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AUTHOR OF
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TO ETERNITY"

"THE PRODIGAL
POWERS OF POT" BY
DAN WAKEFIELD

the prodigal powers of pot

ACCLAIMED BY ANCIENTS, FROWNED ON BY FUZZ, BEATIFIED BY BEATS, MARIJUANA REMAINS THE MOST MISUNDERSTOOD DRUG OF ALL TIME

article **By DAN WAKEFIELD**

IN A MODERN VERSION of *Aladdin*, performed by a mime to the high appreciation of a Greenwich Village coffeehouse audience, Aladdin spills oil from his lamp on the ground and a tall, green plant quickly grows. Aladdin pulls a leaf from the unusual plant, rolls it, lights it, takes a deep puff, and his face brightens with ecstasy. The audience breaks into laughter, for no one needs to be told the name of the magic plant. It is known by many different names to many different people — to scientists *cannabis sativa*, to Persians *beng*, to Russians *anascha*; it is *kif* to Algerians, *ma* to Chinese, and *churrus*, *ganja* and *bhang* to Indians. Among the more than 200 names that it travels under throughout the world it is known in America as pot, charge, tea, hemp, gauge, grass, weed, Mary-Jane and marijuana. It is ranked the second most popular intoxicant of the human race, following only alcohol. It is (depending on the preparation and, even more important, the person who takes it) euphoric, relaxing,

inspiring, depressing, exciting, frightening, soothing — and, in most countries, illegal.

It is a common weed. But the preparations made from the female hemp (cannabis) plant have caused uncommonly passionate and contradictory reactions ever since men became acquainted with them. In the course of her long career, the Lady of the Hemp has been known at different times and in different places to those who loved her as a cure for snake bite, malaria, ulcers, sore toenails, venereal disease, earache, cancer, corns, sunstroke, tuberculosis, burns, poor appetite, trench mouth, dysentery, impotence, asthma and the pains of childbirth; has been touted as a spur to intellectual creativity, an aid in withdrawal from addicting drugs, a promoter of sexual desire and prowess, protector from evil influence, support in times of famine, stimulant to labor, a source of self-confidence, a key to divine revelation and, according to 19th Century Indians, "The Poor Man's Heaven," "Soother of Grief" and "Heavenly Guide." Yet to others she has been known as a cause of murder, assault, insanity, rape, addiction, anxiety, moral degeneration, sterility, death, laziness, physical decay, crime, panic and suicide; and called such names as "Liberator of Sin" (by an ancient Chinese) and "Assassin of Youth" (a low-budget American movie of the Thirties).

Marijuana, which is made from the dried leaves of the female hemp plant and is one of the cruder, less potent derivatives of cannabis, is the most common form of the drug in America, and has recently been associated here with the literature and life of the Beat Generation. But the use of the hemp drugs, like the wearing of beards, dates much farther back than the Beats. The Chinese Emperor Shen-Neng referred to the drugs in a work on pharmacy in 2737 B.C., and the physician Hoa-Thoa reported their use both for easing the pain of patients during operations and for enjoyment at nonmedical functions in A.D. 220. According to Herodotus, the frugal citizens of Scythia and Thrace made clothes from the fibers of the plant and made merry by roasting its seeds and breathing the intoxicating vapors (a community rite which may be the original antecedent of that favorite Western institution, the cocktail party).

Most of the ancient reports of cannabis come out of Asia, however; the scent of burning hemp didn't spread very far in the Western world, even after Marco Polo and other Europeans on the Oriental road brought back tales of the drug in the Middle Ages. It was not until Napoleon's army arrived home with samples from Egypt that a burst of medical and literary interest in cannabis exploded in Europe. While doctors studied its possibilities as a cure for ailments of the body, intellectuals explored the more dramatic effects of its influence on the mind and imagination. Charles Baudelaire, Théophile Gautier and other writers and artists of Paris in the 1850s formed the Club des Hashischins, and set down the story of their transports with hashish (one of the strongest derivatives of cannabis, made from the powerful resin of the plant) in awesome passages. In a typically passionate hymn to the hemp, Baudelaire wrote:

"Over the surface of man's ordinary life the power of hashish spreads a magic glaze, coloring it with solemnity, bringing to light the profoundest aspects of existence. Fleeting horizons, perspectives of cities, pale in the cadaverous light of storms or blazing beneath the concentrated ardor of a crouching sun — profundities of space — allegories in the profundities of time — the dance — the gestures and the declamations of actors if you happen to be in the theater — the first phrase your eyes chance to fall on if you are reading a book — in short the universality of being reveals itself to you with a glory never before experienced."

In America, at about the same time, similar vistas were opened to a 16-year-old boy named Fitz Hugh Ludlow, who was to record his experiences in a deep-purple tract called *The Hasheesh Eater*, which seems to have been written as much under the influence of *The Arabian Nights* as under the influence of a drug. "About the shop of my friend Anderson the apothecary," he wrote, "there always existed a peculiar fascination, which early marked it out as my favorite lounging place."

As all Americans know, teenagers given to hanging around the corner drugstore are likely to get into trouble, and before long young Fitz was sniffing in the medicine bottles. One morning he noticed a new jar on the shelf — something called "cannabis" — and asked old Anderson what it was. " 'That,' answered the doctor, looking with parental fondness upon his new treasure, 'is a preparation of the East Indian Hemp, a powerful agent in cases of lockjaw.' "

Ludlow didn't wait for lockjaw to strike. Soon he was running to the drugstore with the six-cent price of a portion of cannabis and flying off to regions of the mind far removed from his home in Poughkeepsie. And, in the true spirit of the cannabis enthusiast, he was eager to bring along a friend. His report of that occasion surely has historical, if not literary, merit, for it seems to be the first recorded instance of an American hemp user turning on an uninitiated companion:

" 'My friend, we shall travel together.'

" 'I shall go,' said my friend, 'with delight.' "

But not many of their fellow Americans followed them, even though what Ludlow called the "drug of travel" could be had quite cheaply, in various forms, and without any legal restrictions. The ready accessibility of hemp mixtures in 19th Century America can be glimpsed in the report of one George W. Grover, M.D., a kind of Norman Vincent Peale of narcotics, who, in 1894, wrote a book entitled: *Shadows Lifted or Sunshine Restored in the Horizon of Human Lives: A treatise on the morphine, opium, cocaine, chloral and hashish habits.* The good doctor was not turned on by some predatory pusher. He explained: "Once while I was passing down the leading business street in Baltimore, I saw upon a sign above my head 'Gungwalla Candy, Hashish Candy.' "

Gungwalla did not replace cherry cordials in the parlors of America, however, and the flare of medical and literary interest in cannabis (John Stuart Mill, Walter de la Mare, Alexandre Dumas and William James were among those who experimented with it) did not create much popular interest. But soon after the turn of the century the cannabis plant — not as hashish, but in the milder form of marijuana — invaded and quickly spread through America. By the late 1930s it was being used in every state in the Union, and the Federal Government had outlawed it in terms that suggested the menace it presented was the greatest threat to home and country since V. I. Lenin debarked at the Finland Station.

Marijuana was introduced to America's Southwest by Mexican laborers who didn't want to be without it when they ventured north of the Rio Grande. It caught on fast among their fellow workers in America, and filtered outward and upward, gradually improving its social status. According to one observer, it was first brought into New Orleans by foreign seamen in 1910, and by 1926 had infiltrated the city's society from the elite to the local waifs' home. Some enterprising entrepreneurs, finding that it grew tall and wild right there in Louisiana, began to cultivate their own gardens.

Then, like jazz, marijuana went up the river from New Orleans. It was not transported by itinerant trumpet men, however, but by wholesale distributors who filled old New Orleans warehouses with stacks of the drying hemp. The drug soon made its way as far north as Cleveland, where a prominent doctor reported that it was smoked in one of the city's exclusive men's clubs. By the late Thirties, newspapers were headlining The Marijuana Menace in almost every part of the United States. It was being raised in the yards of Federal prisons by ingenious inmates, was said to have replaced liquor in Harlem, was found to be a popular new diversion in chic Westchester County, and had become an after-school pastime of teenagers in Jack-

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son, Mississippi. Marijuana even puffed its way into the vast machinery of the New Deal. It was smoked in CCC camps in New Hampshire, and in 1936 the American Medical Association reported: "Squads of WPA workers specially trained to recognize marijuana have been placed on duty in the boroughs of the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Richmond to eradicate the weed from vacant lots . . ."

The editorial outcry against the evil of cannabis cited the weed as a cause of sex crimes, murder and, indeed, almost everything but bad breath. With public opinion aroused against this "menace," Harry J. Anslinger and his Federal Narcotics Bureau were able to get it outlawed through the passage of the Marijuana Tax Act of 1937, which equated it with cocaine and opium derivatives. This, of course, did not mean the end of marijuana. It merely meant the takeover of the trade by racketeers, and a consequent rise in prices. A year after the Federal Government made possession of marijuana a crime, Dr. Robert Walton wrote a book entitled *Marijuana: America's New Drug Problem*, in which he recorded a historical fact that was full of prophetic implications. The use of cannabis drugs, he noted, has flourished in every country where it was ever established, and he added: "This is despite the fact that, in some of these countries, attempts have been made for almost 1000 years to stamp out the practice." At least today, almost a quarter century later, America has proved no exception to the rule.

By the time the Government decided that marijuana was illegal, a great many Americans had become converts. These vipers shared the opinion of clarinetist Milton "Mezz" Mezzrow, who declared in his autobiography, *Really the Blues*: "Every one of us that smoked the stuff came to the conclusion that it wasn't habit-forming and couldn't be called a narcotic. . . . To us a muggle wasn't any more dangerous or habit-forming than those other great American vices, the five-cent Coke and ice-cream cone, only it gave you more kicks for the money."

Mezz had been turned on by an itinerant jockey while playing a gig at the Martinique, near Gary, Indiana, in 1924, and was one of the first of the great number of jazz musicians to become converted to pot. The musicians who used it not only liked its effect on their feelings, but also on their music, and found it gave a much better lift than the demon rum: "We were on another plane," wrote Mezzrow, "in another sphere compared to the musicians who were bottle babies, always hitting the jug and coming up brawling after they got loaded."

Scholarly as well as off-the-cuff research has been done on whether marijuana really helps — or, as many believe, hurts — the music of the jazzman. A particularly fascinating study of the question was made in 1959 by Dr. Charles Winick, a research authority on drugs who participated in the November 1960 *Playboy Panel: Narcotics and the Jazz Musician*. Dr. Winick interviewed 609 musicians, and of those who took a stand on the matter, only 19 percent thought that marijuana improved a musician's performance, while 31 percent felt that it was a hindrance. Eighty-two percent of those interviewed had smoked pot at some time or other, either for playing or just for relaxing before or after sets.

A number of jazzmen helped spread the word of marijuana, not so much by selling it to others, but by using its terminology in lyrics and titles of songs such as *Sweet Marijuana Brown, If You're a Viper, Reefer Song, Sendin' the Vipers, That Funny Reefer Man*. Although cannabis had made converts in many different segments of American life by the Thirties, it had become especially popular — and especially publicized — among jazzmen and among the Negroes of the big-city ghettos. The lurid reports of Harlem tea pads, apartments where people gathered to listen to music and smoke marijuana, impelled Mayor LaGuardia to appoint a committee composed of three psychiatrists, two internists, two pharmacologists, one public health expert, the city's Commissioners of Correction, Health and Hospitals, and the director of the psychiatric division of the city hospitals, not to mention six policemen, to investigate the "marijuana menace." *The LaGuardia Report*, published in 1944, came as a disappointment to those who had been awaiting tales of unimagined evil.

One of the committee's agents visited a tea pad that consisted of a series of pup tents on a Harlem tenement roof, and found that after the smokers partook of the weed "they all emerged into the open and engaged in a discussion of their admiration of the stars and beauties of nature." The report went on: "In most instances, the behavior of the smoker is of a friendly, sociable character. Aggressiveness and belligerency are not commonly seen, and those showing such traits are not allowed to remain in the tea pad . . ." The use of the drug in general was found by the LaGuardia committee to be far less than the menace publicity had pictured it. Marijuana, they reported, was not physiologically addicting (in fact, it was found to be less habit-forming than either alcohol or tobacco); it did not necessarily lead to the use of stronger drugs; it was not a cause of insanity or violence: it was no more of an aphrodisiac than alcohol; and its therapeutic properties merited further investigation, particularly as a means of withdrawal from heroin.

It was a glad day for the vipers, and *Down Beat* magazine came out with a happy headline:

LIGHT UP GATES, REPORT FINDS "TEA" A GOOD KICK

Any gleeful Gate who lit up, however, would have been well advised to do so in the privacy of his own padlocked bathroom, far from the madding fuzz. Despite the findings of the experts, The Little Flower was not about to sanction the use of the flowers of the hemp plant. (The social stigma of marijuana in the West is complete; it is condemned by both the FBI and the *Daily Worker*.) LaGuardia wrote in the introduction to his committee's report that although he was glad the menace of pot in New York had been greatly exaggerated, "I shall continue to enforce the laws prohibiting marijuana until and if complete findings may justify an amendment. . . ."

A number of medical, psychiatric and sociological findings have since been published that reinforce and support the conclusions of *The LaGuardia Report*. However, as more of these studies have appeared which conclude that marijuana is a relatively harmless drug, the punishment for possessing it has progressively *increased*, and can now mean up to 40 years in prison. The minimum Federal sentence for a first offense of possession of any amount of marijuana is five years, and, like other narcotics violations, it is one of the few Federal crimes for which there is no allowance for parole or suspended sentence. Some state laws, however, are less harsh. New York, for instance, makes possession of less than an ounce of marijuana or less than 100 cigarettes a misdemeanor with a maximum term of a year in prison, a $500 fine, or both. But other states rival and sometimes surpass the severe punishment of the Federal statutes. A Texas court, for example, sentenced stripper Candy Barr (Juanita Dale Phillips) to 15 years' imprisonment for possession.

Few of the medical and scientific experts who have come to less than menacing conclusions about cannabis have questioned the extreme punishments surrounding the use of the drug. Many of them, after reporting that marijuana is relatively harmless, conclude by saying that it is nevertheless an undoubted "nuisance." Recently, however, one scientist did raise his voice on the matter in terms that could be understood by persons who have never laid a hand on a test tube. Dr. Robert S. deRopp, a prominent biochemist and narcotics expert, and the author of *Drugs and the*

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Mind, wrote for a popular audience in *Metronome* magazine:

"About one thing . . . scientists who have studied marijuana in its various forms agree: it is a very innocuous drug, nonpoisonous, nonaddicting, and does not even produce a hangover. . . . As an example of prohibitive legislation at its worst, the Marijuana Tax Act can hardly be improved upon. It is founded on ignorance, nourished by superstition, and pervaded by a spirit of vindictive self-righteousness that places it on a level with the old laws relating to witchcraft. A myth, the Marijuana Menace, has been created that has about as much substance as a medieval succubus. In the name of this myth otherwise respectable citizens are thrown into jail like common criminals for having in their possession a relatively harmless weed. Even the most puritanical must have doubts about the rightness of legislation which makes unlicensed possession of a handful of hemp flowers equivalent, as regards the penalty it carries, to the crime of treason."

Despite the law, the "crime" goes on — and, indeed, flourishes. The world of marijuana in America is a kind of state within a state, society within a society, culture within a culture, possessing its own language, laws, traditions, jokes, economics, prejudices and rituals. There is no way to make any accurate estimate of the population of this world, for its only census takers are the cops, and their statistics include merely the small minority of users known to the law — those who have at some time or other been arrested. There is every reason to believe, however, that the society of vipers, without the aid of formal membership drives, has steadily increased, especially since the end of World War II. Part of its rise has been linked with the social and literary eruptions of that era that fall beneath the general headings of Beat and Hip.

Just as a number of jazzmen spread the word of The Righteous Bush in the Thirties through the lyrics and titles of their songs, some postwar writers have celebrated its merits in novels, stories, poems and personal declarations. Nor has this been strictly limited to the works of Jack Kerouac and his immediate clan. Norman Mailer wrote in *Advertisements for Myself* that after the publication of *The Deer Park* he first began using pot, and "Once again there was sanction to gallop on self-love — God's gift to women, wife, letters and history, marijuana my horse." In a short story called *Red Dirt Marijuana* in the *Evergreen Review*, Terry Southern, author of *The Magic Christian* and other works unassociated with the Beat scene, puts the following dialog into the mouths of a young Southern boy and an old Negro field hand:

" 'How come it's against the *law* if it's so all-fired good?' asked Harold. '. . . I *tell* you what it is,' he said then, 'it's 'cause a man *see* too much when he git high, that's what. He see right through everything . . . a man git high, he see right through all them tricks an' lies, an' all that ole bull-crap. He see right through into the *truth* of it!' "

Allen Ginsberg, an outspoken enthusiast of marijuana, said recently that among the younger poets of his own circle, "Almost everyone has experimented with it and tried writing something with it. It's all part of their poetic — no, their *metaphysical* education." Ginsberg, moreover, feels that pot is good for much of what ails the world. "I was talking to a Cuban official once," he recalls, "and I asked him what the Castro policy was on marijuana. He said Castro had burnt down whole fields of it in Oriente, because Batista's soldiers used to get high and shoot the peasants. I don't think that's true, at least not because of marijuana. So I said well, why doesn't Castro nationalize it as an industry and give it to his *own* soldiers? 'Ah, but the army wouldn't fight then!' the Cuban said. And that's the whole point of marijuana — it's a *humanizing* influence."

In the past decade, marijuana has spread well beyond the confines of certain literary and musical circles. Aside from its base in the slums of nearly all our large cities, it has gained an increasing number of converts from the middle class — not the Rotarian wing of the middle class, but the branch that brings back Olympia Press books from Europe, prefers Medaglia d'Oro to Maxwell House, and works in what is known as the communications field.

But the nonindulging public maintains the illusion that marijuana is confined to such elements of society as teenage gang members and Village beatniks — and that is, in fact, what they are most likely to read about it. One of the biggest news stories concerning marijuana in New York City since *The LaGuardia Report* was published hit the front page of *The New York Times* in the fall of 1959 with a headline announcing: POLICE POSE AS BEATNIKS IN NARCOTICS RAID — "Detectives Act Like Poets and Dancers." Five detectives from the New York narcotics squad, the *Times* reported, "had completely integrated into the Village's Beat Society." In order to perform this public service, the detectives had grown goatees and sideburns, learned to play the bongo drums, and participated in what they called "vague intellectual discussions" with the natives. One of the detectives, George Bermudez, had even composed poems which he read at some of the Village coffeehouses. The purpose

of this safari into the lair of the Beats, which seemed to be unrivaled in its preparations since the OSS was parachuting spies into Nazi Germany, was ostensibly done "in the interests of tracking down the Village narcotics traffic." The 12 arrests, predictably, were all for marijuana, the nonaddicting "nuisance" drug. The thriving Village traffic in heroin, which has hooked a number of local (non-Beat) teenagers in the neighborhood, went entirely untouched. Nevertheless, the adventure made exciting copy, got Detective Bermudez' poem published in the *Times*, and afforded Inspector Edward Carey, head of the narcotics squad, a chance to take his place beside the fabled commanders of military history, with the ringing declaration that "Carey's Crusaders will strike again!"

Home, hearth and Mother were safe, and so was the old equation of marijuana and antisocial characters. Yet some of the newer-style vipers hold down jobs of high position and swear by the weed as an aid in their work, as well as a means of relaxing at home and at parties. A public relations man who gets high every day before going to the office, and again at lunch, told a friend that he felt marijuana gave him an advantage over the people he was dealing with — "you see more, you pick up fleeting looks on people's faces that betray something, things you wouldn't ordinarily notice." Another viper got high before an interview for a good position in the publishing field and credits the inspiration of pot for helping him land the job. Long before the Beats invaded North Beach and Venice West, pot was widely used in the Los Angeles area, not only by Mexican laborers in the slums, but by some of the highly paid toilers of Hollywood. One of the most notable public exposures in recent years was the conviction of Robert Mitchum for conspiracy to possess marijuana. He was given two years in prison under the California narcotics law — reduced to 60 days and a suspended sentence.

Tea parties that offer no orange pekoe sometimes occur in unexpected places. Early in 1960 police discovered a tea pad in Little Rock, Arkansas, that was frequented by local teenagers, some of whom were reported to be from "prominent families" in the community. The group included Negroes as well as whites, and Governor Orval Faubus immediately issued a statement that "These are the fruits of integration."

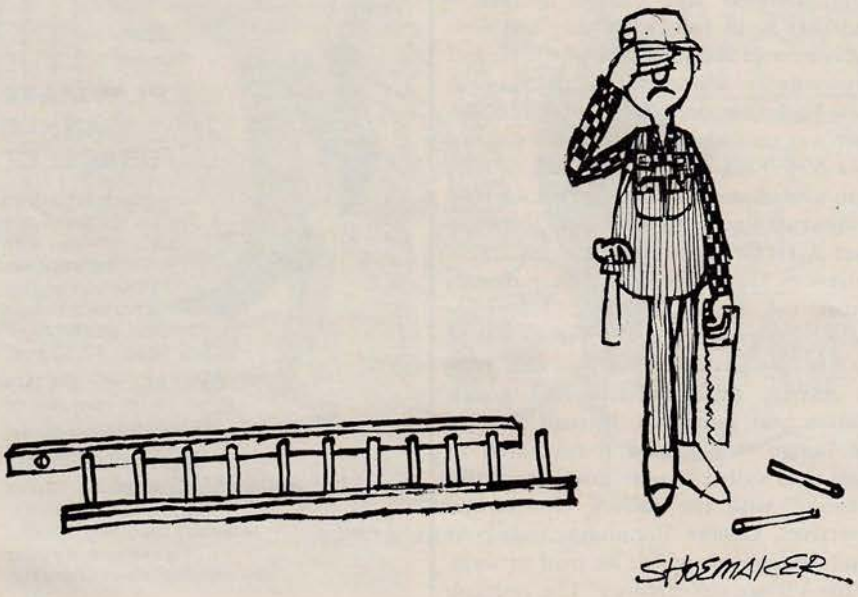
Whatever the differences in skin color, paychecks, I.Q. or toilet training among the users of the hemp in America today, they share, like the members of some outlawed religious sect, a common bond that goes deeper than many social loyalties. As one young female viper explained it, "There's sort of a brotherhood of those who have had good experiences with pot — and those who haven't, or who haven't used it, resent it because the ones who have are a group, and have a special kind of communication."

They share, basically, their knowledge of the techniques and language for acquiring and using the drug. In other parts of the world cannabis is often eaten (Hindu ladies munch it in a candy called *majoon*, and Mexicans sometimes mix it in their chili) as well as drunk (Haitians are among those who brew it as a tea). But Americans prefer to smoke it in cigarettes, and have generally shunned suggested variations, such as Gertrude Stein's recipe for Marijuana Fudge, which appeared in the first edition of *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook*. The vipers usually roll their own cigarettes, for most have found it more economical to buy their pot by the ounce (the going price is $20–$25 in New York) rather than in "sticks" or "joints," the terms more commonly used now than "reefers" or "muggles" for individual cigarettes. An ounce provides roughly 100 cigarettes; sticks, usually priced at 50¢–$1 apiece, are bought mostly by teenagers. There is an intermediate quantity known as a "bag" which sells for five dollars and is sometimes purchased by younger users. Some vipers pitch in together and buy a pound at a time, which can usually be had for $160–$200, depending on the current demand-supply curve in the city. In the economic terminology of marijuana, a dollar is called a "cent," five dollars is "five cents" (not a nickel) and so on — mainly as a precaution in speaking about marijuana matters, especially on the telephone.

The cigarettes are sometimes rolled with a bit of ordinary tobacco at the end, so the real stuff won't be wasted. As a further prevention of waste, the cigarette is licked to make it burn slowly, and after it is puffed to the last dregs, the butt or "roach" is saved and the marijuana left is used again. Some economy-minded users smoke their precious pot in a pipe, to eliminate loss. But whether smoked in cigarette or pipe, a basic rule of viper society is that the smoke is always passed around from person to person. This prevents wasting the vapors of the burning weed, and solidifies the community bond among the smokers.

Pot smokers also share the deeper link of the physical and mental sensations peculiar to the drug. There is no guaranteed experience for those who smoke marijuana, any more than there is for those who drink martinis. As DeRopp has pointed out, "The effect of the drug is completely unpredictable. It may produce ecstasy, or nothing but fear and horror. It may have no effect at all." But for those who have *good* reactions to it, there are certain common experiences that constitute an important part of the mystique of the users' society.

In the rush-hour world of time clocks, alarms and 5:09 trains, the bell does not toll for the viper who is high. The time-sense distortion produced by the drug is one of the common, pleasant sensations, which users from Baudelaire to kids in Harlem gangs have described much in the way that one viper did recently: "You lose all time sense. You look at your watch and it says 12:30, and then it seems like hours go by, you have all sorts of thoughts and experiences, and you look at your watch again and it's 12:31." Or, to put it another way, there is the story of the two vipers who were standing on a street corner when suddenly a couple of motorcycles flashed by at top speed, leaving a cloud of dust. "Man," said one viper to the other, "I thought they'd never leave." This stretching out of time has found its way into the language of the marijuana world, in which "a minute" means an hour, "an hour" means a day, and "a day" means a year; because, in one user's words, "That's what it seems like when you're high."



But more compelling than the time sensation is the state of the high that the Moslems call *el kif* — that is, "blessed repose." It has been variously described by assorted users of different times and places: "You just want to lay back and dig everything"; "I felt myself the center of a world-pervading love"; "It's not as if the drug distorts reality, but that it brings you closer to it — it's like tearing away the veil, and at best is a mystical experience." The Hindus call it *bhakti*, which means "emptying the mind of worldly distractions and thinking only of God."

Those who see marijuana as a menace never mention the soothing sensations the drug brings to many users (except, perhaps, as examples of insanity). But neither do the vipers refer to the unpleasant reactions that may be produced by cannabis — the feelings of anxiety that pot brings to some instead of ecstasy. Just as there are happy drunks and sad drunks, so it is with pot — happy highs and sad highs. The glorious colors, vistas and sounds that came to Baudelaire and others under the influence of hashish are often referred to by enthusiastic vipers, but they seldom mention the reverse side of the hallucinatory coin of cannabis, such as the experience recorded by an English hashish eater:

"I stretched myself, as if I were waking from a heavy sleep, and attempted to thrust my hand through my hair, when horror! my fingers passed through my crackling skull, and into my warm, cheesy brain! . . . as I walked falteringly hither and thither, the whole of my internal economy fell out with a hideous splash."

Hashish, of course, is a stronger form of the cannabis, and according to those who have taken both, it is less possible to "feel in control of" than marijuana. (This, as well as its greater expense and greater scarcity, explains why it is rarely used in the United States.) But the same sort of nightmares have been experienced by marijuana users.

In the end, each man seems to find his own drug, whether it be Miltown or marijuana, Dexedrine or gin. The cliché of the outside world, however, reinforced by the Federal Narcotics Bureau, is that all drugs are evil (except those permitted by our own laws and customs) and, therefore, all drugs are the same. But although marijuana and heroin, for example, may be equated by Federal law, they are hardly equated by either scientists or the groups who use each. As a veteran of the East Harlem drug scene explained it, "You very seldom find a guy pushing junk (heroin) and pot, too. Guys who use pot don't want to have anything to do with guys on junk — they look down on each other. It's like a guy who drives a Rolls-Royce and a guy who drives a Model A — they belong to different societies."

The much-quoted maxim that "marijuana leads to heroin" often causes outsiders to lump these two different drugs together, even though many medical studies have discounted the connection. The "relationship" was clearly explained by Dr. Winick when he wrote, "Many persons who take heroin have previously smoked marijuana, but many marijuana smokers never go on to taking heroin."

In the East, where mixtures of the cannabis are holy to the Hindus, as well as to certain Mohammedan sects, its use involves less personal conflict than it does for Westerners. As Aldous Huxley pointed out in *The Doors of Perception*, "For unrestricted use the West has permitted only alcohol and tobacco. All the other chemical Doors in the Wall are labeled Dope, and their unauthorized takers are Fiends." This cultural taboo may help explain the defection of many Western experimenters with cannabis, ranging from Baudelaire ("I do not understand why rational and spiritual man must use artificial means to arrive at a state of poetic bliss, when inspiration and will are sufficient to lift him to a supernatural existence.") to Neal Cassidy, who served as the model for Kerouac's hero Dean Moriarty in *On the Road*. Cassidy, a kind of Johnny Appleseed of marijuana, who spread the weed to friends from Greenwich Village to Nob Hill and liked to turn on hitchhikers in his cross-country odysseys, was put into San Quentin prison for selling pot. He explained to a *New York Post* reporter that he had originally taken marijuana "to find spiritual enlightenment" but that "Now I spend 10 months here and I find I don't need marijuana to find spiritual enlightenment. This is slower and better — like an apple growing."

A less metaphysical reason for leaving the clan of cannabis was given by a leading novelist who recently explained, "I took marijuana for a while, but to tell the truth, I quit because it was a bore. The people who use it are a bore. There's all this ritual and language, and being *in* — it's like a religious cult. And besides that, I couldn't work under it."

Whichever way one leans on the philosophical, mystical or social questions raised by the use of marijuana, the advice of one former viper is essential for all Americans to bear in mind. It was given by Mezz Mezzrow, who put aside his gauge for less eloquent, but perhaps more compelling reasons than those that led Baudelaire to dispense with the hemp: "I laid off five years ago, and if anybody asks my advice today, I tell them straight to steer clear of it because it carries a rap. That's my final word to all the cats: today I know of one very bad thing the tea can do to you — it can put you in jail. 'Nuff said."