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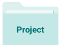

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Salvador Roquet, María Sabina, and the Trouble with *Jipis*

Alexander S. Dawson

Abstract While María Sabina has long been an iconic figure among drug enthusiasts and advocates for indigenous rights, her sometime collaborator Salvador Roquet remains largely unknown. This essay introduces the work of this iconoclastic psychiatrist and, in particular, his work with Sabina, highlighting their contributions to the world of psychedelic psychiatry and exploring the nature of their exchanges. Beyond examining the contours of the therapeutic method Roquet developed in part due to Sabina's teachings, the essay argues that their work together offers us a fascinating example of cross-cultural collaboration. Moreover, their mutual disdain for *jipis* introduces an alternative history of psychedelic drugs in Mexico—one in which the counterculture acted as a foil to those who believed that local, naturally occurring psychedelics like psilocybin mushrooms, peyote, datura, and ololiuqui were powerful medicines that needed to be respected, handled by experts, and used in carefully prescribed ways.

Santo para unos, demonio para otros, es en realidad el único científico que en México ha estudiado con profundidad los alucinógenos y su aplicación en psicoterapia.
—Alfonso Perabeles, "Salvador Roquet, ¿Médico tira? ¿Loco? ¿Genio? ¿Revolutionario?" (1971)

As the title and above text from Alfonso Perabeles's 1971 *Piedra Rodante* article suggests, Salvador Roquet was a polarizing figure. To his friends he was a visionary psychiatrist, a man of modest means who rose to great prominence, who risked everything in the pursuit of a revolutionary cure. To the residents of indigenous communities in Chiapas, Oaxaca, Nayarit, and Jalisco, he was a kindly white-haired doctor who brought gifts and medicine and offered a place to stay and a little money when they traveled to Mexico City. To his critics he was a dangerous charlatan, a man who corrupted the morals of young people and trafficked in illegal drugs. And to Federico Emery Ulloa, a student

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leader jailed in late 1968, Roquet was a shadowy torturer who forced psychedelic drugs on him in an effort to reveal his secrets.

This last version seems to make a balanced biography a nonstarter. Roquet used disorienting drugs on a political prisoner, leaving lasting scars in the process. If more condemnation is needed, we could accuse him of doing this with special knowledge he gleaned from the famed Mazatec shaman María Sabina, tying him to a long tradition in which nonnatives simultaneously misunderstood and appropriated native customs.[1] The asymmetries between Roquet and Sabina do push us toward this version of the doctor, but it is possible that our tendency to view figures like Roquet through the lens of appropriation and incommensurability fails to appreciate the complexity of their relationships with their indigenous informants.[2] What if we instead viewed these figures as people who refused to "stay 'in their place,'" who evaded the categories we use to make sense of their lives?[3]

Roquet and Sabina both lived uneasily within their places of origin—he as a doctor who could not fully embrace inherited medical tradition and she as a shaman operating on the margins of her community. Both attempted to move into and out of their worlds, authorizing their capacity to participate in the lives of strangers through reference to their specialized knowledge. This approach would allow us to view relationships like that of Roquet and Sabina as instances of transformative collaboration between different healing traditions, even if those exchanges were sometimes rife with misunderstandings.[4] This might also allow us to view the participants in these relationships as rooted cosmopolitans, as individuals who (in Anthony Appiah's words) shared "common conversations about . . . shared ideas and objects" grounded in a minimal respect for certain fundamental human values and a vision of "a world in which people and novels and music and films and philosophies travel between places where

1. See, for example, Friedlander, *Being Indian*; Deloria, *Playing Indian*; Huhndorf, *Going Native*; Fikes, *Carlos Castaneda*; Agustín, *La contracultura*, 45–46; Sluis, "Journeys to Others," 1–9, 14. Michael F. Brown offers a more nuanced rendering of the concept of culture and ownership in *Who Owns*.

2. Recent work has tended to be quite critical of the assumptions about indigenous cultures that underlie the claim to appropriation. See, for example, Cadena and Starn, "Introduction," 1–30, in *Indigenous Experience Today*. See also various authors in that volume, especially Tsing, "Indigenous Voice"; Clifford, "Varieties." See also Clifford, "Indigenous Articulations"; Rappaport, *Intercultural Utopias*; Tsing, "From the Margins."

3. Jacques Rancière is here quoted in Seigel, Frazier, and Sartorius, "Spatial Politics," 6.

4. On productive misunderstanding, see Tsing, *Friction*, 272.

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they are understood differently, because people are different and welcome to their difference."[5]

The fact that Roquet and Sabina's collaboration involved the use of hallucinogenic drugs adds a further dimension, for while both viewed their cures through their own cultural prism, both experienced psychedelics (and in particular psilocybin mushrooms) as actants, or vibrant matter that produced bodily affects independent of language and other meaning-making practices.[6] These drugs were not simply adornments, like long hair and sandals. They caused bodily disruptions, forcing the participant out of his or her normal perceptive state in ways that were not entirely culturally specific. Among their common effects were (and are) dramatic changes in the senses, perception, and temperature, perspiration, nausea, and hallucinations. The psychedelic experience also tended to overwhelm users, as the boundaries between body and mind, self and other seemed to collapse, while the principle that the mind controlled the body and that the world could be understood wholly through the five senses became untenable.[7] Furthermore, since many of these affects took place outside language, they undermined the sense of difference produced by linguistic and cultural barriers.

This is not to say that psychedelics would have erased all forms of difference. Inasmuch as the physical experience of being Mazatec, or white, is written on the body through diet and other experiences, we must acknowledge that cultural differences are also inscribed on bodies and are experienced bodily.[8] Decades of scholarship have shown that seemingly universal corporeal phenomena, from pain to intoxication, are often experienced in distinct ways within different communities.[9] Yet the particularly powerful properties of psychedelics suggest that we would do well to consider the possibility that the

5. Appiah, *Ethics of Identity*, 213–72, esp. 258–59, quote on 258. This idea of exchange between healing traditions has a long history in Mexico. See in particular Aguirre Beltrán, *Medicina y magia*. Aguirre Beltrán's focus on relationships based on exchange offers a stark contrast to the ways that doctors tended to treat members of indigenous communities during these years, though some other doctors did endeavor to understand and mobilize local beliefs in their practices. See, for example, Cueto, "Appropriation and Resistance."

6. See Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*.

7. See Csordas, "Rhetoric of Transformation"; Csordas, "Medical and Sacred Realities."

8. See Scott and Hirschkind, "Introduction"; Bourdieu, *Outline*, 93. See also Csordas, "Introduction"; Csordas, "Embodiment."

9. See, for example, Csordas, "Introduction"; MacAndrew and Edgerton, *Drunken Comportment*.

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shared experience of their remarkable effects helped to bridge the large cultural divide between Sabina and Roquet.[10]

Roquet's controversial biography represents an unusually well-documented opportunity to examine the complexity of cross-cultural relationships that critics sometimes too quickly dismiss as merely exploitative. At the same time, this essay explores the shifting meanings of these potent drugs during the 1960s, as psychedelic use spread beyond the relatively remote regions where they had long histories as medicine and sacraments. Though psychedelic drug use spread throughout the Western world, embraced by global countercultures along with new movements in alternative medicine and psychiatry, its emergence in urban Mexico was especially fraught given the deep history of these drugs in that country and their close association with indigeneity. This story thus also provides a new perspective on the global sixties as they played out in Mexico.

The Doctor

Salvador Roquet had a rather illustrious career long before his encounter with María Sabina. Though orphaned as a child and raised under difficult circumstances, he overcame many obstacles to graduate from medical school in his early 20s, and by age 31 he was director general of the Ministry of Health's national campaign against malaria and tuberculosis, a position he held from 1951 to 1955. He only later took up psychiatry, a move he explained as stemming from limited career prospects in the Ministry of Health and his own growing concern about the impact of poor parenting on Mexico's youth.[11] From there he might have followed a fairly traditional path into the profession but for an experience he had with mescaline on Holy Thursday 1957 in the Hospital Psiquiátrico Samuel Ramírez Moreno.

The session took place under the direction of Dr. José Rodríguez, who was running a series of studies on hallucinogens at the national university. He was one of a small number of researchers who had been closely following the advent of psychedelic psychiatry in Canada, the United States, Europe, and Latin America.[12] Mescaline (isolated in 1897) and LSD-25 (developed in 1943) seemed to offer great potential for psychiatry, though there was little consensus

10. See Dyck, *Psychedelic Psychiatry*, 69; Nichols, "Differences."

11. Roquet told the story of his early life to Janine Rodiles, a Mexican journalist who, after meeting the doctor in the early 1990s, became both a supporter of his method and his principal biographer. See Rodiles, *Una terapia prohibida*, 91, 109–11.

12. See Stevens, *Storming Heaven*; Lattin, *Harvard Psychedelic Club*.

on just what their therapeutic uses might be. Initially researchers thought that their psychotomimetic qualities might offer a window into schizophrenia. Others noted the drugs' capacity to lubricate conversation between therapists and patients thanks to the exaggerated good humor and intellectual energy they stimulated. The introspection produced by these drugs was also attractive to artists and writers like Aldous Huxley, who was given mescaline in 1953 by Dr. Humphry Osmond, one of the leading researchers of the day. By the end of the 1950s, researchers in more than a dozen countries had performed thousands of experiments with psychedelic drugs, and more than 1,000 papers on LSD had been published.[13]

That 1957 session upended Roquet's world. Shortly after receiving his injection he panicked, felt simultaneously deeply connected to and disconnected from the world, and saw his many distinct personalities and selves. When asked by the doctor to stand, he found that he could not, as he was paralyzed by fear: "I felt I was dying. I could not breathe, suffered a terrible inner fire, extreme palpitations. I was scared . . . I felt like a caged lion."[14] He tried to read the book he had brought to the session (Erich Fromm's *Psychoanalysis and Ethics*) to stem his sense of panic but found that he could not make sense of the words. The doctor then tried to calm him with food and games, to no avail. Roquet was overcome by horror and anxiety, feelings he carried long after. He would later conclude that the session taught him that psychedelics "allowed a deepened understanding of the soul," but in the immediate aftermath he felt shattered.[15] Dr. Rodríguez put him on a yearlong regimen of tranquilizers and stopped studying mescaline. Some months later, Roquet had a dissociative breakdown while on a trip to Germany and had to be helped onto a plane bound for Mexico. Rodríguez met the disconsolate doctor at the Mexico City airport and took him under his care.[16]

Once he regained his equilibrium, Roquet went to work as a psychiatrist at the Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado, where he was forced to confront what he believed to be epidemics of alcoholism,

13. See Busch and Johnson, "LSD-25"; Unger, "Mescaline"; Roquet et al., "Existential," 14–16 (page numbers refer to the version of this talk contained in the Norma Roquet Papers, Cuernavaca). See also Stevens, *Storming Heaven*; Lattin, *Harvard Psychedelic Club*; Dyck, *Psychedelic Psychiatry*, 2–5.

14. Salvador Roquet, quoted in Alfonso Perabeles, "Salvador Roquet, ¿Médico tira? ¿Loco? ¿Genio? ¿Revolutionario?," *Piedra Rodante* (Mexico City), 15 Nov. 1971, p. 20.

15. Salvador Roquet, unpublished memoir, Norma Roquet Papers, Cuernavaca.

16. Rodiles, *Una terapia prohibida*, 112–14. See also Roquet, unpublished memoir.

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drug addiction, autism, depression, and anxiety.[17] Increasingly concerned that humankind was sick, he also came to believe that he had seen the causes of these crises in his own experience with mescaline. Under the drug's influence he had witnessed terrifying reminders of the childhood traumas that, he thought, lay at the heart of his and his patients' problems. He concluded that conventional therapies lacked the capacity to expose those wounds and begin the healing process. He needed a more radical intervention.[18]

The idea of turning to indigenous hallucinogens to solve this dilemma crystallized during a trip to Paris in 1962 when, in a Saint-Germain-des-Prés bookstore, he saw Roger Heim and R. Gordon Wasson's *Les champignons hallucinogènes du Mexique* (1958), which described these drugs and Huautla de Jiménez. Not even sure of the location of Huautla, Roquet asked Heim for some insight into the region. Through Heim he met Carlos Incháustegui, the anthropologist who ran the Centro Indigenista de la Sierra Mazateca. Incháustegui then agreed to collaborate with Roquet on a project that would combine public health work, school construction, and a series of intellectual exchanges with local curers, including María Sabina.[19] Operación Mazateca, which began in 1967, involved Roquet, Incháustegui, Ricardo Bogrand of the Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social, and several others conducting an integrated study of the ethnobotanical properties, cultural practices, and medical, philosophical, theological, and chemical knowledge in the region.[20] It was meant as a reciprocal endeavor, and while in the sierra Roquet opened clinics, distributed medicine, and offered medical advice. In a typical example of this partnership, after distributing vaccines and gamma globulin to children around Huautla during a measles outbreak, Roquet received lessons from several locals in the use of the hallucinogen *Ipomoea violacea* (*badoh negro*).[21]

Roquet translated the Mazatec customs he witnessed into his own language with little difficulty. Observing the use of a seed that cut short the psychosis caused by hallucinogens, he proposed that it be used to treat schizophrenia.[22] He was similarly inspired when he encountered a young indigenous man who told him that he had been the victim of a violent assault and that he had remained in a terrible state until a local Indian told him to take some *Salvia*

17. Roquet et al., "Existential," 9–11.

18. Villoldo, "Introduction," 45; Rodiles, *Una terapia prohibida*, 116–17.

19. Rodiles, *Una terapia prohibida*, 120–21.

20. Salvador Roquet, "Del porque de la investigación," in "Operación Mazateca: Estudio de hongos y otras plantas alucinogenas mexicanas: Tratamiento psicoterapeutico de psicosintesis," edited by Salvador Roquet, 1971, Norma Roquet Papers, Cuernavaca, 1–7.

21. Ibid.

22. Perabeles, "Salvador Roquet," 21.

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divinorum, which had dramatically lifted his spirits. The youth reported that before taking the drug, "my spirit had fallen," but he went on to recount how the Indian "told me that to get better I should take this. It put me in contact with god and my spirit has recuperated." Roquet concluded that this was the Mazatec means of describing both depression and its alleviation.[23]

Were these descriptions of a 3,000-year-old tradition of "indigenous psychotherapy" gross misreadings of a local practice?[24] At some points this seems to have been the case. Roquet relied on a series of diagnostic tools rooted in his psychiatric training to make local ailments legible. At others points, however, Roquet resisted mapping his views onto those of his interlocutors, insisting that he did not really understand the inner lives of the indigenous peoples he studied. He did not in fact think that psychiatric traditions that privileged individual subjectivity had much value in this setting, preferring to believe that the curers of the sierra understood what ailed their patients far better than he could.[25]

That said, the ritual surrounding psychedelic use in the sierra seemed particularly relevant to Roquet's work in Mexico City. Though impressed by the physical effect of these drugs, by their capacity to loosen tongues to reveal the darkest of secrets and their ability to "produce a state of greater clarity, vision, and energy in the person who ingests them," he was particularly taken with the ritual forms of the cures.[26] This included the cleansing rituals that were woven into the psychedelic ceremonies, the careful attention to the timing and quantity of the drugs ingested, the aural, visual, olfactory, and other elements that could affect the drug experience, and the capacity of the curer to "become god."[27] If he could capture the essence of this process, he would be able to "assimilate and integrate ancient indigenous practices to the science of modern psychiatry with the respect they both deserve." The result would draw from both traditions in order to produce "integrated men."[28]

23. Salvador Roquet and Jaime Ganc, "Factores estudiados y evolución de la técnica psicoterapeutica con el uso de los psicodislepticos," in "Operación Mazateca," 34–35.

24. Roquet drew the term from Palacios, Ramírez, and Valner, *Psicoanálisis*, 242–43. On the misreading, see Csordas, "Psychotherapy Analogy"; Boddy, "Spirits and Selves"; Boddy, "Spirit Possession."

25. Roquet and Ganc, "Factores," 22–43.

26. Ibid. He also discusses this in Perabeles, "Salvador Roquet."

27. Roquet and Ganc, "Factores," 23.

28. Roquet makes these claims in a variety of settings. The first quote comes from Roquet et al., "Existential," 22. The second can be found in Roquet, "Del porque de la investigación," 1. He also alludes to it in Perabeles, "Salvador Roquet," 24–25.

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Roquet adopted the term "sensitivity" to describe this integrated subject after a particularly terrifying experience with datura (toloache). As he recounted to Alberto Villoldo, under its influence he "saw monumental changes in the personality occurring. . . . The personality structure of the individual lost its rigidity, and change and synthesis rather than analysis became a possibility."[29] The madness he experienced took him back to his origins, to where he "found what I had lost: sensitivity."[30] Like others living in this "century of anguish,"[31] he was the product of constant striving, progress, and technological change, yet he lived a soulless antilife, suffering from fear and "the inability to love," which in turn produced an inert life of pain and violence, characterized by the absence of contact with the essential energy of life: love. "Lovesickness," he concluded, lay at the root of both his problems and the neurosis and psychosis that affected humankind more generally.[32]

The Shaman

When he first arrived in Huautla in the mid-1960s, Roquet encountered a community in transition. New roads and government services had connected Huautla to the wider world. The town's elite were increasingly bilingual, literate, cosmopolitan, and deeply ambivalent about the mystical reputation of the region, though outside the town center, traditions of mystical curing remained firmly entrenched.[33] Poor residents, often living on the margins of the community and generally monolingual, maintained their belief in a supernatural domain that could be accessed by gifted interlocutors using the sacred mushrooms ("the little saints").[34] Those who mastered this knowledge became *curanderos*, a term generally used interchangeably with "shamans." Shamans often cured family, friends, and neighbors of physical and spiritual maladies, with the most accomplished among them also gaining a reputation as great healers.[35]

Shamanic healing operates through an uneasy balance of the universal and the local. Shamans gain their authority through their capacity both to conjure a

29. Salvador Roquet, quoted in Villoldo, "Introduction," 49.

30. Roquet, unpublished memoir.

31. Roquet and Ganc, "Factores," 24.

32. See Roquet, "Teoría," in "Operación Mazateca," 86–93. See also Roquet and Ganc, "Factores," 22–24. See also Armando Carlock, "Salvador Roquet Pérez, psiquiatra especialista en psicosíntesis," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), 19 Sept. 1969; Roquet, unpublished memoir.

33. See, for example, Feinberg, *Devil's Book*, 127–48.

34. Incháustegui, *La mesa de plata*, 26–27, 55, 56; Incháustegui, *Figuras en la niebla*, 14.

35. Feinberg, "Three Mazatec," 413.

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sense of their specific rootedness in a place and to cure outsiders. Their cures are both ritual and process: ritual insofar as they rely on traditional scripts and practices (e.g., the need for confession, the nocturnal timing of the *velada*,[36] and the requirement that participants be sober), but process because the transaction is unpredictable, dependent on the skill of the shaman and his or her capacity to manage the experience.[37] María Sabina was one such skilled practitioner, so well respected by local authorities that when the mycologist R. Gordon Wasson arrived in Huautla in 1955 looking for an expert, Cayetano García Mendoza (the acting mayor) took him directly to Sabina. In 1957, Wasson wrote about his experience with Sabina in *Life* magazine, encouraging a flood of visitors to the town, ranging from lowly beatniks to the most famous rock stars of the 1960s.[38]

Her story has been well documented. She began eating mushrooms as a little girl both out of hunger and in an effort to cope with her difficult childhood.[39] Having watched a local curandero cure her uncle, she knew that the mushrooms were powerful, and in her first experience, she initially felt dizzy and then drunk, began to cry, and then felt content, good, and full of hope. In her own words, "In the days that followed, when we felt hungry, we ate mushrooms. And not only did they fill our stomachs, they filled our spirit. The mushrooms asked God that he not make us suffer so much."[40] Sabina also heard voices after eating mushrooms, "voices that came from another world. It was like the voice of a father who gives advice." She sensed that "everything that surrounded me was God"; "later I knew that the mushrooms were like God. That they gave me wisdom, that they cured illness, and that our people, since a long time ago, had eaten them. That they had power, that they were the blood of Christ."[41]

Curing is a central part of this narrative. After two miserable marriages and a long struggle to become independent by planting coffee, chopping wood, and selling goods in Huautla, Sabina again turned to the little saints when her sister became gravely ill. She took a great number of mushrooms and visited Chicon

36. This is the term for the Mazatec mushroom ceremony.

37. Feinberg, *Devil's Book*, 127–37, 188–90. See also Joralemon, "Selling of the Shaman"; Brown, "Shamanism"; Johnson, "Some Notes," 148; Miranda, *Curanderos y chamanes*, 7–8.

38. See R. Gordon Wasson, "Seeking the Magic Mushroom," *Life* (Chicago), 13 May 1957, pp. 100–120.

39. Estrada, *María Sabina*, 33.

40. María Sabina, quoted in Ramón Méndez Estrada, "María Sabina de Huautla, ¿Isis sin velo?," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), 7–9 Feb. 1986.

41. María Sabina, quoted in Estrada, *María Sabina*, 38–40.

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Nindó ("Lord of the Mountains") and the "Principal Ones" to plead for her sister's life. She describes her experience in Álvaro Estrada's biography:

> I heard a voice. A voice that was sweet but authoritarian at the same time. Like the voice of a father who loves his children but raises them strictly. A wise voice that said: "These are the Principal Ones." I understood that the mushrooms were speaking to me. I felt an infinite happiness. On the Principal Ones' table a book appeared, an open book that went on growing until it was the size of a person. In its pages there were letters. It was a white book, so white it was resplendent.
>
> One of the Principal Ones spoke to me and said: "María Sabina, this is the Book of Wisdom. It is the Book of Language. Everything that is written in it is for you. The Book is yours, take it so that you can work." I exclaimed with emotion: "That is for me. I receive it."
>
> The Principal Ones disappeared and left me alone in front of the immense Book. I knew that it was the Book of Wisdom.
>
> The Book was before me, I could see it but not touch it. I tried to caress it but my hands didn't touch anything. I limited myself to contemplating it and, at that moment, I began to speak. Then I realized that I was reading the Sacred Book of Language. My Book. The Book of the Principal Ones. I had attained perfection. I was no longer a simple apprentice. For that, as a prize, as a nomination, the Book had been granted me. When one takes the Saint children, one can see the Principal Ones. Otherwise not. And it's because the mushrooms are saints; they give wisdom. Wisdom is in Language. Language is in the Book. The Book is granted by the Principal Ones. The Principal Ones appear through the great power of the children. . . .
>
> Language makes the dying return to life. The sick recover their health when they hear the words taught by the saint children.[42]

Sabina was now able to use her newly discovered powers to cure her sister and become "wise woman" and "doctoress,"[43] designations that authorized her as both expert with universal knowledge and insider whose knowledge could not be shared.[44] In the years that followed, Sabina became one of the most prominent curers in the region. Since she spoke only Mazatec, she relied on neighbors and relatives to act as interpreters with her visitors, but language

42. Ibid., 48–50. See also García Carrera, *La otra vida*, 28.
43. Estrada, *María Sabina*, 68–69, 93.
44. Méndez Estrada, "María Sabina de Huautla."

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rarely seems to have acted as an obstacle. Some believed that the mushrooms allowed them to understand Mazatec, though she managed the experiences of most visitors through her cadence, chanting, and other sonic and visual effects.[45]

It is impossible to fully ascertain how most outsiders experienced Sabina's veladas. Our own tendency to privilege the difference between the Western subject and the Other pushes us toward assuming that while her Mazatec clients might have taken her allusions to flight and invocations of the earth spirits (Chicon Nindó and the Principal Ones) literally, outsiders subject to modern sensibilities would understand them as metaphorical language that described the effect of a drug on the body.[46] However, it is also possible that some Mazatecs took Sabina's words metaphorically and that some outsiders accepted her claims literally (Frederick Swain actually believed he was speaking Mazatec during the ceremony). All we can know with any certainty is that those who participated in a velada with María Sabina agreed to share a script, authorized by her, for the duration of the ceremony.

The Robert S. Hartman Institute of Psychosynthesis

Though his views would evolve over time, early in his practice Roquet did seek to translate Sabina's curing directly into the language of the medicalized body of the West—a body whose ailments were not caused by spirits or earth beings but were due to specific traumas and physical ailments. Shamans had different explanatory mechanisms than he did but were effectively doing the same thing—finding a route to the memories and other phenomena that had produced sick bodies. He would take their cure, if not their precise explanations, and implement a version of it in the clinic he opened in Mexico City in October 1967. Employing a method he called psychosynthesis,[47] the Robert S. Hartman Institute of Psychosynthesis would treat 813 patients over the course of eight years. Among the most common problems he diagnosed at the clinic were neurosis (83.4 percent), drug addiction (6.7 percent), "problems of a sexual

45. See Frederick Swain, "El Hongo Mistico! The Mystical Mushroom," *Tomorrow* (New York), Oct. 1962.

46. To do otherwise is to disrupt the nature-culture divide. See Latour, *We Have Never*, 28. Michael Taussig contends that this presumed difference between shamanism and psychiatry acts as a basis upon which the Western self fashions itself through reference to the Other. Taussig, *Shamanism*, 216–19.

47. Roberto Assagioli also used the term, but somewhat differently. See Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*.

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nature," primarily homosexuality (3.75 percent), alcoholism (2.4 percent), and psychosis (3.1 percent).[48]

The name of the clinic came from the Hartman Value Inventory, an axiological scale that allowed Roquet to measure the progress of his patients through their capacity for love and which he administered in the diagnostic phase of treatment. In this first meeting, Roquet also endeavored to purify and prepare the patients for their session, insisting that they be absolutely truthful in telling him about their problems so that their treatment would be appropriate. Some days after this first meeting, groups of between 15 and 30 patients, selected for age, sex, and other factors, gathered with several assistant therapists at 9:00 p.m. After a brief, free-flowing conversation, they shifted to yoga and meditation in order to quiet their conscious minds. The group session ended between 11:00 p.m. and midnight, when patients left their shoes, watches, and cigarettes with an assistant and entered the session room, a six-by-eight-meter space with large foam pads on the floor. As they entered the room they were greeted by flashing lights, which mimicked the aural and visual effects of the velada. Record players offered three different types of music, and projectors displayed images designed to produce a sensory charge. These included photos of money, bearded yogis, skulls, smiling families, crying women, sunsets, naked men and women, cemeteries, corpses, vultures, starving people, demons and saints, and images and sounds from the patients' own lives.

At the end of the stimulation phase, each patient received a prescribed psychedelic. Thirty-four percent of patients received LSD. Others received Ketalar (a commercial name for ketamine), *Rivea corymbosa* (ololiuqui), psilocybin, datura, *Ipomoea violacea*, peyote, or mescaline. Each drug was carefully chosen for its specific effect and administered at set points in what was typically a four-session cycle that took place over four months. LSD, peyote, psilocybin, and ololiuqui were given in the first session because of their capacity to produce a variety of psychotomimetic affects. Datura was only administered in the final two sessions of a cycle, used to dissolve the ego's final defenses and allow the disintegration of the personality.[49] Ketamine was similarly introduced late in the cycle and later in the session, used to break down resistance to the effects of the other drugs. It was especially useful for patients who had prior experience

48. The following descriptions of the practices in the clinic are drawn from Roquet, "En busca de la aplicacíon terapeutica de los psicodislepticos," in "Operación Mazateca," 57–85; Perabeles, "Salvador Roquet," 24–27; Roquet et al., "Existential," 1–55, quote on 44; Villoldo, "Introduction"; Walter Houston Clark, "'Bad Trips' May Be the Best Trips," *Fate* (Chicago), Apr. 1976.

49. Villoldo, "Introduction," 45–50.

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with LSD and who had thus learned to manipulate their trip in order to avoid painful experiences.

After receiving their doses, the patients returned to the floor to watch more images. Some were blindfolded and listened to music on headphones. By five in the morning most would be reaching the peak of their intoxication (those given datura would not peak for another eight to ten hours), at which point they were shown the final film, which depicted a child being born. Visuals then ceased, the music changed, and the room was shrouded in total darkness. Soft religious music would be interposed with sounds of an airplane diving and crashing, machine guns, and car horns, followed by strobe lights. This period lasted three hours, during which time patients felt a great deal of anguish.

During the session the patients moved through five distinct psychedelic phases. The first and most superficial was an expectant and anxious stage, in which patients became nauseous and confused and experienced perceptual alterations and euphoria. The second stage, characterized by visual hallucination, was pleasant, Dionysian. Patients became lost in fantasy, escaping from reality and experiencing false mystical and religious visions. This was a hedonistic, pleasant, childlike state, in which individuals could imagine God as a projection of themselves but experienced no real insight (Roquet and Sabina both saw this as the state sought by the *jipis*, the Mexicanization of the word "hippies"[50]).

In the next stage, darkness set in. The patients experienced a naked, pitiless view of reality, a clear vision of what was meaningful in their lives. They became both observer and observed, and they experienced a cleansing catharsis as the unconscious viewed itself. This tended to be both painful and dramatic to a degree that depended on the patient's level of neurosis and repression. The patients might gain insights about themselves, but they often panicked as they were engulfed by death, feelings of falling and drowning, and various other anxieties. This was followed by the fourth stage, madness, which entailed the complete loss of ego. Modeled on the *locura* that Mazatec shamans generated in their veladas, the madness stage brought the disintegration of all traces of personality and boundary. This was the maximum point of regression, the nothing point, the psychotic stage. Only then, with the help of the therapist, could the patient reconstruct his or her personality, reintegrating the forms of sensitivity that had been fragmented by various traumas.[51] In the reintegration phase, the patient began to recover his or her capacity to live in the world, not as

50. See Zolov, *Refried Elvis*.
51. Roquet, "Teoría."

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the repressed and disassociated subject but as an integrated individual aware of both the source of his or her traumas and his or her connection to the universe. It returned the unfeeling person to the place where, as Villoldo described it, "we 'lost our soul'" to reinstill "our communion with the divine."[52]

Synthesis was in part achieved through sensory means. As the effect of the drugs began to wear off, the room was made pleasant, colored lights were illuminated, and the patients were encouraged to interact. Roquet would talk with them, bringing out their files and allowing them to look at old photos, letters, and journals. Those who were prescribed ketamine would then get their injections and experience a short period of psychedelic involvement—one to one-and-a-half hours—before they too moved on to synthesis. Between 10:00 and 11:00 a.m. they would begin a three-hour break, during which the patients practiced yoga, meditation, and deep breathing. They would then take a short nap while the drugs fully metabolized.

A couple of hours later, the patients were awakened by music, encouraged to read from their journals, to look at family pictures, and to interact with the therapist for six to eight hours. Music was again used, but this time as a catalyst of integration. Only one stereo played, and the music was typically classical. Some would practice psychodrama. Some would also meet with family members and friends or would reach them by phone. The patients would then return home late in the evening, with the expectation that they would come back eight days later for an eight-hour group session unassisted by drugs.

Roquet was adamant that this subject was synthesized, not analyzed. In part this was because psychedelic involvement undermined the forms of subjectivity that patients brought into their sessions. Their bodies became newly visible through a powerful refocusing of the senses—in chills, nausea, vomiting, sweating, visual hallucination, shaking, screaming, temperature, and tactile changes. Beyond simple affective responses, the treatment released embodied memories, undermined sequential thinking, revealed things long forgotten, and provoked bizarre ideas, free associations, and "alterations in reality with or without depersonalization." Bodies "released" traumas that had long been stored, causing the "rupture of repression and the release of unconscious material."[53]

Roquet was circumspect as to whether these traumas lay entirely in the mind, but his focus on the terrified body, his effort to promote the bodily release of these traumas, and his general embrace of the physical experience within

52. Villoldo, "Introduction," 50.
53. Roquet, "Teoría." See also Clark, "'Bad Trips.'"

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psychosynthesis uneasily skirted the line between the mind-body duality of contemporary psychiatry and the holistic body of Mexican shamanism. Under the influence, the boundaries between mind and body, self and other seemed to melt away.[54] This was where transcendence lay, and this was where over time his practice raised a series of questions about the medicalized, traumatized bodies that he had been treating in his clinic. He became convinced that he was not just healing the bodies and minds of his patients but also connecting them to something much larger than their normal states of consciousness allowed them to understand.

We see this particularly in his interest in the vital energy that humans possessed, an energy that they did not create but simply transformed. Roquet came to believe that patients experienced a profound love by accessing that energy, which in turn led them to God and the realization of their own immortality. Like the gods María Sabina invoked in her velada, the god of psychosynthesis mixed Christian and other traditions and imagined God as a vital universal energy. Denied the love they needed as children, his patients could not access that energy. They instead had developed a fear of feeling, a fear of suffering, and they had devoted their lives to the search for bodily pleasure through substitutes—alcohol, sex, and drugs.[55]

That vital energy recognized neither the mind-body separation nor the boundaries between the self and other; it connected all living beings on an atomic level. Those with sensitivity could feel these connections, and patients regaining theirs developed "a certain ability to vibrate in unison with other human vibrations; the ability to feel (to sense) without the senses." As one of his patients reported, "I felt that even though I wasn't a definite entity, and that I was changing each instant, I was part of an energy and a plan that had been forged somewhere in the universe, and that energy was working within me."[56] As another patient noted,

> I felt that my arms were stiff, that I couldn't use them as I would like to. They were paralyzed for a moment. After a while, they began to soften; I felt some sort of electric energy moving my arms very softly, following the concert's beat. Energy began to have a consistency; it became like a ball that I had in my hands in the moment that I discovered with the most immense surprise of my life that all of me was love. You asked me what was the matter. I stood up, a force reaching me from above similar

54. Rodiles, *Una terapia prohibida*, 37.
55. Roquet et al., "Existential," 60–65.
56. Ibid., 57.

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> to the force I had in my hands only much stronger, started to pull me. The only thing I saw was light, and the only thing I felt was an irresistible attraction. God was calling me. He called me. . . . The force became more intense and I could not resist. I went; I went with him and he enveloped me. I cannot describe what I felt. The words that might approach this are happiness, totality, eternity, and I don't know what any of them mean. I only felt them at that moment.[57]

These descriptions remind us of the powerful role that the actant plays in this story. Descriptions of vibrations, flights, the melting of boundaries, and a feeling of connection to the universe appear in any number of contexts in which individuals seek language to make sense of the bodily experience of psychedelics. While we should not go too far in attempting to suggest a universal experience, the common language deployed at these moments is noteworthy.[58]

And the Trouble with Jipis

Roquet gained some minor celebrity in the late 1960s as word spread about his clinic. He welcomed foreign and domestic dignitaries (some took part in sessions) and became a vocal public advocate of psychedelics. Newspaper stories about him repeated a set number of claims—that the drugs used posed no danger, that hundreds of patients were flocking to the clinic, that their success rate was extraordinarily high, and that psychosynthesis had reduced the time needed for therapy from 4 years to 12 months.

By late 1974 the clinic had held 764 sessions. Roquet claimed that 85 percent of patients showed improvements in their relationships with family, work, and others and healthier attitudes toward life and love.[59] Roquet was particularly proud of the treatment he offered alcoholics, claiming success rates similar to those observed in Humphry Osmond's LSD trials in Weyburn.[60]

57. Ibid., 59.

58. Janine Rodiles describes a session with a Huichol shaman in Wirikuta in great detail. See Rodiles, *Una terapia prohibida*, 51–90.

59. See Roquet et al., "Existential." More broadly, see Patricia de Parres, "LSD y hongos para la salud," *Contenido* (Mexico City), Aug. 1972 (I consulted the version contained in the Norma Roquet Papers, Cuernavaca); Salvador Roquet, "En busca de la aplicación terapéutica de los psicodislépticos," Norma Roquet Papers, Cuernavaca. See also Krippner, Editorial, 103; Clark, "'Bad Trips'"; Roquet and Favreau, *Los alucinógenos*.

60. Both claimed a success rate of greater than 50 percent. Dyck, *Psychedelic Psychiatry*, 9.

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Nonetheless, like psychedelic researchers in Canada, the United States, and elsewhere, Roquet was forever at risk of being swallowed up in the tectonic cultural shifts signaled by the counterculture.

"Jipi" was one of those markers that was more often deployed as an accusation than as a self-identification. This was in part because the dissonant quality of the jipi gesture produced powerful visceral responses in its critics and in part because Mexican *jipismo* was a somewhat inchoate gesture that ranged from a devotion to yoga, vegetarianism, and living close to the soil to a full-on embrace of drug-fueled hedonism and the rejection of all sexual norms. Jipis tended to adopt a common sartorial style and were drawn to a series of shared signifiers (flower power, "peace, love, and joy"), but their nonconformist commitments did not easily coalesce into a unifying ideology. Though in some ways drawn to the New Left of the era and originating in the same middle-class background, jipis were often disdained by their militant, disciplined counterparts in the student Left.[61]

As Eric Zolov notes, critics of the counterculture despised the jipi for being derivative of a degenerated, overindividualized North American youth culture in Mexico—North Americans imitating Mexican Indians, who were in turn imitated by young Mexicans.[62] As described by the popular, irreverent, and decidedly leftist writer Rius (the pseudonym of Eduardo del Río García), they were alien to Mexico, a response to civilizational crisis in the United States. They were nihilists with no political agenda seeking a drug-assisted paradise. They rejected all forms of politics. They lived like beggars, alternating between sexual escapades and drug-induced stupors. They were driven to suicide in large numbers by their drug use. And, of course, LSD was producing permanent chromosomal damage in those who took the drug.[63] This last claim was repeated often, especially in the years after Tlatelolco. Mexicans were continually reminded that the drugs their children were taking could "modify the structure or function of a living organism" or cause "changes in the genetic structures."[64] Even if the youthful user escaped the genetic threat, medical

61. See, among others, Pensado, *Rebel Mexico*, 147–80; Pensado, "'To Assault'"; Zolov, "Mexico's Rock Counterculture," 382; Piñeiro, *Psiconautas*; Agustín, *La contracultura*; Zolov, "Introduction"; Manzano, "'Rock Nacional,'" 396; Gould, "Solidarity under Siege," 348–49, 365–68; Frazier and Cohen, "Defining the Space."

62. Zolov, *Refried Elvis*, 106–31.

63. Rius, "¡Auxilio!!," 60–63. See also Pensado, *Rebel Mexico*, 170–74.

64. Beatriz Reyes Nevares, "Las drogas, un nuevo azote para la inteligencia y el vigor juvenil," *Novedades* (Mexico City), 18 Mar. 1969.

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experts insisted that they were still likely to become more neurotic while young and suffer from depression and schizophrenia as adults.[65]

Chief among the expert critics of the jipis was Guido Belsasso, director of the Centro Mexicano de Estudios en Farmacodependencia (CEMEF), which was founded in 1972. Belsasso and the CEMEF rehearsed a core set of claims—that psychedelics were of no medical use, that they caused a variety of negative physical and mental conditions (nausea, vomiting, mystical-religious states, dissociation), and that the erratic conduct they produced had "on more than a few occasions driven youths to murder or suicide."[66] In CEMEF publications, mescaline was specifically held to produce psychic dependency, tolerance, psychosis, panic, and extreme emotions. Psilocybin was said to have similar effects but was not known to produce psychosis. LSD was the worst, linked to the inability to work or study, possible genetic damage, cerebral lesions, or damage to the central nervous system (later research debunked these claims).[67]

In part, these classifications represented the advent of addiction language. The new specialists classified addiction (or dependence) both as a physiological need for the substance and by a body's ability to develop tolerance, which thus required an ever-expanding quantity of the drug.[68] Psychedelics did not create physical dependence, but the CEMEF insisted that they created "psychic dependence" due to the "distortions in perception" that they produced.[69] Put another way, the perceptual shifts caused by these drugs violated the idea of the

65. See, among others, "Llamado a los padres de familia," *El Universal* (Mexico City), 10 Apr. 1970; Reyes Nevares, "Las drogas"; "Estalla la familia y los hijos recurren a la droga," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), 18 Sept. 1969; Juventino Chávez, "El 14 por ciento de la actual juventud capitalina consume drogas y enervantes," *Novedades* (Mexico City), 2 Aug. 1970; "Señalan el peligro de las drogas," *El Nacional* (Mexico City), 31 July 1970.

66. Report compiled by Dr. José Carranza Acevedo, of the Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social, for the Consejo Nacional de Problemas en Farmacodependencia, Mexico City, 1971, Archivo de la Secretaría de Salubridad y Asistencia, Mexico City, Secretaría Particular (hereafter cited as SSA-SP), caja 244, exp. 2. See also José Carranza Acevedo, "Información a jóvenes" (information sheet produced by Consejo Nacional de Problemas en Farmacodependencia), 1972, SSA-SP, caja 263, exp. 3; Centro Mexicano de Estudios en Farmacodependencia, *¿Cómo identificar?* See also Luis Berruecos, "La función de la antropología en las investigaciones sobre farmacodependencia" (report for Consejo Nacional de Problemas en Farmacodependencia), 15 Mar. 1974, SSA-SP, caja 293, exp. 2.

67. *Uso y abuso*, 18 (I consulted this source at SSA-SP, caja 295, exp. 1). See Mayoral Pardo, "Toxicomanía-farmacodependencia" (I consulted this source at SSA-SP, caja 266.1, exp. 4).

68. Dr. Francisco Alarcón Navarro, Antropólogo Jorge Miranda, and Sociólogo Nicolás Pérez Ramírez, "Drogadición," 1971–1973, SSA-SP, caja 245, exp. 1.

69. Ibid., 10.

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bourgeois body as "atomized, completed, and the locus of social control, reductive analysis, and fixed meanings."[70] Bodies under the influence were unpredictable. They panicked, grew confused, and experienced flashbacks, anxiety, and depression. Youths might find it hard to concentrate in school and then drop out, lose interest in life, and turn to "pseudomystical ideas, regressive tendencies, and a nomadic and naturalist life."[71]

The allusions to indigeneity were unmistakable, especially when it came to psilocybin mushrooms and peyote. Young people had regressed to a degenerate state, an infant stage: they had become Indians. This was a protest against middle-class abundance, against parents who were so distracted in their quest for material goods that they no longer partook in their children's "joys, their sufferings and problems."[72] In the words of Dr. Antonio Prado Vértiz, youths had embraced a drug that "destroys the body and soul with a crushing evil that leads the mind to darkness and chaos"—a drug that produced the same paranoia in modern youths as it did in Indians, who were foolish enough to believe that under its influence they "speak with God, as equals."[73]

Huautla de Jiménez was ground zero for this crisis, a site where North American beatniks and hippies followed trails blazed by Bob Dylan, the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones. This was why the Mexican army moved into town in July 1969, arresting 84 jipis. *Novedades* published a sensational story on the arrests, noting the large number of women and the fact that these unmarried people were having sex (which the paper emphasized was against God's law). It printed the name of every single person who had been detained and highlighted the deportation of the foreigners (22 in all).[74]

Among those most relieved by the arrests were local residents. According to María Sabina, the 70 or so jipis who resided in Huautla at any given time by the late 1960s were entirely unwelcome. They brought no money and were lazy, dirty; they begged for food and sought only drugs and sexual pleasure. Worse

70. Boddy, "Spirit Possession," 423–24. See also Csordas, "Introduction," 8.

71. "El problema de farmacodependencia," Departamento de Psicología Medica, Psiquiatría y Salud Mental, Facultad de Medicina, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City, 1971, SSA-SP, caja 244, exp. 2, pp. 32, 38–39. See also Alfred Grosser, "La droga y el vacío," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), 28 Sept. 1969; Samuel Maynez Puente, "Sucedáneos del afecto," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), 26 Apr. 1969.

72. Alfonso Noriega, "Reacciones de adolescente," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), 14 Feb. 1970.

73. Antonio Prado Vértiz, "El peyote (la droga religiosa)," *Novedades* (Mexico City), 12 Mar. 1971. See also "Estalla la familia."

74. "Razzia de hippies en Huautla: Deporta gobernación a 22 de los 84 detenidos," *Novedades* (Mexico City), 12 July 1969.

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still, their lack of respect desacralized the little saints, destroying their power.[75] And they besmirched her and Roquet's names in similar ways, their drug-fueled hedonism sullying the reputation of anyone who came in contact with psilocybin mushrooms. As Juan García Carrera notes in his biography of María Sabina, "the movement . . . was blamed on María, Wasson, Cayetano García, Fernando Benítez, Salvador Roquet; on those who told the world about the power of the mushrooms and about their experiences."[76]

Scandal

Two years after the arrests at Huautla, the Mexican Congress outlawed LSD, peyote, psilocybin mushrooms, and their chemical derivatives, classifying these substances as "without therapeutic value" in the Sanitary Code.[77] Punishments included prison sentences of between six months to five years and fines between 5,000 and 50,000 pesos.[78] Reforms to the penal code in 1974 increased punishments and fines for possession of these drugs.[79] The new laws put Roquet in a tight spot, and he confessed to friends that he was deeply worried about the future of the clinic.[80]

Working with colleagues in Mexico and the United States (including Abraham Sussman, Richard Yensen, and Stanislav Grof), Roquet did everything he could to defend psychedelic psychiatry, but it all seemed to come to naught when at 11:30 p.m. on November 21, 1974, police burst into his clinic and arrested 23 patients, doctors, and staff. The next morning, Roquet and his associates Pierre Louis Favreau and Rubén Ocaña Soler were also arrested. Describing Roquet as a "charlatan," the Procuraduría General de la República (PGR) identified the drugs seized in the raid as peyote, mushrooms, and ololiuqui, all dangerous drugs that possibly caused cerebral lesions. Estimating that he had collected on average 500 pesos from over 1,000 patients, they also accused him of drug trafficking. Making matters worse, Roquet was accused of crimes of moral turpitude because of the "pornographic" films seized in the raid.[81]

75. On Sabina's complaints, see Estrada, *Huautla*, 10, 60–91, 108; Estrada, *María Sabina*, 86; Feinberg, *Devil's Book*, 148; Roquet et al., "Existential," 21; García Carrera, *La otra vida*, 30–31.

76. García Carrera, *La otra vida*, 35.

77. Armando Bejarmo to Dr. Manuel Altamirano Ferrer, Mexico City, 13 Aug. 1971, SSA-SP, caja 244, exp. 2.

78. Licenciado Rodolfo Chávez Calvillo (representative from the Procuraduría General de la República), "Informe," Mexico City, 1971, SSA-SP, caja 244, exp. 2.

79. *Uso y abuso*.

80. Yensen, *Hacia una medicina*, 59.

81. PGR press release, Mexico City, 22 Nov. 1974, SSA-SP, caja 264, exp. 3.

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Not coincidentally, Roquet's arrest coincided with a public smear campaign in part orchestrated by other mental health practitioners that culminated with the publication of an article in the magazine *Tiempo* four days after his arrest. In the article, Ignacio Ramírez Belmont described his experience with psychosynthesis in lurid detail. He claimed he was enticed to visit the clinic by a girl he met in a bar, who told him that whatever his problems, the clinic would cure them. After paying 200 pesos for a consultation and agreeing to pay a further 700 for therapy, he was told by Roquet that he had a variety of problems and would likely require eight to nine sessions. He was then asked for an autobiography, photos of family members, and other mementos and was told that he was not to drink alcohol for eight hours before his session.[82]

The session went according to script. First there were the shocking images, the color transparencies of sexual acts, many of which appeared to depict adolescent boys and girls. There were images of war, funerals, student rebellions, and naked men and women. This was followed by what he described as a 15-minute pornographic movie, after which he was given peyote. He tried to palm the pills but was forced to ingest them. He then grew nauseous and felt chills and sweaty palms. A little later, Ramírez lost his cool. He found himself screaming in terror and driven crazy by the syncopated music. He locked himself in the bathroom and tried to escape, but he was blocked by the bars on the bathroom window. "There are no words to transcribe what Bélamonth [his alter ego] felt in those moments; he suffered dizziness and the syncopated sounds of music that hammered inside his head. He could not stand it."[83] By the time the session ended, his distress was unshakable.

Ramírez's experience mystified Roquet, who told him that in eight years, treating 2,000 patients, he had not seen anyone react this way. Of course, had he known the true purpose of Ramírez's visit, Roquet might have concluded that his terror was rooted in the surreptitious nature of his task. Ramírez falsified his biography during his intake and attempted to fake his way through the session. It is possible that his panic was in part the result of peyote's power as a disinhibitor, as a truth serum. Efforts to dissemble under these circumstances could easily have produced a terror due to the fact that the body would no longer participate in the conscious mind's efforts to conceal. This is one of the reasons psychosynthesis was preceded by cleansing rituals—the need to purify the body

82. "24 horas de terror," *Tiempo: Seminario de la Vida y la Verdad Hispano Americano* (Mexico City), 25 Nov. 1974. *Alerta* published an article on 7 Dec. 1974 titled "Hospital para degenerados." See Rodiles, *Una terapia prohibida*, 159–60.

83. "24 horas de terror."

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of alcohol, to confess one's sins, and to fully embrace the process before partaking. To do otherwise, Roquet believed, was to risk madness.[84]

Indeed, Roquet allegedly used this belief as leverage against Federico Emery Ulloa five years earlier when the doctor was called in by members of the Dirección Federal de Seguridad (DFS) to interrogate the student leader in the aftermath of Tlatelolco. According to Emery Ulloa, Roquet warned his unwilling patient not to resist the power of the pills (said to be peyote), because "you can wind up crazy or dead." Decades later, Emery Ulloa reported that "this psychological torture produced intense depressions" and occasional homicidal rages.[85] Asked in 1985 if he still suffered the effects of these experiences, he replied that they continued to make him tense, but not tense enough to seek help. "I've never seen a psychiatrist; well, besides Roquet."[86]

The Defense

It seems ironic, then, that in November 1974 Roquet wound up in the same prison that had housed Emery Ulloa five years earlier. Locked up in Lecumberri, he stewed about the "defamation, calumny, and intrigue" that a corrupt Mexican psychiatric community used to silence him.[87] He wrote letters to friends in the bureaucracy, reminding them that his was a tireless, even nationalist labor.[88] His friends and colleagues in Mexico and elsewhere flooded the PGR and the Ministry of Health with protests, reaffirming the respectable if revolutionary nature of his practice.[89] One, from the 129 residents of Santa

84. He may have learned this from María Sabina. Estrada, *María Sabina*, 46–57, esp. 55.

85. "Con la derrota del 68 murió el Maoísmo en México: Emery U.," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), 30 Mar. 1985.

86. Jesús Aranda, "Nueva denuncia contra Echeverría Álvarez," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), 17 July 2002. The proceedings included testimony by Federico Emery Ulloa, 25 July 2002, "Toca Penal 344/2006-II," El Universal.mx, last modified 29 Nov. 2006, accessed 12 Aug. 2014, http://videos.eluniversal.com.mx/echeverria2.pdf. See also Raúl Monge, "Nazar Haro y la psicotortura," *Proceso* (Mexico City), 3 Aug. 2002.

87. Salvador Roquet to Dr. Carlos Campillo Saénz, Mexico City, 29 Nov. 1974, Norma Roquet Papers, Cuernavaca.

88. Ibid. See also Roquet et al., "Existential," 56–57. Walter Houston Clark claimed the police had acted on Guido Belsasso's advice. See Clark, "'Bad Trips.'" See also Salvador Roquet to Luis Echeverría Álvarez from prison, Mexico City, 3 Feb. 1975, Norma Roquet Papers, Cuernavaca.

89. Krippner, Editorial, 103. See also letter from Ofelia Canales de Hodgins (Department of Physics, University of Virginia) to Luis Echeverría Álvarez, Charlottesville, 3 Dec. 1974, Norma Roquet Papers, Cuernavaca. Others included Walter Houston Clark, Professor Duncan Blewett (University of Regina), Dr. Oscar Rios

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María Asunción Matamoros, Oaxaca, described the doctor as "an honorable person whom we have known for a long time, and who is the only person to have helped us . . . he has donated medicines and established a pharmacy for the indigenous."[90]

Within weeks of the arrest, a large group of patients gathered for a public hearing at the Mexican Congress to defend the doctor. In their testimonies that day, they come across as decent people with real problems who defended the doctor because he had helped them in ways no one else could. As Alejandro Ainslie put it, the participants were "people we could encounter in the streets, like any one of you," whose treatment had been put in jeopardy because "these drugs have fallen into the hands of the jipis, who are fleeing from life, who are fleeing from reality, and who do not want to integrate or work for their country."[91] The jipis had harmed themselves, while none of Roquet's patients had been negatively affected. To the contrary, "these drugs had produced better citizens."[92]

Ainslie focused on the help Roquet offered when he and his wife had been struggling with infertility, but he also reported that he personally knew that psychosynthesis had the capacity to turn subversives into good citizens. He reported that there were

> very confidential cases . . . in which we have seen young university students with completely subversive ideas, who in 1968 had intentions to blow up electrical supply towers, who through psychotherapeutic treatment with psychodysleptics have changed their thinking and have realized the best way is not that of aggression, that the best way does not involve these types of aberrations, but it is to work for Mexico, to pay taxes just like everyone else, and to be disposed to live for Mexico.

Other testimonies followed a similar pattern. Angélica Parragot Gronillet was suicidal when she entered treatment in 1969. After 52 sessions she was transformed. A patient named Rosa María testified that she had been a juvenile delinquent and jipi, a pot smoker, and sexually promiscuous. Suffering from

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(research psychiatrist at McGill University), Dr. Harvey Cox (Harvard University), Dr. Carmi Harari (American Psychological Association, Division of Humanistic Psychology), and Larry Davis (medical director of the Mental Health Clinical Research Center of the Community Hospital of Indianapolis). These letters can be found in the Norma Roquet Papers, Cuernavaca.

90. Transcript of the hearing on Roquet's imprisonment in the Salon Verde of the Mexican Congress, Mexico City, 28 Dec. 1974, Norma Roquet Papers, Cuernavaca.

91. Ibid.

92. Ibid.

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depression, she turned to cocaine, amphetamines, and psychedelics in order to escape her problems. After her first session with Roquet, she quit cocaine entirely. It took a year to get off amphetamines, in part because her depression had been so acute that she could not get out of bed without them.

Rosa María's rescue narrative reinforced one defining aspect of Roquet's practice. According to him, jipis sought only the second stage of the psychedelic experience—the hedonistic phase—and thus never addressed their underlying neuroses. They were young, immature, the product of failed families, in search of something that did not exist. They spoke of love and God, but their concepts were "distortions": "They are mirages . . . they see a god who is not God, but the devil, fantasy, and the negation of love."[93] Their indiscriminate use of psychedelic drugs was not therapeutic, not anything like the practices he and María Sabina embraced, but rather led to "depression, panic, psychosis, and suicide."[94] In Roquet's clinic, former jipis could deal with persisting problems from their drug use along with their underlying issues. This is why they were said to flock to the clinic, where "they all become followers of Dr. Roquet and practitioners of his theories on sensitivity and love."[95]

These testimonies collapsed the distinction between the jipi and the subversive. Hedonistic youthful indiscretion and revolutionary political gestures were one and the same. The drug-addicted jipi might manifest his or her problems differently than the student radical, but both suffered from affective disorders caused by bad parenting and alienation that provoked pathological and self-destructive behavior. It was no coincidence, then, that student rebellion, disorder, drug use, and homosexuality were powerful signifiers of this illness and that all these "disorders" were treated in the clinic.

We might suppose that these conflations also factored into Roquet's decision to take part in the torture of Federico Emery Ulloa, along with his decisions to inform on patients in his clinic who had connections to the guerrilla Left.[96] We should not lose sight of the simple self-interest behind these acts (strong connections with the state would hopefully shield the clinic from scrutiny) or of the fact that other Mexican doctors also regularly worked with the DFS during these years.[97] But we must also recognize that the entire trajectory of the clinic was informed by Roquet's desire to save the nation's

93. Salvador Roquet, quoted in Perabeles, "Salvador Roquet," 25.

94. Roquet and Ganc, "Factores," 41.

95. Perabeles, "Salvador Roquet," 20–21.

96. See Javier Mancera Fuentes to C. Director Federal Seguridad, Mexico City, 19 Mar. 1971, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Dirección Federal de Seguridad, exp. Personal Rafael Estrada Villa, Versión Pública, leg. 4, fols. 190–92.

97. See Soto Laveaga, "Shadowing."

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youth from a crisis that he saw epitomized by the jipi/subversive.[98] It is even possible that he told himself, as he claimed in other cases, that he was "treating," and not torturing, Emery Ulloa.[99] Given the fact that both Roquet and Emery Ulloa are no longer with us, and that Roquet never spoke publicly about this incident, it is also remotely possible that the incident did not occur as Emery Ulloa remembered it.[100]

And, in the End

After several months of lobbying, Roquet was released from prison without charge on April 30, 1975. He was then free to revive his practice in Mexico City, and he even continued to work with psychedelics, though after a further arrest in the United States on drug charges the following year he lost his taste for legal trouble. Henceforth he would turn to indigenous shamans, commonly the Huichol *mara'kame* Florencio de la Cruz, to run the ceremonies and administer the drugs.

In doing so, Roquet found his way into an important gray area in Mexico's new drug control regime. By signing the 1971 Vienna Convention on Psychotropic Substances, the Mexican state agreed to tolerate the ritual use of these substances by indigenous peoples, and though the Mexican government never passed legislation to this effect (and Mexican police regularly persecuted indigenous peyotists during these years), both the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI) and the CEMEF advocated the toleration of traditional indigenous psychedelic uses. Because of this, Roquet could safely avail himself of the services of shamans in the Sierra Huichola and elsewhere in the years after 1975. Of course, in order to do so he had to participate in a process that once again inscribed substances like peyote and psilocybin as inherently indigenous and ultimately dangerous to nonindigenes.

The new enforcement regime allowed people like María Sabina to continue to carry out their practices with little threat from the state, while Roquet was forced to discreetly cover up his continued use of psychedelics by turning

98. Roquet makes several allusions to the nationalist nature of the endeavor, including in "Operación Mazateca" and in his letter to Echeverría from prison, 3 Feb. 1975.

99. See Clark, "'Bad Trips.'"

100. Richard Yensen and Gabriel Parra have reservations about the accuracy of Emery Ulloa's recollections. They doubt that Roquet knew that Emery Ulloa was an unwilling patient, given the fact that Roquet had treated some patients in prison on a voluntary basis during this period. Parra does, however, acknowledge that some patients may have been "obligated" to participate. Richard Yensen, personal communication, Vancouver, 2 Sept. 2014; Gabriel Parra, personal communication, Mexico City, 1 Sept. 2014.

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over all authority in these sessions to indigenous curers. Sabina might be worldly in many ways and might avail herself of modern medical treatments for gunshot wounds and other ailments, but in the eyes of the INI and the CEMEF, she would always be the indigenous shaman whose otherworldliness entitled her to psychedelics. And Roquet might be someone who had rejected the norms of psychiatry in favor of a radically transformed view of man's relationship to the universe, but he would forever be the white doctor whose use of these drugs was illicit. Even so, Sabina did not really benefit from this new arrangement. Though her image was widely used to promote Huautla as a psychedelic destination through the 1970s and 1980s, late in life she found herself living in poverty, bitter that any number of people had grown wealthy from her fame. Biographies, collections of her chants, plays, documentaries, and even cafés in Huautla would bear her name, honors for which she received nothing.

In telling her story to Juan García Carrera in the early 1980s, Sabina complained about many people, including Roquet. While recalling that he was respectful and grateful for her tutelage and that he reciprocated by bringing food and other goods on his trips (he and his colleagues were "good people"[101]), she noted with great bitterness that he never again visited after 1973 (she seems to have remembered this incorrectly, as Roquet did visit at least one time in later years, in 1980[102]). She felt abandoned and robbed, suspecting that Roquet grew rich because of her knowledge (he did not). In 1973 he had promised to send money after jealous neighbors burned down her store, but he never did. The sting here has a particular resonance when one considers the importance that mutual respect had in her autobiography. He "abandoned . . . his teacher."[103]

This is not the language of patrimony stolen or spoiled (that she reserves for the jipis and those she clearly sees as charlatans) but of a transaction in which Roquet had not held up his end. Nonetheless, when she returns to recollect her collaborations with Roquet, she describes them in positive terms. Roquet was a good outsider, someone who respected her, respected the little saints, and who—at least at first—compensated her for her teachings. And the positive feelings were shared. We know that Roquet was deeply impressed by Sabina's knowledge and skills and that he never imagined that he could assume her role. He was amazed by her expertise in directing the velada, in particular her ability to maintain control of situations that seemed on the verge of chaos, and by her ability to do this after having consumed an enormous quantity of mushrooms.[104]

101. García Carrera, *La otra vida*, 38–39.

102. Richard Yensen went along on that visit and took photos of Roquet and Sabina. Richard Yensen, personal communication, 11 June 2014.

103. García Carrera, *La otra vida*, 38–39, 63–64, 73, 134–37, 166–68, quote on 167–68.

104. Roquet, "En busca de la aplicación"; Rodiles, *Una terapia prohibida*, 121–31, esp. 129.

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One particular exchange between the two of them is telling in this regard. Describing the velada, she told the doctor, “The veladas are not made to find God, we do them with great respect and with the sole purpose of curing diseases affecting our people. Those who take them just to feel the effects can go crazy and remain that way temporarily. Our ancestors always took the saint children in a velada overseen by a wise one. Fungi are the blood of Christ, are the meat of God.” Roquet responded, “Yes, María, this is exactly my concern. Look, I’m a doctor and I believe that this sacred food can cure problems of the mind and soul, like sadness and madness. . . . I come to learn from you. . . . and my companions come with the idea of healing.” Sabina then replied, “Jesus Christ! A Doctor? Then you are also a wise one, like me?”[105]

Could this be the moment when Sabina made Roquet legible through her own lens on the world? Indeed it could, but there is even more to the end of the phrase. Like Sabina, Roquet was a healer who in many ways operated on the margins of his world and who sometimes suffered greatly for this. Like Sabina, Roquet had a vision for psychedelics in which the pleasure seeking of the jipis was not just misguided, it was dangerous. And like Sabina, Roquet believed that the long traditions of Mazatec shamanism represented an important form of knowledge that had universal application, if only the little saints were appropriately respected. This did not make Roquet a shaman, and both he and Sabina seem to have discounted those who sought to somehow make themselves shamans, to entirely escape their origins in an effort to become the Other. Like Sabina, who could never escape being Indian, he was looking to reshape the category in which he lived rather than adopt an alternative (and, one might add, highly romanticized) subjectivity.

While her bitterness later in life lends credence to the tendency to view this transaction through the lens of appropriation, it may be that this reflects our own confirmation biases more than it does the complexity of a relationship that was bound by time and space. During one brief period, in the Sierra Mazateca and in Mexico City, María Sabina and Salvador Roquet cooperated in a series of projects that were mutually transformative. He brought medicine, medical knowledge, and aid to the sierra, improving lives and likely saving some. She brought knowledge of the use of psychedelics and management of psychedelic trips to a clinic in Mexico City, changing the doctor’s view of the world and improving the lives of perhaps hundreds of patients. In those transcendent moments, the differences between those who respected the little saints and those who did not were more significant than the differences between the indigenous shaman and the Mexico City doctor.

105. Rodiles, *Una terapia prohibida*, 123.

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