Xix-Plants-Naturo Alchemists transform air suit, water, noto precious thougs - The astonishing Photograthesis xx Planets don't locomote-so they make chamicals to affrect and repel people as a way to congres the trees. xxii todoyour presence is felt everywhere - Planks succes depend on getting along with us, 7 John Chapman-lited to be with Indians and Chaldren 38- The Old Days - Pre Christian when "monisstill to his own thanking brother of plants and animals. 52 Sexis noturesway of creating thesh genetic lambing tions 57-It is on wildness that domestication depends Thoream-in wildness is the preservation of the world Wendel Berry "In human culture is the preservation of wildness." 64-July Flowers - howded these organs of plantsex manage to get premselve cross wired with human ideal sof value and status and eros? 70 A flower evolved to looklike a contain temple insect, viewed from behind 141 Getting Hi makes Animals more vulnera ble

The more I read the more I was led to ab her and detest my ons laws. Prodonick Dougher 139 We: 1 - Conscious ners Change - "A basic human activity" BOOK

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false. Perhaps it is our work ethic that is offended—you ke
pain, no gain. Or maybe it is the provenance of the chemitroubles us, the fact that they come from outside. Especially in the
lodge Christian West, we tend to define ourselves by the distance
we've put between ourselves and nature, and we jealousy guard
the borders between matter and spirit as proof of our ties to the
angels. The notion that spirit might turn out in some sense to be
matter (and plant matter, no less!) is a threat to our sense of separateness and godliness, Spiritual knowledge comes from above or
within, but surely not from plants. Christians have a name for
someone who believes otherwise pagan.

Two stories stand behind the taboos that people in the West have placed on cannabis at various times in its history. Each reflects our anxieties about this remarkable plant, about what its Dionysian power might do to us if it is not resisted or brought under control.

The first, brought back from the Orient by Marco Polo (among others), is the story of the Assassins—or rather, a corruption of the story of the Assassins, which may or may not be apocryphal to begin with. The time is the eleventh century, when a vicious sect called the Assassins, under the absolute control of Hassan ibn al Sabbah (aka "the Old Man of the Mountain") is terrorizing Persia, robbing and murdering with brutal abandon. Hassan's marauders will do anything he tells them to, no questions asked; they have lost their fear of death. How does Hassan secure this perfect loyalty? By treating his men to a foretaste of the eternal paradise that will be theirs should they die in his service.

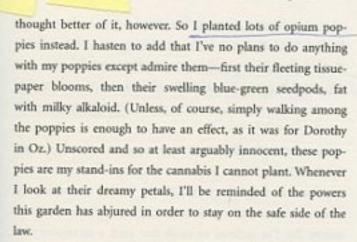
Hassan would begin his initiation of new recruits by giving them so much hashish that they passed out. Hours later the men would awaken to find themselves in the midst of a most beautiful

What, then, was the knowledge that God wanted to keep from Adam and Eve in the Garden? Theologians will debate this question without end, but it seems to me the most important answer is hidden in plain sight. The content of the knowledge Adam and Eve could gain by tasting of the fruit does not matter nearly as much as its form-that is, the very fact that there was spiritual knowledge of any kind to be had from a tree from nature. The new faith sought to break the human bond with magic nature, to disenchant the world of plants and animals by directing our attention to a single God in the sky. Yet Jehovah couldn't very well pretend the tree of knowledge didn't exist, not when generations of plantworshiping pagans knew better. So the pagan tree is allowed to grow even in Eden, though ringed around now with a strong taboo. Yes, there is spiritual knowledge in nature, the new God is acknowledging, and its temptations are fierce, but I am fiercer still. Yield to it, and you will be punished.

I've removed most all of the temptations from my own garden. though not without regret or protest. Immersed this spring in research for this chapter, I was sorely tempted to plant one of the hybrid cannabis seeds I'd seen for sale in Amsterdam. I immediately

So unfolds the drug war's first battle.

greatest pleasure ever known in just a minute more ... But that future never comes." In this respect the cocaine experience is "a savage mimicry of consumer consciousness." With cannabis or the psychedelics, on the other hand, "pleasure can come from natural beauty, domestic tasks, friends and relatives, conversation, or any number of objects that do not need to be purchased."



So I make do with this bowdlerized garden, this densely planted plot of acceptable pleasures-good things to eat, beautiful things to gaze upon-fenced around by heeded laws. If Dionysus is represented in this garden, and he surely is, it's mainly in the flower border. I would be the last person to make light of the power of a fragrant rose to raise one's spirits, summon memories, even, in some not merely metaphorical sense, to intoxicate.

The garden is a place of many sacraments, an arena-at once as common as any room and as special as a church-where we can go not just to witness but to enact in a ritual way our abiding ties to the natural world. Abiding, yet by now badly attenuated, for civilization seems bent on breaking or at least forgetting our connections to the earth. But in the garden the old bonds are preserved, and not merely as symbols. So we eat from the vegetable patch, and, if we're paying attention, we're recalled to our dependence on the sun and the rain and the everyday leaf-by-leaf alchemy we call photosynthesis. Likewise, the poultice of comfrey leaves that lifts a wasp's sting from our skin returns us to a quasi-magic world of healing plants from which modern



