

Jekyll and Hyde Revisited: Paradoxes in the Appreciation of Drug Experiences and Their Effects on Creativity

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Abstract—Historically, states of intoxication—like dreams and madness—are seen in either one of two opposed ways. The intoxicated are either “possessed” or “under the influence” of an external agency, or revealing hidden feelings or truths (*in vino veritas*). Along the same lines, artists who worked during LSD, mescaline or psilocybin intoxication often refer to feelings of either being “possessed” or “liberated,” a difference that can be explained partly by their expectations and partly by their evaluations, which both tend to conform to the cultural dichotomy in interpreting the irrational. Both interpretations, however, tend to obscure not only the other, but also—it is posited—the paradoxical nature of the drug experience itself. Analysis of a protocol shows that intoxication might comprise feelings of “possession” as well as “liberation” almost simultaneously, and mediumistic and some psychedelic art shows stylistic traits that can be seen as the visual expressions of both these feelings. It seems that the “demoniacal” and “psychedelic” mode come together in experiential reality, only to be divided in the cultural sphere.

Keywords—cultural history, creativity, drug experiments, possession states, psychedelic art

From the perspective of the historian of culture, drug experiences don't seem to differ much from other irrational experiences such as dreams or madness. As a rule, they are interpreted in either one of two diametrically opposed ways. Homer (*Odyssey* XIX: 562-69), for example, spoke of two kinds of dreams: those that come to man through a gate of polished horn reveal prophetic truths, while those that reach us through a gate of sawn ivory deceive us with nonsense. Since Homer's days, more or less the same

distinction can be traced from Virgil (*Aeneid* VI: 893-99) to Rabelais (*Pantagruel* XIII), and from the Bible (*Numbers* XII: 6 and *Ecclesiastes* XXXIV: 1-8) to Gérard de Nerval (*Aurélia* I: 1) and William Burroughs (1995: 2), and almost everywhere in popular lore.

The same holds true for madness. At some times weird pronouncements of eccentric people are thought to reveal prophetic truths. Special interpreters are summoned to unravel them, so that those in power can use them as a basis for future policies. At other times equally puzzling utterances are thought of as mere gibberish, with those who uttered them being ridiculed, placed under medical care and/or removed from society as clinically insane. At some times they are holy men inspired with divine visions, at

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other times sad or dangerous cases of demonic possession or pathology, even when the subjects' outward demeanor is altogether not that different. This distinction also goes back at least to the time of Plato (Porter 1993; Foucault 1989).

The situation with drugs is also similar. It is well known that alcohol often makes us say things we wouldn't say in other circumstances. In such cases, our audience often judges us to pronounce nonsense. We don't know what we're saying, it is argued, because we are—rephrasing the old notion of demonic possession—"under the influence" and cannot be held responsible for our utterings since it is "the alcohol that speaks." But again, at other times, similar utterings are taken very seriously indeed. Then, on the basis of the *in vino veritas* principle, the alcohol is supposed to disinhibit us, making us more honest, spontaneous and courageous in expressing feelings we would have kept to ourselves otherwise. Drunks, as popular wisdom has it, speak the truth. And this difference in interpretation also seems to be an historical constant.

CULTURAL RELATIVISM

It doesn't seem very likely that science will one day prove one or the other interpretation true, or show that there are indeed two kinds of dreams, madness and intoxication. Cultural historians will point out that what we are dealing with here is nothing more than an alternating difference in cultural appraisal. "Every age of human thought," Albert Béguin (1991: ix) stated in his study of the function of dreams in Romantic literature, "could be defined, in a sufficiently profound way, by the rapports it erects between the dream and waking life"; the term "dream" in this context embracing all kinds of irrational experience, from reverie to ecstasy and from apparent madness to intoxication.

As a rule, different cultures—and different periods within one culture—can be quite easily divided along the lines of oneirophiles and oneirophobes, dream-lovers and dream-haters. The eighteenth century, the age of Enlightenment, for example, considered any interest in dreams to be a gateway to superstition, suspect prophecies and dangerous mysticism. The Romantics of the early nineteenth century, on the other hand, formed a generation for which all kinds of unconscious states and natural or provoked ecstasies acquired the status of, quoting Béguin (1991: xiii) again, profound "revelations of reality and of fragments of the only authentic knowledge." Apparently, the two positions keep on shifting throughout history, in ever changing phrases.

The approach of the cultural historian however, though very illuminating, is ultimately not very satisfying. Its message is that of relativism. In the end, it is argued, our views on dreams, madness and drug experiences are culturally conditioned, and that fact supposedly signals the end of the discussion. A closer look at the nature of such experiences themselves is not deemed necessary. They remain irrational,

and therefore unfathomable. Still (or so I hope to show) states of intoxication are not only interpreted paradoxically as either revealing or deceiving, but can be themselves quite paradoxical too. And we don't have to choose the side of either believers or disbelievers to come to that conclusion.

As an art historian I am studying the history of drug use in nineteenth and twentieth century Western art. For the larger framework of this study, I too have adopted the cultural historian's approach, noting, for example, that it is mostly those artists who can be called, in a wide sense, "romantic" who are tempted to use drugs, expecting these substances to raise creativity, inspiration or at least aesthetic sensibility to levels that would be much harder to reach under normal conditions. But within this framework, I also focus on the experiences of the artists themselves, or at least on what they have said about it. It soon becomes obvious that we're dealing here with a phenomenon that is more inherently paradoxical than the history of its appraisal suggests. Generally speaking, we can divide the artists who worked during intoxication into two groups, corresponding quite neatly with the above sketched division in those who claim to find truth in irrational states, and those who claim to find only nonsense and deformation.

DRUG STATES OF POSSESSION

Magical Painting

Before illustrating these two extremes of the spectrum, it should once more be noted that this division is largely dependent on the *Zeitgeist* or cultural "set" of a given society. Until the late 1950's, drugs like mescaline and LSD were referred to as "hallucinogenic", "psychogenic" or "psychotomimetic," that is, as inducing or mimicking psychopathological phenomena. This conception of the effects of drugs can be seen as an updated version of the archaic notion of disease as demonic possession, with the drug transforming the user from a conscientious Dr. Jekyll into a demonically driven Mr. Hyde, to use the image Robert Louis Stevenson created in his 1885 novel (Figure 1). Indeed, many users of drugs like LSD have spoken of their experiences in terms of demons and possession, even Albert Hofmann, the chemist who synthesized LSD and, in 1943, was the first to experience its effects, stated: "A demon had entered me and taken possession of my body, my senses and my soul" (Hofmann 1979: 32).

Not surprisingly, the results of experiments in which artists take drugs depend rather heavily on the views of those conducting them. In 1940, for example, the London-based psychiatrists Walter Maclay and Erich Guttman asked several artists to work under the influence of the hallucinogenic drug mescaline. In the drawings of one of them, they found a prevalence of wavy lines that were "entirely foreign to the artist's ordinary style but were marked in his sketches made during the intoxication, so that there can be little doubt about their causation by the drug"

FIGURE 1
Jekyll and Hyde Revisited



In 1954 the German newspaper *Quick* described an experiment at the Psychiatric Clinic of the University of Vienna, in which a "brave" artist let LSD "plunge" him into a state of "artificial madness".

(McClay & Guttman 1941: 136). Apparently then—and in line with the idea of demonic possession—they thought that the drug had somehow "taken over," steering the artist's hand against his will.

Some thirty years later (skipping a few examples) the German psychologist and gallery owner Richard Hartmann invited some fifty artists to the Max Planck Institute for Psychiatry in Munich to take LSD and go to work. He recorded many statements like "My hand moves as if it belongs to somebody else" and "What interests me most is that someone is drawing, and that it's not me." To Hartmann such statements indicated a "process of fusion" in which the subject gradually lost his distance with respect to his

actions (Hartmann 1974: 15, 48-52). He distinguished three levels of intensity in this process.

At the first level disorientation and disturbances in concentration force the artist to an "associative painting from point to point." Every new line or color evokes new images and makes the artist lose sight of his original concept. He typically becomes obsessed with drawing details that often fester on interminably. As one artist (Heimrad Prem) stated: "You can work for hours on a detail. You live completely in that little corner where you are busy. You are absorbed by it. You don't think about the complete work" (Hartmann 1974: 223). His drawings show this very clearly. While drawing a girl, he lost sight of the proportions of the

FIGURE 2
Heimrad Prem, Untitled*



*Hartmann-Dokumente, 1968-1970, red and blue felt-tipped pen on paper, 51 x 73 cm, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna.

body and drew first the front leg, then the boot much too large. After this he started filling in the space within the leg's outlines with ornamental doodles which he found so fascinating that he next blew up part of the leg only to indulge in more doodling (Figure 2).

At the second, more intense level of "fusion", artists felt their hand being driven by some kind of external force, a phenomenon Hartmann observed with 80% of his subjects and called "magical painting." As a rule, the artist experiences this as a lucid spectator being surprised at what his hands are creating. "It is as if somebody leads my hand," was a typical comment, "My hands are creating a Cadillac . . . that's funny . . . I didn't even know what a Cadillac looks like." At the third and most intense—but only rarely reached—level, no comments were made anymore. Having lost all reflection, the artist becomes completely absorbed by what he is doing. This Hartmann called

"mimetical painting," indicating a kind of automatic transference of the mind's content onto paper, as if the artist literally had become a medium between a mind gone autonomous and the paper (Ien Berge 1999a: 266-69; Hartmann 1974: 24-25, 50-53).

Mediumistic Doodling

The comparison with mediumistic art—drawings and paintings made by people who, whether or not in the guise of a spiritist contact with another universe, work in a trance-like state—is quite appropriate here. As described by the English art historian Roger Cardinal (1989/1990: 31), mediumistic art typically presents networks and aggregations of simple repeating shapes, resulting in densely patterned textures, which sometimes have a flat and decorative effect, and sometimes suggest unfathomable depths from which faces or figures not infrequently loom. In

FIGURE 3
Marc Lamy, Untitled*



*1997, Indian ink on paper, 65 x 50 cm, Dr. Guislain, Ghent (Collection Museum De Stadshof).

effect they can be seen as "mega-doodles," scaled-up and intensified versions of the kind of associative drawings that many people produce in the margins of notebooks or telephone directories when their conscious minds are otherwise engaged.

Such doodles are generally characterized by a peculiar rhythmic quality which seems to derive from the mechanics of the hand or fingers, and which may develop in two more or less opposite ways: geometrically, into a highly ordered and often symmetrical mosaic, or organically, like a climbing plant proliferating over the surface of the paper. Most mediumistic art, however, unites these two

impulses of compulsive in-filling and free gesture. According to Cardinal (1989/1990: 31) they may represent: "the two creative extremes which Mediumistic Art typically reconciles, for in the work of a majority of these artists, we find the two modes merging, geometric shapes intersecting with organic ones, as if the pedantic one-by-one accumulation of straight-edged mosaic units had provoked an irrepressible counter-impulse towards free-flowing, profigate, unpredictable lines."

Or conversely, it is as if a prolonged frivolous play of lines somewhere reaches a point where it demands to be disciplined by order, regularity and symmetry. In the case

FIGURE 4
Jan Kervezee, *Déjà Vu**



*1974, gouache, ink and varnish on cardboard, 61.2 x 41.1 cm, private collection, Amsterdam.

of the French mediumistic artist Marc Lamy, for example, the result is a kind of elastic, undulating space with, in places, more dense and rigid decorative patterns suggesting faces or Gothic structures offering glimpses into infinite universes (Thévoz 1997; ten Berge 1999b: 82-87; see Figure 3).

As was already obvious from Hartmann's experiment, drug users who take up a pen or pencil often start doodling. And, not surprisingly, the something like eight hour-duration of an LSD trip makes for many "mega-doodles." An example is the painting entitled *Déjà Vu* by the Amsterdam artist Jan Kervezee, who took LSD almost daily before going to work for some fourteen years (Figure 4). Kervezee would start with a few lines or decorative forms and then let the composition develop itself, just like doodling (as he noted himself). In this case, compulsive repetition and accumulation clearly predominated, though the counter-impulse of letting forms grow of their own accord thwarted the symmetry in several places.

Cardinal (1989) saw the complementary impulses of mediumistic art as analogous to the nature of the mediumistic trance itself, characterized as it is both by

mechanical automatisms and ecstatic raptures. Mediumistic drawing, he said, is not really an exclusively automatic or instinctive process (not the very opposite of consciously controlled drawing, as is often believed) but rather a more or less harmonious blend of structuring and delirious tendencies (Cardinal 1989/1990: 31). The same can be said for much art that is made during drug intoxication. At best they show an harmonious blend of symmetry and chaos, of cool austerity and impassioned freedom, of fixed structures and fluid arabesques, though quite often the balance can be seen shifting to one or the other extreme. With Kervezee's *Déjà Vu* illustrating more of the structuring tendency, we now turn to the other, more "delirious" extreme where artists don't talk of being mediums for some external agency, but, on the contrary, of feeling liberated and free from all constraints.

DRUG STATES AS LIBERATION

Again, a change in the Zeitgeist stimulated a more general shift towards the other end of the spectrum. From the

FIGURE 5
Anonymous, Untitled*



*Two drawings of a Indian deer kachina, the first painted before, the second after ingestion of LSD, between 1954 and 1962, published by Oscar Janiger.

middle or late 1950s on, a new generation abandoned the psychiatric approach to drugs like LSD. Instead the newly coined adjective "psychedelic" was adopted, describing the same drugs but implying a very different—though not at all new—view of their effects. In essence, the psychedelic model was an updated version of the old *in vino veritas* lore, just like the earlier psychiatric view can be seen as a modernization of the idea of demonic possession. Instead of changing the user into something other than himself, drugs like LSD were now thought to reveal a "true" inner self that supposedly lay buried behind a lifetime of social and psychological programming: LSD became the "acid" to burn this patina off.

Not surprisingly, this alternate picture of the operation of drugs proved to be much more attractive, especially among artists. And the results of experiments changed accordingly. In 1954, for example, the Beverly Hills psychiatrist Oscar Janiger observed how a painter on LSD saw his work become a mixture of "cubism, fauvism and abstract expressionism," exclaiming this to be equivalent to four years of art school. Janiger decided thereupon to start an art project in which he had dozens of volunteers copy an Indian Kachina doll before and after taking LSD. Stylistic analysis showed that the work done during intoxication almost invariably tended away from figuration and towards more expressionist and abstract ways of expression

(Janiger & Dobkin de Rios 1989: 132-33; see Figure 5).

Here, instead of an accumulation of structural elements, we find almost "delirious," free-flowing, profligate explosions of form and color. And unlike Hartmann's subjects (who felt that drug use distorted their artistic skills), the artists participating in Janiger's project seemed quite happy with the results. They often judged their LSD-work "more interesting or even aesthetically superior to their usual mode of expression," and a follow-up questionnaire showed that afterwards many thought the experience had produced "a desirable lasting change" in their work (Janiger & Dobkin de Rios 1989: 133).

Comparable results were obtained by yet another large-scale research project, conducted from 1959 to 1962 by the Parisian neuropsychiatrist Robert Volmat and his assistant René Robert. They asked 29 artists to take psilocybin, a derivative of the so-called "magic mushrooms," and go to work. Typically, Volmat and Robert observed that after 20 to 30 minutes the artists would find themselves "perplexed" with the impossibility of using their normal techniques and materials. They seemed to have lost all their experience with colors, drawing and spatial composition, and when an artist clung to his old notions of what (his) art should be like, the result would be a mess, that is, a technically inferior version of his usual work (Volmat & Robert 1961: 21).

FIGURE 6
Pierre-Xavier Lafitte, Untitled*



Uniquement entre le Ciel et le sol
 « Je suis libre ! C'est un art d'instinct ! »

*Indian ink and pastel on paper, made during a psilocybin-session, 1959-1960, published in Volmat & Robert (1960).

But when the artist didn't cling to his old ideals and accepted the new circumstances in which he had to work, all would be well. An inevitable "discovery of speed" would take place, with the artists working much faster than usual, sometimes leaving their brushes behind to work directly with their hands or even throwing their paint (Figure 6). Statements like "I feel liberated" and "I always wanted to paint like this, but never dared," made Volmat and Robert conclude that "from the impossibilities new possibilities might arise that are welcomed by the painter as 'a liberation' and in which he claims and believes to recognize his true 'nature'" (Volmat & Robert 1961: 21). Because the ability to look ahead or plan into the future was lost, they considered the work an "instantaneous inscription" of the painter's experience, and spoke of "fertile moments" in which barriers and inhibitions were lifted, enabling the artist to discover his "elementary expressive faculties" (Volmat & Robert 1961: 21-23).

Apparently these artists, like those in Janiger's project but unlike those in Hartmann's, subscribed to the psychedelic model. Whereas others only saw deformation or sheer

nonsense, Volmat and Robert and their subjects believed the drug effected disinhibition and the disclosure of something true and basic and of great personal and artistic value. In fact, several participants were later observed trying to draw or paint "as if under drugs," and their work often showed a lasting change of character, as if the experiment had triggered a new period in their artistic career (Robert 1962: 88-89).

SET AND SETTING

The differences between the conclusions reached by Hartmann on the one hand, and Volmat and Robert on the other, can be attributed to several factors. The choice and dosage of a drug (Hartmann used LSD, Volmat and Robert psilocybin) determine to some extent its "manageability." The circumstances or "setting" in which the drug is taken is also instrumental: Hartmann subjected his artists to the white rooms of a psychiatric institute and had several of them filmed for television, creating an environment that was hardly fit for the purpose, according to one critic (Bader

1973: 168). Volmat and Robert, in contrast, went to the artists' studio and limited their interference to making photos every now and then of the work in progress.

Most decisive, however, was the difference in "set" between the German and the French groups of artists, that is, the whole of personality characteristics, cultural beliefs and expectancies they brought to the experiment. The general lack of positive results with the Germans can be largely attributed to a defensive and unwilling set on the part of the artists. One factor was that Hartmann offered them a "model psychosis," and even though he assured them that he as a psychologist was not at all interested in the artistic quality of the results but only in functional changes and "auto-symbolically" revealing pictures, this can hardly have made the experiment more attractive. Another was that he was a prominent gallery owner whom it was hard to refuse.

But most crucial with respect to the set was the fact that all of Hartmann's subjects were established artists who had worked for many years to find and develop their own personal style of which they were rightfully proud and protective. (It should be noted that stylistic pluralism at the time was not as common as in our postmodern times and still indicated either a lack of individuality or market-oriented opportunism.) Not surprisingly, when approached for an experiment in which a drug was expected to drastically alter their style, they were anxious about their artistic credibility and decided, consciously or not, to resist the drug's effects. In fact, as Hartmann later acknowledged, many participants had started the experiment with a strong conviction that they needed show themselves immune in order to prove to others as well as to themselves the authenticity of their calling (Bader 1973: 167). The idea was that those painters who were least affected by the drug had to be, ipso facto, the greatest. (In a paradoxical way then, Hartmann's subjects can also be said to have subscribed to the psychedelic model, but in contrast to the French they felt threatened by this, suspecting their artistic integrity to be called into question by some kind of truth serum or lie detector—instead of hoping for liberation, they feared exposure.) In effect, these artists were promised an artistic breakdown, and the results mirrored this expectation.

The French artists, on the other hand, may have been expecting more of an artistic breakthrough. Volmat and Robert found their volunteers among friends and in particular Parisian circles to which former subjects introduced them. Possibly, this made for an atmosphere of intimacy in which the enthusiasm of both researchers and colleagues produced a relatively optimistic set. Possibly it also made for a particular selection of artists with more or less the same artistic concerns. Hartmann's subjects were mostly preoccupied with either fantastic realism or disciplined abstraction, both demanding technical skills that drugs will only disturb. The French, in line with French post-war aesthetics, may have put more value on spontaneity of expression, an ambition which "blends" much better with

intoxication. Finally, Volmat and Robert's subjects were professionally far less established than their German counterparts and therefore may have been more open to experimentation and less anxious about having their style changed or their artistic credibility questioned.

PROTOCOLS

We might conclude from the above that whether a drug experience will turn out to be "demoniac" or "liberating" is largely dependent on the user's expectations. This is certainly true, but we should not overlook the fact that we are generally relying for our information on retrospective accounts that are rarely neutral protocols (i.e., notes made during the experiments themselves). Like prior expectations, evaluations also tend to conform to either side of the cultural dichotomy that categorizes such experiences as either misleading and deforming or liberating and revealing. Those artists among Volmat and Robert's subjects who had not felt "liberated," for example, argued later on that they were exempt from responsibility since they had been "under the influence" of a drug (Robert 1962: 85), a defensive strategy that testifies to the strength of the need to choose either one interpretation or the other.

Evaluations of drug experiences, like all accounts of irrational experiences, tend to be censored and adjusted, stressing some aspects at the expense of others in order to present a more clear-cut picture. This holds true for firsthand accounts as well as for researchers' evaluations. Volmat and Robert, for example, though stressing psilocybin's liberating properties, also thought it had to be held responsible for some often recurring characteristics of "psilocybinic" art such as elongated brush strokes, repetition, and the use of parallel lines (Volmat & Robert 1961: 20)—traits that, because of their recurrence, suggest more of the drug's "demoniac" power to steer the artist's hand. Hartmann (1974: 83 & 159), on the other hand, though stressing the mediumistic aspect, also had to acknowledge that several of his subjects later claimed that the experience had had a liberating and positive effect on their work. Apparently both researchers stressed those phenomena that supported their respective conclusions, while downplaying others.

The effect of such censoring procedures is that we are left again with those two seemingly incompatible interpretations of the effects of drugs, which obscure not only each other, but also the essentially paradoxical nature of drug experiences themselves. When the original protocols of experiments with intoxicated artists are available, it becomes much easier to separate colored evaluations from what really happened. And in such cases, it is not uncommon to find references to both feelings of being possessed and being liberated, side by side, in one and the same protocol of one and the same experiment with one and the same artist.

FIGURE 7
László Mátéfi, Untitled*



*Nine portraits from a series of fourteen, made before (a), during (b-h) and after (i) an LSD-session, 1951, charcoal on paper (except f: tempora on cardboard), dimensions and location unknown.

One such protocol was published in 1954, discussing an experiment that took place three years previously in Basle, Switzerland. In order to establish the exact pathological nature of both LSD and mescaline intoxication, the physician and amateur painter László Mátéfi would take one of these drugs and then draw, before (Figure 7a), after

and every hour during intoxication and as realistically as he possibly could, a series of portraits of a present supervisor. This, he believed, would provide him with "objective" visual protocols for each drug to be diagnosed later on. (At the time it was still widely believed among psychiatrists that the style of a drawing or painting

FIGURE 8
Isaac Abrams, Untitled*



*1967, Indian ink on paper, 40.5 x 49.5 cm, published in Masters & Houston (1968).

betrayed the mental state of its author; see Ien Berge 2001: 78-31, for a critique of this notion.) Apparently Mátéfi expected the two drugs, as a kind of demons, to show their ugly heads in his drawings.

But contrary to his evaluation of the experiment, in which he stressed the pathological nature of his experiences, both the written and the visual protocols show that Mátéfi's experience comprised both feelings of "possession" and "liberation." One and a half to three hours after ingesting LSD, the protocol reads: "I see the object correctly, but I draw it incorrectly. My hands don't follow me. . . . It makes me furious that I cannot really keep my mind on my work. . . . My hand must follow those wavy lines. Except for the play of colors and the plasticity, I see my model in the correct proportions and outlines, but my hand is being dragged along by the dynamics of some 'system of coordinates' . . . I draw the lines as they are given to me" (Mátéfi 1952: 148-54).

Up to this point, Mátéfi's experience corresponds with the idea of being possessed by an outside force. At one time he literally spoke of an "intruder" that he had to force back. His loss of control can be clearly observed in the visual protocol as well, in the need to use auxiliary lines (Figure 7b), in the dislocation of the ear and legs of the glasses (Figure 7c), in his failure to keep his drawing within

the format of his paper (Figure 7c-e), and in the increasing speed of execution and growing lack of motor control (Figure 7d-e).

Then, quite suddenly, Mátéfi decided to give up his attempts at a realistic portrait. Forfeiting the aim of the experiment, he decided to "let himself go," threw away his charcoal, picked up a piece of cardboard and some tempera paint and created, very quickly, a drawing in which all the features of his model seem to be lost in one explosive configuration (Figure 7f). He felt euphoric, thought he might create a fantastic work if only he could paint better technically at the moment, and found every piece of paper too small for his liking. When asked if his drawings meant anything to him, he answered: "Yes, when I let go, very much, because it is the expression of my feelings—they aren't visions, but feelings." (Mátéfi 1952: 157)

Still, almost at the same moment, he also stated that he drew lines "as they are given to me." Here, at the peak of an LSD intoxication, we find the two seemingly incompatible phenomena of possession and liberation combined. Mátéfi felt possessed, as if an intruder was steering his hand, and felt free to express his feelings, as if cathartically liberated from all constraints. He felt that he was being led and being free almost simultaneously. Here, then, we encounter the paradox at its most paradoxical. Only one

FIGURE 9
Isaac Abrams, *Space Ship**



*1968, Indian ink on paper, 35 x 56 cm, published in a leaflet on occasion of the exhibition *Psychedelic Art* by Galerie Bischofberger, Zürich 1968.

conclusion seems to fit: we are dealing with a Janus-faced psychological phenomenon that becomes divided in two only in the cultural sphere.

We might almost feel regret for the fact that Mátéfi let himself be disciplined for the sake of the experiment, attempting to make realistic portraits again instead of pursuing whatever it was that inspired him. Gradually the force that led his hand so energetically subsided, giving way to slower and more quiet, rhythmical waves and a tendency to give every movement a mirror-like, balancing counterpart (Figure 7g). His brush strokes became shorter and shorter and started to resemble straight or curly, repetitious hatchings (Figure 7h). The last portrait (Figure 7i) was done after all the effects of LSD had subsided and he felt very tired.

PSYCHEDELIC ART

The protocol of Mátéfi's experience illustrates that feelings of possession and liberation do not automatically exclude each other. Preceded by a phase in which we see mostly deformation, and followed by a phase that tends towards doodling, it seems that at the peak of intoxication demon and muse fused into one and the same experience of "inspiration." It is hard to say whether the two really were identical or merely alternated, shifting in emphasis. Though

I wouldn't want to rule out the possibility of them occurring simultaneously, other examples of art made during LSD trips seem to indicate that a more or less fluent alternation is at least more common, just as mediumistic artists seem to alternate between "pedantic accumulation" and profligate "explosions" of form, in the words of Cardinal (1989/1990).

Several good examples of this alternation in working method can be found in *Psychedelic Art*, the only monograph on the subject to date, published by the psychologists Robert Masters and Jean Houston (1968). In this book, the New York artist Isaac Abrams, for example, was presented as one of the major representatives of this somewhat ignored movement in art. Abrams, a salesman in daily life, became an artist in 1965 during his first experience with LSD when he started drawing for the first time in his life. When the drug's effects wore off, he kept on drawing, in time becoming a professional artist.

"As I worked," Abrams told Stanley Krippner about his first drawing session, "I experienced a process of self-realization concerning the drawing," a statement clearly indicative of the psychedelic model. When describing his working method, however, one easily recognizes feelings of the mediumistic posture too: "I have found that I can flow through my pen and brush; everything I do becomes part of myself—an exchange of energy. The canvas

FIGURE 10
Isaac Abrams, *Cosmic Orchid**



*1967, oil on canvas, 188 x 153 cm, published in Masters & Houston (1968).

becomes part of my brain. With the psychedelics, you learn to think outside of your head" (Krippner 1968: 177-78).

For Abrams, as for many other psychedelic and mediumistic artists, what appeared on the paper or canvas came as a surprise. He stated that thoughts and images materialized on the canvas, painted by a brush that he experienced as a natural, inseparable extension of his hand. He described the creative process on the one hand as an expression of his innermost feelings, and on the other as if it merely happened to him.

Abrams' art also illustrates the combination of the two extremes described above, outgoing fluidity and mechanic doodling. Analyzing his work, it seems his working method consisted of two phases, starting with those bold, Art Nouveau-like lines, put on the paper by comparatively wide

movements of the arm or hand. With this he created a space with many empty areas divided by thin lines. In the next phase, he moved much closer to the paper and added hatchings, decorative patterns and doodles resulting not so much from movements of the arm or hand but from the fingers, creating (like Lamy and Kervczec) sometimes flat, decorative patterns and sometimes three-dimensional spaces with figurative forms (Figure 8).

In this way, combining or fusing both centrifugal and centripetal tendencies, Abrams created impressions of a dynamic world teeming with life where, in contrast to Kervczec, the balance has shifted towards the more fluid or "delirious" side of the spectrum. Within a few years, he developed a very individual style that, at the same time, came to be regarded as typically "psychedelic." Whereas

the early drawings are still dominated by the expansive impulse and remained somewhat sketchy, with just a few doodles clinging to the first bold lines, a work like *Space Ship*, made a year later, seems finished to the point of overelaboration (Figure 9). The bold lines have gained in compositional value, creating a dynamic perspective space that pulls the beholder's eye towards its vanishing point—an effect that is quite common in visionary experiences (Siegel & Jarvik 1975: 139-40) and in some visionary arts (ten Berge 1992). He filled in the many empty spaces between the lines with plain black or with the by-now-familiar doodling. When using color, like in his *Cosmic Orchid* painting of 1967 (Figure 10), Abrams was most successful in creating a synthesis between the two extremes of outer-directed boldness (compare Figures 5 and 7f) and inner-directed doodling (compare Figures 2 and 4).

A JANUS FACE

To conclude, I think it is safe to posit that the division of irrational experiences into deforming and revealing ones is a cultural construction. The analogies that I have made may seem bold, lining up these two opposed ways of dealing with the irrational with artists' feelings of being either possessed or liberated, and these, in turn, with artworks that show either accumulations of doodling or an expansive boldness of line. Still, I think that the fact that these two feelings and stylistic categories can come together, as

demonstrated by the verbal and visual protocols of Mátéfi and Abrams, shows the artificiality of our cultural dealings with these states.

In the cultural sphere, the two opposed interpretations of states of intoxication only tell us half of the story, obscuring not only the other half, but also the essentially Janus-faced nature of such experiences. The reason for this dichotomy's stubborn persistence probably lies in our need for a clear and ordered universe in which light is light and dark is dark, a need so strong that it cannot tolerate paradoxes and instead has produced a schism that can be traced throughout cultural history. It forces us to choose sides again and again, before and even after we have experienced such states ourselves, and is apparently so fundamental that it has even obscured the obvious incompatibility of the two views themselves, which most of us pass by in daily life without a thought.

Still, it is very strange indeed to take the utterings of a drunk man for honest truths at one time and for complete gibberish at another. Instead of continuing this paradoxical behaviour and dividing ourselves permanently into drug-lovers and drug-haters, we might also try and deal with the paradoxical nature of these states themselves, as well as with our schizophrenic dealings with the irrational in general. After all, Jekyll and Hyde were one and the same person, and it wouldn't be possible to kill only one of them.

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