Ain’t it funny how life turns out? Writing to strangers on the Interweb about the drugz what I’ve did. Who’d have thunk it? Let me just state that up until the age of seventeen I didn’t drink or smoke and was vehemently anti-drugs!

Then I tried some.
And then some.
And then some more.
(Et cetera.)

Alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, amphetamines, barbiturates, ecstasy, acid, GHB, cocaine, mushrooms, ketamine... and, more recently, Salvia Divinorum. It is my brief sojourns with Salvia that compel me to write this.

Thanks to the internet for providing an arena wherein I and people similarly inclined can share our altered states experiments amongst one another, sparing us from ranting at passers-by in busy highstreet shopping precincts. Writing this will give time for my friends’ ears to heal, at least.

Note that I refer to my drug use as ‘experiments’. Scientist always has a nicer ring to it than junkie, I find, and allows my intellect to justify my habits as pioneering academia for the benefit of mankind, rather than just drooling on the floor. Method to the madness. It has been said that Sir Arthur Eddington once remarked, “Science is an edged tool, with which men play like children, and cut their own fingers.” Well, this psychonaut has his hands in bandages!

At twenty-six, I decided my new trip would be to see what life was like as a sober grown-up, giving up alcohol, tobacco, amphetamines, barbiturates, ecstasy, acid, GHB, cocaine and ketamine, leaving me with cannabis and mushrooms (well, sober-ish - giving up drugs is for quitters!). I thought I had been as high as I could go.

Then I met Salvia.

It was March, 2004. I had wandered into a ‘headshop’ in Liverpool to peruse their selection of fresh Psilocybe mushrooms. I bought a baggie of fresh Psilocybe mexicana to add to my own dried Psilocybe semilanceata (Liberty Caps) when I got home. As my money wafted down onto the glass counter I caught sight through its transparent surface of a small vial amongst bags and packets of various ‘legal highs’. Pocketing my change and peering closer at the dark, flaky contents, I read the label then swiftly pulled out the rest of my cash.
“And I’ll have that Salvia too, please!”

My only knowledge of Salvia up until then had been from TV documentaries such as Channel Four’s Sacred Weeds and To the Ends of the Earth: Jungle Trip, which had described the plant as a tool used by Mazatec shamans for the healing and teaching of the community. I felt that after being wired for nine years I could do with some healing. And I couldn’t do much else I’d fall into teaching.

“Be careful,” the shopkeeper warned, handing over the vial, “This is ten grammes-worth of active ingredient on one gramme of leaf. You’ll only need a pinch, it’s extremely strong!”

I re-read the label:

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Salvia 10x
1 gramme
WARNING - EXTREMELY STRONG!!
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Extremely. Extremely. Extremely.

What warranted it the adverb? Surely a capital-lettered WARNING that it is strong with two exclamation marks is warning enough. Why the extremely?

Back home and perched on the edge of my bed, vial in hand, my curiosity peaked, halfway through watching a Simpson’s episode (my eagerness truly knew no bounds). I unstoppered the stopper, smelled the contents (faint but pleasant, like a freshly-mowed lawn), then gently tapped a couple of the small, dark flakes into the bowl of my trusty old pipe.

I took a deep breath in then exhaled, expelling as much air as I could, sparked up the lighter, and inhaled again, taking in the smoke easily and holding it for about thirty seconds. Whilst still holding the smoke I could discern a very mild cannabis-like stoned effect, mixed with a strangeness I couldn’t quite put my finger on. A feeling of being on the brink of something. Like needing to sneeze but not quite sneezing.

The feeling passed within a minute. Back to baseline.

Hmm... That was strange...

What was strange? Why was it strange?

Curiouser and curiouser...

I emptied the pipe and refilled, this time with just over double the amount (about the size of a pinkie nail, well-trimmed). I sparked the lighter and inhaled the smoke, again holding it for about thirty seconds.

What happened next is exceedingly difficult to relay. I can’t really make sense of it. Indeed, what I perceived seemed to lie outside of my five senses. I am only left with impressions. Vivid, palpable impressions.
Still holding the smoke and watching TV, I began to notice textures in my surroundings that I
don’t ordinarily see. The nearest analogy I can think of is that it felt like I was looking through
how I normally see my bedroom to another layer, like when staring at a Magic Eye picture.

The image of my bedroom rippled slightly, then slowly began to twist, as a bizarre force tugged
at my body, pulling me down physically from right to left so that I actually fell off my bed!

Whoa! What the...?

My jaw dropped in astonishment. I had a feeling/vision that how I normally see my bedroom was
like a two-dimensional backdrop which suddenly got yanked away, revealing the true ‘behind the
scenes’ picture. The twisting force had me thinking/feeling I was being rolled in a slowly rotating
metal pipe...

I regained my composure, tried to get back on the bed. The force was still strong, pulling me to
the floor, but I found that with will I could resist and finally raised myself onto my bed.

Whoa! What the fuck was that? I thought, thinking it was all over and time for reflection. I
had never before, drugged or sober, experienced anything like the bizarre pulling force that had
literally bowled me over. What the fuck was it?

As my internal dialogue assessed my situation and started to interpret the alien pulling effect
I suddenly had the impression that I had had some kind of serious accident, felt like Humpty-
Dumpty after his fall, and was lying sprawled in a road behind an ambulance with its doors wide
open, ready to take me away!

I can’t explain how plain weird this all felt. I was sitting on my bed, in my bedroom, yet simul-
taneously lying on a road! In two places at the same time! How could this be? I had, again,
most certainly never felt anything like this before in my life; it was unbearably strange and intense
whilst at the same time so subtle that I doubted whether anything was happening at all. I’m in
my bedroom - how can I be lying in the road? It can’t be!

Unable to interpret what was happening I simply concluded that nothing could be happening (it’s
easier), but just as I reached this decision, it suddenly dawned on me that Bart and Lisa Simpson
were standing over me, looking down at me lying in the road, discussing my state, saying things
like, “Look what he’s done!” and, “Now he’s gone and done it!”

What the...?

I felt so uncomfortable, raw and exposed, as if Bart and Lisa knew every intimate detail of my
life and were examining me to find out about how or why I had come to be in this outrageous
circumstance. I didn’t exactly feel like I was being judged by them - they appeared playfully
concerned - but I began to feel great shame, like I’d done something beyond naughty! Like I had
crossed a line one should never cross, caused a cosmic violation. It was so emotionally intense and
unexpected that I felt violated.

Then, in an instant I was back in my room, back to baseline, boggley-eyed and bewildered.

What the...?
I looked around. Everything was familiar. All back to normal.  
What the...?

The Simpson’s episode was still playing. Bart and Lisa were back in the TV set.  
Wha...?

I just didn’t know what to make of what had just happened. I was dazed and discombobulated by the sheer weirdness, but couldn’t understand just how weird it was. Obviously the TV had influenced how I visualized the experience, but it seemed it couldn’t have been mere hallucination; the physical pulling effect was strange enough, but Bart and Lisa’s whisperings seemed realer than real. Their presence was undeniable (under the influence of a drug, mind!). Were they two real entities or perhaps vivid thoughts that were so powerful as to have presence, manifesting themselves as cartoon characters, since I was watching a cartoon? Maybe my mind pictured these Others as Bart and Lisa to make some kind of sense out of the situation (I’m alone watching TV, yet people are here talking about me...I’m the only one here, must be TV characters). Whatever the presences were, their realness and intimacy struck a chord within me that still resonates today, though I can’t tell why.

With this all going through my mind, I still couldn’t tell if the Salvia was ‘extremely strong’!

I just had to know.

I emptied my pipe and again refilled with more Salvia than the other two doses put together, I would estimate about 1/20th of a gramme.

I cleared my mind and lungs, then third time a charm, fired up and inhaled.

As I still held the smoke I perceived a slight change. Things were the same, but somehow different, somewhat similar to the encroaching feeling one perceives when descending into a ketamine ‘hole’, don’t you know.

Then the pulling force began again, this time strangely familiar. I barely managed to reach to put down my lighter and pipe as I felt myself being pulled back into my body, my arms and legs seemingly stretching out before me far into the distance, reminiscent of Alice in her Adventures in Wonderland when things go all out of proportion. Reading about it is one thing: feeling it is something else altogether! As I was pulled further back into my body, into the space behind my eyes, a periphery was revealed that I was not previously aware of, as if my vision had zoomed out to reveal a wider shot, similar to the extra bits you get to see at the sides of a widescreen film compared to the non-widescreen version. These ‘extra bits’ seemed to stretch and wrap around behind my head to meet up, allowing 360-degree visual capability, only I couldn’t see the bedroom behind my head - I was aware of the space behind my eyes as being a vast dark space, perhaps another dimension, teeming with life! This was incredibly unnerving, like a vault to a nightmare realm had become unhinged in my head. Who or what would come through? I felt as if I was not the only one in my own head! Could this be what being conscious of the unconscious feels like?

My sweatshirt seemed cumbersome and constricting so I peeled it off and lay down.
Again my bedroom twisted to a point in front of me, so that I was looking through the hole of
whirlpool made of my room! My jaw dropped in amazement. I could see at the other end of this
long, stretching whirlpool a wreath of leaves, which turned out to be an arching entrance to a
lush green magical rainforest!

In the space behind my eyes I sensed a lurking presence, I even think I felt my shoulders being
grabbed and pulled. I was petrified! I remember a feeling of being dragged backwards through the
thick and fecund rainforest by a giant green plant creature!

Back in my room the pulling force pinned me to my bed, which became the ground of the forest.
Thick green vines suddenly sprouted, grew, spiralling, twisting, around my arms, legs and torso,
grasping me so tightly that it felt like my body was being sliced right through. I couldn’t move! I
have an image of my startled face peering out of a leafy thicket! I felt the buzz of the forest, the
wet fronds of the vegetation, could hear the song of the birds and insects. Could smell the foliage
and sweetness of the plant life. I felt the sun beaming down, pulsing warmth through my body. It
was so hot. Sweat popped out on my forehead.

I felt like I had been cursed by a witch, been transformed into a plant within a heaving tropical
rainforest!

I remember feeling an enormous presence but being too afraid to look up, and found myself
apologizing to someone/something I thought I might have seriously upset (the witch?) which I
somehow knew was not prudent to do. I had an overwhelming sense of being observed very closely,
and felt quite, quite humbled, in the presence of some unbelievably awesome power.

I thought that the great presence was about to admonish me for being there. I was terrified of its
power, which I sensed as female. I felt the presence communicate with me, not in words, but with
feelings so overwhelming persuasive as to negate my own. The message was, “Relax, go with it,”
so I stopped resisting, relaxed, and then felt a tremendous feeling of joy and love flow through me,
being held, hugged, cradled by a motherly plant. I felt a connection, perhaps to my roots...

The next few minutes were spent at peace in the forest, feeling/seeing the sunshine pulse through
me in ecstatic rhythm with my heartbeat. It felt like I was in La-La Land, as if I had been smashed
over the head with a frying pan in a Tom and Jerry cartoon. I wouldn’t have been surprised to
see stars or tweeting birds encircling the peak of a mountainous bruise. Being in the forest was
now my reality, my real reality, as it always had been and as it would ever be. I just didn’t realise
it until that moment!

In the next moment I was back in my room, face frozen, mouth wide open with incredulity.
OhmyGodohmyGodohmyGodohmyGod...

I had experienced something I didn’t think was possible to experience! Need to have a re-think!

My gut reaction was that I had had communion with the spirit of Salvia! A spirit! Of a plant!
This will give you some idea how weird this stuff must be to even make me contemplate such an
idea. I’m supposed to be a middle-class suburbanite, for goodness’ sake! I used to think Prince
Charles was an inbred buffoon for talking to plants (among other things, obviously). Now a plant
has talked to me! What does that make me?! Man, at this rate I’m gonna end up as a vegetable.
I concluded there and then that Salvia 10x is indeed ‘EXTREMELY STRONG!!’, and didn’t touch
it again for six months.

(The following was written just over six months after the above. . .)

During those months the Salvia experiences were never far from my thoughts, the apparent ‘real-
ness’ forcing me to question my entire belief structure, which has always been pretty shaky at best.
Even though I consider myself a veteran drug user, Salvia shocked and shook me to the very soul
of my being like no other substance has ever done. Indeed the Salvia experience was so ‘out there’
I was no longer sure where ‘here’ is. My new-found pre-occupation with trying to integrate the
Salvia experiences into my worldview of what is possible took away worries from everyday trivial
concerns, for as a human I was no longer stuck plant-like to the same spot, I had arms and legs
and an opposable thumb! What gripe had I?

I tried to explain to my friends what had happened, but how could I even begin? This rambling
written report will give you some idea about that difficulty. After a while I decided to shut up, as
harping on about it seemed to act as a barrier between normal interaction. My psychology degree-
holding friends half-heartedly listened then belittled and branded the most profound experience of
my life as hallucinations. They probably thought I was weirder than Prince Charles. This irritated
me slightly, because, as friends, and particularly as educated psychologists, I would have expected
more interest from them. Even if my experiences were hallucinations, what do those hallucinations
tell us about the brain and chemical reactions, etc., and if the hallucinations seemed ‘true’ and
realer than real, then how real is reality, and so on. I was just expecting more input and less ridicule,
since it is their professional field. To me, this plant seemed to be a fascinating tool for exploring
psychology - most importantly, states of consciousness and belief structures. However, my friends’
belief structures wouldn’t budge or consider anything beyond what they had first sponged from a
textbook (darn conformist scholars!). I can’t blame them, though: even I couldn’t believe it, and
it had happened to me! It was clear I needed to find other people who had experienced Salvia, to
see what they made of it too. This is what brought me to do further research on the internet.

Reading through other people’s Salvia reports I was taken aback - as they revealed that different
people in different places were ‘hallucinating’ the same thing!!!

The plot thickens.

I didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. I’m not the only human being in the world that has been
turned into a plant! Well, how about that!

To exemplify similarities with my experiences described above, below are two very short extracts of
Salvia reports. It cannot be more emphatically expressed that I had no knowledge of these reports,
or any, before writing the experiences you have read above. I was astounded at the similarities.

Extract 1: Three-Day Journal, Ending With Forestland by redworm
My legs started to feel like they were being wrapped up in leaves or vines—can't really describe the visual hallucinations I was having, but ‘giant plant leaves’ was the best I could come up with.

It came on quick, but I was ready this time. Immediately I was sucked into the reality of the forest entity in which my body was located. I was experiencing the same reality as the forest but from an objective point of view. It was as though Gaia was showing me just how beautiful our planet really is. It was a nature lover’s nirvana and I had front row seats. She was dancing beautifully with the wind and conveying a message of love and comfort. STRONG feminine presence here.

After a minute or so of Forestland I felt myself being pulled back and opened my eyes. I immediately packed another bowl and took another monster hit. I closed my eyes and before I could exhale I was there again. I ‘saw’ the whole body of the forest moving, swirling in bright colorful motion.

I understood that the aboveground trees and foliage were wise old women, merely parts of the infinitely elaborate head dress of an ageless multidimensional Goddess entity who exuded a message of hope and comfort across all time. The landscape swirled around and enveloped my astral body in warmth and light, slowly coiling around my torso and beckoning me further. I felt the pulling sensation again and consensus reality faded back in. The forest was ringing with energy for a long time afterwards and I was intensely satisfied.

Extract 2: Can Be Dangerously Different by Gumby
The experience began with my legs turning into a combination of vines and leaves. This was not your typical hallucination. I didn’t have a sensation of vines and leaves growing on me. I didn’t feel them. I didn’t look down and see them. I knew that it was happening. It started at my feet, and worked it’s way up my entire body. I was turning into a human shaped plant creature. This is the only time in my life (and that with a lot of drug experience) that I was something else. Sure, I have lost control of my actions, or been completely overwhelmed and unable to move. This was different. I wasn’t me, but just fucked up. I wasn’t totally lost in hyperspace. I was gone, but another being was sitting on the porch.

The array of similarities between reports told me that Salvia Divinorum could have enormous implications. I knew that this was something BIG! Salvia Divinorum could change our entire understanding of the mind and the nature of reality (I guess)!

I was honoured to have encountered her. Finally, actually, factually, from junkie to scientist in the puff of some smoke... pioneering academia for the benefit of mankind! Not just dribbling on the floor!

I had work to do.

One night as a friend sat on my bed to roll some marijuana joints, I decided to give Salvia another go. My friend could be my sitter, I thought, since, with a fearless explorer mindset, I had planned to try a bigger dose of Salvia (this time about the size of a thumbnail, well-chewed) to see what it’s seriously all about. As it came to loading the pipe, however, I lost my nerve and instead gently tapped out an amount less than that I’d smoked to meet Bart and Lisa Simpson.

I asked my friend not to talk or interact with me for five minutes, or until I instigated a conversation, and to make sure I didn’t do any damage to myself, or him. I think this last bit shocked him. I lit the pipe and inhaled.

Again, the ineffability! But, well, fuckin’ hell! This is getting like a creative writing exercise.

I was aware that I was sitting on my bed, my back to the wall, my friend at my side, yet also aware I was somewhere else.

To save my trying to find the words to set the scene, and to exemplify another similarity between my experiences and others’, below is another short extract from somebody else’s report that perfectly describes the place in which I found myself. Again, I had this experience before I read the report from which the extract is taken. After the extract’s description, I will take up my story.

Extract 3: Gravity Effects by Bacchus

Feeling of a lucid dream. I know my eyes are lightly closed, and feel like I could see my surroundings more clearly if I could open them, but I can’t. At the same time, I can see/feel 360 degrees.

Infinitely long street, fenceposts and mailboxes stretch out forever. Green, sunny, suburban. Alien different physics and dimensionality. There is a strong force - a gravitational pull that
is the center of my local universe. I realize that this point, strong as a black hole, is actually
the connection to my jaw (of my ‘real’ body, sitting back home on the couch). My mouth is
gaping open, and this other universe pivots around the sensation- like being stuck in a huge
cosmic yawn. The thought crosses my mind that I could come out of this with a dislocated
jaw, but it hurts so good! Feeling of a lucid dream. I know my eyes are lightly closed, and
feel like I could see my surroundings more clearly if I could open them, but I can’t. At the
same time, I can see/feel 360 degrees.

I take up the story . . .

As I have stated, I was aware that I was sitting on my bed, my back to the wall, my friend at my
side, yet also aware I was in this infinitely long sunny street, fenceposts and mailboxes stretching
out forever. Each garden in the street was separated by a fence, and I was lying in the garden at
the bottom of every fence leading off into the distance. In other words, there were lots of gardens
and lots of me’s, like panels of the same image repeated into infinity. It was so cartoon-like I
half-expected Dennis the Menace to hurdle over each fence, being chased by his slipper-wielding,
red-faced Dad.

To my left I was aware of a black cartoon entity standing in the street, peering over the fence,
looking at me in each garden, laughingly telling me that I was about to get cut up and run over.

Again the feeling of apparently being in two places at the same time was just as bizarre as my
experiences six months previously. Here I was amused at the incongruity of being in a cartoon
land while my friend was rolling joints right next to me and couldn’t have a clue; and a cartoon
character telling me I was in danger tipped me over the edge, and I burst out laughing, loud and
hard.

As I laughed, the black entity continued to tell me of my fate and imminent annihilation, whilst I
frankly found it all absurd. How can this be happening?!

My laughter was relentless, the strongest and longest I have ever laughed in one go, that whilst
laughing I found myself wondering what was so funny and pointedly tried to stop, but couldn’t.

The entity was adaman t about the danger I was in. “You’re going to get cut up!”

“No I’m not!”

“Sure you are. Look!”

Looking to my right I suddenly became aware of another cartoon-like entity, slowly pushing a
lawnmower towards every me in every garden! The black entity over the fence was right! I was
going to get cut up!

My laughter continued but inwardly I started to panic. I couldn’t move, I was stuck in every
garden, about to be chopped to pieces by the sharp metal blades tumbling towards me! Had I
turned into a plant again?! What would happen to my friend rolling joints?!

I started to wonder how my manic, incessant laughter would be interpreted by my friend, or others
in the house, as even I didn’t know why I was laughing! I’m sure I had descended (or is that ascended) into madness.

Suddenly the lawnmower was upon me and the blades split my skin, pushing through me, slicing my body into slivers. As I felt myself being cut I was aware of the black entity still peering over the fence, standing with an air of something like, “See - told ya!”

The vision faded and I was back in my bedroom, left to pick up the pieces, unable to grasp what had just happened. The laughter I experienced had a quality to it that I don’t normally associate with laughter, and I pondered the meaning of this for a long time. It had felt good laughing so hard, for a while, but the laughter was mixed with a more negative feeling. A feeling of! This ambivalence was, and still is, confusing, and slightly disturbing. It has since brought tears to my eyes just thinking about it. What was so funny?!

I haven’t touched Salvia since, though am sure to very soon. I know that Salvia holds untold secrets about the nature and meaning of reality. However, the experience is so overwhelmingly ‘other’ that it takes a lot of time and reflection to acclimatize. Even though I still can’t tell why, I feel as if what Salvia has to offer is seriously important. A much-needed reminder of...somethin’. I still have about a fifth of a gramme of the 10x left, waiting for me in my wardrobe, and I have ordered ten grammes of standardized 20x and 1/2 fl. oz. of tincture for further, extended experimentation. Watch this void.

(Written one month later...)

Additional. All of my Salvia experiences made my jaw drop. Literally. I remember each time I saw the ‘whirlpool’ vision my mouth opened wide, and remained so until the experience had passed. I later realised that I was somehow lining up the ‘O’ of my open mouth with the opening of the whirlpool vision, perhaps to make a link? Was it perhaps to connect with the pulse of the heartbeat, or maybe connect with the void within ourselves? I am well aware of the strangeness of these musings, but the alien laughter into which I burst out during my last experience brought me to these suppositions. The bizarre laughter was not joyful. Was it a defence mechanism to protect me from the horrible transpiring vision of being sliced up and destroyed? Was it the ego trying to keep connected to my body? Or was the laughter to interrupt a connection? Did my laughter create the comic vision, or pushed out air so I wouldn’t swallow what was happening to me? Could it be down to breathing and yoga practices?...

I here add another experiencer’s musings concerning the mouth and heart during the Salvia trip:

Just a thought.I (for some reason) started humming part of a Moody Blues tune (the second time - the first time I hummed along to some classical music I had on the radio) and this makes the energy flow out from your heart new tunnels form (from your heart) and flow out into the universe. Just a thought.

(Written four months later. January, 2005.)

Well, well, well. What a journey. So much has changed, and yet stayed the same. (Nothing more
permanent than change, an’ that.)

Since writing about my Salvia experiences I came upon *The Psychedelic Experience* by Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner and Richard Alpert (yes, I was that excited). It is based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead - a book I have had on my shelf since I was eleven years old. Strange to think my psychedelic adventures have brought me back. I urge you to read it. Everything is explained.

Salvia has brought all of my hobbies, studies and interests together, as if they were preparation for this moment. Even though I have learned and changed so much, I realise my true journey is just about to begin. The ten grammes of 20x and bottle of tincture entice me with beckoning talons.

If you wanna be the best, but don’t wanna beat the rest - Oo-ooh - meditation’s whatcha need - Gonna be so dedicated (dedicated - ooh)!

Peace and love, in this life, and other states of consciousness.

GERONIMO!!!