

THE POET BEHIND THE DOORS: JIM MORRISON'S POETRY AND THE 1960S  
COUNTERCULTURAL MOVEMENT

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By

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# **THE POET BEHIND THE DOORS: JIM MORRISON'S POETRY AND THE 1960S COUNTERCULTURAL MOVEMENT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

While there has been a wealth of literature on Jim Morrison, the lead singer of the Doors, little work has actually been done to engage in a serious critical study of his poetry and lyrics. As a result, critics have continually misrepresented his work (usually linking it to a drug culture), the poetic tradition from which he built, and, most importantly, his place within the context of the 1960s. Looking at both his poetry and his lyrics, this thesis begins to discover reasons for Morrison's fractured relationship with his generation. This relationship can be better understood by examining Morrison's work alongside two cultural phenomena that were incredibly popular during the 1960s: Eastern religion and also communal living. While, on the one hand, Morrison uncompromisingly insisted upon individuality, allowing people to become the creators of their own reality through their imagination, the spiritual practice of Eastern religion and the material practice of communal living on the other hand insisted upon people following specific creeds and doctrines to reach a higher level of spiritual cognition and/or inner peace. By understanding the reasons for this fractured relationship, we can not only better understand the context of "Five to One" and his notorious 1969 concert in Miami – two instances where Morrison insults his generation for their lack of willpower and their enslavement to a fixed system of order – but we

can also see that Morrison himself was highly aware that his core message that he preached throughout his career (1966-71) was radically opposed to the messages and visions embraced by his generation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Take the highway to the  
    end of the night  
End of the night  
End of the night  
Take a journey to the bright midnight  
End of the night  
End of the night

Realms of Bliss  
Realms of Light

– Jim Morrison, “End of the Night,” 1-9.

Jim Morrison – undoubtedly one of the most celebrated performers of the Rock era, one of its most successful songwriters, and one of its most charismatic figures – has since his death in 1971 invited discussions from critics and fans regarding his life, work, and impact on the radical decade of the 1960s.<sup>1</sup>

While Morrison always considered himself to be a poet, the vast majority of critics of his work have never taken into account his poetry, instead choosing to base their examination on Morrison’s myth or legend, concepts which have little resemblance to who Morrison actually was or what he tried to accomplish. Perhaps this “myth” began in 1980, when Danny Sugerman, an assistant to Morrison and former manager of the Doors, wrote in the Foreword to *No One Here Gets Out Alive*: “Jim Morrison was a god.” (Sugerman vii).<sup>2</sup> However innocent this line may be, I argue it poses an inherent problem: Jim Morrison was not a god nor did he see himself as one.

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<sup>1</sup> Sections of this thesis appeared in another essay entitled “Fanny Howe and Jim Morrison: A Vision Beyond the Senses.” The sections of that essay that appear in this thesis have since been modified and expanded.

<sup>2</sup> In his introduction to *The Doors: The Complete Lyrics*, Sugerman contradicts (or corrects) his earlier remarks on Morrison, writing: “Jim Morrison didn’t want to be a god” (Sugerman 13).

What is more troubling, indeed, is that these lines were written in the first major biography on Morrison, and have reached more than a million readers.

Not surprisingly, then, Sugerman's perception of Morrison in *No One Here Gets Out Alive* has become a catalyst for other critics and fans to propel the "Morrison myth."<sup>3</sup> Like Sugerman, Wallace Fowlie, the late professor at Duke University, refers to Morrison as the Greek figure "kuros" (Fowlie 105).<sup>4</sup> William Cook, who responds to Fowlie's remarks here, argues that:

[...] Fowlie ignores the literary qualities of [Morrison's] poetry. Like most people that encountered Morrison, either through books or in person, Fowlie never seems to get past the myth. In view of this unfortunate aspect of his discussion of Morrison's poetry, his approach is neither scholarly nor enlightening (Cook 3).

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<sup>3</sup> For the best biography on Jim Morrison, see Jerry Prochnicky and James Riordan's *Break on Through: The Life and Death of Jim Morrison*. In the opening pages of their biography, they recognize the decades of writing that fabricated the Morrison myth. As they write:

[...] I've learned the hard way that it's not easy to separate truth from myth and the bigger the legend the more difficult it becomes. All good myths soon become self-perpetuating and each person who recounts them tends to add a little something of his or her own. Add this to the fact that there are a host of people out there consciously perpetrating the Morrison myth for their own financial gain, and the maze because a considerable one. The funny thing is that Morrison never needed exaggeration. His truth is indeed far stranger than the fiction that has grown up around him.

Nonetheless, the passage of twenty years [the book was written in 1981, twenty years after Morrison's death] has clouded the issues and led to many obstacles – lost documents, an absence of witnesses, selective memory, and even worse, creative memory – people remembering what they wish would've happened instead of what actually did (Prochnicky and Riordan 9-10).

<sup>4</sup> Fowlie further writes:

As far as I can ascertain, it is not the name of a god, or even a minor god. It is a general term designating in Greek a young man, an adolescent: *kuros* [...] The word is applied to a youth attractive to men and women. At times it is in praise of beauty. At other times it is hurled almost as a curse at those youths who insolently torment older people. This name I suggest as representative of the nonhypocritical innocence of Jim when he was not aware of the power of his appearance and his personality (Fowlie 105).



While I would not suggest that Fowlie's "approach is neither scholarly nor enlightening," as it is the first piece of scholarship to at least engage with Morrison's poetry, I agree with Cook that "by concentrating on the myth of Morrison" in this instance, Fowlie's work continues to propel the Morrison myth, rather than engaging in a serious academic analysis on the "literary qualities of" Morrison's "poetry." In other words, by continuing a dialogue that fosters the Morrison myth, Fowlie has failed – and, in so doing, has encouraged others to follow in his path – to judge Morrison based on the platform upon which Morrison invited his readers to judge him, his poetry.

Take, for instance, three other prominent books on Morrison – John Densmore's *Riders on the Storm: My Life With Jim Morrison and the Doors* (1991); Patricia Kennealy's *Strange Days: My Life With and Without Jim Morrison* (1992); and Ray Manzarek's *Light My Fire: My Life With the Doors* (1998) – which have all taken the form of a memoir. While these authors' personal narratives of Morrison and the Doors are clearly worth sharing with the public, the overwhelming amount of literature on Morrison has taken a variety of similar forms, but none of which has sought to examine his poetry and lyrics.<sup>5</sup>

Far too much has been written on Morrison's life, his relationship with the Doors, and his myth; by extension, far too *little* has been written on Morrison's poetry

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<sup>5</sup> Prochnicky and Riordan support this argument, writing:

The image Jim Morrison created for the media was considerably different from the real person. The press saw the side of Morrison that best suited their needs. Predictably, their accounts were steeped in paradox: Writers praised the emotional insights in Morrison's lyrics and then criticized him for trying to be a poet. The press called him 'King of Orgasmic Rock' and attacked him for being pretentious. They praised him for the fusion of rock and drama that The Doors created and then put him down for carrying it too far. They hailed him as the chief shaman of new religion and then questioned his sanity for taking himself too seriously (Prochnicky and Riordan 20).

and lyrics. We cannot understand Morrison, his lyrics and his poetry, his life, his understanding of the human form, and his relationship with the 1960s countercultural movement – areas in which Morrison critics have continually tried but *failed* to understand – unless we begin to extract Morrison the “poet” from how decades of critics and fans have seen him, and begin to have a serious examination of his poetry and lyrics. Strictly as a poet, Morrison’s place in history remains to be seen, not because his lyrics and poetry are not worthy of critical study, but because critics and fans have only engaged with his legacy through the lens of his celebrity.

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This thesis will be one of the first attempts to critically engage with Morrison’s poetry and lyrics.<sup>6</sup> In so doing, it traces Morrison’s understanding of the human form back to the radical theories that William Blake set forth within his work. It will thus show that Morrison’s understanding of reality – one that defies Truth, form, unity, time, and space – cannot be linked to a drug culture that critics, as Sugerman and others, have suggested. Instead, this project links Morrison’s vision of the human form to a rich poetic tradition originated by Blake in the British Romantic period. The question that Blake’s work inspired Morrison to consider is not what is possible, but what *can* become possible, through the imagination.

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<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of clarity, I will refer to the poetry of James Douglas Morrison in this thesis as written by Jim Morrison or Morrison, though Morrison himself insisted that his legal name be used when his poems were published and mentioned.

There is no doubt that Morrison wrote at a time of spiritual and intellectual awakening, a time in which younger Americans began to explore and expand their reality through a myriad of social and cultural practices: drugs, sexuality, communal living, Eastern religion and philosophy, to name some important examples. And there is no doubt that American youth's rebellion against conventional Western practices (conservatism, materialism, Christianity) inspired Morrison to form the Doors, allowing him to participate in the intellectual movements that came to define the 1960s.<sup>7</sup> In many respects, we can see that the ambition of the countercultural movement to reach a higher level of cognition parallels Morrison's ambition to become a poet and public performer. What the movement, in other words, attempted to accomplish in its rebellion against Western conventions strikingly resembles what Morrison attempted to accomplish in his poetry, lyrics, and stage performances.

Such a parallel might lead us to believe that Morrison was indeed part of the movement, or even shared its defined ideologies; however, exploring this relationship in greater detail shows us instead a striking dichotomy between the messages and visions that Morrison preached within his poetry and lyrics, and the ideas, beliefs, and practices that emerged from the movement.

This thesis explores this relationship in greater detail. It begins with Morrison's earliest works, in sections 1 and 2; there it argues that Morrison's major poems in *The Lords: A New Vision*, "Power," and "The Original Temptation," in addition to the songs he wrote for the Doors' first two albums, *The Doors* and *Strange Days*, build from Blake's understanding of the human form and its potential. In his early work, Morrison

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<sup>7</sup> In particular see Oliver Stone's portrayal of the formation of the Doors in his film *The Doors* (1991).

argues that the human imagination could free men and women from what he saw as their societal oppression and allow them to become the creators of their self-images, as well as their external reality. Indeed, instead of perceiving the world based upon the edicts of the government, school, parents, our five senses, and religion, Morrison argues that we have the potential to manifest a world within our imagination, free from external influence, oppression, or dictation.

For Morrison, liberation can only be achieved if individuals free their minds from any exterior influence. Morrison, like Blake, uncompromisingly insisted that if people are subject to influences outside of themselves, they could not be considered free, as their lives are still subject to dictation and pressures created outside of themselves. Instead of allowing their infinite desires and expression to create their own reality – free from time, space, and unity – their reality generates through the framework that others impose upon them. As a result, people cannot be considered free within this world, but rather slaves to it, as how they think, act, and perceive their reality is controlled by the external systems to which they conform.

Section 3 discusses why this point served as a barrier between Morrison and the 1960s counterculture movement. Beginning in 1969, the year after the Doors were largely regarded as the number one band in America, Morrison's work became increasingly hostile towards his generation; in both the Doors' third studio album, *Waiting for the Sun*, and his notorious 1969 concert in Miami, Morrison repeatedly attacked his generation for its failures, its lack of willpower, and what he deemed as its slavery to a closed system of order. Several critics have been perplexed by what

spurred this anger in Morrison's work. What was it about the counterculture movement, many of whose followers hailed him as "The Lizard King," that inspired Morrison's vehement hostility? Critics, like Fowlie and Stephen Davis, have noted that Morrison's hostility can be traced to the countercultural philosophy's preaching peace, on the one hand, and Morrison, on the other hand, preaching chaos and destruction, for freeing individuals from unity and order.<sup>8</sup> While Fowlie and Davis' claims make sense up to a point, this aspect of his work deserves to be expanded, complicated, and further researched, in order to allow us to have a better grasp not only of Morrison's poetry, but of his poetry within the context of the countercultural movement.

I find that this fractured relationship can be better understood by examining two cultural phenomena that emerged within the movement: the spiritual practice of Eastern religion and philosophy, and the material practice of communal living. The messages and ideals that emerged from these two cultural practices can be seen as diametrically opposed to the ideas that Morrison presents in his poetry and lyrics. Indeed, while Morrison's message insists upon individuality, freeing people from any impeding or outside dictation, the ideals and creeds that emerged from Eastern religion and communal living usually encouraged followers to work within a framework given to them by a spiritual leader, guru, or community. By examining these two cultural phenomena in greater detail, we can better understand the composition of "Five to One," as well as his notorious 1969 concert appearance in Miami, where Morrison repeatedly attacks the counterculture for living within a closed system of order. Thus,

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<sup>8</sup> See Fowlie's *Rimbaud and Jim Morrison: Rebel as Poet*, 78 and Stephen Davis' *Jim Morrison: Life, Death, Legend*, 153.

Morrison's hostility towards the 1960s counterculture, which he expressed in his work since 1969, shows us that the visions and ideals that he expressed *throughout* his career radically differed from those of the generation to which he spoke.

I have two audiences in mind for the present project: a scholarly audience and fans of both Morrison and the Doors. This thesis, I hope, will serve to engage both parties. For a scholarly audience, this thesis will allow us to see a different perspective of the 1960s countercultural movement from one of its greatest voices. While scholars may disagree with Morrison's vision, we must agree that he was a cultural icon of the 1960s and helped shape the direction of the movement; as a result, what he said about the movement must be taken seriously, as he was taken seriously during his lifetime. In addition, by separating Morrison the "poet" from his "myth," this thesis will give Morrison's poetry and lyrics more credibility within serious scholarship of literature. For the fans of Morrison and the Doors, this thesis will redirect how we perceive (and have perceived) Morrison, examining his career based upon his poetry and lyrics, not upon his myth; it will thus produce a better understanding of who Morrison was, what his poetry and lyrics say, and what his place within the history of 1960s should be.

## MORRISON'S ORIGINS: WILLIAM BLAKE

Like so many others, Jim took drugs to expand his consciousness, to gain entry into worlds otherwise locked and sealed off. Aware of the shaman's relationship to his inner world via peyote, and Castaneda's experiences with Don Juan, Jim ingested psychedelics. Like Coleridge and the opium eaters, he was held spellbound by the artificial paradise, the hypnagogic architecture, the milky seas and starless nights.

– Danny Sugerman, *The Doors: The Complete Lyrics*, 11.

No one would ever argue that Danny Sugerman did not have the best intentions when he spoke or wrote about Morrison or the Doors. Sugerman not only was an assistant to Morrison and the manager of the Doors but he also authored the first major biography on Morrison, *No One Here Gets Out Alive* (1980), in addition to editing *The Doors: The Complete Lyrics* (1991). In most circumstances, Sugerman, especially when it comes to biographical detail on Morrison and the Doors, has provided scholarship with a wealth of reliable biographical knowledge.

That being said, what is most troubling about Sugerman's analysis of Morrison's poetry and lyrics – as seen in the epigraph above – is that Sugerman constantly links Morrison's poetry and lyrics to drugs. On the one hand, no one would claim that Morrison's poetry and lyrics, especially his earlier work (1964-67), were not influenced by his use of LSD. On the other hand, no one would ever argue that Morrison did not drastically reduce, if not stopped altogether his use of LSD around 1967, yet continued to produce and publish an array of poems and lyrics that contained visionary elements. Thus, to overly emphasize Morrison's use of drugs in creating his poetry and lyrics – as

Sugerman does – both misses and dismisses the rich poetic tradition by which Morrison was influenced, while at the same time diluting Morrison’s poetry of its artistic integrity.

There are more intrinsically stimulating approaches to Morrison’s poetry than to simply categorize it as drug poetry. Yet such a literary appreciation would be hard (if not impossible) to grasp unless we understood Morrison’s earliest poetic influences. Indeed, to understand the poetic tradition from which Morrison built, we need to first understand Morrison’s philosophy of the human form, which can be credited to the theories developed by William Blake in the British Romantic period.<sup>9</sup>

While William Blake’s influence on Jim Morrison has been well documented, little work has actually been done to examine this relationship in great detail. The ideas that Blake set forth in his poetry should not only be seen as the origins of Morrison’s poetry and lyrics; perhaps more importantly, Blake was Morrison’s greatest poetical influence. Most notably, Blake’s poetry had an overwhelming impact on Morrison’s understanding of the human form and its potential. In so doing, Blake’s poetry inspired Morrison to categorize humanity into two parts: a state where people live within a system of order that produces how they perceive their identities and reality, what I am calling “closed form,” and, in opposition to this state, Morrison posits that people have the capability to liberate themselves from this oppression to “open form,”<sup>10</sup> a state in

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<sup>9</sup> The relationship between the British Romantic poets does not cease with Blake, especially in the few pages that I have designated for Blake within this thesis. We can also see Morrison’s relationship with William Wordsworth (see *The Prelude; or Growth of A Poet’s Mind*), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (see “Kubla Khan: or A Vision in a Dream” or “Frost at Midnight”), and Percy Bysshe Shelley (see “Mont Blanc: Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni”).

<sup>10</sup> I borrow these terms from Anne K. Mellor’s *Blake’s Human Form Divine* in a slightly different context.



which people can live free from the confines of a fixed existence and begin to see the infinite in all things.

## I

William Blake's poetry marks a clear shift from the ideals set forth in the Enlightenment Period – a period during which philosophy tried to make sense of the world through reason, order, and the five senses – arguing, instead, that our self-images and reality are not fixed or innate, but “Infinite,” chaotic, and constantly in motion.<sup>11</sup> Underlying this theme, Blake argues in *There is No Natural Religion*: “The desire of Man being Infinite, the possession is Infinite & Himself Infinite” (Blake Plate B). Indeed, if man's (or woman's) desires, possessions, and his essence are all, according to Blake, “Infinite,” then not only does man's identity fail to be confined within his bodily framework (skin, bones, organs), but his identity cannot even be classified based upon a singular term (gay, tall, rich, poor). What the human form can potentially become, then, fails to be understood in terms of a utilitarian function, as its infinite thoughts, desires, and perceptions constantly create and, most importantly, re-create, identity.

Blake extends this philosophy not only to the creation of our identities but also to our exterior world. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake writes:

If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing  
would appear to man as it is, infinite.

For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things  
thro' narrow chinks of his cavern (Blake Plate 14).

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<sup>11</sup> See Anne K. Mellor's *Blake's Human Form Divine*, Saree Makdisi's *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity*, and William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790's.

If “the doors of perception” – the “doors” that reside between the world of the infinite and the world that is generated by our five senses – “were cleansed,” Blake argues, we would see the world as it truly is, “infinite.” This passage marks, to use the words of Saree Makdisi, “an escape into the infinite as a simultaneous dissolution of political formations and the psychobiological modes of existence which correspond to them” (Makdisi 183). As Makdisi notes, by seeing the world through any framework, that framework, in turn, dictates the boundaries of what is and, most importantly, what is not, possible. This can either be within a framework of religion, philosophy, literature, parental authority, or government; however, what all these entities and doctrines have in common is that they teach people how to perceive their reality. Yet, as Blake writes, “[i]f the doors of perception were cleansed,” we would no longer see the world based upon a system of order, but instead as “infinite,” allowing ourselves be “free” to experience a myriad of different possibilities and visions that refuse boundaries.

This passage also identifies the closed world system, one that determines how we perceive our reality. Though our world, as Blake argues, is “infinite,” we can still live within a system of order that confines an “infinite” world into a fixed essence, dictating the boundaries of our perception. As Blake laments: “For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things / thro’ narrow chinks of his cavern.” As Blake argues, men and women in Nineteenth Century England fail to see the world as “infinite,” but rather “have closed” themselves “up” until they see “all things / thro’ [the] narrow chinks of [their] cavern[s].” For this mental entrapment – what Blake calls “mind-forg’d manacles” in his poem, “London” (8) – occurs when people begin to abide by

principles or doctrines originating from outside themselves, principles that are systematically designed to teach people how to perceive their reality. In so doing, our identities and reality are not infinite, which would allow us to have power over nature, but rather our identities and reality remain fixed, manifested within the principles and beliefs to which we conform our lives.

## II

This is a rather simplistic reading of one of the most complex poets in the English canon. Nevertheless, Blake's radical re-conceptualization of the human form was perhaps Morrison's greatest poetical influence. Morrison, drawing from the theories of Blake, once famously stated that: "there are things that are known and things that are unknown and in between are The Doors" (qtd. Prochnicky and Riordan 68). This statement should be familiar to readers, as it is almost identical to Blake's statement earlier. Like Blake, Morrison argues that there are two worlds: a world that we can perceive through our five senses – a world that is fixed, and thus "closed" – and a world that is infinite, allowing us to experience unrealized opportunities through our imagination. Instead of living within a closed world system, one that generates how we perceive ourselves and our world, Morrison, like Blake, posits that if we can move beyond our own "Doors," then our perceptions, identities, and experiences become infinite, a state that I call "open form."

## Open Form: An 'Open' System of Order

When “An object,” as Morrison writes in *The Lords: Notes on Vision*, “becomes cut off from its name, / habits, / associations...it becomes only / the thing, in and of itself.” In so doing, “the object,” as Morrison argues, “is free to become endlessly anything” (Morrison 78). Morrison, like Blake, clearly draws a distinction between what is and, most importantly, what is *not* possible through the imagination. Like Blake, Morrison glorifies the imagination in his work, arguing that when generate our reality through our imagination, our imagination does not see that reality as fixed; very much to the contrary, it allows us to see beyond a fixed set of structures, perceiving our reality, like Blake argues, as infinite. To be clear, Morrison does not intend for our imagination to change the physical parameters of our bodily existence, or, for that matter, any other physical structure, such as a house. Morrison, like Blake, glorifies the imagination precisely because it does not abide by the principles of a physical world; as a result, when we separate ourselves from every influence, structure, or binary that may dictate how we perceive reality, our imagination becomes free, free to achieve “endlessly anything,” precisely because nothing stops our imagination from accomplishing what it can accomplish.

In “Power,” a poem in *Wilderness: The Lost Writings of Jim Morrison*, Morrison celebrates just the potential of the human form, writing:

I can make the earth stop in  
its tracks. I made the  
blue cars go away.

I can make myself invisible or small.

I can become gigantic & reach the  
farthest things. I can change  
the course of nature.

I can place myself anywhere in  
space or time.

I can summon the dead.

I can perceive events on other worlds,  
in my deepest inner mind,  
& in the minds of others

I can

I am (1-15).

Morrison's overt use of "I can" celebrates the power of the human form. Take, for instance, Morrison's understanding of his identity; indeed, like Blake, Morrison refuses to define himself as a fixed object, but rather an object that is constantly in motion.

In so doing, Morrison shows us the true elasticity of his identity. In "Power," Morrison re-defines his identity three times ("invisible," "small," or "gigantic"). All three of these terms are merely adjectives; modifiers that describe how Morrison perceives his identity. They are not terms, in other words, that encapsulate his identity within utilitarian taxonomies (house, dog, human). Morrison thus showcases the

amorphousness of his identity, as his identity can be radically altered based upon the language he deploys to describe himself. When Morrison says that he can make himself “invisible,” “small,” or “gigantic,” he is not actually changing the height of his bodily image; to re-create his identity, he does not need to change the physical structure of his body, but rather he needs to change the terms he uses to signify his relationship to his body. Indeed, by deploying radically opposed adjectives (“gigantic” and “small”), he, in turn, profoundly alters both how he and the readers perceive his identity. While, on the one hand, the *physical matter* of his bodily image will remain stationary, the construction of his identity – that is, how he perceives himself – can become profoundly altered through switching the terms which he uses to articulate his infinite thoughts, desires, and expressions.

This deserves more detailed attention. By constantly altering the terms he uses to describe his identity, Morrison shows his readers that he does not see himself as a fixed image. What does Morrison’s self-image resemble? How does Morrison describe his identity? These questions, of course, are rhetorical and refuse definite answers; yet because these questions are ineffable, Morrison, like Blake, illustrates that he refuses to see his identity as confined to a singular term (“big” or “small”) or within the confines of a singular answer. His identity, therefore, is left open, undefined, and thus potentially infinite. My use of the term “infinite” here describes the full elasticity of Morrison’s identity: at one moment he describes himself as “big” and at another moment he describes himself as “invisible.” Thus, by refusing to describe his identity (not necessarily his bodily self) within a stable structure of binaries, Morrison refuses to

permit the reader to define his identity within the confines of any notion of categorical knowledge. As a result, because Morrison's identity refuses to have limits, it can become anything through the power of his mind.

But Morrison is not only concerned in "Power" with his relationship to his identity, but also with his relationship to the exterior world. Morrison makes three different references to his reality: "I can change / the course of nature"; "I can place myself anywhere in / space or time"; and "I can perceive events on other worlds." Here Morrison refuses to base his reality upon a fixed system of order, one that would, in turn, generate how he perceives his exterior world. Thus, in allowing it to move beyond the physical structures of his world, Morrison's imagination can "perceive events" not simply on one world, but on multiple "worlds." Again – as with his identity – this mobility can only be achieved because Morrison refuses to base his reality upon a system of order that systematically teaches him to confine his reality to a limited existence. As a result, when Morrison engages with his imagination, his perceptions of his identity and of his reality become infinite, allowing him to perceive a myriad of different and unrealized visions that are free from the confines of fixed reality.

This significant theme is reinforced in the opening moments of his song, "Moonlight Drive" from the Doors' 1967 album, *Strange Days*:

Let's swim to the moon

Uh-huh

Let's climb thru the tide

Penetrate the evenin' that the city

sleeps to hide (1-5).

While “Moonlight Drive” does not contain explicitly philosophical lines like those in “Power,” Morrison’s whimsical lexicon is every bit as centered here upon the human form’s potential through its imagination. For instance, in “Moonlight Drive,” Morrison shatters the boundaries of his perception by reversing the use of the terms swimming and climbing: instead of “climbing” “to the moon,” he wishes to “swim to the moon.” The same is also true for Morrison’s use of the word “climb”: rather than “swim” “in the tide,” he wishes to “climb through the tide.” Thus, in abolishing the structures within which his body is accustomed to working, Morrison’s world becomes a cosmic playground for him. He asks his companion not only to “swim to the moon” and “climb thru’ the tide” with him – an act that can only be achieved by refusing to work within a fixed system of order – but Morrison encourages his date to “surrender” herself “to the waiting worlds [...]” (13). Not world, but “worlds.” Here Morrison evokes an argument similar to the one that he made in “Power”: by moving beyond his five senses and engaging with his imagination, his world becomes infinite, allowing him (and hopefully his companion) to experience unrealized opportunities on not just one world, but multiple worlds.

“Power” and “Moonlight Drive” thus both evoke the freedom that can occur when we move beyond “The Doors.” “The Doors” are not solitary objects, such as one solitary “Door”; “The Doors,” on the contrary, operate within all binaries or structures that systematically dictate our reality to us. Indeed, as we have seen in both works, when Morrison’s imagination moves beyond certain structures (what I am referring to



as “The Doors”), he perceives his identity and his reality as “infinite.” The question becomes: does this ability come because Morrison uses drugs? While critics like Sugerman and Fowlie have suggested otherwise, I wish to offer another explanation. This phenomenon finds articulation in the passage examined earlier in this section: when “An object is cut off from its name, / habits, [and] associations,” it “is free to become endlessly anything.” Indeed, when Morrison’s imagination moves beyond the limited structures of his existence – binaries, terms, his bodily framework, his senses, and religion – his imagination enables him to see his identity and his exterior world as infinite; as a result, Morrison’s identity and reality are not bound by a stable structure, but instead are open, fluid, and constantly in motion, allowing him to live within a world that exists within his mind, one that refuses to have limits. Thus, what is and, most importantly, what is not, possible is not dictated by a system of order, but rather is determined imaginatively by Morrison, allowing him to become, achieve, and perceive “endlessly anything.” In other words, in living in a world without a fixed system of order, Morrison can freely experience “anything,” as there refuses to be a structure, boundary, framework, or doctrine that can keep him from achieving what his imagination sets out to accomplish.

### III

Thus far in this section I have suggested that Morrison perceives his reality and his identity as infinite. Yet the interesting question becomes: does Morrison believe that we can achieve this kind of liberation once we have conformed to a fixed system of order? Does Morrison argue that we live only in a linear fashion, in that we can never

go back to a pure, open form of existence once we have been conformed to social mores? If Morrison were to take this position, then one may rightly argue that Morrison's poetic ambition – that is, to use his creative imagination to free men and women from their social oppression and allow them to become the creators of their own reality – would fail. If, for instance, we could never achieve an open-form existence once we have conformed to society, then we could never acquire the power to perceive our identities and our reality as infinite.

Morrison's poetry and lyrics do, however, suggest that we can liberate ourselves from our social oppression and revert back to a state of pure, open form existence. In "The End" (from *The Doors*, 1967), to give the most prominent example, Morrison argues that liberation back into an open-form condition symbolically represents a rebirth into our primordial state of existence. Morrison writes:

The killer awoke before dawn  
He put his boots on  
He took a face from the  
ancient gallery  
And he walked on down the hall  
He went into the room where his  
sister lived  
And then paid a visit to his brother  
And then he walked on down the hall  
And he came to a door

And he looked inside

Father?

Yes, son?

I want to kill you

Mother, [I want to fuck you] (38-52)

These lyrics have been subject to much scrutiny.<sup>12</sup> A majority of readers (and listeners) interpret these lines literally, arguing that Morrison wishes to kill his father to pursue a repressed, Oedipal sexual desire to have sexual intercourse with his mother. While this interpretation is arguable, I must take Paul Rothchild's interpretation:

Kill the father means kill all of those things in yourself which are instilled in you and are not of yourself. They are not of your own. They are alien concepts which are not yours. They must die [...] Fuck the mother is very basic. And it means, get back to the essence. What is the reality? Fuck the mother is, very basically, Mother: mother-birth, real, very real, you can touch it, you can grab it, you can feel it. It's nature, its real, it can't lie to you (qtd. Prochnicky and Riordan 143).

When Morrison states that he wishes to kill his father, he, as Rothchild argues, wishes to symbolically "kill" off everything that is not pure, everything that has been instilled in him to fertilize (such as sperm) his existence. Killing the father symbolically, therefore, becomes the act of abolishing everything that has been foreign or anything that asserts external authority over him. Thus, "fucking" the mother, should not be read

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<sup>12</sup> In fact, these lines did not appear in the earliest versions of "The End." The first time that these lines appeared was not in a recording studio, but actually during a live performance in the Whisky a Go Go in 1966. For more information see Davis' *Jim Morrison: Life, Death, Legend*, 117.

literally; instead, these lines should be read as having an intimate relationship with his primordial state of existence, one we possessed within our mother's womb, before the act of birth.

Yet, in symbolically killing off the father and having sex with the mother, Morrison illustrates not only the death of an artificial self – one that has been constructed through his father's sperm – but also a rebirth into a pure state of existence. If these lines suggest that we have the ability to revert back into our primordial state of existence, one that is free from an artificial consummation, then Morrison does not see existence as strictly linear. Because we have the ability to kill off a foreign world – what one could see as “The Doors” – that has shaped our existence, and then liberate ourselves back into an image of our primordial self, we, as Morrison demonstrates, gain the ability to possess a state of existence that we held before our fathers fertilized our mothers' womb. This only validates Morrison's poetic ambition; indeed, because we can achieve an open-form existence at any moment, then Morrison's poetry and lyrics are not contextualized in remembering any past self or theory that cannot ever become a reality. Very much to the contrary, because the worlds and visions that Morrison praises inhabit our imagination, a realm outside of our senses and our physical world, Morrison insists that his visions and messages are entirely possible for individuals to possess.

## **Closed Form: A ‘Closed’ System of Order**

While Morrison’s poetry aims to move readers beyond “The Doors,” allowing their identities and realities to be free from any restrictions or boundaries, Morrison, like Blake, was also critically aware of a closed-form environment. Closed form denotes a closed system of order, created outside of ourselves, that generates how we perceive our identities and our external world. Morrison’s most vehement criticism of a closed world system comes not from the individuals who succumb to this limited lifestyle, but to the established order – parents, teachers, religious authorities, governments, and even friends – who confine individuals to a rigid system of order in order to retain their power over them.

In a telling interview with Lizzie James, Morrison protests against:

[...] teachers, religious leaders-even friends, or so-called friends – take over where the parents leave off. They demand that we feel only the feelings they want and expect from us. They demand all the time that we perform feelings for them. We're like actors-turned loose in this world to wander in search of a phantom ... endlessly searching for a half-forgotten shadow of our lost reality [...]

[...] When others demand that we become the people they want us to be, they force us to destroy the person we really are [...] Society, parents; they refuse to allow you to keep the freedom you are born with. There are subtle ways to punish a person for daring to feel.

Morrison’s central criticism here is against social institutions that teach people how to live. Instead of allowing members of society to “keep the freedom,” a state that he

describes more fully in *The Lords*, Morrison argues that social institutions create doctrines and systems that force people to live in a specific manner. When this conformity occurs, our “feelings,” as Morrison describes, cannot enjoy free expression, allowing us to “achieve endlessly anything”; rather we only express the “feelings” that fall within the particular framework that certain social institutions have created for us. In so doing, we “destroy the person who we really are” (or could become) in order to live within the boundaries that society has set forth for us.

Morrison utilizes this significant theme in his first book of poetry, *The Lords: Notes on a Vision* (1969), ending his book with a staunch warning to his readers:

*The Lords*. Events take place beyond our knowledge  
or control. Our lives are lived for us.

[...]

The Lords appease us with images. They give us  
Books, concerts, galleries, shows, cinemas.  
Especially the cinemas. Through art they confuse  
us and blind us to our *enslavement*. Art adorns  
our prison walls, keeps us silent and diverted  
and indifferent (Morrison 89; italics mine).

As Jerry Prochnicky and James Riordan argue: “Morrison saw most people as being like sheep, a herd, following the leaders. The Lords were the people who controlled them, the ruler class” (Prochnicky and Riordan 58). At the end of *The Lords*, Morrison argues that when we accept the structures that others have imposed upon us, our

perceptions of our own identities and realities are created and controlled by those structures. As a result, the system of order that “The Lords” manifests closes the world and its possibilities off to us, dictating what is and what is not possible; in so doing, “The Lords,” as Morrison argues, “blind us to our enslavement.” Morrison’s use of the word “enslavement” should not be read as a physical “enslavement” – such as the Atlantic slave trade or the plantations in the American colonies – but rather it connotes a mental “enslavement.” This mental “enslavement,” like Blake’s term “mind-forg’d manacles,” occurs when we live within the structures that others have imposed upon us – through “Books, concerts, galleries, shows” and “cinemas” – all of which control how we think, act, and see the world.

Even more troubling to Morrison is our failure to realize our “enslavement” to “The Lords.” Because the tools that “The Lords” use to control members of their society are “Books, concerts, galleries, shows” and “cinemas” – in essence art – our “prison walls” do not resemble a physical prison: dark, concrete, and metal bars. The “prison walls” that Morrison envisions here are instead decorated with “Art,” which both “divert[s]” us from and “blind[s]” us to our societal oppression. This deserves more attention: because the structures that “The Lords” use to control people seem physically harmless, people fail to realize that these devices are actually extremely harmful, controlling both their minds and bodies. Thus, the spark that would cause us to revolt against these evil forces fails to exist, and the authorities responsible for their oppression remain – at least in their eyes – “silent.”

Morrison's poetry and lyrics suggest that he saw our lives as a lived performance. Morrison himself was a powerful public performer; in addition, poems such as "Power" and *The Lords* suggest that we can free ourselves into the infinite, almost through a self-performance.<sup>13</sup> However, if, on the one hand, Morrison argues that our self-performance, free from the confines of any structure, could allow us to move into the infinite through the expression of our infinite desires, thoughts, and perceptions, Morrison, on the other hand, also argues that our self-performance could be created and controlled by somebody else. In his interview with James, Morrison argues that when we accept the structures that others have imposed upon us, we: "trade in [our] reality for a role. [We] trade in [our] senses for an act. [We] give up [our] ability to feel and in exchange, put on a mask." The moment when we allow others to direct our lives, our self-performance is limited to the role we are given. As a result, we close our imagination off to the possibility of attaining the infinite, and instead perform only the actions, thoughts, and desires that our role permits for us.

## V

Blake's theories became a seminal platform for Morrison to develop his own philosophies and theories on the human form. As we have seen, Morrison categorizes humanity into two parties: what I have been calling open and closed form. In so doing, Morrison vehemently argues against what he calls "The Lords" – governments, religion, parental authorities – who enslave us to our reality. Yet, in protesting against the rulers of society, Morrison provides individuals with another option: arguing that we can

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<sup>13</sup> For more information on performance identity, please consult Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter: On Discursive Limits of "Sex."*



potentially move beyond what he calls “The Doors” and allow our identities and our reality to become infinite.

In making this argument, I have been critical of interpretations that continually link Morrison’s poetry to drugs. I find that if we fully engage with the complexities of his argument, we can see that several of Morrison’s theories derive from a rich poetic tradition set forth by William Blake in the British Romantic period. My main critique of Sugerman’s analysis is that he continually posits grand claims for Morrison’s poetry and lyrics that are not supported by Morrison’s work itself. More importantly, to constantly link his poetry to drugs misses Morrison’s central point. As we have seen in *The Lords*, “Power,” “Moonlight Drive,” and “The End,” Morrison never once preaches the use of drugs to achieve a state of open form existence. Liberation, in all these works, occurs through Morrison’s ability to separate his imagination from the artificial structures of his reality, allowing his perception of his identity and reality to become infinite.

While Morrison understood that we, as humans, all live within a physical world that has limits, he nevertheless argued that our imagination could allow us to move beyond these limits. To reach the infinite or even to become infinite, he need not literally deconstruct every structure or binary; rather, to become infinite, he simply needs to perceive his reality, not through his senses or reason that works within these physical structures, but through his imagination. As Morrison shows us in “Power,” while, on the one hand, the physical structures of his body will remain the same, his perception of his identity, on the other hand, can become infinite. The world(s) that

Morrison, like Blake, preach do not take place within the physicality of the world (buildings, trees, our bodily selves), but reside within our imagination. Thus, even though our world and our bodily image will remain the same – as in “Power” – that does not mean that our imagination is unable to move us beyond these limited binaries and into the infinite; indeed, by allowing our imagination to move beyond “The Doors,” what we can achieve and create within our imagination becomes infinite. Morrison’s message becomes a celebration of the human form’s imagination, a concept that will be crucial for us to understand in the next section.

**“BREAK ON THROUGH TO THE OTHER SIDE”: ‘OPEN FORM’ AND THE CREATION OF  
REALITY**

To participate in the creation.  
To screw things up. To bring Things  
into being. – Jim Morrison, “The Original Temptation,” 7-9.

In “The Original Temptation,” Morrison calls our attention to the act of creation. In the last section, I suggested that when we abolish the structures that dictate our reality to us, our identities and reality become infinite. Yet in “The Original Temptation,” Morrison examines the aftermath of this act. Indeed, for the act of destruction – “to screw things up” – calls for, in return, an act of reconstruction: “to bring Things / back into being.” Thus, deconstructing a closed world system allows us not only to perceive our identities and our reality as infinite; perhaps more importantly, in achieving this realization, we gain the ability to reassemble the infinite back into our own system of order.

In this section, I will focus on Morrison’s understanding of creation in “Break on Through” and *An American Prayer*. In both of these works, Morrison examines that by allowing our imagination to move beyond “The Doors,” we not only move into the infinite, as discussed in the last section, but we gain the ability to frame the infinite back into our own structural world through our imagination. Thus, what remains beyond “The Doors” is not a world that lies in wait for us; instead, when we move through “The Doors,” the worlds that we perceive are a creation of our imagination. Yet, even though Morrison argues that people can become the creators of their own world, one should not see these individuals as trapped within this system. Because Morrison encourages us to

not only deconstruct an old world but to then re-construct our own world, he examines that this power enables individuals to continue this process, ensuring that they remain free from the confines of a fixed order.

## I

One illustrative example of this concept appears in the Doors' first hit single, "Break on Through" (*The Doors*, 1967). "Break on Through" is more than a hit single of the 1960s; in many ways, "Break on Through" *defines* Morrison's poetical ambition. In the first section of the song, Morrison reiterates several themes explored in the last section. As Morrison writes:

You know the day destroys the night  
Night divides the day  
Tried to run  
Tried to hide  
Break on through to the other side  
Break on through to the other side  
Break on through to the other side (1-7).

Here Morrison clearly rebels against the binaries that systematically dictate our reality. Let us take the structure of the song's first passage: Morrison argues against the binaries of "day" and "night," which can be interpreted as the binaries that plan out what is possible during the twenty-four hours of a certain day. For instance, if we abide by the structures of "day" and "night," we live linearly, planning our days (school, sleep, arising) and "night" (sleep) according to these fixed binaries. Human freedom, not to

mention the powers that we can possess, cannot be achieved within this rigid structure; as a result, Morrison does not argue that we should “run” or “hide” from these binaries – a state that *still* forces us to still abide by these binaries – but to “Break on through to the other side,” an act that not only shatters the boundaries of these rigid binaries but, in so doing, allows us to move through “The Doors” and into the infinite.

Thus, what resides on “the other side” becomes a creation within Morrison’s imagination. As Morrison writes:

I found an island in your arms

A country in your eyes

Arms that chained us

Eyes that lied

[...]

The gate is straight

Deep and wide

Break on through to the other side (19-22, 28-30).

Morrison incorporates Blake’s symbol of “the doors” with the image of “the gate;” that is, the structure that divides what is real and what can *become* real. As we have seen in the opening segments of the song, Morrison protests against basing his reality upon a fixed structure or binary; thus, the visions that he perceives are not visions waiting for him, as that would imply that “the other side” contains innate binaries in which Morrison must live. Rather, his visions are generated through his imagination, which allows him to create a portrait of the person within the song beyond his or her bodily

framework. For instance, rather than simply seeing the person's "arms" or "eyes," Morrison creates a vision of the person beyond these limited structures, seeing not just the physical elements of "arms," but an "island in your arms." Moreover, instead of seeing simply "eyes," Morrison imagines a "country in your eyes." In his move into the infinite Morrison illustrates how he frames the chaotic world beyond "The Doors" into his own portrait of the person under observation.

When Morrison moves through "The Doors," he abolishes every innate structure that dictates his reality to him. Yet when Morrison evokes his imagination to create a portrait of the person, his vision is anything but chaotic; it is defined and unified. His visions, such as the "island" and the "country," suggest that Morrison's vision contains structures and, most importantly, unity. Thus, in moving to "the other side," Morrison not only shatters the boundaries of a fixed system of order ("day" and "night"), but, in so doing, he enables himself to frame the infinite back into his own unified portrait of the person through his imagination. In other words, as Morrison moves to "the other side," he not only deconstructs the structures of an old world system, but he enables himself to reconstruct the infinite into his own creation of the person under observation.

Morrison uses the imagination not simply to promote the act of deconstructing an old world order – though that is, of course, part of it – but to create a new world order. In his most famous poem, *An American Prayer*, Morrison writes:

Let's reinvent the gods, all the myths of the ages

[....]

We can invent Kingdoms of our own

grand purple thrones, those chairs of lust  
& love we must...(7, 101-3).

For once we have shattered a closed system of order, Morrison argues that we enable ourselves to “invent” a world of “our own.” Indeed, the “myths” that our world(s) embody, in addition to the physical structures of our world (“grand purple thrones, those chairs of lust”), will become manifested within our imagination. Yet what becomes just as important here is that the act of creation is an act of crafting an infinite array of possibilities and elements back into a unified order of existence within which each individual can live. Our imagination not only allows us, as we have seen in “Break on Through,” to create our own vision of reality; in fact, it allows us to create our own world, free from external control or influence. While Morrison does utilize his imagination to deconstruct the binaries of his former world, he does not intend for us to live within this arcane, chaotic environment. On the contrary, in “Break on Through” and *An American Prayer*, Morrison clearly argues that our imagination enables us to frame “our own” world, one that corresponds to each individual’s needs, preferences, and desires.

Strikingly, then, creation, for Morrison, is highly dependent not only on the Dionysian spirit but also the Apollonian system of order. In developing this theory, Morrison draws from the theories that Nietzsche set forth in *The Birth of a Tragedy*, a source that Morrison credited as one of his greatest influences.<sup>14</sup> As Nietzsche writes: “the Apollonian spirit [a unified system of order] rescues us from the Dionysiac universality and makes us attend, delightedly, to individual forms [...] Through the

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<sup>14</sup> See Prochnicky and Riordan’s *Break on Through: The Life and Death of Jim Morrison*, 183-5.

massive impact of image, concept, ethical doctrine, and sympathy, the Apollonian spirit wrests man from his Dionysiac self-destruction [...]” (Nietzsche 128-9). The birth of a tragedy, for Nietzsche, occurs when the Apollonian spirit frames the chaotic energy of the Dionysian spirit into an orderly existence. It is the fusion of these two entities that births the tragedy, the discourse, and matter. Without the synthesis of these two entities, as Nietzsche so brilliantly argues, the sheer power of the chaotic Dionysian energy would drive men and women to their “self-destruction.”

Morrison’s understanding of this relationship parallels Nietzsche’s examination. Without a unified system of order in the “Apollonian spirit,” creation, for Morrison, would “self-destruct,” as the overriding, chaotic Dionysian powers would destroy, or rather disallow, him from crafting his own world in which to live. For instance, in *An American Prayer*, Morrison calls for us to “reinvent” both the truths within our new world (“Let’s reinvent the gods, all the myths of the ages”) and also a structural, physical unity (“We can invent Kingdoms of our own / grand purple thrones, those chairs of lust”). Even in “Break on Through,” his vision of the person in the song is manifested as a result of him framing the infinite on “the other side” into a portrait of the person in the song, beyond the person’s bodily structure. Thus, in calling for this relationship, Morrison acknowledges that his vision is not only dependent on Dionysian elements to deconstruct his world, but also on the Apollonian elements to frame chaos back into a unified order of existence. However, once we create our Kingdoms through the Apollonian spirit, we should not see our Kingdoms as stationary, as the deployment of our imagination cannot be so static. As Morrison shows, how we use our



imagination to create our world is directly linked to our infinite thoughts, expressions, and desires. Therefore, because Morrison argues that our imagination is linked to our infinite selves, our world can never be considered fixed, as our selves are not fixed. Thus, how we deploy our imagination will allow us to deconstruct the binaries of a structural world order – even our own created world – and then continue the act of recreation, filling our world with new thoughts, truths, “myths,” and structures.

Morrison’s poetry argues that not only can we abolish a world that enslaves us, but also we can create our own world. Each individual can, indeed, take the infinite and craft it back into a unified system of order, filling it with each individual’s own “myths,” structures, and “grand purple thrones.” Morrison’s poetry, in other words, gives rise to the notion that we can become the creators of our own reality through the power of the imagination, allowing us to create and, most importantly, recreate a world that is based upon our infinite desires, thoughts, expression, and imaginations. Does this mean that each Kingdom will be the same? This could be true if Morrison urges us to create our world universally, such as through our senses. If so, then one could rightly argue that how we would craft our world would be very similar (if not identical) to another’s world. Nevertheless, because Morrison argues that creation must come from the human imagination, how each individual uses his or her imagination will be different, as each individual is different. And, by extension, how each individual will resurrect his or her Kingdom will, in turn, be an extension of his or her infinite thoughts, desires, and perceptions.

#### IV

In making this argument, however, I am arguing against Prochnicky, Riordan, and Sugerman's claims about how Morrison uses the imagination. As we have examined in section one, Sugerman argues that Morrison uses the imagination – an imagination that is stimulated first by “drugs” – to “gain entry into worlds otherwise locked and sealed off.” And, moreover, through Morrison's imagination, Sugerman further argues that he can now “unlock worlds” that would otherwise be denied to Morrison. Thus, Sugerman interprets Morrison's understanding of creation linearly, as the world(s) into which Morrison “gains entry” are not products of his own creation, but an already existing world that he enters into as a result of his use of drugs.

Riordan and Prochnicky, too, share Sugerman's understanding of Morrison's sense of the imagination. And, like Sugerman, Prochnicky and Riordan continue to link Morrison's poetry and the poetic tradition from which Morrison built to drugs. As Riordan and Prochnicky state:

In 1966 and 1967, Jim Morrison used LSD to take his journey to what the surrealists calls the frontiers of divine madness. He forsook reason and sought inspiration at all costs. He ventured into the same realms that influenced Blake, Rimbaud, Poe, and others. The mystical visions and omens Morrison experienced in this condition were the soul and depth of his lyrics and poems, and so many of them were clear and compelling, a montage of symbolic mythological images (Prochnicky and Riordan 135).

Like Sugerman, Prochnicky and Riordan argue that Morrison perceives the act of creation in a linear fashion. Through drugs, as Prochnicky and Riordan argue, Morrison “ventured into the same realms that influenced Blake, Rimbaud, Poe, and others.” If, then, Morrison entered into the “same realms” upon which Blake, Rimbaud, and Poe all embarked, then all four poets (including Morrison himself) did not create these realms, but these “realms” were created by another entity. (Who exactly created the “realms” is not specified in the text.) Indeed, because Morrison experienced these same “realms” more than a hundred and fifty years after Blake experienced them, then it would be impossible for Morrison to have created them. Therefore, it is logical to assume that Prochnicky and Riordan, like Sugerman, argue that when Morrison moves through “The Doors,” the worlds, visions, and “realms” that Morrison perceives are not an act of his own creation, but of another entity’s creation.

Of course, the problem that arises with Prochnicky, Riordan, and Sugerman’s interpretations are that they all posit that Morrison’s visions remain within a fixed system of order. Because all three critics argue that Morrison needs drugs to “unlock” these worlds or “realms” that existed prior to his conception of them, these “realms” operate according to innate binaries (such as “day” and “night”) by which Morrison must abide. In other words, because he did not invent these worlds, these worlds carry a certain degree of structure to them that existed prior to Morrison’s arrival. But the question, therefore, becomes: what is the difference between the worlds within which Morrison lives as a result of drugs, and the worlds where he lives as a result of his senses? This question is not taken up by any of the three critics, but I would like to

suggest an interpretation: there cannot be a difference. If Morrison lives within a world that is created by another entity – no matter what that world is – he must still live within a system of order that is both created and controlled by another entity. What is and what is not possible, then, is not predicated upon Morrison's imagination, but entirely predicated by whoever created that world. Thus, in keeping with Prochnicky, Riordan, and Sugerman's examination, Morrison cannot be considered free within this world; instead, he is but a guest within that world, living according to someone else's structures, rules, binaries, and regulations.

Morrison, however, does not preach this message within his poetry and lyrics. As we have seen in "The Original Temptation," "Break on Through," *An American Prayer*, and even in certain elements of "Moonlight Drive" and "Power," Morrison gains control over nature within these works, not through drugs, but by allowing his imagination to refuse to abide by a fixed and innate system of order that dictates how he perceives reality. Without restrictions or boundaries, therefore, Morrison's imagination could move "to the other side," allowing it to frame and re-frame the infinite into his own portrait of "the other side." This constant act of creation and, most importantly, re-creation made Morrison highly aware that we could all create a world beyond "The Doors," but, at the same time, he did not know what this realm could become. Thus, by failing to define what the "the other side" is, Morrison allows it to remain open and undefined, allowing him to invent and "reinvent" his own world, through his mind's discretion.

Morrison imagines and re-imagines his own reality not because he possesses special powers or uses drugs, but because he can create it through his human imagination. Like so much of his poetry, Morrison's message contains elements that all men and women can accept and utilize. In his "Self-Interview," Morrison once stated: "Listen, real poetry doesn't say anything, it just ticks off the possibilities. Opens all the doors. You can walk through any one that suits you [...] If my poetry aims to achieve anything, it's to deliver people from their limited ways in which they see and feel" (2). Morrison's words remind his audience that they, too, can move beyond their own "Doors." Yet, as Morrison remarks, this ability must come from within, through the imagination, which not only "ticks off the possibilities" of what one can become – an infinite being – but also allows one to "Open all the doors" of one's imagination. Like Morrison, his readers can experience a myriad of different possibilities that reside on "the other side"; in so doing, what resides on "the other side" (as we have discussed) is not a vision that Morrison has created for them, but a realm that remains undefined, open, and constantly in motion. Thus, like Morrison, his readers can free themselves from what he considers "their limited existence," and create and re-create their "own Kingdom" through their imagination.

## MORRISON AND THE 1960S COUNTERCULTURAL MOVEMENT

You're all a bunch of fuckin' idiots. Let people tell you what you're gonna do. Let people push you around. How long do you think it's gonna last? How long are you gonna let it go on? Maybe you like it. Maybe you like being pushed around. Maybe you love it. Maybe you love getting your face stuck in shit [...]  
You're all a bunch of slaves. Bunch of slaves. Letting everybody push you around. What are you going to do about it? What are you going to do about it? What are you gonna do? [...]  
I'm not going to take this shit. You are a bunch of fuckin' idiots, your faces are being pressed into the shit of the world....

–Jim Morrison, Miami, 1969

Critics and fans of Morrison and the Doors have long debated what sparked Morrison's anger towards his audience in a 1969 concert in Miami. This was the year that the Doors were at the height of their popularity, reaching worldwide stardom and having produced three successful albums (*The Doors*, *Strange Days*, *Waiting For the Sun*) and just releasing their fourth (*The Soft Parade*). Though Morrison never went out of his way to please mainstream audiences – arriving late to concerts, showing up to concerts drunk and/or high, being arrested onstage, and blatantly ignoring Dick Clark's request to remove the word “higher” from the Doors' live performance of “Light My Fire” – it is still odd how often he viciously attacked and insulted his audience, the lifeblood of his and the Doors' success.

While critics, such as Fowlie and Stephen Davis, have provided insights into Morrison's torn relationship with his audience, this aspect of Morrison's work needs to be examined in greater detail. Beginning in 1969 – the year that the Doors' third studio

album, *Waiting for the Sun*, was released – Morrison’s work started to become increasingly confrontational with the direction of the countercultural movement. In the first two sections of this thesis, I suggested that Morrison’s poetry and lyrics attempted to liberate people from their oppressed existence; nevertheless, even though the Doors were incredibly successful, Morrison became acutely aware at this time that his core message was being overlooked (or simply ignored) by the generation to which he spoke.

Two major aspects of the 1960s countercultural movement, the practices of Eastern religion and philosophy, and the emergence of communal living, give us better insights as to why Morrison’s work and stage performances began to become increasingly hostile towards that movement. While, on the one hand, Morrison insisted upon individuality, freeing people from any influence outside of themselves, the practice of Eastern religion and communal living, on the other hand, both urged people to follow specific guidelines given to them by a spiritual leader, guru, or community. By examining these two phenomena in greater detail, we can not only better understand both the context and composition of “Five to One” and his notorious 1969 concert in Miami, both of which are instances of Morrison repeatedly attacking his generation for living within a closed system of social life. More importantly, we can see that the messages and visions in which Morrison provided to the countercultural movement throughout his career were drastically different from the solutions that it advocated.

## I

The Doors achieved world recognition as a result of their first two albums, *The Doors* and *Strange Days*, both of which were critical and commercial successes.<sup>15</sup> Songs such as “Break on Through,” “The End,” “Moonlight Drive,” and even songs, such as “When the Music is Over” and “End of the Night,” became an intellectual enterprise for Morrison to liberate people and allow them to achieve a higher level of cognition beyond their five senses. However, while the Doors and Morrison were fully committed to the counterculture’s efforts to rebel against Western conventions – Judeo-Christianity, parental authority, governments, school, and reason – Morrison and the Doors never acknowledged the direction of the movement, or even the movement itself, within any of their songs. This phenomenon can perhaps be explained due to Morrison writing a significant amount of the Doors’ songs before the formation of the band; thus, by never knowing who their audience would eventually be, or even how well their messages would be received, Morrison and the Doors never had an audience to acknowledge in their songs.

By 1968, however, the year that the Doors were largely considered the number one band in America and one of the most prominent bands in the world, Morrison not only became aware of who his audience was, but also the impact (or lack of impact) he actually had on it. As Prochnicky and Riordan argue:

Morrison began seeing himself as a misunderstood poet living within the confines of the rock medium [...] They saw him only as a sex symbol and just

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<sup>15</sup> See Prochnicky and Riordan’s *Break on Through: The Life and Death of Jim Morrison*, 153-7 and 174-82. In addition, see Davis’ *Jim Morrison: Life, Death, Legend*, 196-8.



wanted to hear the hits from the radio. The more he realized the words were being overlooked, the more frustrated he became [...]. At first, when the sex symbol thing began, he was pleased, believing it could only enhance his power and increase his influence on the people he was trying to reach. But by this time [1968], Jim had grown to hate it (Prochnicky and Riordan 252).

Prochnicky and Riordan's argument can perhaps explain the drastic shift in the Doors' third studio album, *Waiting for the Sun* (1968).<sup>16</sup> For *Waiting for the Sun* not only marks a shift towards Morrison confronting the prevalent issues of his time in "Unknown Solider" – "wait until the war is over / And we're both a little older" (1-2) – but it takes aim at attacking the direction of his generation in "Five to One." Before his attack in the second segment of the song, Morrison gives his generation momentary praise, only to subvert it in the song's next section. In "Five to One," Morrison begins the song with a revolutionary chant, much like, as Hopkins and Sugerman note in *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, the "revolutionary rhetoric heard on the streets and read in the underground press" (Hopkins and Sugerman 152). As Morrison writes:

Five to one, baby

One in five

No one here gets out alive

Now

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<sup>16</sup> Prochnicky and Riordan's argument is also supported by Morrison's Paris diary, better known now as *The Lost Diaries of Jim Morrison*. As Morrison writes:

I only became a singer due to never having my poems published, or, taken seriously. Then, the poems were published and my world changed. I thought if I sang some songs I could share my poems. And, if I was famous that my poems would be recognized, too. Taken seriously. [I] [f]eel that no one refers to me as a poet. Like they do, Dylan. Then, when I finally had them published no one says a word! Wh[y] do I write for them? To many, I'm just the fool on the hill! (26).

You get yours, baby

I'll get mine

Gonna make it, baby

If we try

The old get old and the young

get stronger

May take a week and it may

take longer

They got the guns but we got

the numbers

Gonna win

Yeah, we're takin' over

Come on (1-17).

The first segment of the song situates itself within the counterculture's revolutionary rhetoric. The opening lines imply that both Morrison and the Doors were committed to the counterculture's revolution, and that Morrison even envisions its victory ("Gonna win / Yea, we're takin' over").

Yet, as Hopkins and Sugerman suggest in *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, this song was "misunderstood by nearly everyone because they listened only to the first two verses" (Hopkins and Sugerman 151). In the next section, Morrison withdraws his initial praise for the counterculture, now directly attacking its efforts and direction:

Your ballroom days are over, baby  
Night is drawing near  
Shadows of the evening crawl across  
the years  
You walk across the floor with a  
flower in your hand  
Trying to tell me no one understands  
Trade in your hours for a handful  
of dimes (18-25).

Here Morrison not only shows his distaste for his status as a sex symbol – “You walk across the floor / with a flower in your hand / trying to tell me no one understands” – but he candidly expresses his disapproval for the movement’s direction. As Prochnicky and Riordan argue, Morrison “reminds the girl [in “Five to One”] that her ballroom days are over and refers to her walking across the floor with a flower and her saying no one understands, it is clear that [Morrison] foresees not only revolution in America, but the failings of the flower children to stop it” (Prochnicky and Riordan 248).<sup>17</sup>

Morrison’s metaphors of “Night is drawing near” and “Shadows of the evening crawl across / the years” further support Prochnicky and Riordan’s interpretation. On the one hand, while the counterculture attempts to spread peace over the world, the natural order of that world, on the other hand, works against the movement, as the world suppresses its efforts through the coming of “Night.”

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<sup>17</sup> For more information about the context of this song, see Hopkins and Sugerman’s *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, 151-3.

Moreover, while the movement attempted to liberate individuals from Western conventions, Morrison argued in “Five to One” that the movement’s direction has placed itself within a closed system of order. For instance, when Morrison confronts the flower child within the song, he informs her that she “Trade[s] in your hours for a handful / of dimes.” What these lines signify, interestingly, is that while the flower child may believe her actions are revolutionary – as seen in the song’s opening moments – her actions have nevertheless placed her within a closed system of order. Instead of the flower child using her “hours” to “break on through to the other side,” as Morrison suggested in “Break on Through,” the flower child has “trade[ed] in [her] hours,” for a monetary value, “a handful / of dimes.” Monetary should not be read as referring to simply money; these lines should rather be interpreted as the flower child receiving a reward, not produced by her imagination, but given to her from another source, a source for whom she works. In other words, the rewards that the flower child receives come not from her imagination, free from external control or influence – as Morrison and Blake preach – but are provided to her as a result of someone else.

The symbol of the flower in the 1960s – like the one in “Five to One” – is usually linked to the counterculture movement.<sup>18</sup> Thus, in using the symbol of the flower child in “Five to One,” Morrison does not speak directly to one member of the counterculture, but instead makes a larger cultural statement. Hopkins and Sugerman support this interpretation in *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, arguing that while this song does not suggest that Morrison had “turned his back entirely on the ‘love generation,’”

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<sup>18</sup> See Robert E. Fitch’s “Hippies, Hoodlums, Youthmongers - and Students” and John Robert Howard’s “The Flowering of the Hippie Movement.”

he “remained different in many basic ways.” For instance, Hopkins and Sugerman argue that:

Unlike the prototypical ‘hippy,’ Jim thought astrology was pseudoscience, rejected the concept of the totally integrated personality, and expressed a distaste for vegetarianism because of the religious fervor often attached to diet. It was, he said, dogma, and he had no use for that (Hopkins and Sugerman 153).

Hopkins and Sugerman clearly elucidate several differences between Morrison and the countercultural movement – differences of which Morrison was clearly aware.

Specifically, Hopkins and Sugerman emphasize that Morrison rejected the emerging alternative practices that were embraced by the counterculture in order to reach a higher level of cognition or inner peace, believing that they were attached to “dogma,” “pseudoscience,” and “religious fervor.”

Hopkins and Sugerman’s argument underscore Morrison’s central attack on the flower child within “Five to One.” Indeed, when Morrison expresses his “distaste” for the flower child, he argues that the rewards (“dimes”) that she receives comes as a result of her “practicing” within the guidelines that others have provided her. Could the rewards that the flower child receives be a result of her practicing these new alternative lifestyles? While we do not know specifically what the flower child is doing to receive her “dimes,” we can begin to identify that the reasons for Morrison’s distaste towards the counterculture, as Hopkins and Sugerman illustrate, are the same reasons he attacks the flower child in “Five to One.” In both instances, Morrison’s central attack is

towards individuals who follow within the specific guidelines that others have created in order to achieve a proposed “reward.”

Above all, “Five to One” marks Morrison’s increasing hostility towards the direction of the movement. In 1969, one year after “Five to One” debuted, Morrison’s anger towards his generation had escalated, becoming even more direct, more confrontational. The themes that Morrison evokes in “Five to One” become even more hostile by the time of the Doors 1969 concert in Miami. There Morrison candidly insults his fans:

Let people tell you what you’re gonna do. Let people push you around. How long do you think it’s gonna last? How long are you gonna let it go on? Maybe you like it. Maybe you like being pushed around. Maybe you love it. Maybe you love getting your face stuck in shit [...] You’re all a bunch of slaves. Bunch of slaves. Letting everybody push you around [...] You are a bunch of fuckin’ idiots, your faces are being pressed into the shit of the world (qtd. Prochnicky and Riordan 295).

Here Morrison clearly attacks his generation for working for an entity outside of itself. Candidly, Morrison remarks that the men and women of his generation are “all a bunch of slaves” and they are all “a bunch of fuckin’ idiots,” as their “faces are being pressed into the shit of the world.” The word “slave” appeared earlier in *The Lords* (1969), where Morrison argues that “The Lords” (or the leaders of society) “enslave” individuals through “Books, concerts, galleries, shows” and “cinemas.” The same metaphors and motifs are re-deployed by Morrison in Miami; indeed, by utilizing the

word “slave” to describe his audience, Morrison suggests that someone – whoever pushes their faces “in shit” – controls, oppresses, and ‘enslaves’ his audience.<sup>19</sup>

Critics and fans have long been puzzled over Morrison’s attack on his audience. Yet with songs like “Five to One,” this attack, perhaps, should not be seen as out of the ordinary; there were, of course, other songs that debuted before the Miami incident, such as “The Soft Parade” and “Do it,” that give us evidence of Morrison’s growing disappointment with the direction of his generation. “Five to One” and Miami, however, are two incidents that come together, concentrating on one central theme. The theme is not, as one might imagine, that Morrison’s words are being overlooked by his audience; the theme, on the contrary, is that for Morrison the counterculture’s directions have placed it within a closed-form environment. In both circumstances, Morrison vehemently attacks his generation for living within the guidelines that someone else has set forth for it.

But the interesting question is: who is controlling and enslaving his generation? By examining two cultural phenomena that emerged from the 1960s, eastern religion and communal living, we can begin to direct scholarship towards considering this aspect of Morrison’s work more fully. The beliefs, messages, and practices that emerged within these two disciplines can not only be seen as diametrically opposed to

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<sup>19</sup> It should also be noted that a large portion of Morrison’s attack on his audience in Miami took place within the instrumental pieces of “Five to One,” further connecting the messages in “Five to One” and the messages that Morrison expressed in his performance in Miami. Prochnicky and Riordan note that in *Break on Through: The Life and Death of Jim Morrison* that: “When Morrison paused in his rap the band started playing ‘Five to One.’ That was probably a mistake. Morrison sang a few verses, but after that his rap became angry and harshly condemning (Prochnicky and Riordan 295).

the messages and visions that Morrison preached within his poetry and lyrics, but this conflict led to Morrison's continuous attack towards his generation beginning in 1969.

### **Eastern Religion**

One of the major aspects of the 1960s countercultural movement was an increasing practice of Eastern religion and philosophy. Among the most notable celebratory activists of the 1960s were: The Beatles (especially George Harrison), Aleister Crowley, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and Gary Snyder.<sup>20</sup> According to Marty E. Martine, by the mid 1960s:

[...] many Americans were beginning to send out subtle signals that a change was in the air. Some of the protest against the war turned pacific; "flower children" replaced the militants, and some of them retreated to communes where interest centered in Zen Buddhism, macrobiotic diets, or the Children of God [...]. Eastern religions found Western embodiments on campuses and cities (Martin ix).

With the efforts of the leaders of the 1960s counterculture to promote the benefits of Eastern religion and philosophy in their works (*see* Kerouac's "Buddha," The Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper*, Ginsberg's "Whales Visitation," or Whalen's "Sourdough Mountain Lookout"), in addition to Guru Maharaj Ji and Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki teaching these practices throughout America, Eastern religion and philosophy became a popular

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<sup>20</sup> See Hugh McLeod's *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*, 132-4.



mainstream attraction among American youth.<sup>21</sup> As a result, centers and movements, such as San Francisco's Zen Center, Transcendental Meditation (TM), Krishna Consciousness Movement, the Divine Light Mission, and the International Society of Krishna Consciousness, were operating throughout Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York, and were flourishing even in mainstream American society.<sup>22</sup>

Eastern religion and philosophy appealed to the people of the 1960s not simply because they encouraged rebelling against Western religion. The rituals and beliefs that Eastern religion and philosophy provided people, as Hugh McLeod argues, with an avenue for "personal exploration" and "individual freedom." As McLeod further examines, Eastern religion and philosophy, unlike Christianity, emphasize the individual's "experience rather than doctrine, [and] feeling and intuition rather than rational argument" (McLeod 132-4). Instead of living by a set of rules or regulations set forth within the canonized Bible, Eastern religion and philosophy were perceived by the members of the counterculture as focusing on the individual's own spiritual journey, through the practices of meditation, yoga, and other alternative practices. More prominently, however, while Judeo-Christianity insists that individuals cannot transcend their bodily framework until death – where the individual will experience an afterlife in Heaven or Hell – Buddhism, for instance, focuses on the individual's own spiritual

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<sup>21</sup> See also Camille Paglia's "Cults and Cosmic Consciousness" for more information about the rise of Eastern religion in America in the 1960s."

<sup>22</sup> In his book, *Jim Morrison: Life, Death, Legend*, Davis supports this argument, writing: Transcendental Meditation was the first of the Asian spiritual cults to invade America in the sixties. Founded in 1957 in India, by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, as the Spiritual Regeneration Movement, it arrived in Los Angeles in 1960 and spread through the U.S. and Europe until it became identified with the Beatles and eventually mutated into an international corporation [...] Maharishi taught a practice of deep meditation by means of personal mantra given to the student by his teacher, a technique based on ancient Vedic scripture orally transmitted to him by his own teacher, Guru Dev (Davis 80).

journey in the living present. Allan Watts, a prominent figure in bringing Eastern religions to America, argues that Buddhism, in contrast to Judeo-Christianity, is “all action,” in that each individual is connected to every aspect of the world he or she inhabits. Moreover, when the individual’s own “separateness disappears,” realizing his or her connection to all facets of the world, the individual experiences a state of “nirvana” (Watts 10).

While Eastern religion and philosophy were perceived in the 1960s as focusing on the individual’s spiritual journey, several sectors of Eastern religion and philosophy practiced in 1960s America mandated each individual to follow a specific lifestyle or creed to achieve a higher state of spirituality. In most cases, students of Eastern religion and philosophy were led through their spiritual journey by a guru, master, or spiritual leader; yet the doctrines and creeds that each guru, master, or leader taught took a variety of forms.<sup>23</sup> For instance, at the most radical of levels, E. Burke Rochford, Jr. argues that “the aim” of the disciples of Hare Krishna is “to become self-realized by practicing bghakii-yoga (i.e. the devotion to God). Central to this spiritual process is chanting Hare Krishna and living a lifestyle free from meats, intoxicants, illicit sex, and gambling” (Rochford 155, n2). In addition, Buddhism mandates that students follow an eight-step process to achieve inner peace that Buddha himself once outlined: right view, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right means of livelihood, right exertion,

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<sup>23</sup> Paglia argues that: “Members of the sixties counterculture were passionately committed to political reform, yet they were also seeking the truth about life outside religious and social institutions. Despite their ambivalence towards authority, however, they often sought gurus – mentors or guides, who proved fallible” (Paglia 58).

right mindfulness, and right concentration.<sup>24</sup> Thus, in order to achieve a higher level of spirituality, or what Watts calls “nirvana,” individuals must be cognizant of these eight steps given to them by their master or guru.

Even the most popular Eastern religions and philosophies practiced in America mandated that individuals follow certain techniques or doctrines. Robert J. Trotter argues that the basic techniques for Transcendental Meditation – the most popular Eastern philosophy in America in the 1960s – “can be learned in the course of a 90-minute session of individual instruction. It is then practiced for 20 minutes, twice a day, during which the meditator sits in a comfortable position with eyes closed” (Trotter 377).<sup>25</sup> Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki – perhaps the most influential figure in bringing Zen Buddhism to America – describes the devotion that the student must show to his or her master, writing:

The idea of direct method appealed to by the masters is to get hold of this fleeting life as it flees and not after it has flown [...] Their aim is to have the pupil’s attention concentrated in the thing itself which he wishes to grasp and not in anything that is in the remotest possible connection liable to disturb him [...] We must penetrate into the mind itself as the spring of life, from which all these words are produced [...] [This] direct method is thus not always the violent assertion of life-force, but a gentle movement of the body, the

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<sup>24</sup> See Sangharakshita *A Survey of Buddhism: Its Doctrines and Methods Through the Ages*.

<sup>25</sup> In his book, *Transcendental Meditation: What Do They Believe?* Val Waldeck supports Trotter’s argument, stating that TM’s Mantra consists of a:

pleasant-sound [...] taken from the “Vedas” (Hindu scriptures). Devotees are required to sit quietly for twenty minutes twice a day and repeat this sound until they experience ‘transcending awareness’ [...] This mantra is used to ‘clean’ the mind and to still concrete thoughts (Waldeck 13).

responding to a call, the listening to a murmuring stream, or to a singing bird, or any of our most ordinary everyday assertions of life (Suzuki 154).

Like TM, for the effect of Zen Buddhism to manifest – to “penetrate into the mind itself as the spring of life” – students must follow the specific instructions of their masters, whose “aim is to have the pupil’s attention concentrated in the thing itself.” Though students of Zen Buddhism, as Suzuki notes, may pick the object upon which to focus, the master still plays a vital role in his or her students’ spirituality, ensuring that the individual continues to be “concentrated in the thing itself” and “not in anything that is [...] liable to disturb him.” Thus, if the students’ attention or impulse directs them towards another object, the master will work to ensure that their focus does not digress from the initial object under observation. Suzuki suggests, therefore, that while Zen Buddhism may provide students with the ability to engage with their own spirituality, students can only achieve this effect through working within the guidelines that their master has provided for them.

While these books and articles do not provide us with an encapsulating understanding of the religious practices of the 1960s, or even their proposed effects, they do suggest that students practice Eastern religion and philosophy through the guidelines or instructions of their masters, gurus, or spiritual leaders. Hence, the most popular Eastern trends to enter into American mainstream culture in the 1960s – Hare Krishna movement, TM, Buddhism, and Zen Buddhism – cannot simply be seen as individualistic in their very nature; rather, their effects can only manifest if students follow certain paths, techniques, or directions outlined by their masters or spiritual

leaders. Granted, not all Eastern religions or philosophies are similar in nature: the radicalized practices of the Hare Krishna movement are not as strict as the techniques and procedures of Buddhism, TM, or Zen. Yet what all of these Eastern trends have in common is how individuals practice them: through following the instructions, beliefs, directions, or techniques provided for them by their master or spiritual leader.

### **Communal Living**

The other major cultural phenomenon driving Morrison's fractured relationship with his generation was the emerging cultural practice of communal living. Ed Schwartz organizes these communes into four categories:

First, there were therapeutic communes. These were cooperatives built around working out some mutually shared psychological problem [...]

Next, there are fraternal communes [...] A group of people [are] lonely; its members want to live with more than one person. The commune gives them the opportunity.

Third, there are utopian communes. These are the "we-are-out-to-show-the-world-a-new-way-of-living" communes which gather in the rural hinterlands. They demand an extraordinarily high level of interaction within the group and become enmeshed in an endless dialogue on "how-well-we-are-doing as a group."

Finally, there are the organizing communes. These are the communes which unite around a common ideology, program, or strategy for social change which members are pursuing in relation to predominant institutions. Usually the

experience of living collectively is part of the overall ideology of the group, but only part. The commune derives strength primarily from refining its analysis of the oppressive nature of the system, and from sharing the risks of challenging it (Schwartz 22-3).

Schwartz's research shows that the counterculture embraced communal living for the same reasons that it embraced Eastern religions and philosophies.<sup>26</sup> Similar to the perceived practices of Eastern religions and philosophies, the members of the counterculture perceived that communal living provided them with an avenue to explore their own individuality. Or, in the words of Timothy Miller, communal living allowed them to "live freely without interfering or being interfered with the outside world any more than was necessary" (Miller 94). Thus, as Schwartz and Miller argue, the counterculture's move towards communal living, distinct from society, was perceived as enabling members to focus on new, alternative lifestyle practices and experiences, free from societal mores.

In fact, as Scott MacFarlane argues, the individuals of the 1960s counterculture used communes to manifest a world distinct from mainstream society. As MacFarlane writes: "The hippies of the late '60s were railing against mainstream society in a highly deconstructivist manner," yet "the phenomenon evolved into one where those hippies found constructivist adaptations on the edges of American society" (MacFarlane 233).

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<sup>26</sup> Timothy Miller takes Schwartz's observations to a further extent, arguing that certain communes in the 1960s were geared towards the practices of Eastern religion and philosophies. As Miller notes:

New religions were part of the countercultural matrix, and several of them operated communes for some or all of their members. The Hare Krishna movement, founded in the United States in 1965 and intimately related to the hippies in its early years, was largely communal. The Jesus freaks who appeared in the latter days of hip founded an extensive network of communes. And independent spiritual communes were also founded in the considerable numbers. An independent spiritual communes were also founded in considerable numbers (Miller 94).

In many respects, the hippies' attitude strikingly resembles Morrison's belief in deconstructing an old world and then creating a new system of order; however, the main distinction between Morrison's belief and the belief of the hippies is that Morrison constructs a world within his imagination, and the hippies re-constructed a world *collectively*.<sup>27</sup> In so doing, MacFarlane notes that the hippies could experience together (or even learn): "healthier eating habits, greater thought regarding the impact of what they were consuming, a pacifist and collectivist credo, and striving to find a higher level of spirituality" (Ibid 233). Thus, while Morrison preached for people to construct a world, free from any influence, the hippies, as McFarlane argues, based their world instead upon a "collectivist credo."

Coexistence within certain communes could only succeed as a result of individuals following specific rules and regulations set forth by the members of the community. In his 1969 article on hippie communes, John Robert Howard argues that at first communes "assumed that voluntarism (every man doing his thing) was compatible with satisfying essential group and individuals needs and with the maintenance of a social system [...]" (Howard 45). Initially, members of several communes throughout the western United States thought that harmony could only be reached if individuals were not forced to abide by specific rules or regulations. And,

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<sup>27</sup> John Robert Howard, in "The Flowering the Hippie Movement," takes a similar stance to MacFarlane, arguing:

The hippies offered, in 1966 and 1967, a serious, though not well-articulated, alternative to the conventional social system. To the extent that there was theory of change implicit in their actions, it might be summed upon by the phrase 'transformation by example.' Unlike political revolutionaries, they attempted no seizure of power. Rather, they asked for the freedom to 'do their thing,' that is, to create their own social system. They assumed, implicitly, that what they created would be so joyous, so dazzling, so 'groovy' that the 'straight' [Howard's use of the word straight signifies, as he states, "honest or forthright."] would abandon his own 'uptight' life and come over to their side (Howard 45, n 3).

because individuals would now be happier, both with themselves and their respective communes, it was initially thought that these people would gladly volunteer their time to the “maintenance of [their] social system.”

Yet, as Howard notes, this theory failed to achieve a reality, and several hippie communes around Northern California were forced to initiate rules to maintain their existence. Don S, a former resident at the famous Haight-Asbury, states:

We had all kinds of people there at first and anybody could stay there if there was room. Anybody could crash out there. Some of the motorcycle types began to congregate in the kitchen. That became their room, and if you wanted to get something to eat or beer you had to step over them. Pretty soon, in a way, people were cut off from the food [...] It was like they had begun, in some very quiet and subtle ways, to run things (qtd. Howard 47).

Of course, this is just one specific example; nevertheless, what Howard notes is that “internal contradictions” – such as the one that Don S. mentions – became problematic for continuing the maintenance of the hippie communes (Howard 47). Indeed, in “refusing to introduce explicit rules designed to prevent invidious power distinctions from arising,” as Howard argues, “such distinctions inevitably began to appear” (Howard 48). Therefore, as Howard writes, in some communes “allocation of task and responsibility is fairly specific” (Howard 48). Thus, no longer were individuals free to live without any external pressures; now they were forced to follow a creed – albeit a creed that they have agreed upon – to ensure that everyone within the community performs a task designated to better that community as a whole.



### III

We can perhaps see why these two cultural phenomena contributed immensely to Morrison's fractured relationship with his generation. In his interview with Lizzie James, Morrison states: "Nobody can win [freedom] for you. You have to do it on your own. If you look to somebody else to do it for you – somebody outside yourself – you're still depending on others. You're still vulnerable to those repressive, evil outside forces, too." Morrison argues when we look to "somebody else" – a guru, spiritual leader, creed, or community – we cannot be considered "free," as our actions thoughts, and perceptions are still – even if only slightly – being directed or influenced by "outside forces."

Thus, even though the practices of Eastern religion and philosophy, and communal living, attempt to reach a higher level of spiritual awareness and inner peace, Morrison clearly thought that any influence outside of oneself continued to place one within a state of mental oppression. Because the spiritual practice of Eastern religion and the material practice of communal living urged people to follow specific guidelines, people who embraced these cultural practices cannot be considered free, as their road to freedom is being determined by "somebody outside" of themselves. Therefore, instead of individuals' reality becoming a manifestation of their own infinite thoughts, expressions, desires, and perceptions, all of which are free from outside influence, individuals who subscribe to influences outside of themselves generate their reality within the specific techniques, philosophies, rituals rules, or creeds given to them by another individual.

Perhaps these two cultural practices can give us a greater insight into Morrison's composition of "Five to One" and his public performance in Miami. In both incidences, Morrison argues that his generation lives within a closed system of order. Indeed, when he informs the flower child in "Five to One" that she "Trade[s] in your hours for a handful / of dimes," Morrison evokes that the rewards ("dimes") that the flower child works to achieve ("Trade in your hours") are given to her by another person. This reading of "Five to One" suggests that the flower child cannot be considered free from external influence, but, as Morrison states in Miami, she remains a "slave" to this system in order to achieve a higher reward. Indeed, because the flower child's "hours" (or life) are spent working towards a reward ("dimes") given to her as a result of following specific steps, techniques, or rules, the flower child cannot be considered free from external control, but is shown to be highly dependent upon an external system of order to ensure that this reward will be given to her.

This reading of "Five to One" and of the Miami rant clearly connects to the manner in which Eastern religion and communes operated in the 1960s. Indeed, the rewards that Eastern religion and communes provide are not free from external influence, but, as with the flower child in "Five to One" and Morrison's perception of his audience in Miami, are highly dependent upon a system of order to achieve a higher level of spiritual cognition or inner peace. While the individuals who practiced Eastern religion or practiced communal living in the 1960s may not be literally "slaves" to these system, Morrison's philosophy would, however, suggest that they were mentally controlled by these systems to achieve a reward from those systems. Because

Morrison's philosophy, which unquestionable insist upon individuality, suggest that because these two cultural practices urge individuals to follow specific guidelines to achieve a higher level of cognition, spirituality, or inner peace – all of which could be argued as the proposed rewards that Morrison attacks the flower child in "Five to One" and his audience in Miami for attempting to possess – Morrison's theories posit that for him these individuals are living within a closed world system.

These two aspects of the movement, aspects of which Morrison was clearly aware, give us a better understanding of how the directions of the movement were radically different from Morrison's vision. Indeed, while Morrison insisted that freedom could only occur if individuals were to free themselves of any external influence or dictation, allowing them to become the creators of their own system of order through their imagination, individuals of the counterculture, on the other hand, used gurus, spiritual guides, communes, and creeds to lead them to a higher level of spiritual reality and inner peace. This may explain why Morrison in 1969, the year in which these two major movements reached their full momentum, called his generation "slaves." As he argues in his interview with James, Morrison thought that if individuals were to follow the rules, regulations, beliefs, rituals, steps, or doctrines provided to them by Eastern religion or their communes, they could not in actuality be considered free. Thus, while Morrison's poetry and lyrics illustrate that he thought individuals could liberate themselves through their imagination, he thought that individuals who took part in these two major culture movements in the 1960s failed to acknowledge this

power, choosing to instead allow others to direct, guide, and – perhaps – construct their reality.

## CONCLUSION

Do you know the warm progress  
                                under the stars?

Do you know we exist?  
Have you forgotten the keys  
                        to the Kingdom?

Let's reinvent the gods, all the myths  
                                of the ages

– Jim Morrison, *An American Prayer*, 1-8

Riordan and Prochnicky begin their biography on Jim Morrison by identifying Morrison's relationship with his generation:

The status quo of the late sixties viewed Morrison as a political revolutionary. However, he never had any such desire – the last thing he wanted to do was organize anything. Morrison argued that we should all set ourselves from our mental prisons and cease playing warden to our souls. His was the voice that bid us to dance on fire, to listen to the butterfly scream, and to break on through to the other side away from social and parental conditioning to freedom – personal freedom (Prochnicky and Riordan 19).

Throughout this project, my aim has been to investigate in greater detail this interesting point. Morrison's fractured relationship with his generation resulted in that the direction Morrison wished to take the counterculture was very different from its actual direction.

Morrison's poetical ambition was to move his readers beyond "The Doors" of their own perception and allow them to become the creators of not only their own

identities, but also their own reality through their imagination. From his earliest work in “Break on Through” and “Moonlight Drive” to even the later works of “Original Temptation” and *An American Prayer*, Morrison’s poetical ambition remained the same; that is, to guide his audience to achieve “personal freedom.” “[P]ersonal freedom,” for Morrison, is freedom from any system of order that directs – even if only slightly – how we think, act, or perceive our world; in so doing, the reality that we create becomes a product, not of someone else’s dictation or influence, but purely of our own imagination. Yet this belief does not suggest that Morrison rebelled against every system of order. Take, for instance, “The Original Temptation”: “To participate in the creation. / To screw things up. / To bring Things into being.” For Morrison, once we have moved through “The Doors” and see the infinite in all things, we, in turn, gain the ability to “participate in creation” by imaginatively framing the infinite into our own system of order.

However, as we have seen in our examination of the 1960s countercultural movement, several aspects of that movement opposed the messages and visions that Morrison preached. For the practice of Eastern religion and philosophy and also communal living did not urge individuals to express their infinite desires, expressions, and thoughts; quite the contrary, these practices urged individuals to follow a specific technique, belief, ritual, or creed issued to them from either a spiritual leader or a community. While I have spent the majority of my time within this project focusing on this one aspect shared by both social practices, it is all that is needed to show how these practices radically clashed with Morrison’s vision. Indeed, though these practices, like

Morrison's messages, were an attempt to free individuals from societal mores and allow them to experience a higher level of personal freedom, Morrison's work clearly demonstrates that any influence outside of ourselves continues to place us within a form of mental oppression. Thus, because other individuals, doctrines, beliefs, creeds, and techniques were influencing individuals who participated within these cultural practices in the 1960s, their reality becomes a manifestation of someone else. According to Jim Morrison, these individuals simply exchanged one form of mental oppression for another form of it.

Perhaps these aspects of the 1960s counterculture can give us a greater insight into his work and performances from 1969 onwards. For songs such as "Five to One," *An American Prayer*, and his stage performance in Miami suggest that Morrison was at odds with some aspects of his generation and saw the potential dangers with its direction. In 1969, with the debut of the Doors' third studio album, *Waiting for the Sun*, Morrison no longer dominated his album with visionary aspects. In *Waiting for the Sun*, and the music even in *The Soft Parade* (1969) and *LA Woman* (1971), his work and stage performances became a repeated attempt to direct and re-direct his readers and the members of his audience from what he saw as their oppression and allow them to experience the liberation that can occur behind "The Doors."

Unlike the practice of Eastern religion and communal living, Morrison's poetry and lyrics never influence or dictate to his readers or audience members how they should live their lives. While Morrison does suggest that genuine liberation occurs the moment we move through "The Doors," he never dictates or instructs us on how to

“break on through to the other side”; furthermore, his poetry and lyrics never promises or describes what resides on “the other side.” Throughout his work, Morrison argues that our reality is infinite and undefined; yet how we can perceive the infinite or, most importantly, frame the infinite, is left to our own imagination. As a result, the visions, desires, and experiences that Morrison encourages his readers to achieve reveals that he thought his readers could create their own world even if he did not know what this world could entail. This is, I think, the beauty of his message: he leaves this land of alternatives to his readers’ imagination, ensuring that the construction of their own world and the construction of their own identities will become malleable to their own – and not anyone else’s – discretion.



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