

WHEN THE MUSIC'S OVER

WHEN THE MUSIC'S OVER, *RENEW* MY SUBSCRIPTION TO RESURRECTION:
WHY DOORS FANS WON'T LET JIM DIE

By

KATHLEEN A. RIDDELL, B.A.

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

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MASTER OF ARTS (2008)
(Religious Studies)

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TITLE: When the Music's Over, *Renew* My Subscription to the Resurrection: Why
Doors Fans Won't Let Jim Die

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how American icons, such as Jim Morrison, become the focus of “secular” religious followings. Morrison died in Paris, France, in 1971. His grave site, in Paris, attracts thousands of visitors each year. As the lead singer of 1960s era band, *The Doors*, Morrison achieved extraordinary fame. Tiring of his rock star status, Morrison moved to Paris in 1971, where he died under mysterious circumstances at age 27.

After his death, Morrison remained a focus of popular biographies and films; many attributed mythic qualities to the dead singer. The continued interest in the celebrity of Morrison, following his death, generated much popularity among a new generation of fans.

The motivation for visiting the Morrison grave, in Paris, is not only the music of Morrison or the *Doors*. Rather, fans gather in Paris each year to remember Morrison as cultural hero and the values he represents: freedom and rebellion against authority.

An ethnography in Paris completed during the anniversary of his death, July 3, supplements an analysis of the subculture surrounding Morrison. A wider conclusion concerning the purpose of dead celebrity followings, in contemporary society, is a final focus.

KEYWORDS: 1960s, American icons, celebrity, counterculture, cultural religion, dead celebrity, fans, grave site, Jim Morrison, pilgrimage, popular myth, The Doors, subculture
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I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Ellen Badone. Her positive demeanor, availability, patience and constructive approach made the writing process smoother, efficient and effective.

Dr. Celia Rothenberg and Dr. Mark Rowe provided invaluable support and input throughout the completion of my thesis.

To my friends and colleagues at McMaster, especially Rachel Loewen and Abigail MacBain; your companionship and support will be deeply missed.

I would like to acknowledge my undergraduate instructors at Carleton University, in Ottawa, Ontario, who helped me form a solid base for completing my program and thesis.

Thank you to my family, particularly my parents, who provided me with the support and freedom to find my own path. To Charlotte, in memoriam, who passed away during the completion of this thesis.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

JIM MORRISON

Identifications of Jim Morrison as a “spiritual figure” are extensive. Perone (2004) acknowledges that “some of the popular counterculture musicians of the era [1960s and 1970s] had a curious sort of religious aura surrounding them. Most notable was Jim Morrison, singer and songwriter of the Doors” (2004: 153).¹ Despite numerous observations in films, documentaries, and popular literature, that Morrison possessed a “religious aura,” the references provide little elaboration. An analysis of how Morrison attained these religious qualities is absent; rather, it is taken as fact. Academic literature on social and cultural aspects of Jim Morrison is limited mainly to literary criticism. This thesis illustrates how American icons, such as Jim Morrison, become the focus of “secular” religious followings and should contribute to literature in cultural studies, new religious movements, and religion and popular culture.

A successful recording artist as frontman of the *Doors*, Morrison is an example of the destructive elements of fame. His rapid rise to fame is mirrored by his equally

¹ Perone states: “Morrison, in his presentation and his lyrics, often played the role of the shaman in a pseudo-Native American-inspired manner. He made frequent references to Native Americans and to animals that some Native Americans, and others, thought to have special religious significance, lizards in particular. In fact, the singer characterized himself as the Lizard King. Morrison’s persona became well-known to the extent that he was often characterized as some sort of “dark shaman” by the press. The shaman-like aspects of Morrison’s ‘act,’ primarily a near-fixation on death and sex are detailed to great effect by Jerry Hopkins and Danny Sugerman in the book *No One Here Gets Out Alive* (Hopkins and Sugerman 1980). The Doors 1969 album *Waiting for the Sun* makes for an especially valuable study of Morrison’s dark persona, as the liner notes include the text of his poem, ‘The Celebration of the Lizard,’ only part of which is set to music on the album. Pseudo-religious images abound not only in the ‘Celebration of the Lizard,’ but in many other Morrison poems as well” (Perone 2004: 153-54).

fleeting descent. Morrison died in Paris in 1971, during self-imposed exile to escape fame in the United States. The cause of his death is unknown. The only witness to his death, Morrison's "cosmic mate" (as he called her), Pamela Courson, died three years later. Morrison's death in a distant location, the unknown circumstances surrounding his death, and the lack of witnesses, contribute to the ways in which his death is regarded. These factors are important catalysts for the popular myth surrounding Morrison, and the development of pilgrimage to his grave.

In 1980, and again in 1991, a biography and a film about Morrison renewed the public's interest. This time, however, it was not just about the music; in these works, Morrison became a god (Hopkins and Sugerma 1980), and a sociopathic narcissist (Stone 1991). During the 1980s and 1990s, Morrison's grave in Paris became a haven for hippies of all ages and a mecca for tourists seeking the grave of dead rock star.

At this point, it seems, Morrison assumed the attributes of a "religious figure." There are several possibilities for the development of Morrison as a spiritual figure explored in this thesis. The relevance of Jim Morrison and to some extent, the Doors, is timeless. For a community of people, Morrison is not only a symbol which lends coherence to their lives, but his death is viewed as a "sacrifice." Finally, Morrison is depicted as crucified in Community images, perhaps the most emblematic of all Christian representations. In letters and petitions left at the grave, it is evident that there is a desire, among fans, for Morrison's resurrection. This sentiment is also expressed in popular literature on Morrison.

Currently, there is a paucity of academic and popular literature that explains Morrison's connection to spiritual themes. Was Morrison just a celebrity, or something more?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary question motivating my research concerns how, and why, Morrison became the focus of an alternative religious following. This question is addressed in a different manner in each chapter. In chapter two, it is approached through an examination of historical events in Morrison's life. Chapter three pertains to the grave of Jim Morrison as a location of pilgrimage. Morrison, as an American icon, and the subject of popular myth, is discussed in chapter four. The last chapter concerns Morrison as a spiritual figure for the Doors Community.

FIELDWORK

My discussion of the collective identity of Doors fans centers on data from participant observation and interviews in Paris during June and July 2007. The sample size consists of 148 people. I spoke to 78 men and 70 women. While I am unsure of the exact age of informants, I would estimate that the age range of people I spoke to is between 18 and 71.² In addition, I observed hundreds of people at Morrison's grave, the tribute concert and areas associated with Morrison in and around Paris. The Doors Community consists of a smaller number of people, approximately 45.

² I do not know the exact age of informants because I felt it was inappropriate to ask people their ages if I only spoke to them briefly.

I also draw upon a variety of visual materials, audio recordings and internet fan sites as well as popular literature and media concerning Morrison. I analyze these materials using theoretical tools drawn from anthropology, religious studies, sociology and popular culture studies.

EIGHT MILES HIGH³

Like many Doors fans, I was introduced to the music through my parents. My parents were not really Doors fans, but I have early memories of playing the Doors 33 1/3 rpm on my father's record player, and staring, hypnotically, into Morrison's eyes on the record cover. By attending countless concerts, over the years, I learned how to identify the collective identity of different fan subcultures.

I started attending rock concerts at age nine. My greatest involvement with rock subculture is with the "Blue Army," or fans of the group Aerosmith. As a fan, I was a regular on *Aeroforceone*, or AF1, the official Aerosmith Internet forum. I would also travel to their concerts in various cities around North America. In traveling to different locations, I met other fans like myself. Fans never had to fear going to a strange city alone because they would inevitably meet someone they had seen before, or that they had met on-line. At Aerosmith concerts, girls like me lined the catwalk, hoping that when frontman Steven Tyler walked by, he would look into our eyes, stroke our hair, or, if we were lucky enough, even kiss one of us. I noticed that girls would talk about catwalk

³ "Eight Miles High," *The Byrds* (1966). The Byrds, an influential band in the history of rock, were one of the first to produce a "psychedelic," or "acid" rock sound (George-Warren and Romanowski 2005: 137-38). This sound, of course, "paved the way" for the *Doors*. Also, "Eight Miles High" is the first song of this era I remember hearing as a child.

encounters in religious terms. In the middle of a loud rock concert, when Steven bent down, looked into your eyes, and stretched out his hand, the roar of the arena would silence, time would suspend and the halo of light behind him would temporarily blind you. Going to the concert of a band you love is a religious experience or as Sapphire in *Almost Famous* (2000) says: “To blindly love some silly piece of music . . . or some band so much that it hurts.” It is an experience which renews your psyche and that you carry long after the encore has ended. It is a high you cannot wait to re-live again.

My experience in rock subcultures, as a fan, contributed to my experience as a researcher of the Doors subculture in Paris. As an example, this excerpt from my field notes records my emotions while traveling to the grave:

I remember feeling a sense of entitlement to the grave when I was on the Metro on July 2. I overheard a number of people explaining they had the same destination: Jim’s grave. I had to remind myself that I was here, in Paris, to study people at the grave, and not to “bask in the glow” of having the privilege to be here. I thought: “I’m behaving like so many people I dislike on the Doors forum, or girls clawing away at each other along the Aerosmith catwalk.”

Such feelings among fans are not unusual. The desire to be the “ultimate fan” (part of the quest for authenticity) is felt by many devotees of rock musicians. This experience, of slipping into the “fan role,” was something I encountered on a number of occasions. I think I fought it at first, but soon, I realized that sometimes it can be appropriate, or equally as effective in gathering information.

A band attracts a following because it embodies a collective identity, in particular, for the hard core fans. Aerosmith has been referred to as “America’s Greatest Rock and

Roll Band” and “The Bad Boys from Boston.” As these references suggest, Aerosmith embodies an American ethic, in particular a rock ethic indigenous to America. The attraction of Aerosmith, for male fans, is Steven Tyler, who “makes you feel like you are thirteen all over again.”⁴ This feeling is evoked by lyrics of songs such as “Walk this Way” about a boy’s first time with an older, more knowledgeable woman. Until he became sober in 1986, Steven Tyler, one half of the Toxic Twins (with guitarist Joe Perry), carried the torch of the ‘bad boy’ after Morrison’s death.⁵ Aerosmith undeniably appeals to women because of Tyler. His love of women is well known. The ideal woman, in Aerosmith lyrics, is characterized as the ‘good girl gone bad’: a gorgeous blond next door, who makes deviance look sexy. The Aerosmith woman is captured in the songs and music videos “Crazy” and “Cryin’.” Alicia Silverstone, and Tyler’s daughter, Liv Tyler, embody this image as two fallen school girls in the MTV music videos.

I also have experience with the fan communities following Bruce Springsteen and the E-Street band. Springsteen’s lyrics, as in the song “Born to Run”, capture the hopes and dreams of working class America. At Springsteen concerts, fans wear t-shirts emblazoned with the phrase “Tramps like us,” a lyric from “Born to Run.” “Tramps like us” is a euphemism or metaphor for the working class (Coles 2003: 153-55). The song

⁴ Karl Iagnemma, “The Essential Steven Tyler.” *Boston Magazine*, October 2005, http://www.bostonmagazine.com/articles/the_essential_steven_tyler. Accessed 26 June 2008

⁵ Steven Tyler once told Harold Wilder “Zunk” Buker III that he wanted to be the next Jim Morrison: “One night that August, I told Steven that I was leaving town to seek my fortune as a young outlaw pot dealer in California where good marijuana was (falsely) said to cost \$25 a pound. It was a time when dealers were more glamorous than rock stars and more important to the community. I want more than anything to be a part of that underground world. And Steven says something like, ‘Zunky, what do you want out of this?’ And I said, ‘I want to be Jesse James.’ He thought about this for a while, then he said, ‘I want to be Jim Morrison.’ And so we parted ways and chased after our own separate myths” Davis (1997: 51).

“Born to Run,” became “an anthem of disenfranchised, blue-collar male youth who saw rock and roll as their only salvation from the drudgery of a future living paycheck to paycheck” (Perone 2004: 32). As such, “Born to Run” is an opiate of the masses; something for the “disenfranchised” to clutch to their collective breast and distract them from the reality of exploitation.

Getting a sense of Doors fans, today, is more difficult. The Doors have not performed together as a group since 1970. Consequently, the fan base cannot be assessed in the same way as it can for Aerosmith and Springsteen, or any touring rock group. There are, however, other ways the collective identity of Doors fans can be identified. One method is through the Doors online forum. The fan-base surrounding the Doors in the 1960s can also be used, to some extent, to assess the attitudes and beliefs of current fans.

I have been a member of the *Official Doors Internet Forum* since 2005. In subculture forums, the same topics come up again and again as new people join. Repeated topic posts, however, can become tiresome for regular members of the forum. As a result, the Doors website formerly had a separate forum for members over eighteen years old called the “Severed Garden.”⁶ To have access to the Severed Garden, a member was required to have a certain number of forum posts.⁷ As with most members who frequented the forum, I soon found myself spending most of my time on the Severed Garden.

⁶ The “severed garden” is a section in Morrison’s *An American Prayer* (1971). The meaning of this passage is debated. It is frequently interpreted as a reflection on what binds us in life; and what we are free from in death (Doors Forum: passim).

⁷ Forum posts are a mark of status in online communities (MUDs).

Generally, members who posted on the Severed Garden were very intelligent. Since people on this forum were familiar with one another, they were also given to teasing and berating other members. When participating in those activities, people were judged by their ability to “dish it out,” but also, “to take it”; all in the spirit of Morrison “who would do the same.”

Fans on this part of the forum had interesting and insightful things to say about Morrison. His influence in their lives encouraged them to oppose conventional society, which, like Jim, they saw as mundane and constraining. This ethos could be seen in direct statements made by forum members, as well as in anecdotes about the way they managed situations in their everyday lives. Maggie, a woman in her mid-thirties from the American mid-West, posted regularly on the Severed Garden. She had a number of difficulties in her life, including marital problems and a dependence on prescription pain-killers. After a car accident, she was on disability leave from work. The constant pain left her depressed and she found it difficult to care for her young son. She would spend time nearly every day driving along Route 66⁸ and listening to the Doors on her car stereo. While driving and listening to music, she would smoke a joint. The effects of the marijuana eased her pain and altered her perception of the music. The combination of drugs, music and driving on Route 66 translated into identification with Morrison: he would have understood her suffering because he too, she thought, must have suffered like

⁸ Route 66, also known as “The Main Street of America,” and “The Mother Road,” was one of the original federal routes in the United States. Route 66 was used by migrants moving west during the 1930s. The remaining sections of the highway, after it was decommissioned in 1985, are referred to as “Historic Route 66.” The route has a long history of references in popular culture, including John Steinbeck (1939) *The Grapes of Wrath*, Jack Kerouac (1957) *On the Road*, and by recording artists such as Chuck Berry, the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan. National Historic Route 66 Federation, “History of Route 66: Why is this road so important to America?” <http://www.national66.com>. Accessed 30 May 2008.

this. She would often post poems by Morrison on the forum followed by her own reflections about how they helped her during difficult times. For Maggie, Morrison was someone whom she found comforting in her daily life. This type of narrative is not uncommon in the Doors community.

The Doors site administration changed the format of the forum in the fall of 2006. Around this time, the administration eliminated the Severed Garden. The Doors management, which includes band members Ray Manzerak and John Densmore, posted a thread explaining why the Severed Garden had been eliminated [Appendix A]. The management felt that there was too much animosity and mean-spiritedness on the Severed Garden, which is not what the Doors wanted to encourage. The loss of the Severed Garden was upsetting to forum members who felt that it was “in the spirit of Jim”; many members started posting less frequently. Due to my familiarity with other forums centered on rock bands, I knew that the “Severed Garden” was not a typical forum. Rather, it was a unique part of the on-line Doors community.

The Severed Garden is significant for a several reasons. The Severed Garden is the first place I encountered *Tribute in Motion*, the organization dedicated to celebrating Morrison as a poet and visionary. Members on the Severed Garden forum were more likely to have been to Paris and seen Morrison’s grave. Before meeting them in Paris, my acquaintance with the more central members of the Doors Community⁹ was a result of the Severed Garden forum. Knowledge of the Doors Community gained on the forum prepared me for the type of difficulties I encountered when I met the community in Paris.

⁹ Found on the *Tribute in Motion* and *Paris Journal* forums.

Participating on the Severed Garden forum had additional benefits. When I revealed my on-line identity to the Doors Community they were reassured that I was not some “mainstream moron wanting to intellectualize Morrison.” “Hey, you’re dharma bum?” Harrison, an Australian now working as an investment banker in London said, “You’ve always got right brilliant things to say.” Harrison’s knowledge of me from the Severed Garden helped ease his concerns, and confirmed that I met his “quotient for cool.”

The “Severed Garden,” provided me with credibility in the Doors Community. Not only was my participation on this forum beneficial in Paris, but connecting with informants, after leaving Paris, was much easier. I suspect that if a researcher was to commence an ethnography in Paris, with no prior knowledge of the Doors Community, the adjustment process would pose more difficulties. Given the rate at which music subcultures change and develop, my continued involvement in the Doors Community would facilitate future Doors-related research.

The next chapter outlines historical events in the life of Jim Morrison, in particular, events which contributed to his notoriety in the public realm.

CHAPTER TWO:

LIFE HISTORY OF JIM MORRISON

A hero is someone who rebels or seems to rebel against the facts of existence and seems to conquer them, but obviously that can only work in moments. It can't be a lasting thing.

The above passage is from the last interview Jim Morrison gave with *Rolling Stone Magazine* in 1971 (Fong-Torres 1971). Not only is this quote significant because it captures his essence, but thirty-seven years after his death, Morrison as a heroic figure has had lasting value. This chapter outlines significant events during his life, as well as other events that have contributed to his iconic status today. Morrison can be understood in relation to historical events that occurred during his lifetime; however, some of these events have been transformed through popular discourse to support the myth that surrounds his life and death and image. While Morrison's body of work is important to the aesthetics of a 'fan' who enjoys the music of the Doors, it is the myth that informs the world view of the many people to whom Morrison is more than 'just a singer.'

EARLY LIFE

James Douglas Morrison was born on the eighth of December, 1943, in Melbourne, Florida to Clara and Steven Morrison. Steven Morrison was a member of the U.S. Naval Academy and was appointed in the South Pacific shortly after the birth of his son. After two years, he returned to Florida as a decorated Naval Officer. His wife and son had been living there with her parents

Steven Morrison was reassigned elsewhere in the country, beginning a pattern of relocation that would continue the rest of young Jim's life. Another child was born, a girl, Ann, and a few years later, the last child, a boy, Andy. Due to the constant moving and, thus, not being able to maintain friendships for very long, the children remained quite close.

Throughout his childhood, Morrison was a well-adjusted and successful student in school. In popular literature, much has been made of Morrison's relationship with his father suggesting that he was authoritarian and ruled with an 'iron-fist'. Ann and Andy Morrison take exception to this, however, describing their father as very kind and loving (Henke 2007: 6). Whichever was the case, it cannot be disputed that Morrison was a sensitive and perceptive child with a keen intellect.

As Morrison entered his early teen years, he became more withdrawn, and often sought solace in reading and writing. As future band member, Ray Manzarek, later commented, "all the moving turned Jim into a reader. I think he found his consolation and his friends in books" (Henke 2007: 8). During this time, he often was taken to becoming moody and, as a tenth-grade teacher indicated-"self-centered" (Henke: 8). This trait would, much later, surface once again.

Like many children born during the immediate post World War II era, Morrison became enraptured with the growing culture of popular music. In a 1969 *Rolling Stone* interview, Morrison described this time in the following manner:

The birth of rock and roll coincided with my adolescence, my coming into awareness. It was a real-turn on, although at the time, I could never allow myself to rationally fantasize about ever doing it myself. I guess all that time

I was unconsciously accumulating information and listening. So when it finally happened, my subconscious had prepared me for the whole thing (Hopkins 1969: 15).

The sentiment expressed in this quotation, particularly about a “coming into awareness”, had implications that, for Morrison, also revealed a darker side. During his sophomore year of high school, he began to feel uneasy, “that something was not quite right” (Henke 2007: 9). The climate in America was changing, from the relatively conservative value emphasis, embraced by the pre-Baby Boom generation, to a more liberal and open value emphasis that defined the Baby-Boom generation, at the time. Still, the restraints of the old guard, such as conservative dress, appearance and demeanor of women, could be felt. For Morrison, such restraints took the form of a stifling atmosphere, which encouraged conformity.

Although Jim continued to excel academically, his last year of high school in Alexandria, Virginia, proved difficult. His interest in music continued, and he preferred to spend time with his first girlfriend, rather than study.

His father hoped that Jim would enroll in the U.S. Navy, but he showed no interest, nor did he intend to go to college. Steven and Clara Morrison moved to San Diego, while Jim moved in with his grandparents in Florida and attended St. Petersburg Junior College where his parents had him enrolled. Jim took no particular interest in college, and while he continued to attend, he focused more on his interest in art; particularly the medium of film. At the end of the year, he transferred to Florida State University, where he stayed until the end of the fall term in 1963. The following January, he began his studies at the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television.

Around this time, many aspects of Morrison's life began to change. While attending UCLA film school during its golden age,¹ Morrison began to develop interests in more involved forms of artistic expression, including poetry and his longstanding interest in writing. It was also in Los Angeles that he met his future band mates and his long-term partner Pamela Courson.

NEW MEXICO HIGHWAY ACCIDENT

No One Here Gets Out Alive, the now cult-classic book written by Jerry Hopkins and Danny Sugerman in 1980, provides a description of an important early event in Morrison's life which contributed greatly to the mythos surrounding him. This work was the first of many popular works written about Morrison, and it ignited the interest of a whole new generation of fans. It later became an important influence for another installment of the Morrison myth, Oliver Stone's 1991 film *The Doors*. The event, in which a young Morrison and his family came across a highway accident involving Native Americans in New Mexico, became a theme manipulated by Stone and by Morrison in his performances. The following passage is an excerpt from *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, describing the incident:

It was outside Albuquerque, while traveling with his parents on the highway from Santa Fe, that Jim experienced what he would later dramatically describe as "the most important moment of my life". They came upon an overturned truck and saw injured and dying Pueblo Indians lying where they had been thrown on the asphalt.

1. This period is referred to as the "golden age" due to the number of students who attended UCLA's film school during the mid-1960s and went on to achieve high levels of success in their careers. For example, Francis Ford Coppola was a classmate of Jim Morrison.

Jim began to cry. Steve stopped the car to see if he could help and dispatched another onlooker to a telephone to call an ambulance. Jimmy, as his parents called him until he was seven, stared through the car window at the chaotic scene, still crying.

Steve returned to the car and they left, but Jimmy wasn't calmed. He became more and more upset, sobbing hysterically.

"I want to help, I want to help . . ."

While Clara held him in her arms, Steve consoled the boy.
"It's all right Jimmy, it is."

"They're dying! They're dying!"

Finally his father said, "It was a dream, Jimmy, it didn't really happen, it was a dream."

Jim continued to sob (Hopkins and Sugarman 1980: 5-6).

Years later Jim told his friends that as his father's car pulled away from the intersection, an Indian died and his soul passed into Jim's body (Hopkins and Sugarman 1980: 6).

Morrison would later describe this event as "the first time he discovered death . . . [and] tasted fear" (Stevenson 1970). It was a formative event in his life and fostered a life-long fascination with death. The origin of the association between Morrison and shamanism also had its roots in this experience. Morrison would later acknowledge that the soul of "one of those Indians," or perhaps more, "jumped into my brain" (Stevenson 1970), but it was something that he consciously invoked and manipulated in his image and performances. In other words, this was an important event, but not the all-encompassing alteration of personality that Oliver Stone, and others, portray in their work. The idea of Morrison as a shaman in the context of myth is very important, particularly when considering Morrison as people see him today.

FORMATION OF THE DOORS

In the year after finishing his last year at the University of California's Los Angeles film school, Morrison considered moving to New York. Instead, he stayed on a friend's rooftop in Venice beach, spending his time reading and writing. Morrison met Manzarek, again, a few weeks later while they were both walking along Venice beach. Ray asked what Jim had been doing, and he replied that he had been writing songs. When Ray asked if he could hear some of them, Morrison, responded, hesitantly at first, by singing what later became "Moonlight Drive." Ray, who had been classically trained as a keyboardist and had been in bands before, suggested that they form a new one (Henke 2007).

This meeting was the beginning of the *Doors*. The inspiration for the name was said to have come from Aldous Huxley's 1954 book *The Doors of Perception*, which greatly influenced Morrison. The book recounted Huxley's experiences with mescaline and psychedelic drugs and their purported properties of opening one's mind to new and different perceptions. The name was taken from William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in which he wrote that "If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite" (Blake 1975: 36).

A month later, John Densmore, whom Ray knew through meditation class, joined as the band's drummer. Afterwards, a few other members joined, including the brothers of Ray Manzarek Robby Krieger, whom Densmore had known from a previous band, joined as the guitarist. Upon first meeting Morrison, both Densmore and Krieger

described him, as rather shy and reserved. His lyrics, however, brought a missing and unique element to the contemporary music scene.

In the summer of 1966, the Doors began working as the house band at the Whiskey-a-Go-Go bar on the Sunset Strip in Los Angeles. This gig continued for a few months until they were fired for the now infamous Oedipal addition (explained later in the chapter) to the song “The End.” From this time on, Morrison became associated with the “embodiment of dark intellectual impulses;” an image which he used to his advantage in performances and to distinguish the group from the predominant folk-sounds of other music groups at the time (George-Warren and Romanowski 2005: 278).

The Doors put out their first, and most successful, album, entitled *The Doors* in 1967. This album contained songs such as “Break on Through (to the Other Side)” and “Light My Fire,” which would become Doors’ standards. “Light my Fire,” in fact, was number one on the Billboard Chart during 1967, also known as the “summer of love.” This album was also a critical success. Future albums would see the band move in different and, not always, well-received directions. Albums, such as 1968’s *The Soft Parade*, were accused of being much darker, and songs, such as “The Unknown Soldier” from *Soft Parade*’s predecessor *Waiting for the Sun*, contained controversial anti-Vietnam lyrics.

IMAGE

Morrison was known for the theatricality of his stage performances, which were more successful than those of his contemporaries. Morrison had a natural gift of

composition with the ability to improvise stream-of-consciousness monologues between breaks in lyrics. He had an enormous ability to use the audience to channel his creativity and they, in turn, would ‘feed off’ of him. It was this exchange, between the musician and the audience, that Morrison enjoyed most about performing. Bill Siddons, the former manager of the Doors once said of Morrison’s onstage presence:

The whole thing that made Jim so powerful was that he really lived in character, and he brought out the demons and you could feel the powers that he was reaching in the room. You couldn’t see a Doors show without being disturbed, without being shaken up. It was just, *Holy shit!* He tapped into places you didn’t know you had. He was a provocateur and he did it face-to-face, on stage, in person (Henke 2007: 47-48).

In an interview published in *Newsweek*, Morrison described the band’s live performances:

Our work, our performing is a striving for metamorphosis. It’s like a purification ritual, in the alchemical sense. First, you have to have the period of disorder, chaos; returning to a primeval disaster region. Out of that, you purify the elements, and find a new seed of life, which transforms *all* life, *all* matter, *all* personality, until, finally, hopefully, you emerge and marry those dualisms, all those opposites. Then you’re not talking about good and evil anymore, but about something unified and pure (Henke 2007: 49).

As seen in the above descriptions from Siddons and Morrison, a Doors’ performance was a process by which a large number of people could gather and collectively express any number of shared sentiments. By doing so, while together, they hoped to continue the transformation once they returned to their everyday lives. Morrison’s theatricality, stage antics, dress and demeanor were aesthetic tools he used to guide the audience.

MORRISON AS A SHAMAN

In addition to seeing a Doors' performance as akin to an "almost mystical journey," Morrison began to view himself as a pseudo-shaman while performing. His basis for this conception was his experience of the New Mexico highway accident. Manzerak, in particular, supported the notion of Morrison as a type of shaman, describing him as "the visionary, the seer of the tribe" (Henke 2007: 48-49). Morrison had a personal interest in shamanism and the shaman persona was an aid in their concerts, "a religious experience between us and the audience" (Henke 2007: 48-49). As Danny Sugerman recalls, Doors keyboardist, Ray Manzarek, acknowledged that Morrison was more than a performer, and that he was in fact a shaman who would allow the spirits to use his body. Manzarek admitted:

When the Siberian shaman gets ready to go into his trance, all the villagers get together... and play whatever instruments they have to send him off [into a trance state and possession] . . . It was the same way with The Doors when we played in concert . . . I think that our drug experience let us get into it... [the trance state] quicker . . . It was like Jim was an electric shaman and we were the electric shaman's band, pounding away behind him (Hopkins and Sugerman 1980: 158-60).

Some authors and critics at the time, particularly in the New York music scene, recognized the Dionysian element in Morrison's philosophy and in his performances; others have come to realize this element in retrospect. Danny Sugerman continues to speak of Morrison's use of ritual in concert:

Morrison was the first rock star I know of to speak of the mythic implications and archetypal powers of rock 'n' roll, about the ritualistic properties of the

rock concert. For doing so, the press called him a pretentious asshole: “Don’t take yourself so seriously, Morrison, it’s just rock ‘n’ roll and you’re just a rock singer.” Jim knew they were wrong, but he didn’t argue. He also knew when the critics insulted him they demeaned his audience. Jim knew that music is magic, performance is worship, and he knew rhythm can set you free. Jim was too aware of the historical relevance of rhythm and music in ritual for those transforming Doors concerts to have been accidental (Hopkins and Sugerman 1980: xii).

Morrison, in his life and in his lyrics, promoted ritualistic use of substances as tool by which to “break on through.” The song, “Break On Through”, according to Arnold Wolfe, is about emerging into “an *other* mode of life or consciousness in which the distinctions that ‘divide’ day from night and, subsequently, pleasure from pain, freedom from slavery, and truth from falsehood have no meaning” (Wolfe 1999: 42). Many Doors’ lyrics contain references to the power of drugs to expand the mind, or to the cathartic release of sex. The stylistic structure of the Doors music has been claimed to mimic orgasm. Riordan and Prochnicky, in their 1991 book entitled *Break on Through: The Life and Death of Jim Morrison* reported that, “when Morrison spoke of the effects of the Doors music generally, the metaphor he chose was sexual: ‘Through the medium of words and music,’ he said, ‘we are able to move people to a kind of emotional orgasm’” (1991: 189). To substantiate their claim, Riordan and Prochnicky provided the following interpretation of the sexual metaphors within the song, “Break on Through”:

Similarly, the ‘straight, deep and wide . . . gate’ of which Morrison sings near the song’s climax may be taken as a vaginal metaphor, the succeeding ‘yeahs’ taken as sexual, and the performance’s abrupt end taken as a sonic approximate of, to use Morrison’s word, ‘orgasm’-- whether ‘emotional’, physical, or both (1991: 189).

The structure of “Break on Through,” where the song, in *ostinato*, or repetition, rises to an ultimate climax, followed by sudden fall in tone, is characteristic of many Doors’ songs. The effect of the song structure would be made even more powerful when performed by Morrison on stage. When Morrison said, “through the medium of words and music, we are able to move people to a kind of emotional orgasm” (Riordan 1991: 189), the implication was that of a collective orgasm. Morrison’s manipulation of song structure was one of the reasons that many called Morrison a shaman.

LIZARD KING ALTER-EGO

It was 1968’s *Waiting for the Sun* that marked the appearance of Morrison’s alter-ego, the Lizard King. A poem entitled “The Celebration of the Lizard” was printed on the album jacket. Morrison later claimed that this poem was meant to be partly in jest, but it took on a life of its own and would play an important role in Morrison mythology. Later, many would claim that the image of the lizard was ideal for capturing the primitive nature of Morrison. In a 1970 radio interview, Morrison described it as follows:

Journalist: How do you feel about some of the magazine articles that used to come out calling you the Lizard King and things like that?

Morrison: Oh, I liked it! I enjoyed it! I thought it was, you know, I always liked reptiles, I always had a fondness for them . . . We did evolve from reptiles . . . I used to see the universe as a mammoth peristaltic snake and I used to see all the people, objects and landscapes as pictures on the facets of their skin, their scales. I think the peristaltic motion is the basic life movement: swallowing, digestion, the rhythms of sexual intercourse. Even your basic unicellular structures have this same . . .

Journalist: Fluidity and motion?

Morrison: Yeah (Stevenson 1970).

Morrison used the image of the Lizard King to his advantage, as seen in this radio interview, by molding it to his ideals of proximity to the earth, suggesting that the motion of a reptile mimics the basic motion of all life. He further used the Lizard image in the theatricality of his on-stage performances and, whether consciously or sub-consciously, to contribute to his own, as well as the band's image.

In the following quotation, from a 1970 interview that appeared in *Circus Magazine*, Jim discussed when he could no longer tolerate the image that had been created:

I was just fed up with the image that had been created around me, which I sometimes consciously, and most of the time, unconsciously co-operated with and it just got too much for me to stomach and so I put an end to it one glorious evening [meaning Miami] (Stevenson 1970).

While Morrison embraced the sex symbol and Lizard King image attributed to him, it became draining later in his career. His passion had always been poetry, and in an effort to be taken seriously, he gained a lot of weight. These changes would culminate in a loss of public favour, as was evident in Miami, and led to the end of the band's career.

Morrison had several run-ins with the law, mainly involving charges of obscenity or resisting arrest, but he often actively sought to challenge the police, as was the case in New Haven, Connecticut and Miami, Florida. These two incidents became turning points in the Doors' career, and were important in influencing the public perception of Morrison.

NEW HAVEN

In December of 1967, the Doors played in New Haven, Connecticut. Before the concert, Morrison and a woman were talking backstage. Thinking they were both fans, a policeman arrived asking them to leave. Morrison attempted to explain that he was the band's singer, but when the policeman would not listen, Morrison became frustrated and confrontational. The officer proceeded to spray him with mace.

After the show started, Morrison told the audience what had happened backstage. Recalling the incident, John Densmore related the following, "Jim told the story of what had happened, real slowly, real deliberately: 'You know, I was backstage and this little blue man in this little blue suit told me to get out, thinking I was a fan' [Densmore continues] 'And all twenty cops started turning their heads toward us, and they're coming after us. And they grabbed Jim, and it was total chaos'" (Henke 2007: 51). Morrison was charged with resisting arrest and obscenity and he was later released on a \$1,500 bond. This remains only one of two incidents, in the United States, in which a musician was arrested while performing.² Comedian Lenny Bruce had been arrested several times, in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In the 1970s, George Carlin would be arrested after performing his "Seven Words You Can't Say on Television" routine.

MIAMI TRIAL

On March 1st, 1969, the Doors were scheduled to play the Dinner Key Auditorium in Miami. By this time, Morrison's on-stage behaviour was becoming more

² "Morrison 'Obscene'" *Rolling Stone Magazine: 40th Anniversary Issue*. May 2007: 18.

and more unpredictable. He missed the flight from New Orleans that he was scheduled to take with the rest of the band, and so he and Doors' manager Bill Siddons took a later flight. Morrison had been drinking over the course of the layover and when he went on the stage he was heavily intoxicated. The Doors started their set and Morrison began to taunt the audience, saying things such as, "You're all a bunch of fucking idiots," and "What are you gonna do? Are you gonna let people push you around? You're all a bunch of slaves. A bunch of slaves."³ In a 1970 radio interview with the *Village Voice* Morrison explained his frame of mind at the time:

It was more of a political than a sexual scandal, I think they picked up the erotic aspect because there would really have been no political charge they could bring against me, it was too amorphous . . . really it was a lifestyle more than any specific incident . . . I guess what it would boil down to is that I told the audience they were a bunch of fucking idiots to be members of an audience, you know, what were they doing there anyway? The basic message was realize that you're not really here to listen to a bunch of songs by some fairly good musicians, but you're here for something else and why not admit it, do something about it? (Smith 1970; Stevenson 1970).

At this point in his career, Morrison was said to be tired of his rock star persona, and, more generally, tired of the passivity of American society. After removing his shirt, Morrison threatened to expose himself to the audience. Whether he did so became a matter of debate. Most claimed that he did not, and there were no witnesses who could claim that they actually saw him expose himself. About half of the audience followed Morrison's lead, and proceeded to undress themselves.

³ Jim Morrison. "1969 Miami Concert," *Doors Box Set*, Elektra Records. 1997.

A couple of days later, the *Miami Herald* reported that, “Morrison appeared to masturbate in full view of the audience, screamed obscenities and exposed himself” (Henke 2007: 54). After the show, a riot of complaints in favour of public decency began, and Morrison was charged under public decency and profanity laws. There was some debate about whether the alleged exposure was the real issue or whether Morrison had been a target of the FBI for some time, enraging them with his anti-Vietnam lyrics in songs such as “Peace Frog” and “The Unknown Solider,” as well as being a general nuisance. Morrison was brought to trial, which ignited a short-term freedom of expression movement, resulting from Morrison’s use of the first amendment.⁴ Bill Siddons claimed that Miami was “Morrison’s most overt and provocative evening. He was literally saying, ‘Is this what you came for?’ He was trying to get them to be real, instead of going, ‘Whoa! A rock star!’” (Henke 2007: 54). Morrison had seen a play the evening before in which the actors appeared nude for part of the play. Whether this idea of artistic freedom was the incentive for his behaviour the next night was not known, but it did become an important issue in the subsequent trial.

The fall-out for the Doors within the performance arena was dire, however. They were banned from playing anywhere in the U.S. While they did continue to play in some European venues, the performance aspect of their career changed drastically.

⁴ The First Amendment of the United States of American Constitution is as follows: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. The United States Constitution, available from <http://www.usconstitution.net/const.html#Am1>. Accessed 1 February 2008.

The affect of Miami could also be seen in Morrison's appearance and demeanor. Some suggest that his motivation for "letting himself go" was to move away from sex symbol status in order to be taken seriously as an artist and a poet. The band members commented that the trial completely demoralized Morrison and that he was drained. The strain of the Miami incident also took its toll on the band. While the Doors completed the last album in their contract, their career as they had known it before was over.

INFLUENCES

Those critical of Morrison for what they perceived as his abandonment of his vision for the path of excess, involving drinking and drug use, might be surprised to find that excess is a common trend among artists and poets. Morrison aspired to follow William Blake and Arthur Rimbaud in his use of drugs to obtain insight and inspiration (Horn 2006: 6-7). Likewise, nineteenth-century poet and Morrison's greatest influence, Arthur Rimbaud, "advocated a systematic rational derangement of the senses" (Fowlie 1993: 11). Drugs such as opium, peyote⁵ and, in Jim's time, lysergic acid diethylamide or LSD provide this rational derangement of the senses as they are opportune intoxicants for mind-expansion through mind-altering hallucinations. It should also be noted that during the 1960s and 1970s, the world of rock music paid considerable attention to Rimbaud as a 'historical' mentor to many prominent artists, such as Bob Dylan (Fowlie 1993: 8). An experienced or knowledgeable ear can sense this influence in Morrison's acid-laced

⁵ A cactus plant which when dried provides a source of mescaline; taken sacramentally by some American Indians (*The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* 1998: 1088).

incantations. It was no coincidence that the Doors became synonymous with the Psychedelic Rock movement.⁶ Other notable figures that influenced Morrison were: Nietzsche, Artaud, Kerouac and Ginsberg, Norman Mailer and Henry Miller (Hopkins and Sugerman 1980: passim). Generally, Morrison claimed that he had always been interested in, “anything about revolt, disorder, chaos-especially activity that seems to have no meaning. It seems to me to be the road toward freedom . . . Rather than starting inside, I start outside and reach the mental through the physical.” The artists by whom he was inspired advocated similar ideas in many of their works, and their influence could be seen in his body of work.

Comparisons between Morrison and nineteenth century poets, such as Arthur Rimbaud, are the focus of many academic and popular works within the domain of literary criticism.⁷ However, such comparisons are only of secondary concern in the present thesis.

LIFESYTLLE

Most bands that came to popularity during the 1960s and early 1970s were known for their indulgence in psychedelic substances and the Doors were no exception. In the early days, when the band’s dreams of making it big were coming to fruition, the popularity of mind altering drugs, or hallucinogens was on the rise. Prompted by figures

⁶ DeRogatis (2003) explains the aesthetic nuances associated with Psychedelic rock “[it] offers something for the intellect as well as the body. Drug users are called ‘heads,’ and the genre could just as easily been called ‘head rock.’ The early psychedelic rockers brought the lyrical sophistication of Dylan to rock’n’roll, and through him, they connected to the Beats and the romantics” (2003: 16).

⁷ Examples of literary comparisons between Morrison and Rimbaud: Fowlie (1993); Horn (2006); Magistrale (1992).

such as Dr. Timothy Leary, this era saw a marked increase in the use of drugs with hallucinogenic properties, particularly the synthetic compound LSD which claimed to alter and distort the individual's perceptions, with many "spiritual experiences." LSD went through a transition from use in the medical field as a therapeutic agent, to recreational use in the 1960s. Its mind-altering properties enabled the user to experience a range of effects, from altered sense properties to loss of self over the course of a "trip". The "acid trip" became synonymous with many New Age spiritualities of the time. Leary, initially a Harvard psychology professor, began experiments with LSD that compared the research subjects' spiritual experiments while on the drug to a form of enlightenment sought by many mystical traditions throughout history. After leaving academia, along with another colleague, Leary continued his research, and evolved into a counter-culture guru. In his now-iconic work, first published in 1965, *Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out*, Leary encouraged people to question authority and challenge the status quo (Leary 1999).

In the early days of the band, Morrison reportedly "dropped acid," as it came to be known, nearly every day. Use of acid was an aid in writing lyrics for many performers. This practice, however, often got Morrison in trouble. It made working and recording difficult, and it strained relations with the other members of the band and the production team. Morrison's drinking, in particular, became uncontrolled and, as band mate, John Densmore said of the time period, "not as much was known about alcoholism at the time" (Henke 2007: 44). It affected their stage performance, as seen in the 1967 New Haven and 1969 Miami incidents.

Although Morrison's use of acid, like that of other members of the band, dwindled in later years, it was an important part of the writing and performing aspects of his career. It was the "dark mystical poems," often composed under the influence of drugs "that they used to set them apart from other bands."⁸ Morrison claimed that he liked the feeling of being out of control. The following excerpt, from the *Jim Morrison Scrapbook*, Henke described the early influence of LSD on Morrison's career:

But [the End] drastically changed one night in 1966, when the Doors were playing the Whiskey and Jim didn't show up. Ray handled lead vocals for the first set, then he and John headed over to the Tropicana Motel, where Jim was staying at an eight-dollar-a-night room. "They found him in his hotel room, hiding under the bed," Robby says. "He'd taken too much acid." In fact, Jim, told Ray and John that he had taken "ten thousand mike," or micrograms, of LSD (an average dose is 350 to 500 micrograms). Still, they convinced him to go to the Whiskey, and by the group's final set, Jim seemed surprisingly stable. According to Robby, Jim wanted to perform "The End" in the middle of the set--usually the Doors ended their set with it--"and we thought that was kind of weird." In the middle of the song, Jim began a spoken-word section that the band had never heard before. "The killer awoke before dawn," he began. "He put his boots on. He took a face from the ancient gallery and he walked down the hall. He went into the room where his sister lived, and then he paid a visit to his brother. And he walked down the hall. And he came to a door, and he looked inside. 'Father?' 'Yes, son?' 'I want to kill you.' 'Mother?' 'Yes, son?' 'I want to fuck you!'" (2007: 31).

This incident ended their tenure as the house band at the Whiskey, but it was this performance that convinced Elektra executives to sign the band (George-Warren and Romanowski 2005: 227-29). After the early days, Morrison became more interested in alcohol as his drug of choice. He never had much interest in harder drugs such as cocaine

⁸ "Jim Morrison", 2007, television program, *Final 24*, Biography Channel, 31 October. Series Producer Oksana Borowik. Online: <http://www.biography.com/final24/index.jsp>.

or heroin, despite reports to the contrary. However, Morrison drank to such an extent that it became detrimental to his career, his health and his personal relationships.

While recording in studio, Morrison became increasingly aggressive and volatile. Once, when a producer brought a television into the recording studio to catch a crucial baseball game, Jim became irate, picked up the television and smashed it declaring, “No fucking televisions in the studio, ever!” (Henke 2007: 34). Alcohol also likely played a role in his behaviour in New Haven, a disturbance he caused on a flight from New Orleans, and, of course, in Miami. Many believed that it contributed to his death, which was suspected to be the result of heart disease at the age of only twenty-seven.

In 1968, Morrison became more withdrawn from the band. One reason was his interest in other projects, such as his desire to establish himself as a poet, but many observers cited his abuse of substances as the primary reason. He also collaborated on two films. One of these *A Feast of Friends* (1968) documented the Doors on tour. Morrison also worked on another film, which was not widely released, 1969’s *HWY*, about a man who came down from the mountains and went into Los Angeles.

Morrison’s erratic behaviour and drinking continued, and aside from the unfolding of events that occurred in Miami in 1969, his alcohol abuse was one of the main contributing factors to the band’s break-up and end of the Doors recording.

After recording their last studio album, *L.A. Woman*, released in 1971, Morrison took an “extended leave of absence from the band” and he and his partner Pamela Courson, left for Paris, France.

PARIS

Morrison moved to Paris in March of 1971. His partner, Pamela, followed soon after. Morrison, along with the other members of the Doors, had fulfilled their contract with Electra to record six albums. Upon completing *L.A. Woman*, Jim took up residence in the Jewish quarter of Paris, le Marais, on Rue Beautreillis. He was close to Place de la Bastille, the medieval square of Place des Vosges and not far from Île Saint-Louis on the Seine. Before renting an apartment, he and Pamela stayed at Hôtel Georges of Rue Georges V.

Morrison's main objective for moving to Paris was to work on his writing, something he had been planning to do for a while, and to establish himself as a poet. Although he was in Paris, a city which had produced many great intellectuals and writers, people believe that he became very depressed. The circumstances under which Morrison and Courson left the United States were not ideal. After being convicted on obscenity charges in connection with the Miami 1969 concert, Morrison and his attorney were still continuing to appeal the charge. When Morrison arrived in Paris, he shaved off his beard, and reportedly lost weight and tried to cut back on his drinking.

Morrison spent his days walking the city of Paris, writing, and going out to bars with friends. He and Pamela went on vacation a few times, once visiting Morocco on the recommendation of a friend. Years of drinking and drug use, however, had taken their toll on his health. He often complained of chest pains and had fits of coughing.

Things were not always well with Morrison and Courson either. He reportedly spent a lot of time with a neighbor who was a French model, while Pamela sought the

company of a number of different men, including a French count. Prior to Courson moving to Paris, the Count had supplied her heroin habit in Los Angeles.

There are a number of different accounts of how Morrison died. The most widely accepted will be presented first, followed by others that provide a slightly, or vastly different time line.

The standard account is as follows: on the night of July 1, 1971, Morrison was in attendance at the infamous nightclub on Rue de Seine, the Rock & Roll Circus. It was believed that he overdosed there, on an unknown drug, which some people think was heroin. He returned to his apartment with the help of a friend. The next day, July 2, Morrison and Courson went to see a movie, *Pursued*, and had dinner at a restaurant before returning home. After returning to their apartment, Morrison began coughing up blood, which was not an irregular occurrence. They went to bed around 3:00 a.m., and Morrison awoke later coughing. Pamela ran a bath for him, and when he said he felt better, she returned to bed, leaving him in the bath. Waking up later, she realized he had still not returned to bed. She found him still in the tub, and thinking that he might be unconscious, tried to arouse him, but he was dead.

What has been outlined above is, more or less, in accordance with what Pamela Courson reported before her death. Some claim that Courson called their friend Alain Ronay, to ask him to call a doctor, as she did not know enough French. The coroner came to the apartment, and Pamela related the events as described. In accordance with French law, given that there was no evidence of foul play, no autopsy was ever performed. Morrison was buried in a wooden casket with only three other members of

the Doors present. He was buried in the seventeenth ward of Père-Lachaise cemetery, a place containing many luminaries and renowned writers and artists. Morrison had earlier expressed the wish to be buried there (Moddemann 1998). Pamela told the graveyard officials that Morrison was a writer, hoping that they would allow him a burial space.

In his book, *Wonderland Avenue*, long-time Doors' fan Danny Sugerman reported that when he spoke with Courson after her return to the United States, she indicated that Morrison had died of a heroin overdose. Thinking that it was cocaine, he had inhaled it. She allegedly gave many contradictory reports concerning his death, such as, "that she killed him" (Hopkins and Sugerman 1980 and Sugerman 1989: 342; 213). She felt a great deal of sorrow and remorse over his death, and this was likely a contributing factor to her death of a heroin overdose three years later, also at age twenty-seven. Their friend, Alain Ronay, also supported the heroin overdose version of Morrison's death. He later wrote that Morrison had died of a hemorrhage after snorting heroin belonging to Courson and, as she slept, Morrison bled to death in the bathtub. Ronay confessed that he had "helped to cover up the circumstances surrounding Morrison's death and to helping Courson flee the country."⁹

The following circumstances contributed to the uncertainty surrounding Morrison's death:

- Courson was the only witness to his death; she died three years later

⁹ Steven Davis (2004) "The Last Days of Jim Morrison" in *Rolling Stone*. http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/6185019/the_last_days_of_jim_morrison. Accessed 21 January 2008; Alain Ronay (2002) "Jim and I-Friends Until Death," Originally published in KING. http://archives.waiting-forthe-sun.net/Pages/Articles/jims_last_days.html. Accessed 25 December 2007; Patricia Kennealy (1992). *Strange Days: My Life With and Without Jim Morrison*.

- no autopsy was ever performed
- the coroner refused to comment on the death
- there were few witnesses to his burial, and friends and relatives in the United States were not notified until days later
- Doors manager Bill Siddons claimed that he never got to see the body before Morrison was buried

Other fans believe that Morrison faked his own death to escape his rock star persona and that he had mentioned the idea of doing so years earlier. The fans believe it is possible that he is now, much like Elvis Presley, still alive. A Doors Community member in Paris, Raphael, claims that Morrison was assassinated by American authorities who blamed him for contributing to the moral decline of American youth and the anti-Vietnam War movements. There are many other factors that have contributed to the belief that Morrison is still alive, such as: Courson initially reporting that “[Morrison] was just tired and resting in hospital,” or Doors’ drummer, John Densmore, upon visiting the grave the first time, thinking it was “too short” (Densmore 1990: 2). As a result of these factors, as well as others, multiple accounts of Morrison’s death have been entertained. Many works of popular literature have been written on this topic, the most recent published in July of 2007.¹⁰

¹⁰ Some examples of popular literature concerning Morrison’s death: Sam Bennett (2007). *The End: Les Derniers Jours de Jim Morrison*. Paris: PRIVE. Stephen Davis (2004). *Jim Morrison: Life, Death, Legend*. New York: Gotham Books. James Riordan and Jerry Prochnicky (1991). *Break on Through: The Life and Death of Jim Morrison*. New York: Morrow.

The author of *The End – Jim Morrison* (2007) Sam Bennett claims he was a friend of Morrison. Sam Bennett resurrected an old rumor that Jim Morrison died of a heroin overdose in the Rock & Roll Circus nightclub. The rumor is that Morrison came to the club to pick up heroin for Courson, went to the bathroom and, after taking some heroin, overdosed and died. According to Bennett, Morrison's body was then moved back to his apartment and placed in the bathtub by the dealers from whom Morrison had purchased the heroin. Bennett claimed that those who were privy to this occurrence were sworn to secrecy.¹¹

This account, however, is just another one of the conspiracy theories that have arisen over the years. These conspiracy theories do not carry the same weight of credibility as the accounts of Courson and Ronay. Although it has been discussed, there are no plans by French authorities to re-open the case surrounding Morrison's death. However, fascination with the nature of his death continues. In October of 2007, the Biography Channel released an episode re-enacting the last hours of his life, entitled *Final 24*, which speculated on both old and new theories.

MORRISON AS A WRITER

Morrison, it seemed, never sought any particular outcome from life. As comedian Bill Hicks, a man who shared many qualities with Morrison once said, "It's just a ride". Sharing many qualities with intellectuals and poets Morrison claimed that, "I like people

¹¹ Walt, Vivienne, *How Jim Morrison Died*, *TIME Magazine*. Online <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0.8599.1643884.00.html>. Accessed 22 January 2008.

that shake other people up and kind of make other people uncomfortable” (Stevenson 1970). It was this quality of his performing career that he enjoyed most.

While he had many other projects that interested him throughout his life, the one consistent project was writing. He saw many of his performances as spoken poetry which, he indicated “can be really effective” (Smith 1970; Stevenson 1970).

While Morrison spent most of his professional career as a singer, he clearly saw himself as a poet. It was in his death that fans continued to work to establish him as a poet. However, he did not gain much critical acceptance in this regard. When Morrison died, *Rolling Stone* editor, Beng-Fong Torres, thought that he would finally give Morrison what he wanted by calling him a “poet” on the cover of *Rolling Stone Magazine* in 1971.

In 1969, Morrison published two separate works of poetry, *The Lords/Notes on Vision* and *The New Creatures*. *The Lords* was a series of commentaries on places, people, and events. The other work, *New Creatures* was more poetic in structure and presentation. At a later time, they were combined into a single volume entitled *The Lords and The New Creatures*. Both these works were published while Morrison was alive.

After Morrison died, two other volumes of poetry were published. The contents were chosen by Morrison’s long-time friend, photographer Frank Lisciandro. He was assisted by Pamela Courson’s parents, as they owned the rights to Morrison’s poetry after their daughter’s death. *Wilderness*, released in 1988, became a *New York Times* best seller. A second volume, *The American Night*, was also very successful. Both items were collected in a single edition, *The Lost Writings of Jim Morrison*.

Jim Morrison made recordings of his poetry in two instances. The first was in March 1969 and the second, on his twenty-seventh birthday in 1970. The second recording featured some of Morrison's friends. In 1969, some parts appeared on a bootleg version of *The Lost Paris Tapes* and were later recorded as part of *An American Prayer*, released in 1978. The poetry recording remained in the possession of the Courson family, and was not released.

CONCLUSIONS

From the early life of Morrison, before the formation of the Doors, the following patterns can be seen: Morrison was a sensitive and bright child, who developed an interest in language and art that would continue throughout the rest of his life. Morrison's father was a member of the U.S. Naval Academy and, as a result, he spent much of his childhood and adolescent years living in different parts of the United States. The public perception was that the relationship between Morrison and his father was stormy. These patterns were important because they shaped popular views of Morrison's character. As well, these patterns contributed to his tendency to become withdrawn and self-centered

During his career, Morrison became renowned for his dark and poetic lyrics, the theatricality of his performances, as well as qualities that did not always work in his favour, such his "sex god" image and his often obnoxious behaviour. While he did enjoy performing, fame, and money, his career with the Doors was not enough. Seeking to establish himself as a serious poet, Morrison made attempts to shed his rock star image.

This attempt culminated in the Miami performances and ended when he died in Paris at age twenty-seven.

Relatively little happened in terms of popular publications about Jim Morrison, between the years 1971-1980. In 1980, authors Jerry Hopkins and Danny Sugerman published *No One Here Gets Out Alive*. The public response to this book, which sparked interest in Morrison from a whole new generation of fans, was overwhelming. In fact, the Doors' albums sold more copies after the publication of this book than during the entire tenure of the band's career.

In 1991, a similar wave of enthusiasm was ignited when Oliver Stone released his film version of *The Doors*. A massive influx of fans and pilgrims from all over the world visited Morrison's grave in Père-Lachaise cemetery. On some occasions, particularly the anniversary of Morrison's death on July 3 1991, there have been riots outside the cemetery's walls.

The enthusiasm for the body of work of the Doors and the public fascination with Morrison's persona has not ceased. He has become an important part of American culture, and, as this thesis will show, a spiritual figure for a community of people. My narrative, thus far, is a more or less factual account of what is known about Morrison's life. However, as with any figure that becomes elevated to iconic status, or the subject of myth, the details become woven into a support system for the mythos that surrounds the individual. The events that have been discussed have been chosen not only because they were formative in Morrison's life, but also because they influenced the way he is perceived today.

The following chapter concerns pilgrimage to Morrison's grave in Paris.

CHAPTER THREE:

PILGRIMAGE TO JIM MORRISON'S GRAVE

Those not familiar with the location of Morrison's grave in Paris may be puzzled by the use of the term pilgrimage to describe the long, or short, journey people make to visit his grave. However, pilgrimage is simply the term used by most participants. Visiting Morrison's grave contains similar elements to those found at any other pilgrimage site. The idea of a journey is central to any pilgrimage. As the authors of *Run for the Wall* (2001) indicate, "at the heart of a pilgrimage, after all, is the idea of a journey, and at the heart of the journey, is the idea of traveling to a different or special place will bring about a change in one's life, in one's view point, in one's state of being" (Michalowski and Dubisch 2001: 163).

The features and boundaries of pilgrimage have been debated by scholars (Badone and Roseman 2004, Cohen 1992, Eade and Sallnow 1991, Morinis 1992, Reader and Walter 1993). For the purposes of this thesis, I use the definition of pilgrimage formulated by Alan Morinis (1992) to apply to pilgrimage at Morrison's grave: "the pilgrimage is a journey undertaken by a person in quest of a place or a state that he or she believes to embody a valued ideal" (Morinis 1992: 4). Further, I utilize the attributes of pilgrimage proposed by Ian Reader (1993): "the idea of a journey out of the normal parameters of life, the entry into a different, other, world, the search for something new, the multiple motives of participants, ranging from homage to veneration to the simple impulses of curiosity" (Reader 1993: 7-8).

These definitions encompass the varying motives of individuals for visiting Morrison's grave. For some, such as Doors fans, Morrison's grave is a sacred space, a location where fans have the opportunity to be in the presence of Morrison's spirit. A Doors fan would journey to the grave with the objective of a spiritual or emotional transformation, or both. Morrison's grave is a place where fans can mourn his death and offer tributes and prayers. Statements from Doors fans, both at Morrison's grave and on the Doors Internet forum, testify to the transformative power of "being in the presence of Morrison" in the words of one fan.

Tourists that visit the grave have varying motives, but those with whom I spoke nearly always mentioned "the Doors movie"¹ or curiosity about seeing the "shrine of a rock star." Interestingly, even if a visitor to the grave is relatively unaware of the details of Morrison's life and death, they would still recognize that his grave, like the site where long-distance runner Steven Prefontaine was killed, "represents an embodiment and enshrinement of the valued ideals and the ethos of [rock and roll] that are central to people's lifestyle and belief system" (Wojcik 2008: 15).

The gravesite of Jim Morrison shares a common theme with many sites of pilgrimage: death. Ian Reader explains that it is not uncommon for "dead-saints and cultural heroes [to] provid[e] a focus for both pilgrimage and touristic travel" (Reader 1993: 17-21). Fans visit Morrison's grave with the objective of reflecting upon his death.

¹ Author Daniel Wojcik (2008), writes that pilgrimage to the location where long-distance runner Steven Prefontaine was killed is motivated, in part, by people who had seen films on Prefontaine: "In interviews with fans at the site, I discovered that many of them had learned about Prefontaine through these films, and that the films were the motivating factor for their journeys to the site, or their 'Pre pilgrimage,' as some of them called it" (2008: 8).

However, encountering the “presence of Morrison,” in the words of a fan, is of greater importance than mourning. Here we see similarities with visits made by fans to sites associated with the deaths of other celebrities. Writing of the site of Steven Prefontaine’s death, Daniel Wojcik indicates that:

Pre’s Rock is a source of inspiration, a place for devotees to experience the cult of personality and legendary status that Prefontaine has attained, comparable to fans visiting the graves of Jim Morrison or Elvis Presley, or the crash sites of Princess Diana’s or James Dean’s death (2008: 14)

“The cult of personality” at the gravesite of Jim Morrison is a major enticement for both fans and tourists. As Morrison is representative of a cultural hero, his grave is a location to reflect upon the values and ideals embodied in the Morrison ethos and world view. One informant indicated that, “It was at [Morrison’s] grave that Axel Rose [of Guns’n Roses] decided he didn’t want die on the altar of Rock and Roll.” The origin of Morrison as a cultural hero, or icon, will be expanded upon in Chapter Four.

PILGRIMAGE AS RITE OF PASSAGE

In an influential essay, “Pilgrimages as Social Processes” (1974) Victor Turner outlined pilgrimage using the concepts of liminality and *communitas*. “Liminality” and “*communitas*” are terms defined in Turner’s 1969 work, *The Ritual Process*. Both concepts have their origins in the *rites de passage* theory articulated by Arnold Van Gennep (1960). Liminality entails being on the threshold, or “betwixt and between” two spaces, or worlds (Turner 1969: 107). Liminality, for Turner, is significant due to its ability to create *communitas* among individuals. *Communitas* is defined as “a relational

quality of full unmediated communication, even communion” with others “which combines qualities of lowliness, sacredness, homogeneity, and comradeship (Turner and Turner 1978: 250). The experience of *communitas* is made meaningful, indicates Turner, through a contrast with the structure and organization of everyday life.

The contrast between structure, and the anti-structure of *communitas* in the pilgrimage process, can be seen, to some extent, among visitors to Jim Morrison’s grave. One factor separating the visit to the grave from everyday life is the great distance pilgrims must travel to reach Paris. Journeying to the grave presents financial difficulties for most fans, particularly for those living far away. Although there are Doors fans all over the world, the band was based in Los Angeles, and as a result, very large concentrations of fans are located in the United States. The long distances fans must travel results in a separation from organized, structured life, further contributing to Morrison’s grave as a geographically and socially marginal location, typical of traditional locations of pilgrimage (Turner 1974: 197). Ideas about pilgrimage as a rite of passage can be used to describe pilgrimage to Jim Morrison’s grave. For example, in the Turnorian model, pilgrimage is marked by a change in social status (Turner 1978: 9; Morinis 1984: 259). For Doors fans, a visit to the grave results in a change of social status, albeit it minor. After visiting the grave, they are accorded more credibility and greater prestige, by other fans, especially those who have not visited the grave site.

Among tourists, visiting Jim Morrison's grave may be just another item to check off their Paris itinerary.²

FACTORS BEHIND THE DEVELOPMENT OF PILGRIMAGE TO MORRISON'S GRAVE

Morrison and Courson left the United States under less than ideal circumstances. They lived in Paris for less than five months, and this was a time of great turmoil for both of them. Morrison's death in Paris, on July 3, 1971, was tragic, and for a number of reasons previously outlined, was regarded with suspicion. It was days before his friends and colleagues in the United States were notified of his death. He was buried in a cemetery that contained the graves of many of his heroes. It has often been remarked in popular literature that Morrison went to Paris to die; that it was fated. "I'm number three," he said after learning of the deaths of Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix. In the last segment of the Oliver Stone film, a number of famous graves in Père-Lachaise are shown before the camera descends over Morrison's grave.³ Surrounded by flowers, wine bottles and burning candles, the bust of Morrison, graffiti and various other tokens commemorating his death are shown. For most people, this scene from the film is the

² Graburn (1989) suggests that one benefit of modern travel is the social status it accrues: "The rewards of modern tourism are phrased in terms of values we now hold up for worship: mental and physical health, social status, and diverse, exotic experiences" (1989: 24).

³ The final scene of *The Doors* (1991) can be found at this link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNk8cF6U2ZE>. Accessed 5 June 2008.

predominate image they have of the grave, often described on online forums as exotic, or shrouded in mystery.⁴

Robert Kruse (2003) in “Imagining Strawberry Fields as a Place of Pilgrimage” writes:

Strawberry Fields, like several other sites such as Elvis Presley’s Graceland mansion that memorialize popular music figures, can be understood as a pilgrimage site devoted to *cultural religious heritage* [emphasis in original] (Kruse 2003: 156).

Although Morrison’s grave is located in Paris, and Kruse is specifically referring to American heritage, the grave can still be characterized as a site of cultural religious heritage as it part of broader Western popular culture. I argue that the distance of Morrison’s burial site from the cultural milieu of America is a contributing factor to the “exotic” quality attributed to his grave. Fans come to Paris to “understand what happened to Jim.” This point underscores another parallel Morrison’s grave shares with the Prefontaine pilgrimage site. As Wojcik notes “As I discovered during the time spent at Pre’s Rock, the circumstances surrounding Prefontaine's death were a common topic of conversation, as his admirers speculated about how he died and the mysterious’ events associated with his death” (2008: 7).

While the Doors Community could be said to be influenced by their perceptions about Morrison’s life as well as his work, the fans/tourist-pilgrims that visit his grave tend to be attracted more by the Morrison myth, particularly as presented by Hopkins and

⁴ “How Jim Morrison Died,” (*TIME Magazine* July 16, 2007) describes the last segment of Doors film, which depicts Morrison’s death. <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1643884,00.html>. Accessed 15 April 2008.

Sugerman (1980) and Oliver Stone (1991). The Doors film depicted Morrison as a vacuous, crazed alcoholic. Native Americans, a character known as “Death,” and images of Jim as a youth appear in various scenes throughout the movie in a conscious attempt by Stone to emphasize the role of the myth and Morrison’s fated death. Morrison is heard repeatedly in the film expressing a fascination with death and the occult. For example, the film shows Morrison visiting the ‘vampirish’ layer of Andy Warhol’s factory and other scenes show him drinking blood and marrying a witch in a pagan ritual. The film also encourages the idea that Morrison, obsessed with death, went to Paris to die, thus fulfilling his destiny and death-wish from the beginning. People who are left with this image of Morrison after seeing the film are not always convinced that it conveys an accurate portrayal. Indeed, it is the ambiguity and uncertainty about Morrison’s life that perpetuates the legend and myth.

Morrison, then, is portrayed as a talented musician realizing his calling to “make the myths,” die young yet be immortal, and, along the way, have a good time, not letting societal constraints get in the way. Depending on how much visitors identify with, or relate to, Morrison, visiting the grave can help them come to terms with their own struggles as well as the social constraints under which Morrison struggled and, ultimately succumbed. According to Eade and Sallnow (1991), a pilgrimage site has the ability to function as a “religious void, a ritual space” which can accommodate “diverse meaning and practices,” while also, “offer[ing] a variety of clients what each of them desires” (Eade and Sallnow 1991: 15). Morrison’s grave functions in the manner described by Eade and Sallnow (1991), accommodating its various clientele. The grave offers tourists

the status of visiting the shrine of Jim Morrison; considered an important site in Paris. Morrison's grave satisfies the curiosity of tourists, most of whom inquire about the cause of Jim's death, and why he is buried in Paris. Doors fans have the opportunity to be in the "presence" of their hero. In memoriam, fans leave a tribute offering and commemorate Morrison through personal reflection, drug use, or playing Doors music. One individual, who attended the celebration at Père-Lachaise on the thirtieth anniversary of Morrison's death (July 3, 2001) said that he left the cemetery "feeling that Jim was indeed pleased and that his spirit will continue to envelop all, as he breaks on back from the other side."

MORRISON'S GRAVE

Morrison is buried in Père-Lachaise cemetery, located in the twentieth *arrondissement* on the eastern side of Paris. The cemetery is considered one of the most beautiful in the world. Established in 1804 by Napoleon, it is named after a confessor to Louis XIV, Père François de la Chaise (1624-1709), who lived on the site. Previously, cemeteries had been banned inside Paris. Among the many notable figures buried there are: Balzac, Oscar Wilde, Merleau-Ponty, Chopin, August Comte, Edith Piaf and Marcel Proust.

It is not known whether Morrison ever visited Père-Lachaise cemetery, but he did express interest in being buried there. It is thought that his partner, Pamela Courson, and their French friend, Alan Ronay, approached a cemetery official asking for a plot to bury Morrison. The official declined their request, but Pamela protested saying that Morrison

was a famous, young American writer, which convinced the official to change his mind. A plot beside Oscar Wilde was suggested, but when she asked if there were other options available, Courson was given a small plot in the sixth division at the bottom of the hill. On July 7, 1971, Morrison was buried four feet down in a cheap wooden casket and a suit that was too big. There were five witnesses to his burial; six, if a Parisian woman, Madame Colinette, is included. Madame Colinette happened to be walking by Morrison's grave at the time. In an interview, years later, she described the burial in the following manner:

The procedure of putting Jim down into the ground took less than 10 minutes, no priest was present, no prayer was said, just a few final words by Agnes Varda; everybody left in a hurry and never returned - the whole scene was piteous and miserable (Moddemann 1998)⁵

Courson reportedly spent only 878 francs on the entire burial, equal to around 200 hundred dollars in Canadian currency (Moddemann 1998). Before burial, Morrison's body was kept in the apartment, with someone occasionally coming to pack the body with ice.

Relatively little happened between 1971 and 1980, in terms of pilgrimage to the grave. This is not to say that the grave was not visited during this time, but it did not experience the same number of visitors compared to later years.

After the publication of *No One Here Gets Out Alive* (Hopkins and Sugeran 1980), the number of visitors to the grave increased, particularly on the anniversary of

⁵ Rainer Moddemann, "The Complete Guide for Jim Morrison Fans," *Doors Quarterly Magazine*, 1998, <http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Palladium/1409/quietday.htm>. Accessed 13 March 2008.

Morrison's death on July 3. During the 1980s, the grave remained relatively undisturbed by cemetery officials. Morrison's grave had a small headstone, but many of the graves around it had tall tombs and headstones. Benefiting from their shelter, visitors would gather around Morrison's grave. While there, they would play Doors music, read poetry, drink alcohol and smoke marijuana, among other activities. People would leave spray painted or written messages around the grave site and the headstone soon became covered with graffiti. Someone carved a head bust of Morrison and left it on the headstone. In later years, people joked that that the bust took on a rather psychedelic appearance, after having its hair painted a day-glow green and splotches of red painted over the rest of the face. Most photos of the grave, or at least the most well known, show the head bust on top of the headstone slab. The headstone is decorated with liquor bottles, candles and a backdrop of a wall covered with graffiti. The bust was stolen around 1988, and two members of the Doors community claim to have fragments of it.

Pilgrimage to the grave was highest in the years following the 1991 Oliver Stone film, *The Doors*, and continued at a steady pace for the next couple of years. In the following quotation, Michelle Campbell, an expatriate U.S. photographer living in Paris, described the chaos which ensued on the 20th anniversary of Morrison's death:

What can I say about the 20th anniversary, except that it was a big mess. Too many fans came and couldn't get in, so they sat outside and drank until they stormed the gates.

There was a party like atmosphere to this riot set to Doors music. Fans would sing "Break on Through" as they tried to batter the door, or "Light my Fire" as they tried to set it on fire. Occasionally, police would disperse the crowd with tear gas. I saw one young guy dancing in front of a police man singing "Come on, come on, touch me

babe, for I am not afraid.”⁶ The police did not appreciate the irony of the situation.⁷

Turner suggests that as a pilgrimage shrine develops over time, there is a greater need for organization. As a result of such organization, normative structure at the pilgrimage site is created (1974: 169; Turner and Turner 1978: 25). This process occurred at Morrison’s grave. In the 1970s and 1980s, pilgrimage to Morrison’s grave was relatively “spontaneous,”⁸ and structurally undeveloped. After the release of the *Doors* film in 1991, Morrison’s grave saw an unprecedented number of pilgrims, creating havoc and discord at Père-Lachaise on the anniversary of Morrison’s death. Visits to the grave, today, are organized, both on the part of cemetery security and pilgrims.⁹ As a result, *communitas* is more structured compared to its earlier “spontaneous” quality.

In 2001, upset by the graffiti and what they perceived as the degradation of their son’s grave, Morrison’s parents had his grave cleaned. The graffiti was removed and a new headstone was installed. An inscription was placed on the headstone, a Greek phrase reading: KATA TON DAIMONA EAUTOU. There have been many different translations of this phrase, as nearly everyone who visits the grave inquires about its

⁶ A lyric from “Touch Me” *The Doors*, 1969. Paul Rothchild (Producer). Elektra/Asylum Records.

⁷ Michelle Campbell, “Doors 20th Anniversary,” June 2001, <http://www.thedoors.com/home>. Accessed 25 March 2008. For documentary footage of the 20th anniversary of Morrison’s death see: Jens Knospe (1991). <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAu0NpWnrJM>. Accessed 19 June 2008.

⁸ Grider (2001), writing of commemoration after the September 11th attacks suggests that “spontaneous shrines,” where individuals gather to understand a death or sudden trauma, “are among the deepest expressions of our shared humanity, combining ritual, pilgrimage, performance art, popular culture, and traditional material culture” (Grider 2001: 2).

⁹ The normative structure among security guards at Père-Lachaise can be seen in the guard’s strategic placements, throughout Père-Lachaise, in an attempt to regulate traffic flow and behaviour at Morrison’s grave. Among pilgrims to his grave, today, the standard procedure at the grave is the following:

meaning. Some are: “He lived like a devil and died like an angel,” “To the spirit (or demon) within,” “He did his own thing,” or “He created his own demons.” In “old Greek” it reads, “To the Divine Spirit within himself,” perhaps slightly more appropriate for an epitaph, while the “new Greek” means “He caused his own demons”.¹⁰ People at the grave find this an odd inscription, to say the least, particularly as it was chosen by Morrison’s parents. For those more sympathetic to Morrison, the reaction to the inscription is of an unsettling nature; it reinforces the image of Morrison as a self-destructive rock star. The restructuring of the grave site was not well-received by fans. Many missed the old, or “hippy,” atmosphere of Jim’s grave, with the candles, the graffiti, and, especially, no security guards present, which gave pilgrims the freedom to act at the grave in the way they wanted. Some have suggested that the “old” atmosphere was more along the lines of what “Jim would want.” While drinking, taking drugs, posing nude for photographs, and covering the surrounding walls with testaments to their lost hero may be at odds with what constitutes appropriate behaviour at a grave site, fans see any less excessive behaviour as sterile, repressive and representative of everything that Morrison, in life, fought against. The activities at Morrison’s grave, although not necessarily “religious,” create a sense of *communitas* among those gathered there. Similarly, Wojcik (2008) observes that pilgrims to Pre’s Rock, the accident site where long-distance runner Steven Prefontaine was killed in 1975, “often place personal objects and things symbolically connected to Prefontaine and the broader subcultures of distance

taking a photograph in front of the grave; playing Doors music; and leaving an offering or petition. Any other activity would be interrupted by the security guards.

running and track and field” such as running shoes, medals and race numbers (2008: 8).

At John Lennon’s memorial, Strawberry Fields, in Central Park, visitors leave photographs of Lennon and sing Beatles songs. The drug and alcohol saturated tributes at Morrison’s grave are no different; the rituals symbolically represent Morrison. Turner and Turner (1978) indicate that non-liturgical features of pilgrimage also give rise to *communitas*, even if such activities are not declared legitimately “religious” (1978: 37). Tributes, and tribute activities, at sites connected to Prefontaine, Lennon, and Morrison, though not explicitly religious, carry deep spiritual and emotional meaning for participants. The symbolic nature of tribute activity, concerning Morrison, can be witnessed in the Doors Community. Ritual in the Community is a focus in Chapter Five.

In 2003 barricades around the grave were installed. It is guarded by security staff, particularly during the summer, when the grave receives the most visitors. The presence of security guards and barriers do not allow people to be in close proximity to the grave and it also prevents people from drinking or smoking which they often come with the intent to do. The regulations are a frustrating experience for people who have traveled long distances, and feel they are being prevented from honouring Morrison in what they see as the appropriate manner. As a result, people look for alternative areas within cemetery gates to conduct such rituals. Consequently, they may end up in the area of another tomb where such activities are not suitable.

¹⁰ Interpretations of inscriptions are from Steves (2007: 318) and participant observation and interviews with Père-Lachaise security guards. Most tourists find inscription translations in Paris guide books.

MICHELLE CAMPBELL

Michelle Campbell, the expatriate who has lived in Paris for the past eighteen years, was the first member of the Community with whom I had contact in Paris. I had been in contact through e-mail with Michelle, but I did not know what she looked like. It was an unseasonably cool day, on July 1, 2007, when I went into Café La Renaissance. I walked around the café for a while to assess the situation, and then waited for the opportunity to introduce myself. Michelle is the official photographer of Morrison's grave on the Doors website, and many photos she has taken over the past three decades are featured on the site. Before moving to Paris, Michelle taught photography at a college in Texas.¹¹ In Paris, she is still teaching, but her real passion is taking photos of Morrison's grave. I saw her as a motherly figure, primarily because she was kind enough to introduce me to important people in the Community and protected me from Rémi, for which I was most grateful. She asked how I "got into the Doors" and was particularly intrigued by the spiritual aspects of my project, which she said "seems to be a common thread [among fans]." She brought up the idea of popular pilgrimage, and said it was something that she found really interesting. "You should've been here last year!" Michelle said, "The BBC was filming a documentary of the grave." I was comforted by Michelle's presence; she was an American and more like me than the Europeans surrounding us. Michelle had a lot of interesting anecdotes about the Doors history, as "an original fan," she said. She also had information about the grave that I had not heard before. Michelle knew what had happened to the infamous head bust, stolen from the

grave in 1987. The bust is a legend in the Doors Community: there are a number of conflicting stories about how it got to the grave, and where it disappeared.

It was Michelle who first introduced me to Imma Janssen, or “Jimma” as she is affectionately called, is a 32 year-old woman from Holland. She first came to the grave during the week of the anniversary when she was 26. She turned 27 the following week and, relieved to have outlived Morrison, commented, “Yes! I made it!” She has been coming to the grave ever since. Imma always wears her Doors jacket; a denim jacket with the face of young Morrison covering the back. When she takes the jacket off, she wears a denim vest, decorated with Doors pins, over a black t-shirt also adorned with the face of Morrison. I regard Imma as a member of high status in the Community. She has a lot of connections, and was staying with Michelle while in Paris, which is indicative of the high regard in which she is held. She travels around Europe to see *Riders on the Storm*¹² and knows former Doors members Ray and Robby; Michelle added “they know she is not a groupie.” Imma maintains contact with other Community members throughout the year. At her home in Holland, she put block lettering on her front window

¹¹ Michelle has a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Masters of Fine Arts in Photography.

¹² Riders on the Storm is the name of a Doors tribute band founded by Ray Mazerak and Robby Krieger in 2001. The band used to tour under the name “The Doors of the 21st century,” but stopped the practice when John Densmore, the Doors drummer, sued Mazerak for using the Doors name. Riders on the Storm were a frequent topic of conversation in the community. The band was playing a tribute concert in Paris, on July 3 2007. Many felt that Ray Mazerak, sometimes referred to as a “sixties ideologue,” and Robby Krieger, were unfairly trying to make money from Jim’s legacy. Everyone at La Ren on July 2 had an opinion about Riders on the Storm: “John hates Jim. The Doors were strange then and they’re strange now,” Heinrich said. “Jim is nothing without the Doors and the Doors are nothing without Jim” Alan added. A British man in his early 40s, wearing a shirt with a mug shot of Morrison, and the words “WANTED” underneath, Alan was particularly adamant in his disapproval of Riders on the Storm. When I asked Alan if he was going to the tribute concert, he replied with a laugh, “Nooo!” Drinking from one of the beers in his hand, he continued, “In fact, if you give me your ticket right now, I’ll shit on it.” Imma understood the opinion everyone was expressing, but was still

spelling “M-O-R-R-I-S-O-N H-O-T-E-L: Morrison Hotel!”¹³ Any friends in town are welcome to stay with her. Imma introduced me to a number of people from the Community that have been coming to the celebrations for a long time. Most of the people she introduced to me were from Holland. Unfortunately, I had little verbal interaction with two of them because they were Dutch or German speaking women who knew very little English or French.

Both Michelle and Imma provided me with valuable information concerning pilgrimage to Morrison’s grave. Michelle introduced me to a number of important members of the Doors Community such as Gilles Yepremian, described later in this chapter.

VISITORS TO THE GRAVE

Morrison’s grave is the fourth most visited monument in Paris, after the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre and Notre Dame.¹⁴ When people arrive at Père-Lachaise cemetery, the grave everyone wants to see is Morrison’s. Even if someone is not a *Doors* fan, it is

going to the concert. She liked Robby and had met him “several times,” she said, bragging like any fan would.

¹³

Morrison Hotel (1970) is the fifth of six studio albums released by the Doors (Elektra Records). The cover shows band members behind the Morrison Hotel front window. The hotel no longer exists, but was located at 1246 South Hope Street in Los Angeles (near the Pasadena Freeway).

¹⁴

Kathleen Crislip, “Tokens on Jim Morrison's Grave, Père-Lachaise Cemetery,” http://studenttravel.about.com/od/eftoursphotos/ig/Pere-Lachaise-Paris-Cemetery/morris_plach_ef_06.htm. Accessed 8 June 2008. On “Find a Grave”, Donald Greyfield, points out that “[Jim Morrison’s] grave, unmarked for many years, became, much to the chagrin of cemetery officials, a number one Paris tourist destination,” <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=740>. Accessed 8 June 2008.

still considered an important site to see when visiting Paris. A BBC news article describes a visit to Morrison's grave as simply "part of the ritual of a visit to Paris."¹⁵

Given the expansive grounds and confusing layout of Père-Lachaise, with its winding cobblestone paths, and tall tombs that impede the line of vision, most people have difficulty locating Morrison's grave. It is in the seventeenth ward, which is to the far right, and at the second of two descending hills from the top escarpment. The grave often receives large groups of visitors. For this reason, it is convenient that it is located in an enclosure that allows privacy, while at the same time, enabling a large number of people to gather in the immediate area. These features are not characteristic of every grave at Père-Lachaise. There are two graves on either side of Morrison's, separated by a space of about fifteen feet, with a tall tomb on one side and a small flat tomb on the other side. Many people use these graves as a support on which to lean, or as a place to put their belongings while they take photographs or, similar to institutional pilgrimage shrines, write a letter to leave at Morrison's grave.¹⁶

If the visitor enters at the main gate, Morrison's grave is difficult to locate. You must go up the main walk, then off to the left until you arrive at a large, cobblestone circle. At this point, many people become confused. If they take the path immediately to the right, they will find themselves at another fork between paths. Taking the bottom

¹⁵ Hugh Schofield, "Paris's love affair with Morrison," *BBC News*, 3 July 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/1420957.stm> Accessed 20 March 2008.

¹⁶ Most letters fans leave express their grief over his loss and ask that Jim "come back" because humanity is at a loss without his vision. Another common theme in letters comments on his death as a sacrifice. Before the grave was cleaned of all its graffiti, fans used to leave written message on the surrounding tombs. Steves (2007) provides a few examples of this practice: "Graffit-ing nearby tombs, fans write: "You still light my fire" (referring to Jim's biggest hit), "Ring my bell at the Dead Rock Star Hotel,"

path leads to a semi-circular entrance at the front of Morrison's grave. At this point, most people verbally express relief. This sentiment can arise for different reasons, depending on their attachment to Morrison. Most are glad they finally found the grave site, while others are overwhelmed as they enter the sacred realm of their hero.

Entering by the gate closest to his grave, there is a store on Rue de Repos that sells flowers, cards and pictures of Morrison. If a visitor enters by this side gate, they may purchase a picture to leave at the grave. This entrance tends to be used by people, "in the know," or regulars that have been to Morrison's grave many times. It is a much shorter walk that brings you up a short steep hill and at the back or around the left side of his grave. Knowledge of this entrance appears to be a mark of status, particularly among members of the Doors Community.¹⁷ Along the way, particularly during the summer months and around the anniversary, it is not unusual to find people crouched around, or in other tombs, drinking or smoking a joint.¹⁸ This is because, as mentioned previously, the security guards, when present, prohibit these activities at Morrison's grave. Many visitors, however, feel their journey is incomplete without this ritual. Favored drinks are beer, red wine, and Jack Daniels. Morrison loved beer and whiskey. Red wine has been associated with the Greek god Dionysus, and Morrison has often been called the Dionysus of Rock and Roll. Marijuana in popular culture has its roots in the 1960s, and

and "Mister Mojo Risin'" (referring to the legend that Jim faked his own death and still lives today, age 65)" (2007:318). Appendix C contains a copy of an offering left at Morrison's grave.

¹⁷ Awareness of the side entrance to Père-Lachaise is a mark of status as it implies a greater knowledge of Morrison. Such knowledge, among fans, is equated with greater intimacy with the spirit of Morrison.

¹⁸ The majority of tombs in Père-Lachaise consist of a three-sided stone arch creating a small sanctuary-like interior (the dead are buried below the arch). Fans that are not permitted to drink or smoke at

has also been associated with Morrison. Other items that are often left at Morrison's grave are acid sheets, cigarettes and condoms.

A visitor, interviewed by BBC television on the thirtieth anniversary of Morrison's death in 2001, described his desire to return to the grave:

Burkhard Goeke, 45, a professor of medicine from Munich, who also made the pilgrimage, described it as a special day on which fans look back at their youth. "I listen to his music and read his poetry all the time and every five years I travel to France to commemorate his death," he said.¹⁹

Fans at Morrison's grave are reminded of the idealism of their youth, a reaction shared by visitors to the John Lennon memorial. Visitors to the Strawberry Fields memorial are motivated, in part, by Lennon's life and death, which is symbolic of "what is most troubling and hopeful in society" (Kruse 2003: 159). Similar to Morrison's grave, baby-boomers at Strawberry Fields see the memorial as "a shrine to the youthful idealism of the 1960s" (Kruse 2003: 159). Kruse indicates that Lennon's memorial, "is a place of pilgrimage that binds together the past, the present and the further generations that were most affected by the Beatles" (2003: 159). Pilgrims at Morrison's grave experience a similar unification across generations.

Morrison's grave often retreat to another tomb to do so. Due to the complexity of the cemetery layout, it is possible to perform these activities, in and around tombs, without being noticed.

¹⁹ Hugh Schofield, "Fan's flock to Morrison's grave," *BBC News*, 3 July 3 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/1419829.stm>. Accessed 20 March 2008.

TYPES OF VISITORS TO THE GRAVE

Although these categories are not always fixed, Morrison's grave attracts three different types of visitors: tourists, fans, and the Doors Community.

A *tourist* is an individual who visits the grave as a 'sight.' They come to Père-Lachaise in order to see the cemetery and several of the famous people buried there, but not always with the sole purpose of seeing Morrison.

A *fan* is someone on vacation. When fans visit Paris, the grave is an essential part of their vacation itinerary. They like the Doors music and know the details of Morrison's life and death.

A member of the *Doors Community* is a more complex identity, and consists of two possibilities. The first is an individual that comes to Paris for either or both of Morrison's birth and death anniversaries (July 3 and December 8) each year often from distant locations. The Doors Community members make these journeys because Morrison, in some way, has had a profound affect on their lives and they feel a strong affinity for him. Many members of the Doors Community see one another throughout the year. Their knowledge of Morrison is quite extensive; often it is more than my own. As a result, their insight into his life and work is profound. The Community believes that they understand Morrison on a level above everyone else. The last component, which is not essential but often present, is that the Community members use a pseudonym and some are known solely by their pseudonym.

The second type of member of the Community consists of people who knew Morrison during his time in Los Angeles, or in Paris. Additionally, these Community members generally know the remaining Doors. This category also includes Parisians actively involved with Morrison, such as the employees of the bar Café La Renaissance or the Lizard King Association, a group permitted to clean the grave.

Most American tourists who visit the grave carry *Rick Steves' Paris*, a guidebook which contains an interesting description of Morrison.²⁰ The majority of people at the grave read the entry about Morrison out loud. Some are confused by the fact that the headstone reads, “James Douglas Morrison,” rather than “Jim Morrison,” and they are not always sure if they have found the right grave. Many express disbelief at how young Morrison was at the time of his death. Another common topic of conversation is, “Why is he buried here? In Paris?” A lot of people talk about the circumstances of his death. One woman who sounded British was at the grave with her husband and young son. The son aged six or seven, asked how Morrison died. The woman said that he was a musician and that he injected something in his arm.²¹ When the son asked ‘Why?’ The woman sighed and said, “Because it makes you feel good”. Among tourists that visit the grave, the scenarios and perceptions described are seen as stereotypical, and often irritate fans and Community members who feel they are more knowledgeable about Morrison.

²⁰ The entry under “Jim Morrison” in *Rick Steves' Paris* is one which reinforces popular misconceptions of Morrison, such as: “He drank a lot, took other drugs, gained weight and his health declined . . . In the wee hours of July 3 1971, he died in his bathtub at age 27, officially of a heart attack, but likely from an overdose (Any police investigation was thwarted by Morrison’s social circle of heroin users, leading to wild rumors surrounding his death)” (2007: 319).

²¹ This is a widely held, though not substantiated, public perception.

For fans that make the journey to Paris, particularly if they have traveled from far away, the grave marks an important milestone. Whether because of lack of financial resources, or lack of time, coming to Père-Lachaise is a rare and profound moment in their lives. On the *Doors* Internet forum, people that have visited the grave tend to be held in higher regard. Victor Turner (1969) indicates that pilgrimage, like a rite of passage, is marked by a change in social status after the return home (1969: 94). This idea is certainly true among Doors fans. For many fans, the anticipation of visiting the grave involves a process of building momentum. It can start as soon as they contemplate going to Paris, but it intensifies once they arrive, take the Metro, and make the long and confusing walk through Père-Lachaise to his grave.²² Père-Lachaise is located on the periphery of the Île-de-France, away from the majority of hotels. As a result, most visitors begin their journey to Morrison's grave on the Metro. On July 2, I got on the Metro blue line from my apartment in the eighth arrondissement. At this point in my stay, I was accustomed to the Metro ride to Père-Lachaise: coffee burning my hand as it spilled over the lidless cup, and moving when a man would sit beside me trying to smell my hair. With the anniversary only one day away, there were growing numbers of people on the Metro going to the cemetery. I listened in on their conversations, and watched as one teenage boy, who was going to the grave, put socks over his beer bottles to stop them from clanging in his knapsack. After exiting the Metro, visitors pass by a number of vendors selling Morrison related merchandise.

²² There are hundreds of 'blogs' and videos on *YouTube* illustrating the journey in this manner. The following links are examples found on-line. A video account of the pilgrimage to Jim's grave starting on the Metro: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Rzx4-So7X8&feature=related>; Farr Out (2001). "Pilgrimage to

Most first time visitors enter by the main gate and are visibly excited when they locate Morrison's name on the main board. Sometimes there are people selling postcard collections of Morrison. If you look as if you are going to Morrison's grave, it is likely that a guard may check your bag. While Morrison fans cannot be easily identified, it tends to be hippies that are targeted.

Walking up to the grave on July 2, I saw two hippie-style girls ahead of me. They looked and sounded American. I walked up beside them and asked if they were fans "Yes!!" they exclaimed. Approaching people in the confines of the cemetery, particularly if they appear to be fans, is not considered inappropriate. In fact, most fans are happy to share the pilgrimage experience and their love of the Doors. The two girls, who appeared to be in their early twenties, were from San Francisco. I asked if they were on the Doors forum, and judging from one girl's confused facial expression, I decided they were not. One of the girls, thin and petite with short brown hair and a tattooed under arm, showed me a picture she was going to leave at the grave. "Nice!" I said, though secretly I thought it looked like a psychedelic vagina with contoured black lines filled in with a rainbow of colours. "Everyone always leaves him drugs," the other girl added. The walk to Morrison's grave and finally getting there, as previously mentioned, can mean different things depending upon how significant this journey is for the individual.

A BBC News article from the thirtieth anniversary of Morrison's death in 2001 describes the procession to the grave as follows:

Paris: One Fans Tribute to Jim Morrison," http://features.waiting-forthe-sun.net/Pages/paris_pilgrimage.html. Accessed 5 June 2008.

'Deification'

Morrison came to France in early 1971 to escape, he told friends, the frenzied celebrity lifestyle that was forced upon him in the United States. In Paris, he hoped for peace and to rediscover his poetic muse. He failed, but the French love him for trying. At Père-Lachaise - amid the tombs of the Paris bourgeoisie and beneath a sky of Mediterranean blue - the line of adepts looked more and more like a religious procession. For this is, after all, a process of modern-day deification.

'Perfection'

Like Apollo, Morrison represents youth, love and poetry. The marijuana is the incense of today. The scribbled notes are votive offerings. Perhaps it was just like this that some beautiful harpist from the Aegean was transformed via the collective memory into a godhead. And in Paris, beneath the graffiti-strewn slab, the candles and the fading blooms, lies not the decaying body of an alcohol-raddled narcissist, but an ideal of perfection - as ancient as human life itself.²³

While the author of this article has taken poetic liberties in the language used to describe pilgrimage to Morrison's grave, the sentiments reflect those of visitors. The quotation is reminiscent of language that would be used to describe pilgrimage to the shrine of a saint. For fans, particularly if they have seen the Oliver Stone movie, it is often confusing to see the grave in its current state, compared to the atmosphere created when candles, graffiti, and liquor bottles covered the ground. The idea that Morrison has been laid to rest, in a far away place, and among famous company, as the BBC²⁴ article suggests, contributes to the allure of visiting his grave.

²³ Schofield, "Paris's love affair with Morrison," 2001.

²⁴ Similar to events at the grave on the anniversary of Morrison's death, Kruse (2003) points out that "the annual vigil at Strawberry Fields is perceived by the media as important local and national news" (2003: 157).

JIM MORRISON'S PARIS AND OTHER PILGRIMAGE LOCATIONS

For Doors fans, the grave is not the only location visited while in Paris. There are many other sites in and around Paris that were frequented by Morrison. *Jim Morrison's Quiet Days in Paris* (Moddemann 1999) and *The Complete Guide for Jim Morrison Fans* (Moddemann 1998) offer walking guides in booklet form; there are also formally and informally organized tours. With regard to informally organized tours, it is common for a fan to post a message on the Doors forum asking for suggestions of places to visit, other than the grave, while in Paris. If a fan who has been there many times is planning on being in Paris at the same time, they will often post a message offering to act as a guide for the fans who are visiting Paris for the first time.

Some of the locations that appear in the published guides, however, no longer exist. Paris has changed since 1971, but it has only been within the last ten years that many of the sites related to Morrison have disappeared. Trying to locate some places can be a frustrating experience. For example, Bar Alexandre, located on the corner of Champs Elysées and Rue Georges V where Morrison spent many nights drinking, is now the flagship Louis Vuitton store. Difficulties in locating sites related to Morrison occurred on more than one occasion while I was in Paris in June and July 2007. In some instances, it was possible to speak with someone who had knowledge of either Morrison's association with the location or information concerning the establishment during the early 1970s. More often, however, fans are left to speculate about the exact location.

MORRISON'S APARTMENT AND NEIGHBORHOOD

For a visitor lacking the time or the inclination to visit too many sites, one important place to visit is the apartment Morrison shared with Pamela Courson. It is located on 17 Rue Beautrellis in Le Marais, the old Jewish Quarter of Paris. It is off the main street, Rue Saint Antoine, and only two blocks from Place de la Bastille. Place de la Bastille, famous for the jail located there during the French Revolution, is now marked by a roundabout with le Colonne de Juillet, or the July Column in the centre which commemorates those who died during the 1830 and 1848 revolts. From Morrison's apartment, it is a short walk to the Seine. By crossing Pont Sully and walking down the stairs on the right, one can find a bench where Morrison used to sit watching the ships pass by and the people on the other side of the river. Leaving Quai d'Anjou, and walking further, you will reach Ile Saint Louis, one of two islands in the centre of Paris. At Hôtel de Lauzun, 17 Quai d'Anjou, Morrison would visit a site associated with Charles Baudelaire, one of his favorite French poets, who belonged to a Hashish club that gathered there.²⁵ Contrary to the other island at the centre of Paris, Ile de la Cité, Ile Saint Louis is much quieter and contains more residential homes.

Morrison's flat is on the fourth level of the apartment complex at 17 Rue Beautrellis. While it is a private apartment, some fans are able to gain entrance into the inner courtyard. For most people, seeing his apartment is a deeply moving experience. Directly across the street is a restaurant where Jim and Pamela often dined. It used to be

²⁵ Rainer Moddemann, "Jim Morrison's Quiet Days in Paris," *Doors Quarterly Magazine*, 1999, <http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Palladium/1409/quietday.htm>. Accessed 13 March 2008.

called *Restaurant Beautrellis* but is now *Le Dindon en Laisse*. Until 1990, it was owned by a French couple who knew the owners during Morrison's time. As a result, they were able to provide patrons with various stories about Morrison. The next owner was a Yugoslavian by the name of Vieran. At first, he was unaware of the restaurant's history related to Morrison. However, after learning more about Morrison, he began to cover the walls with various memorabilia: photos of the apartment, tiles from Jim's bathroom, photos of celebrities, letters and stickers. The restaurant changed owners, again, in 1996, and the Morrison-friendly atmosphere disappeared. It is reported that the current owner thinks Morrison fans will bring him a bad reputation.²⁶

Across Rue Saint Antoine from Morrison's apartment and through the iron gates, is the beautiful medieval square, Place des Vosges. Morrison would often come here to drink and to write. He reportedly wrote parts of *The American Night* at this location. In the past, the Doors Community has held Tribute in Motion gatherings here. The Tribute in Motion gatherings will be described later in the chapter.

On Rue Beautrellis, on the same side of the street as the apartment is another restaurant, *Vin des Pyrenées*, which in 1971 was a vintages shop. At the corner of Rue Beautrellis and Rue Saint Antoine is a Japanese food store, where, at one time, Morrison bought cheese. There are a number of places along Rue Saint Antoine and bars and restaurants in Place de la Bastille which Morrison often visited.

²⁶

Moddemann, 1999.

ÎLE DE LA CITÉ

On the main island across the street from Notre Dame is a famous bookstore-*Shakespeare & Company*. It has been visited over the years by a number of famous writers, one being James Joyce. Morrison would also go there; reportedly attracted by the antiquarian side of the bookstore. The Doors Community has held Tribute in Motion gatherings here in the past. A Doors community member, Kat, indicated that she overheard an employee of the bookstore tell a group of tourists that the Doors Community thought that Morrison's ghost haunted the bookstore (Kat found this highly amusing).

SAINT-GERMAIN-DES-PRÉS

Walking along the famous left bank, you will eventually come to Rue de Seine in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, another area in which Morrison regularly spent time. Here you will find the infamous *Rock & Roll Circus*, where Morrison, along with many famous celebrities partied into the early morning hours. Close by, at 13 Rue des Beaux Arts is the intimate boutique hotel, *L'Hôtel*. In a room on the second floor, writer Oscar Wilde died and an intoxicated Morrison fell out of the window when he and Pamela were staying in the same room in May 1971. Apparently he fell onto a parked car but unfazed wiped off his jacket and "continued his drinking tour."²⁷ Also on the left bank is *Galerie Patrice Trigano*, at 4 Rue des Beaux Arts, which in 1971 was a hotel where Morrison and Courson kept a room.

²⁷ Rainer Moddemann, "The Complete Guide for Jim Morrison Fans," *Doors Quarterly Magazine*, 1998, <http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Palladium/1409/quietday.htm>. Accessed 13 March 2008.

Walking to the far end of Rue de Seine away from the river, there is a busy, mainly pedestrian intersection. This street is Rue St.-André des Arts and has a very 'Parisian' feel. It is a narrow winding street lined with shops and restaurants. Turning to your left, you will eventually come to Saint Michel square. Walking toward Saint Michel there is a pub called *The Mazet*. Morrison was here, drinking alone on the left side of the bar on the night of July 1, 1971. He was recognized by an American fan; it is believed that this was the last time he was, publicly, seen alive.²⁸ Walking the other way down St-André des Arts, you will eventually end up in the Latin Quarter of Saint-Germain-Des-Prés. Here, writers and intellectuals would gather at cafés such as *Les Deux Magots* and *Café de Flore*. Ernest Hemingway, Simon de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre were just some of the many famous patrons. Morrison and Courson spent a lot of time here. When the remaining members of the Doors visit Paris, they often come to these bars. Concerning the sixth arrondissement, it should be noted that the scene in 1971 was very different than today. It was well known for its nightlife and in the 1960s was popular with students and hipsters. While many of the more infamous establishments still exist, the atmosphere is very different.

ST. LEU D'ESSERENT AND CHATEAU CHANTILLY

On June 28th, Morrison and Courson, along with their friend, Alain Ronay, traveled to Chantilly, a town about forty-five minutes northwest of Paris. In Chantilly, they visited a Chateau before going to a town, about 12 km north, St. Leu d'Esserant, to

²⁸ Moddemann, 1998.

see a music festival. This is not a large town, but there is a river and a medieval church to which people make pilgrimage. They had lunch at Hôtel l'Oise in the town, and took photos by the river, the last of them seen taken together. The hotel has changed little since 1971, and the same music festival that Courson, Morrison and Ronay attended still exists today. St. Leu d'Esserent is not easy to access as train service stops at Chantilly. Additionally, most fans do not spend long enough in Paris to make this excursion. As a result, it is always of great interest to members of the Doors Forum when someone has gone here, particularly if they have the photos to provide as evidence for their trip.²⁹

GILLES YEPREMIAN

In 1971, a young Gilles Yepremian was leaving the Rock & Roll Circus when he noticed a very distressed man sitting on the steps outside the doors. It was Morrison; he had been ejected from the club for throwing cushions and furniture. Not wanting to leave him there, Yepremian helped him into a cab and planned on taking him to his friend, Hervé Muller, a rock journalist living not far from Champs Elysées. The short drive to Muller's, however, proved difficult as Morrison was heavily intoxicated. Driving along the Seine, the taxi stopped at a light near Pont du Concorde. Morrison jumped out of the taxi and started climbing the bridge, claiming he wanted to go for a swim in the Seine. There were two police officers walking across the street and Morrison shouted some derogatory remark at them. Finally arriving at Muller's flat, 6 Place Tristan Bernard, around four in the morning, a disgruntled Muller agreed to let Morrison grab a sleeping

²⁹ Visiting this town is a mark of status among Doors fans, particularly for an American.

bag on the floor. Instead, Morrison walked up to the bed where Muller and his girlfriend had been sleeping, collapsed, and forced them to the floor instead.

The next morning, Morrison was startled when he woke up in Muller's flat. Feeling somewhat embarrassed, he invited his hosts out to breakfast. They went to Bar Alexandre on Rue Georges V. Morrison ordered a large bottle of cognac and proceeded to get drunk again. At one point, Morrison apparently ran out to an iron bench outside the bar and clinging to it, yelled, "Where are you taking me! I don't wanna go!" Bar Alexandre was a favorite drinking place; he was tolerated by the waiters because he tipped well. In 1990, Bar Alexandre was torn down and the Louis Vuitton flagship store and a bank now occupy this location. The iron bench that Morrison latched onto was stolen in 1992.³⁰

A picture of Morrison standing outside the doors of Hervé Muller's flat gained notoriety when it appeared in Hopkins and Sugerman's *No One Here Gets Out Alive*. Visiting this site is of interest to many fans. Given its obscure location, many inquire as to its whereabouts even if they are only in Paris for a short time.

Visiting sites associated with Morrison, other than his grave, allows the fan to identify with Morrison, particularly his last days, on a deep and intimate level. For someone who identifies with the tragedy of Morrison, walking around these locations, particularly if the date coincides with the same day he was there, is akin to "reenacting the last days of Christ," as one informant told me. Connell and Gibson, in *Soundtracks*, indicate that the "quasi-religious faith in the power of music icons. . . renders the range of

physical spaces that they occupied or passed through sites of crucial importance, imbued with sacred meaning” (2002: 223). If cultural religion (where a religious quality is applied to a “secular” aspect of society) involves “the sanctification of figures and themes from popular culture” (Alderman 2002: 28), then locations associated with Morrison, such as his apartment in Paris, or the Rock & Roll Circus, have also “undergone sacralization” (Alderman 2002: 28). Kruse (2003) notes that similar phenomena can be seen in places associated with John Lennon and the Beatles.³¹

Sites in Paris associated with Morrison, aside from his grave in Père-Lachaise, are more likely to be visited by members of the Doors Community than by fans or tourists. Motivation to visit these locations, and to discover new places associated with Morrison, is a result of the Community’s desire to identify with Morrison on a deeper level and to find “Jim’s Paris.”³²

DOORS COMMUNITY AND TRIBUTE IN MOTION

Most people who come to Paris for the July 3 anniversary of Morrison’s death arrive on the first or second and usually leave on the fifth or sixth. While there are a number of different online forums on which Doors fans arrange celebrations to mark the anniversary and meet other fans attending the gathering, the largest organized forum is www.doors.com. The specific anniversary forum is Tribute in Motion, commonly

³⁰ Rainer Moddemann, “The Complete Guide for Jim Morrison Fans,” *Doors Quarterly Magazine*, 1998, <http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Palladium/1409/quietday.htm>. Accessed 13 March 2008.

³¹ Such sites include places in Liverpool, *The Cavern Club*, where the Beatles played, and the businesses mentioned in the Beatles’ song, “Penny Lane.”

referred to as the Paris Journal, found at [http://www.parisjournal.com](#). The organizational details for outings and poetry readings, and accommodation inquiries are posted on the Paris Journal online forum well in advance. The location of the poetry reading changes each year. In previous years, it has been held at the Shakespeare and Company bookstore, Place de Vosges, Rue de Repos and last year at Arènes de Lutèce.

The fans that log onto the Paris Journal site are the people I have come to refer to as the “Doors Community.” The Community is composed mostly of people from Ireland, England, Holland, Germany and the United States, although there are a few Community members from several other countries. These individuals often travel to Paris more than once a year. They know one another and occasionally visit Paris together or see one another outside Paris during other times of the year.

In Paris, most of their time is spent at *Café de la Renaissance*, known as “La Ren,” a bar at the side entrance of Père-Lachaise, the entrance closest to Morrison’s grave. In the summer, this café, in Parisian style, opens the windows and places chairs and tables along the sidewalk of the café. A small middle-aged man, Rémi, who some call the “clown” of La Ren, may see you gazing at the café with its panels of Morrison pictures lining the bar. Calling you in, he will start to ‘talk Doors.’ If you know your stuff, you will realize his stories are mostly propaganda and conspiracy theories, and if you do not, you will leave wondering if Morrison really was assassinated by American authorities and if Morrison stayed in the small (sleazy) hotel above the café. The Doors

³² As a student studying Urban Planning at the Sorbonne told me, difficulty finding sites associated with Morrison, in Paris, perhaps ironically, is the result of restructuring modern Paris to re-create the “authenticity” of Old-world Paris. Conversation, Paris, France, 25 June 2007.

Community is continually frustrated with Rémi, whom they perceive as conveying popular, yet incorrect notions of Morrison to naïve fans. Gathering at another location would be preferable for Community members, but they normally meet at La Ren because the location is convenient to the grave. Doors fans spend many afternoons drinking and talking with other fans at La Ren. They may wander up to the grave at different times during the day.

While I was in Paris in July 2007 the Community would also go to an Irish pub, *Kilty's*, located in Place de la Bastille. Here, nights would be spent standing at the bar, sitting at tables, or in chairs lining the bar storefront. Occasionally, a fight might break out between Community members, but it is mostly a convivial atmosphere. Most nights end in getting something to eat and walking around the Seine in drunken revelry, normally losing a few members along the way.³³ The Metro closes at night, so the only way home is to walk, stay with a friend or catch a cab. The discussion does not always centre on Morrison, but subtle Doors references and inside jokes frame most of the conversations.

The Community may also meet with one another at other times while they are in Paris. But for most, they know this visit will not be their last. Therefore in parting, they are likely to say “see you soon,” rather than “it was nice meeting you”.

The Tribute in Motion website contains a brief history of a central event that took place in 2005:

³³ The Doors Community loves to tell stories about the ‘good old days’ in this regard.

A Tribute In Motion--TIM as it's lovingly known--is a since-expanded--concept which was posted on the Scorpywag Doors talk forum in early 2005. The idea being that since many fans of Jim Morrison were already gathered together in Paris on the days in which he was born and passed away, July 3rd and December 8th respectively, why not hold readings in his memory on these dates? As often as not, Morrison is overlooked as a poet, and was once quoted as saying that he respected people that could stand up and recite their own poetry--dry as it were. The popular hang-out spot being Café La Renaissance, right outside the gates of Père-Lachaise where Morrison is buried, we could all meet up there. First, of course, we'd need a setting.

Alan Patterson, editor of the site, took to the idea immediately and posted a topic in which we could discuss the possibility of furthering this. Many ideas were initially discussed between us but we finally settled on a venue after Michelle Campbell (writer and Photographer) was kind enough to stop in the Shakespeare & Co. bookshop and run the idea of having it there by them. Sylvia Whitman, daughter of legendary George Whitman (American expatriate and proprietor of Shakespeare), gave us an OK. At first a few people were pessimistic about holding it there, but when all was said it done, it went beautifully; truly a perfect spot to kick things off.

Special thanks to Theodore Halton for his part in making it happen. All along he's been a leader in supporting our effort. At one point, shortly before the first TIM was to be held, there were conflicts in my life that kept me from doing my part of the organizational duties. Someone needed to step up and pull us thru and Theo did an exceptional job. No time had been set and things seemed somewhat off the boil, but Theo ensured the continuity of the event. The date was now set for July 4th and the word was spread.

And now that we're going we can't be stopped. Theodore then helped arrange a second outside of Père Lachaise. It was held on July 3, 2006. The crowd was even bigger this time and it was enjoyed by many. Often people, on their way down the alley from the cemetery, would stop to listen. "I didn't know I could get off on poetry," one individual remarked after. Of course, isn't that what a poetry reading really should be a celebration?

Also in the works is a Saint Louis TIM this April hosted by the Tribal Soul Kitchen (Literary Doors ezine which branched off a poetry section once included on the official Doors site) and another in Paris this December. Killian, one of the co-organizers, has expanded on the concept of IN MOTION even

further, suggesting we hold December's actually in motion on the Metro. Dates and location are yet to be finalized but stay tuned. THERE'S MORE TO COME.³⁴

To my great disappointment, the readings which were scheduled to take place on Rue de Repos did not happen in 2007. However, this situation was revelatory in other ways. It created conflict in the community, and I was witness to things I did not always initially understand. A Community member known as Brett was responsible for organizing the gathering but failed to do so. Many members of the community were angry with him, complaining that he somehow managed to show up from the United States every year, but had no money once he got to Paris. As a result, while the Community is quite generous, they became annoyed at him for this behaviour on several occasions. He apparently showed up at another member's house in Britain and was rude to her family. I only found out about the trouble with Brett when I saw him passed out on the bathroom floor in Kilty's, from drug use, I was told, and witnessed physical fights between him and other members. Nevertheless, not all of the blame was placed on Brett for the absence of the readings. Several Community members claimed annoyance with others whom they felt were too focused on drinking, and who then feeling ill, could not be bothered with organizing T.I.M.

The complaints, regarding the Community's disappointment and speculation over who, or what, was responsible for the failed poetry readings, went on for months after the anniversary of Morrison's death on the Paris Journal Internet forum. "Let's get drunk and

³⁴ "A Tribute in Motion," <http://tributeinmotion.kk5.org/#>. Accessed 10 June 2008. "What is TIM? (a brief history),"

do crazy things, just like Jim would do,” does seem to be a prevailing attitude among Community members. While that is not the only way they choose to honour Morrison, it often translates into this form and other Community members appear to interpret some people’s behaviour this way.

For Community members, going to Paris is not a one time occurrence. Rather, they find themselves returning year in and year out. Motivations for these particular individuals, compared to the large assortment of pilgrim-fans and tourists are difficult to pinpoint.³⁵ It does not need to be acknowledged that they enjoy the music, and admire Morrison’s persona on a separate level than those who merely appreciate him as a singer. Morrison aside, the motivation is close to that of people who participate in the annual “Run for Wall” commemorating those who fought in Vietnam, as described in the following quotation:

Many participants, like pilgrims to other sacred places, return to the Run year after year, seeking the emotional reinforcement that comes from participation in a collective journey of healing that has now become an important part of their collective identities and of their search for wholeness and peace (Michalowski and Dubisch 2001: 18).

For members of the Doors Community, wholeness can be found in close proximity to Morrison and in the company of those who share a worldview. For these members, the grave is not the central focus of their time spent in Paris. Rather, the focus is with the other Community members who share a mutual affinity for, and identification with,

<http://blog.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=blog.view&friendID=100835384&blogID=157108001>. Accessed 10 June 2008.

Morrison. Each Community member, however, still recounts the first time they visited the grave with great anticipation.³⁶

Kruse views Strawberry Fields, not as a “shrine of institutionalized religion, but as a secular pilgrimage site resulting from the multitude of discourses that represent John Lennon and the societal discourses that he stimulated in the minds of millions through the influence of his music” (Kruse 2003: 156). Morrison’s grave shares similar attributes: visitors are aware of Morrison primarily through the medium of music (and film) and participant reflections at the grave, in some capacity, involve Morrison’s message. Although Morrison’s grave is not a traditional site of pilgrimage, fans mark their visit in similar ways as do pilgrims to a religious shrine.³⁷

In an attempt to express the nature of the Steven Prefontaine pilgrimage site, Wojcik observed the following: “The practices and personalized spirituality expressed at Pre’s Rock blur the boundaries between the sacred and the secular, pilgrimage and tourism, shrine and memorial, inspiration and supernatural intercession” (2008: 2). Ian Reader suggests that the categorical division between the “secular” and the “religious” in definitions of pilgrimage “is not ultimately a viable frame of reference” (1993: 16).

³⁵ It should be acknowledged that it is not always possible to differentiate between pilgrim-fans and tourists; there may be overlap.

³⁶ One example, of a Community member recalling her first visit to Père-Lachaise, is taken from my field notes on July 1, 2007: Imma handed me a picture of herself standing beside Morrison’s grave. It showed her behind the headstone; she looked like a stunning, young bohemian woman. When I expressed how wonderful a picture it was, she beamed with pride. She indicated that she wanted to come back year after year.

³⁷ Morrison’s grave, in contrast to some sites of secular pilgrimage, contains elements of traditional pilgrimage such as “a shrine like” atmosphere. I visited the John Lennon memorial in Central Park shortly after being at Morrison’s grave and the atmosphere is markedly different. One possible reason for sharing similarities with traditional pilgrimage shrines is because Morrison’s grave is located in a Roman Catholic cemetery.

Similarly, visits to Jim Morrison's grave do not fall neatly into either category of pilgrimage or tourism. Rather than clarifying, his grave confounds the categories.

Chapter Four outlines the development of the popular myth surrounding Morrison, while also exploring contributing factors to its progression.

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE MORRISON MYTHOS

To summarize the myth surrounding Morrison, the following claims have been made. Morrison was regarded as highly controversial during his short, but prolific career. Many events in his life, career and death are shrouded in mystery. Following the release of Hopkins and Sugerma's *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, in 1980, and *The Doors* movie, in 1991, Morrison became known to a new generation of fans. The book and the film stressed the more controversial and mythological elements of Morrison's life. As a result, newer fans, or those who had not taken an interest in the Doors in the 1960s, are more familiar with the myth than with Morrison as an individual. In addition, Morrison's charisma derives in part from the ambiguities in his life story.

William Bascom, in "The Forms of Folklore," provides the following definition of myth used by folklorists:

Myths are prose narratives which, in the society in which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past . . . they are taught to be believed, and they can be cited as authority in answer to ignorance, doubt or disbelief. Myths are the embodiment of dogma . . . their main characters are not usually human beings, but they often have human attributes . . . Myths account for the origin of the world, of mankind, of death, or for characteristics of birds, animals geographical features, and the phenomena nature (Bascom 1984: 9).

My usage of the term myth departs from the folkloristic definition. I use the term "popular myth" to refer to popular narratives and discourses surrounding deceased celebrities which elevate those individuals to a "larger-than-life" status. Popular myths

relating to dead celebrities have a factual basis in the historical existence of the individual. The messages or values associated with the individuals in popular myths arise out of ambiguities in their lives and deaths. In order for a figure from popular culture, such as Elvis Presley or Jim Morrison, to acquire iconic or mythic status he or she must have achieved a certain level of notoriety in the public realm before death. The audience must have a high level of interest in understanding the celebrity's death, and the celebrity's importance to culture and society.¹ It is the public discourse which continues after the celebrity's death that results in the emergence of an icon. In books, films, and television shows concerning the celebrity, various narratives and central values become associated with the celebrity. After several years of continued public interest in the dead celebrity, the image and the values associated with the celebrity become more significant than, and transcend, the factual details about the historical existence of the individual. The following section will outline elements contributing to the construction of a celebrity's image after their death.

IMAGE CREATION IN DEAD CELEBRITIES

In *Centre and Periphery* Edward Shils discusses the nature of charisma, an important attribute of celebrities who achieve an iconic status. In the modern world, charisma tends to be distributed less among “the extraordinary set aside from society,”

¹ A very recent example of this was the death of Heath Ledger. Ledger died on January 22, 2008 at the age of 28. He was a young, successful actor and thought to be in good health. Ledger was found by his masseuse, naked and unconscious in his Manhattan apartment. Although some believe that Ledger accidentally overdosed, or committed suicide, no note was found and the autopsy was inconclusive. Several high profile relationships with various actresses landed Ledger on the cover of tabloid magazines week after week. Heath Ledger's youth and his success as an actor, contributed to the public interest in understanding his mysterious death (Chan 2008).

such as an other-worldly God-figure (Shils 1975: 11), but rather concentrated “in a person, an event, an institution, or a discipline of the lingering senses of order and higher purpose on which the cohesion of a society depends” (Shils 1975: 130). Shils suggests that, in some capacity, the “central value system” of a society permeates parts, at least, of its periphery, if at very different levels of intensity. Shils writes:

What sociologists and social anthropologists call the central values or belief system of a society can be lived up to only partially, fragmentarily, intermittently and only in an approximate way . . . For the rest of the time, the ultimate values of the society, what is sacred to its members, are suspended amidst the distractions of concrete tasks (Shils 1975: 111).

Given this view of the largely half-perceived penetration of the larger society by its “central value system,” we can view charisma not so much as an eruption, but rather as something less dramatic and less highly “personalized.” The following section(s) will provide a more detailed account of this process and relate it to the specific case of Morrison. Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe will be used as analogous examples.

In the following quotation, Steven Davis describes the portrayal of Morrison in the Hopkins and Sugerman book and Stone film:

[*No One Here Gets Out Alive*] cemented in the public mind the image of Jim Morrison as a poetic wild man, a rebel, an asshole, and a tragic American legend. The book ended, stupidly, with the suggestion that Jim Morrison might have faked his own death, and might be still alive and in hiding . . . [and] the defining event in the development of the Jim Morrison legend was Hollywood’s treatment of it [the Stone film, *the Doors*]” (2004: 487-68).

The depiction of Morrison described above became the predominant construction of his image for a new generation of fans. Morrison became emblazoned everywhere, in particular, “[on] dorm room walls” (Davis 2004: x). His eternal anthem, “to break on through,” speaks to the anxieties of youth, and provides a channel through which to resolve them. The popular myth, pioneered by Hopkins, Sugarman and Stone, continues to be perpetuated in the media.

In the section of his book dedicated to an examination of Morrison, Wallace Fowlie comments on Morrison’s mythical status:

Morrison has generated legends, and the facts are hazy. One could devote a whole book to the legends of Jim Morrison--down to the film by Oliver Stone. It is the legend of Rimbaud that attracted Morrison, just as it is the legend of Morrison that attracted Stone. The legends become more important than the reality (Fowlie 1993: 70).

The argument that a ‘hazy’ set of facts and mysterious circumstances contribute to the creating of an icon could conceivably be made for many mythic figures. Sarah Churchwell, a professor of American Studies at the University of East Anglia, echoes Fowlie’s sentiments concerning the making of an iconic myth, in this case relating it to Marilyn Monroe, “The lack of reliable evidence about Monroe’s life has only heightened the actress’s enigmatic appeal and provided fodder for conspiracy theorists and gossipy biographies” (Proudfoot 2006), “Happy Birthday Ms. Monroe” *The Ottawa Citizen*, June 1 2006: E1-2). Fowlie’s remark, “The legends become more important than the reality” emphasizes the importance of the image of iconic figures, like Monroe or Morrison.

Jim Morrison, along with celebrities such as Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe, was famous for his charisma, beauty and mysterious death. Musicians, actors and performers that came of age during the advent of television were the first to receive widespread exposure to audiences. In living rooms across America, people watched as actors performed their on-screen and real life identities on television shows, films and televised music performances. Prior to television, America would not have been able watch the last moments of an assassinated President's life.² For some celebrities, such as Marilyn Monroe, the boundary between the film screen and real life became blurred. The blonde bombshell image of Monroe is universally recognized, yet little is known or remembered of her life beyond the exterior. Similarly, the "Young Lion" photograph of Morrison as a youthful, bare-chested sex symbol conveys the intensity and rebellion of youth [Appendix B].

Celebrity exposure intensified with the expansion of the media (Boorstein 1964: *passim*). The proximity and intimacy created by media makes these otherwise distant events seem more "real" (Barnous 1970: *passim*). Constant media exposure, however, resulted in psychological difficulties for many celebrities, including Morrison. To cope with the perils of fame Morrison began to drink heavily which in turn became a contributing factor to his premature death.³

When an iconic figure dies, particularly if the death is premature and mysterious, or occurs at the height of the iconic individual's fame, the image is forever locked in

² The assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963.

³ Similarly, it is believed that Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe both died of an accidental overdose (prescription drugs [Presley]; barbiturates [Monroe])

public consciousness. The image of the individual, however, continues to evolve. For example, Morrison died in 1971, but was reborn through Hopkins and Sugerma's book in 1980, and again through Stone's film in 1991. New ideas concerning Morrison are added to the image of him each time a book is written about him, or a television show is produced. The image of Morrison is reworked into something which is often entirely different from historically recorded events. As the new image is constructed in the public realm, the "audience" is involved in a reciprocal relationship with the popular press. This is a continuous process, as social life is never captured in an isolated frame (Maffesoli 1996: passim). Nonetheless, the central values of a celebrity who becomes an image⁴ become entrenched in society.

The values possessed by the image of a celebrity are a result of the celebrity's historical existence and the societal discourse, through the media, surrounding them after death. In the case of Jim Morrison, he is remembered as young, beautiful, intelligent, rebellious, tragic and god-like.⁵ Youth and beauty are a result of his death at 27.

Intelligence is a result of his vision and insight, as well as his advanced schooling. He is rebellious because he had a disregard for convention, a dislike of authority and he stressed the value of personal freedom. The last value, a god-like persona, evolved after Morrison's death, from the representations produced by Hopkins and Sugerma (1980)

⁴ The central values of an image can relate an element of their life, such as a successful career, or aesthetic beauty, or they can tell us something about their death: tragedy or wasted life.

⁵ A female journalist, who once interviewed Morrison, is quoted as saying: "The world began at that moment, I felt like it was all a dream before that. Nothing was real except his incredible presence. Jim Morrison was there in the room and, baby, you better believe it. There isn't another face like that in the world. It's so beautiful and not even handsome in the ordinary way. I think it's because you can tell by looking at him that he IS god. When he offers to die on the cross for us its ok because he IS Christ . . . That's why we love him" [emphasis in original] (Riordan and Prochnicky 1991: 228).

and Stone (1991). This divine-like character in particular was of predominant concern for fans who came to know Morrison through Hopkins, Sugarman and Stone.

The significance of the endurance of an celebrity image, such as Morrison, is a result of the importance of his message. The image of Morrison, and his message, became fixed in its origins: 1960s America.⁶ The message of the counterculture movement, like the message of Morrison, is timeless; an anthem of the jubilations and torments of the young which speaks to the personal freedom that this population desires, at least in Western culture. The image of Morrison becomes iconic, because it is a representation of the values of youth and autonomy. The 1960s were a paradigmatic decade in the history of America, in which the ideals of youth, beauty, freedom and rebellion are entrenched. These ideals have become embodied in Morrison: “What thirteen-year-old can hear ‘People are Strange’ and not hear it as a postcard of comfort from the grave?” (Davis 2004: xi). The persistence of the image of the celebrity, facilitated by the media and public discourse, is a way to ensure value of the celebrity endures.

POPULAR MYTH

Popular myth, like myth in the classical anthropological sense, may be understood as an attempt to overcome an inconsistency, whether at the individual or societal level, or both. As Claude Lévi-Strauss argues:

⁶ In the words of Stephen Davis (2004), “his words are burned into the brains of three American generations” (2004: x).

And since the purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction (an impossible achievement, as it happens, the contradiction is real), a theoretically infinite number of slates will be generated, each one slightly different from the others” (1963: 229).

In his article “Break on Through as Myth” Arnold Wolfe (1999) comments on the function of the Morrison myth. Wolfe follows Lévi-Strauss suggesting that:

. . . a myth provides members of a culture with an easily understood story or explanation that transmits values and helps such members think they have made sense of their world . . . myths mediate real cultural conflicts or contradictions. This is to say that myths both express and fictionally resolve them (1999: 41).

In the life and death of Morrison, there are a number contradictions, or in the words of Lévi-Strauss, binary oppositions. Morrison himself, by embodying these oppositions mediates or overcomes them. As Riordan and Prochnicky (1991) indicate, Morrison “wanted not only to experience drugs and the darker sides of life but became attracted to the idea of being the door through which others could experience them” (1991: 69).

Similar to Riordan and Prochnicky’s notion of Morrison as a channel between two sides, Wolfe suggests that “Morrison frames the Doors as mediators, inviting all to see them as mythic figures who not only understand the pain of living with contradiction, but ‘know’ a way out” (Wolfe 1991: 62). For example, Morrison, in many ways, is able to express and sometimes unite opposites: youth and death, talent and wasted life. In the example of the individual in opposition to society, the popular myth surrounding Morrison has placed him in the role of a tragic individual who was victimized by the larger, oppressive society, leading to his artistic decline and premature death. Therefore, the popular myth

of Morrison expresses the contradiction between social constraints and individual autonomy and personal vision. Through a mediation of these contradictions, the Morrison myth provides Geertz's "model of" and "for" a life orientation for thousands of fans and an archetypal representation of the values of youth and personal freedom for American society (Geertz 1973: 93).

WHAT DOES HIS STORY TELL US?

"Jim drank and yelled and pleaded, cajoled and danced in inspiration to unite the band, to ignite the audience, to set the night on fire, once and for all, forever."⁷ This quotation is from a one-time manager of the Doors, but he is better known as their biggest fan. Danny Sugerman bears witness to the much criticized antics of Morrison. He concludes that Jim channelled his negative emotions and energies in an attempt to speak to the conflicts and anxieties of those who were mesmerized by his music. Wolfe's understanding of myth, described in the following quotation, resonates with Sugerman's conclusion:

Equally, each culture "must find ways of publicly and collectively [its] attempts at resolving" the conflicts or "contradictions," that concern its members, spark their deepest anxieties, and threaten to rend their culture asunder. Myth is one such way—if not always the truth and the light (Wolfe 1999: 41).

⁷

Danny Sugerman. *The Doors Forum*. www.thedoors.com. Accessed 23 February, 2008.

The threat of complacency moved Morrison, as some critics claimed, to behave badly. His death is interpreted as a modern day crucifixion which attempts to redeem the blindness of a ‘sleeping city.’⁸

THE EFFECT OF THE MYTH AT THE GRAVE

As discussed in the previous chapter, many people who visit Morrison’s grave are attracted not only by his association with the Doors, but equally, and sometimes more so, by the myth surrounding his life and death.

Fans have several motivations for visiting Morrison’s grave, but it is his lifestyle and death which are most intriguing. This fascination is reflected in the popular literature and media concerning Morrison, as well as discussions at his grave, which center on his lifestyle and death. The nature of Morrison’s death is frequently discussed and most people believe he overdosed on heroin, despite inconclusive evidence. I overheard a security guard at the grave tell a group of Polish tourists that Morrison died from “injecting heroin into his vein.” I questioned the validity of his statement, given that this element of the myth, in particular, has been subject to much scrutiny. The security guard told me that, in fact, Morrison had died from a heroin overdose, and justified his argument by claiming to be a “historian of Père-Lachaise.” Informed fans tend to be

⁸ The references to the ‘sleeping city’ and the ‘wet forests’ of the ocean are lyrics from the song ‘Moonlight Drive’. Magistrale, (1992) described the intended interpretation of its message, “As he argues in many of his poems, the ‘sleeping city’ is a general metaphor for passive acceptance of the status quo, an indictment of the masses who lack both the interest and inclination to explore ‘the waiting worlds/That lap against our side’” (1992: 136).

offended by this explanation of the death, as they feel Morrison is grossly misunderstood. Conversely, tourists who are attracted by the myth have it reinforced by Parisian cemetery officials. Many officials resent or do not understand the appeal of Morrison. It is difficult to know if the irony is lost on the security personnel at Père-Lachaise cemetery. I spoke to visitors at the grave and overheard many conversations. My conclusion is that visitors to Morrison's grave leave Père-Lachaise with a heightened gratification that the myth was reinforced.

Morrison's lifestyle is another common topic of conversation around the grave. Although his image as a "rock and roll bad boy" was responsible for a great deal of his appeal, especially in the early days, it was the depiction of Morrison in the 1991 Stone film that elevated him to godly status. This "deification" of Morrison is particularly evident among teenage boys that visit the grave.

I encountered three males in their late teens, two from Portugal, and one from Sweden, who were traveling around Europe over the summer and came to Paris, "especially" to see Morrison's grave. I met them at the grave, and later, when I was sitting in Café La Renaissance with Michelle, a member of the Community, one of the boys asked her if it was true that Jim had slept with Nico (of the Velvet Underground, as depicted in the Oliver Stone film). Michelle, an expatriate of the United States, now living in Paris, replied, "Yes," adding that, "after all, he was a rock star". The teen turned to his Swedish friend, heavily intoxicated and wearing a Velvet Underground t-shirt, and said, "See! I told you [Jim got some sweet ass!]" Earlier in their conversation, they had asked Michelle about the accuracy of the Doors film. Michelle had told them that it was,

“not at all [accurate], really”. Nevertheless, the boys asked about an event that took place in the film and Michelle confirmed its authenticity. Michelle asked the boys why they liked Jim. One of the Portuguese boys said he was attracted by Morrison’s stage persona. When they were leaving, the teenaged boys told Michelle, who was originally from Texas, that President Bush was a “dick” and that they were going to Amsterdam next and were excited about visiting the Doors Café to smoke pot. Within this brief encounter, the boys discussed, questioned, and had the image of their hero confirmed. They visited the grave, asked about his relationship with Nico, and expressed their contempt for President Bush.⁹ Their planned visit to the café in Amsterdam was seen as an appropriate way of honouring Morrison.

CONCLUSION

The popular myth has developed out of ambiguities or lack of reliable evidence concerning the life and death of the rock star. There was, however, public interest in Morrison prior to his death. Morrison was a controversial and charismatic musician, who died under mysterious circumstance at age 27. One of the motivations for Jerry Hopkins and Danny Sugerman (1980) was to make sense of this tragic death, and to ensure that Morrison’s vision was not lost to subsequent generations.¹⁰ Hopkins and Sugerman characterized Morrison as a tragic figure, victimized by a society who could not accept

⁹ One aspect of Morrison which Europeans, in particular, admire, was his hostility toward American authorities.

¹⁰ As each generation of youth must crave the same desire for personal freedom that Morrison’s espoused (Sugerman 1995: 351-52).

his vision. Further, Hopkins and Sugerma enshrined Morrison as a modern god. In the revised introduction to *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, Sugerma states:

And now, twenty years after Jim's death, the Morrison/Doors story has blossomed into the realm of myth. Jim's short, tragic life is the stuff of which our heroes and our gods of youth and resurrection are made. Like Orpheus, he is forever young, and like Dionysus, he dies to be born again. And as with the murder of Adonis, the sacrifice of Mithra, and the accidental death of Antinous, he could not have lived without destroying the myth on which his audience has founded itself. One of the main reasons Jim went to Paris was he could no longer live up to the mythology he himself had helped to create. Because Jim Morrison didn't want to be a god. Jim Morrison wanted to be a poet" (Sugerma 1995: xiv).

Since 1980, thousands of books films and television shows about Morrison have been completed. The majority of popular productions are concerned with understanding Morrison's death, vision and importance in American society.

Morrison, as an iconic figure, represents the values of youth, rebellion, and personal autonomy. These values can be seen in the life, death, and music of Morrison, but it is his association with the 1960s counterculture that makes his message particularly powerful. The year 2007 marked the 40th anniversary of the Summer of Love. The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City held an exhibition displaying artistic works of the psychedelic era. In a critical review of the art show, "Welcome Back Star Shine," *New York Times* columnist John Leland reflected on nostalgia among Baby Boomers for the bygone hippie-era:

Like any brand, Summer of Love nostalgia champions its own brandedness, or exceptionalism, separating itself to an exaggerated extent from what came before or after. In this separation the past is seen as a purer image of the present, shorn of vulgarity and invested with possibility. The past points to a more

utopian future than the one it actually became.

Mr. Eustis of the Public Theater said he hoped to invoke the utopianism of 1967 without simply playing to nostalgia that runs on the desire to forget, not to remember. “Nostalgia is a corrupting emotion,” he said. “You’re imagining a lack of contradiction in the past. You’re imagining something that wasn’t true. It’s a longing to be a child again, to have magical thinking about the world.”

But he added that nostalgia could also have a “progressive aspect” that pushes people to think forward rather than back, to “remember that you can imagine a world that is different, where money didn’t determine value, where competition wasn’t the nature of human relations (Leland: 20 May, 2007).

This quotation invokes a number of important factors relevant to both the anthropological and popular definitions of myth. According to anthropological theories of myth, societies look to myths as an authentic portrayal of the past, but also as a charter for the present and the future:

Myth, as a statement of primeval reality which still lives in present-day life and as a justification by precedent, supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values, sociological order, and magical belief. It is, therefore, neither a mere narrative, nor a form of science, nor a branch of art or history, nor an explanatory tale. It fulfills a function *sui generis* closely connected with the nature of tradition, and the continuity of culture, with the relation between age and youth, and with the human attitude towards the past. The function of myth, briefly, is to strengthen tradition and to endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events (Malinowski 1948: 146).

In this quotation, Malinowski articulates what is meant by the function of myth as a “sociological charter” for belief. Baby Boomers, as well as others who idealize the 1960s, look to the past as a time of infinite possibility in the world. Nostalgia for the sixties ignores flaws in the past; the past is remembered not as it happened, but as a time when anything could have happened, and as a symbol of hope for the future.

The popular myth surrounding Morrison contains many of the same elements that Leland identifies in nostalgia for the sixties. Morrison is remembered as a young god, who, for modern day youth, pioneered the fight for values of freedom and rebellion. Such values were important to Morrison during his life, but he succumbed to substance abuse and a premature death. The Morrison myth, however, is able to overcome the contradictions that Morrison embodies, such as youth and death, talent and wasted life. Following Lévi-Strauss, we can view the Morrison myth as a model that posthumously reconciles contradictions apparent within Morrison's life. More importantly, the Morrison myth is capable of transmitting counterculture values, and a template "for a wholesale breaking away from the established order" (Wolfe 1999: 47). The Morrison myth helps to resolve the stress and anxiety of today, by providing us with an idealized charter or "model for" challenging authority and achieving individual artistic fulfillment.

The following chapter focuses on Morrison as a spiritual figure for the Doors Community.

CHAPTER FIVE:

THE COMMUNITY

In a 2004 presentation, Stephen Prothero provided insight into our fascination with celebrities and their role in culture:

Celebrity is the new sainthood . . . when celebrities die they give us their lives. Not to truth, but to beauty, to authenticity, maybe, or to sexual freedom . . . Fans react religiously when their “heroes” die; treat them as martyrs, who die for a cause. Determining what those causes are, could take you to the heart of America, to the development of popular values in the United States over the last half century. Border zones, between the meat of sacred and the milk of the profane. Where they mix promiscuously and where religion forgets to be confined to its own domain.¹

Celebrities are a type of modern god, with fans creating “cults” around them. In the Western world, celebrities are held in such a high regard that institutions such as cinema and music have acquired quasi-religious characteristics. Christine King (1993), in “His Truth Goes Marching On: Elvis Presley and Pilgrimage to Graceland” suggests that “[Elvis’] cult bears symbols evocative enough to encompass critic and fan alike; hero, martyr and saint. Pilgrims to Graceland attest to how Elvis makes them feel; how he ‘lifts their spirits’ and makes them young and whole” (1993: 98).² Celebrities become famous because they speak to the desires of their adoring fans, while also addressing societal

¹ Stephen Prothero. Paper presented at *Ideas Boston*. 2004.
http://bostonglobe.com/promotions/ideas/2004/speak_prothero.stm. Accessed 26 March 2008.

² King (1993) indicates that “[Elvis’] legend, like those of the saints and gods, has grown after his death, with the growing compilation of his gospel which tells, in many and contradictory versions, how he was chosen, misjudged and tricked (by the press, the public and Colonel Tom who encouraged him to sign away his freedom” (1993: 100-101). This process is structurally similar to the development of Jim Morrison’s legend after his death.

demand for commodity (read: value) they are “selling” (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972: 127-30). As discussed in Chapter Four, celebrities who become icons represent a “central value” in society; Elvis, as a poor boy from the American south who achieved stardom, represents the American Dream, Monroe the epitome of female sexuality, Morrison the ultimate rock god. Celebrities, such as Morrison, aid in the construction of a community identity because they embody timeless characteristics: youth, aesthetic beauty and freedom.

The Doors Community celebrates Morrison as a symbol that lends meaning and coherence to Community members’ lives. My understanding of the term religion follows Clifford Geertz’s (1973) definition outlined in “Religion as a Cultural System”:

Religion is defined as (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (Geertz 1973: 90).

This section provides an overview of ethos, worldview and ritual in the Doors Community. The discussion of ethos, worldview and ritual will be followed by an examination of Morrison as a spiritual figure in the lives of Community members.

Members of the Community live by the ethos espoused by Jim Morrison, which stresses intelligence and non-conformity, in addition to having a good time. In a 1970 interview with a CBC radio, Morrison spoke of the passivity which had befallen American society:

Morrison: . . . so there's really no choice involved [in the media], someone's programming you.

Announcer: So we're the victims of media?

Morrison: Ummhmm . . . the message is for everyone to stand up and say "I'm me!" Life gets restricted to what can be seen rather than what can be touched or experienced physically. You know the medium is the message, and the message is me (Thomas 1970).

Morrison's mentality, which has been embraced by the Doors Community, is to take nothing at "face value." Morrison's perception of Marshall McLuhan's (1964) "the medium is the message" is "the message is me"; a promotion of one's own individuality rather than a large-scale projection of homogeneity. Morrison would not necessarily advise his followers to embrace a specific ethos, but rather to question everything and come to their own conclusion.

ETHOS, ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS: THE PARADIGM

Every year, the Doors Community gathers in Paris to celebrate Morrison as a poet and a visionary. There are individual Community members who may adhere more strongly to a Morrison ideology than others. A general, overriding assumption is the Community, as a whole, shares a worldview and lifestyle similar to that lived by Morrison. This shared lifestyle or expression is seldom spoken. It is apparent in action and Community creed. The annual gathering, of the Doors Community in Paris, is one example.

Clifford Geertz (1973) describes a people's "ethos" as "the moral (and aesthetic) aspects of a given culture":

A people's ethos is the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects (Geertz 1973: 126-127).

In line with Morrison, the Doors Community does not take an amoral stance toward the world; rather they encourage individuals to question morals, values, and beliefs instead of adhering to the status quo. This attitude is consistent with the ethos promoted by Morrison in his lyrics, poetry and lifestyle. Morrison, as previously indicated, was greatly influenced by Nietzsche. On more than one occasion, Jim expressed identification with the role of the [Nietzschian] clown: "I see myself as an intelligent, sensitive human, with the soul of a clown which forces me to blow it at the most important moments" (Bangs 2003: passim). Dylan Jones, author of *Jim Morrison: Dark Star* (1991), claimed that Morrison's embrace of the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche is the key to understanding Morrison and the Doors (1991: passim). Nietzsche's influence on Morrison is a topic of frequent discussion on the *Doors Forum*.³ A senior member on the forum posted the following comment in a thread entitled "Anyone Interested in Nietzsche?":

"The kingdom of God is *in you*"...
[Jesus of Nazareth, as quoted by Nietzsche in *The Antichristian*, section 29.]
It is true, however, that Nietzsche warned in the same section from which I have just quoted against making a *hero* of Jesus:

³ A *Doors forum* member noted the influence of Nietzsche (and Rimbaud) on Morrison: "Anyone out there take Jim's lead by picking up the works of these two visionaries? I gather that these two guys were his biggest influences, and it seems like the best way to get inside Morrison's head is to read up on what interested him most. I have read a lot of Nietzsche (not so much Rimbaud), and I can draw definite and even obvious parallels of his work in Jim's life/attitude/charisma etc. So if you really consider yourself a Morrison fan I suggest you read up if you want to know what he was really all about, and pay less attention to which chick he was slamming in 1970." "jimmyjames," "Rimbaud Nietzsche," *Doors Internet Forum*. 13 October 2004. <http://messageboard.thedoors.com/showthread.php?t=6145&highlight=Nietzsche>. Accessed 4 June 2008.

“if anything is unevangelical it is the concept of the hero. Just the opposite of all wrestling, of all feeling-oneself-in-a-struggle, has here become instinct.”
[ibid.]

But Jim Morrison was very much a hero, one who struggled to make us see the indestructible power, and pleasure, of life. Thus he admonished us to WAKE UP!!! - arguing that “No eternal reward will forgive us now for wasting the dawn.” He invited us to “take a chance with us [the disciples of the philosopher Dionysus], and meet [him, Jim] at the back of the blue bus.” What is the blue bus? There cannot be any doubt: it is a *police van*. His life's motto was Nietzsche's maxim: “Live dangerously!” [emphasis in original]⁴

On-line postings, such as the example above, are the Community's attempt to analyze Nietzsche's influence on Morrison. Wallace Fowlie, in *Rimbaud and Jim Morrison: The Rebel as Poet* (1994), remarked that one of Morrison's main influences regarding his stage behaviour was inspired by a sentence in Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*, “I do not wish to be a saint; I would rather be a clown” (Fowlie 1993: 62). Another source of Morrison's identification with the Nietzschean clown is from Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The passage, below, from “Image and Meaning in *Also sprach Zarathustra*” provides an analysis of the tightrope walker in *Zarathustra*:

Although the roles of the tightrope walker and Zarathustra differ vastly in degrees of urgency and pervasiveness both figures are metaphorically linked. The tightrope walker, having made danger his calling, perishes in the attempt to cross the abyss extending from the tower of the present to the tower of the future. Emily Hamblen, in an early but perceptive study, interprets the clown who causes the tightrope walker's overthrow as humanity and locates Nietzsche closer to the clown than to Zarathustra (Wolfe 1964: 547).

⁴ “Shiva Dancer,” “Anyone interested in Nietzsche?” *Doors Internet Forum*. 8 February 2006. <http://messageboard.thedoors.com/showthread.php?t=13926&page=2&highlight=Nietzsche>. Accessed 4 June 2008.

Morrison can be thought of as the tightrope walker who falls into the abyss attempting to bridge the present with the future. For Morrison, progress and moving toward the future were of great urgency. As a result of this urgency, Morrison often behaved recklessly. He had profound foresight, but Morrison tended to be blind to possible consequences. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the clown defeats the tight rope walker and both fall into the abyss. It is the “soul of the clown” which causes Morrison’s to “blow it at the most important moments.” Morrison is at once the tightrope walker and the clown; he is the visionary who succumbs to his own recklessness. Morrison’s downfall was aided by humanity, or the American public who both demoralized and degraded him. The clown in the passage has also been interpreted as the state; progress, whether intellectual, moral or spiritual, has always been perceived as a threat by society.

In a 1969 appearance on William F. Buckley’s television show, *Firing Line*, Noam Chomsky spoke of the detachment and passivity of Americans, echoing similar sentiments expressed by Morrison:

W.F.B.: In your book [*American Power and the New Mandarins* (1969)] you say the war [Vietnam] is simply an obscenity; a depraved act by weak and miserable men.

Chomsky: [. . .] Including all of us; including me.

W.F.B: Sure, sure, sure, because you count everybody in the company of the guilty.

Chomsky: I think that’s true in this case [. . .] the terrifying aspect of our society, and other societies, is the equanimity and the detachment with which sane, reasonable, sensible people can observe such events. I think that’s more terrifying the occasional Hitler, Lemay, or other that crops up. These people would not be able to operate were it not for this apathy and equanimity. And, therefore I think, in some sense, it’s the sane and reasonable

and tolerant people who share a very serious burden of guilt, they very easily throw on the shoulders of others who seem more extreme and more violent (Buckley 1969).

Passive subjects who lack autonomy and free will are easy to govern. Apathy and indifference among people toward their government, as well as their own lives, has always existed. The growth of the media in mid-twentieth century, however, saw a rise in the “voyeur,” a passive subject in society, which frightened many people. Chomsky specifies that the everyday citizen, in their apathy and disinterest in the world around them, is more guilty of terror than the occasional totalitarian leader, such as Hitler. Morrison expressed similar views in interviews and his poetry.

A line from Morrison’s poetry reads: “The cleavage of men into actor and spectator is the central fact of our time.”⁵ During a 1970 radio interview, the announcer asked Morrison to clarify what he meant by that line:

I just lament the fact that so many people are content with living a very quiet, well mannered, orderly life when so many obvious injustices are going on and they just seem to ignore it somehow, or not care at all, just let it happen without ever becoming involved, I think that’s sad . . . [the media] is a tool which somnambulizes people into a kind of waking sleep (Thomas 1970).

Morrison’s desire to arouse people from a “waking sleep” was a sentiment articulated in his lyrics, his poetry and the manner in which he lived his life. Morrison, speaking of the overall message in his poetry, said:

⁵ Morrison, 1970, p. 4.

Listen, real poetry doesn't say anything; it just ticks off the possibilities. Opens all doors. You can walk through anyone that suits you. If my poetry aims to achieve anything, it's to deliver people from the limited ways in which they see and feel (Thomas 1970).

The regret Morrison felt for the passivity of humanity, and its limited capacity for vision, was the “underlying attitude” (Geertz 1973) in his approach to life. The Community gathers to celebrate this aspect of Morrison and to share a collective identification with both Jim and the entire Community; “it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects” (Geertz 1973: 127)

ETHOS, ATTITUDE AND BELIEF IN THE DOORS COMMUNITY

It is possible that this study would have been different if I had done research during celebrations of the anniversary of Morrison’s death in Los Angeles. Although the celebrations in Los Angeles are smaller than those in Paris, more Americans would be attendance and the aesthetic feel would be different from that of Paris.⁶ The majority of people from the Doors Community in Paris during the 2007 celebration were European. While some were American, I suggest that they were qualitatively different than the Americans who attend the Los Angeles celebration. The differences between Americans in Los Angeles, and American in Paris are made evident as in the case of Brett from Missouri, mentioned in Chapter Three.

I have indicated that the Doors Community exhibits an ethos reminiscent of Morrison. In Paris, several Community members associate qualities such as passivity,

⁶ The anniversary celebrations in Paris are different not only because of the people who attend, but the “feel” engendered by the city.

hypocrisy and general lack of artistic merit with the United States or with North America as a whole. In many respects, this condemnation of the United States appears illogical; Morrison, after all, was an American. The following is an excerpt, involving Heinrich, from my field notes on July 2, 2007:

When I arrived at the grave there were 10 or 12 people spread around the semi-circular grave front. I saw a flash of turquoise on a man's t-shirt in front of me: Morrison's face, with "The Doors" emblazoned across the top. The man in the t-shirt was talking to a young girl, dressed in mid-80s British punk fashion. I waited until they were finished talking before I eased up beside him. Heinrich, the man in the turquoise Doors shirt, is in his early forties. He is originally from Switzerland, but now living in Thailand. He speaks English well, but is sometimes hard to understand due to his heavy accent. He said that he had been coming to the grave since 1979. He became interested in the Doors through the music, but is intrigued by the intellectual aspects of Morrison. Heinrich thought Jim was brilliant, though grossly misunderstood. He said that visits to the grave peaked in the 1990s, especially 1991, but "[pilgrimage] started to go downhill after that." Heinrich was under the impression that I was trying to write a book about Morrison, "No, no, no, everyone does that" he groaned, "The only good book about Morrison was written in German." The conversation evolved into a tirade about how Heinrich dislikes America because it has no history. I encountered 'American bashing' nearly every day in Paris. I indicated that I was Canadian, but this was often to no avail. I walked down to La Ren with Heinrich, and listened to him speak as he pointed at various graves.

When we arrived at the café, several other members of the Community were sitting at tables along the café front. It was only 12:30 p.m., but the drinking was already well underway. Heinrich knew the other members of the Community, but I got the impression, from Michelle, that he was a marginal member. She thought that he was doing something "sketchy", or possibly slightly illegal in Thailand: "God only knows what he's doing there." Heinrich was curious whenever I took out my Moleskin notebook, leering over my shoulder to read what I was writing. Michelle, irritated with Heinrich, told him to "Back off! It's confidential" several times. Heinrich relented, but he still felt he was entitled to read my field notes.

Listening to people talk at La Ren on July 2, but also throughout the week, I noticed that the Community would often reflect on "the good old days" (1971-1992), when "real fans" could celebrate Morrison any way they wanted. The

construct of a “real fan” was a frequent topic of conversation. “New” and some “American” fans are regarded with hostility. A “new” fan is criticized simply because they are new, while American fans are criticized for the way they celebrate Morrison and the way they think about him. No one elaborated on the way they perceived Americans celebrating, but I guessed that it was related to the “American way”, the result of being a “dumb American.” I found this idea amusing given that Morrison was from America and, to me, very American. I asked Heinrich about Morrison as an American, knowing I would get an interesting response. Heinrich replied “Jim was more European, really.”

The above passage contains several points of significance relating to the way the Doors Community perceives Morrison. Heinrich, as well as other Community members, distance the American Morrison from the European Morrison; one of decidedly greater pedigree. In the eyes of the Community, the European Morrison is more authentic. The Community’s characterization of Morrison as “European” is an attempt to distance him from America, and instill European attributes of class and refinement.⁷ The perception of America both in the Community (and in the city of Paris, generally) is that it is an arrogant nation which acts in its own interests. Americans are lacking in intelligence and any artistic merit.⁸ Morrison, for the Community, is the exact opposite. Subsequently, the Community must renounce any ill-fitting American qualities. Morrison disliked, in his era, what the Community dislikes, now, about America. Embattled in a trial which he saw as violating artistic freedom, Morrison left America under less than ideal conditions. In the eyes of the Community, America killed Jim; like the clown tackled the tightrope walker in Nietzsche; and, as Chomsky argues, the apathy of average citizens is the real terror found in the world.

⁷ A strategic move given that they want to establish Morrison as an intellectual and a poet.

⁸ A recent example of the clash between American and French cultural perceptions of one another can be seen in the film *Two Days in Paris*. 2007. [dir. Julie Delpy].

Distancing Morrison from America, while at the same time, allying him with European attributes is a reflection of the worldview of the Community. Geertz defines worldview as: “[the] cognitive, existential aspects [and a people’s worldview is] their picture of the way things in sheer actuality are, their concept of nature, of self, of society. It contains their most comprehensive ideas of order” (1973: 126-127). Geertz claims the connection between a people’s ethos and their worldview is that

[. . .] the ethos is made intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life implied by the actual state of affairs which the worldview describes, and the worldview is made emotionally acceptable by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs of which such a way of life is an authentic expression (Geertz 1973: 127).

The Community recognizes the qualities of vision, foresight and artistic merit in Morrison. Like Morrison, the Community believes in the importance of enjoying life rather than leading a passive existence. The expression of an ethos, or way of life in the Community, is made possible by the worldview. The Community sees the world through the lens of the struggle between society and the individual and the repression of free will and autonomy. As a result, the ethos, or “the underlying attitude towards themselves and the world” (Geertz 1973) is expressed as a function of the worldview.

The following passages provide examples of how the Community cultivates and protects its ethos and worldview. I indicated in an earlier passage, a discussion I had with Heinrich on July 2, that he was not particularly fond of North America. Despite being a Native ethnographer with an insider affiliation, I became an outsider by virtue of my geographical origins. Heinrich almost felt threatened when I told him I was studying Jim

Morrison, worried that I might write a book. He reassured me that the only good book ever written about Morrison was in German: a European publication amid the hundreds by American authors. Heinrich and other Community members' concerns about me subsided when they realized I was not going to misrepresent Morrison.

Another example which the Community would perceive as contrary to their own worldview occurred at Morrison's grave:

I was sitting in La Ren with Imma and Michelle when realized it was near the cemetery's closing time. I said that I wanted to visit the grave once more before going elsewhere with Community members. When I arrived at Morrison's grave, there was a middle-aged British man, dressed in a tweed blazer. He was standing in front of the barriers with what appeared to be his wife. He seemed really interested in the grave, and in Morrison. He wanted to stay longer, but his wife said, "C'mon. It's not that interesting."

As I stood at the grave watching the couple leave, I felt the comment was reflective of the way people frequently dismiss Jim before taking the time to understand him. It is exactly this attitude that the Community dislikes; people dismiss what they are not capable of understanding. This event was not one witnessed by the Community, rather it was my own observation. My interpretation, however, was the result of spending time with the Community and gaining an understanding of their worldview and ethos.

A final example of the cultivation of the Community's ethos and worldview involves their perception of other "fans." Morrison must be placed in a new contextual frames, by the Community, that distance him from his status as an American rock god and fans are included in this re-organization as well. "Real fans," for the Community, must possess certain criteria: fans must recognize Morrison as a poet, rather than as a

degenerate rock star. New or recent fans are regarded with hostility.⁹ Finally, if you are an American fan, you should try to be more European.

Jim Morrison and American satirist Bill Hicks share many things in common. Both men died at a young age and both died, indirectly, from years of prolonged substance abuse. They expressed distaste for the way Americans live their lives; in a predominantly passive state. However, as much as they hated the American way, they loved America. Morrison and Hicks had an inspiring message, to embrace everything life has to offer, in an independent and autonomous manner.¹⁰ Hicks and Morrison were criticized and censored in the United States for the manner in which they chose to deliver their message which was perceived as offensive. To a large extent, the separation between the Community and the rest of the world is a result of the mentality I have described. Community members desire change, just as Morrison (and Hicks) desired change, but their attitude, and occasionally offensive behaviour, only maintains the status quo.

⁹ I will also add outsiders, in general. The Community is concerned with preserving its boundaries as well as its worldview.

¹⁰ The following is an excerpt from a Bill Hicks stand-up comedy show, *Revelations* (1993), which toured the United States, Canada, and Britain. The excerpt shows Hicks' sentiments about the effect of the state on the individual, sentiments shared by Nietzsche, Chomsky and Morrison: "The world is like a ride at an amusement park. It goes up and down and round and round. It has thrills and chills and it's very brightly coloured and it's very loud and it's fun, for a while. Some people have been on the ride for a long time, and they begin to question: Is this real, or is this just a ride? And other people have remembered, and they come back to us, they say, 'Hey - don't worry, don't be afraid, ever, because, this is just a ride...' But we always kill those good guys who try and tell us that, you ever notice that? And let the demons run amok. Jesus - murdered; Martin Luther King - murdered; Malcolm X - murdered; Gandhi - murdered; John Lennon - murdered; Reagan... wounded. But it doesn't matter because: It's just a ride. And we can change it anytime we want. It's only a choice. No effort, no work, no job, no savings and money. A choice, right now, between fear and love. The eyes of fear want you to put bigger locks on your doors, buy guns, close yourself off. The eyes of love, instead, see all of us as one. Here's what we can do to change the world, right now, to a better ride. Take all that money that we spend on weapons and defences each year and instead spend it feeding and clothing and educating the poor of the world, which it would many times over, not one human being excluded, and we could explore space, together, both inner and outer, forever, in peace" *Revelations*. (1993). [dir. Chris Bould]

Geertz indicates that, “this demonstration of a meaningful relation between the values a people holds and the general order of existence within which it finds itself is an essential element in all religions, however those values or that order be conceived” (1973: 127). I have already described, above, how the values of freedom and autonomy, in particular, are related to “the general order of existence,” or worldview shared by the Doors Community. How this order is given meaning and the origin of the meaning, however, must still be explained. When attempting to understand something, a mechanism often employed is to contrast it with its opposite. Many theorists, including Lévi-Strauss, argue that the human mind has a propensity to construct dichotomies, and then seeks a mythic reconciliation of the dichotomies it differentiates. The archetypal expression of opposing dichotomies with a synthesis is the Hegelian dialectic. German philosopher and sociologist Herbert Marcuse explains the Hegel’s dialectic:

The dialectical process receives its motive power from the pressure to overcome the negativity. Dialectics is a process in a world where the mode of existence of men and things is made up of contradictory relations, so that any particular content can be unfolded only through passing into its opposite. The latter is an integral part of the former, and the whole content is the totality of all contradictory relations implied in it. Logically, the dialectic has its beginning when human understanding finds itself unable to grasp something adequately from its given qualitative or quantitative forms. The given quality or quantity seems to be a ‘negation’ of the thing that possess this quality or quantity (Marcuse 1941: 66-67).

The Western world tends to see the world through a lens of opposites, or opposing forces, where elements are more often conflicting than compatible. For example, a devout Christian adheres to a value system of exclusivity. If something is not “good” according to the church, it is likely “bad.” The Doors Community worldview is given meaning by

contrasting itself with everything they dislike in the world: passivity, lack of autonomy, authority. These antithetical values are associated with the United States.

ETHOS AND WORLDVIEW: THE ROCK ASPECT

One final source of the Doors Community's ethos and worldview, particularly an aesthetic manifestation, is the rock lifestyle. After briefly explaining the history of rock music in America, and how certain themes became associated with rock and roll, I will illustrate how the rock ethos informs the Doors Community.

Rock music grew out of Blues¹¹ in particular, the music of the Mississippi delta region made famous by musicians such as Robert Johnson (Onkey 2002: 204-5). Blues was influenced by voodoo and the Creole culture of the American South (Scaruffi 2003: 63). Themes of black magic, the dark forces, and sensual sins of the body are typical of Blues lyrics (Davis 2003: 129). Elvis Presley, the white face of Black music, delivered these songs to mainstream audiences: middle-class white teenagers (GuralBrett 1995: passim). Rock music in the 1950s and 1960s was regarded with fear by parents, who felt that the moral integrity of society was at risk (by virtue of children listening to the music) (Weinstein 1989: 28). The opposition to rock music, by the older generation, however, only strengthened its association with American youth (Reich 1970: 218). The rise of youth against parental authority, the growing availability of mind-altering drugs, the Civil Rights movement, and the opposition to the Vietnam War were predominant concerns of the time, referred to as the era of the counterculture (Braunstein and Doyle 2002: 36-76).

¹¹ The Blues originates in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. See Davis (2003).

Arnold Wolfe claims that even more than the songs of Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones, “Morrison’s lyrics signified a recognition that an older generation had betrayed its children (the average age of an American GI serving in Vietnam during the late 1960s was nineteen)” (1999: 47). There are a number of different ways counterculture has been defined, but the idea of movement, whether for, or against, something is particularly appropriate (Perone 2004: 1-4). The concept of movement not only captures the array of social activism occurring at the time, but the predominant ethos of the sixties; an ethos that can still be recognized today.

Contemporary rock music continues to evoke the themes of evil, sin and opposition to authority found in its history. These sentiments are embodied in rock music subcultures, such as the Doors Community. In “Notes on the Enduring Popularity of a Signature Doors Song,” Arnold Wolfe argues that one of the reasons “Break On Through” remains popular is the result of:

its lyrics, which thematically appeal to today’s U.S. adult because of their mythic significance and to today’s U.S. adolescent as they appealed to the U.S. adolescent of the 1960s . . . “Break on through to the other side” instantly became and has remained one of the most memorable in popular communication history (1999: 37-38).

People attracted to the music of the Doors, now, hear the same call for freedom. The call for freedom, which Morrison represented in the 1960s, continues to appeal to youth at an iconic level. Morrison provides a mythic charter or model from the past, the 1960s, the paradigmatic era of the counterculture, for today’s opposition to authority and what is perceived as an unjustified war in Iraq.

RITUAL IN THE COMMUNITY

In the following quotation, Geertz describes the “confrontation and mutual confirmation” of ethos and worldview:

On the other [hand], [confrontation and mutual confirmation] supports these received beliefs about the world with a particular structure, as mere common sense given the unalterable shape of reality. On the other, it supports these received belief sentiments as experimental evidence for their truth. Religious symbols formulate a basic congruence between a particular style of life and a specific (if, most often, implicit) metaphysic, and in so doing sustain each with the borrowed authority of the other (Geertz 1973: 90).

The religious symbols in the Doors Community are ones embodied in the rock and roll lifestyle, in particular, the manifestation of the lifestyle as found in Morrison. In Morrison’s life, use of drugs and frequent, careless sex, aside from his enjoyment, was also an expression of resisting authority. For example, Morrison’s actions in Miami (1969), irritating law enforcement and allegedly exposing himself, was the manner in which he enacted a metaphysic of societal resistance. This resistance, as I have discussed in previous chapters, was both repetitive and conscious. In Morrison’s life there was an implicit connection between his beliefs and his actions; such a connection not lost on the Doors Community.

The Doors Community engages in drug use, oppositional behavior, and glorifies indiscreet sex. These activities are seen as a symbolic reflection of what is important to them, just as the youth of the 1960s engaged in these behaviours as a representation of who they were and what they stood against: the established order. In addition to the

moral stance of the Doors Community, the aesthetic aspects of the community's ethos are embodied in their activities and rituals, particularly in the context of Paris. These rituals are a result of the 'sex, drugs and rock and roll' lifestyle to which Morrison adhered. On a broader level, such rituals occur in most rock subcultures, with variation depending on the band or musical group. Use of drugs in the Community is influenced by their identification with Morrison. Morrison's drugs of choice, marijuana, alcohol, and LSD, are also favoured by the Community. Drug use is not always the result of Morrison's influence, but it corresponds to the general ethos and worldview of the Community.

A symbol, for Geertz, is something which stores a "meaning" (1973: 127). Symbols, for the community of people in which they are significant, represent "what is known about the way the world is, the quality of life it supports, and the way one ought to behave while in it" (1973: 127). More than simply a physical reality, Morrison is for the Doors Community a symbol - a symbol which relates "an ontology and a cosmology to an aesthetics and a morality," the power of which comes from its "ability to identify fact with value at the most comprehensive level, to give to what is otherwise merely actual, a comprehensive normative import" (Geertz 1973: 127). In Morrison, the Community sees the confirmation of the way they understand the world.

The following account, which occurred during the early morning hours of July 3, 2007, is reflective of the connection Community members make between commemorating Morrison and drug use:

Around 2 a.m. the Community went to a nearby restaurant to eat. Neither Molly nor I were hungry, and we left shortly after the others ordered drinks. I walked, with Molly, the short distance to Morrison's apartment. We stopped in

front and I asked Molly if she could point out which window was Morrison's, as it was difficult to tell under the construction scaffolding. Molly reflected on previous anniversaries, remembering that "we drank and smoked hash until dawn outside the apartment, sometimes getting into the courtyard [of the apartment]." She had the same bittersweet tone in her voice as other Community members, when they remember times past. We continued walking around Quai d'Anjou and across the Seine behind Notre Dame on Pont de la Tournelle which Molly said was her "favourite view." We kept walking until we reached Notre Dame, the time nearing five a.m., and took separate cabs home.

Molly mentioned that on previous anniversaries, the Community had smoked hash outside of Morrison's apartment. Through the act of smoking a joint, whether outside Morrison's apartment on his anniversary, by a visitor at the grave, or nearly anywhere in Paris commemorating Morrison, an inherent connection between honouring and remembering Morrison is established. In the act of smoking a joint, and the drug's calming and euphoric effects, a deeply personal identification with Morrison is made and a spiritual experience, for a Community member, is induced.

In the following quotation, Geertz describes ethos under the provisos of "dispositions" (Geertz 1973: 95-96):

They shape it by inducing in the worshipper a certain distinctive set of dispositions (tendencies, capacities, propensities, skills, habits, liabilities, pronenesses) which lend a chronic character to the flow of his activity being performed or an occurrence in certain circumstances (Geertz 1973: 95).

To explain the idea that ethos, in this instance, is conceived of not as activity, but as the likelihood of activity taking place under certain circumstances (Geertz 197: 95-96), Geertz provides the example of a man who smokes cigarettes. It is not to be said that "the man is smoking a cigarette now," but rather that, "to be a cigarette-smoker is to be in the

habit of smoking cigarettes” (Geertz 1973: 95). The Doors Community is not continuously engaged in sexual behaviour, use of drugs, and listening to music, but these activities are likely under certain circumstances. These circumstances can be throughout the year, but the anniversary in Paris is a likely occasion. In addition, the activities exemplify a greater meaning, a way of honouring and remembering their idol.

The high point of ritual activity for the Doors Community is the anniversary of Morrison’s death. However, the motivation to use sex, drugs and music in a ritual fashion, particularly in situations such as parties, concerts and celebrations, is engendered in the individual as a result of the communal gatherings of the group.

At rock concerts, excessive drinking, use of drugs and sexual behaviour is considered normative. It is more likely that an individual would be motivated to engage in these activities, in such a context, and that these actions would be welcomed by the group. An individual at a concert may desire and subsequently engage in these activities in order to belong, but generally this is not the case with members of the Doors Community. Community members, though interested in the music of the Doors, travel to Paris primarily to celebrate Morrison. Not only does use of drugs and engaging in sexual behaviour induce euphoric feelings, but drinking alcohol decreases inhibition, making sexual behaviour more likely under such circumstances. The emotions instilled by using substances at the anniversary celebrations create a spiritual experience for many Community members. As the following excerpt from my field notes on the night of July 3, 2007 illustrates, drug use generates a sense of connection with Morrison:

After the concert, I went to Kilty's, where the *Riders on the Storm* dissenters had gathered. Everyone had consumed far too much alcohol; each round of drinks became a different toast to a Doors song. I told Harrison that I had found Brett lying on the washroom floor, again, "People are Strange" Harrison replied holding up his glass.¹² Given the context in which Harrison stated that "People are Strange", I felt the comment was a reflection of just how odd the Doors Community really is. Again, everyone was concerned that I was not having enough to drink. Brigid was shaking her head at my empty hands, which held no drink. Molly, Brigid and I laughed as we told Kiana, Brigid's friend, that "we found [Brigid] wondering around Place de la Bastille last night." "Yeah and where were you?" Brigid inquired of Kiana, with a skeptical tone to her voice." Kiana bent over laughing, "I think I was raping Riley, then." We all laughed, except Molly, who was giving the Killian the evil eye as he leered over me. Molly sang along to the Doors "Universal Mind", playing in the background, "*I was turning keys, I was setting people free.*"

Damon Reading, a fixture of the music business, now working with Ray Manzerak, was talking to Kip on the café front. A few of us went to sidewalk and watched as Damon rolled a blunt, or a large marijuana cigarette, and laced the rolling paper with hash oil. It was almost midnight, and standing in Place de la Bastille, it was only about a five minute walk to Jim's apartment. It was quite and peaceful outside, compared to the carnivalesque atmosphere inside, where the Community drained the bar of its liquor. Damon contemplated cutting the paper, which is customary when smoking a joint, but Kip argued that "Jim lit the paper. That's they way he smoked it." The paper inflamed quickly and burnt down. I watched as Damon took a long drag and exhaled a cloud of smoke, gradually tilting his head back, "Wow!" he said tranquilly, as if to assure the high quality of the drug. The blunt was passed around, ceremoniously, to the people standing outside.

In the above example, the Community uses several references to Morrison to account for their actions. Harrison quotes "People are Strange," the title to a Doors song, when I report that I found Brett sprawled across the bathroom floor. The Community shared a

¹² "People are Strange" appeared on The Doors album *Strange Days* (1967). In an *Allmusic* review, Tom Maginnis claimed that "[the song] is about alienation and being an outsider [and] reflects the group's fascination with the theatrical music of European cabaret," <http://wm02.allmusic.com/cg/amg.dll?p=amg&sql=33:0zftxzq0ldte>. Accessed 6 May 2008.

blunt on the evening of Morrison's death. They consciously smoked it as Morrison did on the anniversary, so as to fuse the connection with him.

So powerful are the rituals of drinking and drug use among the Doors Community, and fans at Morrison's grave, that the Community's ethos and worldview can be said to be "encapsulated" in the performance of these rituals. Bell indicates that "Geertz suggests how the convergence effected in ritual enables one to understand the way in which people regard their religion as 'encapsulated' in specific performances that can be performed for visitors and themselves" (Bell 1992: 30). If a visitor at Morrison's grave were to observe an individual drinking or smoking pot by the side of the grave, the visitor would understand the significance of such a ritual for a group of people. There would be an implicit understanding that these action are being performed "in memoriam."

RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS FUNCTION

I hope it is true that a man can die and yet not only live in others but give them life, and not only life, but that great consciousness of life. Jack Kerouac (1957) *On the Road*.

Kerouac was one of Morrison's favourite authors and a major influence in both his music and life. Morrison, in death, provides members of the Doors Community with a "great consciousness of life." For the Doors Community, and the thousands of pilgrims to his grave, Morrison acts as a model, an example by which to organize their lives. Morrison is an exemplar of Geertz's notion of religious symbols as both "models of" and "models for" (Geertz 1973: 95). Morrison is a "model of" and "model for" members of the Doors Community; shaping the actions and beliefs of members. Through reference to events in

Morrison's life, and to his lyrics and poetry, many members of the Doors Community have come to organize, understand and interpret their life experiences in terms of a framework derived from Morrison. Members of the Community gain comfort from the knowledge that they suffer in similar ways to Morrison, and seek solace in his revolutionary vision. They believe he should be remembered, as a visionary and a poet, not as the degenerate rock star portrayed in Oliver Stone's 1991 film *The Doors*.

In previous chapters I have outlined Morrison's uniqueness as a performer, both in his stage persona and in the structure of Doors songs. Jim has been referred to as a shaman, or as the Dionysus of rock and roll. The Doors saw their concerts as a ritual, in which fans came to be healed by their music. Morrison's grave in Paris has become a place of pilgrimage. The mythos has contributed to the public's fascination with Morrison, solidifying his place in the American collective consciousness. All of the elements that have been discussed thus far in the thesis contribute to the Doors Community's understanding of Morrison as a visionary.

MORRISON AS SPIRITUAL FIGURE FOR THE DOORS COMMUNITY

Sean McCloud (2003) suggests that celebrity fandoms are no more than a "project of the self." McCloud presents the following example:

[. . .] participation [among Grateful Dead fans] is primarily a project of self in which they seek out identity and community. One Deadhead that Sylvan (2002) quotes at length, for example, says in part that "the music made me feel both just free and inspired and more in touch with myself . . . I found myself getting reconnected with myself...it definitely gave me a larger sense of the world and how I fit into it and what I needed to do for myself" (McCloud 2003: 200).

McCloud is reacting against contemporary scholarship in religion and popular culture. The reason so many fans express their devotion in “religious terms,” McCloud suggests, is because “the most serious language they have access to is religious” (2003: 203). McCloud speculates that “whether the language and activities of fans should be thought of as neo-religious or religious still comes down to definitions, methods, and approaches” (2003: 203). Morrison undeniably aids Community members and fans in developing self-identity, but he is more than a “project of the self.” Morrison provides a system of symbols, for, and shared sense of reality, with, the Doors Community. As such, Morrison is an authentic expression of their experience. My basis for a discussion of the Doors Community as “religious” is influenced by Geertz’s notion of religion as a set of symbols. Furthermore, the language the Doors Community uses to express their identification with, and feelings for, Morrison, is religious.

It is evident from fans I met in Paris, and thousands of postings on the Doors Internet forum, that Morrison is a refuge for Community members during times of difficulty. Members seek solace through Morrison’s presence in their lives; many fans ease their own suffering by allying it with Jim’s.

In the following section, narratives of Community members will be used to show how they interpret events in their lives in Morrison-esque frames.

COMMUNITY NARRATIVES

Mireille

Mireille, a Dutch woman in her late thirties with short fiery red hair, traveled to Paris for the anniversary of Morrison's death with another couple from Holland, Kip and Mariella. Mireille has been coming to the grave on the anniversary since 1994. She became interested in the Doors through her husband, who died of cancer in 2001. The death of Mireille's husband occurred on their tenth anniversary, which was surprising, as "no one thought he would live that long." The extra time added to her husband's life, and his death on their tenth anniversary "was destiny" she claimed. The song, "The End," a ballad celebrating the beauty of death, was her husband's favourite *Doors* song. Each time she hears the song, Mireille feels, "very sad," but also "very close to both her husband and Jim."

She named her eldest son "Jim" after Morrison, and her youngest son "Robby," after Doors guitarist Robby Krieger. Mireille was always very forthcoming when I asked her about Morrison's role in her life.

Mireille was visiting Paris without her current partner. He agreed to stay in Holland and look after her sons. "He understands the importance [of the anniversary] for me." They have an agreement that she will be able to travel to Paris every year in order to partake in the celebrations.

Elena and Beatrice

Elena and Beatrice, two middle-aged women from England, traveled to Paris for Morrison's anniversary in July 2007. Both women had been to Paris for the anniversary on previous occasions. As fans of *Riders of the Storm*, they had also traveled throughout Europe to see the tribute band perform in various venues. On the night of July 3, Elena and Beatrice made reservations at Hôtel de Médicis,¹³ in a room where Jim stayed periodically during 1971. On the morning of July 4, Elena and Beatrice told the hotel manager, Shayne Nelson, about their night in Jim's room. Shortly after, Mr. Nelson took Elena and Beatrice to the Jardin du Luxembourg to film their account of their encounter with Jim. In excerpts taken from the video, Elena and Beatrice, describe Morrison's presence in the hotel room:

Beatrice: Initially when we walked in, during the day time, we both felt a presence, felt something really strong . . . in the room. We went to the concert, came back to the room and lit three tea lights . . . put them onto a table, put a picture of Jim behind them, put the light out, sat on the bed with a glass of wine and two of the candles began to reflect against the opposite wall. The other [candle] wasn't there, but we weren't concerned about it, we were just amazed at what we were actually seeing. And as we stared at the wall, I started to see images of Jim between the two candles. Different images, totally. I knew, I knew it was Jim. I knew it was . . . we weren't drunk, we weren't [stoned] . . . This carried on for about five minutes.

Mr. Nelson: Were the images of Jim clear?

Beatrice: They weren't clear, but they were definitely there. The more I concentrated, and stared, and felt that there was definitely something going

¹³ Hôtel de Médicis (214 rue Saint Jacques) was closed on January 10, 2008. The hotel, built in 1780, is scheduled to be demolished. In the 18th and 19th century, it was primarily a place for pilgrims en route to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. Since the 1960s, traveling students are attracted by the economical rate per room. The owner of the hotel claims to have the cheapest rooms in the Latin Quarter. Shayne Nelson. <http://www.jimsroom.com>. Accessed 6 June 2008.

on, I just started to get images of Jim. They were different ones, there were about five [or] six. I don't know, I can't say anymore because I'm too emotional about it.

[The camera turns to Elena, who confirms the story]: Yes, there were two images when there should have been three [due to the third candle] I thought this was strange and I got up to move the candles so the other images would come up, and everything disappeared and it never came back. The room was so calm and peaceful and there was definitely something strange going on. I'm not given to stories, but it was strange and lovely, it really, really was.^{14 15}

After I watched the video I e-mailed Elena to ask about some the feelings and sensations described in the video. Her response to my inquiry is found below:

You asked about emotions/feelings from Jim's room. Without sounding too strange, we both felt similar sensations. Feelings and emotions of spiritual bonding with Jim, deep love, warmth, elation and a pure sense of comfort, closeness and belonging (to Jim) - so intense that the tears quietly flowed. Feels good to even think about it!! Others before us had written tiny messages on the walls - nothing ugly or big enough to upset the hotel management! So, of course, I had to write what immediately came up for me as I felt those emotions. "Would I die for you Jim - Yes, I would." I wrote it in tiny letters just above Jim's headboard!!

Bet you think we are mad now! However, over the last probably 10 years, the effect of Jim Morrison and the music has dominated my life. My ex partner was a good bit younger than me and was his [Jim's] double - we lasted 10 years. (He didn't resemble him towards the end!) As I told you, the inspiration of reading many, many books about The Doors and Jim sent me off on a belated trail to the Open University for a Degree. Another 18 months to go! I have now been to Paris 4 times, first time as a teenager, once many years ago

¹⁴ Shayne Nelson, "Two Women Share a Vision in Jim Morrison's Room," Video Recording, *YouTube*, 4 July 2007. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYsuuzSpvIg>.

¹⁵ The following is an excerpt from an e-mail Elena sent to me on August 4th 2007. Some of the correspondence has been omitted, but she suggested I look at the video posted on *YouTube* [which I have just described] detailing her odd experience on the night of July 3: "We had a very strange and wonderful night in 'Jim's Room', so strange, in fact, that you would probably consider us to have lost the plot on reality . . . That aside, the things that happened that night were real. We were sober and I don't smoke (anything!). Anyway, see for yourself" Elena Collins, "no subject," e-mail message to Katie Riddell, 4 August 2007.

with my ex Jim look-a-like and twice recently with Beatrice - the last three times purely to go to Jim's grave. In fact, most of our traveling involves Doors concerts all over U.K. or Wild Child concerts.¹⁶

Elena's religious background is similar to that of a number a Doors Community members. She indicated that she had "dabbled in a number of different [religious and spiritual movements]" in her life. In line with Morrison's and the Doors Community's worldview, she commented that she disliked institutional religion because, "there's no room for objection or disagreement in institutions like the [Church]. How do you grow as a person when you don't know what else the world has to offer?" Following a description of their experience in the hotel room, Elena and Beatrice described what happened to a picture of Morrison that was in the room during the encounter:

Elena: This picture was behind the candles and it was far enough away that there's absolutely no way it would heat up. There was just a part of the picture there [pointing to the place on the picture] about a half an inch long; it was wet. It was almost like a tear rolling down. That sounds bizarre, I know, but we both saw that [the camera turns to Beatrice who confirms the story]. And then it disappeared, but the mark is still there.¹⁷

In *Visionaries* (1996) William Christian Jr. accounts for the possibilities behind interpretation of apparitions, and why people report visions or apparitions. His work focuses on visions in Spain, but some of the descriptions of visions provided by Christian are similar to that of Elena and Beatrice.¹⁸ Christian suggests that seers construct

¹⁶ Elena Collins, "Jim - What else!!," e-mail message to Katie Riddell, 14 August 2007.

¹⁷ "After the vision, a picture of Jim Morrison weeps," 4 July 2004.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvfTZXXVqeUA&feature=related>. Accessed 6 June 2008.

¹⁸ Christian (1996) approaches "vision states . . . on the whole as 'genuine,' that is, not a product of conscious deceit or what people normally consider illness" (1996: 299).

accounts of their visions in appropriate or culturally-established frameworks (1996: passim). In *Moving Crucifixes in Modern Spain*, Christian describes the various interpretations attributed to the perceived movements of the statue of the Christ of Limpias in early twentieth century Spain. Several publications in newspapers, journals and books, by both clergy and lay people, outline the various actions associated with the crucifix, one of which was shedding tears of blood. Christian indicates that “all of these writers interpreted the movements of the Christ of Limpias in terms of their own social, devotional, or political agendas” (1992: 109). Elena and Beatrice are probably not making a political statement, but their claim suggests that they interpreted what happened to the photo in light of their worldview. It is also possible that Elena and Beatrice sought to explain the overwhelming emotion they feel for Jim Morrison in the context of the powerful Christian experiences of apparitions and seeing statues shed tears.

DEATH IN THE DOORS COMMUNITY

Imma told me about a man who had died during the celebration for Morrison’s birthday on December 8 2006. The Community was dancing at a concert put on by a French Doors cover band, *Les Poors*. The man fell, suddenly, on the dance floor, and died. The next day, Imma placed a picture of him on Morrison’s grave with a written caption, “Angels dance and Angels die,” the title of a book written about Morrison and Pamela Courson.¹⁹ The man’s death, which occurred while dancing to Doors music, was interpreted by some Community members as a sign of Morrison’s supernatural presence.

¹⁹ Butler, Patricia & Jerry Hopkins. 2001. *Angels Dance & Angels Die: The Tragic Romance of Pamela & Jim Morrison*. New York: Omnibus Press.

Similar stories were told about a girl who committed suicide a few years earlier on Rue de Repos, the street leading to the side entrance of Père Lachaise, close to Morrison's grave. Another man had died in Café la Renaissance. Some people claimed that there might have been a suicide pact at the time. Killian, a tall thin, thirty-something man from Ireland noted that "La Ren" was in the same district in Paris, 75007, as the Elektra distribution number of the album *Morrison Hotel*: "You know the one where Jim is smirking on the cover?" I got the impression that Killian thought the whole phenomenon was amusing to Morrison.

According to Ellen Badone, in *The Appointed Hour: Death, Worldview and Social Change in Brittany*, people seek "a structure of significance" through which to interpret tragic deaths in a manner which provides meaning in their lives (1989: 324). Although Badone writes of supernatural phenomena in Brittany, the quest for a "structure of significance" in order to understand death is analogous to the experience of the Doors Community. The otherwise senseless death of a man, while dancing, was given meaning by connecting it to the supernatural presence of Morrison. Such a connection was particularly significant as the man's death occurred during the celebration of Morrison's birthday in Paris.

The suicide and death of two individuals on Rue de Repos, and in Café la Renaissance, respectively, were also placed, by the Community, in "a structure of significance" relating to Morrison. However, these deaths were not seen in the same context as the death of Imma's friend on the dance floor. The deaths on, or near, Rue de Repos were seen as ominous and sinister in nature. Killian indicated that "La Ren" was

in the same district in Paris, 75007, as the Elektra distribution number of the Doors' album, *Morrison Hotel*. Although not a focus of this thesis, Morrison has been associated with the occult on numerous occasions.²⁰ Morrison has been seen by many as a medium of dark forces. He has been accused by some Christian groups as being “an instrument of the devil,” allying Morrison with individuals such as Satanist Aleister Crowley.²¹ Hopkins and Sugerman (1980) and Oliver Stone (1991) exaggerated the occult aspect of Morrison. Killian's comment that “Jim would find the whole phenomenon amusing” could be interpreted as the result of such an influence. When I asked Killian if he was implying “the occult connection,” he smiled, but would not confirm.

Another interpretation of the relationship between Morrison and the deaths on Rue de Repos reflects the association Community members make between Paris and Morrison's destiny. Popular biographies claim that Morrison went to Paris knowing he would die. Oliver Stone referred to Morrison's flight to Paris as “fulfilling a death wish.”²² Attributing the death of Morrison, and deaths in the Doors Community, to “destiny,” aids Community members in coping with otherwise senseless deaths.²³ For

²⁰ For example, a Google search, such as “Jim Morrison + the Occult,” will produce hundreds of websites making such a connection. Some examples are: Thomas Lyttle, “Jim Morrison & the Occult,” 12 September 2004. http://www.illuminati-news.com/art-and-mc/jim_morrison_index.htm. Accessed 7 June 2008. Delia Morgan, “The Cult of the Lizard King,” <http://home.earthlink.net/~delia5/pagan/jmlk/cult-lizardking.htm>. Accessed 2 June 2008. Donald Phau “The Satanic Roots of Rock.” <http://www.av1611.org/othpubls/roots.html>. Accessed 27 May 2008.

²¹ Joseph Schimmel. 2007. *Goodfight: Because There's More to Music Than Meets the Ear*. http://www.goodfight.org/a_jimmorrisonaddressed.html. Accessed 18 May 2008.

²² *The Doors*. Film Supplement “The Road to Excess,” 1991. DVD. Written and directed by Oliver Stone. Santa Monica: Lionsgate.

²³ In line with Ellen Badone's (1989) claim about destiny in Brittany, the Doors Community would assume a similar position: “It is possible to suggest, modifying slightly Maurine Bloch's (1977) ideas about time and ritual discourse, that Bretons subscribe to notions of destiny in certain contexts but assume a nonfatalistic perspective in others. Beliefs about destiny thus would be relatively unimportant in everyday

Doors fans, Paris is a liminal city. Paris is liminal not only because most people in the Community “suspend” their everyday lives to visit the city, but being in Paris on the anniversary is a surreal experience. For the Doors Community, beliefs about destiny and the deaths of members would be stronger when the deaths occurred in the context of Paris.²⁴ This is not to say that ideas about a connection to, or the supernatural influence of, Morrison, are insignificant at other times, or in other places; rather the connection is simply stronger in Paris

In an on-line blog, the following individual describes his thoughts on Morrison’s death while visiting the grave:

“The only thing that interests me is rebellion, disorder, chaos and any senseless activity” said Morrison. The rebellious, the disordered and the chaotic are pale shadows over Jim Morrison's tombstone at Père-Lachaise. Stronger is the sense of senselessness: the senselessness of a great talent's death and the empty sorrow left in his place. His death may have been preordained or inevitable. Morrison was too volatile a star to shine peacefully. Morrison once described religion as a “bunch of bullshit.” Yet in the searching faces, the tears and the candles gathered about his tomb in Père-Lachaise, Jim Morrison has become an alternative

patterns of behaviour, whereas in or after crisis situations involving tragedy or death they would become prominent” (1989: 325).

²⁴ As an illustration of another Community member who placed events in his life in a Morrison-esque “structure of significance,” Vieran, the restaurant owner mentioned in Chapter Three, related his story involving Morrison’s role in his life: Vieran told me how he came to France from Romania and how he came to own the restaurant across from Morrison’s apartment. Due to his unusual French accent, I found Vieran very difficult to understand. His story was complicated, and sometimes difficult to follow. He would not allow me to record any of our conversations because he wanted to write a book himself. In various aspects of his life, the numbers 3 and 6 kept recurring over and over again. For example, he once received a letter from Robby Krieger, of the Doors, mailed from the United States. It arrived in Vieran’s mailbox on July 3. Numbers 3 and 6 are significant, as the date of Morrison’s death is on the third and July is the sixth month of the calendar year. Vieran told me that these numbers kept repeating in his life, and they brought him good luck and secured his destiny. Vieran did not tell his story to me about the significance of the numbers as a mere sideline. To him, Morrison had secured his destiny.

religion, his bible a collection of music that never loses its relevance nor its appeal.²⁵

The fan used a quotation, from Morrison, to describe what he and others are feeling when at the grave. The belief in the senselessness of the world has, perhaps ironically, united fans in an “alternative religion.

GENDER IN THE DOORS COMMUNITY

The aesthetic identification with Morrison was similar in men and women, but manifested in different ways. The most noticeable element was in dress and behaviour. Killian, a man from Dublin in his mid-thirties, dressed in black leather, with silver studded accents and steel-tipped boots. Whether Killian dressed this way intentionally, the Community interpreted his dress as a means of identification with Morrison. In dressing this way, it was possible that Killian felt closer to Morrison; however, it is more likely that he wanted to be perceived as Morrison. This self-identification of Killian, with Morrison, was supported by his obnoxious behaviour.

Mireille said that the Community had been at a restaurant, the previous year, when Killian began spraying everyone seated at the table with condiment bottles. The Community was furious with Killian as their personal belongings were covered in stains. Unfazed, Killian responded, “If Jim did it, you’d all think it was funny.” Mireille indicated that Killian often used this justification for “acting like a jerk.” Killian is

²⁵ Mark Godfrey. “The Demons of Père-Lachaise.” Online: <http://www.cluas.com/music/features/jim-morrison.htm>. This article was first published on CLUAS in May 2003 1999-2008 www.CLUAS.com & individual writers as indicated per byline. Website created & maintained by Eoghan O'Neill. Accessed 1 June 2008.

extraordinarily bright, but I found him difficult to speak with because of his frequent intoxication. Killian's love of drinking was another factor which contributed to his self-perception as Morrison. The Community was out drinking at Kilty's on July 2 when Killian asked why I was not drinking more. Running out of justifications, I said that I was "conscious of calories." "Well then, just don't eat, like I do," was his response.

Another way Killian mimics Morrison is through the number of women he attempts to seduce. Molly noticed that I was tiring of Killian's sexual advances, and pulling him closer, she started to open his pants. Peering down, she said, "We knew you had a small [penis]" as if to symbolically divest him of his manhood. The insult was effective; Killian left me alone the rest evening. However, I felt sorry for Killian, as his desire to be perceived as Morrison was one he could not quite achieve.

Men in the Community tend to identify more than women with the intellectual aspects of Morrison, as previously mentioned. Since Morrison was intelligent, they also want to be intelligent. Morrison, too, is representative of the rebel. His ability to capture the mysterious allure of the rebel, while at the same time being intelligent and well-spoken, demonstrates his ability to unite two traits which are normally seen as incompatible: social deviance and intelligence.²⁶

Women in rock subcultures, in general, are attracted by the image of the bad boy. Many women want to experience the "[phallic] power" and "prowess" of rock musicians that the music, visual iconography and gendered performance reinforce (Fast 2001:

²⁶ By "social deviance," I do not imply "pathological deviance," which can occur in highly intelligent individuals.

164).²⁷ Susan Fast, in *The Houses of the Holy: Led Zeppelin and the Power of Rock Music*, indicates that positive gendered experiences in rock music, on the part of women, are not often reported. The most significant reason is that hard rock music, or “cock-rock”²⁸ as it is often called, is written about, both critically and academically, by men (Fast 2001: 160). As a result, women’s experience is often generalized or is overlooked all together (Fast 2001: 160). Another reason, suggests Fast, is that “the idea that women do not generally enjoy sex or that, even if they do, it is not very polite to acknowledge it is still entrenched in our culture [and] enforced in the discourse on hard rock . . . [or that these women are conceived of] as ‘loose’ or ‘slutty’”(Fast 2001: 185).

Fast does not overlook the chauvinist aspects of rock music; rather she encourages the notion that rock music can be a source of empowerment for many women. Reversing author Laura Mulvey’s theory of the “male gaze,” where “in mainstream film the women is put on display for the visual pleasure of the male viewer,” Fast writes:

And just as Mulvey, in *The Female Gaze*, argues that the act of males gazing at female screen stares as erotic objects is empowering, so I would argue that it is empowering for female fans to gaze at male rock stars—that, in fact, the female fans know they experience control over the way in which rock stars dress and act in order for them to attract women and also that their gaze on these men offers them an opportunity to explore and express something about their sexuality (Fast 2001: 187).²⁹

²⁷ Fast (2001) revealed that she “came to identify with Robert Plant partly because I was in awe of his abilities as a singer (as an aspiring singer myself) and partly because I was sexually attracted to him. I am not sure that the two can be separated” (Fast 2001: 169).

²⁸ Simon Frith, in “Rock and Sexuality” (1990) defines “Cock-rock” as “music making in which performance is an explicit, crude, and often aggressive expression of male sexuality--it’s the style of rock presentation that links a rock and roller like Elvis Presley to rock stars like Mick Jagger, Roger Daltrey and Robert Plant” (1990: 372). “Rock is cock,” is a “catch-phrase” used by mostly male members of the Doors Community.

²⁹ Fast (2001) states that “Tori Amos has made the latter point several times with respect to her attraction to make rock stars and, particular, to Robert Plant” (2001: 187). In a 1994 interview, Amos said

It must be acknowledge that it is the women's gendered experience of the male musician that is empowering. The male image, in rock music, however, is socially constructed, and in some ways a manipulation of feminine desires. The idea of the "unattainable male," (Fast 2001) rock musician is appealing for many women; women can experience their fantasies vicariously through the music, and by observing stage performances.

Alternatively, women in rock subcultures revel in their "exploitation" and submission to male power.

Fast, through participant surveys, reports that many fans commented on Jimmy Page's "mastery" over his guitar and described his guitar solos as, "better than sex," or said that "He's having sex with his guitar and the audience," and that his solos resemble an "Electric prolonged orgasm" (Fast 2001: 177). All of these comments were made by women and express the idea of women's desire for, or repulsion toward, mastery by men and their music. In addition women "who identified most closely with Page cited his interest in the occult or mysticism" (Fast 2001: 179). This identification is found among women in the Doors Community, who are more likely to emphasize the spiritual aspects of Morrison, than men. In particular Maggie McGee, Mireille, Elena, Michelle, and many others, emphasize this facet of their relationship with Jim.

Males in the Doors Community identify with Morrison through dress and behaviour, as well as through emphasizing the importance of intelligence. One example

that: "I'd be five years old, lying on my bed, with the afghan over me, squeezing my legs together and thinking, 'Something should go here one day.' I wanted to runaway with all those guys, with Zeppelin and Jim Morrison and John Lennon. I [recently] told Robert Plant that I really wanted to pack my peanut butter and jelly and teddy and my trolls and come find him . . . Actually, Zeppelin didn't happen until I was nine or ten, when I started to bleed, so it was totally perfect was all ready for Robert (Doerschuk 1994: 36).

comes from a conversation with Uncle Max. While I was talking to Mireille, a tall well-built German man in his early twenties introduced himself as “Uncle Max.” He is a university student, in Germany, and expressed an interest in Morrison’s poetry. He said that he loved Canada and was fond of Algonquin Park. We started talking about literature and I mentioned that William Faulkner was one of my favourite authors. Suddenly, he was interested in anything I had to say. Intellectual exchange, particularly about topics such as philosophy and literature, is a type of currency in the Community. Intelligence and “thinking against the grain” are important marks of membership, and, for males especially, status. The Doors attract intellectual types in general, but those who are perceived to have greater intellect and insight are held in higher regard.

CONCLUSIONS

The stories of Mireille and Elena and Beatrice are revelatory of how Morrison is a “model of” and a “model for” their lives. To introduce the concept of how symbols can act as models, Geertz provides the example of a beaver building a dam:

To build a dam a beaver needs only an appropriate site and the proper materials-his mode of procedure is shaped by his physiology. But man, whose genes are silent on the building trades, needs also a conception of what it is to build a dam, a conception he can get only from some symbolic source (1973: 93).

Geertz uses this example to introduce a discussion of “cultural patterns” as models for people’s conceptions of reality. A cultural pattern is a “set of symbols whose relations to one another ‘model’ relations among entities” (1973: 93). Cultural patterns, or models,

“have an intrinsic double aspect: they give meaning, that is, objective conceptual form, to social and psychological reality both by shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves” (1973: 93). To be a “model of” something implies the “manipulation of symbolic structures so as to bring them, more or less closely, parallel with the pre-established non-symbolic system”; to be a “model for” something entails “the manipulation of the non-symbolic system in terms of relationships expressed in the symbolic . . . here the theory is a model under whose guidance physical relationships are organized: it is a model *for* ‘reality’ ” [emphasis in original] (Geertz 1973: 93). Symbolic systems, unlike their nonsymbolic counterparts, are both “models of” and “model for” (Geertz 1973: 93). For Mireille, Morrison’s untimely death provides a model through which she interprets the death of her own husband. Just as Morrison did not experience a “good death,” nor did Mireille’s husband. Mireille specifies an intrinsic connection between Jim and her husband; each time she hears “The End” Mireille feels, “very sad,” but also “very close to both her husband and Jim.” Morrison serves as a “model of and for” Mireille’s life. The importance of Morrison to her is reflected in the fact that she named her sons “Jim” and “Robby.”

Elena and Beatrice interpreted their spiritual experience in Hôtel de Medicis as a result of Morrison being a “model of,” and a “model for,” their lives. The spiritual undertone was strengthened by the occurrence of the event in Jim’s room,³⁰ on the night of the anniversary of his death. Elena, in a subsequent e-mail, acknowledged that, “over the last ten years, the effect of Jim Morrison and the [Doors] music has dominated my

³⁰ Hôtel de Medicis has undergone relatively little change since 1971. As a result, Elena interpreted the experience as particularly authentic.

life.” She referred to her former partner as “Jim’s double.” When I first met Elena, she told me that it was Jim’s influence which inspired her to return to university to pursue a degree. Morrison is a “model of” in that Elena’s life experiences are given meaning through an ethos and worldview shared with Morrison. Morrison is a “model for” Elena’s life in that her life is organized in line with the worldview Morrison provides, which she sees as an “authentic expression” (Geertz 1973: 95) of reality.

Those whose interpretive framework or cultural pattern is not “dominated” by Morrison would not react to a spouse’s death, or an eerie occurrence in a hotel room, in the same manner as Community members. However, Mireille, Elena and other Community members organize reality in light of their ethos and worldview and the symbolism provided by Jim Morrison. Akin to an understanding of how “a dam works by developing a theory of hydraulics” Morrison is the model whose “blueprint” provides the Community with the sense of a meaningful connection between persons, events and places.

In Chapter Four, on myth, I discussed how central values of a society become distributed, among institutions and in charismatic figures, such as Jim Morrison. The values which Morrison exalts, are those embraced by Americans, generally, and the Doors Community, most strongly.

For a community of people, Morrison symbolizes what they see as an authentic expression of universal traits. Morrison exists, for Community members, in a liminal zone between humanity and the divine realm. In *Saints and their Virtues* (1987) Hawley views saints as liminal figures, following Victor Turner’s notion of liminality. In *The*

Ritual Process (1969) Turner suggests “liminal figures who both belong to ordinarily structured social reality sharply contest the boundaries (and narrow limits and injustices) of social structure by evoking a large, more inclusive, undifferentiated sense of community” (Hawley 1987: 212). Doors fans express a sense of *communitas* with other fans, as well as with the spirit of Morrison. When fans return to their everyday lives from gatherings such as the commemoration of the anniversary of Morrison’s death in Paris, their conceptions of reality have been reaffirmed and they maintain contact with one another and continue to view Morrison as a “model for” their lives.

Significant numbers of people I encountered during fieldwork placed Morrison in a central role in their lives. “Jim is with me all the time,” Mireille said, “Everyone here [meaning the Community] would say the same.” The 2007 *Tribute in Motion* poster displays Morrison crucified on a cross, and superimposed onto the Eiffel Tower. Lines from Morrison’s poetry surround his image, along with Community sentiments such as “Will you die for me?” and “Born to suffer” [Appendix D]. Morrison’s “crucifixion,” from the point of view of the Community, is a result of society’s failure to accept his vision. As a corollary, Morrison is a martyr for “the cause” among those who share his worldview.

CHAPTER SIX:

CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis, I discuss events in the life and death of Jim Morrison and their contribution to his place as a spiritual figure in the Doors Community. Chapter Two provides relevant historical information about Morrison. Chapter Three, on pilgrimage to his grave, and Four, on the Morrison myth, describe two phenomena that occurred after Jim's death. The "central values" (Chapter Four) embodied in Morrison are in congruity with an understanding of pilgrimage to his grave. As a result of the importance of the values manifest in Morrison and his message, pilgrimage to his grave provides visitors with a multitude of different meanings and experiences.

The appeal of visiting Morrison's grave and the myth surrounding him is significant because it is representative of something America holds as "sacred" (Prothero 2004). I have outlined the association between Morrison and values emblematic of the 1960s: freedom, opposition to authority, and passivity. These values inform the ethos and worldview of the Doors Community. It is not by accident that the commemorative event(s) in the Doors Community are called *Tribute in Motion*. The spirit of the counterculture¹ is present among Community members in Paris. Morrison, "the most archetypal of all decadent rock stars" (Clark 2001: 198) emphasized "taking it as it comes,"² or having a good time, which is also embraced by the Doors Community.

¹ Earlier, I defined counterculture as the "movement for, or against, something" (Perone 2004).

² Complete lyrics to "Taking it as it Comes" *The Doors* (1967): Time to live/Time to lie/Time to laugh/Time to die/Take it easy, baby/Take it as it comes/Don't move too fast/If you want your love to

Morrison acts as both a “model of,” and “model for” the Doors Community, a symbol which lends meaning and coherence to Community members’ lives. “Religious symbols,” writes Geertz, “provide . . . a definition to their [a community’s] emotions which enables them, morosely or joyfully, grimly or cavalierly, to endure it [generally, their world]” (1973: 71). The narratives of Community members, in particular, those of Mireille, Elena and Beatrice, and Imma, are revelatory of Morrison as a source of solace in their lives.

There are three, final, elements I would like expand upon. The first relates to the circumstances under which Jim Morrison became the focus of a myth. The second point concerns pilgrimage to his grave. As a concluding remark, I will contemplate “why fans won’t let Jim die.”

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CELEBRITY DIES UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS?

From the year of his death, 1971, to the present, Morrison has undergone a metamorphosis in the collective imagination. Chapter Four, on myth, outlined factors that contribute to the development of an icon, but the “process of myth” is still very much a mystery. Why Morrison, and not others? One criterion, a high level of public interest in the individual prior to their death, is nearly always necessary if a celebrity is to be considered “myth material.” Morrison died in a distant place, at a relatively young age, and under unknown circumstances. Further, the only person who may know the “real”

last/Oh, you’ve been movin much too fast/Time to walk/Time to run/Time to aim your arrows/At the sun/Takes it easy, baby/Take it as it comes/Don’t move too fast/If you want your love to last/Oh, you’ve been movin much too fast/Go real slow/You like it more and more/Take it as it comes/Specialize in havin fun/Takes it easy, baby/Take it as it comes/Don’t move too fast/If you want your love to last/Oh, you’ve been movin much too fast/Movin much too fast/Movin much too fast.

story, Pamela Courson, went insane (after Jim's death) and died three years later. These variables contribute to the creation of an American icon. Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe, and James Dean are all comparable examples.

It is important to remember that the phenomenon of celebrities transcending death and fulfilling new roles, while not new, is amplified by the media. The twentieth century is the first century to be documented on film; a century in which world events could be witnessed in our living rooms. Prothero's (2004) notion of "celebrity [as] the new sainthood" is possible because the lives of stars are captured on film and their images embedded in the collective imagination.

Not everyone becomes material for myth. Keith Moon, of *The Who*, died in 1978 at age 32. Moon is arguably the best drummer in the history of rock music and his party antics are legendary. Moon's death, however, did not generate the same public interest as the death of Jim Morrison. One possibility for this difference is that Moon's death is not as much of a mystery.³ In addition, the lack of a myth surrounding Moon could be attributed to the absence of an influential "message" of lasting value attached to him. Despite Moon's talent as a drummer and his charismatic personality, he did not have quite the same complexity and substance as Morrison. Biographies have been written about Moon, but they did not have the same response evoked by Hopkins and Sugarman (1980) and Stone (1991).

³ Fletcher (2000) indicates that on September 6, 1978, Moon dined with Paul and Linda McCartney. Moon, with his girlfriend, returned to a flat in Curzon Place, London (near Shepherd Market). It was here that Moon died of an overdose of Clomethiazole (Heminevrin), a medication prescribed to aid his withdrawal from alcohol addiction. The police investigation revealed that there were approximately 32 pills in his system, 26 of which were undissolved. Moon died in the room in which Cass Elliot of *The Mamas & the Papas* had died four years earlier.

At this point in time, concerning Morrison, it is difficult to separate myth from reality, or perception from fact. The Doors Community believes that they understand the “real” Morrison; however, beliefs held by others, even American tourists in Paris, are equally valid in the eyes of an “outside” observer. Currently, it is only possible to present Morrison’s case as accurately as possible, even if this approach leaves more questions than answers. Pamela Des Barres, a one time companion of Jim Morrison and author of *I’m With the Band* (1987), claims that “Jim has been mythologized to such a huge degree that no one is ever going to know who the heck he was.”⁴

SHRINE OF A ROCK STAR, OR OF A MARTYR *WITH* A CAUSE?

Although it is not always easy to distinguish between tourists and fans, Morrison’s grave is able to accommodate the tourist, by revealing the resting location of a rock star, and Doors fans, by providing a space where they can mourn their hero and leave him offerings. Morrison’s grave has qualities of both “sacred” and “secular” pilgrimage sites. The grave of Jim Morrison shares many qualities with other sites of “secular” pilgrimage, such as the crash site of Steven Prefontaine, the memorial for Princess Diana, or the mosaic in Central Park for John Lennon. Like Strawberry Fields and Graceland, Morrison’s grave is also a site of American cultural religious heritage, despite its location in Paris. Morrison’s grave, however, also contains a number of features shared with traditional, or institutional, pilgrimage shrines. My study supports Ian Reader’s

⁴ Pamela Des Barres. *The Doors*. Film Supplement “The Road to Excess.” 1991. DVD. Written and directed by Oliver Stone. Santa Monica: Lionsgate.

conclusion that the categorical division between the “secular” and the “religious” in definitions of pilgrimage “is not ultimately a viable frame of reference” (1993: 16).

WE WANT THE WORLD AND WE WANT IT . . . NOW. NOW? NOW!

Jim Morrison, in life, death, pilgrimage, myth, and as a symbol for a Community of people, has become an “alternative religion.” If a celebrity has experienced “life after death,” it is likely that this individual characterizes a value, or message, worthy of continued representation. In many cases, dead celebrity cults surround someone whose life was lived “too fast,” or “on the edge.” Nietzsche, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, indicated that, “Though the favourites of the gods die young, they also live eternally in the company of the gods.” This quotation is the opening segment of *No One Here Gets Out Alive* (Hopkins and Sugerman 1980). Morrison was once quoted as saying: “I see myself as a huge fiery comet, a shooting star. Everyone stops, points up and gasps “Oh look at that!” Then -- whoosh and I'm gone . . . and they'll never see anything like it ever again . . . and they won't be able to forget me -- ever.” In an updated forward, Sugerman (1995) wrote, “Cancel my subscription to the resurrection,’ [Jim] sang. Not likely, Jim, This is not the end.” Ironically, it seems that those who spend the least amount of time on earth, whose existence is fleeting, are remembered the most. Why the premature death of a star ignites such interest in the public realm is worthy of further consideration.

Morrison is a product of his environment. In the Western world, the crucifixion of Christ is a cultural point of reference. The image, or the idea of crucifixion, is used as an exemplar not only within its institutional domain. For example, several quotations

throughout this thesis have directly, or indirectly, alluded to Morrison as crucified (or resurrected). At Morrison's grave in Père-Lachaise, fans leave notes asking Jim to "Come back!" Some people claim Morrison is still alive, while others testify that his ghost haunts a motel on the Sunset Strip,⁵ and the Shakespeare and Company bookstore. The Doors Community depicts Morrison crucified on cross and surrounded by words which condemn society for his death. Michael Ross (1991) once wrote, "If ever a rock star was capable of resurrection, it was Jim Morrison."⁶ Morrison died, but was reborn to provide a "structure of significance" framing the lives of his legions of fans.

⁵ The Alta Cienega Motel, located in West Hollywood, California, is reportedly haunted by the ghost of Jim Morrison. The motel is Morrison's last known Los Angeles address. Jim stayed in Room 32. For further information see: Brett Meisner, "24 Hours in Hell," Television feature on the FOX Network. Originally aired in 2006. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoiUa3OSbZg>. Accessed 17 June 2008.

Brett Meisner. "The Ghost of Jim Morrison appears in a graveside photo of Brett," Rock and Roll Bad Boy. http://www.rockandrollbadboy.com/hollywood_diaries/ghost_of_jim_morrison. Accessed 17 June 2008.

⁶ Michael E. Ross. "Rockin' With Nietzsche," *New York Times*. March 24, 1991. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D0CEFD8113EF937A15750C0A967958260>. Accessed 9 June 2008.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TO ALL DOORS FANS, BOARDS MEMBERS AND MODERATORS

Here is a personal message to all of you from Ray Manzarek, John Densmore and Robby Krieger:

When we first envisioned the creation of The Doors Message Boards we had a purpose in mind --- to foster a place for Doors fans from all over the world to come, be part of a community, and contribute to the legacy of The Doors, as well as provide a safe haven that offered support, understanding and a common, shared purpose: Love of The Doors, Jim Morrison, his poetry, our music, and everything The Doors stand for as a group. We have watched with concern as the message boards have been usurped in their purpose and, through the negativity of several members, have devolved into hate, recrimination and plain old mean-spiritedness. This is no longer a community we can support.

As The Doors, we have had personal disagreements with each other, and we have differing feelings and opinions regarding several issues that are important to us. However, we also have well over thirty years of history with each other and have had, many times over our decades together, differing viewpoints on important issues. This has never stopped us from stating our views, both personally and as Doors members – and it has never stopped us from working together towards our one common goal: the support, concern, and fostering of THE DOORS as a band.

Yes, we have each been guilty of some of the same things we see happening on the boards. Yes, we have each stumbled and sometimes said things in anger that we later regretted. We are not saints, and we are not asking you to be, either. However, The Doors are bigger than any of us individually, and we are all committed to bringing the legacy, the principles we believe in as a band, and the music of The Doors forward for the next generations to come. We have, sometimes with great difficulty and inner turmoil, put our personal feelings aside in order to cooperate in this endeavor. Now we are asking each of you to do the same.

We have decided to make some changes to our message boards. Many of you have strong opinions on issues that are important to you. We encourage you to express your opinions, but to do so IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF LOVE AND SUPPORT, contributing to a positive, uplifting environment where all Doors fans can come. We are not interested in supporting an environment where participants are called names, ridiculed, or viciously attacked, whether the target be any one of you, us, our management team, our advisors or anyone else.

To help in this endeavor, effective immediately we are moving the ROTS board, and all

individual member and member project threads, off of The Doors Message Boards and onto each member's own website. You may go to these individual websites to discuss your opinions about ROTS, Tribaljazz, The Butts Band, The Robby Krieger Band, and other issues not related to The Doors as a whole. However, none of us will tolerate rude behavior on our individual sites, either. We are not interested in anyone coming here to ridicule any one of us, or any of you, for any reason. If you want to do that, find another forum – it's a free country and a wide world, but here on The Doors Message Boards and on our individual boards, it will not be tolerated.

We have instructed our manager, Jeff Jampol, to watch over the boards, and to permanently ban any member making incendiary or name-calling attacks in their posts. His word will be final and irrevocable. If you disagree with anything that is going on, or with an individual band member's stance on an issue, we are not censoring you – you are free to speak your mind, in a positive, uplifting, contributory way.

Don't forget, we have been brothers-in-arms for well over three decades, and none of us is willing to let outsiders or fans come between us, even though we may have attacked each other in the past. That is sometimes - sadly - what brothers do. Yes, there have been a lot of hurt feelings among us, angry sentiments, even bitter infighting that may take a long time to heal – if ever. But we all stand together when it comes to The Doors, and the legacy we wish to leave behind, and we will close ranks to defend against any attacks from outside our inner circle, no matter who the target – or the attacker - may be.

If you wish to go sound off and attack The Doors – or any one of us - feel free to do so, but not on The Doors Message Boards, which we finance and make available to you as a service. We do, however, look forward to continuing to facilitate the spirited discussions among our fans, and even our critics, that we have come to appreciate. Just leave the personal animosities, name-calling, accusations and viciousness at home. Or write to your congressperson!

“A MESSAGE FROM THE DOORS,” *The Official Doors Forum*. 25 October 2005.

[http://messageboard.thedoors.com/showthread.php?t=12288&highlight=to+all+doors+fans%2C+board+members.](http://messageboard.thedoors.com/showthread.php?t=12288&highlight=to+all+doors+fans%2C+board+members)

APPENDIX B

The Young Lion

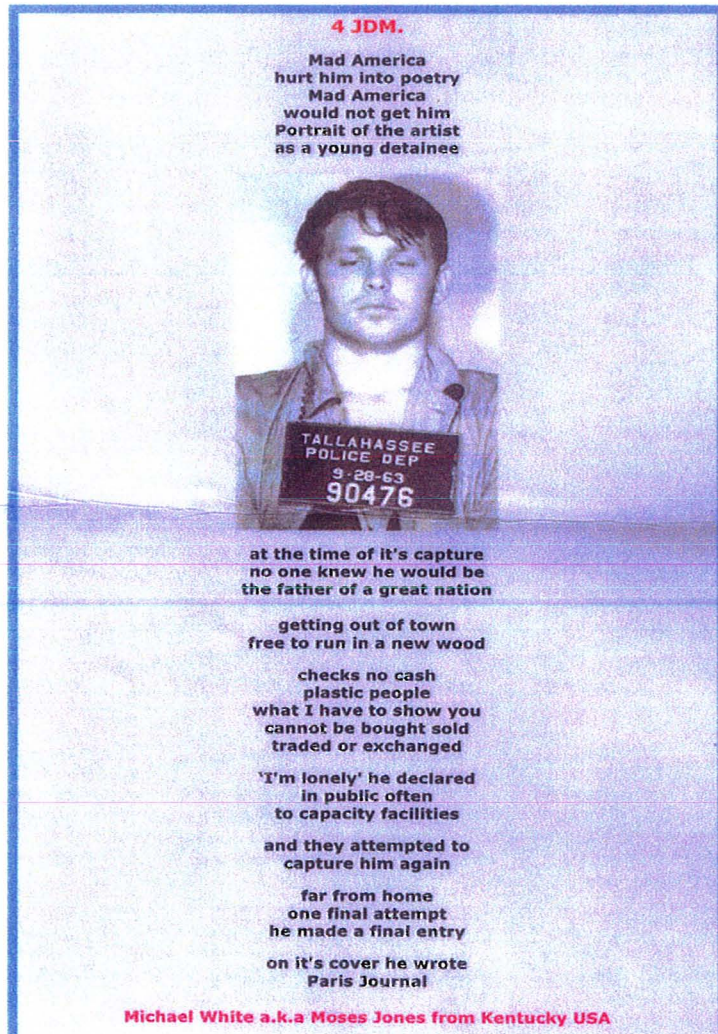


Brodsky, Joel, photographer. "The Young Lion." Photograph. City: *Elektra Records*, c1968. From the *Best of The Doors* 1985 album cover.

<http://www.google.com/musicl?lid=nQJWUeLRasF&aid=vyUEqWLJiJ>.

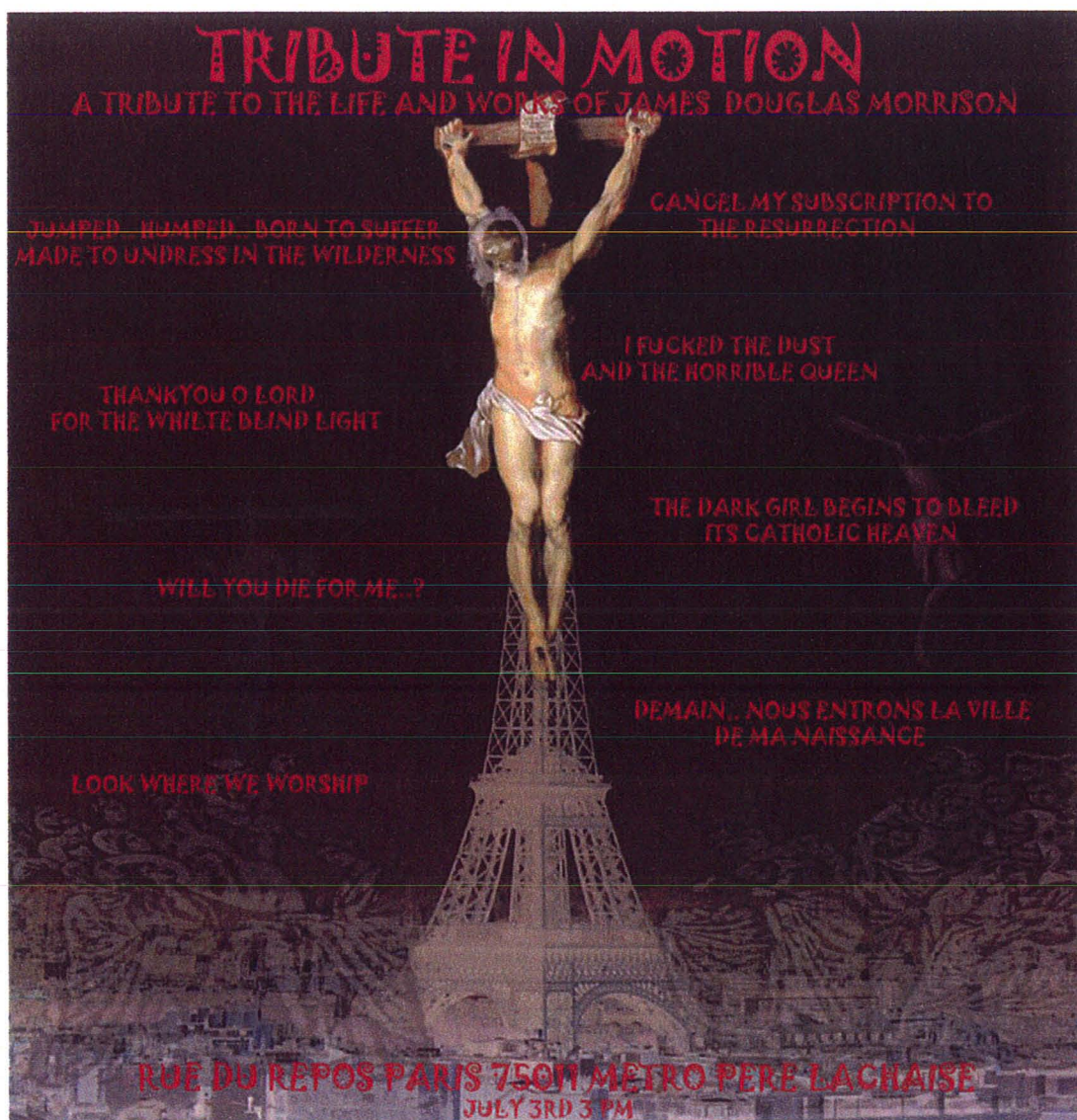
APPENDIX C

Fan offering at the grave: “Mad America”



APPENDIX D

Tribute in Motion 2007 Promotion Poster



Killian "Tribute in Motion: A Tribute to the Life and Work of James Douglas Morrison." 2007. Poster. From the *Paris Journal*.

<http://www.timparistalk.proboards99.com/index.cgi?board=tribby&action=display&thread=509>.

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