

musicko

A 904 Trilogy

1. the lyrics of song
2. the drugs that we took
3. the times we survived

the lyrics of song

It was the music that drew me in
to clubbing, then raves.
And then dancing I would dance

Until dawn, or we left
that particular venue
that special event

and I would wait, fomo setting in
for it all to begin again

I became, in my delimited space,
beneath the twirling discoball
immersed in the acidstrobe

A good dancer. And I think people saw that saw what I was doing
what we were all looking to achieve in this constructed abandon–

We were searching for release.

I came to understand that anything to do with music was now my
path to enlightenment, to self-redemption.

All the pain, the confusion, the doubt, would completely dissolve
within these moments of afforded clarity

The physicality of the dance

the emotional uprising the symbiosis between awkward body and
Seeking spirit, absolutely everything would resolve on dancefloors

And I would pit myself against them. Almost in an abject fury. And
The better I became at letting myself go
letting all this accumulating music in the

More I believed that I could now
or would soon, uncover the true

And real, unassisted, unabridged meaning of my life lead to these
Places by my friends, who became my influencers, my instigators
the carriers of this great and unexpected gift
this knowing of the human, mapped out in beats and left hanging

like bittersweet fruit
in the moments the
gaps in the lyrics of

song.

the drugs that we took

And we took an enormous amount of drugs, to get there to reach this place that was unfolding while we were mapping it – each step, impression on the

Dancefloor a key, that opened out, to the next beat
the next lyric the next intersection of ourselves
and this new world but it was always ahead always

Beckoning. And there was nothing unintended or obtuse about it.
It was pure. In many ways it was religious.

Some people speak of gateways when looking to define what they view as a degeneracy but I came to understand these moments as doorways, doorways into a world that will always exist, somewhere between all things relative and quantum.

And if you look closely enough, stride through confidently enough, expunged of both ego and fear, you can begin to see the turning of things, the swirling motion of it all that keeps us alive and wanting, having been regurgitated our forms of animal offering grossly incomplete and divergent, in this physical realm that holds us all enmeshed and in Chains.

in keeping to popular consensus, marijuana was the 'gateway' I encountered shortly after becoming drenched in alcohol during my Standard 9, and Matric years

where I was able to begin reimagining who I was and where I was and where all of this was taking me.

The first time I smoked marijuana I'm talking about not seriously stoned, but the first time I smoked marijuana

was at jamie's house one afternoon we all got together and there was a party, I can no longer remember what for, as if we needed

A reason.

And there was music and there were movies, and Jamie had a penchant for metal, and david lynch and robert smith from the cure not the standard stuff the truly eclectic pieces that otherwise would

never have crossed my path, and it was how I discovered bands as wide ranging as ministry and bruja

and that afternoon we smoked pot whichever way we could put it into our bodies the final take an improvised

Apple, which one of the girls offered around, and it was wet and soggy and not at all effective. None of it was.

That evening riding home on my alpina, back from mouton street to mindalore all I received for my efforts was a piercing headache

so visceral, so searing I could hardly pedal.
Not the best beginning in other words, but

I vowed I would try again. And I smoked everytime after that whenever it was and I was beginning to think that I was in some way immune to the stuff until

That night of the first general elections in the arcade at Horison View s/c and I was playing windjammers and I hit the flying disc up, deflecting a vicious

Throw from mike most likely who could play any game as if born in front of it

And it hit me quite literally, the flying disc, or the 8bit videoed perception of it and I laughed like a loon and time was all gone or bent in on itself

I couldn't finish that game but it was OK because everyone knew I was (finally) stoned as a coot – in the parlance of our times.

It became simpler and more regulated following that evening:
receive joint smoke joint get stoned, sometimes almost immediately, or after the first few drags.

And there was always dope around when we got together from 94 at 904 or wherever – ryan would like lighting up in the opel kadett he had christened belfry with balthazar the bat

hanging from the rearview mirror as if keeping a close watch over us both where we were going as well as where we had been

twitching and turning and bopping about on his worn leather leash

mike would smoke from the confines of 904 in the arms of his lazyboy which was both his perch and his throne

dispensing wisdom like some longhaired guru from the 60s although decked out in an adidas tee and tracksuit pants

chris and I would smoke at rau sometimes all hours before or after challenging everyone who'd a mind, to backgammon or on those occasions we hit the clubs together most often wednesday and thursday nights at le club the student nights

me on my student loan chris sponsoring freely from his winnings from the petshop, westgate pet hyper, where he often and quite simply never rang up cash sales.

And of course
there were sacred places that we frequented to get
seriously goofed together:

The Tunnels

The UFO and the Stormtrooper

The stairwell in honeydew heights where mike and I watched
the ant confederation (mike's term) with people coming back

from work, from their boring and tedious, and entirely incomprehensible
nine to fives, as we sat there, in the evening light watching them
exit the two cranky glassfronted shindlers lifts, all the way up and down
from the first floor to the tenth, the lifts ryan once put his foot through

In accident or rage and cutting himself
so cleanly and severely that he required micronervesurgery on his ankle
and almost fucking bled out and died on the way to the hospital

And then, for sure and for serious there was 904 – the two bedroom flat
on the corner of the 9th floor closest to the lifts that mike and ryan
shared at first on their own and then with arthur who also worked

At boston bbq in westgate and who slept on a mattress by the front
door against the rippled glasswindow so you could see him there
in mixed relief when you came to visit and he would open for me and

Say mike is here or ryan is here or they have gone out
to get drinks or spliff who's real name was mark whose second name
was arthur which mike called him having him somewhat under thumb

And we only realised this when 904 disbanded in 98 after ryan's rage
or accident which ever came first and mike saw his chance against
ryan's karate for the first time and beat the crap out of him on crutches

and ryan moved out and into my small cottage, on my parent's property
and we all kind of drifted apart after that
and the brotherhood disbanded and we

Went our separate ways. We smoked a fuckton of pot in 904 everything
everywhere was coated in it, the sticky resin the roaches in ashtrays the
holes in the cranberries couch that saw so much late-night action if any
of the stories were meant to be believed

And I came over there often, to smoke and to chat and before and after
clubs and raves

But even from the first joint and the apple, to the very first high, and the
brotherhood, and the communion of our

Shared experience what I really wanted was
to get some dope and smoke on my own and write just write but it was

difficult at first because I never knew how or where to buy this stuff and at first had to ask ryan for a small matchbox

Of weed when he dropped me off and he obliged and I got stoned and wrote on my own and this is when I realised that smoking pot was a doorway and that I would probably spend the rest of my creative life looking for these or similar doorways which I would go through willingly unwittingly, and explore.

The first time I took LSD
I didn't have to wait
for anything barring
the first hour, while it took hold.

And it completely and irreversibly changed my fucking life. Just like that. one minute I was fox the next minute I was fox-but-not-fox-but-definitely and-effortlessly-fox and I loved every drawn out collapsing rippling pulsing, techno flavoured heartbeating flowering of it.

After that first trip which was at a rave an industrial rave the first rave we went to, and I was the guinea pig honestly I had heard of LSD obviously and sort of knew what it was and what to expect and everyone at boston bbq had been talking about it and taking it the resident thug and low life criminal mastermind become local dealer

raymond who worked at sweets from heaven
prices from hell was doling it out quite literally
like candy

mostly red and black dragon microdots but also papers
these things called purple ohms and at this first rave we

went to I didn't know I was going to be tested on I just wanted to dance it sounded really hard and clear and clashing at the same time what I came to learn was a form of techno called industrial techno similar to the industrial music they were beginning to play

at tchaikovsky and subzero and of course I didn't get any dancing done that night I spent most of the evening sitting on the side of the road outside the venue my mates all gathered worried geese mothers asking what the hell what's going on what are you feeling while I sat there rocking and keening and watching the road under the streetlights consume itself in wave after blossoming wave of disco-bobulating, ever repeating purple.

I fell in love with the visuals
on my first trip

And I never turned back. Even after I had three bad-trips in a row
across four days a situation that rectified itself thankfully
at rustlers valley when I climbed the mountain
on half a double-dipped
california sunshine

with the cars and the tents and the people arranged down below
on the semicircular-stepped camping areas, elements that
magically reasserted themselves in direct juxtaposition, to sit ever
more perfectly within the flowing whorls of the fractal
pattern I had become to associate with the presence
of the chemical passing synthetically
through my veins and up and down my spine,
the openvalve-hearted breathing of that CD coloured
swirl that drove my soul beautifully insane.

I've tried to calculate realistically not egotistically how much acid I took
over the years which were 95 to around 01 and then a few times in 02
irregularly after

And I think I must have taken acid around 80 or 100 times, and a total
dosage equalling about 150 to 180 doses these taken
singularly or collectively
in single sittings.

These figures are hard to calibrate because towards the end there
aroundabout the millennium, when things went seriously pie to the nth
power-shaped for me, we were doing liquid LSD
which natasha and matt were preparing and sharing
from matt's parents house who had tragically died in
a car crash and left the house to him and all he did
besides working as a waiter was take and deal and this liquid LSD

Was hard to measure out broken-down in a whiskey
tincture and then dapped with an eyedropper on the
back of your hand where I developed this weird rash

or at times directly by mouth with natasha the matriarch of the billowing
and often incongruous commune feeding the stuff in
a trickle onto your tongue and down the back of
your throat

and you would wait for the taste of metallic purple
that lets you know your trip is about to begin, and
you're on it for 6 – 10 hours. Like it or not.

Around 96 everybody I knew through the rave scene began getting into ecstasy or MDMA and, to be perfectly honest although I enjoyed certain moments especially the physical moments around dancing ecstasy does this weird thing with your body where it bleeds out colourfully in your sweat

When you move, and everything becomes beautiful and lovely and smooth and the women are so beautiful on it and so into you.

But for me often when I don't move on MDMA when I just sit and try enjoy the trip it becomes languid and just plain weird and heavy and

It is at these moments when I am not sweating this shit out through my pores that it begins fucking with my eyes and fucking with my mind

And my mind aside anything that fucks with my eyes is a nogo zone they're fucked enough as it is.

But everyone was doing it, to return to the gateway metaphor and myself being so impressionable, so gleefully along for the ride and

Before long where raving in johannesburg was dominated by hard techno and acidstrobe and LSD in the mid-90s soon the music began mellowing, if we can call it that, into these sustaining house rhythms and while it mattered not I loved house and techno and trance and I would dance on autopilot, counting out four to the floor beat sequences almost begging for it to break while simultaneously knowing precisely when the DJ would drop it

I never really got into ecstasy as some of my mates did, and there was a shitton of MDMA going around so it would not have been a farcry to say the opportunity was always there

Especially when chris's uncle charlie came over from the UK, with condoms of the stuff smuggled up his and sue's buttcrack and wherever else

but that, as they say is a story for another day.

the times we survived

And that's just it really. Everyone who was a part of the scene
the drinking and the drugging and the clubbing
made it out relatively unscathed as well as I know and barring

The one or two exceptions where someone or other
did just die
as can be the way of things sometimes

But not that I know of in any way directly related to what we were doing
as kids and then young adults looking to find

Our way in this messed up world. Perhaps we were built differently
the west rand in particular and johannesburg
in general and as the saying goes Africa is not meant for sissies and for

Sure we took plenty of risks some of us for reals could have died
on any number of separate occasions, doing

The often ridiculously stupid things that people do
to remove themselves from the gene pool

and perhaps again, it was because in many ways
we started out broken not in any definitive
way, like, I was broken because of this or that or some childhood
trauma

but that we entered these moments this coming of age ritual with
our eyes and our hearts, to some extent, open and yearning

Relying on the rituals and the rites in some way to defragment us
further or at least define the fragments that were already there

young men pushing greenshoots through the shells of their youth

Waiting acknowledgement by our kind, for being bold and brazen
and often absolutely stupid, but doing it right doing it with the

Best intentions. And trying. To be good human beings, accepting
of ourselves. And others.

Or some such bullshit. I'll never know.

This was the time of my life, and I wanted to live it like this, doing
These things, with these people

And no matter the mischief we got up

to, the complete redundancy almost of growing up and accruing
experiences which you somehow believe to be uniquely

Your own, we went out, into these scenarios,
both presented to us and formulated by our own free will

In as much as that can be said to be a decisive term and
dependable

As seekers firstly of truth and of beauty.

and if there was a fault inherent in what we were doing to
this effect it could be claimed that it was quite simply that
we were doing this

Almost to the exclusion of all else, as the means to justify
the ends the ends to which we had no formal conception
of, being truly in the moment

And of the moment and young and quite immune to criticism and
the overly prescribed sentiment of adults who were there
often it seemed

Only to say I told you so or watch yourself before you get yourself
in a real situation you won't be able to get yourself out of, and I'm

Not bailing you out. But of course they did, or they would, and
perhaps, once more this is precisely why we did the things we

Did, with the confidence of heart that so often saw us through
these otherwise insane times knowing that we were good kids

And that somewhere, should the shit really hit hard, that there
was a safety net the same way we approached

as mostly unpolitical souls, the notion that the country around
us would be OK after everything had settled. That the real world

was mostly populated with good people looking to do the right
thing. Maybe we were sheltered and innocent and naïve

but maybe too we called it right, having seen and understood in
some intrinsic way precisely what was in front of us

which was quite simply life, undisguised, and inexorably present
and accounted for by those with the balls
and the gumption and

The wherewithal, to reach out and grab it.