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# Morrison: mýtus a člověk. Analýza jeho poezie v souvislosti s trendy 60. a 70. let 20. století

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TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF LIBEREC  
Faculty of Science, Humanities  
and Education



# Morrison: the Myth and the Man. An Analysis of his Poetry in Relation to Trends in the 1960s and 1970s

**Bachelor thesis**

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**Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :**

Cílem práce je

- 1) vysvětlit hlavní kulturní a literární vlivy na tvorbu Jamese Douglase Morrisona
- 2) hledat ústřední myšlenky jeho poezie, které překonaly svou dobu
- 3) srovnat mýtus a skutečnost této osobnosti s důrazem na opomíjenou roli Morrisona jako básníka s cílem poukázat na to, že Jim Morrison nebyl pouhým bohémem a rockovou legendou, ale především komplexním autorem zapojeným do filozofie a problémů svého času.

Metody: literární analýza jeho básnické tvorby na pozadí filozofických a sociálních trendů 60. a 70. let za použití psychoanalýzy, strukturalistických a poststrukturalistických postupů.

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## **Anotace**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá způsobem jakým ikona americké hudby šedesátých let dvacátého století Jim Morrison nabyl mýtických kvalit, jež přesahují skutečnost. Práce se skládá ze tří součástí. První část je všeobecným popisem kontextu určeného erudovanému čtenáři. Tato část, založena na kritické studii populárního diskurzu na téma Morrison, pojednává o rozporuplných událostech, které přispěly k utvoření mýtu provázejícího tuto osobnost. Jednotlivé události jsou prezentovány chronologicky, aby tak čtenáři poskytly stručný smysluplný příběh, jenž dává do protikladu mýtus a skutečnost a zároveň poskytuje výčet hlavních vlivů v procesu vývoje Morrisona jako básníka. Pozornost je věnována vysvětlení role Morrisona v subkultuře mládeže šedesátých let. Druhá část této práce popisuje důvody posmrtného vyzdvižení Morrisona do oblasti populárního mýtu. Třetí část jej zařazuje do americké literární tradice, čímž se snaží etablovat Morrisona jako komplexního básníka, který si zaslouží uznání akademických kruhů. Nalezení ústředních myšlenek přetrvávajících svou dobu je pak závěrečným ohniskem zájmu této práce.

## **Klíčová slova**

šedesátá léta, Jim Morrison, mýtus, subkultura, romantismus, The Doors, Nietzsche, vizuální kultura, hudební průmysl



## **Annotation**

This thesis examines how the icon of American 1960s' music Jim Morrison acquired mythic qualities larger than life. The thesis consists of three parts. The first is a popular account directed at educated adults. Based on a critical study of popular discourse about Morrison, it deals with contradictory events in his life that contributed to the mythos surrounding this man. The events are presented chronologically to provide the reader with a concise, yet sensible narrative contrasting the myth with reality, while at the same time showing the main influences in the evolution of Morrison as a poet. The attention is paid to explaining Morrison in relation to the hedonist youth subculture of the 1960s. The second part outlines reasons for the afterlife elevation of Morrison into the subject of popular myth. The aim of presenting Morrison in an American literary tradition is to establish him as a complex poet worth of academic recognition. The final focus of the thesis is to find the timeless themes of Morrison's writings that are still relevant today.

## **Keywords**

1960s, Jim Morrison, popular myth, subculture, romanticism, The Doors, Nietzsche, visual culture, music industry

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# 1 Introduction

The aim of presenting a life story of James Douglas Morrison is not to provide a mere factual account of events. Rather, the biography is intended to give the reader context to understand better not only the formative factors of Morrisons personage, but also the main influences on his artistic expression. Various sources including film, popular literature and afterlife best selling biographies are being balanced with intimate interviews and poetry to provide, on one hand, details of transformation of a man into a poet and an elevation of the man into the subject of myth on the other.

According to Macherey, “all narratives contain an ideological project. That is, they promise to tell the truth about something” (Storey 2003, 40). Hence, the task of this critical writing is not to provide an immaculate depiction of Morrison as a man, of who he really was. Rather, it is to point out disparities in literature written about and by Morrison.

While stressing the role of Morrison as a poet, this thesis is intended to reflect on specific events in his life that led to various conflicts of meanings in the process of creation of Morrison’s myth and thus strives to question the ideology that “exists precisely in order to efface all trace of contradiction” (Storey 2003, 40).

## **2 Evolution of the man**

### **2.1 Authoritarian upbringing and the constant moving**

Storey (2003 75) explains that “myths are stories we tell ourselves as a culture in order to banish contradictions and make the world explicable and therefore habitable.” Thus many biographies try to explain Morrison through his childhood spent in a strict, rigid atmosphere of the household of a heavily decorated naval officer Steve Morrison. The reason why some of the postmortem memoirs described Morrison in a sharp contrast to his family is that such depiction fits into the usual narrative portraying Morrison as a prototypical rebel, symbol of the 1960s’ youth subculture engaged “in symbolic forms of resistance to both dominant and parent cultures” (136).

Together with constant moving and a lack of love in childhood Steve Morrison’s role as a severe taskmaster who ruled with an iron fist is often described amongst the reasons for Jim’s outrageous behaviour and his joy of being in the centre of attention not only throughout the schoolyears, but also during his stage performances with The Doors. Although Jim’s brother Andy contradicts such narrative claiming that “...our dad was pretty mellow” (Henke 2007, 6), and that “There were never any big disciplinary deals or anything like that” (6), the popular literature about Morrison states the authoritarian upbringing as one of the main formative impulses in his life and thus contributes to the creation of Morrison’s myth.

“The mother’s role repeatedly changes, depending on whether or not the father is home, and the children often suffer a confusion about and resentment of authority” (Hopkins, Sugerma 1991, 7-8). Often the reason for such depiction of Jim’s childhood is the effort of biographers to make the story seem logical and explainable

by presenting Morrison's family relationship within a broader temporal context of rebellious social discontent of the 1960s. Jim's brother Andy disproves such representation of their childhood claiming that "People don't realize that we were a pretty close family" (Henke 2007, 6).

It was the constant moving that had a major impact on Morrison as a poet. By the time Jim was sixteen the family had lived at eighteen addresses in nine states. While the family spent a lot of time together in the car moving to different locations where his father would be assigned, Jim had difficulties to make friends in each transient location. Despite he excelled in all his schoolwork not only at Oak Street School in Fairfax County, Virginia, but also back at the West Coast at Longfellow school in San Diego, California, where, at the age of ten, he displayed his talent for writing and composed his first authentic poem *The Pony Express*. But in 1955, after moving to Albuquerque, New Mexico, he became more and more withdrawn. According to Ray Manzarek "all the moving turned Jim into a reader. I think he found his consolation and his friends in books" (8).

## **2.2 The friendly loner**

It was 1957 when Commander Steve Morrison was reassigned to Alameda, close to San Francisco the centre of the Beat Generation. The popular suggestion that he became a loner because of all that moving is shattered by Fud Ford, Jim's close friend at Alameda High School, who says he was "exactly the opposite; he was really friendly" (Lisciandro 1991, 32). He enjoyed mystifying teachers and playing practical jokes on other students. He obviously loved challenging authority. Soon Jim became a clown of the class, the one "with the comment about the class and everyone would laugh" (35). Furthermore, besides his extreme intellect and ability to

get along with people, Fud emphasizes Morrison's sense of humour. However, some of his classmates remember him as being rather outrageous than funny.

I curried favor in school  
& attack'd the teachers  
I was given a  
desk in the corner  
I was a fool  
&  
The smartest kid  
in class (Morrison 1989, 202)

After a little more than a year spent in Alameda fourteen year old Morrison had to leave his friends again, this time moving to East Coast where he enrolled in George Washington High School in Alexandria, Virginia. Jim had already read novel *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac that enraptured him by its nonconformist philosophy standing in opposition to the dulling values of American middle-class lifestyle.

Besides Norman Mailer, Marquis de Sade, Norman O'Brown or William Burroughs, other author had a profound influence on Morrison's future life and poetry. A French symbolist Jean Arthur Rimbaud stirred Jim not only with his visionary poetry and unique intelligence, but also with his excessive lifestyle. Rimbaud was known for his outrageous manners as well as for his brilliant poetic insight that paved the way to the future surrealists. Together with Rimbaud's *Illuminations* Nietzsche's book *Beyond Good and Evil* challenging morality, ethics and Christianity had a decisive influence on Jim becoming more difficult, provocative and self-centred while maturing. That is not only due to being fed up

with the constant moving, but also due to the atmosphere of the school which was more conservative and status-conscious than the Alameda High School in the West. Despite being a troubled child Morrison continued to excel. Writing on a daily basis he filled his notebooks with poetry, comments and dialogues and eventually finished the school with an overall B+ average.

### **2.3 The troubled child**

In 1961 Jim's parents enrolled him in St. Petersburg Junior College in Florida. This chapter of Morrison's life is often described as the period of loss of interest in schoolwork. Popular literature about Morrison claims that reasons for this apathy towards school were his father expecting him to follow in his footsteps, having to live with his grandparents and the new school environment obliging him to wear a uniform to class. Nevertheless, he didn't lose interest in self-education, and thus his teenage years in Florida became a significant period in the evolution of Jim as a poet.

He resisted the expectations of his family by searching for freedom in the realm of art. The Contemporary Arts Coffeehouse and Gallery became the centre of his interest. It was there where he first recited his poetry publicly at the club's open-mike nights.

Having read the Kerouac's *On the road* or Ginsberg's *Howl* he became gradually dissatisfied with the values of the American middle class lifestyle. It is not to say he despised his family. Rather, he disagreed with nearly everything they stood for, especially with the fundamentalist attitudes of his grandparents.

The personality test given to him as a new student proved him to be "impulsive, happy-go-lucky and excitement-loving, as opposed to disciplined and self-controlled" (Hopkins, Sugerman 1991, 20). Yet he fostered interest in

intellectual activities, which would later make him write:

Did you know freedom exists

In a school book (The Doors 1978a, 00:01)

Therefore, Morrison's affection for reading can be viewed as an enthusiastic effort to self-discovery, to find authenticity and relief from the oppressive aspects of two-faced victorian manners. His unconventional choice of readings throughout the teenage years resonates with the quest for self-determination and self-discovery so typical for Morrison's poetry.

It was about this time where the roots of his affection towards sociology can be traced. He took influential courses that significantly influenced his artwork, general view of the world and an his abiding interest in mass culture, specifically the philosophies of protest and the psychology of crowds. Despite the fact he kept a notebook filling it with ideas he found while reading existentialist ideas that helped maturing Jim to make sense of the world and his own existence, later in his life in an interview for The Rolling Stone he said he couldn't select writers who had major impact on him from the very beginning. Morrison claimed that they were "Too numerous to mention" (Morrison 1969, 16).

Rather, he considers listening to Elvis Presley and Bob Dylan, reading Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, Rousseau and others an unconscious accumulating of information throughout the adolescence that corresponded with the early days of rock 'n roll.

## **2.4 UCLA and the mayor literary influences**

In 1964 Jim became student of Theater Arts Department of UCLA. Los Angeles became a city of major changes in Morrison's life. He was about to



experience a cultural and spiritual renaissance blooming in the West Coast.

History of Rock

coinciding w/my

adolescence

Came to LA to

Film School

Venice Summer

Drug Visions

Roof top songs

early struggles & humiliations (Morrison 1989, 204)

Morrison chose to attend the school because of his fascination with film as “the closest approximation in art that we have to the actual flow of consciousness” (Morrison 1969, 16). Although the friends he made there were the most problematic ones in the university, he enjoyed being part of the intellectual atmosphere of the university which was at those times going through its so called golden era. Francis Ford Coppola and Steven Spielberg were students there.

*The Lords/Notes on Vision*, a collection originally published in an edition of 500, is a book of poems on visual culture that was originally conceived as notes on an essay Jim had to write at UCLA. Morrison was enchanted specifically with the theory of film. In fact the only film he made there was a film that called the film process as such into question. Basically, the film was quite similar to what is called metacinema, except that Morrison’s film was not about film production. Instead, it poetically depicted the bare process of film consumption by showing people watching TV and then filling the whole screen with scenes shown on that television.

But it was not just film theory that affected the process of writing of *The Lords*. As soon as in 1963 Jim started experimenting with psychedelic substances. A new theme appears in his poetry which can be understood in the light of radical changes of the time. Fowlie explains the recurrent theme of metamorphosis in Morrison's writings by putting it in relation to the struggles and confusions of young people trying to feel both attached and detached from society (Fowlie 1994, 128). Nevertheless, for Jim metamorphose is rather an issue of a particular experience, or better, a process of achieving a state of Nietzschean Ur-eine:<sup>1</sup>

*Metamorphose.* An object is cut off from its name,  
habits, associations. Detached, it becomes only  
the thing, in and of itself. When this disintegration  
into pure existence is at last achieved, the object  
is free to become endlessly anything (Morrison 1989, 78).

Here, we have a record of escape which so typical to every romantic movement, an eternal, timeless side of Morrison's art that provides him, on one hand, with an ecstatic state of consciousness free of all dogmatic fictions, "habits, associations" (line 2) and links him, if not the whole youth subculture of the 1960s with its idealism, to the tradition of literary resistance. In the same way that Nietzsche sought this disintegration into pure existence in an attempt to overcome Christianity in his book *The Birth of Tragedy*<sup>2</sup>, Jean Arthur Rimbaud, another of Jim

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<sup>1</sup> For Nietzsche Ur-Eine is a particular experience, a pleasurable ecstatic experience of Primordial-Oneness, Cosmic Will or heightened consciousness which can be achieved through raush. Ur-Eine experience was, in one way or another, part and parcel of the Romantic era, much as the "altered state of consciousness" was of the 1960s (Borody, 2003, 81).

<sup>2</sup> "The Birth of Tragedy is a sustained defence of personal freedom overlaid by an apostate rhetoric that is personally directed against Christianity, but masked as a scholarly attack on the Hellenistic-based idealization of

's literary heroes, sought this experience to find a source of creativity and a refuge from the oppressive climate of Christian morality. Both Morrison and Rimbaud believed that to achieve such insight into their own selves, they had to derange their senses. ““Over” stimulation, and eccentric, risky behavior, were for them the norms of their youth” (Balz 2008, 13). Other literary geni Morrison read and can be linked to are French symbolist Charles Baudelaire with his *Artificial Paradises*<sup>3</sup>, or English romantic visionary William Blake, who in the mayhem of the French Revolution wrote these lines in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*:

The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.

Prudence is a rich ugly old maid courted by Incapacity.

He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence. (Blake 2008, 35)

As demonstrated in line 2, Blake speaks on behalf of the universal energy, or wisdom (line 1), which is universal, self-replicating and inherent to each generation of youth trying to challenge the prudence and incapacity (line 2) of its predecessors. It is the passivity of modern man, that came as a threat to humanity with the Industrial revolution, that made Blake compose these verses encouraging to attain the palace of wisdom (line 1). The passivity and complacency towards life are the same values Morrison feared and rebelled in his poetry. His writings are, therefore, rationality embraced by much of nineteenth century academic and scientific discourse” (Borody, 88). Instead of a religion as a form of oppression, Nietzsche proposes a concept of what can be termed as Christianity of Joy. “According to the argument in the Birth of Tragedy, pleasure, in its most heightened form as ecstasy, is a celebration of life and existence, and however temporary, the most fitting response to the pain and suffering of existence” (81).

<sup>3</sup> “Viewed by contemporaries as a late, decadent Romantic or as a Parnassian lover of art for art's sake, Baudelaire is often described as the founder of what would later be known as symbolism” (Leicht, 789). The use of drugs is apparent in the exceptional sensuality of his verses. Similarly Morrison used various intoxicants to boost his imagination and creativity.

intended to “deliver people from the limited ways in which they see and feel” (Morrison 1989, 2). According to Balz (2008 ,23), “Blake embodied in his poetry the yearning Jim shared for the tranquility of society not in the grips of materialistic or idealistic passion, but in touch with its spirituality.”

It was the Venice Summer that had a profound influence on Jim. During 1965 people all over America began migrating to Los Angeles, the centre of the new lifestyle revolution. According to Dylan Jones (1991, 27), it was not the film school that fueled Jim’s thoughts but his experiments with LSD. Having received negative notices for his end-of-term film he quit college and moved to the Venice beach, the heart of the emerging bohemian culture near Los Angeles, where he spent some time living on a rooftop, dropping acid and writing poetry that would later become the most successful lyrics of The Doors band. Surrounded by beatniks, musicians, actors, hippies and other hedonists Morrison was conscious about the exceptionality of the time he was part of. “From a historical vantage point it probably will look like the troubadour period in France. I’m sure it will look incredibly romantic” (Morrison 1969, 18). Understanding Morrison’s poetry and his role as an actor in The Doors band is thus easier when put in relation with these revolutionary literary figures.

## **2.5 The Doors and Morrison’s role in the 1960’s subculture**

Despite Jim considered his role of a singer in The Doors only a temporary form of artistic expression and saw his future in the literal sands, his activity in the band cannot be separated from his artwork in an attempt to emphasize his role as a poet.

The Doors band began at UCLA where Morrison and Manzarek enrolled in a masters program in filmmaking. They shared a house in Venice, California, near the famous beach. Ray introduced his friends Krieger and Densmore to Jim’s poetry.

They began to jam together at small clubs at the Sunset Strip. Even at the early tapes they made there was a distinct bluesy feeling. The reason why they hit the top charts so soon was not Jim's voice which he describes as a sick croon (Morrison 1989, 205). Rather it was due to the perfect timing of the combination of good music and original lyrics.

Chronologically, the tone of The Doors albums progresses from sheer exuberance of mid-sixties, to more socially aware themes of later albums reflecting hopes, expectations and communality of anti-war movement with its subsequent disillusionment.

By 1970 Morrison became frustrated by the lost message of his poetry and realized that "poets usually become heroes after they are long gone" (Morrison 1971a, 01:21). The radical change of the sound of the band in its last album that switched from rock to blues is not only due to Morrison feeling misunderstood, it also reflects disillusionments of the whole generation that felt unheard of after all efforts for transformation failed.

In order to understand the rising restlessness of the 1960s era we need to go back to the end of the World War II. Once the War was over consumerism became the propulsion power of American economy. The relief and prosperity that came with the end of the war resulted in a baby boom. The flush of prosperity and the thrill of victory thus translated itself into a completely new generation born in times of affluence (Gittlin, 20).

But with the technological progress a new oppressive machine of an industrial society emerged. American cities became gradually psychologically and physically crowded. Consequently the rapid technological progress and massive urbanization

caused a gradual alienation of society from nature and spirituality. The society switched from spiritual modesty to consumerism and strict materialism. According to Morrison (1971, track 1, 26:10), the reasons why people attend rock concerts are instinctive insect-like and can be seen as a consequence of people getting neurotic and paranoid due to overpopulation. Therefore, the role of a poet is to mediate the contact with the lost spirit life. According to Balz (2008, 20), Jim's effort was to create an "old fashioned purgation, ancient exorcism onto the audience, in this way relating their modern symptoms of sickness to more fundamental social and spiritual failings." For their effort to "overcome unpalatable social regimes" by means of "spiritual or metaphysical collectivization" (Baker 2003, 2) we may incorporate Morrison's theatricity in Doors' performances alongside Nietzsche and Artaud's political aesthetics. Borody's comment (2003, 93) on Nietzsche's determination to "clean up the mess left by the quagmire of the moral and sexual authoritarianism of the oppressive aspect of nineteenth century Euro-Christian culture" is, therefore, applicable also to Morrison and the effort of the new hedonist youth for a more open, free society. Both Morrison and Nietzsche had to put on a mask to achieve it and both suffered harsh consequences of their art (93).

In compare to his literary predecessors, he managed to mediate his art to masses. Just like beats, Morrison explored the self as a "source of all good" (Gitlin 1989, 54). Unlike his romantic predecessors, he did not find himself at the edge of society but got a chance to transfer his ideas to a large public at the stage as a shaman rock singer, to invite the audience to join him on his inner journey. In *The Lords* Morrison claims that shaman's "mental travels formed the crux of the religious life of the tribe" (Morrison 1987, 71). In his symbolic language Morrison invited people

to set on their own spiritual journey. On the stage The Doors offered people way to a real sustainable change that lies in a transformation of each individual. That is because “Without first undergoing the journey to a heightened consciousness, the very concept of revolution would remain superficial, and true social change would not be sustained” (Magistrale, Tony, 1992, 143).

Jim with many of his generation shared a conviction that revolution would be the only way to achieve a meaningful change. Nevertheless, he also shared the disillusion that followed this era he repetitively referred to as a cultural renaissance. Despite the larger than life celebrity status Morrison acquired after his death he had almost no impact on the radical changes and liberal reforms of his time and turned out harshly misunderstood. The disillusion with the lost message of his lyrics resulted in Morrison trying to abandon the public favor and shed the destructive, self-overwhelming mask of the “bitter Poet-Madman” (Morrison 1989, 124). As a result, a significant part of Morrison’s poetry is self-referential and can be considered as a deeply personal struggle for identity. Therefore, any attempt to find his contribution to the actual politics of his time would result shallow. Yet the themes of his lyrics surely are related to the torments of the youth and, judging by the popularity The Doors received, proved to be very timely in his time.

Morrison’s artistic merits were ignored owing to the sensational and conservative press, exaggeration of facts and prevalent moral and sexual authoritarianism of the shallow relic of Christianity which denounced him as a symbol of a general moral decay. Evidently, Morrison’s philosophy of having a good time became an inherent part of the subculture that emerged in the 1960s as a result of a “contradiction, at an ideological level, between traditional working-class

puritanism and the new hedonism of consumption” (Storey 2003, 135-136).

The popular myth that Morrison embodied the rebellious social discontent of the 1960s overshadows his real contribution to American spirit. While this is result of writers trying to explain Morrison in relation to the restless time, claiming falsely that he was often violent and even attempted to incite riots (Jones 1991, 137), it is a fact that “several of Morrison’s poems and song lyrics allude to his generation’s dissatisfaction with the values of American middle class life” (Magistrale 1992, 141). According to Morrison (1971b, 1:32), the reason for his popularity is that people seek to fulfil the need for some figure that would symbolize a lot of ideas. “Each generation wants new symbols, new people, new names. They want to divorce themselves from preceding generations.”

He explains the role he carried out before the rock moved to large open-air concerts claiming that what people want is a band that is a part of their community rather than something that is being laid on from somewhere else on top of them. He was the artist who casted aside all the past and all the business associations, to prove people he wasn’t doing it for money, but for a reason (Morrison 1971c, 0:11).

## **2.6 The death myth**

Morrison is often depicted as an enigmatic spokesman of a neurotic youth, writing about dark Freudian secrets, a poet obsessed with death. This myth stems partly from an effort of the popular literature to embody rising conflicts of youth with the conservative generation of their parents in a figure of Morrison. Nevertheless such depiction shatters the notion of Morrison as a positive poet which he was, a poet who certainly didn’t plan to die so young.

Jerry Hopkins and Danny Sugerman (1991, 35) assert that the 1960s’ crowds



suffered from a sexual neurosis caused by repression and lack of love. Since the nature of myth creation is that it's placing discontinuous individual events into a narrative structure in which everything seems logical (Kitch 2002, 296), Morrison is often misinterpreted as a self-destructive pathological neurotic with a death wish, which would later lead to him being considered by the new generations of fans as a symbol of excess, an example of the so called better to burn out than to fade away lifestyle.

According to Jim's friend Babe Hill, death wish is a "cliche that does not apply to this man" (Lisciandro 1991, 172). Instead, he searched for a new system of personal faith demanding a constant awareness of death in order to live more fully:

Now is blessed

The rest

remembered (Morrison 1989, 16)

The theme of death is often viewed as an ultimate form of romantic escape. Nevertheless, it was not something Morrison would be obsessed about or yearning for. In fact, in his poetry Jim fears death and, despite its temptation, asserts he would rather live:

No more money, no more fancy dress 1

This other Kingdom seems by far the best 2

until its other jaw reveals incest 3

& loose obedience to a vegetable law 4

I will not go 5

Prefer a Feast of Friends 6

To the Giant family (The Doors 1978b, 01:38) 7

Here, Morrison contemplates the temptation of the other Kingdom of death (line 2) void of money and pretence (line 1). However, he overcomes this appeal realizing its numbing vegetative essence (line 4). In this poem we can see a hint of Morrison's hedonistically positive philosophy which oppose the popular myth that he was self-destructive.

## **2.7 Morrison, the rebel**

In one of the interviews he gave just months before eventually died in Paris he denies terming what happens during The Doors concert a riot, claiming it never really got out of control (Morrison 1971, track 1, 24:57). The concert that took place in New Haven, Connecticut, in December 1967 is considered a mark of the beginning of the serious trouble The Doors had with authorities. The Doors now gained as much publicity from their presence as they did from their music. This concert started the reputation of The Doors as a dirty and dangerous band and it also marked a change between the band and their audience who, from now on, were coming to watch Morrison go crazy.

After he gained acceptance as a rock star, Morrison realized he was becoming to contribute to the complacency he contemplated so much and originally tried to combat by achieving an Artaudian<sup>4</sup> dissolution of the boundary between spectator and actor during his performances. In *The Lords* he writes about the feeling of powerlessness and hopelessness that people have in the face of reality, that they have

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4 Antonin Artaud was a French dramatist who believed that theatre had the power to provoke change within a person and had the ability to transform a culture. Artaud insisted that to truly move the audience they must undergo an experience based in ritual, which in this case is theatre with its transformative power (Delano 2012, 2-6). "He also strove to destroy the separation between the audience and actor, in effect blurring the lines between real and imagined."(12) Employing such a life-altering purgative experience he turned the passive audience into an active participant of the action of his plays.

no control over the events in their life.

We are content with the given in sensation's  
quest. We have been metamorphosed from a mad  
body dancing on hillsides to a pair of eyes  
staring in the dark (Morrison 1987, 29)

While Morrison became a symbol of rebellion, he didn't rebel against the establishment as most of the young of his time did. He romantically rebelled against the ignorance and passivity of people that came as a result of enlightenment's emphasis on exclusively visual perception. Just like Nietzsche Morrison wanted people to be active participants in their life, to "beware the ways your Freedom and Joy are duplicitously manipulated and, as a result, surreptitiously obliterated by the very voices bespeaking that Freedom and that Joy" (Borody 2003, 93). As explained in further chapters he tried to reverse this tendency of audience towards passive consumption of music during the Miami concert, but failed.

## **2.8 Lizard King and the Media manipulation**

Throughout his career as the singer-actor of The Doors Morrison acquired several pseudonyms like Dionysus, shaman, the dark angel and others. The most distinctive of which has become the Lizard King alter-ego. This chapter is intended to demonstrate how Morrison participated in the creation of his myth.

Having grown up in the ambience of booming mass media Morrison adopted their sensational style looking for catchy phrases. In the interview for the Rolling Stone magazine in July 1969 he admits he deliberately manipulated media by giving the journalists what they wanted. When The Doors achieved some recognition in the world of music, Jim, with his prominent talent for self-image propagation, was the

one who helped to turn the band into a phenomenon. The fact that the mass market itself is an integral part of The Doors' history should not be left out when describing the process of creation of the Morrison's myth. Using phrases he knew would secure his place in the field of popular music Jim proved to be very good at manipulating publicity. While it is because of his endowment for the printed word that he knew how to manipulate the press, he was conscious of the fact that it carried a risk, because "it can turn on you" (Morrison 1969, 16).

Stylistics was a necessary part of The Doors propagation. Although in his later poetry we may see Morrison trying to separate himself from the public image he himself helped to create, in the early days he consciously worked on integrating ideas he acquired during the film school studies and while reading masters of literature mentioned in the previous chapters. In *The Lords* he contemplates the role of a shaman that later became relevant in explaining his performance in the band and in the creation of a popular myth among the new generations of fans.

In the seance, the shaman led. A sensuous panic,  
deliberately evoked through drugs, chants, dancing,  
hurls the shaman into trance. Changed voice,  
convulsive movement. He acts like a madman. These  
professional hysterics, chosen precisely for their  
psychotic leaning, were once esteemed. They  
mediated between man and spirit-world. Their mental  
travels formed the crux of the religious life of a tribe (Morrison 1987, 71).

Morrison integrated the image of a pseudo-shaman in his performance to differentiate the band from the predominant American folk sound of his time. He

took drugs and danced madly to achieve the contact with the spirit-world encouraging others to set out on their own inner journey. For the benefits of both his and the band's propagation he got himself a leather-suit. The black leather jacket he originally wore was inspired by the new bohemian fashion spreading in the East Coast, specifically in the bohemian culture of New Yorkers (Jones 1991, 57). Various features including cowboy shoes or tight leather trousers were integrated to create a distinctive style which would resonate with an already unique, almost psychedelic, sound of the band.

Consciously or not, to propagate the iconic image of his he was repetitively mentioning his experience of the New Mexico highway accident of pueblo indians, later used not only in various biographies, but also in film, as the main formative impulse in his life. Morrison often described the incident as follows:

Indians scattered on dawn's highway bleeding

Ghosts crowd the young child's fragile eggshell mind (Morrison 1989, 180).

Morrison himself used to say that ghosts of the dying indians he saw during one of the innumerable travels across the States just leaped into his young soul. Nevertheless, his sister Anne claims that the incident of pueblo indians, in fact, was not such a crucial event in Jim's life. "I don't really think it was a momentous moment that he made it out to be. And I think he enjoyed the drama of telling it, and he expanded on it over the years, and it became a focal point" (Henke 2007, 36).

Although fans thought that understanding what was written about the band and told by Morrison in journals would lead to understanding who he really was, that by appropriating his onstage look they could identify themselves with him, they didn't realize that "It's not to be taken seriously. It's like if you play villain in a western it

doesn't mean that that's you. That's just an aspect you keep for the show" (Hopkins, Sugerman 1992, 191). Therefore, instead of finding The Doors' performance inspiring, the audience, ignoring any references to the souls' inner journey, started to demand a freak show from him.

The self-image he created was a mask he wore to reflect the ideological background of his lyrics and to preserve his public recognition. Despite his assertion that he contended an abiding sense of irony over all he did (Lisciandro 1991, 164), this public persona, that made him so distinctive and undoubtedly successful in the field of music, turned to overpower his true nature and eventually turned him into a clownish self-parody, a puppet of the crowd. Fowlie (1994, 119) aptly comments on the treacherous convulsive properties of the shaman mask on its bearer, the artist:

When used in their art and thus made public, such unexpected gifts may cause their readers and their spectators to look upon them not as artists but as maniacs. Artists will accept this tag because they are aware that the unconscious mind knows nothing of logic, nothing of tradition, nothing of proprieties.

Having realized it, Morrison turned from psychedelics used to stimulate thought to alcohol intended to kill thought, and thus decided that it will just be "the phenomenon manifesting itself through me while I'm blotto" (Lisciandro 1991, 164).

## **2.9 Audience, alcohol and the death of rock'n roll**

Morrison's alcoholism stems not only in his admiration towards intellectual artists with inclinations to intoxicant substances, but also from his frustration of being understood rather as a rock star than as a sensitive poet trying to be accepted for the human being that he was.

At the early days he believed that as an artist he could make a real change by inviting the audience to join him each on his own inner journey to the heightened consciousness which would eventually lead to creation of a new better and sustainable society based on a deeply personal experience of freedom.

However, as the audience grew bigger it became still harder and harder to achieve this artist-audience dissolution. He became gradually aware that “masses of people couldn’t accept him as a one-on-one human being. They couldn’t separate the performance from the human that was giving the performance” (Lisciandro 1991, 128).

While The Doors were trying to mix jazz and blues with poetry, Jim’s reputation had set up a very different expectations in minds of the audience. Now they were coming only to see a freak show, a wild man going crazy in a lizard-skin suit. Some of his close friends claim this had a major influence on Jim’s frustration and drinking habit. Babe Hill explains Morrison’s apathy towards life as a consequence of knowing “you were not going to be recognized for what you are, who you are deep down inside” (Lisciandro 1991, 171). He became confused with the audience’s expectations of him and seemed to unconsciously go along with this public image of his, which is eventually how he became trapped in his persona.<sup>5</sup>

Ray Manzarek dates the beginning of Morrison’s addiction on alcohol back somewhere between the middle to the end of 1967. He believes the switchover from

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<sup>5</sup> To Jung, persona is a mere “functional complex ... by no means identical to the individuality”, the way of how we present or face to the world. It is a mask which protects the ego from negative images and according to post-Jungians, it is sometimes considered as a dynamic or structural component of the psyche. According to Jung’s writings, the original meaning of the word “persona” is a mask to make sure an actor could act well in a play (Jung, 2003). There are also two paronyms: “person” and “personality”. Theoretically, the persona makes a person have a certain kind of personality, but this personality may not be his real personality. Persona is just a person’s publicly displayed appearance, the purpose of which is to gain a social permission. It also has another name “conformity archetype” (Zhu, Jiang, Lemeng Han 2013, p.325).

mind opening psychoactives to the sedative delirium of alcohol came “when Jim no longer had anything to seek, to find, to attain” (Henke 2007, 42). In a film about Morrison and The Doors called *When the music's over* Morrison's alcoholism originate with the recording of their third album *The Soft Parade*, which, due to producer Rothchild's perfectionism, took a long time and effort to finish (DiCillo 2010, 0:40:44).

There were many signs of Jim being harmed by the image of rock star, but his bandmates did not let him walk off the success they had achieved. The excessive life he had led was starting to have serious impact not only on the relations with other members of the group, but mainly on Jim's mood and authenticity. In the summer of 1968, when The Doors were being hailed as the American Rolling Stones, Morrison said he wanted to quit because he was having a breakdown. Nevertheless, his bandmates persuaded him to hold on six more months (Manzarek 1999, 288).

Jim became more and more annoyed with the audience's expectations of him. Although the band had a huge audience for their music, in outdoor concerts all they did went dissipated. The audience did not understand the message of their lyrics. As Ray Manzarek remarks “They only wanted Light my fire.<sup>6</sup> That's all they knew and that's all they wanted. What a lame audience” (Manzarek 1999, 304).

Trying to divorce himself from his public image of a sex symbol and a rock star badboy, he grew himself a beard and gained some weight. His disillusionment with the audience culminated on March 1, 1969, at Miami.

In compare with the early days, “The Doors now had millions of people coming to them, and specifically to Jim Morrison, for enlightenment, for a total

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6 The second single of The Doors written by the band's guitarist Robby Krieger. Spent three weeks at number one on the Billboard Hot 100 charts. The band owes its rapid rise to popularity to this song.



answer that would do everything for them, not to mention a revolution” (Balz 2008, 103). Once the rock became popular it was already dead. According to Storey, “subcultures appropriate for their own purposes and meanings the commodities commercially provided. Products are combined or transformed in ways not intended by their producers” (Storey 2003, 135). When the tattered blue jeans of the originally inconspicuous beat generation became a popular fashion, their artistic message became a commodity to be bought. That is why Morrison contemplated quitting the band and starting a career as a “writer-filmmaker” (Morrison 1989, 209).

The masses of people now attending The Doors did not come to Hollywood Bowl to listen to the music, they were coming to see a freakshow. “There was a growing sense that the fans were not there to hear the music, but to witness a spectacle” (DiCillo 2010, 0:43:48).

In Miami, frustrated by the celebrity status he himself helped to create Morrison tried to reveal the truth to people, to open eyes of the “the army of vacuum cleaners” (Morrison 1989, 79) to the absurdity of their admiration towards him. Thus, Balz describes Morrison during the Miami concert screaming “I’m not talking about a revolution!” (Hopkins, Sugerman 1992, 228), in an “attempt to break the cycle of restricted demystification by completely eliminating all differences, immediately” (Balz 2008, 103). People wanted to see either a freak show, or a man with a definite answer that would do everything for them just by looking up to him or collecting albums. Morrison tried to reverse this process of passive consumption by inviting them onstage to achieve a sense of commonality and collective responsibility, an exact opposite of the indifferent crowd.

By the time of the Miami concert the band had already spent 5 years together.

When the generation of young people who were part of the counterculture chose to look at him as a rock star, Morrison ceased to be heard as a poet. Instead, became a mere subject of spectacle, a commodity to be bought. This is because of the twisted processes through which

...youth subcultures always move from originality and opposition to commercial incorporation and ideological defusion as the culture industries eventually succeed in marketing subcultural resistance for general consumption and profit (Storey 2003, 136).

No wonder Jim yelled at the audience in the Dinner Auditorium calling them slaves and a bunch of idiots. Reflecting on Rosselson, Storey claims that

...the music industry determines the use value of the products which it produces. At best, audience passively consume what is offered by the music industry; at worse they are cultural dupes, ideologically manipulated by the music which they consume (Storey 2003, 113).

Miami concert should be seen as Morrison's attempt to invoke demystification in the realm of his art. Nevertheless, he didn't manage to handle delicately the exposure taboo when trying to imply it was his penis they came to see instead of artistic performance.

Consequently, Morrison was found guilty of indecent exposure and open profanity. More than thirty thousand came to "A Rally for Decency" in Miami, Florida, supported by president Nixon and specifically targetting Jim's words and actions.

According to Balz (2008, 109), the guilt of audience is the most neglected fact about the day. In *The Mass Sacrificial Spectacle* he claims that a huge gap between

the actor and the audience is the reason why “...the image of transgression, of otherness, reigns even where transgression is not present.” The other day, journalists who were never there, wrote sensational stories about lascivious behaviour and riot that took place in the Dinner Auditorium. Thenceforth, Morrison for many represented an incarnation of everything they considered evil.

Despite the fact that none of The Doors members, nor almost three hundred people willing to testify not having seen the alleged exposure during the concert, Morrison planned to contend against the charges on several grounds. He wanted the jury to see several movies, like Woodstock for example, where there was nudity on stage every night, to prove that he had not violated the contemporary community standarts in Miami. Nevertheless, his attempt to turn the trial into a basic freedom of speech issue failed when judge refused any further investigation and limited it to a criminal action (Morrison 1971, track 1, 13:09).

A month after being sentenced to sixty days of hard labor at Dade County jail and six months of hard labor The Doors played a show in New Orleans which is considered the end of Jim’s performing career. It was there where, according to Manzarek, Morrison lost his energy. “You could actually see it leave him” (Henke 2007, 56).

### 3 Creation of the popular myth

Early in 1971 Morrison wrote his *Season in hell*<sup>7</sup>, the ultimate part of *Wilderness*, the lost writings of Jim Morrison published after his death, called As I look Back. There he tries to reflect on his life that left him with a feeling of “guilt”, “mind like a fuzzy hammer” and regrets for wasted creativity (Morrison 1989, 208). Determined to terminate his life of a clown, to come out from the open arms of his public image persona of a rock star and find a rest for his deteriorating health he left to Paris to begin a new life in which he would finally be acknowledged as an intellectual writer. Jim’s departure to Paris was a desperate attempt not only to flee publicity, but mainly to find authenticity, improve both physical and psychological health. In words of Ray Manzarek (1999, 341) he simply “needed time away from his drinking buddies. He needed to be a poet again.”

End w/fond good-bye

& plans for future

-Not an actor

Writer-filmmaker

Which of my cellves

will be remember’d

Good-bye America

I loved you (Morrison 1989, 209)

Although this may sound as a farewell, Morrison was excited about critic’s appretiation of their new album called *L.A. Woman* and was looking forward for

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<sup>7</sup> An extended poem in prose written in 1873 by French writer Arthur Rimbaud. The implication of the poem is that it’s impossible to escape the limits imposed on us by reality. Rimbaud wrote *Season in hell* as a farewell to his literary adventures and self-experimentation through drugs.

further collaboration with The Doors:

Now I embrace the poetry  
of business & become-for  
a time-a “Prince of Industry (206)

Being convicted of obscenity charges, he left to Paris. Still appealing the charge he saw as violating the artistic freedom of speech, he worked to establish himself as a poet. However, he was unable to cope with his addiction to alcohol and eventually died under mysterious circumstances with only his girlfriend Pamela Courson to witness his death. Morrison was buried in the famous Père-Lachaise cemetery leaving an excellent breeding ground for myth creation. This chapter is, therefore, intended to outline the reasons of him being elevated into a larger than life status and to describe the way he became an important part of American culture.

The everlasting impression of Morrison as the alcoholic rebel possessed with death, the exhibitionist, who embodied the typical narcissism of male, sex idol who died in a drunken haze at age 27, stems, among others, from the deification of his person in popular literature and in the Oliver Stone’s film.

While relatively little happened during the 1970s, in 1980 Danny Surgeman and Jerry Hopkins stirred a new wave of enthusiasm regarding Morrison by publishing a controversial book called *No one here gets out alive*. This biography about Jim stressed the more controversial elements of his life and became a catalyst for the popular myth. Instead for the man with weaknesses that are human, in this book Morrison is portrayed as a tragic legend, a god-like victim of society that could not accept him. Moreover, the book ended naively indicating he might have faked his own death. The book quickly became a best seller and significantly boosted the sales

of *The Doors*. More money was made after the publishing of this book than throughout the whole existence of *The Doors* with Morrison and the book created a new generation of fans who considered the image of Morrison depicted in it to be truthful (Bascom 1984, 9 quoted in Ridell 2008, 79). Values of youth and rebellion against authority became entrenched in Morrison thanks to this sensational publishing.

In 1991 Oliver Stone followed in the success of the book by filming a movie called *The Doors*. There, he depicts Morrison as a sociopath obsessed with death, as a man who died for a reason, as a deranged alcoholic fascinated with the occult. The success of both the book and the film is partly due to the fact that Morrison's life and death coincides with the thwarted hopes for a better future of the 1960s and partly to the curiosity stirred everytime a celebrity dies young and under mysterious circumstances. For the young people, who were not even alive during the peak of *The Doors*, Morrison becomes a symbol of the values of the 1960s. Despite the fact that it is mainly thanks to these publications that Morrison remains grossly misunderstood, it is the very same public discourse that attracts people to go beyond the popular myth, beyond such shallow depiction of his persona, to discover the inconsistent man and the timeless ideas lying between the lines of his poetry.

Lule (2001, 15) defines myth as "a sacred, societal story that draws from archetypal figures and forms to offer exemplary models for human life." He believes that "myth-and perhaps news-[is] an important way a society expresses its prevailing ideals, ideologies, values, and beliefs" (15). Therefore, the elevation of Morrison into an icon can be seen as a consequence of the nostalgia for the ideals of the 1960s. This tendency is human but creates a false image not only of Jim, but also of the whole

era of the 1960s which is, therefore, perceived as a time of infinite possibilities. But it is not only to the tendency of the bygone babyboomers and hippies to embody ideals of youth and rebellion in Morrison that he is being reworked over and over again in the public discourse. The endurance of Morrison in media is also due to the effort of music industry to earn money on each youth generation to come, to create a model for challenging parental authority through excessive lifestyle contributing so to the illusion that drugs can lead to authenticity and creativity. The assertion that “Youth subcultures communicate through acts of consumption” (Storey 2003, 135) reflects him being portrayed on T-shirts as a symbol of eternal youth and rebellion, a commodity to be bought. However, the fact that Morrison keeps attracting people to his poetry even forty years after his death is also a proof of the timelessness of his message that encourages individuals to question old truths, values and even his own myth.

## **4 Morrison as a poet in the American literary tradition**

I have ploughed

My seed thru the heart

of the nation

Injected a germ in the psychic blood vein (Morrison 1989, 206).

In this poem Morrison's vision of the impact of his work on audiences stands in a stark contrast to the usual critic's statement that Jim had become a sex symbol.

The Doors Community often try to distance Morrison from the picture of arrogant and self-interested America in an attempt to establish him as a poet and emphasize that he was an exact opposite of the rotten values America represents (Ridell 2008, 103). However, the fact that he is still misunderstood as a poet does not mean he should be pulled out of the American literary tradition and depicted rather as exclusively European. In fact, Morrison employs both American and European literary influences and thoughts to enrich his own culture, to fight the complacency and passivity which had befallen American society.

### **4.1 The legacy of the beat generation**

In 1955 Alan Ginsberg for the first time in American 20th century literature, reads out loud his Howl. In this poem he names the enemy of a new rebelling spirit. Despite the alarms aroused by media, this generation was rather inconspicuous and much smaller as compared with the 1960s. It consisted of few thousands of beats at its peak, but the hardcore consisted of cca 150 literary authors.

Those who awoke the most interest rebelled against the Moloch, the "pure machinery" (Ginsberg 2006, 21) of society which had been causing America's crisis



of spirit. They felt annoyed by the postwar values and chose the way of inner emigration. Instead of settling down they wanted to set on the road. Choosing a voluntary poverty they refused the national obsession with consumerism.

In *Howl* Ginsberg terms Moloch as “the heavy judger of men!” (21), the superego of this evilish system which dictates codes of life and manners and causes the standardization of life. In the following section from *Howl* we can see Ginsberg trying to define what Moloch means to him.

Moloch whose love is endless oil and stone! Moloch whose soul is  
electricity and banks! Moloch whose poverty is the specter of genius!  
Moloch whose fate is a cloud of sexless hydrogen! Moloch whose name is  
the Mind!” (22)

In the first line we can clearly see that Moloch corresponds with the symbols of American consumerism. Ginsberg, influenced by Marxism and the belief that capitalism exploits the working class and causes violent wars, uses an oxymoron comparing Moloch’s love to the oil and stone of industrialization (line 1). Such emotional alienation inevitably impacts the Mind (line 4). Moloch hates genius (line 2), because, after all, it is the human mind that is the source of evil when passive, the human mind that allows the apocalyptic cloud of the hydrogen bomb (line 2). The concept of Moloch resembles the idea of the Lords prevailing in the early poetry of Morrison (1987, 112):

Fear the Lords who are secret among us.

The Lords are w/ in us.

Born of sloth & cowardice.

Here, Morrison also emphasizes the universal responsibility of each individual

by claiming that the Lords are within us. We should fear them because they are unconscious, rooted in the sloth and complacency of American abundance. Just like Ginsberg tried to point out that it is this indifference of people that causes evil and destruction, Morrison highlights the failings of a modern alienated mass culture of ossified thought that allowed some of the worst acts of the twentieth century (Balz 2008, 115).

Therefore, the rebellion against the Moloch, or the Lords, justifies not only the beat's way of intense life, overthrowing sexual taboos or committing disobedience, but also the excessive lifestyle of Morrison. They lived a perverse life, but searched for a spiritual bedrock at the same time.

The beat generation opposed empty religiousness. Inspired in Buddhism they chose their own way of exploring one's spirituality through community experience, sex, ecstasies, meditation, marihuana and drugs. They followed a traditional romantic view holding in high regards working class-men, Mexicans and blacks.

The beat's prototype was Neal Cassady, star of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. The ecstatic hero, who was sometimes married more than once at the time, reflects the pursuit of the beats for the heightened moments they found only when they were together.

Their literary style was a manifestation of their ideals. They introduced new timeless forms of writings inspired not only in spontaneity of Rimbaud, Yeats and surrealists, but mostly in jazz that usually accompanied poetry reading or was apparent in the rhythm of flowing associations and the usage of space dash. Fast rhetorical exhaltation of automatic prose following free associations of mind without pause to think culminates in illumination. They explored the self because it is a

source of all good and evil.

In 1955 Kerouac and Snyder inspired the creation of a new hippie movement, a rucksack revolution that inspired millions of bums to go up to the hills to meditate and ignore society.

Besides the celebration of life, the beats were rather passive. In terms of willing to change society, they preferred to sidestep. Thus Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti or Snyder were rather a transit into the political sixties, they recognized one another as a brother but still they were hiding at the bottom of society.

In 1956 publisher Lawrence Ferlinghetti was charged with selling obscene material including *Howl*. On October 3 1957 the court ruled that the poem was not obscene and judge Horne said that questions of literary merit or beauty are protected by constitution legally established by president. Although the court resulted in some restrictions it made beats more visible and enabled them to have a profound lasting impact on popular culture and thus influence the entire new youth generation including Morrison, who, in his fourteen years, copied passages from *On the Road* into his notebook (Gitlin 1984, 55). The opened verse form used in *Howl* had a profound impact on his poetry which is therefore very sincere.

Despite Ginsberg and Snyder's pursuit of the Buddhist enlightenment and their effort to bring spirituality to the 1960s rebellion, the press chewed beats' reputation changing the revolt into a comic relief. By the early 1960s for every full-time beat there must have been dozens of sycophants, pseudobeats and posers (56). At those times the beat counterculture was about to move into the mainstream which actually meant that as a cultural uprising the beat scene was over. In the same way, by the end of the 1960s Morrison's artistic message got lost once his performance lost the

original essence of communality and turned into an entertainment.

## **4.2 Specifics of Morrison's poetry**

Since Morrison used poetry as a means of expanding his consciousness as well as exploring limits of his own perception and imagination, his verses are often vague. Feeling resentment towards the limitations of society he is often careless also in adapting his poetry. Nevertheless, thanks to his intellect, he managed to write “ballads, lyric love songs, surreal juxtapositions of striking images, philosophical verse, aggressive political commentary and traditional rhythm and blues” (Magistrale 1992, 134).

Bored by the limited perception of reality he turned himself to drugs and poetry trying to explore “the worlds beyond the grave” (135). This is not only why some of his verses remain unclear but also why he kept using diverse symbols of soul's journey in the world of imagination.

The basis of Morrison's poetry is the critique of mass culture with all its consequences. Nature is the common indicator of human uncontrolled destruction rooted in the indifference and capitulation. The following lyrics of the song When the music's over provide just one such example where Jim talks about the destruction of environment:

What have they done to the earth? 1

What have they done to our fair sister? 2

Ravaged and plundered and ripped her and bit her 3

Stuck her with knives in the side of the dawn 4

And tied her with fences and dragged her down 5

I hear a very gentle sound 6

With your ear down to the ground 7

We want the world and we want it... 8

We want the world and we want it... 9

Now 10

Now? 11

Now! 12 (The Doors 1967a, 07:09)

Here, as in many other poems we may see a dualistic world full of horror, but at the same time world full of possibilities. The destruction or even apocalypse accumulated by the exploitative manners of western civilization is described in lines 1-5. This aggressive disposition of culture towards nature stems partly from the remains of a Christian culture that turns the attention of man to the afterlife and partly from the egoistic self-centeredness of people that came with the alienation after the industrial revolution and with the rise of a mass culture. The return to the nature is possible through sensuality (line 6-7) and the realization of its own time free of all dogmatic fictions.<sup>8</sup> While these lines are taken from lyrics of The Doors written by Morrison, most of his poems are not necessarily accompanied by rhythm.

Throughout his career as a performer Morrison became renown for his talent for spontaneity. As a writer he believed that in order to be truthful in his writings he had to achieve a state where art just spontaneously drives his hand. Sometimes these attempts result chaotic and incomprehensible. However, these kinds of poems are not intended to be displayed on pedestal, rather they are valuable for what they were in the process of writing, a means to achieve the Nietzschean rausch, to attain the

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<sup>8</sup> Morrison in his lyrics “articulates a modernity that defines itself by its desire to rupture the historical continuum and determine for itself a true present, a point of origin that marks a new departure” (Salem-Wiseman 1998, 16-25).

heightened consciousness where the source of art can be experienced and, therefore, testified in other more elaborate prophetic writings. In the prologue to the afterlife collection of the lost writings of Jim Morrison called *Wilderness*, selected by his close friend Frank Lisciandro and published in 1988, Morrison asserts “Listen, real poetry doesn’t say anything, it just ticks off the possibilities. Opens all doors” (Morrison 1989, 2). Hence, we may incorporate Morrison’s process of automatic writing alongside other cultural means used to achieve the dissolution of ego like sex, psychoactive drugs, repetitive music or rhythmical dance.

However, as Wallace Fowlie remarks, “It is hard for us to accept that art is doom-a harsh doom for the artist who survives in his art” (Fowlie 1994, 119). Over-indulgence has its price and the price is usually steep. Often Morrison used drugs to achieve this state of mind. This is how Nietzsche, Baudelaire and other literary heroes of Jim ultimately killed him. Nietzsche regularly used chloral hydrate to achieve the ecstatic state of mind. This habit ultimately lead him to a mental collapse, dementia and death. Baudelaire’s long-term use of laudanum, a form of opium, lead him to a massive stroke and death in a semi-paralyzed state. Although there are rumours about Morrison’s death there is basically no doubt he died of excessive lifestyle. Reality is not designed for pure pleasure. Ecstasy should be a unique natural event based on simple pleasures of life.

And I came to you

for peace

And I came to you

for gold

And I came to you

for lies  
And you gave me fever  
& wisdom  
& cries  
of sorrow  
& we'll be here  
the next day  
the next day  
&

Tomorrow (Morrison 1989, 106)

Here, Morrison talks about the necessity to live. The tone of the poem is sorrowful. It seems the poet realized that although the road of excess leads to palace of wisdom, it cannot be a lasting thing. Morrison's poetic quests did not make him happy. The wisdom he acquired by achieving the dissolution of ego did not provide him with answers to the age-old question regarding the meaning of life.

Therefore, in several of his poems, there is an apparent effort to find beauty in the ordinary everyday life in an attempt to flee the destructive lifestyle. Morrison introduces a concept of self-interview as a new source of inspiration and creation. Questions prominent in such lines are concerned with the very meaning of existence.

We demonstrated how Morrison matured in his lines to struggle his self-indulgence and overcome the vanity of senses. However, this tendency is not to disprove the philosophy of his poetry which stresses life as unrepeatable. Basically, Morrison highlights the futility of living a passive life, the vanity of being a spectator of one's own life instead of being an authentic active participant in this unique

existence. In following lines Morrison puts the sleep walking ignorance of spirituality of a modern man in contrast with those who worship genuinely:

Old men worship w/long 1  
noses, old soulful eyes. 2  
Young girls worship, 3  
exotic, indian, w/robes 4  
who make us feel foolish 5  
for acting w/our eyes. 6  
Lost in the vanity of the senses 7  
which got us where we are. 8  
Children worship but seldom 9  
act at it. Who needs 10  
temples & couches & T.V. (Morrison 1989, 30) 11

Morrison's call for authenticity is timeless and, perhaps, even more relevant now than it was in the era of booming visual culture.



## **5 Conclusion**

We have outlined some of the most important events formative not only for Morrison as a man, but also for the popular myth surrounding his public perception today. While the events described in the chapter called The evolution of the man give the reader a complex sum of influences, they also serve to provide a better understanding of Morrison in context with the disturbed times of 1960s. Various sources were critically elaborated and used to uncover the highly controversial and variable person of Morrison concealed behind the tendency of popular myth to overcome the inconsistency and provide a logical story. Morrison is described as a bright friendly child who developed interest in literature. The popular view of Morrison's character is described as influenced by the false public perception of his relationship with his father. A detailed information is given to reflect on the evolution of Morrison not only as a man, but also as a poet. The film school he attended is illustrated as formative of the timeless ideas in his poetry. Furthermore, parallels between his readings and writings are drawn to explain ideas proper to Morrison. Specifically, the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche and ideas of William Blake are applied when explaining his early writings. Morrison is, therefore, illustrated as part of a recurrent romanticism in both society and literature.

Morrison's artwork cannot be separated from The Doors group and viceversa. His performance in the band was highly theatrical and his lyrics often resembled spoken poetry. Despite Morrison intended to bring about a real change in society, he had no impact on the radical changes of his time. Rather, he became an inherent part of a transition towards a more open hedonist society where joy, instead of suffering, is considered the true substance of life. Although the collaborative work of four

musicians addressed the frustrations of young people, the fact that his music reached such a vast fame lead to him becoming a public property. The story of Morrison's lost artistic message is a flashing light into the twisted process through which music industry prevents subcultures with their strive for change to have any impact on the established order. A case in point is a parallel drawn between a massive cultural appropriation of the beat generation's lifestyle and the fleeting message of the original rock and roll before it turned mainstream. However, Morrison's death is described not only as a consequence of not being understood as a poet. Despite conscious attempts to establish himself as a poet Morrison's death at the age of 27 is also a result of his inability to escape the public excessive rock star persona he himself helped to create as part of the band propagation.

In the chapter called Creation of the popular myth further conclusions concerning his afterlife elevation into a myth larger than life are drawn. With each publication about Morrison new attributes are added to his image and become part of the public consciousness. The persisting interest in Morrison is partly a consequence of the public nostalgia for the era of the idealized 1960s. Therefore, Morrison becomes entrenched in society not for the ideological complexity of his timeless verses, but for his exterior. Values embedded in Morrison are result of both his historical existence and the public discourse generated after his death. Generally, he is remembered for the values he represents like youth, beauty and personal freedom. Nevertheless, by the new generations of fans, influenced by the popular myth surrounding this dead celebrity, Morrison is misunderstood as a rebellious sex symbol who died under mysterious circumstances, a young god serving as a model of excessive lifestyle.

This thesis strove to emphasize the importance of an academic recognition of Morrison as a poet. One of its aims was to find parallels in Morrison's philosophy to the present day. Morrison pointed out the necessity to reunite with the neglected spirituality of the indifferent modern man to prevent the massive destruction of environment, to avert the repetition of atrocities that happened during the World War II or in the Vietnam War. In his lyrics and verses Morrison tried to make people uncomfortable with their indifference. Morrison warns us against the treacherous essence of visual culture that transforms us into a passive spectator of life. Together with Morrison's profound sense of universal responsibility of each individual, this tendency is even more relevant now in the era of a widespread visual entertainment consumption, than it was during the times of the idealistic 1960s.

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