Psychedelics in context: Mapping the adaptation of an ayahuasca religion in Canada

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Abstract

Psychedelic substances occupy a central role in medical and spiritual paradigms throughout the world. Yet, they have been criminalized in nearly every country over the course of the 20th century. Users of psychedelics face a host of legal and political barriers in spite of mounting evidence for the safety of these substances in culturally-integrated contexts. The research presented in this thesis focuses on a Canadian branch of Santo Daime, a Brazilian syncretic religion structured around the ritualized consumption of the psychedelic plant decoction called Santo Daime, known outside the religion as ayahuasca. Generating data with participant observation and in-depth interviewing, I employ critical discourse analysis and thematic analysis—methodologies derived from qualitative research—to analyze models of spirituality and healing embedded in the discourse of members of Santo Daime, and frame the group's adaptation to the Canadian cultural context within larger trends in Canadian law and drug policy. By locating Santo Daime at a controversial intersection of mental health and culture, I bring the concepts of ontology and epistemology to bear on Santo Daime members' worlds and worldviews, and explore their construal as radically other in relation to their largely secular cultural-political surroundings.

Les substances psychédéliques occupent un rôle central dans des paradigmes médicaux et spiritueux à travers le monde. Pourtant, avec quelques exceptions dans quelques pays, ils sont presque uniformément criminalisé. Les consommateurs de psychédéliques font face à divers barrières politiques et légales, malgré une croissance de recherche scientifique attestant à la sécurité de ces substances dans les contextes culturellement-intégrés. La recherche présentée dans cette

thèse concentre sur une succursale canadienne du Santo Daime, une religion Brésilienne syncrétique organisé autour de la consommation rituel de la préparation psychédélique Santo Daime, reconnu hors de la religion sous le nom *ayahuasca*. En générant des donnés avec l'observation de participants et des interviews profonds, j'emplois l'analyse de discours critique et l'analyse thématique—des methodologies dérivées de la recherche qualitatif—pour analyser des modèles de la spiritualité et de la guérison intégrés dans le discours des membres du Santo Daime, et pour formuler l'adaptation du groupe au contexte culturel canadien, en considérant des tendances globals dans le loi canadien et de la politique sur les drogues. Localisant le Santo Daime à l'intersection controversé de la santé mentale et la culture, j'emploi les concepts de l'ontologie et de l'épistémologie sur les mondes et les conceptions du monde des membres du Santo Daime, et j'explore leurs conceptions comme étant radicalement "autre" en relation de leurs alentours culturels et politiques, plutôt séculaire.

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1. Introduction

> As I list these treasures of 5000 years of perilous and sometimes fatal searching, think upon those nameless discoverers and rediscoverers, Aztec and Assassin, Carib and berserker, Siberian and Red Indian, Brahmin and African, and many others of whose endeavors even scholars do not know. We inherit their secrets and profit by their curiosity, their courage, and even from their errors and excesses. Let us honor them. They do not appear in any list of references.
>
> Humphry Osmond
>
> *A Review of the Clinical Effects of Psychotomimetic Agents*, 1957

This thesis explores the adaptation of a Santo Daime centre to the Canadian cultural context. Santo Daime is a Brazilian syncretic religion structured around the ritual consumption of an eponymous beverage known outside the religion as "ayahuasca". Indigenous to the Amazonian basin, Santo Daime catalyzes a range of culturally-mediated effects including, non-exhaustively: structured manifestations of atypical visual and auditory phenomena, increased inter- and intrapersonal sensitivity, shifts in temporal and spatial perception, and a sense of wonder. However, the effects of ayahuasca vary tremendously according to the context in which it is consumed; a search of the Internet and the academic literature signals to the variety of forms and functions that ayahuasca assumes. As a member of the category of substances called psychedelics, ayahuasca—and by extension, ayahuasca drinkers—encounter many of the stigma-laden cultural and political attitudes attached to substances like LSD, peyote and psilocybin mushrooms. These attitudes persist within popular discourses, despite cultural knowledge and academic research suggesting that psychedelics are neither physiologically harmful nor linked to mental health pro-

blems and suicidal behaviour—rather, evidence suggests that they may be of benefit when consumed judiciously, in safe contexts (Johansen et al., 2015). That being said, ayahuasca is rapidly becoming a transnational phenomenon, as so-called traditional and syncretic Amazonian ayahuasca practices spread throughout the world, and ayahuasca tourism expands in South America (Feeney & Labate, 2014; Harris & Gurel, 2012; Peluso, 2014; Fotiou, 2014). To address a substance that not only brings about powerful shifts in ideation and behaviour but is also embedded within rich and at times contradictory cultural and legal discourses, this thesis situates a contemporary Canadian ayahuasca practice at the crossroads of mental health and culture; a critical intersection for the field of transcultural psychiatry. Alterity, the anthropological concept of otherness, frames my discussion of the pluralistic models of mental health and healing in Canadian Santo Daime (Taussig, 1993, p. 129). Said otherwise, I will unpack the ways in which members of Santo Daime, at individual and collective levels, are positioned and position themselves as "other" vis-à-vis contemporary Canadian society. To lend theoretical focus to this exploration of alterity, I avail myself of the concepts of ontology (the study of what there is) and epistemology (the study of ways of knowing) to shed light on the radically different worlds and worldviews of Santo Daime.

Creating understandings that foreground the importance of context and the complexity of lived experience requires a methodology that does not reduce phenomena to arrangements of variables, manipulate them experimentally, and then expound on them in generalized abstract. As such, this research employs qualitative, rather than quantitative methods to gain access to the experiences of Santo Daime followers. In collaboration with the Montreal-based Santo Daime community, I conducted participant observation and in-depth, semi-structured interviews; two

widely-employed methods in qualitative psychiatric research. Then, I applied thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis to the process of transcribing, coding and analyzing the data yielded from my interviews. Before launching into the research at hand, I offer a literature review summarizing research on psychedelics (the category of psychoactive substances to which ayahuasca belongs), on ayahuasca in Canada and on Santo Daime to contextualize the discussion that follows. Throughout, I aim to demonstrate that understandings of Santo Daime should not be reduced to either the study of a drug, a legal case, or a religious phenomenon. Instead, Santo Daime invokes complex discourses about the globalization of an Amazonian plant-medicine; it speaks to the dynamics of alterity and belonging in a pluralistic society; and it prompts the exploration of co-existing—yet diverging—perspectives on health, identity and spirituality.

2. Psychedelic Literature Review

The following review presents, in broad strokes, the development of academic inquiry into psychedelics. From there, it culls the more specialized domains of research on ayahuasca and Santo Daime to further situate the research that proceeds it. But before advancing any further, a point on terminology should be clarified: though widespread, scholars do not universally endorse the term psychedelic. Rather, consensus on an apt term has been elusive and a handful have passed in and out of circulation over the past century. The designations that people promote can be read as projections of the ambitions and analytical methods of the investigators defining them; what brings clarity for one obscures for the other. The term hallucinogen, for example, seizes on the sensory phenomena associated with the ingestion of these substances, though it does not pay credence to other aspects of the psychosomatic experience. Moreover, the notion of hallucination carries a pejorative association with mental illness. Another term, psycholytic, meaning "mind-loosening", became prevalent in some academic circles, but did not attain popular use as it was thoroughly yoked to the field of psychoanalysis (Sessa, 2005). The neologism entheogen, stitched together in 1979 from Greek, means "generating the divine within". Though the preferred term of some academics and activists, entheogen has not achieved wide popularity, and may convey a certain bias, as it stresses the affectively-positive range of spiritual experience associated with this family of compounds. Finally, the term psychedelic, or "mind-manifesting" was coined by Humphry Osmond in correspondence with Aldous Huxley and eventually became part of the common language (Grinspoon & Bakalar, 1979, p. 6). It has been criticized for its association with the popular movements of the 1960s and for its likeness to the word psychosis.

Still, because it became the preferred popular term and because it retains a sufficient degree of semantic neutrality, “psychedelic” will be the term adopted for this thesis.

2.1 Anthropological and Ethnobotanical Origins

Psychedelic substances, consumed as plants or as plant decoctions, form the crux of many cultural practices around the world. In large part, knowledge of the people and practices that incorporate these psychedelic plants are a product of 20th century academic interest. Anthropological and ethnobotanical research constitute the majority of the first studies of psychedelics, with prominent work investigating the use of peyote cactus (*Lophophora williamsii*) in select First Nations cultures of Mexico and the southern United States, (Aberle, 1966; La Barre, 1938; La Barre, 1960), the consumption of ayahuasca among the Shuar of the Ecuadorian Amazon (Harner, 1973a), practices employing psychoactive plants in European witchcraft (Harner, 1973b) and ethnobotanical studies of *teonanacatl*, a psilocybin-containing mushroom historically used in Mesoamerican ritual practices (Schultes, 1940). While these formative studies report a general dearth of antecedent investigations into the use of psychedelic plants, documents produced during the Spanish colonization of the Americas predate them by several hundred years (Schultes, 1940). Bernardino de Sahagún, a missionary priest and Franciscian friar, observed and recorded the following Aztec practice between 1547 and 1569, as quoted in Schultes (1940):

> They ate these little mushrooms with honey, and when they began to be excited by them, they began to dance, some singing, others weeping, for they were already intoxicated by the mushrooms. Some did not want to sing but sat down in their quarters and remained there as if in a meditative mood. Some saw themselves dying in a vi-

> sion and wept; others saw themselves being eaten by a wild beast; others imagined that they were captured prisoners in battle, that they were rich, that they possessed many slaves, that they had committed adultery and were to have their heads crushed for the offence, that they were guilty of a theft for which they were to be killed, and many other visions which they saw. When the intoxication from the little mushrooms had passed, they talked over among themselves the visions which they had seen. (p. 430)

In addition to Sahagún's descriptions of *teonanacatl*, Francisco Hernández de Toledo, physician to King Phillip II of Spain, wrote the first detailed record of *peyotl* in the 1570s, a plant which has since been identified as the psychedelic cactus peyote (Schultes, 1972). Hernández also completed detailed reports on the Mexican divinatory seed *ololiúqui*, an LSA-containing relative to the infamous LSD (Schultes, 1972). Reports of psychedelic plants continued to accrue in the Spanish colonial literature. Later, in 1851, English botanist and explorer Richard Spruce described the use of *caapi* by the Tucano of the northwestern Amazon (Schultes, 1972). The designatory *caapi* is a source of confusion, as it denotes both the vine *Banisteriopsis caapi*, and a plant decoction (preparation made by boiling plant material in water) containing *Banisteriopsis caapi* in addition to *Psychotria viridis* and any number of other ingredients. This decoction, known most prominently as ayahuasca, is employed ritualistically by indigenous, mestizo and settler communities throughout the Amazon and South America.

Early anthropological and ethnobotanical work—predating the psychedelic boom of the 1950s and 1960s—contains a significant absence of the terminology and metaphors that would

later typify popular and academic interest in psychedelics. For example, Schultes' describes *teonanacatl* intoxication as a "*semi-conscious* state which is accompanied by a mild delirium" (Schultes, 1940, emphasis added), which contradicts the general tone of idioms that populate the literature today—idioms that are characteristically positive in tenor: expansion of awareness; increased access to psychological and emotional content; mystical experiences; enhanced empathy, etc. In fact, early anthropological texts afford sparse phenomenological characterizations of the ingestion of psychedelic plants, as very few of the first anthropologists who wrote about these substances had actually partaken (or publicly admitted to have partaken) in their consumption (Harner, 1973c). Relying primarily on second-hand reports, these early publications did not stimulate the interest that later, first-hand testimonies fomented.

Ethnographic research informed by first-person experience swelled in the years following the publication of R. Gordon Wasson's 1957 Life magazine article documenting his experiences with *teonanacatl* and the Mazatec *curandera,* Mária Sabina. Of particular relevance to this thesis is Marlene Dobkin de Rios's ethnography "Visionary Vine: Hallucinogenic Healing in the Peruvian Amazon (1972)", which details the ritualized use of ayahuasca in mestizo communities at the margin of Iquitos, Peru. Along with other anthropological tracts, like Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff's "The Shaman and the Jaguar: A Study of Narcotic Drugs Among the Indians of Colombia", the term psychedelic began to co-occur with the term shaman frequently enough that the two anthropological disciplines have become intertwined. As a cursory glimpse at the literature of psychedelics in indigenous contexts reveals, practitioners who employ these substances are almost unanimously referred to as shamans, irrespective of the particular context from which

their practices emerge. A brief discussion of shamanism, in turn, offers insight into the context of psychedelic research.

Shamanism, Colonization, Globalization

By virtue of its association with shamanism—cursorily defined as practices in which a person accesses altered states of consciousness to interact with a spirit world—the study of psychedelics deserves to be evaluated in light of some of the broader anthropological critiques of the literature on shamanism (Atkinson, 1992). The broadest of these critiques merits particular attention: the problem of generalization. Cultural anthropologists receive general theories of shamanism with widespread distrust; they argue that the category of the shaman prompts it to be falsely recognized as a homogenous form (Atkinson, 1992). The tendency to reinforce the concept of "pan-shamanism" dissociates practices from their cultural contexts by over-emphasizing universal similarities. To rectify this faulty construct, critics have dismantled the illusion of a homogenous shamanism and instead advocate the concept of a plurality of shamanisms (Atkinson, 1992). In addition, the designation "shaman" and the constellations of practices that it implies frames shamanism within a problematic trope identified in indigenous studies, where indigeneity is romanticized and cast it into a timeless past, in which the continuity of "millennia of indigenous tradition" precludes indigenous peoples' agency—their capacity to engage with the contemporary world, adapt their practices and produce innovative cultural forms.

The same critiques can be levelled at the study of psychedelics. There is a strong tendency to conceptualize the psychedelic experience as monolithic—to understand ayahuasca healing, or peyote healing, as an ordered discipline enacted in the same way, for thousands of years, by

indigenous healers throughout the global south. In fact, practices are highly diversified and draw on a range of different plant combinations and rituals. Even within the subset of a single psychedelic substance, factors such as geography, local mythology, government policy and colonial histories introduce a wide range of variation among practices and intimate unique relationships between practitioners and psychedelic plants. In the case of ayahuasca, if striking similarities are recorded across Amazonian practices, then, as anthropologist Peter Gow (1996) articulates in the case of Peru, it is possibly a result of the colonial encounter, rather than evidence of an undifferentiated indigenous practice. In his writing on western Amazonia, Gow provides well-constructed, though speculative, evidence that the ritual most commonly associated with the Peruvian *vegetalismo* ayahuasca tradition could have been developed by Amazonian communities in response to colonialism—to heal the violences of the horrendously destructive rubber trade. Gow observes that among communities that were less affected by colonization and the rubber trade, ayahuasca healing is either not practiced in the recognizably *vegetalismo* form, or it is not practiced at all (Gow, 1996).

No discussion of the anthropology of psychedelics or shamanism, however brief, can omit the impact of globalization. In a recent overview of trends in research on shamanism, it was noted that "more so than virtually any other aspect of contemporary shamanism, the study of entheogens ties shamanic traditions closely to wider discussions of community-state relations, globalization, and economic networks" (Dubois, 2011, p. 106). A nascent literature on the intersection between globalization and ayahuasca has begun to investigate the effects that the former has on the latter, with studies split into two overlapping directions. On the one hand, investigators document the spread of the major Brazilian ayahuasca religions (Santo Daime, Uniaõ do

Vegetal and to a lesser extent Barquinha) throughout the world. This thesis falls squarely within this branch of research. On the other hand, scholars explore the political, spiritual and material economies of the various Amazonian communities that use ayahuasca. The burgeoning domain of ayahuasca tourism and the increasing demand for the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine and *Psychotria viridis* leaf are instigating rapid changes in the landscapes of these communities (figurative and literal, as ayahuasca's plant constituents become more scarce), with healers catering their ceremonies to tourists, ayahuasca prices rising, and culturally-appropriative practices swelling, among other issues[1].

Though the anthropology of ayahuasca and psychedelics focuses primarily on scholarship of indigenous psychedelic practices and their globalization, a substantial quantitative psychedelic literature has emerged throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. I will now turn to this literature, while remaining sensitive to the culturally-embedded nature of the research trajectories I describe. As we will see, the potential of psychedelics, as gauged by western science, is matched only by the range of aspirations projected onto them.

2.2 Quantitative Research

The scientific, research-oriented psychedelic literature does not possess the longevity of its anthropological counterpart. Historical and political circumstance divide psychedelic research into two generational halves: the first describing a pre-prohibition arc, and the second being the contemporary, transitional phase out of prohibition. The first generation is interwoven into the

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[1]For a more comprehensive presentation of the globalization of ayahuasca, see Labate's edited volumes, "Ayahuasca Shamanism in the Amazon and Beyond (2014)" and "The Internationalization of Ayahuasca (2011)".

cultural revolution of the 1950s and 1960s. Though psychedelic science began with the identification and synthesis of mescaline at the turn of the 20th century, it took off in earnest with Albert Hofmann's accidental discovery of d-lysergic-diethylamide (LSD) in 1943 (Sessa, 2005). Early research efforts are often characterized as a time when LSD was used as a psychiatric tool to mimic psychoses, hence the early designation of "psychotomimetic". It also marks the beginning of a proclivity for self-experimentation with these substances. Throughout the 1950s, psychedelic researchers encouraged clinicians to try LSD in order to empathize with their patients and obtain a deeper understanding of the schizophrenic experience (Sessa, 2005). The early emphasis on psychedelics as a model for mental illness belies the enthusiasm and open-mindedness of the researchers associated with the "psychotomimetic" movement. These researchers, typified by Humphry Osmond and his clinical research team in rural Saskatchewan, saw great implications for psychedelics in the social, philosophical and religious domains (Osmond, 1957).

Concurrently with psychotomimetic research, clinicians were exploring psychedelics as a psychotherapeutic adjunct. Under the psychoanalytic model, psycholytic psychotherapy used gradually increasing doses of LSD to bring about "psychic loosening or opening" that facilitated encounters with repressed material (Sessa, 2005; Metzner, 1998). Operating from a slightly different perspective, psychedelic psychotherapy used preparatory sessions leading into one large-dose LSD administration followed up with debriefing sessions to bring about the experience of a single, transformative experience with LSD (Sessa, 2005). By the 1960s, more than 40,000 subjects had participated in research on psychedelics and more than 1000 clinical papers had been published (Grinspoon & Bakalar 1979, p. 192). Before long, access to psychedelic materials eluded the authority of the psychiatric establishment. Proponents of the various psychedelic ther-

apies recognized the potential for psychedelics to catalyze enriching, life changing experiences in non-clinical populations including, among others, themselves (Grob, 1994). Psychedelics slowly trickled from university and hospital laboratories into the public and played key roles in popular movements that questioned the fundamental values and morals of the dominant, Euro-American culture (Grob, 1994). The psychiatric establishment responded forcefully to the shifting place of psychedelics in society and urged governmental regulating agencies to tighten control on psychedelics. This control extended so far as to categorize psychedelics as Schedule I drugs in the United States—reserved for dangerous drugs of abuse with no medical value—and by the end of the 1960s, research had ground to a halt (Grob, 1994).

Psychedelic Renaissance

Since the early 1990s, psychedelic research has begun to pick up where it left off. With several decades out of the public eye, psychedelics are no longer the poster child for illegal drugs and polarized debates about their merits have settled into more of a middle ground. Governing academic and legal bodies are slowly acquiescing to proposals to resume scientific explorations. Sensitive to past failures, current researchers have criticized the first wave of psychedelic literature as highly representative of its time; the majority of papers were approached from a psychoanalytic framework, focused on case studies and lacked the empirical rigour of current methodologies (Mangini, 1998). Presently, studies are being conducted in a number of domains, which I will outline in the following section. Due to the breadth of the literature and the limited scope of this thesis, the review should be read as indicative of key research, rather than all-inclusive.

Uncovering errors of the past such that they may be avoided in the future, long-term fol-

low-up studies constructively critiqued some of the most emblematic studies of the first generation of psychedelic research. The first of two studies looked at the "Good Friday Experiment" conducted by Walter Pahnke under the supervision of Timothy Leary (Doblin, 1991). The "Good Friday Experiment" consisted of a single session in which 20 divinity students, blind to their experimental condition, received a capsule of either psilocybin or a placebo. The study, conducted in a chapel, sought to test whether or not psychedelics could catalyze mystical experiences. While the follow-up identified methodological drawbacks to the original study (including the breaking of the double-blind), it confirmed and validated many of the original findings, namely that more subjects in the psilocybin group would have a mystical experience than in the control group, and that those participants who had a mystical experience would report significant positive, persisting changes in attitude and behaviour after a six month interval. The study's participant interviews, conducted over twenty years after the original study was published, provided further support for the findings of the original. Interviewees affirmed that their experience with psilocybin had made uniquely valuable contributions to their spiritual lives, with positive changes persisting, or deeping, over time (Doblin, 1991). Another follow-up addressed Leary's "Concord Prison Project" and yielded less optimistic results (Leary & Metzner, 1968; Doblin, 1998). The original experiment employed psilocybin-centred interventions for prisoners soon to be granted parole and hypothesized a reduction in recidivism rates. The follow-up problematizes two of the conclusions drawn from the study, pointing to erroneous statistical calculations and methodological flaws. Ultimately, Leary's conclusions, namely that his intervention reduced recidivism rates in the short term and that prisoners who were re-incarcerated returned to prison for technical parole violations rather than new offences, did not hold water. The two follow-up stud-

ies identify important issues to be considered in the present generation of psychedelic research: the difficulty of creating adequately blinded experimental paradigms with psychedelic drugs, the attention to detail required in the elaboration of measures of subjective experience and the tendency for confirmation bias to skew findings.

Psychedelic Pharmacology

A good portion of studies skirt prohibitive policies on psychedelics by investigating the pharmacological properties of these compounds without actually dosing participants in the lab. Pharmacological characteristics of psychedelics have been described from a variety of different approaches, ranging from taxonomy, to toxicity, to neurological action. Much of the taxonomical work, delineating the two principle categories of psychedelics—tryptamines and phenethylamines—was completed long before the second generation of research emerged. More recently, studies have identified 5-HT2A (serotonin subtype) receptors in the neocortical pyramidal cells as the primary site acted upon by psychedelics (Sadzot et al., 1989). Seeking to measure the long-term change associated with regular consumption of psychedelic substances, research shows a significant up-regulation of serotonin transporter binding sites in long-term *ayahuasca* drinkers (Callaway et al., 1994). Up-regulation of serotonin transporter sites has been shown to correlate with old age (Marazziti et al., 1989), but in view of the exceptional mental and physical health of the participants in the aforementioned study, one of the investigators speculated that the relationship between serotonergic up-regulation and age could be mediated by wisdom (McKenna, 2004). Further research has identified commonalities between the neuroanatomical substrates affected by psychedelics and cortical systems associated with consciousness (Nichols, 2004).

This finding comes as no surprise to investigators, as psychedelics emerged as substances of interest precisely for their ability to catalyze powerful changes in consciousness[2].

Psychedelics and Neuroimaging

The field of neuroimaging produces some of the most high-profile contemporary psychedelic research. Brain imaging technologies can help build explanatory links between the pharmacology of psychedelics and their subjective effects on consciousness, affect and perception. Studies have investigated a range of psychedelic substances using a variety of imaging modalities (Gouzoulis-Mayfrank et al., 1999; Gamma et al., 2000; Carhart-Harris et al., 2012; Vollenweider et al. 1997; Riba et al. 2006; de Araujo et al., 2011; Roseman et. al. 2014, among others) Using positron emission tomography, studies have identified distinctive patterns of activation for psilocybin (.2mg/kg) characterized by increased glucose metabolism in right hemispheric frontotemporal cortical regions, in comparison to MDE and methamphetamine, which were characterized by cortical hypometabolism (Gouzoulis-Mayfrank et al., 1999). Significantly, the authors used two psychoactive controls in addition to a placebo group, rendering it more difficult for participants to determine their experimental group and break the blind. Once again using positron emission tomography, researchers studied the correlation between brain activation and particular subjective states under the influence of MDMA (Gamma et al., 2000). Increased blood flow in the ventromedial frontal and occipital cortex, inferior temporal lobe and cerebellum as well as decreased blood flow in the motor and somatosensory cortex and the temporal lobe have been shown to correlate with subjective states of heightened mood, increased extrover-

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[2] For a thorough review of the pharmacology of psychedelics that goes beyond the purview of this thesis, see Nichols's piece, "Hallucinogens" (2004).

sion, slight derealization and mild perceptual distortions.

Psychedelic research has kept pace with advances in neuroimaging, producing more refined results with technologies that image at increasingly higher temporal and spatial resolutions. Venturing to measure the transition from normal consciousness to the psychedelic state, participants were given intravenous infusions of psilocybin and underwent a task-free functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scan (Carhart-Harris et al., 2012). Results showed decreases in blood flow in connective regions of the brain, specifically the thalamus, the anterior and posterior cingulate cortex and the medial prefrontal cortex. The authors note that decreased activity in the medial prefrontal cortex might offer a neurological explanation for findings that psilocybin reduces ratings of depression (Grob et al. 2011). This finding runs contrary to activation patterns measured in several psychedelic imaging studies, though significantly, these studies used emission tomography technologies (single photon and positron) with lower temporal resolution than fMRI (Vollenweider et al. 1997; Riba et al. 2006). The authors hypothesize that the decrease in connectivity and activity of hub regions of the brain enables a state of unconstrained cognition. The notion of a psychedelic-induced state of unconstrained cognition was famously popularized by Aldous Huxley, who described the brain as a “reducing valve”, which can be acutely inhibited by substances like ayahuasca, psilocybin, peyote and other psychedelic substances (Huxley, 1956).

Looking specifically at neuroimaging studies using ayahuasca, a handful of publications in the past five years have imaged the effects of the substance, either acutely or on a long-term basis. Using a visual imagery task, de Araujo et al. (2011) studied ayahuasca drinkers in an fMRI paradigm and showed increased activity in the anterior prefrontal cortex, part of the cingulate

cortex and the fusiform gyrus. The authors attributed ayahuasca visions to the activation of an extensive network tied to vision, memory and intention. Interestingly, activity in the primary visual area during a closed-eye visualization task was comparable in magnitude to levels of activation while viewing a natural image with the eyes open. Measuring the effects of long-term ayahuasca use, researchers imaged the brains of 22 Santo Daime members who had taken ayahuasca 123 times on average (Bouso et al., 2015). Lifetime ayahuasca use was inversely correlated with cortical thickness in the posterior cingulate cortex, suggesting potential—though not causally-established—brain changes related to long-term ayahuasca use. Importantly, the thinning of the posterior cingulate cortex was not accompanied by measures of increased psychopathology or decreased neuropsychological function. The only significant difference between ayahuasca drinkers and controls on personality measures was related to increased self-transcendence scores in the ayahuasca group (Bouso et al., 2015). Finally, using a similar paradigm to the previously discussed effort to measure the transition from ordinary consciousness to the psychedelic state, 10 Santo Daime members underwent fMRI scans before and 40 minutes after drinking ayahuasca (Palhano-Fontes et al., 2015). Findings show that ayahuasca consumption leads to acute decreases in the activity of core structures of the default mode network, a brain network associated with internally directed mental processes that typically increases in activity when people are at rest. The authors draw parallels between their findings and meditation research, which consistently demonstrates a similar connection between the meditative state and decreased default mode activity. Psychedelic neuroimaging shows no signs of slowing down, as ambitious researchers continue to induce ethics boards to approve methodologically-robust re-

search paradigms with as-of-yet un-imaged psychedelics, like LSD, using novel imaging technologies.

Psychedelic Therapy

Historically and contemporarily, psychedelics have and continue to attract abundant attention as therapeutic adjuvants, yielding positive outcomes in virtually all preliminary studies in the current wave of psychedelic science. Recent studies have taken up where the first generation left off, and similar hypotheses are being tested, albeit with greater regard for methodological soundness. Exploring the literature of the past, authors conducted a meta-analysis on six eligible randomized control trials using LSD to treat alcoholism published between 1967 and 1970 (Krebs et al., 2012). The meta-analysis corroborated the generally positive findings reported by the studies, revealing evidence of a beneficial effect of a single-dose LSD session conducted in the context of an alcoholism treatment program on alcohol misuse. Also working with addiction treatment, researchers conducted a study in which heroin addicts who had completed treatment participated in ketamine-assisted psychotherapy to encourage abstinence (Krupitsky et al., 2007). The authors found that participants who received three ketamine-assisted psychotherapy sessions demonstrated a significantly higher rate of abstinence (13 out of 26 participants) than participants in the single session group (6 out of 27 participants. More recently, two pilot studies have demonstrated the use of psilocybin in the treatment of tobacco and alcohol addictions. Administered psilocybin in conjunction with cognitive behavioural therapy sessions, 12 of 15 tobacco-addicted individuals demonstrated biologically-verified smoking abstinence at a 6-month follow-up (Johnson et al., 2014). Similarly, in a proof-of-concept study, alcohol-dependent individuals

given psilocybin in addition to motivational enhancement therapy showed significant increases in drinking abstinence 36 weeks after psilocybin sessions (Bogenschutz et al., 2015). These results should be interpreted tentatively for the time being (as both were pilots and lacked control groups), however, they set the stage for full investigations in the near future.

Addressing illnesses beyond the domain of substance dependence, psychedelics are also being evaluated for other clinical applications. Recently, a research team completed several studies measuring the effects of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for treatment resistant post-traumatic stress disorder[3]. Findings from the first clinical trial indicate that participants who receive MDMA-assisted psychotherapy experience greater score decreases on the Clinician Administered PTSD Scale than participants in the study's placebo condition (Mithoefer et al., 2011). Working with psilocybin, a recent study addressed anxiety in patients with advanced-stage cancer (Grob et al., 2011). The authors reported a significant reduction in anxiety on the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory at one and three months after treatment and an improvement in mood as measured by the Beck Depression inventory that reached significance six months after treatment. Psilocybin has also been explored as a tool for the relief of obsessive-compulsive disorder symptoms; in a pilot study, nine subjects received psilocybin at various dosages on various testing occasions and had their symptoms indexed on the Yale-Brown Obsessive Compulsive Scale (Moreno et al., 2006). The study yielded marked decreases in OCD symptoms as measured by the scale, with improvements persisting for the 24 hours after ingestion, long after the psychoac-

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[3]Many studies in the research domains of both therapy and neuroimaging have looked at the effects of MDMA, which is not always classified as a psychedelic, but rather as an entactogen. Taxonomically, entactogens occupy a space between hallucinogens and stimulants for phenomenological and pharmacological reasons, although they often fall under the purview of the research agendas of psychedelic researchers.

tive effects had worn off.

Turning to evidence for the efficacy of ayahuasca in the treatment of various conditions, collaborations between ayahuasca-using communities and researchers have stimulated a growing literature on health outcomes related to ayahuasca use. The majority of studies administer scales that measure the effects of ayahuasca on traits like substance use and psychiatric symptomatology. Compared to research with other psychedelic substances, the subject populations in ayahuasca studies are typically drawn from communities where highly-structured conventions for ayahuasca use are already in place. As such, the efficacy of ayahuasca in these studies is deeply entwined with the effectiveness of the ritual context in which it is consumed. Though the wisdom of randomized clinical trials typically problematizes studies where context and pharmacological intervention cannot be instrumentally isolated, psychedelic investigators spanning both generations of research affirm the importance of context in the use of psychedelics. In turn, the indivisibility of these two variables ought not to be read as a caveat in research with ayahuasca. Working with samples in Brazil from Santo Daime and Barquinha (Brazilian ayahuasca religions—to be discussed in Section 2.3 in further detail), authors administered the Addiction Severity Index and reported significantly lower scores on Alcohol Use and Psychiatric Status subscales compared to controls, in both samples (Fábregas et al., 2010). A similar study, though this time of first-time ayahuasca drinkers from Santo Daime and Uniaõ do Vegetal in Brazil (also to be discussed in further detail in Section 2.3), showed a significant reduction in the intensity of minor psychiatric symptoms in participants from the Santo Daime subset. In addition, the authors reported changes towards assertiveness, serenity and vivacity in both participant subsets (Barbosa et al., 2005). Turning to the use of ayahuasca among adolescents, a study reported on the

differences between drug and alcohol use in a sample of Brazilian teens in the Uniaõ do Vegetal compared to a control group. The authors presented no significant differences between the two groups, except that subjects from the Uniaõ do Vegetal sample reported less alcohol than the control group (Doering-Silveira et al., 2005). A comprehensive study (including a variety of psychological measures, a drug use timeline and a physical exam) of a Santo Daime community in the United States showed members to be in good physical health and reported a high number of participants that met lifetime criteria for a psychiatric disorder (19 of 32) that had either partially or fully remitted (6 and 13, respectively), with 8 subjects attributing their remission to Santo Daime participation (Halpern et al., 2008). A large proportion of participants also had a history of drug or alcohol dependence (24 of 32), with 22 subjects in full remission. Once again, participation in Santo Daime figured as a turning point for remission in all five participants who met criteria for alcohol dependence.

As evidence accumulates in support of the safety and efficacy of psychedelics in addressing a range of mental health issues, research on drug policy and history plays a key role in situating the implications of scientific findings and exploring policy options that reflect scientific evidence. That being said, I now turn to a section on the history of ayahuasca in Canada, outlining key policy issues and historical contingencies specific to the context of my research.

2.3 Ayahuasca in Canada

Ayahuasca's presence in the Canadian consciousness began in the mid-1990s with the founding of Céu do Montréal—whose membership represents the focus of this thesis—and the publication of prominent books by Canadian authors on ethnobotanical and anthropological

perspectives on ayahuasca (Davis, 1996; Narby, 1999; Tupper, 2011b). The majority of scholarship focused specifically on the presence of ayahuasca in Canada has been produced by Kenneth Tupper, whose work addresses ayahuasca's presence in Canadian culture and attendant policy issues (Tupper, 2011a; Tupper, 2011b). His thesis, in particular, is relevant to the research at hand, as it deals with the legal case of the same Santo Daime church that figures as the subject of this thesis (Tupper, 2011a). Readers should direct themselves to Tupper's work for analyses of policy issues surrounding ayahuasca that go into greater depth than I do at present. In absence of demographic survey data on ayahuasca use in Canada, various signs attest to its growing availability and consumption. Since the inauguration of Céu do Montréal in 1996, six additional Santo Daime chapters have been founded in Canada; ayahuasca sessions in the style of South American indigenous and mixed-indigenous traditions (often labelled *vegetalismo* practices) are being offered throughout the country and finally; ayahuasca's plant constituents are becoming increasingly available to Canadian buyers, whether on the internet or in person. As an illustration of ayahuasca's prominence among certain Canadian communities, "Meetup", a social networking platform, hosts a 2200+ person group called the Ayahuasca Association of Canada. The group publicizes several ayahuasca-related events and ceremonies in various Canadian cities each month.

Personal experiences and conversations inform my awareness of ayahuasca ceremonies—beyond those advertised by the Ayahuasca Association of Canada—conducted throughout the country. Due to the brew's contentious legal status (to be discussed shortly), these groups, by necessity, operate clandestinely and very little research has been conducted on ayahuasca drinkers in Canada. However, one observational study proves the exception to this largely-unavoidable shortage of research on Canadian ayahuasca practices. The study measured the outcomes of a

series of ayahuasca sessions conducted in a southwestern British Columbia First Nations community by a Shipibo *ayahuasquero* (ritual ceremony leader) (Thomas et al., 2013). The First Nations band organized the healing sessions in collaboration with Gabor Maté, a Canadian physician with a history of organizing ayahuasca retreats for addiction and stress-related therapy. The objective of the study in question was to address substance dependence and other habitual behavioural problems in the First Nations band. The authors reported statistically significant increases on scales of hopefulness, empowerment, mindfulness, and quality of life. Using self-reports, the study gave evidence of declines in alcohol, tobacco and cocaine use, but not cannabis and opiates. At follow-up, all study participants attributed positive and lasting changes to their participation in the sessions. While this study gives evidence of ayahuasca use in Canadian indigenous communities—framed as a pan-indigenous knowledge exchange—the extent of ayahuasca use amongst this demographic has yet to be documented. That being said, a recent health plan published by the First Nations Health Authority, the Province of British Columbia and the Government of Canada outlined a spectrum of substance use, and included the ceremonial use of ayahuasca as an exemplar of "beneficial substance use" (Tripartite First Nations Health Plan, 2013, p. 20). While this document does not by any means suggest a broad adoption of ayahuasca use among indigenous peoples in Canada, it does signal to their recognition of the therapeutic and spiritual potential of duly-contextualized ayahuasca practices.

Sharing categorical membership with dozens of other illicit substances, powerful discourses on illegal drugs play a role in shaping legal policy on ayahuasca in Canada. Canada is by no means immune to the trajectories taken by other major developed countries (ex: United States, Australia, etc.), where concern about the demographics associated with particular substances

(typically ethnic and cultural minorities) has influenced drug policy more than consideration for the risks and benefits attached to the substances themselves (Small, 2001; Bobo & Thompson, 2006; Manderson, 1999). As long as Canadian drug policy remains rooted in discourses of moral and social control in place of evidence-based decision-making, ayahuasca use, by association with other "drugs of abuse", will continue to be stigmatized. This stigma carries forward into the academic sphere, where researchers encounter obstacles while jumping through the bureaucratic hoops required to study controlled substances. Coming full circle, a deficit of research on psychedelics pays no favours to the creation of evidence-based reasoning that could potentially impact policy-making.

Orienting towards specific issues of ayahuasca's ambiguous (il)legality in Canada, three of the substances contained in *Psychotria viridis* and *Banisteriopsis caapi*—N,N–Dimethyltryptamine (DMT) in the former and harmaline and harmalol in the latter—are classified in the schedule III category of the Canadian Controlled Drug and Substances Act (CDSA) (Controlled Drug and Substances Act, S.C. 1996, c. 19). Although these three substances are scheduled in the CDSA, plants containing these substances are neither explicitly exempt (ex: mescaline-containing peyote) nor included (ex: opioid-containing *Papaver somniferum*) in the drug schedules (Controlled Drug and Substances Act, S.C. 1996, c. 19). Thus, the distribution or possession of ayahuasca's plant constituents is less likely to be construed as criminal activity than the distribution or possession of ayahuasca preparations (Tupper, 2011b). This legal grey-area effectively facilitates ayahuasca practices where *Banisteriopsis caapi* and *Psychotria viridis* are imported into Canada and brewed inside of the Canadian border, and hampers practices (like Santo Daime) that rely on the importation of ayahuasca preparations, brewed in South America. Canadian San-

to Daime's reliance on ayahuasca prepared outside of the country is not exclusively a matter of logistics—as *Psychotria viridis* and *Banisteriopsis caapi* cannot grow in Canadian ecosystems—but also an outcome of their doctrinal beliefs. Adherents of Santo Daime will only drink ayahuasca brewed in a specific religious ritual, and the feasibility of this ritual, in the Canadian context, is effectively nil. The following section provides an overview of Santo Daime, which will help situate the intersecting themes of health, spirituality and culture addressed thus far in this literature review within the concrete, politico-historical circumstances of Santo Daime's inception and growth.

2.4 Santo Daime: A Brief History

Santo Daime is a syncretic Christian religion that emerged from the north-western region of the Brazilian Amazon in the early 20th century. Adherents of the religion imbibe an ayahuasca decoction referred to as Santo Daime, or simply Daime—made exclusively of *Psychotria viridis* and *Banisteriopsis caapi*—as a sacrament at rituals called Works. While Santo Daime originated in a poor, mixed-race community in the Amazonian state of Acre, today it is practiced pre-dominantly by a white, middle-class constituency located primarily in Brazil, with congregations in more than 30 countries throughout the world (Feeney & Labate, 2014; Dawson, 2013, p. 1). As of 2012, an estimated 20,000 individuals participate regularly in Santo Daime Works, however, the global legal precarity of Santo Daime practices puts the reliability of this figure into question (Dawson, p. 5). The following overview of the history and literature on Santo Daime contextualizes the research presented in this thesis, which focuses on a Montréal-based branch of the religion.

Members of Santo Daime trace the religion's origins to a ritual conducted by founder Raimundo Irineu Serra (generally referred to as *Mestre* Irineu) and others in May, 1930, on the outskirts of Rio Branco, in the Amazonian state of Acre (Dawson, p. 8). Irineu Serra, of Afro-Brazilian heritage, resettled to Acre from his home state of Maranhão, a region with a rich history of Afro-Brazilian spirituality and culture (due in no small part to Brazil's historical of enslavement of people of African origin—a practice that was particularly concentrated in Maranhão) (Dawson, p. 8; Domingues da Silva, 2008). Before founding Santo Daime, Irineu Serra worked as a rubber tapper, a frontiersman and served in the territorial guard. He travelled frequently in territories inhabited by indigenous and mestiço communities where ayahuasca is regularly consumed in the borderlands of Brazil, Peru and Bolivia. Santo Daime lore tells that Irineu Serra received his initiation to ayahuasca at a rubber plantation near Peru (Dawson, p. 9). Foundational narratives credit the various spiritual traditions that constitute Santo Daime practice, with major influences drawn from the *vegetalismo* ayahuasca traditions of *mestiço* communities, Amazonian indigenous uses of ayahuasca, Afro-Brazilian beliefs and practices, European esotericism and, most significantly, Catholicism. Christian symbolism saturates many accounts of Irineu Serra's formative experiences with ayahuasca and Santo Daime's political legitimation, from a historical perspective, turns at once on the legacy of continuity with pre-conquest Amazonian culture, and crucially, on the moralization of the ayahuasca traditions through their Christianization (Dawson, p. 10, 13).

Over time, Santo Daime grew beyond its inception in the north-western Amazon and, with the formation of an offshoot of the original Alto Santo community called CEFLURIS (*Centro Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal Raimundo Irineu Serra,* english: Eclectic Centre for the

Universal Flowing Light, Raimundo Irineu Serra) in 1974, spread southeast to Brazil's major metropolises. In addition to its geographical maturation, Santo Daime ritual repertoire evolved into a series of highly-structured Works conducted according to a religious calendar. CEFLURIS congregations observing the full calendar conduct 43 rituals to the year, though this number stretches upwards to approximately 90 rituals per year in larger churches (Dawson, p. 50). While a variety of distinct Works have developed, the most traditional *daimista* (a term denoting followers of the Santo Daime faith) Works are the Hymnal, the Concentration, the Mass and the *feitio* (the sanctified ceremony for the production of Daime). All Santo Daime rituals are highly structured; the spatial and aesthetic arrangement of Works, as well as their chronology and synchrony, follow a specific order.

Without belabouring details extraneous to the purposes of this thesis, I will briefly describe essential elements of Santo Daime ritual organization. The structuring of Works entails the segregation of participants by gender, and the seating of individuals according to hierarchy within the religious community. Senior members of Santo Daime are typically seated at a central table, while more novice *daimistas* form rows of women and men that radiate outwards from the central table. The physical borders of ritual space are delineated first by the space occupied by the people participating in a Work, and again by the borders of the room, or building, used for the ritual. Feasibility permitting, Works are conducted in purpose-built structures, however, in locations where Santo Daime operates clandestinely, Works often take place in borrowed or rented spaces. All *daimistas* wear uniforms: for women, these consist of a long, pleated, navy skirt, a navy bowtie and a white button-down shirt; for men, these consist of navy pants, a navy tie, a white button-down shirt and a star of David. Non-members attending ceremonies wear simple,

all-white clothing. On special occasions, such as dancing Works or festivals, the attire for women becomes more colourful and embellished, while for men, it becomes more formal, with the addition of white dress-pants and a white blazer. Beyond the attire of participants, the geometry of Santo Daime architecture often reproduces important symbols, and the interiors of ritual spaces are decorated, either permanently or temporarily, with images and objects derived from the various religious traditions that feed into Santo Daime tradition (with a particular emphasis on Christian symbology).

Beyond the physical structuring of space, Works follow a regimented timeline. While the range of different Works introduces variation to the contents and sequencing of events, at a rudimentary level, rituals involve the recitation of inaugural prayers, consumption of Daime, contemplative practice, singing of hymns, dancing to hymns and concluding prayers. Not all Works require these basic elements; still others include additional practices. Beyond the deliberate chronological arrangement of ritual events, participants are expected to sustain a degree of synchrony throughout Works—whether staying in harmony while singing hymns, maintaining rhythm during dances, or more broadly, preserving a consistency in behaviour with other members throughout the ritual.

The ordering of ritual time and space serves Santo Daime along multiple modalities. On a pragmatic level, it creates the structure and repeatability required for regular religious practice, and codifies Santo Daime practice such that it can spread to new locations while preserving a minimum of continuity. On a social level, Santo Daime's structure creates a meritocratic hierarchy of religious seniority, which rewards individuals for their personal development and their ability to maintain and contribute to the congregation's co-development. On a metaphysical lev-

el, ritual structure allows for the creation of a collectively-generated spiritual current, nourished by the combined efforts of *daimistas,* that brings about the individual and communal efficacy of Santo Daime practice, whether it be personal insight, spiritual growth, emotional or physical healing, or any number of other boons.

In the decades following the death of Irineu Serra, Santo Daime, and particularly the CEFLURIS division, began to establish church points around the world. Beginning in Europe, Santo Daime groups were founded in the Netherlands and Spain in the early 90s. Shortly after, congregations took root in Canada, the United States and various European countries. Similarly to the expansion of CEFLURIS throughout Brazil, urban, middle-class professionals constitute the core demographic of the international Santo Daime population. While these churches operate principally under the auspices of religious authority in Brazil and conduct a substantial portion of their rituals in Portuguese, the vast majority of *daimistas* in global branches of Santo Daime are not Brazilian nationals. The use of Daime, or ayahuasca, outside of Brazil and select other South American nations typically falls into the category of prohibited substances and as such, many international congregations of Santo Daime have encountered persecution in the form of arrests and seizures of Daime. In turn, several Santo Daime groups have initiated legal proceedings to guarantee their freedom to partake in their religious practice and sacrament. Although the majority of these legal cases are either still in progress or else have not met with success, select groups have achieved favourable outcomes in the USA and the Netherlands. Aside from the efforts of Santo Daime, the Uniaõ do Vegetal (the second-largest of the three main Brazilian ayahuasca religions) have also instigated efforts to establish the right to drink ayahuasca in the context of

their religious practices; similarly to Santo Daime, they have met limited success, with a notable court victory in New Mexico, USA.

The majority of academic scholarship on Santo Daime has appeared in the last two decades. The thrust of research stems from the domains of anthropology and religious studies and has been invigorated, in recent years, by the re-emergent science of psychedelics. Scholarship emerging from the social sciences reflects a range of issues including but not limited to: historical context (tracing political and colonial factors) for the emergence and spread of Santo Daime; critical analyses of social and religious dynamics within and outside of Santo Daime, in regards to other ayahuasca religions and practices; reviews of the proceedings between Santo Daime congregations and implementations of national and international drug policies; and ethnographic work attending to a wide range of subjects (see, for instance: Barnard, 2014; Blainey, 2015; Bouso, 2012; Labate & Pacheco, 2011; Cavnar 2014). Studies of a more quantitative tenor principally address the ramifications of participation in Santo Daime. Using a variety of measures and research methodologies, investigators have looked at the effects of Daime practice on social, psychological and physiological measures of health and function (see, for instance: Labate et al., 2014; Halpern et al., 2008; Barbosa et al., 2005). By and large, these studies have yielded consistently positive results supporting the non-harming or indeed beneficial effects of participation in Santo Daime. Marked among these studies are findings concerning members who self-identify with drug dependency issues, whose dependencies have remitted over the course of their participation in Santo Daime. The burgeoning literatures on the Uniaõ do Vegetal, Barquinha (the third of the religions referred to as the "Brazilian ayahuasca religions"), *vegetalismo* and indigenous ayahuasca practices complement the scholarship mentioned above.

3. Methodology

I undertook this project in the wider context of prohibitionist Canadian drug policy. Conducting research through McGill University and the Jewish General Hospital, my choice of methods was constrained by research ethics boards that would likely steer clear of implicating their parent institutions in the acquisition and distribution of ayahuasca, for scientific or any other reasons. Thus, I opted to use participant observation and semi-structured, in-depth interviewing; methods that interface with ayahuasca drinkers without explicitly facilitating or disabling their practices. Presumably, the research ethics board approved my project on account of this methodological "neutrality". However, by making my own positionality and epistemological assumptions visible, this section contextualizes my research project, and by extension, "outs" my lack of neutrality. Beyond being amenable to a conventional, conservative ethics board, my methods, deriving from the fields of anthropology and qualitative research, provided me with access to a different kind of knowledge gathering experience—and by extension, data—than more conventional, positivistic research paradigms. While quantitative methods acquire knowledge by measuring a hypothesized relationship between variables and statistically analyzing these measurements, the qualitative methods I have selected attempt to generate understandings and meanings attached to social phenomena. Broached at the level of epistemology, the research described in this thesis does not subscribe to the ethos of positivism associated with the majority of quantitative research, which posits that truth is a feature of reality that can come to be known through the accrual of empirical evidence. This project does not claim an objective ground on which the truth of its data will be weighed. Instead, I will be discussing the lives and worlds of my interlocutors, as manifest in conversations with and observations of these people. As such,

transcribed interviews constitute the bulk of my data. To analyze these interviews, I employ two methodologies from the domain of qualitative research: thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis. From the former, I've ascertained my approach to data coding, which I will discuss further on. From critical discourse analysis, I derive an attention to the discourses—systems of meaning embedded in socio-cultural contexts, with material consequences—revealed in the language employed by my interlocutors (Georgaca & Avdi, 2012). Before I describe my analysis in depth, I will introduce the religious congregation that occupies the focus of this project and how I became acquainted with them.

I conducted my participant observation and in-depth interviews in cooperation with Céu do Montréal, a religious congregation established in 1996 as a subsidiary of the CEFLURIS line of Santo Daime. Prior to detailing the group of *daimistas* who constitute this study's sample, I will first provide crucial contextual information by outlining the congregation's history—in particular, it's relationship to the Canadian state and to the Santo Daime community in Brazil. Through contacts at Brazilian branches of CEFLURIS, Céu do Montréal began importing Daime[4] shortly after their founding. They maintained an uninterrupted practice until the year 2000, when the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency detained a shipment of Daime en route to Céu do Montréal. The Canada Customs and Revenue Agency then forwarded the shipment of Daime to

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[4]It is worth noting that practitioners of Santo Daime in Canada make a distinction between the terms ayahuasca and Santo Daime. The term ayahuasca casts a large semantic net and may refer to anything from the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine to decoctions containing the vine in addition to the *Psychotria viridis* leaf and any number of admixtures. On the other hand, Santo Daime refers specifically to preparations brewed in the context of a *feitio*—the highly sanctified ritual for the production of Daime—and is composed exclusively of *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine, *Psychotria viridis* leaf and water (Labate, 2012; Meyer, 2010). Thus, for my interlocutors in Céu do Montréal, while all Santo Daime is considered ayahuasca, not all ayahuasca is Santo Daime.

the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Canada's federal police force) for chemical analysis (Tupper, 2011a). During the investigation that followed the seizure of Daime, Céu do Montréal explained their use of Daime as a religious sacrament, and were informed that an exemption would be required for further importation of their sacrament (Rochester, 2013). In turn, they submitted a request with Health Canada's Office of Controlled Substances for an exemption under Section 56 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances act (Tupper, 2011a). After a protracted investigation, Céu do Montréal received a letter from Health Canada in 2006, granting them approval "in principle" of the exemption request, pending export permission from the government of Brazil (Tupper, 2011a).

For several years, bureaucratic delays stalled the issuance of export permission from Brazil. In 2012, the Canadian Minister of Health—upon whose authority a Section 56 exemption ultimately turns—sent a letter to the president of Céu do Montréal that nullified the approval "in principle" (Aglukkak, 2012). Parallel to the development of their legal case, Céu do Montréal dissolved ties with the CEFLURIS branches of Santo Daime churches, citing concerns over CEFLURIS' conformance to doctrinal regulations and issues with the administration of its international growth (Tupper, 2011a). Once relations with CEFLURIS were curtailed, Céu do Montréal lost their principle distributor of Daime and officially stopped serving their sacrament and holding their regular spiritual services in 2010. Since the official hiatus of Santo Daime Works, Céu do Montréal have been organizing visitor's information evenings, where newcomers and guests are introduced to Montreal's Santo Daime community, the tenets of Santo Daime faith and a selection of the hymns sung at Works. In addition to these information evenings, Céu do Montréal hosts hymn practices for members. Hymn practices serve as an occasion for the community to

socialize, sing *hinários* (the sets of hymns performed at Santo Daime Works) and discuss progress in the ongoing legal struggle.

Over the period of one and a half years, beginning in April 2013, I attended Céu do Montréal visitor's information evenings and hymn practices. One year later, after establishing rapport with the community, I received ethics approval to conduct participant observation and interviews. My ethics protocol and consent forms were approved by both the board members of Céu do Montréal and the Jewish General Hospital Research Ethics Committee. Céu do Montreal expressed interest in research collaborations, valuing academic publications as sources of evidence to be used towards the legitimation of their practices. Participants' proximity to the research centres (McGill University and the Jewish General Hospital) qualified them as accessible and appropriate candidates for participation in research. In turn, from July 2014 through September 2014, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with seven "star-wearing"[5] members of Céu do Montréal. Interviewees were selected using purposive (rather than random) sampling in order to yield relevant, useful data. Recruitment was facilitated by the leader of Céu do Montréal, who made the study available to willing and interested members of her congregation. All individuals who replied to the request were interviewed, with the exception of one person with whom scheduling issues prevented participation. The seven *daimistas* who participated in the project constitute roughly one third of Céu do Montréal's core membership, which consists of 20 members, in addition to approximately 20 regular visitors who attend hymn practices and meetings, and more

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[5]A "star-wearing" member refers to an individual who has attended a compulsory number of Works and who has submitted an official request to join Santo Daime. Pending approval of the individual's request by church elders, the Santo Daime congregation holds a special ceremony where the individual makes a commitment to community, and the community recognizes their commitment in return.

than 60 people who were affiliated with the congregation and are awaiting legalization to resume practicing. Céu do Montréal is comprised principally of French and English speaking individuals of white, middle-class background, in addition to a minority of people who identify as non-white. The majority of Céu do Montreal's congregation have a Christian background, however, people of Indigenous, Muslim, Jewish and other cultural-religious backgrounds are represented amongst their membership. The age range of members spans 26 to 80 years, and is roughly evenly divided between men and women.

Until the official hiatus of Céu do Montréal's ritual Works, ceremonies were conducted in various facilities rented throughout Montreal and the surrounding area. Throughout my research, visitor's information evenings were held in a private residence in Montreal. My interviews were conducted in private locations selected by the interviewees. As locations for interviewing, participants chose their own homes in 4 of 7 cases, while the other interviews took place either in private offices at universities (2) or in my own apartment (1). I designed my interview questions as a series of flexible conversation prompts (see Appendix for the list of questions I brought to interviews). My objective was to direct conversation towards the following topics: i. beliefs about the practices and tenets of Santo Daime; ii. the perceived relationship between Santo Daime and Canadian discourse and policy on drugs; iii. the impact of Santo Daime practices on aspects of health; iv. the connection between Céu do Montréal and indigenous people in Canada; v. efforts made to adapt Santo Daime to the Canadian context. In practice, the interviews naturally tended to the items outlined in my interview materials, and I was able to put them aside for the majority of conversations. After obtaining written consent from the participants, I created audio recordings of the interviews using a digital audio device and subsequently converted the recordings

into written transcripts. Given the existence of different methods for transcription, the process involves a degree of interpretation on the part of the researcher (Georgaca & Avdi, 2012). I opted to use a technique called “denaturalized transcription”, which entails a verbatim depiction of speech, though without employing specific notation to convey elements of language such as involuntary vocalizations, pauses of varying length, or accent (Oliver et al., 2005). Denaturalized transcription has become a prominent method within the domains of ethnography and critical discourse analysis, as opposed to “naturalized transcription” which captures the aforementioned elements of language and is drawn on more frequently in the discipline of conversation analysis. Users of ethnography and critical discourse analysis tend to favour denaturalized transcription since it draws emphasis to the contents of speech, rather than its mechanics (Oliver et al., 2005).

Following interview transcription, I read and re-read the transcribed texts to familiarize myself with the data. The process of familiarization represented the first step in data coding—a term denoting the categorization of data, in which segments of text are labelled and sorted into groupings called codes (Joffe, 2012). I developed my coding frame (the full set of codes) using a dual deductive-inductive approach, meaning that the creation of my codes was informed both by my research questions going into the field (deductive) and issues that became salient while exploring the data itself (inductive). I carried out my coding using the QSR International’s NVivo 10 software suite. The software streamlines the coding process by making it much easier to organize and retrieve coded data, which, in turn, facilitates the process of finding links and patterns in the data. My analysis yielded 32 codes which I consolidated into 15 salient themes, listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Themes Derived from Codes

Rationale for Participation	Navigating Family, Friends, Community	Indigeneity and Santo Daime
Mental Health and Santo Daime	Alternative Ontologies	Identity as a *Daimista*
Syncretism	Nature and Sustainability	Ethics and Santo Daime
Santo Daime in Canada and Globalization	Law and Santo Daime	Valences of Santo Daime Experiences
Drug and Addiction Rhetoric	Internal Politics and Dogma	Christianity and Santo Daime

The exploration and analysis of my data, subsequent to coding, was informed by critical discourse analysis, a theoretical framework that targets the ways in which dominance and inequalities are enacted, reproduced and resisted in social and political discourses—the term discourse referring to talk and text (Van Dijk, 2001). By bringing this methodology to bear on my data, I attempted to uncover structures of dominance and institutionalized discrimination inherent to discourses surrounding Santo Daime and ayahuasca. Discourse analysis brings points of tension into focus between the forms of rhetoric invoked in the legalization, and conversely, the criminalization of ayahuasca practices. The word “drug”, for instance, conveys different meanings dependent on the context in which it is deployed. Whereas the conventional definition of the word drug is a substance that alters the consciousness of a living organism, in dominant sociopolitical discourses, drugs refer to substances that, in addition to altering consciousness, are inherently harmful (Tupper, 2011). Policy structured around this type of discourse hinders the ability for ayahuasca to be studied academically, and in turn, this lack of academic knowledge detracts from the creation of evidence-based policy—further entrenching dominant discourses.

Discourse analysis presents an opportunity to disrupt this cycle by framing research as a situated and politicized process that can engage discourse at multiple levels (throughout fieldwork, as a published document, in presentations, etc.) and that frequently involves research conducted in solidarity with dominated groups (van Dijk, 2001). Results from my analysis were initially validated using the concept of coherence, which calls for a critical review of the analysis to check for logical consistency (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 125). Once the analysis proved coherent, it was then returned to the interviewees, who provided comments and corroborated the accuracy of the analyses. Inasmuch as qualitative methods lack the traditional forms of reliability and validity associated with statistical, quantitative analyses, scholars have theorized that they ought to be evaluated on the bases of their ideological ramifications and the fruitfulness of the research (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 125).

In the section that follows, I present a critical analysis of the adaptation of Santo Daime to the Canadian context. To explore the themes yielded in the coded data, I employ the concepts of ontology and epistemology to structure my analysis of alterity, intersubjectivity and mechanisms of Santo Daime's efficacy; themes that cut across many of my interviews. Ontology and epistemology are terms that originated within the discipline of philosophy, but have recently (especially ontology) been taken up within anthropology. I provide the following working definitions of the terms, which stay close to their roots in philosophy. Ontology refers to "the study of, or reflection on, the question of what there is—what are the fundamental entities or kinds of stuff that exist" (Pedersen, 2012). Epistemology, on the other hand, refers to ways of knowing what "is", with different epistemologies delineating varieties of knowledge-accruing theories and techniques (Pedersen, 2012). Within contemporary anthropology, the zeitgeist is oriented to the

"ontological turn": a recursive vein of ontological work, most prominently associated with the University of Cambridge and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. Scholars of the ontological turn emphasize the study of alterity, conceived of as ethnographic difference. By "making the otherwise visible by experimenting with the conceptual affordances present in a given body of ethnographic materials" (Holbraad, forthcoming), the ontological turn seeks to elicit a multiplicity of forms of existence, and to explore the anthropologist's relationship to these evocations of multiplicity (Holbraad, Pedersen & Viveiros de Castro, 2014). Further, scholars of the turn affirm the political nature of writing that explores alternative understandings of what "is". Employing the concepts of ontology and epistemology, I aim to bring critical nuance to the radical alterity of Santo Daime, by emphasizing a type of intersubjective experience in which participants report dynamic interactions with conscious beings that are unacknowledged by those to whom members of Santo Daime are alter: the Canadian government and public. Within a framework that makes power dynamics tangible, the analysis that follows traces the presence of alterity in Santo Daime and explores its ramifications on the notions of identity and psychosocial wellness for members of Céu do Montréal.

4. Results

Participation and conversation with Céu do Montréal produced rich and varied material. Accordingly, the exploration that follows approaches my ethnographic data at multiple levels of analysis. To begin with, I rationalize my theoretical focus on alterity and intersubjectivity through an extensive engagement with interview material, attention to phenomenological descriptions, and sensitivity to the language that constructs Daime as a subject rather than an object. This amounts to a navigation of alterity at the level of the individual. From there, I shift levels of analysis from the micro to the macro, and explore the ways that alterity and intersubjectivity animate the tensions between discourses performed at a group level. To broach these understandings, I consider text produced by the Canadian state and I render strategic absences visible. These absences speak to the state's recognition—or more accurately, lack of recognition—of the ontological commitments of Santo Daime. From there, I elucidate some of the adaptive measures that Céu do Montréal deploy at a group level to strategically perform their differences and similarities in order to achieve desired outcomes. In a final section, I describe Céu do Montréal's adaptation to the Canadian context in light of the evidence of ontological alterity offered in the preceding sections. Focusing on issues of psychosocial wellness and identity, I articulate understandings of the efficacies of Daime and analyze points of innovation and controversy that emerge out of the intersection of Santo Daime and Canadian culture.

4.1 Broaching Alterity through Ontology and Epistemology

Throughout ethnographic involvement with Céu do Montréal, interaction with non-human beings emerged as a salient dimension of alterity—a pivotal aspect of Santo Daime practice

around which constructions of otherness turn. By using the term non-human, I do not imply that these beings are less than human, but rather, I use the term to invoke an intentionally ambiguous category that is not limited to the human. The relationship maintained between my interlocutors and the presence that animates or accompanies Daime figures centrally in many aspects of life for Santo Daime members, and thus serves as a good point of departure for an analysis of my interview material. Before delving into specific examples of my interlocutors' encounters with non-human entities, it is important to note that the degree to which my interviews indicate Céu do Montréal members' ontological commitment to the existence of non-human entities varies. While the tenets of the Santo Daime faith establish a doctrinal commitment to the reality of the sentient force—called Juramidam—residing within the Daime sacrament, Céu do Montréal's mission statement permits space for interpretive ambiguity, stating, "we affirm beliefs without rejecting those who doubt" (Rochester, 2012, p. 16). To explore this aspect of intersubjectivity—construed as experiences implicitly or explicitly characterized as being shared between conscious beings—I distinguish between ritually-bound intersubjective experiences and reflexive thoughts pertaining to these experiences. My interlocutors used a variety of terms to describe their intersubjective encounters with non-human beings. For instance, participants elicited interactions as incorporations, communications, connections, "getting in touch" and feeling guided or assisted. As far as designations for the subjects of interactions, participants mentioned entities, beings, celestial beings, spirits, plant voices, and a range of proper nouns referring to specific entities. These intersubjective experiences presented across a range of sensory modalities, including visual manifestations of beings, heard voices, or the felt presence of an entity. The epistemological frameworks adopted by my interlocutors play a role in mediating the ontological weight attribu-

ted to the beings encountered through Daime. In other words, reflecting on intersubjective encounters with entities, *daimistas* (also known as fardados [uniform wearers]) deliberated on whether the entities are real or imagined; whether they were externally or internally-generated; whether there was a direct encounter with an otherwise invisible being, or a pharmacologically-induced experience with an imagined subject.

The discourse of members of Céu do Montréal, as elicited by my interviews and analysis, illustrates the negotiation of ontology in the experience of the non-human encountered in the Daime. One of my interlocutors described a commitment to the scientific method, but with a spiritual or an existential conviction, and specified that he didn't believe in God, heaven, souls, or "the ability to perceive supernatural things". Still, discussing his practice, he reported hearing "the plants talking to me", and in this regard, felt like he was "transgressing the line of science". He asserted, on the experience of hearing the plants, that "you feel like it's an entity" and that he felt its awareness. He maintained a critical stance on whether the Daime has consciousness and intelligence—whether it is "an entity in itself that you experience when it talks to you", and hypothesized that the encounter may hinge on the concepts of metaphor and frame of reference. He reported that he struggled with "the language that we use to talk about the plants talking to us, and the plants being teachers" and that, ultimately, the question of whether the voices were internally-generated or owed to the Daime does not really matter, as the experience and the knowledge it conveys is "undeniable once you've had it for yourself". Our conversation revealed a process that arose several times over the course of my interviews: meaning tended to emerge out of a person's relation with the Daime, and the truth of this meaning was of an immanent and personal nature. This personal, immanent meaning overshadowed concerns over the scientific validity

of the emergent meaning, or over the ontological status of the entity invoked in the meaning-producing relationship.

The prioritization of personal meaning over concerns for objectivity, or concrete scientific proof, recurred in my interviews. One of my interlocutors, a *daimista* from Brazil, told me that he used to be an atheist, and that he would try to "find scientific explanations for everything". He described his discovery of a different mode of "being" upon joining Santo Daime, which he elucidated in contrast to scientific skepticism, and termed "divine experience". He described undergoing a change where he began to feel something that he had no desire to explain, volunteering that "if a scientist made me a lot of questions, to prove to him, that I am right about my beliefs—I don't wish to answer those questions. Because I just feel, and that's enough. This was the change. I didn't find a meaning, I just felt something". Shifting away from identifying as an atheist, he adopted an approach to spirituality where reason and logic were no longer the arbiters of the validity of an experience. Rather, feeling became the criterion to gauge the validity of an experience; to feel was to know. Expanding further on the subject of feeling, he reiterated that while others in the Santo Daime may see or hear entities, he felt them instead. Acknowledging the absence of visually or sonically tangible encounters with entities, he speculated that other *daimistas* may experience entities as mediators of the power of God and likened his own experience to an unmediated encounter with the same force. For lack of a conventionally-sensory encounter with an entity, he stressed that he could not describe what it was he was encountering, saying, "the only thing I can say is what I feel, and I feel a power… maybe it's a person, I don't know". Among my participants, this individual's descriptions evoked the notion of an encounter with an "other" that was the most "other". His experience with Santo Daime eluded

explanation in conventional scientific terms; in fact, he resisted being made scientifically commensurable altogether.

Another interviewee corroborated the notion of a shift that opened space for ontological alterity. Asked how his experiences with entities fit into his belief system, one of my interlocutors, who identifies as a member of a Cree First Nation, told me that "it's not always that helpful to think about these things too much". This person—who was raised Anglican and made contact with his indigenous heritage later in life—appealed to what he described as traditional native knowledge to address my questioning. He explained it as such: "our purpose is not to understand this creation, not to analyze this creation, but to develop a relationship with the mystery, so it must remain a mystery". He emphasized a "symbiotic" as opposed to analytic approach to relationships with the Daime and embraced a path "from the heart", not "from the head". Rather than pitting explanatory frameworks against one another and seeking out logical inconsistencies, his process was pragmatic and grounded in intuition. Though my interlocutors had access to scientific epistemologies to address the question of how we can know about the other encountered in the Daime, knowledge, per say, was not at stake, but rather the maintenance of an enriching relationship with the unknown.

Approaching ontology and intersubjectivity at the level of language, my participants regularly employed diction that framed Daime as a subject rather than an object. I observed a tendency among my interviewees to use verbs that mark volition when describing experiences with Daime. Participants often mentioned being "shown", "told", "instructed", or having "received" information. This tendency even presented among participants who expressed an explicit skepticism towards explanations of entities as separate beings from oneself. For instance, one partici-

pant advocated against overly-entrenched beliefs about beings encountered in the Daime by way of describing Daime's ability to "bring you out of your belief system, and the more you believe strongly in something, the more it will bump it out for you". Still, whether reflecting implicit beliefs or an adherence to the conventions of the Santo Daime community (where you often hear the Daime referred to as an agent rather than a thing), he attributed awareness and agency to the Daime decoction by positioning the Daime's own intentions as a steering force in the contemporary Canadian circumstances surrounding Daime's availability and legality in Canada.

Other participants simply did not engage a rhetoric of scientific skepticism towards beings encountered in Santo Daime rituals. For these interlocutors, participation in Works appeared to make these entities self-evident. When I asked one participant how he characterizes the being within or accompanying the Daime, he told me, assuredly, "that being you're referring to, we call Juramidam". He went on to tell me that Daime is "not just a chemical that you would take and it would have effects on your body. That there is this being that actually has, I don't want to say personality, you know, an identifiable other that is there, that can guide, or that you can surrender to—will not force you, will work with you, will give you different teachings and will open up amazing things". In the same vein, when posed a similar question about the presence in the Santo Daime sacrament, a second participant told me, equally assuredly, "the being in the plant, we call it Juramidam. It will come with the tea". She described doubting Juramidam's presence at first, but having her doubt overturned when she "encountered him, physically". A third participant, demonstrating an equal degree of ontological commitment in her discourse, affirmed: "One of the things that is most remarkable about the Daime is the common experience that people have of "other". It's not just 'I'm meditating and information comes' […] but beyond

that, that there seems to be the presence or sense of other, and in Santo Daime we call those beings, and they fall into a number of different categories". Ranging from skepticism to strong conviction, the discourses of Céu do Montréal—revealed in explicit statements and implicit attributions of agency—corroborate understandings of Santo Daime rituals as sites of dynamic, intersubjective experiences where the Daime sacrament is neither related to, understood, or experienced simply as a drug. These discourses expose a disjunction between explanatory models that would describe ayahuasca using pharmacological models, and those that emphasize a less deterministic and more ethnographically-involved approach to understanding the ayahuasca experience.

4.2 Collective Negotiations of Difference and Marginalization

Ethnographic engagement substantiated the importance of Daime, figured as an agent, in collective decision-making in Céu do Montréal. When I would ask about the particulars of different rituals, or the reason that, as a community, Céu do Montréal adopted a certain stance, the causal chain could often be traced back to an instruction that a *daimista* received in a vision. The word "received" recurred frequently in reference to *daimistas'* processes of acquiring meaning or insight. This diction corroborates the relational dynamic in Santo Daime, where insights result from experiences that are intersubjective, rather than solipsistic, in nature. Turning to the broader cultural context of Santo Daime within Canada, the core of Céu do Montréal practices and actions at an institutional level are thus grounded in an ontological framework that differs substantially from the frameworks espoused by most Canadians, or by the actors in the Canadian government—Health Canada and the Office of Controlled Substances—with whom Céu do Montréal are working to legitimate their practices. First, not only are entities "believed-in" by *daimistas* to

the extent that they represent important components of their idiosyncratic cosmologies, but they are also experienced as tangible, non-human others in the ritual setting. Thus, I argue, non-human intersubjective encounters are more than just world*view* for Céu do Montréal, they are part of their worlds, as lived. Second, concerning epistemology, my interviews suggest that meaning is a personal, immanent quality of experiences in the Daime. This stands in contrast to a positivistic epistemological construal of meaning, where validity turns on an objectivity-oriented ethic of verificationism.

The Santo Daime sacrament itself stands at the fulcrum of the ontological and epistemological disparity between Céu do Montréal and Government of Canada. Discourse produced by the Canadian Government ranks Daime squarely within the category of controlled drugs. In concert with Health Canada's moral agenda, this categorization imposes ontological limits on the kinds of things that Daime can be; the semantic scope of the word "drug", in the sense that it is deployed by the Health Canada, is far from neutral and conveys more than just the notion of a psychoactive substance. Instead, dominant legal and political opinions are reified into its meaning, and reflect the Canadian government's stance on the historical trajectory of the war on drugs. The aforementioned letter denying the exemption under Section 56 exemplifies this logic. In the Minister of Health's 2012 letter to the leader of Céu do Montréal, Daime is never referred to as such, and instead, is called a "preparation containing N, N-dimethyltryptamine (DMT), harmalol and harmaline" (p. 1). The document cites the Food and Drug Regulations to indicate that these three substances have "no recognized medical use" (p. 2), and frames their use as a threat to the Controlled Drug and Substance Act's imperative to protect public health and maintain public safety. Further, the document addresses the psychological effects of "preparations

containing N, N-dimethyltryptamine (DMT), harmalol and harmaline" in exclusively pathological terms, and its physical effects along dimensions of risk and physiological harm. The letter does not cite any contemporary research on ayahuasca's safety, whether psychological or physiological, and it does not make reference to the hundred-odd years of anthropological and ethnobotanical literature documenting socially-integrated uses of ayahuasca in Amazonian contexts. In turn, the terms by which the Minister of Health invokes Daime leaves no space for the role it plays for Céu do Montréal. Ontologically, the categorization of Daime as a drug construes it as an inherently threatening and harmful substance and precludes consideration of the positive range of its social, physical, psychological, and spiritual effects in safe contexts (Tupper, 2011a)[6].

For Céu do Montréal, the ontological reality of Daime exceeds the category of a "drug" and warrants a more careful classification, residing in a space between a substance and a person—the other encountered in the Daime is part and parcel with the substance itself (Vasquez, 1998, as quoted in Tupper, 2011a). From the domain of epistemology, the practice of Céu do Montréal begs a nuanced approach to the construction of knowledge; my interviews suggest that knowledge qua positivistic truth claims does not map onto Santo Daime practice. Instead, my interlocutors evoked a knowing, or a feeling, where meaning was produced through personal, immanent experience. Denoted in this way, Daime is perhaps better understood as a medium for knowledge, rather than as an instigator or exacerbator of pathological experience, as represented by Health Canada discourse. Within the current political climate, it comes as no surprise that Health Canada does not acknowledge radical aspects of ontological and epistemological alterity in

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[6]For a related analysis of the discourses surrounding the regulation of ayahuasca, see Labate's (2012) paper on the União do Vegetal and the US Drug Enforcement Agency.

its treatment of Daime, as this would require a significant revision of positions on what a "drug" can do and be.

While the ontological and epistemological disparity between Céu do Montréal and the Government of Canada prevents the latter from producing policy that reflects a nuanced understanding of the former, the discrepancy is not altogether incommensurable since Céu do Montréal are aware of differences of perspective and power. Thus, Céu do Montréal employ a kind of double-logic, where their decisions are informed first and foremost through recourse to knowledge received in the Daime, and then are ontologically and epistemologically translated into terms that are intelligible in the broader Canadian context. In practice, this manifests as a de-emphasis on the esoteric aspects and logics of the Santo Daime (for instance, the agency ascribed to the Santo Daime sacrament and entities encountered in Works) and a selective and instrumental invocation of spirituality, as proof of the authenticity and sincerity of Céu do Montréal. This strategic positioning of spirituality allows Céu do Montréal to appeal to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms' protection of religious freedom. Manifesting a familiarity with the importance of scientific evidence in government discourse, Céu do Montréal have assembled a medical and scientific advisory committee composed of experts in the field of ayahuasca research, and ground claims about the social, psychological and biological safety of the Santo Daime practice in evidence from the academic literature on ayahuasca. In accordance with the government agenda to reduce harm associated with drug use, Céu do Montréal foregrounds the measures put in place to ensure the safe and responsible distribution of Daime within the organization, including a thorough screening process for new members and a code of ethics that establishes participants' rights and articulates policy against harassment and discrimination.

4.3 Santo Daime in the Canadian Context: Adaptations and Efficacies

Intersections between the Santo Daime and their broader Canadian context occur at more than just the institutional level. Members of Céu do Montréal navigate the alterity of their experiences, beliefs and practices on a daily basis. Whereas in Brazil, the infrastructure exists for *daimistas* to live in full-blown communities anchored around the Santo Daime religion, this is not the case in Canada. With a much smaller membership than their Brazilian counterparts, Canadian *daimistas* are equally as embedded in the fabric of their communities as any other Canadian. This means that each Canadian *daimista* maintains their religious practice within the context of work, friendship, family, and community. Throughout my interviews, participants discussed their understandings of Céu do Montréal's place within the contemporary Canadian context and described adaptations made to their attitudes and relations in light of their involvement with the Santo Daime. At risk of under-representing the diversity of *daimistas* in Céu do Montréal, I will address key themes that arose around these conversations.

Throughout my interviews, *damistas* often pointed to the bare fact of having a spiritual predilection as an identifiable source of tension with their relations outside of Céu do Montréal. This speaks as much about Canadian culture as it does about the Santo Daime's place within it; on the whole, much of Canadian culture operates under a rubric of secularism. As one of my interlocutors put it, "you have to deal with this sort of stigma of being religious as being traditional and backwards". In this respect, many aspects of Santo Daime practice, even if only glazed over at a superficial level, appear to run contrary to scientific rationality—not least of all, the instrumental role of a "drug" in the production of profound personal insights. Throughout conversations, a particular spiritual narrative emerged from my interviews, figuring the Santo Daime's pla-

ce within Canadian spiritual culture. This narrative, glossed from several interviews, runs more or less as follows: a good portion of Canadians have shifted away from large, organized religion and taken up a secular way of life—the province of Quebec's massive secularization was cited several times as a prominent manifestation of this trend—though ultimately, this movement has left many people spiritually bereft. Within this context, my interlocutors conceive of the Santo Daime as a platform that resuscitates elements that are lacking in secular life. Virtues recovered through spiritual practice that emerged in my interviews frequently included a sense of interpersonal intimacy stunted by modern technological means of communication; an intimate understanding of the plight of the environment; an appreciation of the interconnectedness of all living things and; an empowerment to identify personal flaws and work towards self-improvement—without recourse to metrics of financial or material success. While all these virtues are certainly amenable to secular logics and do not necessitate a commitment to a religious framework, contention arises around the means taken to acquire these insights. Discussed earlier in the context of the Minister of Health's letter to the leader of Céu do Montréal, the model of pathology monopolizes a great deal of the scientific and cultural availability of explanatory models for the psychedelic experience, and more broadly, problematizes experiences that are healthy or normative in other cultural contexts. Consequently, the use of a psychoactive agent to facilitate transactions of meaning, or the postulation of ontologically-incommensurable sources of insight, precludes the validity of said meaning or insight in the eyes of many individuals outside of the Santo Daime.

Céu do Montréal are acutely aware of the rhetoric of pathology, and their knowledge of medical discourses appears to inform the models of Santo Daime's efficacy and healing mecha-

nisms that emerged in my interviews. Unanimously, participants stressed that the proficiency of elders and guides in unison with structural features inside and outside of the ritual setting mediates the safety and productivity of Santo Daime Works. On multiple occasions, my interlocutors alluded to the existence of North American communities or individuals working with ayahuasca where psychological, physical and spiritual safety were threatened by a lack of training and organizational structure. Members of Céu do Montréal express a wariness of the promotion of ayahuasca, within these circles, as a panacea for physical or psychological issues. In contrast, Céu do Montréal actively dispel the notion that Santo Daime will heal you. My interlocutors never singled out Daime as a comprehensive treatment in and of itself, but instead referred to their ritual experiences as instigators of change and located the responsibility for improvement within themselves. This model of personal responsibility ties into the meritocratic spiritual logic of Santo Daime, mentioned earlier and elaborated in Dawson (2013). In this meritocratic framework, ascension through the church hierarchy hinges on personal growth. Such a mechanism of efficacy, attached to the individual rather than the Daime, also speaks to the ontological limits of the agency ascribed to ayahuasca in Céu do Montréal; the sacrament will "show" but not "do". In addition, this model operates at the level of identity, serving to distinguish Céu do Montréal from communities that they consider irresponsible, and developing a discourse that constructs a specific model of efficacy vis-à-vis their legalization process. Historically, Céu do Montréal's efforts to achieve legal recognition have centred around the possibility of an exemption to import Daime on the grounds of religious freedom. They concede that they are not politically positioned to secure a medical exemption to administer Daime, and that such an exemption would likely impose problematic restrictions on their practice. Accordingly, they recognize the strategic importance of

distinguishing themselves from people or groups that make health-related claims about ayahuasca and actively avoid engaging a rhetoric of medical healing. Encapsulating this sentiment, one participant told me, “we don’t talk a lot about the physical healing, because you know, again, politically, we can’t get into that area”. Thus, throughout my interviews, the medicinal effects of Daime were only ever briefly mentioned and never discussed at length—the perimeter of systems of healing in Santo Daime are fairly well patrolled.

Daime-induced healing aside, members of Céu do Montréal spoke at length about positive changes that followed their introduction to Santo Daime. Participants’ descriptions of these effects offer a window into the phenomenology and mechanism of Daime’s efficacy. One participant used the idiom of “revelation” to convey his understanding of Daime’s mechanism. He relayed that ayahuasca reveals things that are out of balance—without problematizing aspects of life, ayahuasca identifies opportunities to create new stability. This idiom aptly captures a fairly ubiquitous experience described in my interviews, and frequently reported in the ayahuasca literature, where Daime or ayahuasca induces a sensitivity that allows users to perceive things, whether internally or externally (in the case of visions), that elude them in normal waking consciousness. Explaining the moral dimension of his relationship to ayahuasca, this same participant emphasized the onus that comes along with interpreting insights that occur during Works and mentioned that ayahuasca helps him to be at once respectful, but to be honest to himself and others; to tell the truth. *Daimistas* place a great deal of importance on the notion of integration of insights acquired throughout rituals; it is not uncommon to hear people joke that the real “work” takes place outside of the Santo Daime “Work”. Another participant, discussing his relationship to the brew, described Daime’s effect as follows: “it washes out anything that’s unlike itself, not

for the purpose of being horrible, but for the purpose of seeing it for what it is and being able to then make the choice to let go of it. And the choice is always work, it's not something that happens magically". According to his assertion, Daime is subtly characterized as an intrinsically positive force by virtue of its action, which is to cleanse anything unlike itself. The participant alluded to the things that Daime "washes out" as aspects of himself that he ought to let go of, that needed to change. He characterized his practice, which he called his "study", as a process of grounding himself in emotions of his own choosing. He described his study as transformative, and mentioned that friends and family of *daimistas* are often afraid of change and uncomfortable with the shifts they perceive in the Daime practitioner. The notion that friends and family express discomfort when a relation takes up the Santo Daime religion recurred throughout my interviews, however, participants tended to affirm that these situations resolved themselves when friends and family realize that the changes are positive. When I asked him about the relationship between Santo Daime and his employment, he told me, succinctly, that his study with Daime catalyzes the emotional resilience he needs to do his job. Echoing this synergy between Santo Daime ceremonies and life outside of ritual space, another participant told me how work with Daime helped him foster "a sense of control and efficiency and effectiveness in [his] everyday life".

The metaphors that participants use to talk about their Daime experiences provide insight into the discourses within which they frame notions of wellness. Occasionally, participants employed metaphors that subverted conventional or conservative knowledge about psychedelics. Case in point, one *daimista* depicted Santo Daime works as occasions for reality checks. While reactionaries portray the psychedelic experience as a psychotic experience—characterized by a loss of touch with reality—here, my participant affirms the opposite. She elaborated on her me-

taphor, explaining that Daime helps cultivate a perspective from which she can evaluate her progress along various dimensions. Often, she said, Daime shows her that she's not as far along as she thinks she is; that in this respect, it humbles her, while helping her find the will to keep working on herself. Reiterating what other participants conveyed about self-affirmation, she relayed that Daime shows her that she has to speak up for herself and be more spontaneous. It became "more easy to be [her]self, more easy to feel good with someone". Encapsulating her sentiment, she told me that she used to think that everyone was looking at her when she laughed out loud. Now, she laughs loudly, and other people laugh with her.

Over the course of my interviews, I did not encounter evidence of negative mental health outcomes from participation in the Santo Daime. That being said, my interviews were not designed to elicit this type of information and did not include any formal diagnostic criteria. Still, many of the members of Céu do Montréal recounted experiences that they described as very difficult or psychologically and emotionally taxing. Unanimously, participants discussed these difficult experiences as important and often inevitable stages in the process of self-improvement, or personal evolution. Despite Céu do Montréal's re-configuration of difficult occurrences as obstacles to be overcome—rather than as inherently negative or harmful experiences—members report apprehension leading up to Works. In fact, I was told that *Padrinhos* (lit. godfathers; elders in Santo Daime) occasionally approach Works with trepidation, and that the sense of nervousness that precedes Santo Daime rituals is even referenced in the *hinários* (sets of Santo Daime hymns). Proper training and ritual preparation play mitigating roles in the management of difficult experiences in Céu do Montréal. One of my interlocutors described how lapses in personal preparedness could make the Santo Daime Work a "sacred hell" and that if a person's intention is

"just" to have fun, they will not get what they are expecting. Approaching this topic from another perspective, an interlocutor explained how she was occasionally approached to participate in or lead a ceremony outside of the context of the Santo Daime, and that she vehemently refused these requests, asserting that with Daime, "anything can come, good and bad, and you have to be strong enough to hold the space for the people". Corroborating this notion, another interlocutor described the misguidedness of people with a "New Age" orientation who enter the Daime with a panglossian attitude, and who are crucially unprepared for the experiences they may encounter. Céu do Montréal thus distinguish themselves from other drinkers of ayahuasca, particularly those that they identify as New Age, by virtue of their recognition of the ontological reality of dark beings. This ontological recognition underscores my interlocutors' often referenced responsibility for the spiritual (in addition to physical and psychological) welfare of attendees at Santo Daime Works.

A corollary to dialogue on healing and Santo Daime, my participants broached the distinction between spiritual emergency and mental illness. This distinction is also source of tension between Céu do Montréal and their affiliates in Brazil. One of my interlocutors described a failure to effectively distinguish between spiritual emergency and mental illness, resulting in the medical establishment's over-attribution of pathological labels and treatments to issues of a fundamentally spiritual or existential tenor, and conversely, the spiritualization of pathological experiences within religious communities. As evidence of the former, she referred to the medicalization of quintessentially human experiences that were traditionally resolved within spiritual frameworks. For instance, she cited increasingly common interventions to the grieving process through diagnoses of depression and the prescription of antidepressants. In a similar vein, she poin-

ted to the problematization of processes like menopause and other major personal changes as experiences that are falsely framed, such that pharmacological solutions are presented as the best solutions. Shifting to the latter, she cited issues with the adaptability of Brazilian practices where potentially pathological behaviour was "spiritualized". Without condemning a particular group or individual, she suggested that there were Santo Daime centres where potentially inappropriate, disordered behaviour was tolerated through recourse to spiritual frameworks that re-interpreted conduct in less threatening ways. In these cases, she explained, tolerance for misdemeanours was over-extended to avoid seeking help outside of Santo Daime or, vice versa, to avoid drawing outside attention to issues within Santo Daime.

Participants indicated that this sort of practice would not mesh with the Canadian cultural context and, taking this into consideration, called attention to the creation of "a resource list of people, therapists and other allied professionals to be able to refer people to, who might need some assistance outside of Works. Not to assume that just drinking Daime will heal and cure everything". That being said, a balanced approach to mental health and spirituality does not foreclose the possibility that Santo Daime can have a positive impact on mental wellness. For instance, one of my interlocutors described experiences that predated her introduction to Santo Daime, in which she encountered entities that were invisible to others. Eventually, these encounters occurred frequently and indiscriminately enough that they became very distressing, to the point where she "thought [she] was crazy". Through her practice with the Santo Daime, she explained, she reined in her encounters with these entities, and now she no longer perceives them in her daily life and only experiences them within the circumscribed context of Santo Daime Works, where she is able to deal with them constructively. Expanding on this point, she described the

Santo Daime ritual as a charity work where channels are opened for the community to resolve her obligations towards these entities. Her anecdote offers an interesting rebuttal of discourses that depict psychedelics as risk factors for mental illness. In her case, the opposite appears to have taken place, with Daime mitigating experiences which she, herself, diagnosed as "crazy".

The ontological navigation of Santo Daime doctrine plays a large role in the adaptation of the religion to its Canadian context. As mentioned earlier, *daimistas* place emphasis on the notion that hymns and instructions are received rather than personally authored. In turn, the divine provenance of hymns and instructions performs the function of legitimating them, but also provides grounds for traditional *daimistas* to insist on an unquestioned adherence to their contents (Dawson, 2013). While ontologically-committed to the notion that hymns and instructions are received from entities in the Daime, Céu do Montréal contend that some practices are constituted by substantial cultural, in addition to spiritual, components. Part of Céu do Montréal's task, as one of my interlocutors articulated, is the ongoing process of disentangling cultural from spiritual elements of practices inherited from Brazilian Santo Daime. This cultural negotiation is an important aspect of Santo Daime's adaptive process in Canada. The place of women in the Santo Daime occupies a significant portion of Céu do Montréal's concern vis-à-vis cultural-spiritual disentanglement. As a church headed by a woman, Céu do Montréal have argued for the equal rights of women in Santo Daime, but came up against resistance with former institutional affiliates in Brazil. According to the leader of Céu do Montreal, while seeking equal responsibility for women and the right for women to serve Daime—and raising related questions concerning the role of women in Santo Daime—with Céu do Montréal's former affiliates in Brazil, she was accused of transgressing doctrinal direction and met repeatedly with hostility. In turn, Céu do Mon-

tréal maintain that deep study of the doctrine and contemplation have anchored their conviction that hierarchical relations between men and women in Santo Daime are a culturo-historical by-product and not the intent of divine will, and they have revised their practices accordingly.

Tension and Transformation: First Nations and Santo Daime

The assimilation of First Nations traditions represent the largest syncretized component of Céu do Montréal's practice and, according to many of my interlocutors, plays a significant role in grounding Santo Daime's cultural and spiritual presence in Canada. Members often allude to the importance of indigenous Amazonian traditions in the founding of the Santo Daime in Brazil and many see the integration of First Nations traditions into Céu do Montréal as a mirroring of this indigenous connection. Céu do Montréal trace the origins of the alliance between the First Nations cultures of Canada and Santo Daime to the prophetic vision of a Cree elder and the validation of this connection through an Indigenous *daimista*'s vision of the meeting of spiritual beings from the North and the South. The chronology of this alliance was emphasized to me, with a view to legitimizing the relationship: first Spirit manifested the connection, then it was manifested in practice. This connection has led to additions to the Santo Daime ritual repertoire, such as the consecration of ritual space and participants with a blend of sacred Indigenous herbs by a First Nations member of the Santo Daime. In addition, Céu do Montréal members report that they have begun to receive hymns from First Nations spiritual beings and incorporate them into regular use. Idioms and symbolism from First Nations traditions, such as the figure of the Creator, have also been implemented throughout Céu do Montréal's practice. The following hymn, entitled "Sacred Wampum" and offered to Céu do Montréal, speaks to the connection between First Nations and Santo Daime. The hymn is addressed to the entities traditionally atta-

ched to the Daime brew, and describes the encounter between these entities and significant figures of Haudenosaunee history.

Minha Senhora Jurema
Meu Senor Juramidam
You have addressed a prayer of access
To the Spirits of this land

You extend the hand of friendship
To the Chiefs who guard this line
This is the place of meeting
This is the appointed time

They awaited your arrival
Now at your entry brave and grand
The Peacemaker Deganawida
And His Virgin Mother stand

They declare the door is open
For the healing that you bring
Please represent this Sacred Wampum
Among the hymns you now shall sing

They request that all good people
Who shall drink this Sacred Tea
Will recall All Our Relations
Who now struggle to be free

They send blessings to this Circle
That the Lie may never mar
Through the eyes of Grandfather Eagle
They are watching from afar

They address you in your languages

They respect you in your Song
For the Red Road of the Heart still loves
All those who thought it wrong

Soyez sages et soyez unifiés (Be wise and be united)
Beneath your Sacred Star
And call the peoples of the Earth
To remember who they are.

-Cree Elder Frederick Bevan Skerratt

Further solidifying the connection, a Cree elder and *daimista* received the instruction to give *Mestre* Irineu, the founder of Santo Daime, the honorary post-humous title of Black Eagle. Finally, the most significant syncretization of First Nations practices into Céu do Montréal has taken the form of a unique healing ritual, called the Black Eagle *Cura* (*cura* means heal or healing in Portuguese). While most Céu do Montréal Works take place in the urban setting of Montreal, the Black Eagle *Cura* is conducted in a rural location outside of Montreal. The night before the *cura*, the Cree elder in the church leads a sweat lodge ceremony. According to my interlocutor, the Black Eagle *Cura* is held four times a year in conjunction with the four seasons, and weather permitting, is held partly outside. Instead of the traditional uniform, participants in the Black Eagle *Cura* wear white clothing. During the *cura* people sit on the ground or, if inside, on the floor, in a circle with the central alter on a low table or if outside on a white cloth on the ground. The *cura*, according to my interlocutors, is similar to the *Mesa Branca* Work of the Santo Daime tradition, in that it has sections dedicated to different spiritual beings, permits the incorporation of spiritual forces and pays tribute to indigenous traditions and Eastern spiritual lines.

Despite Santo Daime's adoption of aspects of First Nations culture, the adoption of Santo Daime by First Nations people has been relatively limited. At this point in time, a Cree elder sits on the board of Céu do Montréal, and four members of the Native American Church, amongst a number of formerly-affiliated Indigenous people, have remained connected with Céu do Montréal since they stopped importing the Daime sacrament in 2010. According to one of my interlocutors, many Indigenous people are not at ease with the significant amount of Christian ritual and symbolic content in Santo Daime. I was also told that some Indigenous people are not comfortable with the uniform of the Santo Daime (which was modelled after a school uniform [Groisman, 2000 cited in Blainey, 2013]) because it bears an uncomfortable likeness to the uniform that children were forced to wear in residential schools[7]. First Nations people, my Cree interlocutor told me, preferred Black Eagle *Curas* over other Santo Daime Works, attended them in greater numbers, and were more comfortable with the culturally-adapted form that the ritual assumed. It is important to note that the Black Eagle *Cura* and other ritual innovations resulting from the integration of First Nations traditions are legitimated within Céu do Montréal through the active participation of First Nations people in the Santo Daime.

An analysis of the political implications of the encounter between Canadian First Nations and Santo Daime, a Christian syncretic religion from Brazil, exceeds the scope of this thesis. Indigenous communities are rightly alert to the consequences of culturally appropriative practices,

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[7]Residential schools were institutions created by the Canadian government where First Nations and Aboriginal children were sent to be assimilated into Canadian culture. Children attending these boarding schools were not allowed to speak their mother tongues and were subjected to a range of physical, sexual and psychological violences. In contemporary Canada, residential schools are now acknowledged as part of a colonial effort to wipe out First Nations and Aboriginal culture (Milloy, 1999).

and it is my hope that elements owed to their traditions are employed by Céu do Montréal at the discretion of Indigenous people, and in a continuing dialogue with them. However, while it is important to consider the adoption of Indigenous traditions in the Santo Daime through the lens of cultural appropriation, a second—and not inherently mutually exclusive—possibility should be considered. Figuring Indigenous agency centrally, the integration of First Nations traditions in the Santo Daime church can be read as a shaping of Santo Daime's syncretic form by Indigenous people, for Indigenous people. If this is the case, then the proportion of First Nations people attending Santo Daime rituals could be expected to increase along with the integration of additional First Nations traditions. As my Indigenous interlocutor told me, Canadian Santo Daime doctrine would benefit from developing novel forms that reflect the local natural environment and spirit beings. Should Céu do Montréal establish the legal right to pursue their religion, the syncretization of First Nations practices into Santo Daime doctrine will be an exciting and controversial site of intercultural encounter and ritual innovation.

5. **Conclusion**

At the time of writing this thesis, Céu do Montréal face persisting barriers to their practice. Still, five years into the official hiatus of their importation of Daime, a small core of community members press on without legal access to their religious sacrament. Discourses that would have them understand Daime, a categorical member of the class of substances called illegal drugs, as an inherently harmful substance have not quelled Céu do Montréal. In fact, members' confidence in Daime seems galvanized by the interruption; one participant recounted how she was initially afraid at the onset of the hiatus—she didn't know how she would respond, emotionally or physiologically, to the sudden cessation of her regular consumption of Daime. She was worried that she had lost her means of "connecting to the light", but experience proved her wrong and she "learned how to have that [connection to the light] without Daime". Now, she told me, if she gets an opportunity to take Daime, it is more to connect to community than out of a need to drink the sacrament. In this manner, obstacles to Céu do Montréal's practice can be made to productively re-affirm their differences vis-à-vis stereotyped substance users. As in the case of my participants, Daime proves itself to be other than an illicit drug, by virtue of its lack of harmful effects following cessation of use. Through this type of encounter, ethnographic engagement with Céu do Montréal over the past two years has continually challenged any reductive or assimilative frameworks that I might be tempted to understand them through. My impressions suggest that no such simplifications are either possible, or productive. Thinking of the Canadian cultural context as a kind of "experimental space" in the vein of Georges Devereux's ethnopsychiatric clinic—as a place of mediation between scientific systems of thought, and the systems of thought presented by immigrant populations, in the case at-hand, migrating religions and sacra-

ments—social practices and political action cannot be considered "without addressing the question of the place we attribute to systems from other worlds" (Nathan, 1999).

By way of addressing Nathan's query—asking the question of the place we attribute to systems from other worlds—I attempted to elucidate understandings of Céu do Montréal and their place within Canada through an exploration of ontological and epistemological alterity, and an unpacking of its manifestations at several levels of analysis. Recognizing the rhetorical importance of *received* information in the Santo Daime, I looked to the site of transactions of meaning—ritual Works—as loci of ontological divergence from secular Canadian culture. Interview data produced in collaboration with members of Céu do Montréal substantiated information I initially encountered while researching Santo Daime doctrine: the Daime sacrament mediates experiences of spiritual agency, as evidenced by my interlocutors' descriptions of meaningful intersubjective encounters either felt, seen, or heard during Works. Beginning with the navigation of alterity at an individual level, I attended to the language that people used to describe intersubjective encounters and the way these encounters figured into their understandings of the world. I explored the notion that Santo Daime rituals catalyze meaningful relations with Daime and observed that the kind of meaning yielded from these relations eludes a scientific epistemology. My participants privilege an immanent, fluid and deeply personal notion of meaning over positivistic truth claims—allowing, above all else, for the ontological recognition of a non-human "other". While Santo Daime reify their ontological commitment to the presence that animates Daime through established doctrine, my data suggest that this commitment is re-negotiated on an individual basis. Although conversations with my collaborators phenomenologically corroborate the prevalence of forms of intersubjective encounters, it appears that while some *daimistas* are

committed to the existence of entities both inside and outside of ritual Works, others espouse epistemologies that are more ontologically skeptical of the status of entities outside of ritual space. Still, skeptical or not, *daimistas*' use of language frequently frames the Santo Daime sacrament as an agent rather than an inanimate substance, supporting an interpretation of the relation between *daimistas* and Daime as a relation between volitional actors.

Given the centrality of ontological alterity—as contrasted to secular, ostensibly rational, North Americans—in key aspects of Santo Daime doctrine, Céu do Montréal engage in processes of translation to make their beliefs and practices commensurable to interlocutors outside the church. I proceeded to unpack translational processes enacted at a collective level by focusing on the disparities between the ontologies and epistemologies of the government of Canada (in particular, its Health Canada department) and those of Céu do Montréal. Specifically, I looked at Health Canada's rhetorical construal of Daime as a "preparation containing N, N-dimethyltryptamine (DMT), harmalol and harmaline" and their analysis of this "preparation" along dimensions of harm and risk. Health Canada's construal of Daime as a drug of abuse precludes a nuanced understanding of the relationship between *daimistas* and the Daime brew and foreclose on the possibility of an ontological recognition of intersubjective relations with Daime and/or the entities it mediates. In turn, I delineated some of the discourses that Céu do Montréal perform to make their goals strategically commensurable to the state. Shifting attention back to intra-community discourses, I examined the cultural translations that Céu do Montréal members undertake to bridge perceived differences—along dimensions of identity, spirituality and health—between themselves and the Canadian cultural context. At once aware of the alterity of their beliefs and practices, and the fact that they are embedded in a largely secular society, Céu do Montréal

emphasize the cultivation of a mutually-reinforcing dynamic between ritual Works and day-to-day life. I explored members' beliefs about healing and illness as aspects of a process of locating spiritual experiences within the context of a secular, highly medicalized culture. Finally, I described some of the principal innovations that Céu do Montréal have added to the Santo Daime ritual repertoire, and framed these innovations as efforts to ground Céu do Montréal's practice in the spiritual and cultural context of Canada. By deploying the concepts of ontology and epistemology, this chapter assessed Santo Daime's expansion and subsequent adaptation to a Canadian setting by drawing out evidence of alterity, and the techniques that Céu do Montréal have employed—at individual and collective levels—to navigate these differences and establish their practice in Canada.

What place do we attribute to systems from other worlds? The question animates the field of transcultural psychiatry and weaves anthropology into medicine and mental health. It is also a question posed in tacit and explicit ways by members of Céu do Montréal, whose discourses express a spectrum of ontological and epistemological relations to Santo Daime, at once a doctrine, a sacrament and a guide. Santo Daime asks us to take the question of other worlds seriously; it tests the limits of scientific models, asks what kinds of ontological contradictions they can sustain. Can a plant decoction be, simultaneously, a psychoactive substance and a volitional agent? Must it be one or the other? Taking cues from the epistemologies of members of Céu do Montréal, perhaps systematic deconstructions of contradiction within Santo Daime, or between Santo Daime and their Canadian cultural context, will not yield meaningful insights. Ethnographic data suggests that at a personal level, these contradictions are not inherently problematic and are not even necessarily construed as contradictions. Instead, they are presented as syncretizations and

they produce, as their fruits, new practices and, in the eyes of Céu do Montréal, meaningful personal transformations.

On what terms should the mechanisms of transformation and healing in Santo Daime be made commensurable? Members of Céu do Montréal actively resist the assimilation of their practice into medical paradigms, yet most, if not all, of the people I interviewed reported improvements in their psychological (and even physical) well-being, in their relations with others and in their sense of personal autonomy. As far as Santo Daime ought to be thought of as a therapeutic system, do we understand their concepts, in Nathan's words, as "representations" or as "genuine theories" (Nathan, 1999)? To call their concepts "representations"—by extension, considering them in the terms of the culture of medicine and the scientific method—we "deny them, in effect, any claim to describing objects of the world" (Nathan, 1999). If, instead, we approach Santo Daime practices as "genuine theories", then we are not compelled to minimize them by requiring that they comply to the logics of medicine or, say, pharmacological action. Without prefiguring the primacy of one formation of culturally-bound knowledge over the other, perhaps we can appreciate the potential of the hybridization of these forms. We can allow pharmacological and neuroscientific findings to complement, rather than negate, Daime's immanent, individually-apprehended insights. We can encourage constellations of knowledge and experience from Santo Daime and other psychedelic practices to enhance the prospects and outcomes of new clinical research on these substances. We can incite this clinical research to support the political and legal struggles of communities that are responsibly engaged with psychedelics. We can recognize the historical and contemporary effects of colonialism, in its many forms, on the lives of these communities, and we can open space for Indigenous voices to co-determine the future of these

powerful allies, without romanticizing or exoticizing them. The power dynamics inherent to the relationship between Céu do Montréal and the political forces that constrain their practice impose a precarious future on Santo Daime in Canada. In the face of uncertainty, the future of psychedelics, more broadly, is impossible to predict. Through meaningful engagements with Santo Daime and other psychedelic communities, and through critical reflection on the terms of these engagements, perhaps the scales can be tipped in the direction of policies and practices rooted in ethically-gathered evidence.

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7. Appendix

The following document constitutes the interview materials that I brought to each interview conducted with Céu do Montréal. Along with my research protocol and consent forms, it was approved by the Jewish General Hospital Research Ethics Committee.

The objective of the semi-structured interviews conducted for the "Entheogenic Ontologies and Epistemologies" project is to encourage the free flow of thoughts and feelings. Ideally, it will take the form of candid conversation. As such, the interview will not be rigidly schematized, and instead, material will consist of thematic talking points that help inspire topical discussion. Talking points have been designed to elicit discussion about ontological and epistemological perspectives on ayahuasca, and to touch on the subjects of globalization, ethics of ayahuasca practices, production and importation and, finally, on the political obstacles faced by the Canadian ayahuasca community. In the interview materials, the word "ayahuasca" has been replaced by the word "Daime", the preferred designation for ayahuasca of the Santo Daime community.

List of talking points:

-What is Daime?

-What is Daime useful for?

-What is the role of Daime in your life?

-What kind of knowledge or information does Daime provide you?

-What is the relationship of Daime to the sacred?

-What is the place of Daime in Canada?

-What does it mean to work with an Amazonian medicine in Canada?

-What is the significance of Daime's spread around the world?

-What does it mean for Daime to be restricted in Canada?

-Has the restriction on the importation of Daime had an effect on your practice?

-What is the relationship between Daime and other psychoactive substances?

-How does your practice with the Santo Daime interact with your other or previously maintained religious beliefs or practices?

-Is there a relationship between Daime and First Nations people? If so, what is the nature of this relationship?

-Are there any sustainability or environmental issues with the production of Daime tea?

-Are there differences in the way you understand Daime and the way you perceive it to be understood by Canadians at large? By the government?

-Has Daime had an effect (either positive, negative or neutral) on your self-perceived mental health?

-Has Daime had an effect (either positive, negative or neutral) on your self-perceived relationships with others?