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"Turn mirrors to the wall" : James Douglas Morrison and 1960s Dissent

Mark Alan Vanstone

**Submitted to the University of Wales in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree
of Doctor of Philosophy**

University of Wales Swansea

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Contents

| Chapter | Page No. |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Introduction | iii |
| 1. The Fifties and the Sixties | 1 |
| 2. Romanticism and Pre-Raphaelitism | 34 |
| 3. Politics | 63 |
| 4. Fashion | 101 |
| 5. Sex | 142 |
| 6. Myth | 169 |
| 7. The Miami Incident | 225 |
| 8. Conclusion | 275 |
| Bibliography | 281 |

“Turn mirrors to the wall” : James Douglas Morrison and 1960s Dissent

Introduction

Firstly it is important to note the reason for using cultural materialism as a theory underlying the thesis. While the thesis does include many diverse interdisciplinary ideas and covers a range of topics as part of the comparison between rock music, intellectual thought, politics and culture of the 1960s, there is usually a materialist backdrop.

Jonathan Dollimore offers a virtual definition of cultural materialism in his book

Radical Tragedy :

Materialist criticism relates both the literary canon and changing interpretations of it to the cultural formations which produce(d) them, and which those interpretations in turn reproduce, or help to change. In the process it attends to non-canonical texts and offers different conceptions of (for instance) human identity, cultural, social and historical process, as well as the activity of criticism itself. Such an approach is premised on the belief that behind every substantial literary-critical disagreement can be found a substantial cultural and political difference rooted in the society of its time.¹

Dollimore and Sinfield add in their introduction to *Political Shakespeare* :

a combination of historical context, theoretical method, political commitment and textual analysis offers the strongest challenge [to traditional conservative practice] and has already contributed substantial work. Historical context undermines the transcendent significance traditionally accorded to the literary text and allows us to recover its histories; theoretical method detaches the text from immanent criticism which seeks only to reproduce it in its own terms; socialist and feminist commitment confronts the conservative categories in which most criticism has hitherto been conducted; textual analysis locates the critique of traditional approaches where it cannot be ignored. We call this ‘cultural materialism.’ ”²

Works of art cannot be looked at in isolation from the historical background within which they are created. This does not only apply to “classical” texts.

Dollimore and Sinfield make a distinction between two uses of the term “culture”. The first is the analytic sense “which is used in the social sciences and especially anthropology : it seeks to describe the whole system of significations by which a society or a section of it understands itself and its relations with the world.” The second is the “evaluative” use of the word common in arts and literature when “to be ‘cultured’ is to be the possessor of superior

¹ Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, p. xv.

² Dollimore and Sinfield, *Political Shakespeare : Essays in Cultural Materialism*, p.viii.

values and a refined sensibility, both of which are manifested through a positive and fulfilling engagement with ‘good’ literature, art, music and so on.” Cultural Materialism is concerned with the analytic use of the term and it “includes work on the cultures of subordinate and marginalised groups like schoolchildren and skinheads, and on forms like television and popular music and fiction.”³ This is certainly not to deny the fact that art can in fact challenge standard discourses of the day - cultural materialism - “sets out to judge *the degree to which* the drama *was or was not* complicit with the powers of the state” and the idea is that, for example, “certain of Shakespeare’s plays demystified and hence challenged state power.”⁴ Finally, cultural materialism “does not, like much established literary criticism, attempt to mystify its perspective as the natural, obvious or right interpretation of an allegedly given fact. On the contrary, it registers its commitment to the transformation of a social order which exploits people on grounds of race, gender and class.”⁵ Much historical material will be used in this thesis - looking at how the Fifties “produced” the Sixties, looking at what was occurring in universities from 1968 to 1970, and other instances of dissent. Always culture will be looked at in relation to its environment.

It will be seen that shamanism had a key influence on Morrison’s idea that a crowd could be taught how to think, and to escape from their surroundings by means of action beyond words; and that central to this was a link back to days before consumer culture dictated the confines of performance. An introductory background section will explore the influence of New Age beliefs, and how this ethos connected with the drug culture. There will be a focus on the lyrics of the Doors and the poetry of Jim Morrison - a key influence being the Apollonian / Dionysian distinction made by Friedrich Nietzsche in *Birth of Tragedy*. This will be compared to other music in the 1960s. Other Morrison influences will be examined,

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Sinfield, *Faultlines*, p.9.

⁵ Dollimore and Sinfield, *op. cit.*, p. viii.

in so far as they pertain to myth and religion and the concept of the “outsider” artist. Joseph Campbell, James George Frazer and Theodore Roszak will also be consulted for their ideas on the role of the artist in the community. Selected theorists such as Leon Surette and Roland Barthes as well as writers / poets such as Jack Kerouac and Gary Snyder will be looked at carefully for more insights into the role of mythology and religion. Greek religion will be looked at in depth, and in particular the god Dionysos - representing drunkenness and revelry along with a consideration of the Native Americans.

Rather than simply looking at music in general, this thesis also looks at an important figure within the 60s, although he is not generally thought of as a subject for intellectual enquiry. This thesis therefore specifically looks at the poetry and songs of Jim Morrison, singer of the group known as The Doors. Morrison is interesting not just because he was degree-educated with a measured high-school IQ of 149, but also because he was well-read and attempted to bring his ideas to the concert arena. He said in an interview : “I didn’t start out to be a member of a band ... I wanted to make films, write plays, books. When I found myself in a band, I wanted to bring some of these ideas into it.”⁶ Norman Brown, Colin Wilson, Friedrich Nietzsche, Joseph Campbell, Antonin Artaud, the Beats, James Joyce (his English teacher in senior year felt that Morrison was the only one in the class to have read and understood *Ulysses*⁷) and myriad Greek philosophers were all favourites of Morrison. The wall of his dorm room at University was reputedly lined with books, and he acted in plays such as Harold Pinter’s *The Dumb Waiter*.⁸ Keith Carlson, who was at Florida State University with Morrison (before the latter moved to UCLA) comments that Morrison’s spontaneous improvisation started long before he had a large audience : “Jim was interesting to work with. Every night waiting for the curtain to go up, I had no idea what he was going to

⁶ Riordan and Prochnicky, *Break on Through*, p.159.

⁷ Hopkins and Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, pp .17-18.

⁸ Butler, *The Tragic Romance of Pamela and Jim Morrison*, p.37. This book is seriously flawed as a work, but it is a safe assumption that Carlson (see next n.) is quoted accurately. A photograph of Morrison in “The Dumbwaiter” is included.

do. He played scenes and delivered lines with an inflection that seemed totally unmotivated, or at least unexpected. There was a constant current of apprehension, a feeling that things were on the brink of lost control.”⁹ Indeed it was Morrison’s director Sam Kilman who introduced him to Antonin Artaud.¹⁰

These same techniques of improvisation would be a defining characteristic of the Doors concert. Certain songs contained extensive additions and rarely was a song performed exactly the same way twice. It was as if Morrison became bored with the concert format itself. At the Roundhouse theatre concert in 1968 he got off the stage and offered the microphone to the audience. He screamed at high volume on some songs, remaining motionless and silent during portions of the others. During concerts with low turnout Morrison would berate and criticise the audience. There was a clear use of shamanistic ritual in his concerts, and above all a sense of confusion that Morrison induced in the audience. Riordan and Prochnicky states : “Onstage ... he would shout incoherently one moment and stand silently clutching the microphone stand the next. Often he would close his eyes and pause for long periods of time, milking the moment. Morrison had learnt that stopping gets an audience’s attention even faster than shouting and tended to pause whenever he felt he was losing his grip on them. Sometimes he would drop lifelessly to the ground as if suddenly struck down by all the gathered voltage in the mountains of amplifiers around them.”¹¹

These were not just “cute” playful techniques. A show in Long Beach, NY on Jun 17 1967 lasted about two minutes - Morrison at the very beginning of the show “places the microphone in his mouth and begins to create ‘unearthly sounds’ until the other members help him off stage.”¹² On Oct 22 1967 after screaming a version of the song “The End” Morrison stumbled, fell in front of an amplifier and began to cry quietly. The other band

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Hopkins and Sugerman, *op. cit.*, p.40.

¹¹ Riordan and Prochnicky, *op. cit.*, p.159.

¹² Shaw, *The Doors on the Road*, p.45.

members walked off stage in disgust and Morrison, after stretching out his arms toward the amplifier, left the stage “without a wave or a smile.” Contemporary journalist, Jim Bettinger commented : “Paranoia, incest, death and fate are a few of the things that got people freaked Saturday night.; they are implicit on the albums, but they are explicit in person. In some ways they are like a Gothic horror story. Not the kind of story that depends on plastic monsters for effect, but the kind that depends on terror and alienation to produce an emotional experience. With the light show provided by Dry Paint, not one of the senses was left empty to sensation.”¹³

On May 10 1968 Morrison actively encouraged the audience to move past the police barricades : “Pulling out all the stops, he begins to provoke the audience until he succeeds in generating a near riot... As the house lights come on one fan in the balcony deliberately takes a swan dive into the roving crowd below, miraculously landing uninjured. Immediately following this incident, the audience lunges toward the stage but is effectively held back by a reinforced police barricade and the assistance of the Doors’ road crew. There is an odd quietness that permeates these proceedings, as if the audience has been hypnotised to advance on the stage with minimal noise. Once turned back they patiently wait to see if there will be an additional encore, before finally heading toward the exits.”¹⁴

There are numerous other instances of crowd reaction to what Morrison was singing - such as Aug 2 1968 at the Singer Bowl, Flushing Meadows, Queens, NY, when again the crowd rushed the stage collectively. - actually forcing the band to abandon the stage. The Who singer Pete Townsend wrote the song “Sally Simpson” after he was fascinated by Morrison’s “aloof and mystifying demeanour” in the face of intensifying chaos.¹⁵ Whatever

¹³op. cit., p.73.

¹⁴op. cit., p.106.

¹⁵Dave Marsh in op.cit., p.120.

was happening this was not a *show* for the audience. Morrison was actively trying to make the audience uneasy.

It is often assumed that music was part of an exploitation of youth idealism in the sixties. This thesis will not look at all bands of the 1960s - to do so would take the space of many theses. The Doors will be looked at in particular as an example of an interesting approach worthy of study, but with reference to general ideas about music. Other bands (for example the Jimi Hendrix Experience) will be looked at occasionally in so far as they seem to be relevant to this argument. It is necessary to establish to what extent Morrison was part of the movement, or whether he was secretly pursuing his own bourgeois individualism. In the following chapters Morrison's use of Artaud and the influence that The Living Theatre had on him will be explored, along with a discussion of what happened in Miami in 1969. The Living Theatre were also influenced by Artaud and by Bertold Brecht. Also Morrison's shamanism and the importance of paganism when religion is often linked to power examined. The positive role that sexuality played in his performance and the invalidity of the arguments concerning spectacle and fascist control when performance is coupled with theories of *participation* theatre will become clear. Romanticism and Pre-Raphaelitism will be examined as having elements of what became rock music. It shall be seen that Morrison's attempt to motivate audience toward action is a function of *performance*, as opposed to the passivity of reading. There will be a connection made with increased action by free festival radicals at festivals - tearing down fences or making roads impassable, losing ticket sales. Many of the big festivals suffered financial troubles as a result - the Rolling Stones cannot have performed for free at Hyde Park without some feeling that this was necessary in those times of revolt. This fits uneasily within the music business - there were no further Woodstock (until the very different concerts in the 1990s) or further Isle of Wight festivals. This should not be ignored, it should be explained.

A note on the thesis title. The subtitle at the beginning comes from a quote from Morrison's poetry book (actually two volumes) - *The Lords and the New Creatures*. A fuller excerpt is : "Door of passage to the other side / The soul frees itself in stride / Turn mirrors to the wall / in the house of the new dead."¹⁶ This symbolises Morrison's idea of enabling audience to break free of their chains by actively criticising the world around them, *their* ideas included. This is a constant state of revolution, which does not change society and then stop. Rather, it continuously criticises itself, which has been lacking in revolutions throughout history. Including "Rock music" in the title of the thesis reflects the fact that although this thesis does concentrate on Morrison there must also be a discussion of rock music generally - it will not therefore be merely a matter of studying Morrison and his observations. Theories and observations that seem applicable to (Morrison's) music will be cited, whether or not Morrison's own comments show that he was aware of them. Morrison's audience would be fitting The Doors within the background of other bands of the 1960s - and will probably also be aware of the political events of the time (youth being particularly politicised at this time). Therefore all three of these need to be considered, and this thesis will explore to what extent they overlap.

The prosperity of the 1950s was not enough to produce satisfaction - monetary and military superiority was not enough to provide youth with what might be termed spiritual or moral security - indeed with the advent of the Vietnam War their very lives would be sacrificed in the interests of the state, and of the dominance of the military and its related economic interests. The powerlessness of youth in society was represented in the music that they heard, providing it authenticity. Cultural materialism clearly calls for a look at the society which produced rock culture and why radicalism was present in that society. Rock

¹⁶Morrison, *The Lords and the New Creatures*, [*The Lords*], p.33. Note that in this work "The Lords" and "The New Creatures" sections are page numbered separately, hence the subtitle in square brackets.

music was itself a business, but one which had an extraordinary connection with young people at a time when they were obviously radical. It would be a very large assumption indeed to assert that there was no connection. The key point of this thesis therefore is to analyse different examples of art having a radical effect on its audience, comparisons are being made between different types of audience reaction to performance. The suggestion is that it is more than a coincidence when radicalism is occurring simultaneously with radical art. It is merely a question of the method of reaching an audience, with Morrison focusing on enabling his audience, rather than telling them how to think in some sort of fascist sense. Jonathan Dollimore quotes J.W. Lever's seminal answer to the question of relevance : "In the present day world, alienated by poverty and affluence, dehumanised by state bureaucracies, and military machines, the most urgent study of mankind would seem to be not the human condition, but the prospect of survival in the face of impersonal power drives."¹⁷ As part of any cultural materialist study of a key 1960s singer, it is essential to have a background of what his audiences were experiencing - what youth concerns were and the way they were expressing them, along with a consideration of the festival itself, and, as much as space allows, a consideration of other musicians. Cultural materialism, perhaps more than any other model, is concerned with contexts.

Note on my definition of "Sixties". It is obvious that as a decade the 1960s did not end on December 31st 1969 - cultural decades usually do not fit chronological time. It is not unusual for anthologists to define their own decade based on behaviour, and how culture changes in the early 1970s - Marwick defines the 1960s as between 1958 and 1974.¹⁸

Beginning date : protest songs have roots earlier than the decade. Both Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger were active in the 1960s - the former in the 1930s and the latter in 1946.

"Guthrie's songs often subtly reflected the poverty-stricken 'other America' he had personally

¹⁷Lever, *The Tragedy of State*, p.1, in Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, p. xix.

¹⁸Marwick spends some time discussing this. Marwick, *The Sixties*, esp. pp. 1-22 and passim.

experienced.”¹⁹ Events relevant to counterculture however, and therefore to the forms of radicalism dealt with in this thesis, may be said to have originated in 1965 with the advent of Psychedelic Music (The Byrds' “Eight Miles High”) - also when Timothy Leary advocated the use of LSD. In this year The Doors formed as a musical group. End date : 1973 saw the end of the Vietnam War and protest movements fragmented (in 1970 two influential rock performers - Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix both died, and in 1971 Jim Morrison of The Doors died).

Some of the sources used in this thesis (though by no means all) are popular music books and Internet sites. Until the academic community provides more *specific* discussion material on the Doors and their place in (musical) history, in the form of critical texts, articles, etc. (and there are signs that this oversight may be *starting* to be corrected²⁰), this must necessarily be the principal means of reference for the musical history aspects of this discussion. Biographies of Morrison are populist in nature - no academic *biographies* exist, only brief summaries - but they need to be used for the detail that they provide on Morrison's life and career, and certain other sources do not have academic equivalents also, such as Greg Shaw's *Doors on the Road*, an in-depth study of Doors concerts. In instances such as these there is simply no alternative but to use popular sources. A great deal of work has been done to locate theses, articles and papers that deal with The Doors in detail (a specialist in any field has to look to detailed sources not general anthologies or articles) - all those that I have been able to locate have been used. On specific festivals, either generally or specifically, hardly any detailed academic comment exists (not including page length or short summaries

¹⁹Leon Borden Blair (ed.), *Essays on Radicalism in Postwar America*, p.8

²⁰Academics doing recent *and specific* work on the Doors include Tony Magistrale of the University of Vermont, David Pichaske of the University of Chicago (*Poetry of Rock, Generation in Motion*), John Rocco of Queen's College CUNY (editor of *The Doors Companion*), and Yasue Kuwahara of Northern Kentucky University, among others. All are cited in this thesis. Suzanne O'Hop has written an important PhD thesis on Morrison (see Bibliography) that has been of great use. Doug Sundling wrote a dissertation on Morrison's poetry - this could not be tracked down, but his lyric analysis book *Doors : Artistic Vision* has been helpful.

of Woodstock and Altamont, for instance). Considerable work needs to be done for rock music research to be on a parallel with, for example, English literature. Consequently I have felt constrained to use certain populist sources to gain additional information. It seems that there are wider philosophical questions here about what constitutes truth, and whether *all* sources should be evaluated, academic or not. There is academic precedence for using populist sources, Suzanne O'Hop in her PhD thesis on Morrison (see Bibliography for details), also has to rely on similar sources (the Hopkins and Sugerma biography for example). There is a selection of interviews quoted here from populist sources. There is a need to quote directly from Morrison since this was his chosen means of communicating his ideas apart from lyrics. There is no suggestion that these are inaccurate in any way and some of them are available (though sometimes in bootleg form) in audio originals and even, in the case of the WNET-TV Critique interview, by referring to a videotape / DVD which includes the entire 1969 TV special and confirms Jerry Hopkins's written text.²¹

It should be noted also that in order to be careful about misrepresentation and simplistic overviews I have considered it important to quote writers directly rather than attempting to paraphrase them. This seems the only way to quell charges that could be made against the sometimes surprising viewpoints contained in this thesis - making sure that these are the actual words of those I have chosen to refer to.

Chapter summary

We shall see in the first chapter how there was little opposition to the status quo in Fifties US society - one that is consumerist, militaristic and strictly capitalist. A cultural materialist outlook then, involves a look at what means were pursued as an opposition to this in the 1950s (mainly the Beats) and thereafter in the 1960s - how this was expressed in the form of art. We can then reach conclusions about what message this gives to an audience in the

²¹ Interview and selected tracks from this original show appear on *The Soft Parade* videotape, the entire programme appears (apparently uncut) in a recent release - *The Doors : Soundstage Performances* DVD.

1960s. This chapter provides crucial context then which is needed in any cultural materialist analysis of the 1960s or the singers / poets that were produced in this context. Young people who would make up audiences such as Morrison's would have been very conscious of this shift and of the events that were taking place at the same time as the music was being performed. The Romanticism chapter provides a look at drugs and whether Morrison could be compared with the Romantics, and also the Pre-Raphaelites which have been suggested as having specific connection with Morrison.²² The Fashion chapter looks at theoretical perspectives, and a key change in Morrison's image after 1969 - how he seems to have come to distrust his sexual persona and taken tangible steps to change it. The Sexuality chapter takes a look at how puritanical attitudes to sex were reversed in the 60s - sexual pleasure being allowed to be expressed in both art and life, a range of writers are used to help explain this shift. Politics looks at Native America, shamanism and other religions which again are clear contexts behind many of Morrison's performances. The Miami incident is a key chapter which looks at a shift in Morrison's career after watching, acting with, and even saving from financial collapse, the radical theatre troupe The Living Theatre. However as an experiment in crowd empowerment (as he saw it), it did not live up to Morrison's expectations and seemed to sour a political outlook which fascinated Morrison - one which was genuinely confrontational and which did not rely on (fascist) leadership. The Politics chapter brings us back to the cultural materialist background to the 60s, looking at O'Hop's connection between Bakhtin and Morrison. Morrison's politics though not part of overtly political self-promotion (in a time when it was clearly fashionable to do so) was more concerned with quietly emoting sentiments through lyric and poetry - providing a very good reason for looking at the background within which lyrics would be viewed.

²²Suzanne O'Hop, *Translation of Art into Revolution*, PhD thesis.

The Fifties and the Sixties

This chapter will set a context for the discussion of music in the Sixties by looking at the decade that preceded it. A detailed consideration of the 1950s is essential in order to understand what contributed to the build-up of tension that resulted in the following decade's expression of human communality, partly in a musical form. This will also link to some specific discussion of Jim Morrison, lead singer of the Doors - a key figure in the music of the time. The focus of this chapter however will be to understand why the Sixties happened at all, using the cultural materialist emphasis on contexts. Popular culture will be looked at and the issue of whether we should take its particular form of critique seriously. The Beats will be looked at as an very rare expression of voice amongst widespread conformity and will be placed within the context of the life of Jim Morrison. These events would therefore have been uppermost in the minds of audiences of Sixties bands, since youth was political in a way that was unthinkable halfway into the 1970s. It shall be seen that, despite its place within capitalism, there is a difference between music which inspires a protest at society and that which, *unwittingly or otherwise*, inspires conformity with the (powerful) hegemony, and this is apparent when we consider the confrontation with the crowd often engendered by Jim Morrison.

Alan Sinfield has analysed the 1950s in cultural materialist terms : "The very success of US capitalism was producing embarrassment : just those entrepreneurial values that were supposed to secure freedom turned out to be devoted not, after all, to Shakespeare, but to profit, and US people were sliding back to savagery."¹ He has identified and explained what he terms "middle-class dissidence", a form "cultivated distinctively and most powerfully by a fraction of the bourgeoisie that has found itself, in diverse ways, hostile to the hegemony of the principal part of that class - the businessmen, industrialists and empire builders."² This

¹ Sinfield, *Faultlines : Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading*, p.275.

² *ibid.*

could well be used to solve the problem of rock music being a business, but *simultaneously* encouraging and providing the entertainment backdrop for, protest. He continues :

The sense that US power might be not a blessing to the world but a burden did not have to wait for Vietnam ... The thought already haunted ex-left, Cold War intellectuals from the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs (why were two necessary?), through the Korean War and military operations in Iran, Lebanon, Dominica, Guatemala and Cuba. As with the expulsion of Europeans from their empires, it seems that the United States is not wanted, that its culture is not after all superior, that it behaves as badly as the people it wants to make free.³

Of course this latter thought would be uppermost in the minds of radicals after Vietnam and with Watergate in the 1970s. Being against US materialism was not simply about childish rebellion, but a simple reaction to consumerist values, and a growing guilt, among all classes, concerning their dissemination in a rich, though stratified, society. Sinfield uses a quote from Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* : "Is it because we're so rich and the rest of the world's so poor and we just don't care if they are? ... Is that why we're hated so much?"⁴ While it could be said that America was prosperous and liberal in the 1950s (especially for specific groups - mainly whites from rich families), there should be a critique of this, especially in the light of such issues as civil rights, Vietnam and later on Watergate, to say nothing of the abuses and pre-occupations that an avowedly capitalist, consumerist and militaristic society usually creates by its very nature.

According to Simon During in *The Cultural Studies Reader* : "young people living in the aftermath of World War II found that they had no real control over the events of their lives. They experienced feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness. The government actually tried to find ways to produce conforming or docile citizens."⁵ And as Grossman states (quoted in O'Hop), life "as lived by one's parents and organised by the Nixons and Rockefellers was little more than an institutionalised and legalised system for the exploitation of the weak, the young and the different."⁶ Again there is a connection between personal and political

³ *ibid.*, p.281.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ During in O'Hop, *Translation of Art into Revolution*, 1997 PhD thesis, p.41.

⁶ Grossman, *Social History of Rock Music*, in *ibid.*

5

oppression - an awareness that one can be linked to the other when considering the “enslavement” of citizens to the larger conceptions of “reality”. Political actions to counter this would become more intense in the decade following - and even seem to threaten establishment concerns (such as at major festivals - also a metaphor for what was occurring elsewhere), as shall be seen later. Civil rights was (and still is) an important issue and it shall be treated separately in a later chapter.⁷ The forces in the 1950s that would lead to the utilisation of music in a general mood of dissent in or around the following decade need to be looked at.

Jim Morrison of the Doors grew up in the Fifties and according to Riordan and Prochnicky, recognised the stifling effect of much of the ideology of the time :

The kids of the baby boom were doomed to drab conformity, a somewhat plastic existence. The trim front lawn, church on Sundays, flag on holidays, keep up with the Joneses lifestyle all translated into a complacent hum for young Jim Morrison. There had to be more than the crew cut mentality which dominated all realms of life from religion to music to sex. America was at peace with the confident bliss that arose out of World War II. America had the bomb. The economy was booming and most people’s goal was a split-level house with a Cadillac in the driveway. Most kids wanted to be Mouseketeers, and Howdy Doody and Mickey Mouse were their heroes. Morrison hungered for something deeper and saw that just beneath the surface of the fifties façade festered physical abuse, psychological tyranny, racism and other horrors. But the apple-pie wholesome world Jim Morrison grew up in was emotionally void, repressive and predicable - everything he decided not to be.⁸

A specific type of idealism based on materialism was at the heart of society in the 1950s and went virtually unchallenged by the majority of society. The American people wanted to believe that a nation that was victorious in the war (the mainland not physically scarred by any enemy action) and that boasted a booming economy, was the model society. As for Jim Morrison, later singer of the Doors, a *specific* incident also left a mark upon him. His father, Steve Morrison, then a captain in the Navy, reportedly asked his son if he’d like to “go fishing”. When Jim agreed and joined his father at Norfolk pier a launch was waiting for the both of them and took the both of them to an aircraft carrier. Though awestruck by the casual power his father commanded - Jim barely saw him give the order to set sail even though only

⁷ see Politics chapter.

⁸ Riordan and Prochnicky, *Break on Through*, p.32.

he had the authority to give it - the atmosphere changed when the captain suggested that Jim should have “a little target practice” :

Moments later the six marines escorted them to the rear of the carrier where perhaps two hundred more soldiers were shooting targets bobbing up and down in the sea. The targets were painted to look like United States sailors and this gave Jim some second thoughts. The marines were blasting away at the targets with huge riot guns, blowing them to pieces as his father explained that one of the reasons the marines were on the ship was for “security” in the event of a mutiny. Jim was propped up and handed a gun, but he hesitated firing until his father *ordered* him to. Finally he reluctantly began shooting away at the “men,” resenting it all the time. ⁹

The powerlessness in the face of authority must have struck Morrison at this time, and the idea of mutiny being savagely dealt with at the point of a gun. There are no choices when faced with military authority - as millions of young people would find out when conscription for the Vietnam conflict began. We need to think more specifically about musical protest however, and the origins of rock n’ roll in the fifties.

It was in the 1940s that Southern music had become gradually more popular - the music based on rhythm and blues and also country was being influenced by swing jazz and boogie-woogie, which provided for a more exciting and rhythmical music. Mitchell and Pearson state : “many important Southern white singers such as Jimmie Rogers, Hank Williams, Bob Willis, Bob Monroe and Carl Perkins give credit to blues singers who they personally knew.” ¹⁰ As ever, imitation was the sincerest form of flattery. Wicke points out : “Both musical styles [rhythm & blues and country] went back to a folk music source - to the blues tradition and to the songs and dances of the white country dwellers respectively which represented the outcasts and outsiders of twentieth-century America , black people and ‘poor white trash’, the farm workers and small farmers.” ¹¹ Both musical styles “exhibited a naturalism in content which was poles apart from the fantasy world of Broadway.” ¹² This is

⁹ op. cit., pp. 37-38.

¹⁰ Mitchell and Maidment (eds.), *Culture*, p.220.

¹¹ Wicke, *Rock Music : Culture, aesthetics and Sociology*, p.38.

¹² ibid.

an important distinction - though it is as well to recognise the power of the imagination when applied to the “real” world.

The whole essence of creativity is in that which is not real - and radicalism is based upon a need to reform reality. When culture turns its back on the world and offers escapism from it (a charge that could be applied to the hippies though not protesters, as we shall see) there is a form of compliance with society that results from a lack of criticism of it. Much of the wholesome (fantasy) family entertainment that was offered on television and the cinema concealed a deeper idealism based on economic security - a wound which would be opened by the McCarthy hysteria. Mainstream American culture before the Beats tended not to confront the central glorification of materialism and monetary wealth (bound up with patriotism) that was at the heart of American society at the time (and which, it could be said, still haunts “advanced” industrialised nations). Challenging ideas were seen as subversive - with tangible dangers associated with them under the influence of McCarthy (many professors were accused of having communist sympathies, as well as filmmakers and playwrights).

In music, it is easy to ignore the fact that musicians were frowned upon for having black men’s styles as influences. When Rock n’ Roll music emerged at the beginning of the 1950s it was seen as dangerous both by television and by record companies. The music seemed to inspire rioting - such as cinema seats being torn up or gang identification. Whether the studios were actually aware of these social concerns is an interesting question - but if so these gradually became subsumed by the desire for profit. We should not ignore recording technologies that provided a commercial incentive for the major recording studios to push the new music. Vocalists took centre stage with the invention of the microphone and early electric blues guitarists lent their instrument to the emerging rock music.¹³ The allegation by many critics is that musicians should be blamed for choosing a medium that was *popular*

¹³Mitchell and Maidment (eds.), op. cit., p.218.

enough to make them (and those who ran the music companies) large amounts of money. Though were this not the case, the media would not be reaching large numbers and would not be significant enough to be worthy of discussion. Certainly sections of the new rock n' roll music seemed lacking in social comment. After World War II British and US economies turned their countries' collective "victory" into boom. Youth spending power is alleged to have resulted in a clear market value in the music, rather than any comment. However it is interesting that exactly the same reaction to this would eventually result in the music of the 1960s - "an attempt to drop out from the framework within which the parent culture lives so comfortably, and to search for alternative cognitive and social modes beneath and outside that framework."¹⁴ There was a developing urge *against* the framework of society that was responsible for wealth. Though it may seem hypocritical, there is nothing inherently paradoxical about needing money to communicate with an audience (a *necessity*) but using that influence (or that influence being used by the audience) to bring about a feeling of dissatisfaction with it. Early rock n'roll seemed to be a budding, nascent protest, though the audience was then seemingly unsure of what they were really opposing. Much discussion nevertheless surrounded Elvis Presley's suggestive hip movements; from the audience's point of view there was an emerging need to oppose the conservatism of commentators who were trying to preserve the virginal, puritanical dance music of the 1940s. Willis states that "rock n' roll escaped the determinations of the classic bar structure simply by giving equal emphasis to all the beats of the bar. This subverts the bar form and actually replaces it with the continuous 'pulse' or basic primitive, standardised rhythm."¹⁵ The beat replaces harmony. This is of importance when considering the teenager's attempt to break free of the protection of the parental home. While it is true that sex has been used by the capitalist system to sell products, in this case there may well have been other associations with the

¹⁴op. cit., p.147.

¹⁵Willis, *Profane Culture*, p.76.

rebellion that resulted, that was in the next decade to transform into important societal protest, as shall be seen.

In the following decade all this was to become assimilated into the mainstream music industry, though it would not do anything to dissuade youth protest. On the contrary it would be used as a crutch for youth to base antiestablishment action on. Examples such as Chicago 1968 and Kent State 1970 and many others, prove how far people were going to make their anti-authoritarian voices heard - and music was still an integral part of their lives. The music industry may not have been being threatened in terms of record sales, but there were signs that the unstable political situation (the “world on fire” as Morrison was to describe it) was becoming threatening to governments that were actively preserving the status quo. This is evidenced by the rise in the New Left and militant groups like the Weathermen. It is important not to ignore the beliefs of young people at this time (who were of course listening to political music at the same time) and the uncompromising way that they were expressing them.

We should consider the pressures that were building in the 1950s. Homogenisation had become a carefully studied art among the young (which can be defined as those under 34 - though this is a rough variable), influenced as they were by the old. Anderson quotes a professor lamenting that his students (coined the “Silent Generation”) were “without responses - apathetic, laconic, no great loves, no profound hates, and pitifully few enthusiasms.” While another commented, “Are they really listening? Their minds are as quiet as mice.”¹⁶ During the Second World War radio or dance halls predominated over private record buying - hit songs were sentimental and melodramatic “Tin Pan Alley” ballads of the likes of Perry Como and Frank Sinatra. Bing Crosby had learned his technique from singing in vaudeville with a megaphone - which “produced a curious deadpan and emotionless manner of expression, which was to form the basis of the “crooning” style that developed

¹⁶Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, p.19. Quotes regrettably not appended with dates.

after microphones and electrical amplification were introduced.”¹⁷ People were already tuning into Country and Western and rhythm & blues on the independent radio stations as an alternative to the “melodrama / sentiment / trivia over the major radio networks.”¹⁸ Music companies responded to the need to *own* music and to play particular songs at convenience - the specialist music styles became in effect part of the popular music market. Films such as *The Wild One* and *Rebel Without a Cause* from 1954 to 1955 helped herald the emergence of a youth culture. Even if it could be argued that these movies along with advertising in fact *produced* youth culture, with a profit motive, there was a disassociation with certain forms of authority, which though not political in the 1950s would certainly develop actively into such political activity in the decade to follow.

Bill Haley and the Comets made their first hit appearance with “Crazy Man Crazy” in 1953. “Shake Rattle and Roll” and “Rock Around the Clock” followed in 1954 and 1955 respectively. In April 1956 the New York Times reported that several white southern church groups tried to have rock n’ roll suppressed - the whole movement according to them was part of a plot by the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People] to corrupt white southern youth.¹⁹ Meanwhile record producer Sam Elliot was searching for a white man who could play the blues as well as a black man, in order, he said, to make a billion dollars. He eventually discovered Elvis Presley. Elvis was radio friendly if not entirely television friendly. When Elvis appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show* he was seen only from the waist up - his bottom half was much too sexually suggestive for a young audience. The “good girls” myth was always just that however - half of the teenage brides of the decade were pregnant; they *had* to get married.²⁰ The prim attitudes of the time clearly hadn’t worked.

¹⁷ Gillet, *The Sound of the City*, p.4.

¹⁸ op. cit., p.8.

¹⁹ Gillet, op. cit., p.21.

²⁰ Anderson, op. cit., p.26.

The very term “rock n’ roll” comes from blues slang for the sexual act - this was going to be celebrated in music and thus pointed to a possible change in attitudes.

The important point about rock n’ roll is that it is both informal and musically flexible - Willis points out : “it can be stopped or started at any time; it can be turned back or forward; it can be suspended here and carried on over there; it can be interrupted; it does not need an emotional decrescendo to finish.”²¹ Buddy Holly made use of interruptions and confusions of tone “that would not be tolerated in classical music”, while Elvis Presley’s Jailhouse Rock comes to an abrupt stop and then starts again.²² The industry did become more financially secure as a result of the popularity of the new music and if teenagers selected the music they wanted with their eyes open, they may not have been entirely aware of the more exploitative aspects of it then. Long term contracts were drawn up with artists, and record companies maintained close ties with radio; in one case, the so-called “payola scandal,” a company paying disc jockeys to play their particular “clients” more often.²³ Of course this was true, and continues to be so, for all kinds of music. It must be admitted that art and indeed all forms of communication (including academic journals and books etc.) depend upon money for them to reach any audience, and a medium that is entirely pure in this respect is impossible. It is a side-effect of having access to a very large audience, as well as the costs and business influences that are inevitably involved in this. A more productive and realistic question would seem to be whether there is a more subversive role for the particular mode of art that is in question; whether there is something more subtle lurking underneath it.

According to Eyerman and Jamison, in the United States “the various traditions of popular music have been tied, more directly than in European countries, to social movements.”²⁴ This has been true back to the 19th century - “when waves of immigrants

²¹ Willis, op. cit., p.76.

²² ibid.

²³ O’Hop, op. cit., p.48.

²⁴ Eyerman and Jamison, *Music and Social Movements*, pp. 51-2.

came from to the US speaking different languages and upholding different traditions, music became a means of communication” - the “simple refrains of songs could be learnt more easily than complicated written texts, and the rhythms of dance music could create a spirit of community when a common language was lacking.”²⁵ With the apparent lack of formalised feudalism and aristocracy a peculiarly American idea of “the people” resulted, which was used by social movements. Whether it was the slave or the immigrant there was a clear awareness of a hostile environment. American social movements have always recognised that the “myth” of the people has been used effectively to challenge the power elites and their notions of culture and “they have created an alternative kind of popular culture, a folk culture, in which music, song and dance have played a defining role.”²⁶ There is a strengthening of social movements, *despite* the industrial machine that is behind the music. The sense of community feeling comes from shared experience - tensions that sometimes come from different group rivalries within communities are dissipated. At the same time there is a dissatisfaction with the world that lies outside this community - the imagination of the “carnival”²⁷ comes into *conflict* with the world outside (i.e. it is not an evasion of it). This tension would be the inspiration for Morrison’s experiments with crowd manipulation - but with the specific purpose of making them aware of their own inactivity, as shall be seen later. The conclusion has to be that there are emerging signs in rock n’roll of the tensions that should exist between expression and individual freedom on the one hand, and on the other hand a form of social consciousness, which would be addressed more specifically in the decade to come.

Musicians in the Fifties such as the folk singer Pete Seeger, screenwriters and others, found themselves under deep suspicion for holding views contrary to that of the ideologues in the government. We shall see later in the thesis how the FBI’s pursuance of Morrison had

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ *op. cit.*, p.49.

²⁷ See discussion of Bakhtin’s concept of carnival - Politics chapter.

many connections with their wider programme of quelling dissent.²⁸ Also in the background during this time were Cold War fears of nuclear bloodbath; anti-Communist feeling reached new heights of intensity - to the point that ideas themselves were censored as much as actual subversion. There were attempts to control university thought. As early as 1935 a revealing tract on radicalism at the University of Wisconsin exposed, “faculty who advocated free love, syllabi that listed Communist readings, and even a bad football team, which lost seven out of eight games for the year. Posing photographs pictured a Wisconsin student telling his horrified mother that belief in God was ‘just bunk.’”²⁹ This was an insight into the broader ideas which were contained under the convenient banner of Communism. By the early 1950s, in the Commissioner of Education Earl McGrath’s words, there was “no justification” for hiring teachers “whose commitments are contrary to... freedom itself.”³⁰ And in colleges that were not privately financed there was a reliance on the state for federal research funds - “they became more vulnerable to government definitions of loyalty and proper political behaviour.”³¹ Even in the late Sixties a retired Brigadier General commented that more than 100 professors at Berkeley were hard core working members of the Communist Party USA.³²

Of course in the hostile climate of the Cold War - in which the nuclear threat seemed ever more real with incidents in Berlin and then Korea - this might have seemed a bit more understandable. But in such a time a restatement of the role of democracy was needed, with an emphasis on free speech. At the very least, there were signs that questions concerning freedom were starting to be addressed in literature. In Paul Goodman’s 1956 book *Growing Up Absurd* he inveighed against “‘the organised system’, its role playing, its competitiveness,

²⁸ See Miami chapter. An extensive archive of Cointelpro FBI documents is at : <http://www.icdc.com/~paulwolf/cointel.htm> 94 pp of Doors FBI documents are at <http://www.rockmine.music.co.uk/Archive/Vault/Doors1.html> Riordan and Prochnicky discuss the FBI’s role in the Miami incident (see Miami chapter). There shall be more discussion of this later in the thesis.

²⁹ Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, p.101.

³⁰ op. cit., p.102.

³¹ op. cit., p.103.

³² Koerselman, *The Lost Decade*, p.219.

its canned culture, its public relations, and its avoidance of risk and self-exposure.”³³ It stated that the English “Angry Young Men” playwrights have “specialised in piercing the fraudulent speech of public spokesman and in trying to force them to put up or shut up. They have learned to cry out ‘Shame!’ When a million American - and not only young men - can learn to do this we shall have a most salutary change.”³⁴ This seems to foreshadow what was to come in the next decade. When referring to the Beats, which of course had their jazz influence, Goodman is much cooler in his analysis. Their religion (mainly Zen Buddhism) is not feasible, their heightened experiences “do not transform enough natural and social world to create experience.”³⁵ He claims they are “grounded in the existing situation, whatever the situation, without moralistic or invidious judgement of it.”³⁶ However he adds that Beat style “tries to be an action, not a reflection or comment ... their creative playing ... are efforts for art and letters as living action...”³⁷ Youth groups are “achieving a simpler fraternity, animality and sexuality than we have had, at least in America, in a long, long time.”³⁸

In *The White Negro*, a 1957 article in Dissent magazine, Norman Mailer expounded the philosophy of the ‘hipster’ by exposing the hidden connections behind the seeming dichotomy between conformist society and madness. He wrote that to be ‘with it’ :

is to have grace, is to be closer to the secrets of that inner unconscious life which will nourish you if you can hear it, for you are then nearer to that God which every hipster believes is located in the senses of his body, that trapped mutilated and nonetheless megalomaniacal God who is It, who is energy, life, sex, force, the Yoga’s *prana*, the Reichian’s orgone, Lawrence’s “blood,” Hemingway’s “good,” the Shavian life force; “It”; God; not the God of the churches but the unachievable whisper of mystery within the sex, the paradise of limitless energy and perception just beyond the next wave of the next orgasm.³⁹

He added that the presence of Hip as a working philosophy in the sub-worlds of American life “is probably due to jazz, and its knife-like entrance into culture, its subtle but so penetrating influence on an avant-garde generation.” This was “that post-war generation of

³³ Goodman, *Growing Up Absurd*, p.241.

³⁴ op. cit., p.240.

³⁵ op. cit., p.184.

³⁶ op. cit., p.188.

³⁷ Goodman, op. cit., 189.

³⁸ op. cit., p.240.

³⁹ Mailer, “The White Negro” in *Charters* (ed.) *Penguin Book of the Beats*, p.597-8.

adventurers who... had absorbed the lessons of disillusionment and disgust of the Twenties, the Depression and the War.” Sharing a “collective disbelief in the words of men who had too much money and controlled too many things, they knew almost as powerful a disbelief in the socially monolithic ideas of the single mate, the solid family and the respectable love life.”⁴⁰ Since black people were always very much aware of problems in society, Mailer wrote, they were at the forefront of this curious productive “psychopathy.” This is not therefore racist, quite the opposite. Black culture was more true to life because it was confronting the reality of sexuality instead of evading it; it was “closer to the secrets of that inner unconscious life.” This theme of *culturally-defined* madness and dissent would crop up again and again in Beat writing and in novels such as Kesey’s *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest*. Creativity and heightened awareness remain curiosities in psychology today - the creative imagination has some roots in the purgation of personal need and emotion (there has been much scientific discussion on borderline mental ‘aberrations’ and on what *exactly* constitutes ‘normality’ when this is dictated by society). In May 1956 Mailer wrote: “There is a universal rebellion in the air and the power of the two colossal super-states may be ... failing in energy even more rapidly than we are failing in energy, and if that is so, then the destructive, the liberating, the creative nihilism of the Hip, the frantic search for potent Change may break into the open with all its violence ...”⁴¹ This idea of enabling violence would prove prophetic.

What of the Fifties connection to Morrison? Around 1957, at Alameda High School, California, a 13-year old Jim Morrison was discovering beat writers for the first time. According to biographers Hopkins and Sugerma, Morrison’s interest in the Beats was all-encompassing : “[Morrison] read everything Kerouac, Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti, Kenneth Patchen, Michael McClure, Gregory Corso, and all the other beat writers published.”⁴² As far

⁴⁰op. cit., p.585.

⁴¹Charters (ed.), op. cit., p.581.

⁴²Hopkins and Sugerma, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, p.17.

as music was concerned, rock n' roll, apart from Elvis, held little interest for Morrison - instead he would *listen* to poetry albums. As his school friend Fud Ford stated : "Instead of listening to rock 'n' roll records he'd read Kenneth Rexroth and stuff like that.... it would be comedy records or spoken word records. Ferlinghetti and Rexroth both had albums on Fantasy Records."⁴³ Kerouac was also a great influence : "We wanted to be beatniks like the characters on *On the Road*. We wanted to get on the road and travel, and go taste beer in Mexico, and see if we could pick up women in France."⁴⁴ A recurrent theme of Morrison's life was to be an awareness of the qualities of putting reality into question - the essential element of this form of 'madness' . In *Celebration of the Lizard* Morrison wrote : "Once I had, a little game / I liked to crawl, back into my brain /.../ I mean the game called 'go insane' /.../ And I'm right there, I'm going too / Release control, we're breaking Thru."⁴⁵ There is a peculiar sense in which it was the *experimentation* which was seen as eccentric and almost threatening. Even loyal audiences were sometimes to react unfavourably to his constant attempts to challenge them and their expectations.

There is also a direct connection with Mailer's "creative nihilism" at the end of Morrison's published book of poetry, *The Lords and the New Creatures*. The image is of a wasteland and an apocalyptic rebirth :

The new man, time-soldier
 picked his way narrowly
 thru the crowded ruins
 of once grave city, gone
 comic now w/ rats
 & the insects of refuge ...

the monitors are silenced
 the great graveled towers
 sicken on the westward beach
 so tired of watching ...

this could be fun
 to rule a wasteland ...

incredible hardships are suffered ...

⁴³Lisciandro, *Morrison : A Feast of Friends*, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁴op. cit., p.36.

⁴⁵Morrison, *The American Night*, p.41.

15
but all will pass
lie down in the green grass
& smile & muse & gaze ...⁴⁶

This poem can be compared with Gregory Corso's "Bomb" (1958): "into our midst a bomb will fall / Flowers will leap in joy their roots aching / ... / not enough to say a bomb will fall / or even contend celestial fire goes out / Know that the earth will madonna the bomb ..."⁴⁷ And it in turn is reminiscent of Dylan Thomas's "Ceremony After a Fire Raid" (1944): "Myselfes / the grievers / Grieve /.../ by the fire-dwarfed / Street we chant the flying sea / In the body bereft. / Love is the last light spoken. Oh / Seed of sons in the loin of the black husk left. / ... / Erupt, fountain, and enter to utter forever / Glory glory glory / The sundering ultimate kingdom of genesis' thunder."⁴⁸ This shows precisely the same uncertainty that Morrison had concerning whether there was benefit in the reincarnation of a post-war (or post-nuclear Holocaust) world. Certainly Morrison read Dylan Thomas (for instance, he once identified with Thomas's short story "The Followers"⁴⁹) and also enjoyed the Beat poet Gregory Corso (especially around 1959 - when Morrison was 16⁵⁰). Many cold war commentators were aware of the imminent danger of nuclear confrontation, and in Thomas's time it must have seemed as if the world was about to be destroyed, and to be rebuilt. Morrison during the Isle of Wight Pop Festival in 1970, improvised some extra lyrics to "The End" (he frequently changed songs or added fragments of poetry to them on stage) as follows: "Well I woke up this morning got the H-bomb on my mind."⁵¹ Of course a version of this song would much later be used in Francis Ford Coppola's seminal Vietnam movie "Apocalypse Now", and many GIs would listen to Doors songs on radio sets in Vietnam

⁴⁶Morrison, [*The Lords and The New Creatures*], *The New Creatures*, pp. 29-30 [Note in the published edition cited, volumes originally published separately are page numbered separately].

⁴⁷in Charters (ed.) op. cit., p.178.

⁴⁸Originally published in the volume 'Deaths and Entrances' (1946) in Thomas, *Collected Poems 1934-1953*, pp. 107-9.

⁴⁹Hopkins and Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, p.46.

⁵⁰op. cit., p.17.

⁵¹*Message to Love : Isle of Wight Festival 1970* (1995).

(Riordan and Prochnicky claim that by November 1967 The Doors “were becoming the group of choice among the soldiers in Vietnam.”⁵²). Having experienced great personal suffering it is not surprising that songs such as “The Unknown Soldier” and “Love Me Two Times” were popular among soldiers. The latter, controversially at the time, refers to the need (probably while on leave) for sexual fulfilment in a relationship prior to going back to the war : “Love me two times / I’m going away.”⁵³ Some radio stations banned the song as a result.⁵⁴ These intertwined themes of war and personal suffering connect these writers, therefore. Established poets (and writers) are often taken more seriously than (particularly popular and possibly young) songwriters, a position which has little credibility when lyrics are analysed closely. ⁵⁵

Many artists who are critical of society have to face the reality of living in it - there is no veto on account of the strength of an individual’s argument. In his early readings of the Beats Morrison must have had his first sense of the human voice struggling to be heard above the 50s crowd. This is not individualism, it is quite opposed to the 1950s society which is what is stressing this very concept. Among the Beats there was a heightened interest in experiential, existential experimentation via drugs and poetry - the sense that in the face of an impending apocalypse, the individual had to compress a large amount of living into a short amount of time. It is simplistic to refer to life purely in terms of longevity - it is a matter of quality as well as quantity (it is more than just mathematical length). Morrison said in a poem : “Have you been borne [*sic*]⁵⁶ yet / & are you alive? ... (did you have a good world when you died?) - enough to base a movie on ?” ⁵⁷

⁵²Riordan and Prochnicky, op. cit., p.181.

⁵³Sugerman, *Doors : Complete Lyrics*, p.61.

⁵⁴Crisafulli, *Stories Behind the Songs : The Doors*, p.48.

⁵⁵Pichaske David R., “Poetry, Pedagogy, and Popular Music: Renegade Reflections.” *Popular Music and Society*, Winter, 1999.

⁵⁶Presumably a pun referring to a form of support in order to sustain life - maybe a drug reference.

⁵⁷Morrison, “An American Prayer,” *The American Night*, pp. 3 & 11.

Let us not forget that wars such as Korea and later Vietnam were composed of tactical blunders and political omissions in which the authority of war (blind discipline, hierarchy and ideology) took over, based on some surprisingly simple, basic concepts of political leaders unaware of the problematics of the situation on the ground. This was addressed by Norman Mailer, though in the context of the Second World War, in *The Naked and the Dead* (1948). This was however no simple attack on militarism - there was an awareness that the system behind this was composed of complex *human beings*. The machine had a human face after all - though it was still a machine. There are no heroes in the book, just as there are no real victors in war; both concepts are illusions.

His next two novels that were published in the 50s entitled *Barbary Shore* and *The Deer Park* were similarly complex - the first seemed to promote a kind of revolutionary socialism. The idea that emerges though, through speeches towards the end of the book, is that there is an inevitability to a war between America and Russia - what's more, this is impossible to avoid through any revolutionary action before this happens (his "creative nihilism" again). The population is decreased and the people begin to realise their plight - the conditions are right for socialism. It is a heavy price to pay however, and the view seems curious in the light of *Naked and the Dead*, seeming in effect to deny the possibility of social change. In *The Deer Park* the Hollywood industry comes into focus. It is worth pointing out as an aside that Morrison in 1969, attended a production of *The Deer Park*, according to an LA Free Press article - this may have been around the time of the Miami problem.⁵⁸ In the book, the Desert D'Or is a Southern Californian desert resort frequented by the movie community. These people's lives however are "illusions within hypocrisies. They help to establish the national image of morality through the marriage-is-ecstasy pap presented on the screen, yet they seem liberated enough to hunt out physical pleasure wherever they can find it - to be sexual

⁵⁸Harvey Perr, "Stage Doors" *LA Free Press*, Aug 8 1969 in Sugerman, *Doors : Complete Lyrics*, p. 101. This is one of the articles collected in this lyric book - the precise date of Morrison's attendance at this play is not recorded.

adventurers.”⁵⁹ It seems not so much that masculinity per se is indicted - the women in the novel are as sexually promiscuous as the men. Mailer was well known as an existentialist - when asked in an interview what social problem seems most important to him he answered “That more people do more things their inner nature dreams of doing.”⁶⁰ A very Morrisonian sentiment. Nevertheless he was formerly interested in “libertarian socialism” and by 1955 was a “Marxian anarchist.”⁶¹ It seems that he is interested in a balance between these systems - that these are not so mutually exclusive as they seem. That there is a way to attain personal satisfaction and a more just society than is presently allowed for. It is more so that *The Deer Park* shows that there is a disconnection between the actor and the audience they affect to represent, as the result of their *materialistic* (not foremost sexual) existence. They become victims instead of controllers (because of their hypocrisy). As Mailer himself said, “The way of life of the movie star speaks of another order of existence. The lack of connection between a movie star’s life and our lives is greater than the points of view we have in common.”⁶² It is not just that they are not interested in social problems, but they are consciously living out an unreal existence - their hypocrisy is more general than simply concerning sexual matters - this is just an example. There is no direct connection between the “artists” and the audience - in Morrison’s terms it is akin to voyeurism on the part of the audience. There is only a one-way communication.

To some extent this was the problem with Beat poetry too - the lack of an emotional connection in terms of a direct influence, more art *without* activity. But it is interesting that Mailer was using mescaline from late 1954 to 1955 - it seems to have relevance to a passage where Sergius asks God if sex is where philosophy begins, God replies “Rather think of Sex as Time, and Time as the connection of new circuits.”⁶³ The disruption of time is a common

⁵⁹ Solotaroff, *Down Mailer’s Way*, p.57.

⁶⁰ Lyle Stuart interview, Lennon (ed.) *Conversations with Norman Mailer*, p.24.

⁶¹ op. cit., p.22.

⁶² Robert Begiebing interview, op. cit., p.317.

⁶³ op. cit., p.73.

characteristic of certain drug experiences, and this line could have been said by many of the beat poets. Finally it may be added as an afterthought that in an interview Morrison mentioned that Mailer is a “contemporary journalist” and ranks him alongside figures such as Dickens and Dostoevski. Morrison adds that *The American Dream* is “brilliant ... probably one of the best novels in the last decade.”⁶⁴ The novel partly deals with the central character Rojack reaching the conclusion that civilisation has had a deleterious effect on human drives. As Tony Tanner points out : “Rojack sees civilization itself as a disturbance of two orders. Primitive man had an instinctive sense of dread in his relationship with non-human nature ; civilised man has disrupted this by believing himself to be permanently elevated above animals and the jungle. That sense of dread which is requisite for psychic and spiritual health has been greatly attenuated.”⁶⁵ Rojack tries to find political power but ends up being corrupted and manipulated himself, which brings him into a new relationship with reality. Tanner continues : “He [Rojack] touches continually on two worlds - the inner and outer, the demonic and the political, the dreaming and the waking, the structured and the flowing - and tries to be stylistically adequate to all without being trapped by any one.”⁶⁶ It is worth noting also that Mailer when questioned in 1955 about the role of the artist in society answered “I think it is to be as disturbing, as adventurous, as penetrating, as his energy and courage make possible.”⁶⁷

Some of the other Beats which were favourites of Morrison should be looked at. Ginsberg foreshadowed Morrison’s union of drugs, visionary poetry and recklessness. Though this was before he became a part of the Beat movement, Allen Ginsberg, in his early life, won a poetry prize at the prestigious (and expensive) Columbia University, but was also suspended twice for graffiti and being an accessory to robbery. After experiencing what he

⁶⁴ Jerry Hopkins interview, Spring 1969, in Hopkins *The Lizard King*, p.220.

⁶⁵ Tony Tanner, *City of Words*, p. 359.

⁶⁶ Tanner, op. cit., p. 365.

⁶⁷ Lyle Stuart interview, Lennon (ed.) op. cit., p.28.

termed a vision of Blake he claimed heightened visual and auditory perception and started using drugs. “Kaddish” - a long elegy to his mother completed in November 1958⁶⁸, was written under the influence of injected liquid methedrine and heroin, resulting in a forty-hour stretch of work. ⁶⁹ Arthur Rimbaud had become an influence on him (as he later did with Morrison) with his assertion that the poet “becomes a seer through a long, immense, and reasoned derangement of all the senses.” The poems “Marijuana Notation” (1951) “Mescaline” (1959) “Lysergic acid” (1959) and “A Methedrine Vision in Hollywood” (1965) also feature this theme:

I want to know what happens after I die
 well I'll find out soon enough
 do I really need to know now?
 is that any use at all use use use
 death death death death death ⁷⁰

Ginsberg had largely given up drugs by 1961 but his enthusiasm for the 1960s is apparent by his appearance at the marriage of music and poetry that was the 1967 Human Be-In. His work became very political - dealing with dissident activities in Cuba and the former Czechoslovakia. In fact the case against the famous 1955 “Howl” poem was dismissed because the judge concluded that it was “of social importance,” ⁷¹ the case highlighting many legal ambiguities surrounding censorship in 1950s society.

The poets Morrison had heard on records in his early days, as mentioned earlier, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Kenneth Rexroth, were key contributors to the “Howl” trial. It was Rexroth who first had the idea of recording poetry to a jazz accompaniment, in order to make poetry more accessible *to the public*. This is reminiscent of Morrison’s idea to record his poetry, and shows that culture sometimes has to connect with large numbers of people. And it is worth noting that, as Davidson points out, the beatitude of the individual that was the beats trademark and “was expressed within a small group, with its own structures of inclusion”

⁶⁸ Charters (ed.), *Penguin Book of the Beats*, p.61.

⁶⁹ Miles, *Ginsberg : A Biography*, p. 255.

⁷⁰ Ginsberg, *Collected poems*, p.229.

⁷¹ Miles, op. cit., p.232. This is discussed further in the “Miami” chapter.

nevertheless “should be seen not as a desire to withdraw and exclude but a need to find an alternative mode of communal organization within American mass society.”⁷² As Cherkovski says, “Coupled with his commitment to social and political change, Rexroth felt strongly about giving poetry a more public surface. He had always felt stifled in conventional, elitist literary circles, and cautioned younger poets about the dangers of becoming too withdrawn from the world around them.”⁷³ Rexroth’s work “ranged from love lyrics and beautifully descriptive nature poems comparing natural landscapes to the workings of the mind, to the angry protest works that influenced the younger poets.”⁷⁴ The first Fantasy Records LP was recorded in a club called The Cellar, not far from the City Lights bookstore in San Francisco (he had however first tried this technique as a young man in Chicago with black poet Langston Hughes and Maxwell Bodenheim). It was not long after Kenneth Patchen had also recorded his work to jazz with great success. The Cellar readings themselves had gathered large crowds. Jim Morrison had the same idea when listening to these types of records - that it is sometimes necessary to engage with large crowds to get messages across, rather than an elite group of analysts. Even a sense of futility does not provide a sufficient excuse for refusing to speak out. Where would any Marxist analysis be, for instance, without communication with the proletariat? The beat poet Michael McClure would have very constructive remarks about Morrison’s poetry and its attempt to speak to the masses via the connection with his music.⁷⁵ And Davidson points out : “many of the poets associated with the 1950s participated in the Haight-Ashbury scene, they were only part of a larger movement that had its public forum as much in rock and roll as poetry readings.” Morrison occasionally read his poetry at readings, such as in May 30 1969 at Cinematheque

⁷²Davidson, *The San Francisco Renaissance*, p.29.

⁷³Cherkovski, *Ferlinghetti*, p.90.

⁷⁴ibid.

⁷⁵For examples, see McClure, "Snakeskin jacket" article in Lisciandro, *Morrison : A Feast of Friends*, pp. 109-118, another article "Michael McClure Recalls an Old Friend" <www.rockmine.music.co.uk/Doors/> and McClure’s afterword in Hopkins and Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, pp. 377-379.

16, Hollywood, with Michael McClure, Michael C. Ford, Seymour Cassel and others. Also he reportedly attended, and may have read at, the Village Gate reading on May 11 1970 which featured McClure, Allen Ginsberg, and Phillip Lamantia.⁷⁶ As well as poets becoming part of the wider Sixties scene, Morrison was a part of the scene (and a former Beat enthusiast) that aspired to be a poet (*and* a popular singer).

It is worth returning briefly to some thoughts generally on US society of the time in order to provide some concrete justification for the revolt that was to follow, before commenting further on music. Brogan comments : “the [advent] of the atomic bomb ... created vast new interests which were conservative in outlook, and being based on arms expenditure, essentially militaristic.”⁷⁷ Even if true peace returned “there would be resistance in the Sun Belt [south and south west continental US] to cuts in spending for defence; dollar-minded patriotism would see every move to achieve an understanding with America’s foreign rivals as dangerous trifling with the country’s safety... There were vast areas of indifferent housing in Los Angeles, increasingly inhabited by poor blacks.” Meanwhile, “the middle classes... achieved a culture that was at best shallow and at worst vulgarly corrupting...”⁷⁸ Meanwhile Eisenhower created, albeit unwittingly, an environmental problem with the Interstate Highway Act of 1956 “committing the federal government to spending \$33,500,000,000 in fourteen years on building a national network of motor-roads.”⁷⁹ Car ownership was greatly encouraged, and the greenhouse effect, as well as the *culture* of car use, significantly advanced.

In considering how the Fifties gave birth to the Sixties we should consider some intellectuals who were coming to much the same conclusions that young radicals would. A sociologist whose work was frequently cited among radicals as an intellectual foundation for

⁷⁶Shaw, *The Doors on the Road*, pp. 162 & 200.

⁷⁷Brogan, *Penguin History of the United States of America*, p. 606.

⁷⁸ibid.

⁷⁹op. cit., p.631.

the feelings that were growing about America's power structure. The sociologist C. Wright Mills, especially in *The Power Elite*, documented most effectively the reasons for emerging distrust of government and other powerful groups that control society in the name of the people. We should note also that Mills's work has never been out of print since and a 1999 *American Prospect* article claimed : "much of what Mills had to say about the corporate elite still applies."⁸⁰ Mills remarked about the people themselves and how their culture, education and media seem to confirm their own oppression : "People, we know, tend to select those formal media which confirm what they already believe and enjoy ... they tend in the metropolitan segregation to come into live touch with those whose opinions are similar to theirs."⁸¹ More useful education would have "to assist in the birth ... of those cultural and political and technical sensibilities which would make them genuine members of a genuinely liberal public. It includes a sort of therapy in the ancient sense of clarifying one's knowledge of one's self... [and] includes the imparting of all those skills of controversy with one's self, which we call thinking; and with others, which we call debate."⁸² The personal is the political after all. Education "encourages happy acceptance of mass ways of life rather than the struggle for individual *and public* transcendence."⁸³ And as if to underline the point he says, "Knowledge is no longer widely felt as an ideal; it is seen as an instrument."⁸⁴ Politicians are "crackpot realists : in the name of realism they have constructed a paranoid reality all their own; in the name of practicality they have presented a utopian image of capitalism."⁸⁵ This is an interesting defence of idealism as a way of aiming at the highest possible target, rather than settling only for what you are prepared to carry out (often with a dramatic flourish). The problem remains of how to communicate the problems of society to

⁸⁰Wolfe, "The Power Elite Now" *The American Prospect* ,Vol. 10, Iss.4; online at <<http://www.prospect.org/print/V10/44/wolfe-a.htm>>

⁸¹Mills, *The Power Elite*, p.320.

⁸²op. cit., p.318.

⁸³op. cit., p.319 (italics mine).

⁸⁴op. cit., p.352.

⁸⁵Mills, op. cit., p.356.

those who are convinced (by propagandistic methods which may finally work) that large-scale change is impossible. Mills admits that, “Neither the very top nor the very bottom of modern society is a normal part of the world of those who read and write books; we are more familiar with the middle ranks.”⁸⁶ In addition he might have added that it is due, to some extent at least, to *The Power Elite*’s status as an *academic* rather than a popular work (the fact that it was not linked with entertainment or activity), that its meticulously documented, and very pointed argument did not directly create an adequate amount of real protest.

A full eleven years after Mills’s book was published, G. William Domhoff wrote *Who Rules America*, a sociology text that could easily have been written by Mills himself (and was inspired by him, among others). The book attempted to prove in a systematic manner, “the existence of an upper class”. By the Sixties this still owns “a disproportionate amount of the country’s wealth” - controlling major banks and corporations; that it controls universities, mass media and key opinion-forming associations. This in turn controls the Executive branch of federal government, and that (sometimes through related lines of control) has power over regulatory agencies including the federal judiciary, CIA, and FBI.⁸⁷ The only difference with the original “power elite” was that Mills had defined entire institutional groups to become part of the elite, and Domhoff suggests that only a certain commanding section of the *upper-class* could be said to constitute power-wielding groups - some members of the upper class may not be in the power elite. At any rate it is fair to say that institutional dominance remains. This provides some concrete justification for what Sixties writers and then performers were talking about when referring to “the establishment”. If an argument is made that the music industry was as much of a business as anything else, then at least the artists within it were providing comment on a very real problem. Music did nothing to discourage

⁸⁶op. cit., p.363.

⁸⁷Domhoff, *Who Rules America*, p.10.

rioting (Doors concerts on many occasions resulted in violence⁸⁸, and this could be connected with actions against the enclosing fence at major festivals) and in some cases violence against society (and groups such as the SDS). If anything alienation seemed even more glamorous - cultural power did nothing to dissuade protest. The only difficulty is that these are academic textbooks - while there is an awareness of materialism as a substitute for real human joy it remains as words; there is no capacity to act it out and link it directly (emotionally and physically) to the "audience". Morrison would by the very end of his life, though a very rich man supposedly concerned with *capitalist* individualism, would nevertheless write in a poem : "- Money beats soul -" ⁸⁹, words which would tie in with his apparent dissatisfaction with music despite his band's success, something that he persistently talked about in interviews. Also this is made unambiguous in the following lines written towards the end of his life : "The horror of business / The Problem of Money / guilt / do I deserve it / The Meeting / Rid of Managers & agents / After 4 yrs. I'm left w/a / mind like a fuzzy hammer / regret for wasted nights & wasted years." ⁹⁰ As Riordan and Prochnicky point out : "he was failing to draw the line between life and art, business and pleasure ..." ⁹¹ This was all connected for Morrison - but with clear dissatisfactions over the business method of achieving the art.

To summarise the general point, it is true that the act of reading is quiet and invariably carried out while the reader is alone; it is rarely a group activity (sharing an occasion and a place with teenage masturbation - also a solitary activity). In academia information is closely packed - not foremost a leisure activity - and certainly in a textbook there is frequently an overabundance of statistics and an underabundance of emotion. The populace lead busy lives and are frequently not interested in (or are not involved in) politics - a major flaw in the

⁸⁸Especially in 1968 curiously (pre-Miami), e.g. Chicago Center Coliseum - May 10, 1968, Hi-Corbett Field Baseball Stadium, Randolph Park, Tucson, Arizona - May 24 1968 and Singer Bowl, Flushing Meadows, Queens, New York - Aug 2, 1968. See Shaw, op. cit., pp. 104-6; p.107; and p.119.

⁸⁹Morrison, *The American Night*, p.35.

⁹⁰Morrison, "As I Look Back" *Wilderness*, p.208.

⁹¹Riordan and Prochnicky, op. cit. p. 105.

democratic process itself. If *important* work is made sexy, entertaining and fun, it becomes more appealing to large numbers of people. Morrison thought that entertainment could be used - in a specific way (through shamanistic and other techniques) - to achieve this. Others in the Sixties also had their own methods. The reason for the participation theatre which the Doors would use in Miami and elsewhere, as we shall see later, was that youth were not aware of exploitation that was at the heart of the music they were passively listening to. This problem lay within the culture industry, with roots in 1950s rock n' roll - and we need now to explore leisure theory properly.

As noted earlier, apart from the soapbox in Hyde Park, all means of communication with any number of people has to use capitalist media in some shape or form. There is no other option in contemporary society. Folk musicians had to sell a minimum number of records for record company bosses as much as rock musicians would (otherwise the bosses would have been unlikely to have hired them). This might have seemed like hypocrisy were it not for the importance of their social message - it turned out that they were the ideological victims of their own success. O'Hop states : "There is a great danger in stripping art of its life force or characterising it as either wholly material or wholly spiritual"; an artist can sometimes be a "salesman of the self who will do anything necessary to please a paying audience. An artistic craftsman however is more concerned with gaining a reputation for work ..."⁹² There is a fundamental distinction here between rock music inspiring dissent, and easy-listening pop music inspiring quite the opposite. In rock music there are a number of what O'Hop calls "binary oppositions" by means of which a passive experience becomes an active, meaningful, emotionally *real* experience. She continues : "Rock art functions by tapping into the private feelings of the listener but at the same time links these feelings to the public world which

⁹²O'Hop, *Translation of Art into Revolution* 1997 PhD thesis, p.47.

shapes the listener's experience ... by merging sound with image, rock becomes a cultural juggernaut." ⁹³

In that sense the peculiar ability of rock music to constitute an enabling structure was present, though in a raw unfocused form, in early rock n' roll. There is also the advent of the single : "Singles were specifically responsive to the active, moving listener... [Whereas] To play an LP was to be committed - unless you were prepared to go to a great deal of trouble - to someone else's ordering of the music." ⁹⁴ The "logic of late capitalism" that Mills and Fredric Jameson referred to is subverted. Like the motorbike culture that accompanied it, it was "an attempt to stop or subvert bourgeois, industrial, capitalist notions of time - the basic experiential discipline its members faced in the work they still took so seriously." ⁹⁵

As Mills recognised, the working classes in the Fifties were much more receptive to music than to books; this was due to the high cost of education rather than their free choice. Therefore the former medium was much more capable of being translated into protest than academic literature was. Contemporary leisure theory takes little account of the special role of youth in society and what their interests tell us about their growing revolt against the very institutional dominance that they are said to be at the mercy of. So-called "gerontocracies" have prevailed across the world - the virtues of restraint, values, and above all the quality of almost infinite patience with institutional procedure, are seen as facets of maturity. As Friedrich Heer has pointed out : "The industrial society of today demands from everyone the ability to adapt to its technical requirements... Young people tend to object to this regimented way of living. Having seen their fathers enslaved and sucked dry in a lifetime of industrial service, they are not anxious to follow suit." ⁹⁶ Hence the rise of the young person's ideals. In a German context, Friedrich Heer points out : "In the years in which Adenauer was

⁹³op. cit., p.54.

⁹⁴Willis, *Profane Culture*, p.69.

⁹⁵Willis, op. cit., p.78.

⁹⁶Heer, *Revolutions of Our Time*, p.123.

German chancellor, politicians of forty or even fifty tended to look on themselves as young and immature, not to say infantile, in comparison with the grand old man who fought with every possible means to retain his power.”⁹⁷ The problem of the sudden transition between child (few rights) and adult (full rights) is a *cultural* one - the age of consent has been arbitrarily determined. It is perhaps more accurate to speak of different levels of “maturity” - i.e. responsibility, in different individuals of the *same* age through different experiences and upbringing etc. - the law has never recognised the ambiguity, either in individual or political terms. The sexualised music suddenly seemed to break through and to make young people aware of their existence as an autonomous group. Morrison could easily have been talking about adult 1950s culture when he wrote : “The Lords appease us with images. They give us books, concerts, galleries, shows, cinemas. Especially the cinemas. Through art they confuse us and blind us to our enslavement. Art adorns our prison walls, keeps us silent and diverted and indifferent.”⁹⁸ Though he recognised that youth dissent was a metaphor for the struggle within all of us : “Fear the Lords who are secret among us / The Lords are w/ in us. / Born of sloth and cowardice.”⁹⁹ Or as Rojek puts it (referring to the work of Norbert Elias) : “Power is at its strongest when individuals take its historically produced and reproduced effects to be ‘natural’ expressions of being. For this reason the ‘civilised’ body may be said to be a priest to subjugation : it always acts in contrition.”¹⁰⁰ This was the plight of the emerging teenager of the fifties *and* of everyone in the wider repressive society (whether they recognised it in themselves or not).

If leisure theorists such as those of the “Frankfurt school” (Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse) are to be taken seriously then we should look at rock music *only* in terms of a homogenised youth (beginning with the rock n’ rollers of the 1950s) being victimised by

⁹⁷op. cit., p.125.

⁹⁸Morrison, [*The Lords and The New Creatures*], *The Lords*, p.32.

⁹⁹Morrison, op. cit., *The New Creatures*, p.14.

¹⁰⁰Rojek, *Capitalism and Leisure Theory*, p.169.

capitalistic excesses - Adorno's "culture industry." The assimilation of more unpopular musical styles into a more exciting fusion has already been discussed. Certainly radio stations were often censorious - producing a bland de-sexualised product that was thought of as more wholesome to youth. Mitchell and Maidment point out : "[there was a] hysterical reaction against the animalistic urges perceived in rock n' roll music, a reaction led by churches, educators and White Citizens Councils. Many antagonists were in fact members of the music establishment." ¹⁰¹ This is important. Frank Sinatra said: "rock and roll smells phoney and false, it manages to be the martial music of every side-burned delinquent on the face of the earth." ¹⁰² Mitchell and Maidment comments on the role of these critics : "Defending American youth against corruption was the theme that united all those who found fault in rock 'n' roll music, whether it relied too much on black influences, fostered political dissent, showed support for the devil or communism, contained obscenities, or degraded musical ability." ¹⁰³ These causes - including the most interesting one of "political dissent" - receded in rock n' roll, but the gauntlet was taken up again in Sixties rock music.

But the question still remains about the "Frankfurt school" of leisure theorists. There is no doubt that relations of leisure are also relations of power within the capitalist society. Rojek however states : "The writings of Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse's most pessimistic book, *One Dimensional Man*, threaten to install a new conventional wisdom which, in its fully developed form, is every bit as restrictive as the old one which it is trying to replace. It therefore neglects to convey the two-sided action of leisure which operates both to undermine and to reproduce the conditions of class society." ¹⁰⁴ Leisure time is seen by such critics as re-energizing the worker for more labour and leisure commodities to produce consensus and class domination. However : "In all of this the functional passivity of the

¹⁰¹Mitchell and Maidment, *Culture*, p.223.

¹⁰²Mitchell and Maidment, *ibid*.

¹⁰³*ibid*.

¹⁰⁴Rojek, *op. cit.*, p.120-1.

consumer is assumed ... There is a large and growing body of research in the field of deviance [citations given] which indicates that capitalism is only partially successful in civilizing leisure relations.”¹⁰⁵ If the passivity of the consumer could *possibly* be argued in respect to the fifties, it certainly was not true of its progeny the Sixties. In a “totally administered society” which is “without opposition” and produces “one-dimensional leisure” (phrases often used in these works), the critical theory of the Frankfurt school itself is called into doubt : “all criticism must be specious, i.e. ultimately concerned with renewing the power of the existing dominant social interests in society.”¹⁰⁶ Both state socialism *and* capitalism are criticised by them, *without offering any alternatives*. When revolutionary class action becomes impossible, they see a “reconciliation with nature” as the only option - a vague, quietist notion with mystical overtones - quite strange in view of the “irrationalism”, Rousseauian “naivety” and nature worship they tended to reject.¹⁰⁷

We should indeed be very careful when rejecting attempts to question the system, though these attempts may be via what some critics see as “lowbrow” culture. O’Hop suggests : “Rock music from the beginning has challenged the basic values of the culture from which it emerged... An artist only illuminates the general neuroses of [the] age.”¹⁰⁸ Rebellion needs to be looked at in a more abstract way, as an awareness that the authority of adulthood is very similar to the authority of society. An awareness of this is what led to the heightened political consciousness of youth in the sixties. Morrison in particular was trying to encourage a distrust of the leader, ruler or parent in his confrontation with the crowd. The alternative is for youth energy to be misdirected into purely materialistic concerns - setting them up for a career *defending*, or at least a life very bound up with, the capitalist system. It is hard not to see a reflection of this in the excessively imaginative playfulness (what could be called

¹⁰⁵op. cit., p.121.

¹⁰⁶op. cit., p.122.

¹⁰⁷D. Kellner in *ibid*.

¹⁰⁸O’Hop, op. cit., p.25.

“childisplay”) of Seventies novelty music and also with the spectacular special-effects laden music videos of the yuppie Eighties. O’Hop comments :

Some might see irony in the fact that the art culture consists mostly of the young in light of the protective and nurturing role the adult community plays for youth. However the role often... becomes confused with the money making structures which those same adults buy into in order to facilitate their role. Such “buying into the system” often precludes the adult community from participating in the revolt out of fear of persecution or alienation from the hegemony which “supports” these roles. ¹⁰⁹

There is a chance of artistic integrity in the industry if we consider that in most cases the artist is keeping control of the art, while senior adults (managers, chairmen of music companies, etc.) are in control of business interests. The youth has *selected* a particular type of music and thereafter can react to it in ways consistent with its message. Whether it was the cause or effect of society around it is in a sense irrelevant - what matters is that the two strands, music and politics, developed together; dissent strengthened and took on some organisational focus (though it could be argued that the organisation of effective protest should have improved as time went on, and this might have led to greater change). Even if only some new information was disseminated, this was preferable to what would have happened in a contrary situation. Brake sees explicit connections between the Beats and later rock subculture (the “square” world, and traditional structures can equally be seen as the *adult* world, and class dominance) : “Their subculture was distinguished by focal concerns of *Withdrawal* - from all but the bare minimum contact necessary for survival, with the square world. *Dissafiliation* - from traditional family life, society and career structures. *Existential solutions* - to what was seen as basically existential problems.” ¹¹⁰ The Beats moved to San Francisco which “was to become a hippy epicentre, a cradle of the new bohemianism.” ¹¹¹

Whereas some see the suburbanite nature of many of the nascent radicals as self-contradictory, others see this as a powerful indication of the morally principled position;

¹¹⁰⁹O’Hop, op. cit. p.32.

¹¹¹⁰Brake, *The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures*, p.92.

¹¹¹¹ibid.

they could identify with dissident groups *despite* their own experience of life. Eyerman and Jamison state :

This generation-in-the-making, though primarily middle-class, white and suburban, with a great deal of exposure to higher education and formed within a de-centred popular culture, was open to breaking down national, regional, cultural, and ethnic barriers ... it was the blues of the majority, dominant culture ... electrified blues served the youth ... as an authentic source through which to express their alienation from the mainstream American culture, their culture. ¹¹²

As for the materialism of culture, Eyerman and Jamison use the Beats as an example :

“As a way of immunising themselves against cooptation, the danger of success that participating in these media opened, they chose an aesthetic lifestyle and a nihilistic attitude.” ¹¹³ In this way “one could use the media without being used by it. Real meaning was found in the inner self and not the ornaments of success, even if you wore them.” ¹¹⁴ In emphasising that music was becoming an industry due to demand from consumers, little is usually said about the fact that the music clearly encouraged large numbers of people to realise that they were being *alienated* by this very same system. It therefore occupied a unique capacity, theoretically at least, for shaping a community. And the system was composed of more than the music bosses - the concept of establishment, or hegemony, can be extended to the *whole* of society, in particular corporate America as represented by law and certain influential government authorities. In a profiteering economy, as C. Wright Mills and Vance Packard among others were recognising in the Fifties, everyone gets only what they pay too much for. If this sounds too much like the recent concept of the “politics of envy” it might help to show the sheer scale of the personal fortunes involved - Mills spoke of “275 American men and women each of whom has possessed a minimum of \$30 million.” He spoke of people’s *standards* becoming pecuniary : “In a society in which the money-maker has had no serious rival for repute and honor, the word ‘practical’ comes to mean useful for private gain and ‘common-sense’ the sense to get ahead financially.” ¹¹⁵ It is the word

¹¹²Eyerman and Jamison, *Music and Social Movements*, p.134-5.

¹¹³Eyerman and Jamison, *op. cit.*, p.135.

¹¹⁴*op. cit.*, p.135-6.

¹¹⁵Mills, *The Power Elite*, p.346.

“private” that is important here - exclusion, *self*-enhancement. If it is primarily a problem with society that these concerns are dominant - this makes some form of critique exceedingly important, and the more active the better. Capitalist society has always involved the element of competition - as if *everyone* has the capacity to do well, if only they would fit in with one of the dominant groups and to compete with other similar groups (as in sport¹¹⁶). Quite apart from ignoring how much one might have as an accident of birth, it also means to serve the company (or system) itself and not primarily the public interest - not even to give them ideas or spark debate. Serving a limited interest means serving yourself - serving society is not quite the same thing.

When thinking about the seachange from the Fifties to the Sixties, Rodnitzky states :

In the 1950s relatively few college students were radicalised during their college years. However in the late 1960s, relatively large numbers of freshmen entered the universities dissatisfied with American society. As early as 1964 James Dennison, a Michigan State University administrator, complained, ‘These kids are so darned serious they worry us’ [“Changes in Today’s College Students,” *U.S. News and World Report*, February 17, 1964]. Popular protest music has played an integral part in making numbers of youth more serious, radical and politically worrisome.¹¹⁷

An interesting source for a final word is John F. Kennedy : “When power corrupts, poetry cleanses. For art establishes the basic human truth which must serve as the touchstone of our judgement. The highest duty of the writer, composer, the artist is to remain true to himself, and let the chips fall where they may.”¹¹⁸ Coming from a politician this is high praise indeed, and it seems to imply that there might be a broader identification with more of an interest in the possible, with an emphasis on *action* in Morrison’s case. It makes the same connection between self and *wider* society that has already been mentioned - something that was born in 1950s rock n’roll and came of age in the Sixties. This thesis shall demonstrate that it was indeed out of the singers’ hands then - there was *no alternative* then but for the audience to carry out their instinct to oppose.

¹¹⁶Capitalism and its relation to sport and the competitive instinct is discussed in Messner, *Power at Play : Sports and the Problem of Masculinity*, passim.

¹¹⁷Rodnitzky in Blair (ed.) *Essays in Radicalism in Contemporary America*, p.28-9.

¹¹⁸Blair (ed.), op. cit., p.30.

Romanticism , Pre-Raphaelitism and Death

This chapter will look at the preoccupation with death that was apparent in lyrics of the 1960s - and in particular in Jim Morrison's work. Morrison's "Rock is Dead" theme will be looked at - with some discussion of how this is bound up with his own personal death. His use of this theme in his work will be examined. There will also be an examination of why Romantics and Pre-Raphaelites used drugs. We may then extrapolate from this the question of what possible political analogies can be made with this theme.

It is true that drugs are a form of dependency and can be looked at in terms of imperialist history, but we should also consider O'Hop's comment : "the appeal of art and drugs is in the sensations produced."¹ We should bear in mind that drugs are psychoactive substances and *change or influence reality* for the person taking them. When coupled with the rarefied festival environment and different forms of media we have a potent effect - one that often culminated, for the Doors, in a riot situation (and in the Miami concert a political statement, when coupled with the influence of the Living Theatre²). O'Hop, one of the few academics to have done serious research on The Doors, introduces the concept that Morrison's life and art has more connections with Pre-Raphaelitism rather than Romanticism. There are connections with both movements but, as we shall see, it does appear that there is more of a political awareness and a greater use of intertextual art in Pre-Raphaelitism (i.e. using different media to promote the message).

The first question to be dealt with is whether there any connections between the Sixties and the Pre-Raphaelites, as O'Hop claims. William Morris, a painter of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood group, was a poet (and a socialist) as well as a painter (another member of the group, Dante Gabriel Rossetti will be discussed later). There can be a connection here with Morrison's interest in film-making as well as poetry. Also when comparing the Victorian era

¹ O'Hop, *The Translation of Art into Revolution*, 1997 PhD thesis, p.34.

² Discussed in great detail in the Miami chapter.

with the Sixties we must consider that this was not just Jane Austen's polite, middle-class society. In some ways the political climate was like that of 1960s America. In London, then the symbol of a substantial British empire, riots were breaking out among the populace and radical socialist groups were becoming more popular. It was in 1849 that Karl Marx settled in London and although he died in 1883 his thinking continued to be propagated by his daughter Eleanor and his friend and collaborator Friedrich Engels. In 1885 the second volume of *Capital* was published. And in 1886 there were angry crowds in Trafalgar Square where there were impassioned speeches by various socialist leaders such as H. M. Hyndman, John Burns and Henry Champion. After the rally broke up, a militant section marched through London from Pall Mall to Hyde Park breaking windows and causing property damage. From 1886 to 1889 the popular press began to speak seriously of a working class uprising. A fierce rally occurred on 13th November 1887- thereafter known as Bloody Sunday - when a thousand unemployed people converged on Trafalgar Square and were met by four thousand policemen. The speakers included members of the socialist Fabian society - notably the Pre-Raphaelite painter William Morris and George Bernard Shaw as well as Eleanor Marx. The square was lined with guards and Grenadier Guards, armed with loaded muskets and bayonets. One person was killed and more than a hundred and fifty injured. Revolt was managed in 1889 when East End dockers were granted a basic wage of 6d. an hour. At the same time the Fenians in Ireland were also attempting their revolution - to overthrow the British government in what they considered their country. Militancy, radicalism and political movements were all present therefore.

If the Pre-Raphaelite movement intended to change society or even art it is self-evident that it failed in this task, but this may be to ignore the residue that its demise left behind. It may have been more potential than it was actual, but ideas of challenge towards power of all kinds certainly did not die with the movement. Subtle political / societal differences could

become significant if we are to speculate about what should happen if the cycle was to come around again. To say that a movement failed could be to judge how it was carried out in practice rather than its potential value. If all possibilities are not considered then it is not reasonable to assert that all ways of achieving serious reform to society is impossible.

What of drug use? One of the principal pre-Raphaelites, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, used chloral (in full chloral hydrate, a sedative drug). Gaunt states : “it produced a state of mind curiously transforming reality; fitting into the sequence of illusions of which the *New Life*, the *Morte d'Arthur* and spiritualism were part.”³ It is as well to bear in mind that it was Jim Morrison’s flirtation with LSD in the early part of his life - in Venice Beach, California (he had cut off connections to his parents and was living on a rooftop) that led to the visionary quality of his poetry and ultimately his songs. It is uncertain whether LSD is addictive - it is certainly possible, as with marijuana, to use it at specific times and then to stop for long periods without physical withdrawal. These drugs need to be looked at differently from cocaine with its potent effect (it over-stimulates the heart in some cases but rarely kills) and especially heroin, which is, of course, physically addictive.⁴ It is simplistic to class all drugs within a concept of addictive consumption. It is much more a matter of choice - for the effect produced. As with certain theories of culture, we should not completely surrender individual choice and reaction in relation to a particular process or way of thinking; people may be manipulated but they are not always passive victims. For Morrison his lifestyle would eventually lead to a political awareness - an interest in the Living Theatre.

Rossetti, like Morrison, was convinced of the necessity of poetry as well as visual art.

Rossetti grew up the son of an exiled Italian who had himself actually composed

³ Gaunt, *The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy*, p.134.

⁴ Baden, *Unnatural Death : Confessions of a Forensic Pathologist*, pp. 93-4. Dr Baden was formerly Chief Medical Examiner of New York and recounts some of his cases (including many involving drug abuse) in this book. Baden cites as an example the case of the film actor and comedian John Belushi, the death of whom he was called to investigate in 1982. Belushi was a frequent cocaine user for many years and died when experimenting, for the first time, with a “speedball” - a mixture of cocaine and heroin.

revolutionary poetry and turned to translation of literature. Early on, though Dante Gabriel would also write poetry, he showed a particular talent in painting and drawing. Thanks to Victorian educational planning, an academy such as Suss's, which the young Dante Gabriel attended, would usually only be available to the better off. The head of the school was a fellow translator of the poet Dante along with his father though and it seems "that young Rossetti's fees were partially discounted."⁵ This experience would hardly have prepared him for any notion of dissent, however this academy proved to shape (inversely) Rossetti's views on art: "there was less emphasis on original thinking and more on passing exams... the great examples of art 'should be considered by art students as perfect and infallible guides; as subjects for their imitation, not their criticism' [Quotation from Reynold's *Discourses* - a book Rossetti would have been required to read]."⁶ When he joined the Antique School of the Royal Academy he found out for himself that English art was in a position of "conventionality, mediocrity and decline"⁷ - he pursued his studies under an independent painter when his work suffered. It was shortly after this that he met up with William Holman Hunt, the first of the painters that would be known as the Pre-Raphaelite group (it would also include John Millais, James Collinson, Frederick Stephens, William Rossetti - Dante Gabriel's brother - and Thomas Woolner, as well as others later on in a second group). In paintings such as the early drawings of *The First Anniversary of the Death Of Beatrice*, the emphasis is not on religious interests "but a concern with the role of the artist within society that interferes with his visions and his work."⁸ Many of his other works based on Dante such as *Beatrice Meeting Dante at a Wedding Feast*, *Dante's Vision of Mathilda Gathering Flowers*, *Paolo and Francesca da Rimini*, and *Denies Him Her Salvation*, all have a theme of the transcendence of love *over society* - a created world of trust and emotion. Morrison in

⁵ Dobbs, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti : An Alien Victorian*, p.17.

⁶ Fleming, *Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, p.6.

⁷ op. cit., p.13.

⁸ Riede, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti Revisited*, p.62.

songs such as “Blue Sunday” and “Indian Summer” also referred to some notion of love achieving a purity that society was rarely capable of. Similarly in the Pre-Raphaelites’ world, “discontent of all kinds, not only artistic, was spreading through Europe on the threshold of the revolutionary year of 1848.”⁹ The crucial point is that this was a time of artistic *and* political upheaval therefore - the two at the very least were concurrent with each other. It also did not profit pre-Raphaelite painters to set themselves up against such bodies as the Royal Academy - we should perhaps look at their opposition to such institutions as more concerned with free expression of their artistic ideas. Holman Hunt painted *Rienzi* - “the appeal of Heaven against tyranny exercised over the poor seemed well-fitted for pictorial treatment”;¹⁰ the inspiration was the ‘spirit of freedom’ riots that had been spreading throughout Europe. Hunt’s harsh realism was quite different from the dreamlike visions of Burne-Jones of the second pre-Raphaelite phase. Therefore, the revolt against conventions in art did not come in a single prescriptive way from the group as a whole - each had its own distinct views - a form of experimentation for the viewer to make up his mind on (there are clear connections with the Sixties here of course).

Some of the statements that Pre-Raphaelites made resemble those of Sixties personalities. William Morris, whose Trafalgar Square protest is mentioned earlier, nevertheless stated: “society cannot be changed... with the human material available. The people were harmless, helpless and hopeless.”¹¹ As far as Rossetti was concerned however, political revolution followed on from artistic and personal revolt creating “a spirit of aesthetic rebellion that was one and the same with a desire to be assertively *original*.”¹² Counterculture sometimes “tends rapidly to be assimilated to the main culture”¹³ however

⁹ Fleming, *ibid*.

¹⁰Fleming, *op. cit.*, p.85.

¹¹*op. cit.*, p.207.

¹²Riede, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti Revisited*, p.45.

¹³*op. cit.*, p.46.

and this was something that troubled Rossetti himself. One interesting way in which this manifested itself was that he “renounced public exhibition altogether and depended for his reputation and livelihood on the understanding of the *cognoscenti* and the patronage of a group of enthusiasts.”¹⁴ From his very early years Rossetti combined painting with poetry. In “The Sea-Limits” poem for instance there is a union between mankind and transcendent nature - there is an affirmation : “human perception is limited to knowledge of one’s own *sensations*.”¹⁵ In “The Burden of Ninevah” poem both Christianity and paganism are questioned through the standpoint of historical relativism. Some Morrison lines in “An American Prayer” seem similar : “Let’s reinvent the god’s, *all* the myths of the ages” and “The moths and atheists are doubly divine and dying.” Perhaps most surprising of all is Rossetti’s depiction of sexuality; in “Jenny” a prostitute is viewed as a woman like any other and a victim of fate and society - “made by God and deformed by man.”¹⁶ Simple perception, as well as possibly language itself, is challenged : “Poor shameful Jenny, full of grace.”¹⁷ What is being portrayed is *her* internal world, that of the individual, but which becomes a larger statement of what this represents in society. Just as significant in terms of sexuality are one or two sonnets in *House of Life* in which “physical beauty” is presented side by side with moral beauty - something which prompted angry reactions from influential critics such as Robert Buchanan in *Contemporary Review*, who described it as pornographic, something which would influence whether “respectable” people especially would feel it socially appropriate to go to galleries to look at his work.

Another connection with Pre-Raphaelitism may be noted. Hunt comments : “By the end of the [19th] century certainly, the notes of ‘muscular Christianity’ and the occasionally explicit moral indignation at the lot of the oppressed, starving and sick have disappeared. But

¹⁴Helen Rossetti Angeli, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti : His Friends and Enemies*, p.xvii.

¹⁵Riede, op. cit., p.92; italics mine.

¹⁶Riede, op. cit., p.105.

¹⁷op. cit., p.104.

already in 1856 is being formed within Pre-Raphaelite circles a ‘vocabulary’ of urban description and the accompanying chorus of grief and pain; there is also an emphasis upon commonplace circumstances and the essentially unheroic.”¹⁸ Hunt mentions specifically Christina Rossetti’s volume *Commonplace and other Stories* which Rossetti herself referred to as consisting of “everyday” stories. A writer in the quarterly publication *The Yellow Book* (published from 1894-7) looked back to Algernon Charles Swinburne (not a Pre-Raphaelite, but a contemporary of them) for the origins of Pre-Raphaelite interest and success in achieving literary freedom. Hunt pointed out his “wish to celebrate one of the seven deadly sins each day of the week” which he says, “cannot shock Kensington today as much as it presumably did or was meant to then.”¹⁹ Hunt quotes Ezra Pound (surprisingly) as saying, that he wrote “a great deal of his poetry to tear the pants off the Victorian Era and to replace the Albert Memorial by Lampascus.”²⁰ And Hunt points out that Ruskin counselled against the publication of *Poems and Ballads* as well as the poem ‘Jenny’. Swinburne had an “obvious wish to shock, by his perversity and by his flamboyant atheism.”²¹ Critics like Robert Buchanan, condemning the lustfulness in Rossetti’s paintings as being “fleshliness as the distinct and supreme end of poetic and pictorial art” is according to Hunt, taking up “the same attitude as later guardian of Victorian morality adopted towards more outspoken writers such as Hardy, Moore or Wilde.”²² If we bear in mind Rossetti’s use of chloral, we again have a visionary effect caused by some agency which resulted in a change in perception. It is not too much to suggest that for Rossetti (as with Morrison) the impulse to transform reality for himself *and his audience* was the root cause of his death. The large-scale consequences which were close to becoming reality in certain key instances (May 1968 in Paris,

¹⁸Hunt, *The Pre-Raphaelite Imagination 1848-1900*, p.223.

¹⁹Hunt, op. cit., p.231.

²⁰Pound, *Literary Essays*, in Hunt, *ibid.*

²¹Hunt, op. cit., p.233.

²²op. cit., p.234.

free-festival incidents in concerts etc.) were not seized upon by the audience and rock was indeed dead.

Among certain critics both English and American Romanticism have been seen as influential as forms of political radicalism in poetic and literary art. While an opposition to society is also apparent, one that cannot entirely be 'selfish', nevertheless there is not the intertextual angle that is so important to the connection with the Pre-Raphaelites. Concerning the English Romantics, Day has written that the earlier work of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake and Southey showed "distinct political radicalism" and "this chimes with the radicalism of other creative writers in the 1780s and 1790s such as Helen Maria Williams, Robert Burns [and] Charlotte Smith..." However Day claims: "Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey came to change their minds once the French Revolution had disappointed early hopes." Wordsworth's later works such as the 'Immortality Ode', *The Prelude* and *The Excursion*, he continues:

can be seen to stand for a socio-political position which is the opposite of revolutionary. Wordsworth's, and for that matter, Coleridge's later emphasis on spiritual matters, on the ultimate value of the individual imagination, is something which squares not with political radicalism but rather with political conservatism, either explicit or implicit. The emphasis on interiority may be seen as part of a reactionary, counter-revolutionary impulse.²³

Concerning Wordsworth, Day cites works such as 'The Female Vagrant' written from 1793-4. The speaker states in the poem how her father, a relatively poor cottager, is driven out from his property by a wealthy neighbour. Her husband also has to fight in the American War of Independence which moves Wordsworth into anti-war "disgust" - "dog-like, wading at the heels of war."²⁴ Coleridge's "The Dungeon" describes how "poverty and lack of education ... generate criminal behaviour."²⁵ Swingle describes how Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" presents "the stunning spectacle of individual transcendence of the mob" but makes clear that this is only "a fragmentary moment, tragicomically undercut by the mundane power

²³Day, *Romanticism*, pp. 175-6.

²⁴Day, p.9.

²⁵op. cit., p.10.

of the person on business from Porlock.” Swingle also points out that most writings “of the Romantic period seem similarly doubtful about the ability of the one mind to sustain itself alone. Emphasis tends to shift, accordingly, toward the one mind’s search for a friend, and toward the possibility that the one mind might enclose itself in a circle of other, like minds - securing thereby a more potent party position.”²⁶ Wordsworth in *The Prelude* (one of his later works) even if it is less political than his earlier poems, nevertheless seems to draw attention to the collective as well as the individual : “What we have loved, / Others will love; and we may teach them.”²⁷ This is a communal activity - involving the poet and his audience. William Blake in one of his *Songs of Innocence and Experience* includes an anti-slavery poem called “The Little Black Boy”²⁸ while Southey produced sonnets against slavery.²⁹ The temptation may be to compare this with Morrison’s apparent reaction to the Miami incident - when he seemed to change his fashion (although he wore a beard and casual clothes *during* that Miami concert, before he knew the reaction to it³⁰). But Morrison’s behaviour can be interpreted as an inability to adjust to this non-radical attitude - his health and mental well-being seemed to suffer a downturn. The English Romantics mentioned here seemed, initially at least, to have had political sentiments but these disappeared - particularly after the French Revolution. This seems to have been an overreaction based on *just one* possible outcome of radicalism, and are an eighteenth-century version of the “second-thoughters” of today - those who seek comfort by distancing themselves from what they regard as the “immature” radicalism of their youth. But whereas these Romantic writers seemed to change their mind and their work accordingly, Morrison seemed not to be able to make that smooth adjustment.

²⁶Swingle, *The Obstinate Questionings of English Romanticism*, p.126.

²⁷in op. cit., pp. 126-7.

²⁸op. cit., p.18

²⁹op. cit., p.20.

³⁰see Miami chapter for details.

We should also compare the works and opinions of Morrison with that of the American Romantics, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Morrison often expressed dissatisfaction with some of the revolutionary culture and rhetoric of his day - with the notable exception of *The Living Theatre*, with its singular confrontational style. For example he referred to the Woodstock film as follows : “It seemed like a bunch of young parasites, being kind of spoonfed ... They looked like victims and dupes of a culture more than anything...”³¹ But he tempered this opinion with the comment : “I think that even though they are a mess and even though they are not what they pretend to be, some free celebration of a young culture, it’s still better than nothing. And I’m sure that some of the people take away a kind of myth back to the city with them, and it’ll affect them.”³² Of course this ignores the potentially significant incidents at both Isle of Wight and Woodstock when the free festival radicals succeeded in physically tearing down the confining fence - and in that sense did achieve a “free celebration of a young culture.”³³ However, this aside, it does demonstrate a subtlety of reaction to what was regarded by many at the time as a perfect example of popular revolutionary culture. Morrison’s reactions to hippies in songs such as “Five to One” suggest that he saw fundamental flaws in *this kind* of popular revolution, but his interest in the Living Theatre, private comments that he wanted to put politics in his songs, plus some overtly political song / poems such as “Unknown Soldier”, “When the Music’s Over” and others, mitigates this.

We can compare all this to the views of Emerson who, according to Reynolds, recognised that reform rhetoric was “even more instructive than slang because it was coupled with a specifically subversive intent.”³⁴ What better could be said of an era, Emerson said,

³¹ John Tobler interview, Autumn 1970, in Hopkins (ed.), *The Lizard King*, p. 232.

³²op. cit., pp. 232-233

³³These events are discussed in more detail in the Politics chapter.

³⁴Reynolds, *Beyond the American Renaissance*, p.94.

which “put every usage on trial, exploded every abuse.”³⁵ Temperance, abolition and other movements all provided “a keener scrutiny of institutions and domestic life than any we had known.”³⁶ Emerson however was at the same time distrustful of the way liberal reformers lacked the common touch of some more earthy thinkers, as Reynolds points out : “he [Emerson] began to express appreciation for the pungent imagery of backwoods humorists, the stinging oaths of teamsters, all of which struck him as infinitely preferable to the staid idiom of Boston liberals, who he declared, all ‘lack nerve & dagger.’ ”³⁷ He was interested in a form of thought which combined some elements of conservatism with aspects of reform - gratitude and prudence coupled with poetry and invention. The difficulty with this “third way” remains where to draw the line on which issue and to avoid self-contradiction. It is also unclear whether Emerson’s lectures provoked the same emotional, riotous as well as politically motivated, atmosphere that rock concerts occasionally engendered. However, an interesting aspect of Emerson’s communication ability, when considering connections with Morrison, is his desire to perform in front of an audience. Porte draws attention to Emerson’s Phi Beta Kappa address in which the latter stated : “ What would we really know the meaning of ? ... The meal in the firkin; the milk in the pan; the ballad in the street; the news of the boat; the glance of the eye; the form and gait of the body.”³⁸ Porte suggests the following interpretation :

We need to know the meaning not just of the words we hear but of the body they issue from. Speech is symbolic action; but the body’s movement is symbolic speech - life speaking through gesture. We get our experience twice then, Emerson implies: from the orator’s words and from the physical conviction that accompanies (indeed produces) them. The body is spirit incarnate, moving and breathing and giving a local habitation and a name to ideas. It was just such a living model of universal truth that Emerson hoped to be so that he might actually carry with him the feelings of his audience in stating his own belief.”³⁹

³⁵Emerson, “Reforms” lecture, in *ibid.*

³⁶Emerson, “New England Reformers” lecture in *ibid.*

³⁷Reynolds, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-94, and Emerson, Journal entry, in *ibid.*

³⁸Emerson, *Essays and Lectures*, in Porte, *In Respect to Egotism*, p. 111.

³⁹Porte, *ibid.*

Porte continues : “His presence must surely have testified to the truth and sincerity of his speech, for the body speaks as well as the mouth. How can a man without conviction face an audience and not quake in his boots? They will know how to read him; they will see ‘fear in the face, form and gait of the minister.’ ”⁴⁰ This can be connected with the reaction that Morrison got concerning the conviction with which he read his poetry and forcefully drew attention to it in performances. Emerson himself expressed disappointment in the written word : “I have been writing with some pains Essays on various subjects ... My genius seemed to quit me in such mechanical work, a seeming wise - a cold exhibition of dead thoughts .. what I write to fill up the gaps of a chapter is hard & cold, is grammar & logic; there is no magic in it...”⁴¹ He seems to have, at least, grasped the fact that words alone are not enough - the body has to be added to physically enhance dry language. Whether he achieved this in his lectures though is highly dubious, and the precise political effect - lacking any connection to movements outside (even in the minds of his audience) remains very unclear. Although there are still key differences between Emerson and Morrison - and the political context of each, they both share the desire to perform their poetry for an audience - they both see the body as important for emphasis. This is important also when considering the reasons that theatre interested Morrison, and therefore the Miami incident. We shall see later how the opinions of Bertold Brecht have a bearing on this.

What of the other great American Romantic - Henry David Thoreau? In Chapter 2 of Thoreau’s *Walden* we have him, after a bath, recalling an inscription on the bath tub of King Tching-thang : “Renew thyself completely each day; do it again, and again and forever again.”⁴² This is related to what Porte describes as his “insistence on *humanistic* scriptures - on scriptures that reach and preach the perfection and regeneration of our lives as creatures

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, and Emerson, *Essays and Lectures*, in *ibid.*

⁴¹ Emerson, *Emerson in his Journals*, in *op. cit.*, p.112.

⁴² Thoreau, *Walden*, in Lauter (ed.), *Heath Anthology of American Literature*, p. 2111.

of the earth earthy as well as the spirit spiritual.”⁴³ Jim Morrison in an interview said, “you have to be in a constant state of revolution or you’re dead ... It has to be a constant thing ... It has to be every day.”⁴⁴ It seems that Thoreau, like Morrison with his music, recognised that in order to communicate to large numbers of people you have to reach the mass market. Reynolds points out : “As an anti-slavery speaker in the 1850s Thoreau was considered a sufficiently lively crowd-pleaser to be asked once to stand in for the popular Frederick Douglass. Thoreau’s impassioned speech on John Brown had obvious appeal for the mass readership, for it was chosen by James Redpath to be reprinted with other popular antislavery writings in *Echoes from Harper’s Ferry* (1860), which speedily sold more than thirty thousand copies.”⁴⁵ Yet it would be a harsh judgement indeed to claim that this was not a rather worthy cause for such treatment - Thoreau was helping to popularise an antislavery stance. Reynolds has claimed that Thoreau’s “ferocious stabs at his countrymen ... actually didn’t raise many eyebrows in a day when ripping off veils to expose inner corruption was a common reform strategy.”⁴⁶ He alleges further that reviews sound very similar to others of the day. Whether this is true or not, when comparing Morrison’s confrontational stance with his crowd we cannot see Morrison’s behaviour (in certain concerts) in terms of fitting in with audience expectations or desires, in fact exactly the opposite.

What of the use of drugs by Rossetti and Morrison? It may have been the case that, according to Hayter : “Victorian babies were dosed with the opiate Godfrey’s cordial to keep them quiet”⁴⁷ but the many writers that both referred to drugs and in some cases used them, such as, to take a few examples, Edgar Allan Poe, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Charles Baudelaire, were increasingly becoming marginalised in society and were being seen as more

⁴³Porte, op. cit., p.168.

⁴⁴John Tobler interview, Autumn 1970, in Hopkins, *The Lizard King*, p.233.

⁴⁵Reynolds, op. cit., p.99.

⁴⁶ibid.

⁴⁷Hayter, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination*, p.19.

of a threat to mainstream culture. As drug addiction was becoming seen as a social problem, the seeds were being sown by which drug usage was to be seen by some as outright subversion, despite many other forms of addiction like alcoholism and tobacco dependency, which were treated differently. However with the Opium Wars of 1839-42 and 1856-60, Britain vigorously protected its desire to expand trade in China (this was around the time that Pre-Raphaelitism was born as a movement). Medicine was disagreeing with trade. Even the soft drink Coca-Cola was made with cocaine from the beverage's introduction in 1889 until 1906 when it was replaced with caffeine (after threats of legal action). While physician Albrecht Erlenmeyer was warning that cocaine was becoming the "third scourge of mankind," its use was more popular than ever, being sold in cigarettes, ointments, tablets, and injections. The first commercial application called Vin Mariani was reportedly used by Sigmund Freud and Thomas Edison - "even Pope Leo XIII was reported to keep a flask of Vin Mariani under his belt."⁴⁸ By this time 400 cases of acute cocaine addiction had been reported. It is interesting however that the drug was banned along with many others - despite its commercial potential (e.g. people becoming dependent on Coca-cola!). It is not so much a matter of controlling because of health (otherwise alcohol⁴⁹ and cigarettes would have been banned) or from considerations about revenue. In fact by driving it underground and robbing it of respectability government could not claim taxation - unlike with legal drugs such as cigarettes and alcohol, and unofficial producers took over. It is not therefore a simple extension of capitalist consumer control or government control. The exact nature of the dependency, which is very rarely stressed, is often a consenting one between a lone manufacturer / supplier and the consumer (there is, after all, a route away from addiction by means of various medical treatments such as methadone). There is no commercial baggage such as advertising involved. The materialist argument is only part of the drug issue - at least

⁴⁸Kirshon (ed.), *Chronicle of America*, p.497.

⁴⁹It hardly needs noting the problems that prohibition caused, and the pressures that led to its repeal.

as important is its effect and its *context* (in this case the background of the 1960s and the movements it engendered).

It is significant that as the Cold War followed the optimism of the end of World War II, the 1950s should have seen the straddling of the line between reality and unreality (or reform of reality) taking a radical turn. William Burroughs described his own views of drug addiction in best-selling novels such as *Junky* (1953) and *Naked Lunch* (1959). However these works only have a tenuous connection at best with the form of *intertextual* art that Morrison and the Pre-Raphaelites connected with drugs (such as Rossetti with chloral). They also do not have much of a connection with music - we should not completely divorce drug use from the society in which it is used. Burroughs does not see much of a role for drugs as a visionary substance. As has been noted earlier, not all drugs were addictive and sometimes provided a change in consciousness nevertheless (this is an undeniable physiological fact concerning substances such as marijuana and LSD). These substances are not referred to by Burroughs who prefers writing about heroin, which certainly is highly addictive. Writers such as Aldous Huxley who took mescaline (and whose *Doors of Perception* gave the name for The Doors⁵⁰) and the poet Robert Graves, who took psilocybin in 1960, promised that substances could cast a new light on the darkness of spiritual decay - a new generation was to recognise drug use as a way of seeing in a different way. The capitalist trade in drugs was offset by the anti-capitalist fervour which was created at the same time and among the same age group - and that older 'straight' society started to fear people who put their moral values into question (hypocritically at the same time that tranquillisers and alcohol became serious problems among older age groups). The problem of the trade in drugs, as opposed to the experience of them, reflected the problem of the artist in society who was also subject to capitalist forces at the same time as he / she was opposing them. Drugs could lead the user to

⁵⁰Huxley's mescaline experience is discussed in his *Doors of Perception*, which in turn influenced Morrison - discussed more fully in "Myth" chapter.

be aware of the constructed nature of much of social reality - the psychoactive substance makes the user think and experience reality differently. Individuality therefore can reveal a new kind of protest :

the object's power to withstand the subjective gaze... presages a new reversibility of visual relations, one that positions the eye in a dialogic and mobile relation to its lifeworld. In this way, the phantasmagoria of consumer culture reveals its buried utopian energy and allegory's melancholic gaze becomes simultaneously a critical one...⁵¹

The idea can be expressed as the solution of the question of what Cohen calls “the plight of the seeing subject in a culture of spectacle.”⁵² He further comments, that Walter Benjamin’s essay “Surrealism” - “elaborates how the visual experience of modern commodity (and especially urban) culture doubles, in its imaginative reinvention by the likes of Andre Breton, as a repository of subversive political energies, with the potential to transform the degraded experience of mass consumption into a source of ‘revolutionary nihilism’ [Benjamin, *One Way Street and other Writings*].”⁵³ Cohen quotes Benjamin, who comments that writers like Breton can transform art into “revolutionary experience, if not action.”⁵⁴ What matters for our purposes is not so much the details of Cohen’s claims for particular forms of writing, but rather the idea that there is a subversive potential for certain forms of art and that looking at all forms of art *purely* in terms of profit-motive is simplistic. We could extrapolate from this that art can be de-politicised by critics, sometimes for political ends. In other words the denial of a subversive role for art can be a disguised attempt by critics to banish such attempts at subversion, in order to fulfil a conservative, non-radical agenda.

It could be said that despite the parallels that exist, these movements are in the distant past and not applicable directly to the Sixties. However, the influential Sixties underground writer and manager John Sinclair, whose career is discussed elsewhere⁵⁵, explicitly united

⁵¹ Cohen, *Spectacular Allegories*, p.149.

⁵² op. cit., p.3.

⁵³ op. cit., p.15.

⁵⁴ Benjamin in *ibid*.

⁵⁵ See Miami chapter.

politics, sex and drugs. He described it in his own characteristically provocative way : “Our program is rock and roll, dope, and fucking in the streets.”⁵⁶ He stated that : “with our music and our economic genius we plunder the unsuspecting straight world for money and the means to carry out our program, and revolutionize its children at the same time.” It is because : “Everything must be free for everybody. Money is obsolete. The white honkie culture that has been handed to us on a silver plastic platter is meaningless to us.”⁵⁷ This was a part of his program for the White Panther Party organisation that he was chairman of - this was conceived as a direct partner with the Black Panthers (it endorsed every one of the latter’s proposals⁵⁸). In addition the White Panther Statement of November 1 1968 includes as one of its program objectives “Free food, clothes, housing, *dope*, music, bodies, medical care.”⁵⁹ Something which of course the Haight-Ashbury group the Diggers were also trying to achieve in a tangible way.⁶⁰ Although he also stated elsewhere : “tripping out is a dead end”⁶¹ it seems that this is more concerned with not allowing the use of drugs to be an end in itself, but to help achieve political reconstruction : “if you engage yourself in a total revolutionary program of self-reliance and serving the people any way you can, you will have a guaranteed good time forever”.⁶² But as further evidence of this connection, he also says in his Informed Sources article : “if people were exposed to LSD and grass and other psychedelic agents properly, their minds would be truly opened and they would flash right out of the pig’s grasp.”⁶³ He further alleges hypocrisy in middle class attitudes to addictive behaviour : “they’re the ones who are hooked on coffee, cigarettes, alcohol, barbiturates, speed, television and control.”⁶⁴ He is now a respected journalist and as part of his work on blues

⁵⁶ John Sinclair, *Guitar Army*, p.104.

⁵⁷ Sinclair, *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Sinclair, *op. cit.*, p.105.

⁵⁹ Sinclair, *ibid.*

⁶⁰ See Politics chapter. p.235.

⁶¹ Sinclair, *op. cit.*, p.115.

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ Sinclair, *op. cit.*, p.145.

⁶⁴ *op. cit.*, p.144.

and rock music he recently designed and taught courses in Blues History and History of Rock & Roll for the Music Department at Wayne State University.⁶⁵ But it is worth bearing in mind that although Sinclair's countercultural connections began to sever in the 1970s (as the counterculture itself began to unravel) his enthusiasm for the reform of marijuana laws continued with essays such as "Marijuana Revolution"⁶⁶ and demonstrations such as the Cannabis Cup festivities in 1998.

What unites all of these movements is the concept of the hegemonic majority being challenged by a rival group - by means of a form of awareness that disturbs the senses and is influenced by imagination of some kind. This has more of a political dimension and a connection with protest in the Pre-Raphaelites, which are therefore closer to the Sixties than either the American or English Romantics. When this is eroded, perhaps in fear of possible loss of credibility, the status quo is not only upheld but glamorised, and the state becomes close to totalitarian. John Rocco, in a rare academic paper on the Doors, describes its relation to Morrison :

One of the 'established' orders he focused on overthrowing was the Western reliance upon vision, a reliance that equated seeing with truth and clarity with the just. This kind of hegemony of seeing resulted in some of the most entrenched Western ideals and goals : colonialism (Vietnam), racism, sexism and militarism. When Morrison told us to 'Look where we worship' [*Lords and the New Creatures, (The Lords)*, p.3] he was asking us to examine how we see the world around us. This challenge to the eye has deep roots, strange influences, and links to artistic rebellion from Rimbaud to the Beats. This is the best part of the trip : from Nietzsche's horse to the May 1968 riots in Paris.⁶⁷

As part of "asking us to examine how we see the world around us" he seems to have been illustrating how drugs (in his case LSD, when writing his lyrics) made him see reality in a different way, and made him recognise the unimaginative consent involved in the way it had been constructed around him. In another academic paper on the Doors, Tony Magistrale refers to Morrison's nickname of "The Lizard King" : "As a lizard is forever undergoing change in shedding its skin and altering its protective coloration, Morrison used poetry (and

⁶⁵ See biography <www.johnsinclair.us>

⁶⁶ July 1971, reproduced at <www.luminist.org/Archives/marijuana.htm>

⁶⁷ Rocco, "Cameras Inside the Coffin : Jim Morrison's Challenge to the Hegemony of Vision" in Rocco (ed.) *The Doors Companion*, p.71. John Rocco teaches English at Queens College, CUNY.

drugs) to explore the shape his new life would take: he yearned to break the wall that separated our empirical world from the transformative energies of others.”⁶⁸ And in 1949 Bertold Brecht had recognised that an art form that attempts to make social change a dominant, popular theme has to, by definition, reach a wide audience with its message: “We should not by any means be giving it a higher status if we were to turn it e.g. into a purveyor of morality; it would on the contrary run the risk of being debased, and this would occur at once if it failed to make its moral lesson enjoyable, and enjoyable to the senses at that : a principle, admittedly, to which morality can only gain.”⁶⁹ At the same time this must be subverted from popular to radical forms : “The theatre can only adopt such a free attitude if it lets itself be carried along by the strongest currents in its society and associates itself with those who are necessarily most impatient to make great alterations there.”⁷⁰

We could take another related perspective on drugs and art. In the early 20th century - through two world wars, Jean Cocteau - dramatist and surrealist - continued to make innovative contribution to a variety of art forms. One of his ballet movements (*Parade*, 1917) involved Picasso as a set designer. Both shared more than their interest in the subconscious world of dream, sleep and myth - they were both habitual users of opium. In a world of daily bloodshed, the audiences were startled into seeing a deeper ‘reality’ behind familiar appearances. Cocteau commented in his book *Opium* : “Everything one achieves in life, including love, occurs in an express train racing toward death. To smoke opium is to get out of the train while it is still moving - to concern oneself with something other than life or death.”⁷¹ He described addiction as “a liberation from visits and people sitting around in circles. Without opium I am cold, I catch cold, I do not feel hungry, I am impatient to impose

⁶⁸Magistrale, “Wild Child : Jim Morrison’s Poetic Journeys,” *Journal of Popular Culture*, Winter 1992, in Rocco (ed.) *The Doors Companion*, p.82. Magistrale is assistant Professor of English at University of Vermont - both this paper and Rocco’s are collected in the populist source *The Doors Companion*. No academic equivalent exists.

⁶⁹Brecht, “A Short Organum for the Theatre” in Eagleton, Milne (eds.) *Marxist Literary Theory*, p.109.

⁷⁰op. cit., p.115.

⁷¹*The Art of Tripping* - Television documentary.

what I invent. When I smoke I am warm, I do not know what colds are, I am hungry, my impatience disappears. Doctors, reflect on this riddle.”⁷² The problem with being overly health-conscious is the feeling of invulnerability - of unlimited time. This is a philosophical issue about the nature of existence - whether it is useful to think of the totality of a life’s experiences solely in terms of longevity (what could be characterised as a mathematical concept - whether a life can be measured in terms of *number* of years) - or whether it is possible to fit more content into a shorter space of time through a keener awareness of the experience of living, possibly from a knowledge of death (recalling the familiar saying “The knowledge that one is about to be hanged in the morning, concentrates the mind wonderfully”).

This is similar to an example of Morrison’s *carpe diem* philosophy - in a song released posthumously⁷³ entitled “Someday Soon”.⁷⁴ In these lyrics Morrison reminds the listener, who seems to be in a comfortable home environment, of death : “Someday soon / Familiar breeze will fill your living room / Rugs lash out their lizard tongues.” It seems as if in an urban environment people shield themselves from the knowledge of death itself. Instead of realising that the physical process of getting old results in a short time span, most tend to retreat into their own private space. Morrison reminds the listener : “You’re not getting young / You’re not getting young” and “You’re going to die.” The listener needs to be reminded of his or her own personal death, something that tends to be forgotten in the routine of everyday life. The next lines demonstrate Morrison’s sense of the isolation that results in an unfulfilled life at the point of death itself : “You’ll be all alone / When the cannibals cry / All by yourself / Inside infancy’s lie.” The last line may recall Dylan Thomas’s poem about childhood, “Fern Hill” : “Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of His means / Time held

⁷²ibid.

⁷³It appeared on *The Doors Box Set Vol. 2* in November 1998.

⁷⁴The following lyrics are obtained from <http://thedoors.virtualave.net> and checked on the live audio recording from the Seattle Centre concert, 1970, contained in *The Doors Box Set Vol.2*.

me green and dying though I sang in my chains like the sea.”⁷⁵ Morrison was always referring to the freedom of childhood but being young does not conflict with getting old. As time passes we all get older even when we are young. Morrison is saying that we are always on a steady passage to death, no matter how young we are. This is the one inexorable fact among uncertainties surrounding quality of life and health. Our precise quality of life may be influenced in an unhelpful way by the feeling that we are invulnerable, i.e. if we enjoy and promote our good health. It may also recall his comment in “Five to One,” curiously directed at a hippie : “night is drawing near / Shadows of the evening crawl across the years.” In the following verse of “Someday Soon” Morrison refers to his distrust of technology - and his sense of the television as being part of the standard domestic environment, again part of the shield surrounding life and its realities : “Television bleeding like a harvest moon / Flush the scissors down the hole / You’re getting old / You’re getting old / And I hate to remind you but you’re going to die.” The slight variation on the final line of this verse is : “And you’re going to be needing all of your lies.” When the final end comes and, as Morrison says in “American Prayer” the individual asks him/herself the question “Did you have a good world when you died”, all artifices created to deny this reality will be challenged. The constant refrain in the chorus “someday soon” reminds the listener in a very potent way that whatever is done, whether healthy or unhealthy, will result in death. The philosophical truth is that the future and therefore life itself is of unknown length - it is impossible, unless we entertain the notions of the psychic, to foresee in some precognitive way what will happen in the future. As Morrison’s political leanings toward the Living Theatre indicate, this philosophy is not necessarily incompatible with notions of the beneficial role of (a manifestation of) the state in society. In the 1960s both tended to be connected - it would be quite untrue to claim that changing states of consciousness (and knowledge of death) had nothing to do with the

⁷⁵Thomas, *Collected Poems*, p.135.

political experimentation of this decade; that changing one's own personal reality had no connection with changing political reality outside.

A further piece of evidence along these lines is known as "Rock is Dead". This was an extended jam session which The Doors recorded in 1969 but not released officially until a segment of it was included in a boxed set in 1998.⁷⁶ The track describes how Morrison's childhood was transformed by rock music: "I used to be a boy in my home block / Used to feel alone then I heard some news / Bunch of cats got the rocking news / You know I love my rock n' roll people."⁷⁷ There are some curious lines which seem at first glance to indicate a stance against rock music and its revolutionary possibilities. They were repeated at the Miami incident which occurred only a week after this recording (March 1st and February 25th 1969 respectively): "Don't wanna hear no talk about no revolution / I don't wanna hear no talk about no constitution / There's only one thing I want to see and that's some dancing / We're gonna have some fun / We're gonna have a good time / Let's roll". Of course the fact that these lines were repeated at the Miami concert, which was influenced by the Living Theatre, a very political group, suggests that all is not what it seems. He reflects on rock music in the past tense: "I'm talking about the death of rock and who killed it / I'm talking about the blues ... I used to be a fellow traveller / But then I realised / Rock is dying." Later on he explicitly aligns the death of rock music with his own personal death: "I'm dying / It's over / Have mercy on your poor son / We had some good times / We had a few good times / but... they're absolutely, positively under the ground / and as long as I got breath / The death of rock is the death of me / And rock is dead." There is more than a little futility in this stance therefore - as if he is saying that because of his audience's actions he is forced to go against his better instincts. As he frequently did on stage, he is adopting a determinedly

⁷⁶A 16 min segment of the 45 minute session originally recorded was included in *The Doors Box Set Pt 1*. The full session is only available in bootleg form.

⁷⁷Lyrics are my own transcription from *The Doors Box Set Pt 1*.

confrontational stance to goad those listening into a contrary position (he probably thought this piece would be released eventually, which was of course the case). If this all sounds rather far-fetched, close attention needs to be paid to a comment Morrison gave to interviewer Howard Smith in December 1969: "It's a funny thing. I've noticed that when people are joking, they're usually dead serious, and when they're dead serious, it's usually pretty funny. So... I think anything you say means exactly what you say and its opposite."⁷⁸

The audience has to play a part itself - it cannot passively receive everything at face value, it has to use its intelligence and discriminate properly between what is said both in *and between* the lines. It is a clear indication that Morrison was not trying to be a form of fascist leader, but trying to let the audience be aware of their situation. Any consideration of the *apolitical* excesses of 1970s glam rock (Gary Glitter, David Bowie, etc.) and 1980s kitsch pop (Culture Club, Adam Ant or Stock, Aitken & Waterman hits, etc.) reveals how prophetic Morrison's "Rock is Dead" statement would turn out to be. Morrison was much more interested in an *enabling* factor that allows the audience to beware of their status - as individuals (with individual situations) *within* the crowd. Another expression of this idea is in the following poem: "Leave the informed sense / in our wake / you be Christ / on this package tour / -Money beats soul-"⁷⁹ The individual must be his or her *own* saviour, and should not expect Morrison to be one. A package tour is organised for a person and does not require any work from the individual. It is organised for a person rather than being a free choice of destinations etc. Death, fate and a way out of the collective disease (the respectable lives of the whole of the populace) were interlinked. Morrison was not willing to use his interviews or lyrics to preach *his own* views but instead tried to promote the idea of allowing a free range of possibilities (which does not preclude some kind of conclusion) - something which he

⁷⁸This interview with counterculture newspaper reporter Howard Smith of Village Voice 11/12/69 was included on "The Ceremony Continues" CD, text at <www.cobweb.nl/fredhwy/interv.html>

⁷⁹Morrison, *The American Night*, p.35.

obviously thought was not present in the wider world. Consequently, it seems “Rock is Dead” is a form of challenge to the listener - trying to obtain a genuine response.

Morrison’s concern with issues concerning death from his earliest lyrics has not gone unnoticed by critics. Albert Goldman comments :

From the beginning to the end of his brief but brilliant career, Jim Morrison wrote about death, talked about death, sang about death, and enacted death onstage. His masterpiece “The End,” is entirely about death and its associations in his mind : patricide, maternal incest, drugs, love, and the end of the world. Death not only looms up from his lyrics, but it sends its chilling breath out through the spooky music of the Doors, which often resembles a rock ’n’ roll dance of death. Everybody who knew Morrison recognised that he was bound for an early grave ...⁸⁰

And as for reasons for Morrison’s “death obsession” Goldman continues : “he viewed life as a struggle to escape the deadening clutches of mindlessness and insensibility, the numbing effects of the routines into which we all sink after childhood.” His instinctive conviction was : “the only way to break through to passion, illumination and ecstasy was to live dangerously.”⁸¹ This is not therefore an escapist attempt (sometimes claimed of drug users) to deny the *certainty* of death but to recognise that sometimes there is a trade-off between life and death where an excess on one side of the equation leads to a corresponding adjustment on the other side. It recalls Oscar Wilde’s famous remark : “Good health is merely the slowest rate one can die.” In other words excessive concentration on the virtues of longevity can lead to a denial of the forces that conspire to deaden or numb that very life itself. The concept of the Doors debut album is of a journey from life (with the first track “Break on Through”) to death (“The End”). Doug Sundling has commented : “This theme of searching through death and self-realisation weaves together the first album *The Doors* which opens with a search for revelation in ‘Break on Through,’ progresses through a series of songs which oscillate between pursuing the need both for the sanctuary of love and for the freedom to explore the unknown, and then arrives at a resolution with ‘The End.’ ”⁸² In “End of the

⁸⁰ Goldman “The End,” *Penthouse*, April 1991, in Rocco (ed.), *The Doors Companion*, pp. 145-6.

⁸¹ op. cit., p.146.

⁸² Sundling, *The Doors : Artistic Vision*, p.33.

Night,” (a title borrowed from the arch-pessimist Louis-Ferdinand Celine’s novel *Journey to the End of the Night*), Morrison explores the “highway to the end of the night” and follows the “journey to the bright midnight”. Either side of the highway are “realms of bliss, realms of light” where “some are born to sweet delight” but “some are born to the endless night.”

The landscape seems to be outwardly, *visually* bright, but above all there is a sense of (genetic?) fate - where we are “born to” live certain lives. What the journey offers is a release from what conditions you are “born to” and provides a sense of perspective - a way of always looking at both sides of the coin. There is a similarity also with the lyric in “Riders on the Storm”: “Riders on the Storm / Into this house we’re born / Into this world we’re thrown / Like a dog without a bone / An actor out on loan.”⁸³ It looks to be similar to the sort of journey away from a form of death (stagnation) in lyrics such as “Moonlight Drive” : “Penetrate the evening that the city sleeps to hide” or a fragment of “Celebration of the Lizard”: “Each house repeats a mold, / Windows rolled, beast car / locked in against morning. / All now sleeping, rugs silent, / Mirrors vacant, dust blind / under the beds / Of lawful couples wound / in sheets...”⁸⁴ Sleeping is a very potent metaphor for living death.

The idea is that by overcoming the natural barriers of night and day, there is an overturning of fate at the same time. In “Break on Through” at the beginning of the Doors’ first album Morrison writes: “You know the day destroys the night / Night divides the day / Tried to run, tried to hide / Break on through to the other side.”⁸⁵ When asked by Hank Zevallos, in an interview for *Poppin* magazine, “Why do you write lyrics and what are you trying to achieve with them,” Morrison replied, “Achieve clarity and *alter fate*. Deepen a strange hue in the clan tartan.”⁸⁶ Morrison commented at one point that “The End” contains the sentiment that

⁸³ *LA Woman* album, *The Doors Lyrics 1965-1971*, p. 80.

⁸⁴ Morrison, *The American Night*, p.42.

⁸⁵ *The Doors Lyrics*, p.10.

⁸⁶ “Jim Morrison (interview),” *Poppin* magazine, March 1970, in Sundling, *The Doors : Artistic Vision*, p.34. Italics are mine.

death itself is a friend: “This is the end, beautiful friend / This is the End , my only friend, / The end ...”⁸⁷ something which Morrison bore out in an interview : “Sometimes the pain is too much to examine or even tolerate ... That doesn’t make it evil though - or necessarily dangerous. But people fear death even more than pain. It’s strange that they fear death. Life hurts a lot more than death. At the point of death the pain is over. Yeah - I guess it’s a friend.”⁸⁸

Both the beginning and end of “Celebration of the Lizard” are repeating a favourite theme of Morrison’s that we are all engaged in a cycle of birth - orgasm - death, though this in metaphorical terms can be followed by rebirth, as in destruction leading to reconstruction. This constant renewing, which can be interpreted politically, is a theme echoed by other writers such as Dylan Thomas (for example in his poem “Ceremony after a Fire Raid”). They see death as an essential part of life - the awareness of it leading to a new appreciation of the value of life. In *Celebration* we start with an awareness of the loss of the character’s mother : “The body of his mother / Rotting in the summer ground. He fled the town.”⁸⁹ This is an adolescent’s escape from childhood; from having a particular reality imposed upon him/her. This is after a desperate journey consisting of avoiding the “little boxes” in the town (“Each house repeats a mold” section as quoted above) to arrive exhausted at his destination. This is to be compared with the end of the poem. The narrator and his “followers” have to sleep at this point, as the narrator relates the following : “[‘]For seven years I dwelt / in the loose palace of exile, / Playing strange games / w/ the girls of the island. / Now I have come again / To the land of the fair, & the strong, & the wise.”⁹⁰ This patriotic image however is undermined by the following lines : “Brothers and Sisters of the pale forest / O Children of Night /Who among you will run w/ the hunt?” Clearly there is something that needs to be

⁸⁷ *The Doors Lyrics*, p. 18.

⁸⁸ Lizzie James interview, 1969, in Sugerman (ed.), *The Doors : The Illustrated History*, p.124.

⁸⁹ Morrison, “Celebration of the Lizard”, *The American Night*, p.39.

⁹⁰ Morrison, op. cit., p.45.

hunted down and it seems to have something to do with the people they are trying to escape from. The narrator's loose palace seems to have been rather disconnected from the real world. There is a separation between the general "brothers and sisters" and the group that is prepared to take arms. "Now Night arrives with her purple legion./ Retire now to your tents & to your dreams. / Tomorrow we enter the town of my birth. / I want to be ready.' " Again there is a rebirth that occurs after sleep - Edgar Allan Poe of course once declared "Sleep those little slices of death, how I loathe them" and in his visionary poem "Al Araaf" Poe thinks of the poet as "tied to the earth but always straining toward heaven."⁹¹ Angels in the poem "live in a union with beauty that is made intensely blissful because they know it is not eternal." And Wallace Stevens once proclaimed "Death is the mother of beauty."⁹² Also there is no doubt that the sleeping (bourgeois) people in the "Each house repeats a mold" section of "Celebration"⁹³ are sleeping their lives away, hence Morrison's escape from them (and "the morning") in the "beast car". The inevitability of nature and fate is being overturned here. "Purple" legions refers to the authority and controlling privilege of sleep, one that is best questioned. Morrison this time only sleeps because he has to (not because he chooses) - in order to be fully awake and alive for the confrontation that follows. The poem begins with the awareness of death and ends with renewed life - the exact reversal of the sequence that fate itself provides us with.

There are criticisms which could be made of certain "head-in-the-sand" hippies who were not interested in politics. Hippies (those that were generally not on marches) were sometimes more interested in setting up their own rival communities (communes) rather than protesting at America. Morrison in songs such as Five to One criticised this stance : "You walk across the floor with your flower in your hand / Trying to tell me no-one understands"⁹⁴.

⁹¹ Reynolds, *Toward the American Renaissance*, p.45.

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ Above, p.58.

⁹⁴ Sugerman, *Doors : Complete Lyrics*, p.95.

Yet his interest in politics and the Living Theatre suggests that he preferred the alternate strategy of using political confrontational theatre, as we shall see. Ken Kesey and the Pranksters are one example of the hippie approach. Tom Wolfe describes the breaking up of a Vietnam Day Committee in the *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* :

The main trouble with the Vietnam Day Committee was that they couldn't see beyond the marvellous political whoopee they had cooked up. From where they were looking in the fall of 1965, they were about to sweep the country. Berkeley, the New Left, the Free Speech Movement, Mario Savio, the Student Revolution, in which students were going to take over the universities... They never looked beyond that ... from the cosmic vantage point the Pranksters had reached, there were so many reasons why this little charade was pathetic, they didn't know where to begin ..."⁹⁵

Therefore the drug use that Kesey and the Pranksters engaged in did not lead to any appreciation beyond that of personal gratification, which was actually opposed to politics. John Sinclair of course pointed out the same potential problem, as mentioned above. Unfortunately there may have been hippies like this that did not use their insight for practical politics or demonstration purposes, but of course it was still true that many young protesters did. This caused some division between rival groups with different agendas - the counterculture was not always a homogenous whole.

Whether or not it is substances that provide the means with which to change reality - whether or not they are essential to provide a link between personal and political confrontation, there is little doubt that Romanticism (to some extent) but particularly Pre-Raphaelitism were expressions of intertextual experimentation that provided the means for many diverse instances of visionary manipulation of the status quo. But some American Romantics like Emerson and Thoreau had elements of conservatism in their characters which problematized their visionary abilities. English Romantics seemed not fully committed to their respective causes. Morrison was rare among 1960s singers in his *expression of*

⁹⁵Tom Wolfe, *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, p.193

confrontation, *enabling his audience* to “try to find a new answer instead of a way”, as shall be seen in more detail later.⁹⁶ Drugs were just one part of this, and it is true to some extent that they were used in different ways by different people; for some it was a way of changing perceptions of reality, but for others like Ken Kesey it was more of an obliteration of any reality. But there are also philosophical questions about the nature of existence which an awareness of death itself can shed some light on. When many other musicians sang about peace and love within the communal gathering, Morrison was trying to tell his audience that many of them seemed to be in optimistic denial about *their own* capacity to change the reality of the world outside. That reality would consist of an awareness of death existing in order to challenge it.

⁹⁶Morrison, “Whiskey, Mystics and Men,” *Wilderness*, p.144. This shall be discussed in greater length later on in the thesis.

Politics

This chapter will look at subtle differences between Morrison's attempts to conceive of *politically active* points of confrontation with authority, and those of the rest of youth counterculture of the Sixties. It will be seen as important that there was a striving after meaning (though not a dictated one) that seems to belie the common conception of the decade as being solely about self-aggrandisement and personal excess. Comparisons will be made with folk music, but with a view to providing reasons why the rock performance was important - and in a specific way for Morrison. The reasons why the concert environment enhanced protest will be explored. It is useful to consider why both Republican and Democratic conventions (as well as political conferences in the UK in recent years¹) have used music to help disseminate their political message by infusing it with *entertainment*.

There is a long tradition of music and politics becoming interlinked. Both jazz and blues were originally African in origin - they were the first experience, for many, of black music. It is perhaps no coincidence that it was around this time that racist laws were being questioned for the first time. Certainly music was used at such marches - the political protest song, more folk in orientation, "had strengthened the resolve of the civil rights movement."² Two incidents will serve as examples. In August 1963 after the civil rights act was proposed, a march on Washington that involved 200,000 people became a makeshift *concert* involving folk artists, "Peter, Paul and Mary", Bob Dylan and Joan Baez as they sang songs such as "We Shall Overcome" and "Blowin' in the Wind".³ When the act finally came into law in 1964 the right to vote in state and local elections was excluded. The second incident is described by Anderson: "On Tuesday March 9 [1966, Martin Luther] King led 3000 across Edmund Pettus Bridge as they sang 'Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round' "⁴ - though

¹ e.g. Labour's "Things Can Only Get Better".

² Chalmers, *And the Crooked Places Made Straight*, p.91.

³ Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, p.73.

⁴ Anderson, op. cit., p.116.

ironically this is exactly what King did, even though state troopers cleared the way to Montgomery. His policy of non-confrontational politics came under great criticism by some violent groups. Nevertheless, it may be thought of in a similar way as the martial tune - providing a unique rhythmic emotional quality. Rodnitzky states: "From the start the sit-in movement was a sing-in movement, as demonstrators wrote new songs and rewrote old ones to fit the occasion. Sympathetic northern song-writers like Bob Dylan and Phil Ochs pitched in with musical polemics against discrimination, the arms race, and middle-class conformity..."⁵ In 1961 Newsweek reported "Basically the schools and students that support causes support folk music."⁶ Thus what began as a protest involving music against specifically racial prejudice in society began to progress to a more general critique of all social institutions and authority. The anger of black people against authority became everyone's anger.

After 800 students at the University of California Berkeley were arrested for a protest against restrictive university rules, a 1964 flyer handed out to them contained the lyric "We Shall Overcome" at the end of it. Joan Baez had participated in this mass protest.⁷ Music took desire and free expression and fused it with political sensitivity. Burner states that the experience of living in a counterculture, when it emerged, was : "not one of frenetic pleasure-seeking but a phenomenon at once of physical feeling and of meditation, the body sending its reports more freely to the mind, the mind hearing and sensing in a careful and reflective way the material existence with which it has reconnected."⁸ It is often forgotten that such protests marked the beginning of student activism in the 60s. Songs such as Peter, Paul and Mary's "If I Had a Hammer" discussed such issues: "It's the hammer of Justice, It's the bell of freedom, It's the song about love between my brothers and my sisters, all over this

⁵ Rodnitzky in Blair, *Essays in Radicalism in Contemporary America*, p.13.

⁶ in Blair, *ibid*.

⁷ Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-4.

⁸ David Burner, *Making Peace with the 60s*, p.129.

land.”⁹ Bob Dylan’s “Blowin’ in the Wind” contained the lines: “How many roads must a man walk down / Before you call him a man? / .../ Yes’n how many times can a man turn his head / Pretending he just doesn’t see? The answer, my friend, is blowin’ in the wind.”¹⁰

Though recording technologies made a mass market and the growth of the whole of the music industry possible, it is hard to deny that it was coincident with the emergence of a new social consciousness among young people in particular. Something was propagating and popularising these messages of distrust and critique - art and literature may have had a marginal role but it was music that provided a forum for the “tribe gathering” activities, starting with the Human Be-in in 1967 and including other festivals. LP records also allowed different types of music to be disseminated - and for consumers to *choose* to listen to some records rather than others. It also enabled songs to be collected in a convenient form and enabled a concept to be developed across a group of songs (as Morrison was to demonstrate in The Doors’ debut album), giving birth to a coherent structure in some cases. The *coexistence* of singles and LPs meant that a purchaser was not obligated to buy the most expensive product merely to hear one song.

Pete Seeger has pointed out that he himself: “was one of the first Yankee college students who discovered that there were more different kinds of native American music than what Tin Pan Alley gave out over the radio.”¹¹ John Lomax was an early song collector who painstakingly located songs and singers in all sections of the country. It was his son Alan who in 1938 persuaded an actor named Burl Ives to sing folk songs professionally. He also got Pete Seeger started - himself the son of a musicologist. Father and son travelled to North Carolina on a field trip and the younger Seeger first became acquainted with the poorer sides

⁹ Lyric at <www.campwalt.com/songs/hammer.html>

¹⁰ Bob Dylan, *Lyrics 1962-1985*, p.77.

¹¹ Seeger, *The Incomplete [sic] Folksinger*, p.12.

of America. At square dances and ballad festivals he encountered songs which: “had the meat of human life in them. They sang of heroes, outlaws, murderers, fools. They weren’t afraid of being tragic instead of just sentimental. They weren’t afraid of being scandalous instead of giggly or cute. Above all they seemed frank, straightforward and honest.”¹² The Lomaxes also found Huddie Ledbetter, known as Leadbelly - who was in prison at the time. It is claimed that the governor of the prison pardoned him after hearing him sing. John Lomax lined up concerts for him too.

The Almanac Singers included anti-war material in 1941 and later on The Weavers including Pete Seeger were subject to harsh censorship during the 1950s for suspected Communist links. After all, it could be argued, Lenin had said : “classical music was too nice” and that he did not wish to soothe people but rather to incite, arouse, or “hit them on the head.”¹³ A rather apt description for what Morrison attempted to do in Miami and elsewhere. In fact this all provided a legacy to popular music as it developed in the 1960s. Hood points out: “Prior to the folk boom popular song lyrics, for the most part, were mired in the “june/moon/spoon” school of music. Folk music took popular song to a new level of personal and social expression. Artists such as Dylan introduced the idea that youth could use music to talk about the most important things in their lives - anger, sexuality, alienation, frustration, hope, politics and protest.”¹⁴ These themes were present *together* - the fusion was a potent one. It is difficult to imagine anything that could *possibly* galvanise youth politically except a fashionable, if profitable, entertainment. The flaw in this mode of expression may well have lay in the fact that listening was an essentially passive experience and did not involve physical confrontation - necessary to force new forms of political action.

¹²Seeger, op. cit., p.13.

¹³Denisoff, *Great Day Coming*, p.15.

¹⁴Hood (ed.) *Artists of American Folk Music*, p.9.

Even though it became a stimulus for new thinking, it was difficult to produce organised activity - the groundwork may well have been laid nevertheless.

Pete Seeger reacted to his own experiences in the Second World War - this encouraged social protest for him in much the same way as Vietnam provided a focus for many Sixties protesters. He appeared at college campuses and at anti-war and civil rights demonstrations. One song of his was actually about Vietnam and was cut by a CBS TV programme, the Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour. When questioned about the politics of his music, he drew attention to the fact that they were suppressed as proof of their power. He cited history as further evidence - saying that Abraham Lincoln worked within the system but without John Brown (who was considered an outlaw), Frederick Douglass and the abolitionists, the achievement could not have taken place. Politicians are "at the mercy of the system perhaps more than anybody else ... they have to go through life saying what will get them elected."¹⁵ Seeger pointed out that in 1864 Abraham Lincoln's comments about society had an eerie similarity to the position in the 1960s: "We may congratulate ourselves that this cruel war which has cost a vast treasure of blood and money, is almost over but I see in the future a crisis ... corporations have become enthroned and an era of corruption in high places will follow ... I feel at this time more anxiety for the future than at any time in the past, even in the midst of war."¹⁶ It is significant that Lincoln had said that his feelings of pessimism about corporations were worse than those about society during the very bloody Civil War - even at its height. Though it might seem somewhat polemical it does show how seriously the former president took this issue. Seeger referred to more recent events such as the disastrous FBI assault on the Waco compound and also to the unrivalled status of US capitalism : "Now we have individuals in the US who have more annual incomes than the budgets of many

¹⁵Penthouse, "Penthouse Interview: Pete Seeger" January 1971. <www.ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/JimCapaldi/articles.htm>

¹⁶Sanders, "Interview with Pete Seeger." *Press for Conversion!* May 1995. <www.ncf.carleton.ca/ip/global/COAT/21/>

small countries.” He continued : “the powers that be are glad to see 67% of America not bothering to vote.” He summed up the argument about language by saying “beware of the definite article ‘the.’ I think the human race and the English language might be better without it. *The truth, the revolution, the lord, the church, the reason.*” He mentioned proportional representation and also curbs on US arms trade as important issues in the US today. For Seeger the necessity for political action has overspilled firmly into the present day, and his music continues. “Where Have All the Flowers Gone” were hits, there is other much more diverse work such as children’s songs, frontier ballads, civil war songs, Christmas carols, blues and nature songs. A 1995 interview with Seeger showed that he had lost none of his beliefs with time. Commenting on the power of music he stated:

Plato said it [was] very dangerous for the wrong kind of music to be allowed in the Republic. We know that the Catholic Church tried to control music for a thousand years or more and most countries try and keep revolutionary music off the air. There are cases of songs which, Anatol France says, have overthrown empires. He was probably thinking of La Marseillaise. The song Lilly Bolero is said to have cost King James the throne...¹⁷

The key point here is that there is a moral necessity of protest which is often overlooked when commenting on the “naïveté” of music. There is a danger of silence and conservatism being the natural response to such a reaction, rather than a greater expansion of imaginative thought. This music on the other hand contains the revivalist notion - that it is necessary to communicate dissatisfaction with society, even if the practical benefit seems uncertain. It is necessary to acknowledge that the roots of protest among youth in society generally was tied up with music. It can be definitely linked in at least two early demonstrations. These provided the background behind which the new music was to grow up. In November 1964 Joan Baez gave a free concert after some Berkeley students were suspended for civil rights protests. Graduate students went on strike the following month with one of the earlier suspended students stating : “There’s a time when the operations of the machine become so

¹⁷Sanders, *ibid.*

odious ... that you can't take part; you can't even passively take part... you've got to indicate to the people who own it that unless you're free the machines will be prevented from working at all.”¹⁸ Soon after this demonstration, four floors of people (around 1000 to 1500) in one of the halls sang “We Shall Overcome” and “The Times They are a-Changin .” The police soon moved in - over 770 people were arrested for “trespassing.” Luckily most of the faculty was fairly liberal and strikes among the staff were organised. Clark Kerr, president of the University of California, on behalf of department chairmen, read a statement that sit-ins were “unwarranted” and would likely prejudice whatever case the students had. At the end of it a suspended student tried to speak and was instead dragged off the stage to an empty dressing room by campus guards. However, several thousand students gathered the next day for the next senate meeting. A proposal was carried, despite some professors’ objections that it was giving in to mob rule, that the university should adopt a policy of non-intervention except in cases of extreme physical disruption of the campus.

Despite a move later to overturn this on the basis that this meeting did not enjoy ultimate disciplinary authority, the Chancellor was fired and a supporter of the Free Speech Movement hired instead. A number of changes to university procedure, under extreme duress, would have lasting consequences for college education throughout America. Burner states : “Their universities contributed to the institutions of wealth and war, which they were being trained as much to serve as to question.”¹⁹ They were acknowledging “without self-abasement, the extent to which they were privileged but also “the ways in which they were exploited”; trying “to find the points of intersection between the cool critical methods of the academy and the impassioned issues of the time.”²⁰ By 1968 what had begun as civil rights had broadened to include diverse groups. Various elements converged on Chicago in

¹⁸ Burner, *Making Peace with the 60s*, p.141.

¹⁹ Burner, *op. cit.*, p.146.

²⁰ *ibid.*

August and were met by thousands of army troops, national guardsmen as well as 12,000 police. The spectacle of violence - along with conservative ideas that the protest itself was the cause - did not look good to middle-class TV viewers. In general, the New Left had not learned the lesson of the Old Left, what may be called democratic futility, or alternatively “Don’t mess with the middle class.”²¹ What had started from students listening to folk songs and showing support for civil rights movements was to dissipate as the one defining issue of the decade - the Vietnam War, was increasingly seen by politicians as being futile. The scaling-down of the war removed a defining (metaphorical as well as literal) issue for some students - there were very few individuals left that could have galvanised youth.

It is useful to look at other hippie groups and events. Around 1965 psychedelia was born in Haight-Ashbury, San Francisco as artists and students began to be attracted by the low-rent in the area. The Psychedelic shop opened at 1535 Haight Ashbury - it stocked occult books, jewellery, weird fashions, incense, etc. Student radicals were generally from leftist backgrounds, whereas the emerging hippie groups were less politically minded.²² As Morrison was aware, many hippies (though not necessarily all protesters) were from middle class backgrounds - some lived on money from their parents. Carl Oglesby of the SDS said that at the center of the hippies new “love ethic” was an “intrinsic capacity for surrender” and that for all their antibourgeois zeal they were just “suburbanites with beads.”²³

The 1967 “Human Be-in,” however, united political discussion among a wide range of different groups, with speeches and debate alongside poetry and song. Jerry Rubin was the only New Left radical to have any real interest in the festival but Diggers were handing out turkey sandwiches to everyone. They were also to provide information, shelter and medical services for non-establishment visitors to the Haight from 1966-68. It was Ken Kesey

²¹Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, p.261.

²²Unger and Unger, *America in the 1960s*, p.285.

²³ibid.

however who provided a vigorous *opposition* to political thought. Wolfe refers to Kesey's "Now Trip" where past and future are limiting thoughts - what is needed is purified emotion. LSD for Kesey (unlike for Morrison) was a way of avoiding society and reality - "anybody who is into the full bare essence of the thing ... 'tends to react against political disorder because he is concerned with the deep basic religious experience, the deepest sources of life; transient politics are insignificant' -Joachim Wach." ²⁴ Kesey, who travelled the country with a group of similar minded people called the Pranksters, once disrupted a Vietnam Day Committee antiwar rally with one of his "pranks" - various large-scale practical jokes and a speech telling them that protest was useless. This is symptomatic of what was problematic about hippie culture generally (as opposed to young protesters, something Morrison recognised). The way Morrison used LSD was quite different - aligned with a view of politics that incorporated these new ways of seeing, as well as combining it with *theatre* and performance (see Miami chapter and *passim*). This was quite unlike what Kesey was doing. In the large scale festivals music, drugs and political songs *did* at least seem to blend with each other - the counterculture did seem to embody the *purely* democratic idea that everyone had a right to their points-of-view, even if collectively they opposed each other. No-one was controlling youth in a fascist sense, because radically different ideas were circulating - embodied in the very term "experimentation."

The Human Be-In was advertised as a "coming together of the tribes" and like the later festivals (though possibly to a larger extent than later on) "the ritualized sharing of public space with like-minded 'brothers and sisters' remained at the core of the experience... Like other aspects of carnival the feast is a victory over fear." ²⁵ This argument about communality is important - entrenchment in ideology is somewhat undermined by an opportunity to mingle with others of different or slightly different views in an unrestricted environment (it is

²⁴Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, p.192.

²⁵George Lipsitz, "Who'll Stop the World?" in Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties*, p.214.

curious though that it is precisely this lack of a focus that is mentioned in much post-1960s criticism). The Grateful Dead appeared at the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967 (along with a number of other acts) though Heatley (ed.) points out: “They’d been used to free festivals in Golden Gate Park and were deeply suspicious of the motives of what was fast becoming a media spectacular.”²⁶ Country Joe and the Fish also performed, whose music is described as a “heady mix of swirling organ... folk rock, blues, jugband, all-out psychedelic instrumental passages, leftist politics, and flower power lyrics.”²⁷ This is quite a mixture of styles - their antiwar song “I Feel Like I’m Fixin’ To Die Rag” was released on an album of the same name that year. The soul performer Otis Redding was performing to white rock audiences for the first time (tragically he would be killed in an aircraft crash in December that year). These are just some examples of what some would see as contradictory styles of music - hippie bands next to rhythm and blues, next to bands with folk-rock political songs.

The offshoot organisations from the decade, such as The Diggers, active in San Francisco from 1966 to the end of the decade, challenge the idea that it was entirely a matter of making a profit from capitalist ventures linked to protest. The Diggers, were “named after original English Diggers (1649-50) who had promulgated a vision of society free from private property, and all forms of buying and selling”²⁸ It is also interesting to note that several 17th century Diggers songs have survived - singing was clearly part of their movement as well.²⁹ The San Francisco group of the 1960s distributed masses of free food daily (either stolen or begged) and had an antibourgeois philosophy, but did not subscribe to the power struggles and rigid dogmatism of the New Left. Inspired by the Mime Troupe, they set up their own

²⁶Heatley (Gen. Ed.) *The Virgin Encyclopedia of Rock*, p.212.

²⁷Buckley and Ellingham (eds.) *Rock : The Rough Guide*, p.196.

²⁸Noble, Eric, *Diggers archives*, at <<http://www.diggers.org/>>

²⁹ibid. http://www.diggers.org/english_diggers.htm> The songs with full lyrics on this site are “Levellers and Diggers” by Gerard Winstanley and “World Turned Upside Down” by Leon Rosselson. Lyrics of the former song includes the lines “But the gentry must come down, and the poor shall wear the crown. Stand up now, Diggers all ...To conquer them by love /as itt does you behove...” (Original spelling retained). The latter song the lines : “The clergy dazzle us with heaven, Or they damn us into hell, We will not worship, The God they serve, The God of greed who feeds the rich, While poor men starve.”

street theatre (covering mainly radical political themes and not that dissimilar from the Living Theatre in some respects) and eventually were able to open a free store with a much wider range of free services. In their free underground newspaper the Digger Papers, they often showed themselves to be as suspicious of the hippies as the Leftist groups were (reinforcing the division between hippies and protesters).³⁰ Other free newspapers such as *Frendz*, *Freek Press*, and many others also challenge this assumption. Other organisations on Haight Ashbury such as the Hip Job Club and the Oracle group organised communal arrangements for hippies arriving in the area, and the Free Medical Clinic was a point of refuge for people with questions related to sexual health and drugs. It is quite clear that there was a difference between even utopian dreaming or alternative modes of living and the entirely fictional escape offered by merely diversionary entertainment. Mass culture is often concerned with comforting familiarity and only slight variations on a particular theme, providing undemanding distractions (we could consider, for example, the fantasy TV shows that were the most popular programmes in 1966 - *Bewitched*, *I Dream of Jeannie*, *Batman*, etc.). Young people (those for whom political realities led them to search for new meaning) would need to be confronted with unfamiliar concepts from within their own comforting world of the festival, without which it would be virtually impossible to reach them at all. Morrison seemed instinctively to recognise the soporific effect of repetition. Although his work frequently contained elements of ritual (which by definition contains much that is repetitive) he balanced this out with a significant amount of genuine spontaneity and improvisation. This is why he continuously stressed that they were better as a band when they performed live, rather than on studio recordings.³¹ He expected to generate something more creative and a little less derivative, while still providing a comment on a general theme that was clearly being addressed in America at the time - an awareness of the nature of war.

³⁰ Noble, *Digger Papers* - all original articles are available as scanned jpg images or in HTML text transcriptions.

³¹ Shaw, op. cit., p.65.

According to Hopkins and Sugerman, “the dirge became a celebration ... the rhythm was both military (metronomic) and carnivalesque.”³²

These entwined themes are very important when considering Morrison’s work - that of order and precision, but with a chaotic element that always puts these rules into question. The question is whether The Doors, had specifically political lyrics. Some of Jim Morrison’s lyrics resist political interpretations, others are more explicit. For instance, the song entitled “The Unknown Soldier”, though never directly mentioning Vietnam, can easily be attributed to it. It is at the very least a general political statement on the excesses of war. According to keyboardist Ray Manzarek : “Jim said ‘Let’s do a war song.’ I said, ‘Everybody’s doing a Vietnam song.’ And he said, ‘Nah, nah, this isn’t a Vietnam song. This is just a song about war.’”³³ As well as showing Morrison’s contrary nature, it also reinforces the idea that Morrison was very wary about presenting *popular* music, seeing it as just providing passive listening. Morrison is thinking about war generally (through history) and not just the headlines of the day.

The first lines of “The Unknown Soldier” are : “Wait until the war is over, and we’re both a little older / The unknown soldier/ Breakfast where the news is read / Television children fed.”³⁴ People are watching the news and gaining their only “reality” from it. “Unborn living, living dead / Bullet strikes the helmet’s head / And it’s all over for the unknown soldier.”³⁵ There is a clear distinction between those on the battlefield and those “children” watching at home. Psychological protection from reality is present yet again in Morrison’s lyrics. As Sundling points out : “Life isn’t a sanctuary of waiting till the memory fades and the soldier becomes unknown, of wearing a protective shell for a helmet - not if what is digested at breakfast and by the children is the constant parade of allusions to death,

³² Hopkins and Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, pp. 149-150.

³³ Sundling, *Doors : Artistic Vision*, p.264.

³⁴ Sugerman, *Doors : Complete Lyrics*, p.87.

³⁵ *ibid.*

not if a bullet from reality shatters the protective shell.”³⁶ On stage Morrison then enacts what Sundling describes as “a ritual in the ancient tradition of the shaman”³⁷ - a self-sacrifice in which Robbie Krieger’s guitar is posed in the guise of a gun. After some military execution orders and “the dropping of a reverb unit”³⁸ to simulate a gunshot, Morrison drops to the floor sharply with typical dramatic force. He then implores the audience to “make a grave for the unknown soldier” to make it more real to themselves - afterwards though “the war is over”³⁹ this also carries the implication that there is also a personal sense in which life is over for the soldier as well.

A song that has surely been misunderstood is “Five to One” - Hopkins and Sugerma explain that it is an indictment of the “revolutionary rhetoric heard on the streets and read in the underground press in the late Sixties.”⁴⁰ It is a parody of the mood of the times, so the explanation goes. It is claimed that the final verse was ignored by the fans who just concentrated on the first two verses - that are more unambiguously revolutionary. It is worth looking at these claims carefully. There is certainly a militant atmosphere generated in the first few verses - “The old get old and the young get stronger / May take a week and it may take longer / They got the guns but we got the numbers / Gonna win, yeah - we’re taking over - Come on !” But this is then tempered by the final verse, to which Hopkins and Sugerma draw attention: “Your ballroom days are over baby / Nights are drawing near / Shadows of the evening crawl across the years/ You walk across the floor with a flower in your hand / Trying to tell me no-one understands / Trading your hours for a handful of dimes / Gonna make it baby if we try.” Sundling quotes Burt and North that it: “probably was designed as a kind of ritual exorcism” to make the audience “aware of their real power”.⁴¹ This is an

³⁶Sundling, op. cit., p.87.

³⁷ibid.

³⁸op. cit., p.264.

³⁹*The Doors Lyrics*, p.44.

⁴⁰Hopkins and Sugerma, op. cit., p.152.

⁴¹in Sundling, op. cit., p.92.

interesting interpretation - all the more so because Hopkins and Sugeran, while claiming that audiences were ignoring the final verse, themselves ignore the final *line* in their quotation of it. The final line is crucial because it seems to draw attention to the fact that it is not so much the protest but the means of protest that is at issue in the song. The flower child or hippie (unlike the protester on the street) is not actively confronting authority, but is trying to withdraw from it. Being determinedly non-political they become more easily ignored by those very concerned with society itself, including politicians who can allow themselves to retain a monopoly of political awareness.

In "Celebration of the Lizard" Morrison sums up the uncertain relationship with political history when he invites his partner to "run with me" - he states : "Come on along not going very far - to the East to meet the Czar." Morrison said he intended this poem to be ironic; but these lines show that we have to be careful that new political thought does not lead us back to old systems. It also refers to the need to avoid the "mansion" that is "warm at the top of the hill" - representing all that is comfortable. There : "Red are the arms of luxuriant chairs" - the red of blood that is the spiritual death that ensues. The constant refrain is "Run with me" because as Doug Sundling points out, it is "far better to run towards the unreachable, even though we can't ever really step inside the gates."⁴² The East cannot be the real destination because it is reached in a short amount of time - the running continues throughout the song after the earlier lines, making it seem like an outpost on the route. The real irony seems to be in what the audience or private listener is actually doing while listening to these lines - sitting or standing in a degree of comfort (as listeners to other folk or rock music were doing). From their debut album, "Alabama Song (Whisky Bar)", was originally from the Bertold Brecht opera "Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny." Sundling quotes from the W. H. Auden / Chester Kallman translation of the 1920s song, that the operetta it comes from represents the

⁴²Sundling, *The Doors : Artistic Vision*, p.82.

77

“two faces of contemporary capitalistic society” that demanded either “a grinding obedience which produces empty ‘pleasure’ or an equally oppressive freedom based on the ability to pay, or both.”⁴³ In “When the Music’s Over” we have lines which suggest concern for the environment: “What have they done to the Earth / What have they done to our fair sister?” and “We’re getting tired of hanging around /...We want the world and we want it ...Now!” Magistrale states : “Few songwriters or poets, John Lennon included, have ever posited a more emphatic or persuasive call for revolutionary action...”⁴⁴ In “Ship of Fools” environmentalism is referred to again along with the nation’s priorities: “People walking on the moon / Smog will get you pretty soon.” And war in American Prayer: “Do you know we are being led to slaughters by placid admirals / & that fat slow generals are getting obscene on young blood.”⁴⁵ Though not all his lyrics are clearly political, these are unambiguous.

If this all seems like pedantic arguments over lyric interpretation, it is interesting to consider what Hopkins and Sugerman admit in relation to Morrison’s interest in the Living Theatre. They state elsewhere in their biography of Morrison that he was a virtually apolitical figure, a misconception that occasionally occurs among rock journalists. They state : “Jim’s education, intelligence, and background further separated him from many of his fans. A college graduate with a highly catholic taste, he was hardly Marshall McLuhan’s nonlinear, postliteral, tribal man. Whether he liked it or not, he was the obvious product of Southern upper-middle-class family: charming, goal-oriented and in many ways politically conservative.”⁴⁶ It is true that Morrison sometimes attacked hippies, as in the song *Five to One*, but was (secretly?) attracted to the idea of *participatory* struggle. Later on in their biography, in relation to the Living Theatre, Hopkins and Sugerman record the time when he

⁴³Sundling, op. cit., p.38.

⁴⁴Magistrale, “Wild Child : Jim Morrison’s Poetic Journeys” in Rocco (ed.) *The Doors Companion*, p.89.

⁴⁵Morrison, *The American Night*, p.3.

⁴⁶Hopkins and Sugerman, op. cit., p.153.

met Mark Amatin, the Living Theatre's advance man. They quote Amatin that Morrison "wanted to find ways to incorporate a political message into what he was doing, but he didn't know how to go about it, or where to begin." He had asked Amatin, "what do I have to do?"⁴⁷ Whatever words can be said about the Living Theatre, "politically conservative" should not be among them. Coupled with the lyrics it seems that Morrison was more revolutionary than is often thought, including by his biographers. All of this would eventually lead to the Miami incident.⁴⁸

After the Miami concert, in May 1969, Morrison would declare that "Rock is dead" - in some improvisational lyrics that have only been released recently : "As long as I got breath / The death of rock is the death of me / And rock ... is ... dead." He added : "the initial flash is over... The energy is gone. There is no longer a belief."⁴⁹ And shortly before his death in 1971 he confided to a friend, "I'm so sick of everything. People keep thinking of me as a rock and roll star and I don't want anything to do with it. I can't stand it anymore... who do they think Jim Morrison is anyway?"⁵⁰ In case this seems disingenuous, we should consider that many of his lyrics refer to death and could be described as depressive, and that increased self-destruction which followed after Miami. The riches he had gained from fame obviously seemed not to be satisfying for him. His friend and fellow poet Michael Ford claimed he : "contributed to American Indian funds. I think he really wanted to help people but he was so beleaguered by pressures it was difficult for him to do much on a large scale."⁵¹

In (January?) 1969 Morrison had told Fred Myrow, composer in residence at the New York Philharmonic (who ironically was investigating more popular music) : "If I don't find a new way to develop creatively within a year ... I'll be good for nothing but nostalgia."⁵² It is

⁴⁷ op. cit., p.222. More of this exchange with Amatin is in Miami chapter.

⁴⁸ see Miami chapter.

⁴⁹ Doors Box Set Part One (1998). Lyric excerpted in Riordan and Prochnicky, *Break on Through : The Life and Death of Jim Morrison*, p.326.

⁵⁰ Hopkins and Sugerman, op. cit., p.360.

⁵¹ ibid.

⁵² op. cit., p.220.

crucial to realise that this was at a time when The Doors were at the peak of their success:

“In mid-January 1969 the Doors were doing well indeed. They were, in fact, the ‘American Beatles,’ the Biggest American Group.”⁵³ In a readers poll the Doors were named top group.

⁵⁴ As regards artistic credibility however, Morrison was still dissatisfied. It was in February that Morrison first saw the Living Theatre. Contradicting their own opinion of Morrison as “politically conservative” yet again, Hopkins and Sugerman state : “He would never say so aloud to anyone but his closest friends, but he thought of himself as a revolutionary figure, one who had had to provide a social balance by opposing his father.” He “did not necessarily want to lead the revolution, but if there was going to be one, he was all for it. Though he claimed that some of his songs came to him in a vision, he was never unaware of the mutinous and apocalyptic nature of that vision. When his fans and the rock public came to regard him as a figurehead in the political / social movement that was taking place, Jim was publicly unmoved, but secretly flattered.”⁵⁵

This all can be related to Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of carnival, a connection O’Hop has explored.⁵⁶ It is possible to tie in certain events at the festivals of Woodstock, Atlanta and the Isle of Wight as well, for further evidence that people in a festival situation can be made aware of their own ability to transgress boundaries; exactly what Morrison was continually trying to achieve with his audiences. Bakhtin calls attention to medieval grotesque entertainment, with the Roman festival of Saturnalia being an even earlier manifestation of carnival activity. Bakhtin defines the “carnival” as follows: “one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions. Carnival

⁵³ Hopkins and Sugerman, op. cit., p.216.

⁵⁴ Eye Magazine poll, quoted in op. cit., p.220.

⁵⁵ op. cit., p.220.

⁵⁶ O’Hop, Suzanne, *Translation of Art into Revolution* 1997 PhD thesis (*passim*). This English thesis does not explore Morrison’s performances or other 60s festivals, but her work inspired this short section dealing with Bakhtin (it is a key theme running throughout her thesis).

was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized ...”⁵⁷ He is careful to separate it from Romanticism, because grotesque imagery contains a “materialistic concept of being, most adequately defined as realistic.” He backs this up by claiming that this imagery, “directly related to folk carnival culture, as we find it in Rabelais, Cervantes and Shakespeare, influenced the entire realistic literature of the following centuries. Realism of grand style, in Stendhal, Balzac, Hugo and Dickens ... was always linked directly or indirectly with the Renaissance tradition.”⁵⁸

Unfortunately, this imagery degenerated into static “character” presentation and narrow “genrism” that was too static to represent the “recasting and new birth” that is so crucial to this form. Degenerate, petty realism celebrated moral sententiousness and abstract concepts: “What remains is nothing but a corpse, old age deprived of pregnancy, equal to itself alone; it is alienated and torn away from the whole in which it had been linked to that other, younger link in the chain of growth and development.”⁵⁹ Rabelais was, according to Bakhtin, not just popular among his contemporaries, but among the people as well. There is a reference to Goethe’s description of the Roman festival: “carnavalesque revelry is marked by absolute familiarity. Differences between superiors and inferiors disappear for a short time, and all draw close to each other. Nobody cares what may happen to him, while freedom and ceremony are balanced by good humor.”⁶⁰ The carnivalesque crowd “in the marketplace *or in the streets* is not merely a crowd. It is the people as a whole, but organized in their own way, the way of the people. It is outside of and contrary to all existing forms of the coercive socioeconomic and political organization, which is suspended for the time of the festivity.”⁶¹

Rabelais and His World also untangles the difficult issue of the contrary nature of individual versus collective action:

⁵⁷ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p.10.

⁵⁸ op. cit., p.52.

⁵⁹ op. cit., p.53.

⁶⁰ op. cit., p.246.

⁶¹ op. cit., p.255. Italics are mine.

This festive organization of the crowd must be first of all concrete and sensual. Even the pressing through, the physical contact of bodies, acquires a certain meaning. The individual feels that he is an indissoluble part of the collectivity, a member of the people's mass body. In this whole the individual body ceases to a certain extent to be itself: it is possible, so to say, to exchange bodies, to be renewed ... At the same time the people become aware of their sensual, material bodily unity and community.⁶²

Language is an important part of this - "Abuses, curses, profanities and improprieties are the unofficial elements of speech. They were and are still conceived as a breach of the established norms of verbal address: they refuse to conform to conventions, to etiquette, civility, respectability."⁶³ These speech forms bring us closer to the people because of they are closer to their everyday language - they "create a special collectivity, a group of people initiated in familiar intercourse, who are frank and free in expressing themselves verbally."⁶⁴

Popular festive forms:

look into the future. They present the victory of this future ... This is the victory of all the people's material abundance, freedom, equality, brotherhood ... The birth of the new, of the greater and the better, is as indispensable and as inevitable as the death of the old... In the whole of the world and of the people there is no room for fear... This whole speaks in all carnival images; it reigns in the very atmosphere of this feast, making everyone participate in this awareness.⁶⁵

Some, of course, have claimed that there is naive utopianism in this work. Booker and Juraga cite Michael Gardiner's comments that the "central shortcoming" of Bakhtin's thought is : "he seriously overestimates the capacity of dialogic literature and popular culture to effect the liberation of human consciousness from the grip of monologism."⁶⁶ However, Booker and Juraga themselves disagree: "Gardiner's apparent equation of utopianism with naiveté is highly debatable. One need only consider the insistence of Marxist critics like Fredric Jameson that a utopian notion of a desirable alternative future is necessary to empower meaningful political action in the present."⁶⁷

⁶² Bakhtin, op. cit., p.255.

⁶³ op. cit., p.187.

⁶⁴ op. cit., p.188.

⁶⁵ op. cit., p.256.

⁶⁶ Booker and Juraga, *Bakhtin, Stalin and Modern Russian Fiction*, p.5.

⁶⁷ Booker and Juraga, *ibid*.

In order so that we do not stray too far from our consideration of Morrison, we may compare here the final action of The Living Theatre's *Paradise Now*: "The tree of knowledge is formed with three men and two women supported on the shoulders of other actors, the group of couples encircled by the rest of the troupe... the circle around the tree opens and the actors spill out into the audience, mingling with the people and conducting them out of the theatre and into the street... The jubilation that infects the spectators and actors at this point was most manifest in the incredible procession that followed the second performance of *Paradise Now* at Avignon. In the street, spectators surrounded the actors in a compact circle of about two hundred people."⁶⁸ This was in 1968 at around the time of the May disturbances - "the city obtained a court summons demanding the withdrawal of the play for disturbing the peace."⁶⁹ It seems that a comment of Pete Seeger's that the suppression of art is evidence of the fear that authority has of it, has some relevance here. We shall discuss the Miami incident more later.⁷⁰

What of the precise connection to the musical festival? A weakness with the medieval carnival is that it all too often provided a brief respite from social problems rather than it being (seen as) part of a wider movement. Laws and restrictions may have been forgotten during the festival time, but this tended to be temporary - and sometimes fully licensed by authorities. If it is possible to be "carnavalesque" in the streets⁷¹ then we are not certain of what this constitutes in the real world. There were interesting events however - certainly at three large music festivals in the 1960s, that showed a certain expression of political power among the audience. These "storming of the fence" incidents, that we shall look at next, are very similar to the type of riotous Dionysian action that Morrison was also trying to stimulate at shows such as Miami (although the Doors only appeared at one of the festivals described

⁶⁸Biner, *The Living Theatre*, p.213.

⁶⁹op. cit., p.215.

⁷⁰Miami chapter.

⁷¹in the Bakhtinian sense, see above.

below). It should be noticed that all three of these occurred as the decade was drawing to a close (perhaps a reaction to it) and two occurred after Altamont.

First we need to consider Woodstock. First of all it has to be admitted that the Woodstock festival, held in Bethel, New York State, from Aug 15-18 1969 was a business venture. Like many, but certainly not all, festivals at this time, it had to make money for the organisers in order to facilitate other festivals (and of course to make a profit). \$180,000 was spent on talent.⁷² Nevertheless, free kitchens and a free school were set up in the festival area, and the community also benefited from the actions of Abbie Hoffman (of the Youth International Party, better known as the Yippies). He managed to persuade the producers to donate \$10,000 to his group (mainly by threatening to disrupt it). Various community projects would benefit from the money “including New York City storefronts they rented to shelter runaways and defense funds they established for the ‘politically oppressed.’ ”⁷³

More significantly for our purposes here was the consequences of the mass of people that attended. Twenty-four hours before the event traffic was backed up for 10 miles on Route 17B to Bethel, and producer Michael Lang woke up on Friday morning to discover that the ticket booths were missing. Cosponsor of the festival, John Roberts, was supposed to handle it - a garage owner was hired to tow two dozen booths in. People, cars and tents, in much larger numbers than expected, were blocking the way. Although it was said that all attempts to politicise the festival had failed, the prime objective of the group, to persuade festival-goers not to pay, came true when the fence had to come down. At around noon on the Friday the men came to change ticket-boxes. Two hundred thousand people had come in and it was impossible to get them to come back and go through the gates again. They feared there would be a riot.

⁷² Following quotes taken from “How Woodstock Happened” by Elliot Tiber, Times Herald-Record, Woodstock Commemorative Edition 1994, reproduced verbatim at <www.woodstock69.com>

⁷³ <Woodstock 69.com>, op. cit., wsrprnt4.

A second example is of the Atlanta Pop Festival at Byron, Georgia, July 3-6 1970. A number of bands appeared at the three day festival - four of which had also appeared at Woodstock - John Sebastian, Jimi Hendrix, Richie Havens and Ten Years After - and several would also appear at Isle of Wight that August. A proportion of the almost 600,000 people that attended the festival, broke the perimeter fence down on the very first day. According to Mankin :

Our primary job was to build an eight-foot tall plywood fence around the entire, soybean-covered festival seating area... It had been almost a year since the unexpectedly large crowd at Woodstock had forced its promoters to declare it a "free festival." We all wondered how big our own crowd would be and whether fences and tickets would mean anything in Byron. Soon enough, as opening day approached and the crowd swelled, we heard the cries of "Music should be free for the people!" Then, even before the gates opened, all our hard work erecting plywood was for naught and the fences fell.

Or as Richard Beck describes it : "Not far on the heels of Woodstock, few people could know that this would be one of the last truly big weekend festivals before the decline of this phenomenon ... By now promoters are learning that they can traverse a minefield of logistical and legal problems only to see their investment go up in smoke as they are forced to throw open the gates to disruptive fans demanding free admission. Now with barricades broken, fans and revelers from all over the country begin to pour into the breach." ⁷⁴ There was a previous festival in Atlanta the previous year, but there were no further large festivals there after 1970.

Another similar incident occurred at the Isle of Wight concert which took place from August 26-30 1970. Many of the acts that appeared at Woodstock including The Who, Jimi Hendrix, John Sebastian, Joan Baez, etc., performed at the 4-day festival, which drew audiences variously estimated as between 250,000 and 400,000. A group known as the Free Festival Radicals were present at the concert and were inciting people who were camped outside the fence to try to storm it. Baez spoke with reporters about the rebellious elements.

⁷⁴Information on this festival is extremely difficult to obtain. Many anthologists (e.g. Anderson, Marwick) simply do not mention it and these two detailed accounts - "Still Savoring the Magic" by Bill Mankin and "Procul Harem at the Atlanta Pop Festival" by Richard Beck are from <<http://www.classicrockpage.com/newslet/issues/aug11.htm>>

From her position she was equivocal about their motives, saying that they were rebelling against a “lousy” world, but that their agenda may not be entirely the right one either. A report in “The Times” for Aug 31 bewailed the focus away from music towards politics, and blamed: “the fierce young musical radicals whose attempts to force the organisers into declaring it a free event were a constant peripheral obligato to what went on in the main enclosure - for whom the music is obviously not the main thing.”⁷⁵

Gatecrashing on a massive scale did occur and on Sunday 30 August it was declared a free event - as in Woodstock the fence was taken down for the last day of the festival. A promoter⁷⁶ is heard in the movie to refer to the smaller scale (and rarely talked about) Isle of Wight concert of the previous year.⁷⁷ He is heard to state : “Thirty people last year could not keep an area half the size of that Downs free of people jumping over the fence. How do you think they’re going to do it this year, where there’s worse conditions, where there’s a slope...”

⁷⁸ The last comment makes the point of course that we cannot ascribe the events concerning the fence entirely to the location - underneath a hill in 1970. David Wilsworth, a journalist present at the festival, provides corroboration of this account : “One of their jobs was to prevent people from climbing the eight-foot wooden fence around the arena, in this they were only partly successful.”⁷⁹ In 1969 it seems they did not have the hill, and their festival security could not cope, despite manpower called in to help. What happened at the other festivals also prove against this point of course.

⁷⁵ Karl Dallas, “Soundtrack for a lifestyle,” *The Times*, Aug. 31 1970, in Shaw, *The Doors on the Road*, p.210.

⁷⁶ Only identified on the 1995 documentary movie “Message to Love” as “Ron / The Promoter”. A subsequent 2000 documentary on the festival, “Days in the Life - Sink the Island,” does not identify him.

⁷⁷ Also known as the Wootton Pop Festival this 3-day festival (29-31 August 1969) featured such performers as Bob Dylan, Richie Havens, The Who and Joe Cocker - see <<http://www.rook4.freemove.co.uk/Wootton%201969.htm>> It has been somewhat eclipsed by Woodstock of course and information is hard to find.

⁷⁸ “Message to Love” documentary film.

⁷⁹ David Wilsworth [No source], Ryde, I.O.W Aug. 31 - see <<http://tinpan.fortunecity.com/ebony/546/iow1969-press.html>>

This also gives us a new perspective on ideas that the Altamont festival marked the end of the Sixties. In fact that seems to have been a one-off event. It was a combination of very cold weather (even in San Francisco the month of December, when the concert took place, is very chilly), a decrepit speedway for a venue, and above all the brutality of *this particular group* of Hells Angels. Though Marwick calls this a “disastrous choice” as security,⁸⁰ it is worth pointing out that (another group of ?) the Hells Angels had presided over a free concert by the Stones in Hyde Park just five months earlier, an event which went without incident.⁸¹ Clearly not a lot could have changed in society or in the counterculture during this six-month period. Paul Kantner of Jefferson Airplane said that this group of Hells Angels were “neophytes” and were without their leaders that usually went with them,⁸² usually stopping them from getting into trouble. The venue was decided on in haste - just 2 days before the concert. The group of the motorcycle troupe chosen for this event were drunk and high on drugs and had started beating fans up before the Rolling Stones had even arrived in their helicopter. After Mick Jagger spotted a black man who he thought was pointing a gun at him, one of the Hells Angels stabbed the man. This was hardly typical of Sixties concerts - reminding one of a saying among lawyers that extreme cases make very bad law. The Sixties was a cultural decade - these sometimes do not fit neatly into chronological decade boundaries. The Atlanta Pop Festival just seven months after Altamont and also the Isle of Wight festival in 1970 (and to a lesser extent in 1969) provided “storming of the fence” incidents. After the 1970 Isle of Wight festival, the promoters (as they did in Atlanta and Woodstock) announced that a similar event that had been planned would not take place the following year. Though no Doors concerts resulted in this exact “storming of the fence” activity, there were riots caused by Morrison’s shamanistic performances, and at Miami Morrison was to attempt to engineer

⁸⁰Marwick, *The Sixties*, p.749.

⁸¹Curiously many cultural historians simply do not mention this July concert - perhaps because it reveals the uniqueness of the Altamont fiasco.

⁸²Kantner interview, *Dancing in the Street* “The Summer of Love” BBC Documentary 1996.

a riot using as a model the very politically aware Living Theatre (as in *Paradise Now*, the riot that leads people from the theatre out into the street).⁸³ These incidents provide us with concrete examples of protests within a musical environment - which festival producers had to take notice of. There was no sequel to Woodstock until 1994 and this was a very different event from the original - \$135 a ticket, 550 state troopers and myriad corporate sponsors - with Pepsi as the official soft drink.⁸⁴ There was no follow-up to the Isle of Wight 1970. With organisation and commitment, this could have been merely a prelude to a much wider protest dealing with the predominantly financial concerns of the business side of the music industry.⁸⁵ The initiative was not seized before the unity of the decade fizzled out.

We may finally note briefly that according to Greg Shaw, Morrison attended a free concert by Pink Floyd at Hyde Park National Amphitheater in London on Jul 18 1970.⁸⁶ This was no doubt an event to be compared with the free Rolling Stones Hyde Park event. What he might have been thinking as he attended yet another concert with no apparent profit motive, and whether he considered how this state of affairs was brought about, is not recorded. Had he lived longer he would have seen that these events would be replaced with more conventional concerts, and he would have considered why there were no sequels to these large festivals. There was also less pressure to provide free concerts. It seems therefore that the reason that Morrison, like many other Sixties performers, followed a downward spiral into increasingly self-destructive activity is that he was unable to cope with the knowledge that his experiment (trying to incite a carnivalesque riot in his crowd) had not been as successful as he had hoped. He had proved his own prognostication in an interview

⁸³see Miami chapter.

⁸⁴Farley, Christopher John, "WOODSTOCK SUBURB" *Time*, August 22, 1994

<www.time.com/time/magazine/archive/1994/940822/940822.music.html>

⁸⁵As an example of what could have taken place the Jimi Hendrix film *Jimi Plays Berkeley* unwittingly documents a protest outside a screening of the Woodstock movie in that city - but it is clearly very small-scale. It is a matter of speculation as to how such a mass communication medium as the internet will affect any such large-scale protest in future (it has proved useful in recent demonstrations) - organisation seemed to be a problem generally among sixties radicals.

⁸⁶Shaw, *Doors on the Road*, p.205.

when he said : “ How can I set free anyone who doesn’t have the guts to stand up alone and declare his own freedom? ... people claim they want to be free ... But that’s bullshit! People are terrified to be set free - they hold on to their chains.”⁸⁷ He was unable to adapt to other genres after Miami with the result that he became disillusioned with music generally (“so sick of everything” as quoted above⁸⁸). It is seriously doubtful whether any other work of art could have had such an impact as to physically break through capitalist barriers - as the storming of the fences at Woodstock, Atlanta and Isle of Wight concerts symbolise. These of course were isolated incidents - and Morrison, who was present at the Isle of Wight festival, did not recognise the significance of them. It could be said that neither did youth generally. This does seem to be exactly what he had attempted to achieve at Miami - to *catalyse* a crowd, as we shall see. If this turns into a riot there is a transgression, an act of civil disobedience that could potentially be nurtured into a consequential action.

The question could still be asked by a critic as to whether any meaningful action is possible, or can be stimulated when it could be described as a moneymaking enterprise. The question was put to Hendrix directly in September 1969 on the Dick Cavett Show. The host Cavett asked Hendrix : “Someone said it’s hard to sing the blues when you’re making that kind of money. That assumes that you can’t be unhappy and have a lot of money.” Hendrix replied : “Yeah. Well sometimes it gets to be really easy to sing the blues when you’re supposed to be making all this money.”⁸⁹ Because money is getting to be out of hand now and musicians, especially young cats, they get a chance to make all this money and they ... lose themselves and they forget about their music itself, and forget about their talents, they forget

⁸⁷Lizzie James interview Part I, 1967, in Sugerman, *The Doors : The Illustrated History*, p.64.

⁸⁸ above, p.78.

⁸⁹Hendrix’s manager is discussed in *Reputations : Jimi Hendrix*, BBC 1999. Ironically, most of Hendrix’s money was handled by Mike Jeffreys who was observed in the Bahamas paying off some “businessmen” with briefcases full of money. Jeffreys was eventually fired by Hendrix (just a day before Hendrix’s death) for mishandling their financial affairs. All money was handled by Jeffreys and was dispensed by him on his behalf. On Jan 23 1968 Hendrix’s personal bank account in Martin’s Bank, Edgware Rd, London contained only £8 17s 6d. in total, It is unclear whether Hendrix suspected something at this stage.

about the other half of them so therefore you can sing a whole lot of blues. The more money you make the more blues, sometimes, you can sing.”⁹⁰ It seems as if much of the boredom that Morrison felt when he was expected to play the same songs night after night, was something Hendrix felt also. In a 1968 interview Hendrix said, “We’ve been playing ‘Purple Haze’, ‘The Wind Cries Mary’, ‘Hey Joe’, ‘Foxy Lady’. We’ve been playing all these songs - which are really groovy songs, but we’ve been playing them for 2 years so quite naturally we’ll start improvising here and there; and there are other things we want to turn on to the people.”⁹¹ There was obviously a form of experimentation here which links with Morrison’s desire to intersperse his poetry into music. Morrison in December 1969 said he had had a “nervous breakdown”⁹² Hendrix when asked by Dick Cavett if he had ever had a nervous breakdown, replied that he had had “3 since I’ve been in this group, since I’ve been in this business.”⁹³ It surely cannot be claimed that this was an attempt to gain publicity when it was unlikely to have done his reputation as a “dangerous” performer any good.

Also, with Hendrix there were riots (as there was at Doors performances) such as at Zurich in 1967 when riot police had to be called in to subdue the crowd. Hendrix was at the 3 “riotous” festivals described above (Isle of Wight, Woodstock and Atlanta). And just as Morrison had problems with his record company trying to manage his image (such as when he insisted that his bearded image appear on the “LA Woman” album as revenge for when earlier non-bearded photos were used on the 2 previous albums despite Morrison’s change in image having been made), Hendrix had something similar. His manager Mike Jeffreys was concerned that he was becoming unprofitable because of his artistic decisions on the “Electric Ladyland” album :

⁹⁰“Jimi Hendrix” 1973.

⁹¹“Reputations : Jimi Hendrix” BBC Documentary 1999.

⁹²Hopkins and Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, p.277.

⁹³“Reputations : Jimi Hendrix.”

for Mike Jeffrey it was bad news on at least two counts: it was a double, with therefore a lower "sales profile" (the controversial nudes cover didn't help either) and musically it was a (large) step away from "Purple Haze" and "Are You Experienced?" It was also very uneconomically recorded - over an extended period with much loose jamming and "wasted" studio time. But it wasn't only the money-minded Jeffrey who was unhappy with the way Hendrix was going. Chas Chandler was concerned about Hendrix's behaviour, which was becoming somewhat unpredictable. In addition, he was eased out (or quit) as producer during the recording of 'Electric Ladyland' and in frustration sold out his 50% interest in Hendrix to Jeffrey.⁹⁴

That he nevertheless stuck to these decisions despite the *financial* advice given to him is interesting, and could be evidence to support any claim that Hendrix was not motivated solely by money concerns.

It could be claimed that other musicians such as Bob Dylan have captured this essence of tribalism. Dylan also came from a folk background - and like Morrison regarded his lyrics as a form of poetry. Dylan had played rock n'roll in high school but had been writing poetry since age 10. When he got to University of Minnesota in 1959 he changed his name and began singing folk music. After dropping out of college in 1960 he met his idol Woody Guthrie and signed to the same record label as Pete Seeger (Columbia).⁹⁵ What is immediately apparent is that his second LP (the first was mainly cover versions) entitled "The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan" is every bit as concerned with protest as any of his contemporaries. Songs such as "Blowin' in the Wind", "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall", "Masters of War", and "World War III Blues" all contain explicitly political lyrics. "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall" was penned at time of the Cuban Missile Crisis and contains the lines : "I saw ten thousand talkers whose tongues were all broken / I saw guns and sharp swords in the hands of young children / ..And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall."⁹⁶ "Masters of War" was even more direct - "Like Judas of old / You lie and deceive / A world war can be won / You want me to believe... Is your money that good / Will it buy you forgiveness / Do you think

⁹⁴Henderson, "It's Like Trying to Get Out of a Room Full of Mirrors" <www.rockmine.music.co.uk> article.

⁹⁵Stone, *Contemporary Musicians*, Vol.3 (June 1990) <www.musicblvd.com/cgi-bin/tw/>

⁹⁶Dylan, *Lyrics 1962-1985*, p.86.

that it could.”⁹⁷ And *Blowin’ in the Wind* : “how many years can some people exist/ Before they’re allowed to be free.”⁹⁸ *Rock 100* said : “Dylan’s albums were listened to as if they were seismic readings from an impending apocalypse.”⁹⁹ In the third album “*The Times They Are a-Changin’*” (1964), according to Spampanito, “he had been thrust into the role of media spokesperson for the counterculture protest movement.”¹⁰⁰ The song “*With God on Our Side*” is a powerful attack on tradition’s role in war - to justify propaganda : “And the names of the heroes / I’s made to memorise / With guns in their hands / And God on their side.”¹⁰¹ There was also the protest song “*The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll.*” And “*Only a Pawn in their Game*” dealt with civil rights, itself a seemingly apocalyptic battle between good and evil : “And the Negro’s name / Is used it is plain / For the politician’s gain / As he rises to fame.”¹⁰² And most strongly (and memorably) of all in the title track : “Come senators, congressmen / Please heed the call / .. There’s a battle outside / And it is ragin’ / It’ll soon shake your windows / And rattle your walls / ... Come mother’s and fathers throughout the land / Your sons and daughters are beyond your command.. The order is rapidly fadin’..”¹⁰³ This was a clear incitement to action - aimed *at youth*. “Therefore it seems strange that, as Spampanito points out, it was “at the same time the album was released”, that Dylan began to express : “his growing pessimism about the counterculture’s ability to affect (*sic*) change, and declared that he was uncomfortable with his role as the movement’s mouthpiece.”¹⁰⁴

His next album - “*Another Side of Bob Dylan*” contained more folk ballads and love songs than previous records. In 1965 there was the famous episode where he performed with

⁹⁷Dylan, op. cit., pp. 81-82.

⁹⁸ibid., p.77

⁹⁹Stone, op. cit.

¹⁰⁰Lynn M. Spampanito, *Contemporary Musicians*, Vol. 21 (April 1998) reproduced at

<www.musicblvd.com>

¹⁰¹Dylan, op. cit., p.132.

¹⁰²Dylan, op. cit., p. 138.

¹⁰³Dylan, op. cit., p. 127-8.

¹⁰⁴Spampanito, op. cit.

an electric guitar at the Newport Folk Festival - he was booed off the stage. Lyrics became very obscure - and Dylan himself did not help this by refusing to talk about the meaning of his songs in interviews. The philosophy of his lifestyle would change dramatically in years to come. After a near-fatal motorcycle crash in 1966 however Dylan's music became distinctly mellow and religious - he "wrote songs that reflected his new-found sense of inner peace and satisfaction."¹⁰⁵ His next three albums were criticised harshly for what critics said was his failure to comment on the harsh realities of the time - whether Vietnam or civil rights. The personal songs on his following albums were well received by public and critics - especially "Blood on the Tracks." His conversion to Christianity was rather obvious after 1979 - Kurt Loder stated in a Rolling Stone review : "Dylan hadn't simply found Jesus but seemed to imply that he had His home phone number as well."¹⁰⁶ A subsequent conversion to an ultra-Orthodox Jewish sect followed, and critics remain divided about the quality of Dylan's later work.

Both Seeger and Dylan were influenced by Woody Guthrie and both spent the first half of the Sixties (and in Seeger's case long before this) singing protest ballads. While Dylan seemed to "grow out" of the Sixties half way through the decade, Seeger was more applicable to the counterculture *and* is still aware that attempted political struggle by means of art is necessary and urgent. Dylan was later more interested in more introspective, emotional, and sometimes ambiguous lyrics - eventually incorporating a rigid, fundamentalist religious message. Seeger remained convinced that there was at least some power that song retains that brings emotion into political situations, rather than merely stating it in raw, colourless (elite?) language, as a journalist, writer or academic would. It becomes very difficult to imagine that art can ever achieve anything (and what else can?) if, like Dylan, the artist has become dubious about his own role.

¹⁰⁵Spampanito, op. cit.

¹⁰⁶in Stone, op. cit.

Frank Zappa took a very different tack to the musicians mentioned thus far, when writing and playing music. He developed a satirical style based on outrageousness, apparently trying to make his audience aware of exploitation in the music business as well as politically-motivated censorship. His band The Mothers of Invention, formed in 1965, quickly became highly profitable, somewhat paradoxically, as he moved from being an underground hit to having a devoted, if confused, mainstream fan base. Though highly critical of the Summer of Love - satirising it mercilessly in the album "We're Only in it for the Money" (1968), he celebrated what he termed "freaks" in "Freak Out!" (1966) and his theatrical musical "Absolutely Free" (opened in 1967). He told an interviewer : "The origins of hippies as per San Francisco flower power Haight Ashbury is quite a different evolution from the LA freak movement of which I was a part ...Most of the people in the LA freak scene around 1965 were getting their costumes together, dancing a lot. The real freaks weren't using any drugs at all." ¹⁰⁷ Zappa stated in an interview : "One of the good things that happened in the 60s ... was that at least some music of an *unusual* or *experimental nature* got recorded and released." ¹⁰⁸ Also it was "a climate of aberration. Unexpected things happened, unexpected people emerged, unexpected ideas were countenanced." ¹⁰⁹ This sounds like something Morrison may have identified with, but Zappa took "experimental" music to quite unheard of extremes (if we compare it with Morrison's berating of the crowd, for instance, or his poetry on stage). In Zappa's stage performances there were bizarre, surreal routines - but he was not always exact in interviews about what he intended to achieve with his music. A contemporary commentator noted : "[Zappa] thinks that 'freaking out' is an important method of expression and effecting change. He defines 'freaking out' as 'a process whereby an individual casts off outmoded and restrictive thinking, dress and social etiquette in order to express creatively his relationship to his immediate environment and the social structure as

¹⁰⁷Ruhlmann in Kostelanetz (ed.) *The Frank Zappa Companion*, p.17.

¹⁰⁸Ruhlmann in op. cit., p.5.

¹⁰⁹Ruhlmann, op. cit., p.6.

a whole.’ ”¹¹⁰ Also noting : “Mr. Zappa was not explicit about how he was going to lead his crusade against the pop and serious music Establishments, other than to get his band’s work more widely heard.”¹¹¹ Kostelanetz perceived what he termed “arrogance” in a Zappa performance he witnessed : “At one point in the group’s concert, he accused a fellow musician of stealing something from Pierre Boulez and then, after a pause, put down us ‘kiddies’ for not knowing who Boulez was.”¹¹² The music, according to Kostelanetz is “deliberately alienating (unlike most rock which aims to seep into one’s system).”¹¹³ Zappa himself agreed in 1986 when he admitted : “I would say that my entire life has been one massive failure. Because I don’t have the tools or wherewithal to accomplish what I want to accomplish.”¹¹⁴ Though Morrison might well have said the same thing, Zappa’s music was particularly lacking in a sense of purpose. The 1980s saw Zappa in a mood for speaking out politically against Reagan’s “depression during ’82-’83”.¹¹⁵ In 1985 Zappa spoke out memorably against censorship in a senate hearing discussing plans to control and categorise music in much the same way as film certification. Watson said Zappa’s politics : “are a strange kind of pre-Marxist, post-situation materialism: they basically define themselves in opposition to social control through ideas. The great bogey is religion, hotly followed by Fascism, followed by Television, its latter-day derivatives. Possible members of this current include the Marquis de Sade, Johnny Rotten, Killing Joke (before they became a rock band) and Crass.”¹¹⁶ Miles stated in 1994 : “Frank [Zappa] would not allow [the other Mothers] to take drugs or get legless like regular sixties rock bands which is one of the reasons that they never made it commercially - the kids couldn’t relate to it.”¹¹⁷ This is a particular problem

¹¹⁰Shelton “Son of Suzy Creamcheese” *The New York Times*, Sunday, December 25, 1966
<www.fwi.uva.nl/~heederik>

¹¹¹ibid.

¹¹²in Kostelanetz, op. cit., p.87.

¹¹³op. cit., p.88.

¹¹⁴Friedman and Lyons in op. cit., p.218.

¹¹⁵Guccione in Kostelanetz, op. cit., p.223.

¹¹⁶Watson in op. cit., p.108.

¹¹⁷Miles in op. cit., p76.

when you are trying to impart a message to your audience - Morrison seems to have attempted to “lead” the audience before subverting their expectations. A moment in a Zappa concert was described by Walley in 1972: “The biggest attraction of the show was the soft giraffe - the boys in the band had constructed a huge, stuffed giraffe with a hose running up to a spot behind the rear legs. Ray Collins ... would climb up the giraffe and massage it with a frog hand puppet. The giraffe’s tail would stiffen and flop! the audience would get sprayed with whipped cream ... The audience loved it.”¹¹⁸ Zappa broke up the band because he felt the audience were clapping for the wrong reasons,¹¹⁹ but it is hard not to find some sympathy with the beleaguered crowd.

Eyerman and Jamison point to the difference between the individual bohemian artist, and the politically aware artist:

The residual or alternative tradition would be the bohemian, in which the artist lives out a subcultural existence, based on the principle that art is life, an end in itself. The [bohemian] artist rejects any involvement in politics as an intrusion and distortion of aesthetic practice. The dominant culture - the commercial, professional, or state, depending on the historical context - imposes the external standards, material conditions, and aesthetic criteria for artistic expression. The social movement, on the other hand, provides opportunities for artists to experience and innovate and alter those standards and criteria, a context in which the artist can become a political as well as a cultural agent, and thus help shape an emergent cultural formation.¹²⁰

Riordan and Prochnicky in their biography of Morrison state : “The Doors’ impact was heightened greatly by the era in which they existed... Rock music was at the forefront of every social movement in the 1960s and the kids grew up with it being one of the most important things in their lives ... The Doors ... typified their generation by daring to describe the dark passions as well as the high ideals that were driving it.”¹²¹ Amidst the cries of failure of the Sixties there is “something less tangible but every bit as real. There was a Summer of Love, there was a generation of kids who joined together and risked their lives because they believed that America was selling out, and there were leaders who dared to

¹¹⁸Walley in op. cit., p. 60.

¹¹⁹Hopkins, Rolling Stone, Oct. 18, 1969 “Mother’s Day Has Finally Come”

<www.fwi.uva.nl/~heederik>

¹²⁰ Eyerman and Jamison, *Music and Social Movements*, p.164-5.

¹²¹ Riordan and Prochnicky, *Break on Through*, p.504.

voice a dream that could not be silenced by the gun. And maybe in a few years the sons and daughters of our materialistic society will have a thing or two to add to life ...”¹²² Morrison made conscious efforts to turn concerts into “a theater of confrontation, urging audiences to the extremes even as he pushed himself beyond all conventional standards of behavior.”¹²³ Because “for all his tragic flaws, Morrison was not faking it - his “show” was theatrical, but his rebellious image and philosophy of life was not.”¹²⁴ His was a desire beyond profit or entertainment motive, a desire for action - to move beyond music, language and hegemonic passivity.

The important point is that there was an imaginative desire for new ideas - this was at the root of much of the youth protest. However, music on its own is still a form of communication - still a question of language, and for Morrison, even with rhythm it was not quite enough to get people to *act* radically (i.e. not just think radically). It was essential to subvert the audience from within their world rather than trying to attack it viscerally from outside (where it is easy to be ignored). For an argument to be successful it is essential to have a degree of subtlety - you cannot simply attack it physically. From a position of trust it was easier for Morrison later on to assert a more physical, confrontational role, with a better chance of success.

This was essentially present in his method of performing to audiences. No one concert had the same set list and apparently showed a high degree of improvisation. It was possibly on February 10 1968 (Greg Shaw lists the date of the below incident as uncertain), that at Berkeley Community Theatre, California : “mystified audience members remember Morrison scrapping the Doors’ usual set list and instead reading poetry”¹²⁵. However other band members had learned to always expect the unexpected at every single concert. The issue of

¹²² op. cit., p.505.

¹²³ op. cit., p.507.

¹²⁴ op. cit., p.505.

¹²⁵ Shaw, *The Doors on the Road*, p.93.

the boundary between the performer and the audience was addressed by him obtusely in an interview with the San Francisco Chronicle : “I’d like to play in a club where we could be with other people. Maybe we wouldn’t even play. It would be great to just sit down and talk with the audience, get rid of all the separate tables and have one big table.” He also commented: “We’re MUCH better in person. Our record album is only a map of our work.”

126

Just one example of a near-riot occurred as early as 1967 when Morrison was particularly energetic: “The performance concludes with Morrison collapsed on his back, screaming out the final verses [of Light My Fire] while those in the rear of the gym strain to see past the excitement in the front lines. The imminent surge towards the stage prompts the promoters to encircle the band as they finish their set and assemble a human barricade against the wave of fans advancing toward the stage.”¹²⁷ Control had to be administered, and it can be easily imagined that Morrison was noting such a reaction and would eventually work out how it could be fitted within an improvisation of the type performed by the Living Theatre. In the Roundhouse Theatre in London, 1968 (and in other concerts), Morrison got off the stage and offered his microphone to various people in the crowd - another fledgling collapse of the distinction between star and audience (a film for television of the concert shows cameras in the shot - cameramen obviously unprepared for such intrusions).¹²⁸

These examples all help to show that, at the very least, there was a *mood* of experimentation that provided hope for those like Morrison who were trying to take this a step further to a more confrontational approach. In short these were *enabling* measures in society that appeared to be marking impatience with dominant, hegemonic forms, and which were even on the verge of producing clear political action. A revealing example of a riotous act of civil disobedience occurred in Paris in the very year “Five to One” was released (on the

¹²⁶Shaw, op. cit., p.65.

¹²⁷Shaw, op. cit., p.66.

¹²⁸Videotape recording, *The Doors Are Open*, Granada TV, 1968.

album *Waiting for the Sun*), in May 1968. For ten days the city of Paris came to a standstill because of student action. Rocco sets the scene:

... a handful of students at the University of Nanterre begin a revolt against their society that spreads through the university system of the entire country. Their rebellion against everything they have ever known is so intense and so provocative that it quickly spreads to the working people of France. The students seize all of the schools and spend ten days fighting with police in the streets. The revolt spreads throughout the work places of France and soon ten million French workers are on strike. France is paralyzed : no mail, no electricity, no banks, no stores. Government is dead and the people are alive... All over Paris graffiti is written : "Power to the Imagination. Consumer Society must die a violent death. We want a new and original world..."¹²⁹

Unfortunately, for those impatient for widespread root-and-branch change, the workers' support for the students was very weak (perhaps even completely absent) and the revolution failed to materialise. But these events profoundly influenced some - Sartre for instance - and probably impressed Morrison (along with other incidents described above, in Chicago for instance). The Living Theatre was profoundly influenced by these uprisings - they took part in the seizure of the Odéon and Beck later said that this plus the events in the former Théâtre de France were "the most beautiful acts he had ever seen in any theatre."¹³⁰

We should examine briefly whether the prevailing mood of the times (with the emotion provided by music) produced something tangible, beyond mere spectacle? It is evident that events on the street (People's Park, numerous antiwar demonstrations etc.) and in the universities (Berkeley, New York, Columbia, Kent State, etc.), quite apart from the momentous events in Paris in 1968 (and elsewhere that year) *did* happen. And it is also evident, and no coincidence, that the music that the same young people were singing was revolutionary. Of course the contradictory nature of some of the collective goals of the revolutionaries (or groups of revolutionaries), didn't help their cause(s). Not having any large-scale communication medium (such as the Internet perhaps), it was difficult to impose organisation (leadership was too often equated with fascism). In *Paradise Now*, the very

¹²⁹ Rocco, "Cameras inside the coffin : Jim Morrison's challenge to the Hegemony of Vision" in Rocco (ed.), op. cit., p.73.

¹³⁰ Biner, *The Living Theatre*, p.203.

“play” Morrison saw just before his famous Miami concert, Beck included an “action” which calls the audience to enact the Paris revolution victoriously. Money is literally burned at this point - but by the spectators, never the actors. Ultimately the key value is with *collective* action, which involves individual awareness: “Looking for our lost tribalism: create a new tribalism: the collective in which the individual is not sacrificed to the collective nor the collective to the individual. The Absolute Collective.”¹³¹ This is what is being symbolised by the physical tearing down of the capitalist barriers (the fence) in the festivals discussed above - Dionysian revelry carried to a riotous extreme that then problematizes immediately the exploitation of members of the crowd. The individuals in the crowd decided to join the protest. Generally speaking, it is worth bearing in mind that it is not a matter of choosing between the individual or the collective - the state must exist. The question is at what point does the state intervene in the affairs of individuals, for the purposes of protection as well as control? Equally the question is not about whether the individual should have selfhood, free expression and rights - the question is at what point should these become subsumed because of the priorities of the state? There has to be some mechanism that allows people to stand up for their own equality as citizens (“all men are created equal”) and for individual rights. Therefore there has to be a *more equitable balance* between the ideologies of individualism and collectivism. The balance needs to be restored to a more equitable compromise, a *much better* balance.

Morrison songs such as the Brecht covers, the satire of the city evident in “LA Woman”, the uncompromising radicalism of “Whisky Mystics & Men,” “Unknown Soldier”, “When the Music’s Over” and many others, would be at the forefront of the audience’s mind. This would be part of the entertainment of politics that comprised what was important about the decade. Morrison’s lyrics would be examined very carefully by an audience for any

¹³¹Beck, *The Life of the Theatre*, §53.

revolutionary *or even mildly revolutionary* lyrics - they were searching for anything suggesting this in the 1960s. Though it is true that not every song of Morrison's was fitting in with the political context of the times, it is also evident that they did not need to be.

Fashion and the legitimacy of youth culture

The aim in this chapter is to offer some views on the role of fashion in the 1960s including how it has been influenced by political events during former “revolutionary”¹ periods in history. Reasons for the distinctive dress of musical performers and the influence they this has on their audiences will be examined. This will be seen to have a relationship with their expression of communal behaviour and what impact this had, or could have had, in society. Also examined will be the phenomenon of cultural elitism as it pertains to youth culture in relationship to established or “classical” art.

Ray Manzarek, keyboardist of The Doors, recalls in his book *Light My Fire* that while he and Jim Morrison were both Fine Arts and Cinematography students he noticed a massive collage that Morrison had created on the wall of his own student apartment :

He had cut out photos from *Life* magazine, from *Time* magazine, from fashion magazines, color and black-and-white images. Dorothy [Manzarek’s girlfriend] said Jim was the first guy she ever knew who bought fashion magazines. She was into *Vogue* and *Harper’s Bazaar*. A fashion maven, she’s always been into au courant styles. Always keeping abreast of the fashion of the day. Enjoying the changing patterns, the light, the chiaroscuro on the covering of women’s bodies. And so did Jim. He would paste models, beautiful women, in surrealistic settings by using other photos as counterpoint, creating a long continuing collage running the entire length of the wall adjacent to the bookcase. It was like a Chinese scroll unrolled and tacked up on his wall. Except the images were all contemporary. It was a picture story, a picture scroll. I stared at that wall, trying to discern a linear narrative in the images but I never could... it was the same thing Jim was doing with his student movie. It was poetry. It was a collision of images. Sergei Eisenstein, again....²

The images would be in different sections - one consisted of Marines in a “state of easy camaraderie” juxtaposed against a beautiful model, Jean Shrimpton : “who’s looking very seductive, and coming out from behind her is a snake, and the snake moves into an elephant and then an African scene Watusi warriors jumping - and then an American basketball player in mid-leap, and another model, arms outstretched, seemingly about to catch him. It went on like that. Beautifully cut and pasted, it was a tripster’s delight.”³ This spontaneous visual artwork of Morrison’s is interesting on a number of levels. The nature of representation that

¹ In the sense of “a great upheaval; a complete change, e.g. in outlook, social habits or circumstances” (Chambers English Dictionary).

² Manzarek, *Light My Fire : My Life with the Doors*, p.81.

³ *ibid.*



was prevalent in American (magazine) culture of the time was that of fixed rigid codes of beauty and appearance. In the musicals of the 1950s (films such as *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*) the beautiful dumb blonde was a dominant image - her glamorous clothes made her attractive on the surface without any reference to any other qualities. In this kind of film there was a (sometimes hidden) relationship with capitalism, more obviously in songs such as "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend". The pinup girl was not capable of *challenging* the viewer with her image. The pictures in Morrison's collage on the other hand were cut out from these fashion magazines and put into another environment - the artificial context of the magazine (in cultural materialist terms the status quo that it represented) was manipulated, transgressed.

Morrison's collage was like many avant-garde works prevalent in the 1960s, and this was without having any meaningful audience. For example, it is reminiscent of Robert Rauschenberg's use of picture material from a variety of sources : "The commercial technique of photographic silk-screening encouraged Rauschenberg to flood his canvases with pictures gathered from art books and magazines, from the television screen and through the viewfinder of his camera. In *Barge ...* images mirror, jostle and infiltrate one another, churning up a field that feels, like a big Pollock canvas, potentially infinite."⁴ Or with Andy Warhol who complicated the respective images of artists such as Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley etc., by calling attention to their reproduction. The image is replicated to the point of surfeit, and is flattened down to lose its unconventional characteristics, calling attention to it as being one face in a crowd. 'Beauty' itself is therefore deconstructed and subverted. In Morrison's collage too, the mere images of beauty were taken to another level. Allied with photographs from the news magazines *Life* and *Time* pertaining to politics and war (marines in Vietnam) it showed the relationship between art and society. It showed a multiplicity of

⁴ Ratcliff, " 'The Body Electric' : The Erotic Dimension in American Art " in Joachmides and Rosenthal (eds.) *American Art in the 20th Century*, p.168.

cultures (the African warriors next to American baseball stars), signalling that images of reality are wider than that provided by Western aesthetes. The “Woman as Muse” theme which frequently appeared in Morrison’s works is taken to a more intense level here, and its message is that women should not be displayed in any other environment except a complex one. Also, as with modern art, a meaning is not imposed (there is no aggressive, *dictated* agenda, only suggestions) - and it therefore requires the person viewing the art to move beyond passive viewing and activate his or herself to pursue meaning thoughtfully. The non-linear narrative is subversive of rigid form - this can be linked therefore with poetry or with 1960s theatre or rock performances. What is symbolised is the desire to reconstruct meaning - which is linked with a desire to subvert political reality. Manzarek describes it as a “collision” of images - implying forceful deconstruction of the context of the depiction of the models - who would otherwise be mere “pinups” . This provides an early insight into how Morrison used media portrayals (in this case fashion) to create something new himself.

As far as Morrison’s own fashion is concerned, for the first few years of his career, he typically wore leather suits on stage. This was somewhat anachronistic since this was between the 1950s motorbike era and the 1970s emergence of heavy metal music. Angela Carter has compared leather with velvet. She states that velvet, along with leather and suede, though less subtly with these latter two materials, is “skin anti-skin [*sic*], mimic nakedness... [that] simulates the flesh it conceals, a profoundly tactile fabric.”⁵ Fabrics and objects “hitherto possessing strong malignant fetishistic qualities have ... been cleansed of their deviational overtones and used for their intrinsic textural charm ... [they] are fetishes which the purity of style has rendered innocent, as sex becomes more relaxed and the norm more subtle.”⁶ Although “style means the presentation of the self as a three-dimensional art object,” nevertheless “disguise entails duplicity. One passes oneself off as another *who may*

⁵ Carter, ‘Notes for a theory of sixties style’ , *New Society*, 14 Dec. 1967, p.30.

⁶ *op .cit.*, p.34.

or may not exist.” Style gives “a relaxation from one’s own personality and [allows for] the discovery of unsuspected new selves.”⁷ This means therefore that there is something adjacent to and concurrent with consumption which cannot be thought of as simply passive. Today there is not the same countercultural background to fashion as there was in the 1960s and so today fashion does not have the same impact. Fashion does not really produce any social impact in itself - it will more likely only form a background to it but nevertheless it is a uniform that is disruptive to order rather than upholding it. Fashion is generally used in all aspects of society - e.g. the power of the businessman or the teacher’s formal suit, or indicators of class such as jewellery or fur : “Clothes are our weapons, our challenges, our visible insults.”⁸ But Carter points out that in youth culture : “this rainbow proliferation of fancy dress shows a new freedom many people fear, especially those with something to lose when the frozen, repressive, role-playing world starts to melt.”⁹ The multiplicity of clothing may be confusing but it does provide a subtlety to the image. As with Morrison’s collage, we learn that the human being is more complicated than the archetypes with which we surround ourselves in daily life by using conventional language. Money was exchanged for clothes of course, except in certain communes where there were bartering of goods between members of the commune, following from the example of the Free Store on the Haight.¹⁰ But whether money was paid or not, the message that was presented by the communal group represented by this form of dress was present simultaneously. This is the cultural materialist significance of dress.

We may however take the concept of socially meaningful and effective dress much further back, to the 1840s. One of Morrison’s favourite poets, Baudelaire, commented about some of the fashion of his day : “The dress coat and the frock-coat not only possess their

⁷ op. cit., p.32.

⁸ op. cit., p.31.

⁹ ibid.

¹⁰Noble, Eric, *Diggers Archives*, <http://www.diggers.org/free_store1.htm>

political beauty, which is the expression of universal equality, but also their poetic beauty, which is an expression of the public soul...”¹¹ As if to put this vision into practice, two years later he “took part in the Revolution of 1848, on the side of the Revolutionaries; not just in February against the monarchy - many bourgeois did that - but also in June, when the populace of Paris fought against the bourgeoisie.”¹² Unfortunately Baudelaire was beset by doubts about his own radicalism in later years (perhaps the 1860s equivalent of the “Second-thoughters” - today’s former Sixties radicals who have now renounced their activities and assimilated themselves into the modern world with all of its consumerist trappings). In relation to the *black* leather suit of Morrison’s, it is worth noting a contemporary post-French Revolution reaction that the revolutions of “1830 and 1848 have had a very great influence on the tendency to equality by means of a relative uniformity of costume. From the corporate [and] functional, costume becomes individual ... *It is no longer the personage who dresses, it is the man.*”¹³ Baudelaire in his youth thought of the nineteenth century thus far not as a period of progress but one of decline - the black clothes became a symbol of mourning for the age. Baudelaire at various times of his life encountered poverty personally and this may have provided some grounding for his optimistic enthusiasm for the apparent classless society that seemed to herald the Revolution, with its rejection of monarchical authority. Though there was still a vestige of the bourgeois ideology in the concept of the black suit, the dandy himself was disliked because of how far he departed from the norm. Bertall referred to “the young men who play the comedy of chic” - and the dandy was disliked in gentlemanly circles :

The members of elegant society, like the bourgeoisie in general, found it uncomfortable to cope with what might be hostile or ironical parodies of their own pretensions - or simply an entirely different interpretation of the meaning of dress ... According to another etiquette book, the dandy ‘exaggerates the rules, makes them ridiculous; what he wants is the triumph of the bizarre, of the conspicuous [*singulier*] over the natural [Bourgeau, *Usage du Monde*].’¹⁴

¹¹Baudelaire, “On the Heroism of Modern Life” in Steele, *Paris Fashion*, p.86.

¹²Steele, *ibid.*

¹³*Journal des Modes d’Hommes* (Jan 1867) in *op. cit.*, p.94.

¹⁴Steele, *op. cit.*, p.96.

The dandy was also criticised for being “indifferent to the horse that he mounts, to the woman that he greets, to the man that he approaches and at whom he stares for a moment before acknowledging him, and wearing written on his forehead - in English - this insolent inscription : *What is there in common between you and me?*”¹⁵

The leather suit was part of the image Morrison often presented to his audience, before 1969. At this time the other major group wearing leather (most pop performers did not do so) were the motorcyclist Hell’s Angels, who defied mortality with the motorcycle. There is therefore a link with Morrison’s seemingly death-defying stunts both on-stage (leaping into the crowd, at one point in Amsterdam consuming too many drugs to appear on stage) and off (car accidents and numerous rumours of his death, etc.). The Hells Angels were well known for their hatred of promoters and the fiduciary obsessions that often surrounded large festivals. According to Carter the “outlaw dress represents a real disassociation from society. It is a very serious joke ... the Hell’s Angels are obeying Camus’s law - that the dandy is always a rebel, that he challenges society because he challenges mortality... The human being who is condemned to die is, at least, magnificent before he disappears and his magnificence is his justification.”¹⁶

The customary objection to this from Marxist theorists is that within a capitalist economy fashion is merely part of a bigger game of ever-increasing consumption. Ewen and Ewen for instance, claim that fashion :

once the prerogative of those who enjoyed leisure and economic privilege, became the insignia of freedom, available to all. Yet fashion was really an odd admixture. As it intertwined with the instruments of mass production and consumption, its freedom was underlined by uniformity. The success of the industry was in its capacity to produce and distribute standardised goods, laced with the lingo of individual choice and self-expression... when a piece of art is reproduced its commercial potential may be enhanced but it loses some of its aura.¹⁷

Carter draws attention to the apparent arbitrariness of Sixties fashion but reveals something deeper than this is going on, which the industry only feels as if it is control of : “The gaudy

¹⁵*La Presse* (21 August 1859) in *ibid.*

¹⁶Carter, *op. cit.*, p.34.

¹⁷Ewen and Ewen, *Channels of Desire*, pp. 167-8.

rags of the flower children, the element of fancy dress even in serious clothes ... Clothes today seem arbitrary and bizarre; nevertheless the startling dandyism of the newly emancipated young reveals a kind of logic of whizzing entropy. Mutability is having a field day.”¹⁸ The question is whether this superabundance represents a culture that is full and complete in a way not envisaged before, or whether it is excessive to the point of collapse. In order to respond effectively to tradition there has to be widespread experimentation, a form of chaos. From destruction a form of rebuilding is substituted. This represents the first stage of that process. We could pick out an unofficial criteria of fashion from all of this - the gaudy rags presumably refer to the bright colours, and we have other common items of the time such as tie-dyed clothing to consider. Also there are clear items of clothing, such as anything connected with a suit, that are seen as too formal and are left out - the choice is limited to some extent. Within this however there is still scope for much creativity. Tradition is left behind and imagination is substituted - there is some reproducibility of ideas in Benjamin’s sense. The very basis upon which it was possible to pin down what is to be acceptable - a matter of tradition - was undermined.

Many Western countries were affected by countercultural movements during the Sixties - and certainly America and Britain were very close to each other in matters of culture and fashion. For the young the fashion business did not know what to offer - whatever was worn, as long as it was not formal, was accepted. As Carter says : “All these eclectic fragments, robbed of their symbolic content, fall together to create a new whole, a dramatisation of the individual, a personal style. And fashion today [1967] (real fashion, what real people wear) is a question of style, no longer a question of harmony. ‘What to wear with what’ is no longer a burning question; in the 1960s *everything* is worn all at once.”¹⁹ This should be thought of more as a challenge to accepted norms and traditions with a possible resolution, rather than

¹⁸Carter, op. cit., p.31.

¹⁹op. cit., p.31-2; italics mine.

as some kind of allegory of (postmodern) relativism. It is difficult with fashion to make a specific political statement but it does bind members of a group together and is a rejection of tradition - it forms a background to countercultural activity, rather than taking centre stage. This anti-harmonic concept - the “gaudy rags” of the flower children - was a form of unity between disparate forces, a reconciliation between ideas or fusion of new concepts. What mattered was not rules about presentation - hence “rags” - but what they reflected about the collective imagination. Carter draws attention, for comparison, to other fabrics which suggest the opposite of emancipation - the “sequined sheath of the cabaret singer as an image of passive female sexuality” and to the “veiled tulle and taffeta bride in her crackling virgin carapace”²⁰ - connected with the daughter as product of the father (him ‘giving her away’) and the surrender to obey the husband. According to Carter, “girls have been emancipated from the stiff forms of iconic sexuality. Thanks to social change, to contraception, to equal pay for equal work, there is no need for this iconography any more; both men and women’s clothes today say, ‘Look at me and touch me if I want you.’”²¹ This would explain why some clothing of men and women began to look more alike (though it would be a mistake to assume that Carter’s listed achievements of society were the only social problems generally left to be solved).

Rubenstein notes that in the early 1970s: “before disco became popular, whatever one wore during the day would be just as good at night. With disco however, young women and men discovered that there were places for dancing where reality was suspended ... gatekeepers ensured that those dressed in attire that would ruin the fantasy, attire that was associated with the workplace, were kept out.”²² It seems likely that this “discovery” of night clubs was stimulated by managers through advertising. Of course it is important to realise that fashion has always been an industry and an extension of what Lipovetsky has called the

²⁰op. cit., p.35.

²¹ibid.

²²Rubenstein, *Dress Codes*, p.244.

“frivolous economy” : “In fashion’s consummate stage, its abbreviated time span and its systematic obsolescence have become characteristics inherent in mass production and consumption.”²³ But it is also true that during “the 1960s and 1970s this neokitsch economy devoted to waste, futility and the ‘pathology of the functional’ was widely denounced.”²⁴

This denunciation was what was happening in many countercultural communities.

Lipovetsky refers to this - that youthful revolt became part of what he terms “neodandyism” (this links back to Carter’s use of the term “dandy”): “The theater of texts has given way to the theater of images, intensities and poetic shocks ... Neodandyism functions by means of outrageous marginality, exoticism and folklore (hippies)... exaggerating ugliness and repulsiveness (punk) or ethnic self-assertion (Rasta, Afro).”²⁵ This can be paralleled with the form of physical theatre that the Living Theatre espoused, which was also content to deliver images, intensities and poetic shocks. “Neodandyism” is an ironic term in one sense since the Chambers Dictionary refers to the dandy as a “foppish affected person; a man who pays great attention to dress”²⁶ and “foppish” as : “vain and showy in dress; affectedly refined in manners.”²⁷ However, Lipovetsky states that it is no longer a matter of displeasing in order to please, as with classical dandyism, but instead : “to make the most drastic break possible with dominant codes of taste and appropriateness.”²⁸ Personal appearance “is no longer an aesthetic sign of supreme distinction, a mark of individual excellence; it has become a comprehensive symbol designating an age group, existential values, a life-style independent of social class, a culture at breaking point, a form of social challenge.”²⁹ It becomes a mass activity beyond individualistic concerns. Even though the fashion industry would appropriate

²³ Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion*, p.135.

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ *op. cit.*, pp. 104-5.

²⁶ *The Chambers Dictionary*, p.427.

²⁷ *op. cit.*, p. 651.

²⁸ Lipovetsky, *op. cit.*, p.105.

²⁹ *ibid.*

these styles for its own use, it is interesting that there is a clear recognition here of its clear personal *and* political symbolism.

Jim Morrison referred to fashion briefly when talking in a Spring 1969 interview about his documentary film *Feast of Friends* (made from March-September '68) : "*Feast of Friends*... was made at the end of a spiritual, cultural renaissance that's just about over now. It was like what happened at the end of the plague in Europe that decimated half of the population. People danced, they wore colourful clothing. It was a kind of incredible springtime. It'll happen again, but it's over, and the film was made at the end of it." ³⁰

Though the decimation of Vietnam was ongoing and had many years of struggle ahead, it seems that Morrison is hinting here that reactions to widespread death and destruction was changing. This interview was conducted after Miami, of course, when the Seventies, and Morrison's death, loomed large ahead. We will consider later how significant it was that he stopped wearing leather at this stage, and how he began to show clear signs of insecurity. This could be connected also to Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque - a very *political* concept.³¹ This is another restatement of the significance of clothing and its connection with the dance, with hope in the face of widespread death and oppression, and with attempted rebirth in culture and thought. We can add to the earlier specific comment on fashion a more general observation about the struggle between industry and self-expression :

most people feel completely void and helpless in controlling their own destinies, controlling the destiny of human life. And I think it's sad. More people should be involved, rather than designating all these powers to a few individuals. I think the average person, whatever that is... should be a part of it somehow. I think everyone feels that events are just going on without their knowledge or control. I think it's one of the tragedies of our time. I suppose it has always been that way, but now it's just become so obvious, you know. Decisions are made for you in which you have no part at all...³²

An efficient means of expression is in the choice of clothing, since this is immediately apparent to even the most casual of observer. A highly apocalyptic fragment of Morrison's

³⁰ Jerry Hopkins interview in Hopkins, *The Lizard King*, p.223.

³¹ Politics chapter.

³² Interview by Tony Thomas of the Canadian Broadcasting Company. The interview took place at The Doors office in Los Angeles on May 27, 1970 and was partially aired on radio in Canada, but was never published; available at <<http://gyoza.com/frank/html/05MorrisonSpeak.html>>

The New Creatures seems to say much the same thing : “Stare into the parlors of town / where a woman dances in her European gown / to the great waltzes / this could be fun / to rule a wasteland.”³³ Mortality is being invoked here also. A fragment from *Wilderness* describes a differentiation between the young who distrust what they see - there is a thought reminiscent of the line (in “American Prayer”) : “Do you know freedom exists / in a school book.”³⁴ The wise and ancient in this line can only refer to academia : “Young girls worship, / exotic, indian, w/ robes / who make us feel foolish / for acting w/ our eyes. / Children worship but seldom act at it. / Who needs temples & couches & T.V. ... Better to be / cool in our worship & / gain the respect of the / ancient & wise wearing / those robes. They know / the secret of mind-change / reality.”³⁵ The young are exhibiting much the same distrust of the spectacle of society as the academic in *his* robes - both know the secret of “mind-change reality”. Dress is used by Morrison to link the two as searching people - both are in robes and the ancient and wise (what could be called the cult of seniority - as exhibited by a judge for instance) cannot automatically be regarded as superior. They are equal. An academic cannot actively *change* society but is involved in some sense in critiquing it nevertheless - immediate success is not a yardstick by which to judge whether to continue with the criticism. Morrison refers in one poem to “Wild folks in weird dress / by the side of the hi-way/ Some of the men wear / Tunics or short skirts.”³⁶ This could bring to mind the American Indian shaman or the traditional image of the wizard - somebody who is able to manipulate (human) nature. Carter describes a hippie’s clothes as making him “sexually ambiguous in beads and silks and beads” as opposed to the self-consciously masculine uniform of the soldier.³⁷ Again the subversion goes beyond the dictates of the industry (supply and demand) to a deeper and more subtle play which involves self-criticism. It

³³Morrison, [*The Lords and The New Creatures*] *The New Creatures*, p.29.

³⁴Morrison, *The American Night*, p.7.

³⁵Morrison, *Wilderness*, p.31.

³⁶op. cit., pp. 151-2.

³⁷Carter, op. cit., p.33.

should be noted also that the Renaissance fool used distinctive and gaudy clothing to separate himself from the king. The fool, or court jester frequently provided answers that could if necessary be written off by the ruler as mad, but which therefore enabled him to have greater powers of insight and freedom (the fool's crucial role in the life of the medieval ruler was memorably highlighted in Shakespeare's *King Lear* and in the character of Feste in *Twelfth Night*). This also connects with Bakhtin's notion of the political carnival.³⁸

Though the extent to which fashion is *solely* capable of achieving resistance is debatable, there should be little doubt as to its role in identifying members of the subculture itself, the ethos of which should be clear. The question comes back to power relations and whether resistance is possible within those relations - something which scholars have been debating in connection with French philosopher Michel Foucault's ideas. Foucault seemed not to allow resistance - but in matters such as civil rights (which also has connections with music, as has been discussed elsewhere³⁹) this view would seem to be dubious. In other words, the question seems to be whether it is better at the very least to express such a resistance verbally and within a subculture even though it may not have an immediate impact (because of marginalisation etc.), instead of, deliberately or otherwise, upholding the status quo.

Much of the poetry of the 1960s was concerned with the body - whether it was the corporeal trauma of the African-American, the perceived media construction of the woman's body discussed in women's liberation poetry, or GI Resistance work with its emphasis on the individual's body being identified with the state. Bibby states: "For people whose identity has become principally linked to their 'bodies' - African Americans, women, or soldiers, for example - the politicization of tropes, symbols, and images of the body both served to foreground a principal locus of their oppression and helped them articulate new ways of perceiving their own bodiliness as political identity."⁴⁰ LeRoi Jones's poem "An Agony. As

³⁸Bakhtin's ideas are discussed in depth in the Politics chapter.

³⁹"The Fifties and the Sixties" and "Politics" chapters.

⁴⁰Bibby, *Hearts and Minds : Bodies, Poetry and Resistance during the Vietnam Era*, p.13.

Now.”contains the following lines : “I am inside someone who hates me. I look out from his eyes... This is the enclosure (flesh whose innocence is a weapon. An abstraction...”⁴¹ Bibby points out that Jones is trapped “within a public self fashioned in the white-dominated world... Corporeality constitutes a limiting enclosure, a boundary, a prison, the black body bars the self from full experience.”⁴² Poetry provided a means to articulate an individual’s suffering. Women such as Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton critiqued the male-dominated “obstetrical and gynecological techniques which seemed to epitomize the violence of the male gaze - a clinical, rationalistic, penetrating gaze that sought to expose and colonize the interior of the human body.”⁴³ The key point is that of a human body in society becoming subsumed within a greater mass of people - being identified by politicians etc. as an archetypal group, with little regard for individuals, or individual groups (e.g. the young and the old) that actually exist. The individual GI being *forced* to fight for his country whether he believes in the cause or not (as in Vietnam), is a good example. If the symbolism of the body is important, then its image, the way the individual presents him or herself to the world, must be of relevance. According to Bibby, “60s corporeality posits a self that must identify with the body in the same sense that a colonized subject must identify with the imaginative ideal of the precolonial nation.”⁴⁴ There is an understandable scepticism among academics as to whether it is possible for those youths who questioned politics and “respectable” adult society to have been able, through the various manifestations of their subculture to have provided even the merest contribution to intellectual debate. Their fashions are seen as frivolous, their lifestyle a ridiculous and ineffective overreaction. Yet harnessing the multiplicity of existing ideas and viewpoints (which would, curiously, find a legitimacy via

⁴¹ Jones quoted in Bibby, op. cit., p.30.

⁴² ibid.

⁴³ op. cit., p.102.

⁴⁴ op. cit., p.18.

postmodernism) was the first step towards youth being able to marshal its energy to the cause of social awareness, and this was only *effective* by means of an entire entertainment experience. It is crucial to bear in mind that groups such as the Diggers in San Francisco provided tie-dyed clothes, food and medical help for drug abusers, *for free*. Haight Ashbury provided a number of these unofficial free services. Anderson states : “Freaks established free markets on some campuses and many clothing... co-ops in their urban used enclaves.”⁴⁵ If the industry was in some purchases of fashionable items then it was frequently used towards a cause which was against its own capitalist agenda. What you wore contributed to a mood.

This leads us back to Morrison and the relevance of fashion to his performance. There is an interesting division in Morrison’s career that can be seen in his image. The first of the photographs at the bottom of the page is pre-Miami (poss. 1967) - the leather suit he frequently wore on stage can be seen coupled with a shaved face. The second is from the Aquarius theatre, July 1969 (post-Miami) where he has frizzled hair and more casual clothes - a shirt (with black jeans), ordinary shirt and trousers, with a full beard. The third is from Isle of Wight festival Aug 1970 - Morrison’s look persisted throughout the final two years of



⁴⁵Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, p.276.

his life, despite criticism. These photographs and many others from the time reveal this division starkly and this surely is related to his perception of the “cultural renaissance” ending (which would have a lot to do with the reactions of the audience at Miami). It must be noted, however, that this was a traumatic time for Morrison - around December 1969 he told friends he was having a “nervous breakdown”⁴⁶ and it is generally noted that his decline became ever steeper after Miami - he would be dead by July 1971. His later image, if looked at in terms of Christian iconography, could bring to mind traditional images of the face of Christ, at least as depicted by medieval artists. The idea is of a lamb to the slaughter. It is unlikely that it was Christianity itself (bearing in mind Morrison’s religious position⁴⁷), more the idea of sacrifice that is the point. Jesus was betrayed by his disciples (or at least one of them) and he believes (on the cross at any rate) by the Christian deity himself. As an allegory it refers to the tragedy of personal death to avoid a greater “death-in-life” in the decade to come. If this seems far-fetched, noted elsewhere in this thesis is the incident in July 1969, 4 months after Miami, when Morrison “silently strikes a crucifixion pose and the red spotlight and maintains it long after the applause from the bewildered audience has died down.”⁴⁸ Morrison sent the other Doors a postcard from St Louis Cathedral in New Orleans just before the end of his trial in December - it was a picture of the Sacrifice of the Divine Lamb; the message was “Don’t worry the end is near. Ha Ha!”⁴⁹ It is more than possible therefore that it was Morrison’s death (and the “death of rock”) that should be connected with his stopping wearing leather. One theory is that he was trying one last-ditch attempt to get the crowd to pay attention to his lyrics and not so much his image - but at Miami he must have got the impression that there were signs that the decade, and therefore much of the experimental creativity of it, was literally at an end. He was not able to cope with the apathy of his

⁴⁶Hopkins and Sugerman, op. cit., p.277.

⁴⁷see Myth chapter for Morrison’s beliefs - a clear interest in Buddhism with much criticism of Christianity.

⁴⁸see Miami chapter.

⁴⁹Shaw, op. cit., p.212. Morrison had a lamb with him at one point in Miami.

audience - who had come to see a show and were not attuned to Morrison's ideas but still to his image. No assumptions can be made about the capability of the crowd to understand these messages - we should not be too patronising about the intellectual abilities of Morrison's audience, but it seems as if his attempts to "wake" them up from their collective submission did indeed fail. The escalating drug use seems to have been a symptom of this general malaise rather than a cause of it. Whether other attempts to get the crowd to "wake up", made in other ways, might have succeeded is not clear. Also, if leather does have sexual connotations, then we have to bear in mind that we could interpret this as an allegory of sexual maturity - of severing ties from overarching hegemonic authorities in the same way as we all must cut ourselves from the umbilical cord of parental authority. Though it seems as if he thought this wasn't working by the end of the decade.

We may also consider other ideas about leather. Its similarity to velvet has already been noted and the wearing of animal skin appealed to Morrison's shamanistic leanings, in which the souls of animals played an important part. As Riordan and Prochnicky point out : "The young and the hip of the sixties strongly exhibited a form of tribal consciousness ... In Indian societies, the shaman ruled the tribe with awe and mystical power. In modern America, the rock superstar holds similar reign over his audiences."⁵⁰ Again, clothes are linked with a form of influence over crowds - the question is whether this inspires hegemony or a form of collective awareness of individuality. There are also other linkages that can be made with biker culture of the 1950s and with the Hell's Angels. Punks would also use leather (there is a Sex Pistols song, from 1980, entitled "Black Leather" which celebrates the fetish) as part of their hateful defiance. Clearly there is something about the material which attracts the outlaw. The material is certainly durable and hard-wearing - protective even, and this affords security but at the same time offering the sexual thrill of the artificial skin. A personal

⁵⁰Riordan and Prochnicky, *Break on Through*, p.200. Shamanism is discussed in detail in Myth chapter.

gratification however is simultaneously a bond between members of the subculture, and though Morrison's audience would not be leathered they identified with him nevertheless. Along with its subjugation of animals as inferior creatures, leather has, for some, unwelcome associations with the more general dominance of people over nature (the Doors covered a Willie Dixon song entitled "Don't Go No Farther (You Need Meat)"). But if it is connected with shamanism then we have to acknowledge the respect for the animal and nature in American Indian society, and the phallic, half-human, half-animal beings that were companions to Dionysos in Minoan culture.

The sexual quality should not be seen as necessarily undermining the endeavour of oppositionalism. We need not be hemmed in by rigid extreme notions of sexual exploitation on the one hand and bland asexual conservatism on the other. For a similar idea we could refer to the social studies critic Richard Hoggart who "deplored the way in which the traditional working-class community - a community of tried and tested values despite the dour landscape in which it had been set - was being undermined and replaced by a 'Candy Floss World' of thrills and cheap fiction which was somehow bland *and* sleazy".⁵¹ We could even say that the "tried and tested values" are a *result* of the "dour landscape" rather than happening despite it, but that the blandness of the alternative results from a lack of social awareness ("freedom" for *all* in society). What is needed is a better balance of two apparently opposing forces. Hoggart certainly agrees that the concepts are not mutually exclusive.

Morrison's image should be seen as a focus of attention - using the very practicalities of mass communication, but complicated by the fact that simultaneously with the image he provided more complicated, poetic lyrics having veiled references to many of his influences. Morrison did not offer banal (fun) lyrics that offered no form of philosophical thought. Rather, he was trying to introduce the mass of his audience to poetry - and sometimes injected poetry insidiously into certain of his songs (during instrumental sections of songs

⁵¹Hoggart in Hebdige, *Subculture : The Meaning of Style*, p.8.

such as “The End” and “When the Music’s Over”). He saw his “outlaw” status as providing symbolism that the “other” - the one who looks different - can be a productive force; can be responsible for, or take the lead in, a reappraisal of fixed and dominant discourses. As if to underline this after Miami, whether brought on by desperation and mental collapse or not, the image change seemed to reflect the ending of the “renaissance” - that the audience had in fact not paid attention to the subtle nuances of his image. The crowd’s preoccupation with a drastically oversimplified version of his metaphor of the Lizard King was subverted via his change in style. The mutable image generally carries with it a sense of threat which the fixed hegemony feels as real. Hegemony here can be defined as “a situation in which a provisional alliance of certain social groups can exert ‘total social authority’ over other subordinate groups, not simply by coercion or by the direct imposition of ruling ideas, but by ‘winning and shaping consent so that the power of the dominant classes appears both legitimate and natural.’”⁵² According to Hebdige it is a “moving equilibrium containing relations of forces favourable or unfavourable to this or that tendency”⁵³ which makes it sound almost like a fad itself. In this view what we call culture in society generally is a set of choices made for us by some kind of an elite and sometimes even in collaboration with us, but without our knowledge.

When a powerful authority is calling attention to the very act of authority itself we have an enabling force. Hebdige comments : “...forms cannot be permanently normalised. They can always be deconstructed, demystified by a ‘mythologist’ like Barthes. Moreover, commodities can be symbolically ‘repossessed’ in everyday life and endowed with implicitly oppositional meanings, by the very groups who originally produced them. The symbiosis in which ideology and social order, production and reproduction, are linked is then neither fixed nor guaranteed. It can be prised open.”⁵⁴ This consensus can be “fractured, challenged,

⁵²Hall, “Culture, the Media and the Ideological Effect” quoted in op. cit., p.15-16.

⁵³Hebdige, op. cit., p.16.

⁵⁴Hebdige, op. cit., p.16.

over-ruled, and resistance to the group in dominance cannot always be lightly dismissed or automatically incorporated.”⁵⁵

When Morrison approached his audiences, berating them, reciting poetry they often did not want to hear, along with other tactics, his image was associated with opposition and could not be incorporated into that of the archetypal performer. His audiences were often dissatisfied with what they had come to hear - an example is a concert in Boston in March 1968, where Morrison was, according to Greg Shaw “conspicuously indifferent to the audience” and ended the concert by “sarcastically spitting out the lyrics to Light My Fire in a mock South Boston accent.” If Morrison was a sex idol, he was a rather unwilling participant - there are numerous examples of him altering his own music and behaviour to subvert any simple conceptions of him or his art. This has to have a bearing on the role his image played - the fact of the separation from his audience that he engendered in order to get them to question their environment, including that of the rock concert. This was real subversion associated with his image - to get the audience to experience that the concert was not a rarefied atmosphere, but instead one that had connections with the real world, and with the problem of their being exploited within it. As Lefebvre pointed out, in society “ ‘objects in practice become signs and signs objects and a second nature takes the place of the first - the initial layer of perceptible reality’, there are ... always ‘objections and contradictions which hinder the closing of the circuit’ between sign and object, production and reproduction.”⁵⁶ The opposition need not be in explicit content - it can be “expressed obliquely in style.”⁵⁷ The effect of image can sometimes be nebulous - it is a question of the effect of the attendant feelings that result from such a performance.

From Morrison’s perspective he may well have expected his audience to question the role of the image after 1969, despite his sense that the “cultural renaissance” had ended (in

⁵⁵op. cit., pp. 16-17.

⁵⁶Hebdige, and Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World* quoted in op. cit., p.17.

⁵⁷Hebdige, *ibid*.

1970 he still retained a distrust of monopolistic government ⁵⁸). The music remained though it had changed along with his image - the audience, he may well have hoped might be startled by this and reflect on the construction of it, along with other media personalities. This seems to have been a last gamble in the midst of the confusion surrounding the end of what he termed the “cultural renaissance” and the beginning of a new frivolous mood in music that would characterise disco (e.g. the Bee Gees, Abba etc.) and glam rock (e.g. Marc Bolan, T-Rex, David Bowie) when the Seventies got under way properly. In the final 1971 Doors album *LA Woman*, “The Changeling” contained the repeating chorus : “I’m the changeling / See me change.” ⁵⁹ The fact that people were *seeing* someone entirely different (with a full-length beard as depicted on the group shot on the cover of the album) but still had to listen to him as a performer, makes clear that there was something beyond any profiteering concerns. In fact the *LA Woman* album photo was seen by Hopkins and Sugerman as his “revenge” for two albums the previous year where the record company, without Morrison’s knowledge or consent, had featured old pictures of Morrison’s former leather-clad self in substitute for more recent ones. ⁶⁰ What could be the motivation of Morrison giving up his boyish good-looks for the image of an ageing old man? The media was almost unanimous in their negative reports of Morrison’s appearance. James Spurlock of the Chicago Daily News provides one example of the sarcasm : “... Jim comes out on stage for the first set and, oh wow, he’s got a beard. Not one of those tame ones that cries out against the very idea of a beard, but a woolly wild one.” ⁶¹ Edd Jeffords of Poppin magazine referred to Morrison as “looking old and a little wild.” ⁶² A few months into his beard-growing, at a Mexican venue in June 1969, according to Hopkins and Sugerman : “Jim went unrecognised: he didn’t look like the Jim Morrison who had been painted on the wall of the Forum [the name of the

⁵⁸ See above, p.110.

⁵⁹ *The Doors Lyrics*, p. 71.

⁶⁰ Hopkins and Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, p.318, p.320 & p.360.

⁶¹ Sugerman, *Doors Illustrated History*, p.151.

⁶² op. cit., p.149.

venue] and there were dissatisfied rumblings within his party.”⁶³ Even his girlfriend Pamela tried to get him to shave his beard, taunting him that he looked like the “old man of the mountain.”⁶⁴ Hopkins and Sugerman comment that Morrison : “was building himself another image. Not that the previous leather-clad image hadn’t been legitimate, but it had been limiting and he had obviously outgrown it. His new image was both easier to live with and easier to live up to.”⁶⁵ Pamela got her own way in the end, and Morrison shaved his face again, but this was only very shortly before leaving for what would become their final destination before Morrison’s death, in Paris, July 1971 - this was some time after what was Morrison’s last performance on December 12, 1970. By the time of that final show Morrison was showing clear dissatisfaction with The Doors - which was why he did not record or perform anything substantial⁶⁶ for the next 6 months before his death, preferring to write and perform poetry (in between dealing with his own escalating self-destructive behaviour). Morrison was therefore willing to confront those hegemonic forces that were trying to simplify his image. This would culminate in his turning to poetry *in lieu* of singing, as we shall see.

On the subject of long hair, and charges that this might have been just fitting in with fashion, it is worth pointing out that Morrison did occasionally cut his hair so that it was short curly instead of long - this varied according to his whim, or perhaps according to events or his preconceptions about the audience he would be playing to.⁶⁷ It is probable that it shows that he identified with the cause of youth protest but that he was not going to be supportive of everything. His comments on the hippies in “Five to One” are clearly negative but the fact

⁶³Hopkins and Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, p.252

⁶⁴Hopkins and Sugerman, *op. cit.*, p.345.

⁶⁵*op. cit.*, p.242

⁶⁶Apart from a guest performance of “Crawlin’ King Snake” at a Clinic gig at the Astroquet in Paris, May 1971, and a jam with street musicians in June 1971, if this bootleg known as “The Lost Paris Tape” is genuine.

⁶⁷E.g. a photograph of Morrison taken in Frankfurt, September 1968 (in Hopkins and Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, p.206) shows short curly hair; there is another on the cover of Lisciandro, *A Feast of Friends*; and see also the colour photographs in *Doors Illustrated History*, pp. 179-181 (not captioned - possibly European tour).

that at times he did have long hair could be seen as providing evidence of a willingness to belong to certain aspects of the movement nevertheless - it seems to add support to the idea that he was identifying with the more confrontational groups and not others. We shall find out more about Morrison's position with regard to hippies and different groups of protesters including those in the theatre, in later chapters. ⁶⁸As far as cultural materialism is concerned, we could bear in mind what Jonathan Dollimore said about the complication of gender that took place in Renaissance theatre. He describes how artifice, cross-dressing, disguise and role-playing (where boys often played girls - in Shakespeare for instance) revealed what he calls "the artifice of gender - the fact that it is a social construction and not a natural or biological fact." ⁶⁹ Long hair probably fulfils this function, gender stereotypes based on appearance are complicated in this way.

That Morrison was aware of the role of the "dandy" is proved by the following poem entitled "Curses & Invocations" : "Weird bait headed mongrels / I keep expecting one of you / to rise / ... / My militant dandies / All strange order of monsters / hot on the trail of the / wood vine / We welcome you to our / Procession." ⁷⁰ The fact that this poem is about the "procession" shows that the image is important - it is a dance, a gathering of "losers" - those downtrodden by society. "Shit hoarders and individualists" and "large buxom obese queens" are all part of the dance - they cannot help their position in society; they have to take what they can get. In the latter line "buxom" sounds positive, obese negative - our expectations are being played with here. At any rate though they *seem* less than model people they are nevertheless "hot on the trail of the wood vine" which is a reference to the god of the vine Dionysus. This all has connections with punk - as well as leather clothing.

⁶⁸ Principally Miami chapter.

⁶⁹ Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, p. xxxvi.

⁷⁰ Morrison, *The American Night*, p.63.

There is a confrontational power in the image which is itself a reaction to conditions in society. There has to be potential for reinvigorating basic, 'realistic' concepts. John Clarke wrote in *Resistance Through Rituals* :

Together object and meaning constitute a sign, and within any one culture, such signs are assembled, repeatedly, into characteristic forms of discourse. However when the *bricoleur* re-locates the significant object in a different position within that discourse, using the same overall repertoire of signs, or when that object is placed within a different total ensemble, a new discourse is constituted, a different message conveyed. ⁷¹

We come back again to Morrison's collage, discussed earlier. Although they were later to come under the thumb of the fashion industry, blue jeans for a time were used as a part of a symbolic anti-fashion statement :

In the Deep South, where tenant farmers and sharecroppers, grandchildren of slaves, continued to wear denim in its mid-nineteenth century sense, they were joined by college student activists - black and white - in a battle to overturn the deeply embedded centuries of segregation and race hatred. Blue denim - pants, jackets and overalls - became a sacred bond between them. The garb of toil was sanctified by the dignity of struggle. The blue *image* moved north with the song ... ⁷²

According to Ewen and Ewen this continued into the wider student rebellion that followed with "blue jeans and work shirts" providing "a counterpoint to the uniforms of the dominant culture, whether fatigue green in Southeast Asia, or police blue in Chicago, or gray flannel in Madison Avenue. Denim provided an anti-fashion, an anti-uniform."⁷³ Interestingly they also claim that the political configurations of dress became increasingly explicit in the 1960s with the rise of feminism, within which, they claim, blue jeans had their role : "Rejecting the sex roles of convention, blue jeans were a feminist weapon against restrictive fashion, sexual objectification, passive femininity. This was the cloth of action, a challenge to the social fabric of sexuality. The cloth of labor became the emblem of liberation."⁷⁴ This emphasises again that fashion cannot always be incorporated within hegemonic (or economic) control.

There is an interesting question here that needs to be clarified. That is whether it is individuality that is being celebrated via one's own chosen style (Carter's user-defined

⁷¹Hall and Jefferson (eds.), *Resistance Through Rituals*, p.177.

⁷²Ewen and Ewen, *Channels of Desire*, p.78.

⁷³Ewen and Ewen, op. cit., p.79.

⁷⁴ibid.

fashion) or whether it identifies a group - a collection of like-minded individuals against those who are excluded from this group. In fact it is misleading to present these as if they are mutually exclusive concepts - in everyday life, in all aspects of society, there is a fusion between these forces; though it is sometimes resolved after a move more *towards* one or the other direction. In other words it is an individual's own choice whether to belong to a group or not, it is not a slavish act if it is a conscious decision to join a particular group because there is an agreement with the causes of that group. The counterculture was made up of many separate groups, though mainly with shared concerns. Some groups in the 1960s were inoffensive hippie house communes, others were militant protesters that got into more trouble. It was an individual's choice how hard to push the rebellion. But Clarke, Hall, Jefferson and Roberts are in no doubt about the forces that bind together a group : "The peculiar dress, style, focal concerns, milieux, etc. of the Teddy Boy, Mod, the Rocker or the Skinhead set them off, as distinctive groupings, both from the broad patterns of working-class culture as a whole, and also from the more diffused patterns exhibited by [the] 'ordinary' working class..." But these particular groups "belong to the same families, go to the same schools, work at much the same jobs, live down the same 'mean streets' as their parents." ⁷⁵ As far as the approach of the Hippies is concerned - although "leisure appeared as the main focus of attention of the subculture, there were also attempts (however limited) to generate alternative strategies for work, production and sexuality... its attempt to create alternatives over a wider range of life-areas gave it greater viability as an alternative cultural form." Many of these communal arrangements continued well into the 1970s and some still survive. ⁷⁶ However "Judges, the police and social workers will use stereotypes based on

⁷⁵in Hall, Jefferson (eds.) *Resistance Through Rituals*, p.14.

⁷⁶Some of these communes survive even to this day, although a lot did not. Two US examples I have found are The Farm, founded by Stephen Gaskin in 1971 in rural Tennessee - this still works generally on communal lines, see <www.thefarm.org>; also Twin Oaks in Louisa, Virginia founded in 1967 (a community based on the writings of BF Skinner especially *Walden Two*) is still active - see Continued on next page...

appearance and dress to label groups and link them with certain characteristic kinds of behaviour. Aspects of dress, style and appearance therefore play a crucial role in group stigmatisation, and thus in the operation and escalation of social reaction.”⁷⁷ This is convenient within any conservative media-driven attempts to defuse potential counter-hegemonic challenges. The “alternative strategies” however still had an impact for youth and for some theorists such as Paul Goodman and Theodore Roszak.

There is an argument that could be made that the multiplicity of fashions in the Sixties was symptomatic (or ironically symbolic) of the lack of political focus - that there was effectively no single voice to channel protest into a consistent position. There may be some truth in this when considering the end of the Sixties. However at the same time it should be recognised that freedom of speech often results in disagreement - this is true of political discourse and of academic research (the multiplicity of books and theses which may have diametrically opposed ideas). To particularise 1960s culture as being outstandingly guilty of this problem seems unjust. It is simply a by-product of free speech, and a determination to avoid fascist control. There may have been a need for an overall countercultural leader, but assuming such a person could be found, Morrison would be profoundly distrustful of such leadership⁷⁸ as would others such as John Lennon.⁷⁹ This paradox is not easily solved.

Another view is that fashion was simply part of the domination of youth through capitalist forces. The problem with this seemingly convincing argument is that it tends to collapse

<www.twinoaks.org> Also, in Mexico, Los Horcones, founded in 1971 (see <www.loshorcones.org.mx>) which was also influenced by *Walden Two*, is thriving today. This was based on a brief Web search and I make no claims for this to be an exhaustive survey, there may be others.

⁷⁷Hall & Jefferson, (eds.) op. cit., p.184.

⁷⁸Morrison objected to the song “Tell All the People”, written by Robbie Krieger, because of lyrics such as “Follow me down... You tell them they don’t have to run / We’re gonna pick up everyone ... Come on, take me by the hand / Gonna bury all our troubles in the sand.” (Sugerman, *Doors : Complete Lyrics*, p.102). Morrison insisted on individual credits on this album for the first time, after three albums where lyrics, though sometimes collaborative and occasionally by Robbie Krieger, had always been cited as having been written and arranged by The Doors. Sugerman points out all writing credits for each song in *Complete Lyrics*.

⁷⁹E.g. Lennon commented on a radio show “Leaders is what we don’t want.” *Great Britons : John Lennon* (BBC 2002).

differences between forms and lyrics of music (a denial of the capacity of the listener to hear and make associations from lyrics) - and it tends to ignore the differing historical contexts of particular decades - within which culture has to be viewed. The question is not whether the 60s was a decade in which revolutionary activity took place - events such as Paris in May '68, Kent State in 1970, the riots that Morrison tried to provoke on stage, as well as many incidents in major festivals, seem to prove this beyond doubt. The question is rather whether there were any connections - however remote - between politics and style (fashion). The actual lyric and whatever political background existed as context, seems to be irrelevant to this view and this is not what cultural materialism is concerned with (historical causes and opposition). This "victim" question is in fact a denial of any role for communication itself (which can easily become a form of philistinism) and does not take into account the existence of academic criticisms (and other points of view) that are capable of subverting the suggestion that there is no profit motive in culture whatsoever. It is in fact a confirmation that culture does not in all circumstances control and mesmerise, to the exclusion of protest. It is not necessarily academics alone who enjoy a detailed view of culture (from their privileged "ivory tower"), it can be comprehended by the very same consumers that use it. It is a matter of whether this information was then used to deliver interruptions or embarrassments to (right-wing) hegemonic control.

It is difficult to reach a logical conclusion as to the exact role that fashion played - it seems unlikely that it has enough power by itself to challenge social hegemony, but its existence in the background of youth (political) activity cannot be denied. Long hair and unconventional clothes seemed to make a statement by itself and formed the backdrop to activities that cannot always be explained in terms of consumption. Examples are the trend for free concerts that alarmed concert promoters throughout the decade, Haight Ashbury's free services provided by groups such as the Diggers or free theatre such as SF Mime Troupe.

Those present at all of these activities would be unconventionally dressed - a brand image that advertised subversion. This is a complication to the concept of consumption of which a more convincing argument should take account.

Fashion is not specific enough to provide the same function as lyric, any more than lyric will *necessarily* provide specific answers to some of society's problems. But it did at the very least prop up scepticism surrounding institutional and governmental dominance. It will have done nothing to dissuade revolutionary activity - and almost certainly had a hand in popularising it, helping to define the group identity. Therein lay its revolutionary potential despite its modes of production and motives of sale. The fact that fashion is viewed as frivolous adds to its entertainment potential and in fact imbues dry political ideas with a new life. Even the generally cynical Simon Frith acknowledges the significance of, in particular, 1968 and "the cluster of events in Paris, Czechoslovakia, and in different ways, in the rest of Europe and America [that] made it seem for a moment that societies and institutions and people could be liberated."⁸⁰ He points out :

only the young responded to its events with a spontaneous gasp of excitement, without the simultaneous shadow of doubt about disrupted order and routine that even the most dedicated revolutionary, after years of quiescence, must feel. Rock was the sound of 1968 too.... Young people in the 1960s had experiences (experiences of war and politics) that intensified the conflict between public and private obligations, between freedom and responsibility, and it was these problems that rock, more than any other form of expression, addressed and made plain. But the 1960s were exceptional ...⁸¹

This ties into Morrison's comments on the 'cultural renaissance' and we could also add here the opinion of Angela McRobbie in *Marxism Today* that much of the revolt of 1968, drawing on the movements of the early 1960s, took "a cultural form."⁸² She continues : "The working class at least in France and Italy, displayed a cohesion and militancy not witnessed since the war." Of course events took place in America also in that year, in particular the Solidarity Day march of 50,000 in Washington that June and the large-scale demonstrations in Chicago

⁸⁰Frith, *Sound effects : Youth, leisure and the politics of rock*, p.194.

⁸¹ibid.

⁸²McRobbie, 'Revenge of the 60s' *Marxism Today*, May 1988, p.27.

in August. McRobbie continues : “One powerful theme was democracy: participatory democracy, alienation and bureaucratic control were issues which constantly recurred.” At the same time this “was expressed in music, in a new preoccupation with lifestyle.”⁸³

Subversive activities, such as in many universities (Berkeley, NYU, Columbia University and many others in other countries also) were also particularly prevalent in 1970.

Though Morrison was sometimes loath to admit it in interviews, much of what he said concerning the breaking of connections with much of what is referred to as mass culture, constituted an incitement to mass change which could well be called a large-scale reconstruction of society. Many social theorists argue that many of the same problems that were faced in the 1960s are still with us today. If this still seems somewhat removed from fashion, we should consider a comment of Hebdige’s : “subcultures represent noise (as opposed to sound) : interference in the orderly sequence which leads from real events and phenomena to their representation in the media. We should therefore not underestimate the signifying power of the subculture not only as a metaphor for potential anarchy ‘out there’ but as an actual mechanism of semantic disorder : a kind of temporary blockage in the system of representation.”⁸⁴ He cites Saussure that : “language is of all social institutions the least amenable to initiative. It blends with the life of society and the latter, inert by nature, is a prime conservative force.”⁸⁵ He states that the breaking of rules is commonly confused with the absence of rules - which may also characterise the difference between pointed social criticism and postmodernist deconstructivism. But this illuminates a particular role for fashion - to act as a counterpoint to the various uniforms and suits that exist in the parent (conservative) culture and which certainly do nothing to dispel the meritocratic, work ethic philosophy. Extreme fascist groups through history have known the power of the uniform -

⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴ Hebdige, *Subculture : The meaning of style*, p.90; italics mine.

⁸⁵ Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, in *ibid.*

and the military and business alike use it to create a complicit worker; an asset to the organisation. The group style that is associated with rebellion therefore, at the very least, reinforces, and may even create, an awareness of the meaning of control in society. Willis has commented on the nature of hippy clothing : “At the individual level each individual concocted his or her own very personal expression, but what united the hippies was more interesting than what distinguished them from each other. There were some common denominators of style. All their clothes seemed to be permanently out of joint with the immediate environmental determinations of their situation. They were functionally inappropriate ...”⁸⁶ He goes on to describe it as “the internal disorganisation of *fashion*... a colourful unsettling of conventional wisdom...”⁸⁷

Fashion therefore had connotations of freedom of expression. In case free speech seems to be what is encapsulated in the First Amendment, it is important to realise that right-wing groups continuously challenge works of art despite this (and still do to this day). Judges are still empowered to consider what is unacceptable under the law - charges of obscenity etc. Free speech can be reflected in the prevalence of Marxist ideas, and in the 1960s this was clearly linked to protest. There is a disturbing lack of specific social justice provision in the Constitution, the Amendments to it and in many legal judgements. It is important therefore to realise that then, as now, freedom has certain key restrictions, often based on inherited privilege (despite the fact that heredity was supposed to have been rejected by America, along with the divine right of kings, as part of its independence). Democracy is often more limited in practice than it is in theory. There is certainly a symbolism in the drawing of the observer’s attention to your humanity instead of your status.

⁸⁶ Willis, *Profane Culture*, p.97.

⁸⁷ *op. cit.*, p.99.

There is rarely a simple interpretation of style and this was partly alluded to in Morrison's "American Prayer" where he states : "No more money / No more fancy dress / This other Kingdom seems by far the best / Until its other jaw reveals incest / And a loose obedience / To a vegetable law."⁸⁸ The kingdom of revolutionaries is honoured with a capital letter and does not concern itself with fancy illusion or with money - something which is very attractive but Morrison also betrays his ambiguity when he equates it with the security of the mother-figure, referring to incest in a Freudian sense. However there were differences between Morrison's attitude to non-confrontational hippies and the more confrontational protesters (including the Living Theatre radical theatre - see Miami chapter). There is a pun on hippie fashion for vegetarianism and their non-confrontational beliefs (the inactivity of the "vegetable").⁸⁹ But there needs to be a comparison here with comments he made in 1970⁹⁰ about the distrust of government forces and hegemony. It seems to be an emotional reaction to the concept of reconstruction - which he has been convinced is fruitless. He nevertheless revealed in the same interview, surely with some self-contradiction :

When I was in high school and college, the kind of protest that's going on now was totally unheard of. At that time, to be a teenager, to be young, was really nothing, it was kind of a limbo state, and I think it's amazing, just in the last five years. What's happened is young people have become increasingly aware of the power and the influence that they have as a group. It's really amazing.⁹¹

And also there is a deeper reason behind the *element* of scepticism : "Well, I try not to be... I always try and keep a kind of enlightened pessimism about things, because then you don't get too disappointed when things don't turn out the way you wanted." This is hardly flawless logic - it seems almost as if he is persuaded by those that are "enlightened" that the wholesale reconstruction of society, though needed, should be rejected (a view of which a politician with a centre philosophy might be proud). A slightly more convincing argument is : "It

⁸⁸ Morrison, *The American Night*, p.10.

⁸⁹ This also appears in his song, not released officially, "You Need Meat".

⁹⁰ Above, p.110

⁹¹ Thomas, Tony. "Morrison interview." May 27 1970. <<http://gyoza.com/frank/html/05MorrisonSpeak.html>>

doesn't really change anything, its just a switch of power." But he continues : "I lament the fact that so many people are content with living a very quiet, well-mannered, orderly life when so many obvious - I'm not sure of the right word - injustices I guess 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." So there are definite injustices in the world, and people are about to become oblivious to them, although it is left for the listener or reader to wonder about what *precisely* these injustices are - and what constitutes ignoring them.

Nevertheless, that Morrison was anti-consumerist is borne out by Lisciandro's comments about Morrison's own particular style (including fashion). Lisciandro in his profession as a photographer had first-hand knowledge of Morrison, and his observations should be quoted in full :

He displayed an almost un-American attitude towards the things he owned, to possessions in general, which even extended to his clothes and notebooks. Americans usually judge their own self-worth and the status of their neighbours by the amount and value of their cars, cattle, clothes, collections and cottages. Jim never owned a house. He owned a car briefly and the total amount of other things he possessed at any one time could, and often did, fit neatly into a "carry-on" bag. He was unaffected by the attractions of ownership and I never saw him window shop. He just didn't need things, items and objects. Perhaps he considered objects real obstacles in his attempts to make the transition to the other side of reality... Pamela Courson [his girlfriend] tried several times to make a home for him, but Jim spent less than a fraction of his time in any one of these houses or apartments. He preferred the anonymity of cheap motels... Many people saw his disregard of material things as more reckless abandon and chaotic behaviour. His freedom challenged their notion of security and values.⁹²

It should be noted here that Lisciandro's book, written in 1991, would not have needed to paint Morrison as a revolutionary - indeed Hopkins and Sugerma in their biography seem, not too convincingly, to try to distance Morrison from the Sixties, in order, perhaps, to make him seem more modern.⁹³ This seems to add a degree of credibility. Like youth, it seems that Morrison too was trying to find a way out of the Western consumerist trap, though he was unsure how to do it, post-Miami (see Miami chapter) he started to become embarrassed about his own attempts at subversion or perhaps by people's reaction to it. The radical right was to

⁹²Lisciandro, *Jim Morrison : An Hour for Magic*, p.57.

⁹³See discussion of "Five to One" in Politics chapter.

exploit this general post-Renaissance (“Rock is dead” as Morrison put it) mood - people had exhausted themselves, set their sights high and had their short-term expectations dashed. With large amounts of hindsight, we can see it was sometimes by means of their particular flawed strategies, which would have needed to be developed for maximum effect. It was to end with an extreme reaction against the very concept of protest. Culture was about to become ideologically idle.

We may think of concepts of cultural elitism when considering comments such as Ewen and Ewen’s that fashion was “intertwined with the instruments of mass production and consumption” and “its freedom was underlined by uniformity”.⁹⁴ We have considered Walter Benjamin’s objection to this, as well as Hebdige’s rejoinder, therefore it is useful to consider the status of the academic critic. Morrison was aware of the value of education. An anecdotal account by Danny Sugerman describes how, when Sugerman was still a teenager answering the Doors’s fan mail (he would later become their management associate and press agent), Morrison had promised to take him to a Bo Diddley concert. When he turned up Sugerman was shocked to hear a lecture from him on the merits of reading. Morrison proceeded to make him feel more and more uncomfortable - “Don’t you have any *books*? Anything to *read*, ya know with *pages*? ... And you have nothing left to learn huh? You know it all?” He went through his collection throwing down books at Sugerman - Kerouac, Rimbaud, Edith Hamilton, John Rechy and Sinclair Lewis : “I looked at the Hamilton mythology book, indignant. ‘This is the same shit they give me in school to read!’ At that Jim’s smirk cracked into a smile as his satisfaction increased. ‘Exactly, that’s right. Now shut yer hole and do your homework like a good boy. And I want you to remember what you’ve read because when you’ve finished I am going to test you.’” Though they went out to a pub afterwards Morrison points out that after the entertainment he should now go back to his reading - “You don’t want to be a loud-mouthed punk who doesn’t know his asshole from his elbow for the

⁹⁴excerpt from quote above.

rest of your life do you? I'm tellin' ya man, you gotta read. You'll thank me someday I swear."⁹⁵

The point of quoting this story is to suggest that the stereotype of the illiterate, primitive rock star may be inaccurate. Morrison, unusually for rock stars, had a degree - in fine arts and cinematography from UCLA - and betrays his own standard of education here.⁹⁶ He was well-read - in particular philosophy and Greek mythology - and was articulate. It was Morrison who stated in "An American Prayer" : "Do you know freedom exists in a school book."⁹⁷ The idea that the masses cannot be moved into new political and social awareness, by means of atmosphere, mood and image, as well as by music (though it is fashionably sceptical among 21st century thinkers), may itself be a form of cultural elitism, and have little relation to the political reality of the time. To deny that the lyric can be at the very least on par with the poem or the folk song may be a manifestation of the critic's traditional distinction between the popular and the serious (the informal and formal). "Serious" (or classical) music is too often regarded as depending on highly interwoven, carefully developed themes; requiring effort and concentration, disrupting the continuum of everyday life and encouraging reflection. Popular music on the other hand is seen as standardised, repetitive, with a narrow framework of improvisation and having a soporific effect on social consciousness. Fashion would no doubt contribute to the *appearance* of frivolousness surrounding the whole cultural experience. Yet it is precisely the improvisation aspect of the experience that provided subordinated youth with a distinct identity - the 1960s were hardly a soporific decade. Many performers did display technical competence (one thinks immediately of Jimi Hendrix, whose ability is not in doubt, including opinions by other

⁹⁵ Sugerman, "Introduction" in *The Doors : The Illustrated History*, pp. ix-x.

⁹⁶ Ray Manzarek, the organ and piano player of The Doors, was also a graduate of UCLA, and had a masters degree in economics.

⁹⁷ Morrison, *The American Night*, p.7.

guitarists⁹⁸), despite the charge that is often made about the low quality of popular form.

Morrison's improvisational quality (virtually every concert was different in some way) has been noted by many contemporary journalists - a similar ability for musical ad-libbing was the mainstay of Jimi Hendrix's performance also. In the background seems to be lurking the spectre of class bias - a denial of the populace's ability to understand problems in society.

There is an argument that could be made with respect to Morrison that his poetry was being mobilised within an image of a leathered sex idol - and that this carries connotations of exploitation, either on his part (with him exploiting the crowd) or on the part of his record company (with simple profit motives). There are several problems with these ideas. The first concerning his change in image has already been mentioned. Secondly, it is vital to understand that his audience often were oblivious to, or even hostile, when Morrison injected his, sometimes improvisational, spoken-word poetry into songs such as "The End" and "When the Music's Over". They often shouted for hit songs such as "Light My Fire" to the intense irritation of Morrison.⁹⁹ For example in a 1968 Early Show at Salt Lake City, where only a fraction of the venue was filled, an irate Morrison "pauses to ask the crowd 'Are there any songs you would like us to play?' and after people yell out their requests Morrison responds sarcastically 'Those are night show songs, we don't play those now!' "¹⁰⁰ Four songs later the band left the stage. He also threw a microphone stand at the front row of the audience, afterward snarling the "When the Music's Over" lyric "We're getting tired of hanging around" with "clear animosity to the audience." City officials determined that the

⁹⁸There is an anecdotal account of the noted guitarist Eric Clapton seeing Hendrix when the latter was relatively unknown. Horrified at the new-found competition, Clapton did not listen for long. Backstage, after trying unsuccessfully to light a cigarette owing to his shaking hand, Clapton's reported response to his road manager was : "You didn't tell me he was that fucking good. Is that the only song he can play?" *Purple Haze : The Jimi Hendrix Story*. Radio 2, 2002.

⁹⁹This can be heard on some concert recordings.

¹⁰⁰Performance of 25/05/68, Salt Lake City, UT; Shaw, *The Doors on the Road*, p.108. Note that this book reports every concert with the immediacy of a news story - and each entry is in the present tense. This is nevertheless the most accurate and in-depth survey of Doors concerts that exists, to my knowledge, and does not seem to have any academic equivalent. In the interests of accurate quotation, I have not corrected these in the extracts presented in this thesis.

Doors were “uncontrollable, unsuitable and objectionable to the general public” and blocked any further appearance by them in the city. There were many recorded instances of his using obscene language on stage (such as in live shows released in recent years) - this was a criminal offence at the time - and indeed was one of the misdemeanour charges at Miami, which led to the many cancelled bookings afterward. The genuinely confrontational aspects of his performance need to be associated with his image in any realistic critique - many times through cancelled venues (and nervous promoters) it lost the group money. Of course Morrison did make money¹⁰¹, but it should be considered also that artists were only one component of the record label - money was made for the company, and company bosses. In order to reach audiences money has to be spent on producing records and arranging venues, etc. It does not change the effect felt by the audience, and the reality of political stances that were engendered - it is difficult to measure emotion or to precisely evaluate its power.

As far as the poetry is concerned, it is important to remember that much of his poetry was only published posthumously (2 volumes - *Wilderness* and *The American Night*, in 1988 and 1992 respectively) and more has still to be published.¹⁰² Some of this material is actually critical of his own rock star status - an image he was becoming bored with, as Lisciandro points out : “His personality and his physical appearance were not transformed for the same purpose that a chameleon changes colors to blend into the environment. Jim changed on the outside because his mind was evolving into new levels of awareness. It was the final transition into James Douglas Morrison, Poet, that most confused and alienated his fans. They wanted him to stand still, forever the leather-limbed dark angel. For Jim that would

¹⁰¹Though it is ironic that because of his lifestyle he wouldn't get to enjoy the majority of it. A huge amount of his money eventually ended up with his parents since he had bequeathed his entire estate to his girlfriend Pamela, who died in 1974. It was subsequently shared between Morrison and Pamela's parents, neither of which were mentioned in any will (Morrison in particular was not emotionally close to his parents) but who enjoy the royalties to this day.

¹⁰²Patricia Keneally-Morrison claims to have a body of letters, poems, songs and drawings that were “left” to her - she has said she intends to publish this in 2021 to commemorate what will be the 50th anniversary of Morrison's death (Rocco (ed.) *The Doors Companion*, p.186.) Much of the material presented orally in concert improvisations, listed by Shaw and available unofficially among tape collectors, has not been published.

have been as intolerable as wearing a mask to a fête and never again being able to remove it.”¹⁰³ Riordan and Prochnicky state : “More and more young kids were attending the shows now and most of them couldn’t understand or appreciate his lyrics. They saw him only as a sex symbol and just wanted to hear the hits from the radio. The more he realized his words were being overlooked, the more frustrated he became.”¹⁰⁴ In a wider sense, society often looks kindly on those who endlessly reproduce limited product that fit with audience expectations. He contemplated leaving the band in 1968 but had :

given his word that he wouldn’t quit The Doors for six months. But inside, past the conscious mind, Morrison decided he would quit being a sex symbol. He began a rebellion against his own image ... He began searching for a way to break through the trap that was slowly choking the life out of him - some monumental act that would free him of the sex symbol image forever.”¹⁰⁵

This would become the Miami problem and the subsequent change of image to that of the very antithesis of the “sexy” leather clad rock-god - a bearded and visibly older man with casual clothes.

It is unlikely that he wore leather at the two poetry readings in which it is known that he read his work¹⁰⁶ and it is worth remembering that he ceased performing altogether in December 1970 - a full seven months before he died. When he went to Paris in 1971 just before his death he wanted to continue the same poetry that he tried to perform in the improvisational sections of his songs - in fact his casual clothes again made him inconspicuous, though he had shaved off his beard. To Morrison therefore wearing leather was merely a way to gain the attention of his audience, only to challenge the audience mercilessly. He was more interested in the words than his gestures or his sex idol status. He realised that one of the most self-destructive notions is that of futility, particular when realism creates it. In one of his final poems (released posthumously) he writes : “Rid of Managers & agents / ... / End w/ a fond good-bye / & plans for the future / -Not an actor /

¹⁰³Lisciandro, *Jim Morrison : An Hour for Magic*, p.50.

¹⁰⁴Riordan and Prochnicky, *Break on Through*, p.252.

¹⁰⁵op. cit., p.253.

¹⁰⁶Regrettably there is no information known to me on what clothes he wore at these readings. Texts available to me do not mention this.

Writer-filmmaker / Which of my cellves will be remembered".¹⁰⁷ This suggests that his experiment (which is reflected in his fashion) failed to the point that he was willing to consider giving up his singing career entirely. Morrison's friend and fellow poet Michael McClure comments on an incident when he was with him in Chinatown :

just walking down the street, Jim'd start singing some blues right out of nowhere, probably jogged by seeing some fruit in a fruit stand or catfish on ice in shop window... This was when Jim was wearing an old engineer's cap and had a beard and a pot belly, and he did it because he loved to sing. I'm not talking about a Doors song, nobody's gonna know this is Jim Morrison. Anybody would think, it's just some crazy looking guy who's got a great voice. Right?"¹⁰⁸

Just before he died he appears to have jammed with some unknown street musicians identified as Jomo & the Smoothies, all the time with them unaware he was a famous singer (he had recently shaved off his beard which must have added to his anonymity, as was the fact that he was not often in Paris and had separated himself from his entourage). Whether he intended to release this as an anonymous record is unclear (it was, it seems, included in his personal possessions when he died and was released unofficially much later as "The Lost Paris Tapes"). All of these matters suggest that his manipulation of the crowd were for *literary or artistic* ends - trying increasingly unsuccessfully to draw attention to his own lyrics - his leather suit was part of *that* manipulation.

It is conceivable that the most simple gesture or symbolism can provide the impetus for a gradual change of emphasis towards societal problems. It provides a window of opportunity - at the very least an "easy" way into complex issues. A comment of the cultural materialist Alan Sinfield refers to the literary critic Stanley Fish : "Fish reached the conclusion that it is the profession which determines which readings will pass as plausible ... discourses are interactive, they make sense only because they are shared."¹⁰⁹ Fish tended to stress a one-way interpretation saying : "The only proof of membership is fellowship, the nod of recognition from someone in the same community." Sinfield states : "What is misleading

¹⁰⁷Morrison, *Wilderness*, pp. 208-9.

¹⁰⁸McClure "Snakeskin Jacket" in Lisciandro (ed.) , *Morrison : A Feast of Friends*, p.118.

¹⁰⁹Sinfield, *Faultlines*, p.288.

here is the apparent geniality of the process : Fish's phrasing - sharing, community, fellowship, "nod of recognition" - effaces the hierarchy, competition, deference, and coercion in the profession."¹¹⁰ Art may be profoundly difficult to interpret but society's problems may not be - they may just be difficult to resolve. Art has no need for resolution - it can always act as an opposition, but can be used for a definite purpose nevertheless. In other words differing interpretations may not be a bad thing - it shows we are thinking, but an outcome needs to be apparent in terms of practical action. Sinfield states the following :

The dominant ideology strives to constitute subjectivities that will find "natural" its view of the world; to combat that we need to develop and validate dissident subjectivities... Subcultural milieux are where that happens - where partly distinctive conditions of plausibility, alternative subject positions, are created. To be sure, subcultures cannot avoid some kind of implication with the dominant - often they are positioned as defining others. But through this very mechanism, they may return to trouble the social order. They redeploy some of its most cherished values, downgrading, abusing, inverting or reapplying them; willy-nilly, they draw attention to its incoherences and contradictions, and to the economy of ideology and power that organizes them. As Barbara Babcock has written, 'What is socially peripheral is often symbolically central.'¹¹¹

This troubling of the social order was certainly true in the 1960s, and we cannot evade the fact that all aspects of the subculture(s) played their part in the multimedia experience. Morrison was fascinated by the power of the image in film to both disturb but also, in the wrong hands, to be an authoritarian force. O'Hop comments : "fashions associated with rock now equal works of art because society (as well as the art form) is expressed."¹¹² This is also reminiscent of the concept of binary oppositions - "private vs public, negation vs affirmation, closure vs aperture... Only those who dare to work in (or create) binary structures make a difference - they are able to lead the revolution."¹¹³ Michael McClure, in his essay on Morrison (quoted by O'Hop) said :

the role of the poet in society today is the same role as that of any other artist and that is to maintain the thoroughfares, to maintain those pathways of the imagination in a society that would close down the pathways of the imagination. In other words to keep the imagination moving. I mean all of the arts have the same function, and all of them are to maintain a kind of state of crisis, to keep a state of crisis in existence, a state where we're alive and not just robots filling out social positions one after another.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰Sinfield, *ibid.*

¹¹¹*op. cit.*, p.299.

¹¹²O'Hop, "The Translation of Art into Revolution," PhD thesis, p.57.

¹¹³O'Hop, *op. cit.* p.59.

¹¹⁴McClure, "Snakeskin Jacket" in Lisciandro (ed.), *Morrison : Feast of Friends*, p.110.

Morrison was perceived as the representative of that culture of imagination, where forms are reconstructed.

What was important about the 1960s therefore was the *idea* of “liberating ordinary people’s lives by removing the tyranny of uniforms and traditional fashion, and bringing in colour and sexiness.”¹¹⁵ The tyranny is that of individuals being objectified as submissive workers - ones that all look the same and are almost dehumanised as a result (uniforms are



used for dominance and elitist purposes in many areas of life - and are used as part of the punishment in prisons for example). A photograph exists of Morrison from 1961, which shows a smart uniformed (black suit and tie) short-haired, high-school student. Another photo (see left) from the first day of a trial in Phoenix Arizona, in which Morrison was charged with obstructing the duties of flight personnel on an aircraft (a charge of

which he was later acquitted), shows him with a suit and blue and yellow striped tie. In all other situations Morrison felt he must reflect a style not concerned with being “respectable” but being free to express individual feelings within a group.

We can again revisit the claim that the commercial aspect to fashion eclipsed any social significance. It is true that style, and music, became integrated more fully into capitalist structures as the decade drew to a close (c.1974). It would be absurd to attribute the declining communication of the ideas of protest to fashion alone. Rather it was more a case of a growing sense of defeatism - the decline of the Vietnam war (where the *uniform* did not go unnoticed) meant the loss of a unifying conflict; and endless ideas (a pure form of democracy) meant a loss of leadership among many radical groups; divisions began to creep in afterwards. Other causes include the Kent State shootings which frightened many current and future radicals, and also we should not underestimate the concerted program of misinformation and action from the FBI (Nixon’s so-called Cointelpro operations) which

¹¹⁵Marwick, *The Sixties*, p.465.

played a part in breaking up radical organisations. It should be stressed once again that it is very difficult to communicate without a form of subsistence; though some groups managed to operate their own self-contained trade, free theatre or free services. For those who could not go down this route however, the question that should be asked is that if it is not possible to reach large numbers of people without the spending of money, does this automatically disqualify the ideas (and those that they may have spawned through an attraction they engender towards general critique) from consideration?

We could analogise with the academic world again. It could be said that social science books critical of capitalist institutions are themselves marketed - and the lecturers who write them are paid for their job (often indirectly through the fees of students). They are themselves a small part of the capitalist system - but this does not change their ability to criticise it. Their opinions may be ignored by government and those in various forms of power (as well as the masses), but this also does not change their ability to criticise. No aspect of modern society is immune from capitalism - the question is whether they are *drawing attention to it* or not. Entertainment and all its trappings added up to an efficient means of reaching people and would influence them, perhaps politically (that youth were simultaneously politically active *and* listening to certain types of music is sometimes overlooked by critics or seen as purely coincidental). When we consider the FBI files on musicians such as Morrison¹¹⁶ and John Lennon, along with revelations by former Nixon aide G. Gordon Liddy that the administration was well aware that musicians were politically important because large numbers of people listened to what they had to say, then we should pay great attention to the performance and all aspects of it.¹¹⁷ The image itself and the ideas and emotion that will accompany that image should be carefully acknowledged. Truth is not impossible, but with all forms of media-dominated discourse each with its rival political and

¹¹⁶Of course the FBI had a hand in making sure Morrison was prosecuted for a felony rather than a misdemeanour - see Miami chapter.

¹¹⁷Liddy interviewed for "1970 : Behind the Music" (VH-1 music channel, 2000).

ideological agenda, a genuine search for truth needs to be encouraged, advertised even. A key part of this is to have the courage to be a distinctive and uncompromising group and the means to communicate problems. McRobbie notes that cultural reform was a key part of 1968 in particular - she states : “we should not forget the enormous energy, imagination and creativity that was 1968.”¹¹⁸ Though by definition it could not itself have been a source of specific counter-hegemonic activity, fashion was a means of introducing a more general concept of reappraisal; a development of lateral thinking, of a sort. It provided the mood, the atmosphere, the mise-en-scène of protest.

¹¹⁸McRobbie, 'Revenge of the 60s', *Marxism Today*, May 1988, p.27.

Sexuality

This chapter will discuss the aspects of sexuality that seem to be relevant when thinking about rock music performance in the 1960s. This will involve a large amount of psychoanalytical literature - which will be particularly relevant to the poetry and songs of Jim Morrison, who was interested in such literature as Norman O. Brown's *Life Against Death*. There will also be a discussion generally about the role of sexuality in Morrison's performance and poetry, including a consideration of Foucault and D.H. Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent*.

Jim Morrison once commented to a friend: "I can look at a crowd ... just look at it. It's all ... very scientific, and I can diagnose the crowd psychologically. Just four of us, properly positioned, can turn the crowd around. We can *cure* it. We can *make love to it*. We can make it *riot*." ¹ In a college paper he discussed the idea of crowds "having sexual neuroses much like those of individuals, and that these derangements could be quickly and effectively diagnosed and then treated"². This was an early statement of what Morrison considered to be the crux of his confrontation with the crowd. Instead of the crowd reacting to his sexual identity on stage with passivity he intended to incite them to take control themselves and reach a level of activity that would enable them to break free of their status as faceless audience members. All too often an audience's inactive appreciation of music was analogous to the prepubescent child still under the thrall of parental supervision. Morrison tried to change this and substitute creativity and imagination - getting them to realise that they were worshipping something that was in reality oppressing them. His stage presence was not a mere sop to sexualised audience hysteria but was, as the above comment shows, clearly aligned to an agenda of protest. Whether this was a specific political protest is doubtful but it

¹ Hopkins and Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, p.35.

² Ibid. Regrettably Morrison's former college tutor James Geschwender has informed me, via email, that this paper no longer exists.

betrayed a recognition of the need for a discordant group - one that challenges conventions of public order. It could be seen by some as an illustration of a supposed weakness of the decade - that the personal was aligned to the political in some vague artificial manner. In fact it should be seen as a very efficient strategy for attracting and motivating young people (those who have not, to use C. Wright Mills's phrase, "bought into the system") towards a particular cause - instead of advertising which fits with prevailing conservative (economic) ideas and trends, this was a form of promotion that posited ideas which patently did not. This is because though the members of the audience paid to see a *show*, this was a performance that utilised an enabling strategy - one which many other performers in fact rejected, and which ultimately after the Miami problem, led the band to lose an entire season of tours and being temporarily banned from performing in nearly every venue in the country.³ As well as promoters building into their contracts clauses relating to sexual conduct and offensive language on stage (what Morrison contemptuously referred to as the "fuck clause"), police were also keeping an extra-vigilant eye on such behaviour. It is important to realise though, that Morrison must have been aware that much of what he was doing could no doubt have potentially serious financial and possibly legal consequences - this was obviously worth the higher *artistic* benefit. It is worth pointing out that many other performers, with a few exceptions, were not disposed to any kind of trouble - preferring to sing about reactions to authority instead of carrying them out. An example being The Who in "Young Man Blues": "In the old days it was the young men who had all the money / But a young man ain't got nothing in the world these days." These lyrics are very imprecise and seem to point to a highly generalised angst - here leading to possible arguments about the wealth of post-war youth. Actual instances of rioting that were in any way noticed by authorities were rare. The chaos was very tightly controlled, unlike with a Doors concert. Morrison's idea of the "Lizard

³ Shaw, *The Doors on the Road*, p.148. Also see Miami chapter.

King” - taken from “Celebration of the Lizard” (“I am the Lizard King, I can do anything”⁴) is sometimes seen *purely* as a sexualised teen-dream fantasy. Magistrale however has interpreted it as a sexual-political idea : “to break the wall that separated our empirical world from the transformative energies of others.”⁵ This is the image of potency that is conjured up with the “I can do anything” line. There is therefore a connection back to the love-riot of Morrison’s performance and his confrontation with the reality of the controlled concert environment.

We could consider at this point one of Morrison’s key influences - Norman O. Brown’s *Life Against Death*, which Morrison read in high school and wrote a paper on while at Florida State University (this was before his subsequent move to UCLA).⁶ Firstly it should be said that Brown’s work is always a *critique* of Freud - and, though Brown does recognise the importance of the psychoanalyst’s work, he never accepts his conclusions without keen scrutiny and sometimes with amendment. The repression of sexuality is the repression of the individual and the self - but it is also a consequence of the conflict between *reality* and *desire*, which can of course lead to general political analogies. There is a domination of the reality principle and downgrading of pleasure. But this can be taken as a very broad definition of the term “pleasure”: “For Freud, work and economic necessity are the essence of the reality-principle: but the essence of man lies not in the reality principle but in repressed unconscious desires.”⁷ Hence mankind, “is still making history without any notion of what it really wants or under what conditions it would stop being unhappy; in fact what it is doing seems to be making itself more unhappy and calling that unhappiness progress.”⁸ Beyond labour there is love - Marx lacked psychoanalytical concepts of the unconscious. People

⁴ Morrison, *The American Night*, p.45.

⁵ Magistrale, “Wild Child: Jim Morrison’s Poetic Journeys,” in Rocco, *The Doors Companion*, p.83.

⁶ Hopkins and Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, p.35. This is the same paper for Prof James Geschwender mentioned at the beginning of this chapter - unavailable for study.

⁷ Brown, *Life Against Death*, p.17.

⁸ op. cit., p.16.

therefore “are not satisfied by the satisfaction of their conscious desires” but are instead “unconscious of their real desires.”⁹ We should compare the effect of sexuality with what happens to the “adventuring impulse” that Richard Slotkin has described when commenting on the American epic of Henry Thoreau. His epic is that of “the captive in which the adventuring impulse turns inward and becomes a moral and psychological struggle against the forces that imprison the body and against the torpor of mind and spirit that bind the soul to Satan or (to use a term more appropriate to Thoreau) to death and ‘deadness.’”¹⁰ The body linking with the mind is important here. Quite apart from sexuality being something concerned with domination of the other, it is in fact becoming an inward process of self-discovery; which simultaneously can only result in giving authority to the other individual, as long as they follow the same process. To use Morrison’s term it is “breaking through” normal everyday relations and setting up a form of entitlement that allows for people to make their own decisions - using and modifying outside reality. This is therefore the connection between sexuality and radical politics which certainly did exist in the 1960s - it is a matter of pleasure that extends *beyond* the individual - a pleasure that was impossible in the narrow individualistic sense.

Morrison in the poem “Latino Chrome” equates his sexuality with a union of forces - the act of combining his male perspective with feminine instinct and knowledge :

The Spanish girl begins to bleed
 She says her period
 It’s catholic heaven
 I have an ancient Indian crucifix around my neck
 My chest is hard and brown
 Lying on stained, wretched sheets with a bleeding virgin
 We could plan a murder
 Or start a religion¹¹

⁹ op. cit., p.18.

¹⁰Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, p.538.

¹¹Sugerman, *Doors : Complete Lyrics*, pp. 193-4. This citation is of the excerpt that appeared as part of the “American Prayer” album, released after Morrison’s death based on his spoken word recordings.

This has been described as an “obsession with feminine symbolism and female physiological debilitation (menstruation, birth, defloration, etc.)”¹² This is a deliberate connection however where it seems not to be possible to achieve anything *without* the union - the last two lines are significant in this respect. Morrison’s choice of plural pronoun is important - in the final two lines “we” could have easily been substituted with “I” if he was promoting only himself as being powerful. The two of them *together* feel themselves capable of anything - supreme evil (murder) or supreme good (becoming a prophet / messiah) but only with their forces combined. These murder / religion concepts would seem to be analogies and should not be taken too literally - the idea is one of collaborative sexual potency. Madura in her “Cooked Over in a Woman’s Kettle” article points out the following excerpt from Morrison’s “Wilderness” :

Bourbon is a wicked brew, recalling
 courage milk, refined poison of cockroach & tree-bark, leaves
 & fly-wings scared from the
 land, a thick film: menstrual
 fluids no doubt add their splendor.
 It is the eagle's drink.

Again he adds, quite unnecessarily from a masculine point-of-view, a feminine image of menstrual fluids - it seems that this “splendor” is impossible without this feminine contribution. What Morrison could have thought of as a female weakness is converted into a positive image, a celebration of humanity. There is a clearer case of this in the poem “Sirens” : “Are you her / Do you look like that / How could you be when / No one ever could”.¹³ This is a “woman as muse” concept - sexuality as an enabling concept, reflecting a desire for perfection, in a sense of an “answer instead of a way”.¹⁴

We can trace this concept of an enabling sexuality to Freud’s awareness of Eros. The child first becomes one with an outside influence - love is inherently sexual for Freud; there

¹²Madura, Maryla “Cooked Over in a Woman’s Kettle : The Myth and Drama of Jim Morrison” <<http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Palladium/1409/maryla.htm>>

¹³Morrison, *Wilderness*, p.55.

¹⁴Morrison, “Whisky, Mystics & Men,” *Wilderness*, p.144.

exists infantile sexuality. However, it takes the form of a union between the pleasure and reality principles: “Children ... are unable to distinguish between their souls and their bodies; in Freudian terminology, they are their own ideal.”¹⁵ The principle of pleasure (similar to Blake’s concept of “delight”) should not be underestimated. It is: “the fundamental form of human activity in the world over and beyond economic activity and struggle for existence based on the reality principle ... what is the pattern of activity, free from work, the serious business of life, and the reality principle, which is adumbrated in the life of children? The answer is that children play.”¹⁶ We need to be careful about the understanding of this term “play” however - for the young child, as for the adult, it is a very serious concept indeed and is fundamental to life itself, and especially to any conception of desire and imaginative reconstruction. It also has an interesting connection with education - for the child both concepts are combined. But just because the work is made fun, that does not diminish the seriousness of the work; this is merely what could be referred to as a “spoonful of sugar.” For the young, reading, mathematics and other serious tasks are made pleasurable, and learning a language is never so easy in later years. The child’s “pleasure is in the active life of the human body”¹⁷ - however the Christian emphasis on asceticism, Brown contends, has removed this forcibly as an aim. It is only an awareness of the need for a constant striving for re-evaluation, despite its attendant suffering and seeming lack of concrete basis in reality, that has an effect on society around it, in Brown’s words: “Its contradiction of the reality principle is its social function, as a constant reinforcement of the struggle for instinctual liberation.” Quotes like this make it quite clear why Morrison’s favourite book is of such interest here - it provides us with a neat connection between Brown, Morrison, sexuality and

¹⁵ Brown op. cit., p. 31.

¹⁶ op. cit., p. 32.

¹⁷ Ibid.

1960s protest. What is being described is the fruitful result of the search for a compromise between the individual desire and the comforting protection of the group or family.

There is a distinction in Brown's work between the traditional notion of the audience and that of the artist - the former has not come to grips with suffering, the artist according to Nietzsche invariably has to endure it in order to produce his art. This would of course apply to Morrison. The artist makes the unconscious conscious and messages are presented veiled. There is the interesting concept of sensual speech (*die sensualische sprache*) - a form of "language appropriate to the species that is actualizing the true potentialities of its sensuous or sensual nature."¹⁸ The "art of the superior artist is to restore by means of conscious operations the integrity [*valeur*] of sensuality and the emotional power of things."¹⁹ Humour is a further weapon against repression. It is the means to produce a reaction - to involve and excite into a response. The prime goal is one of satisfaction - which as an idea is free from the dualism of work and play, love and hate, etc. Brown quotes the poet R.M. Rilke in his essay "Ueber Kunst" that the actualised play of the artist is not necessarily a product of its times but is "always in response to its present time" - a subtle but important distinction. Rilke presents art as a way of life "like religion, science or even socialism"²⁰ stating that the "times are resistance" and "it is only from this tension between contemporary currents and the artist's untimely conception of life that there arises a series of small discharges which are the work of art." The role of a leader is a response to *repression*: "Again and again someone in the crowd wakes up, he has no ground in the crowd, and he emerges according to much broader laws. He carries strange customs with him and demands room for bold gestures. The future speaks ruthlessly through him ... artists are spokesmen for what is repressed in the present." Confidence and hope - as well as a faith in, and love for, human nature, are all

¹⁸ Brown, op. cit., p.72.

¹⁹ op. cit., p.73.

²⁰ op. cit., p.66.

implied in what according to the reality principle is classed as “naïve.” Desperate pessimism (or even a compromise to a politician’s reality) is far more futile and is a surrender to apathy. The realm of emotion is that of repressed joy and needs a language that is subversive of its own instrument.

We could turn to Foucault here for comparative ideas on sexuality. He states in the conclusion of *History of Sexuality Volume 3* that the move in the West from the Greco-Roman world to Christian ethics “is marked by an increased apprehension, a broader and more detailed definition of the correlations between the sexual act and body, a closer attention to the ambivalence of its effects and its disturbing consequences. And this is not just a greater preoccupation with the body, it is also a different way of thinking about sexual activity and of fearing it because of its many connections with disease and with evil.”²¹ It is this fear of sexuality - of the desire and energy of gratification which is exactly what Freud (and Brown) was highlighting. Foucault nevertheless has at times a forcefully negative view of sexuality, hinted at in the previous quote. He continues: “let us ponder all the ruses that were employed for centuries to make us love sex, to make the knowledge of it desirable and everything said about it precious.”²² The idea that we are all victims of a predatory sexuality seems to be most outrageous here with the claim that we need anything to *make* us love sex. Foucault’s work involves a notion of the repressive hypothesis as fitting in with the capitalist project of marketing sex. However, it is not within the scope of Foucault’s investigation to investigate the political aspects of repression that Brown seems to be concerned with. There is nevertheless in these *History of Sexuality* volumes a distinction between the *scientia sexualis* that exists in Western societies and the *ars erotica* that existed in China, Japan, India, Rome and the Arab-Muslim societies: “In the erotic art, truth is drawn from pleasure itself, understood as a practice and accumulated as experience; pleasure is not considered in

²¹ Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume 3*, p.238.

²² Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume 1*, p.159.

relation to an absolute law of the permitted and the forbidden, nor by reference to a criterion of utility, but first and foremost in relation to itself; it is experienced as pleasure, evaluated in terms of its intensity, its specific quality, its duration, its reverberations in the body and the soul.”²³ And he even suggests a form of resistance: “It is the agency of sex that we must break away from, if we aim - through a tactical reversal of the various mechanisms of sexuality - to counter the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures, and knowledges, in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistance. The rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures.”²⁴ Foucault seems not to be against sex as an act (unlike recent critics such as Stephen Heath²⁵) - and instead proposes that it is the analysis of and commodification of it (not necessarily by the same people) which is the problem. He is also claiming, of course, that throughout history “promiscuity” has existed in much the same form as today - it is not so much the sex act that has changed but the attention that has been paid to it. At the same time power has kept it within the established boundaries. We need however to bring this all back to Morrison and understand what relevance this has for the themes that he pursued on stage.

Morrison was aware of the limitations of sexuality in some contexts - indeed he almost echoes Foucault’s concern about the repression of the body (sex) being more damaging than that of (marketed) *sexuality*. Morrison stated in an interview : “Sex can be a liberation. But it can also be an entrapment... Sex is full of lies. The body tries to tell the truth. But it’s usually too battered with rules to be heard, and bound with pretenses so it can hardly move... we’re taught that the body is something to control, dominate... How can sex be a liberation if you don’t really want to touch your body - if you’re trying to escape from it ... ”²⁶ Morrison did

²³ Foucault, op. cit., p.57.

²⁴ Foucault, op. cit., p.57.

²⁵ Particularly in *The Sexual Fix*.

²⁶ Lizzie James interview Part II, 1967, in Sugerman, *The Doors : The Illustrated History*, p.124.

occasionally comment on the fact that culture as he saw it was concerned with an escape from reality. There is therefore an explicit connection between sex and wider culture - it is not simply about the sexual act itself and has much wider implications : “Twentieth-century culture’s disease is the inability [of people] to feel their own reality. People cluster to TV, soap operas, movies, theater, pop idols, and they have wild emotion over symbols. But in the reality of their own lives, they’re emotionally dead.”²⁷ Again we have the concept of emotion being important - a key reason that music is so powerful. This awareness of the limitations of much of what constitutes culture, as well as the enabling methods used, tends to single Morrison out amongst many of his contemporaries, including John Lennon.²⁸ We can trace this back to Brown and note that this tends to bypass many of the means by which sex is taken out of its own environment and plunged into an artificial cultural background - what Foucault was drawing attention to in his distinction between *scientia sexualis* and the *ars erotica*. We are brought back to the idea that it is our own bodies and pleasures that we should pay attention to, rather than paying attention to the discourses of other agencies.

One of Morrison’s more interesting allusions to sexuality in interviews were his references to snakes: “I used to see the universe as a mammoth peristaltic snake ... the peristaltic motion is the basic life movement ... swallowing, digestion, the rhythms of sexual intercourse”;²⁹ and in another:

...[snakes] are a complete anachronism. If every reptile in the world were to disappear tomorrow it wouldn’t really change the balance of nature one bit. They are a completely arbitrary species. I think that maybe they might if any creature could, survive another world war or some kind of total poisoning of the planet ... There’s something deep in the human memory that responds strongly to snakes...I think that a snake just embodies everything we fear...³⁰

²⁷ Lizzie James interview Part II, op. cit., p.123.

²⁸ John Lennon was initially vocal in protest movements (and was hounded by the FBI as a result) but his work gradually became assimilated into the mainstream after 1970. He changed his music to fit in with the new apolitical atmosphere in popular music, making it likely that, later on particularly, he was more of a commercial artist than a protester.

²⁹ Salli Stevenson interview in Sugerman, op. cit., p.242.

³⁰ Bob Chorush interview in op. cit., p.258.

We should note that Morrison felt fear to be an important emotion - that this should be confronted and “broken through” - snakes are a resilient species, and remind one of the natural, regenerative forces of sex. Pleasure is arbitrary but very important. Morrison’s ideas have connections with D.H. Lawrence’s *The Plumed Serpent*³¹ - and these go beyond the mention of snakes. Lawrence’s novel was based on four essays that he wrote on primitive Indian tribes including “Indians and Entertainment” and “Pan in America”. Lawrence attended dances of the Hopi tribe in Mexico. He read such works as Jane Harrison’s *Ancient Art and Ritual* and from it gained the insight that drama arose from “religious yearning” through the “old ceremonial dances.”³² For primitive man there was “no individual, isolated experience” - all experience came from the “undifferentiated human bloodstream” (we should note the sexual connotation that Lawrence always attached to the word “blood”). He was “a whole self participating, not a half-self acting and a half-self observing.”³³ This all has connections with Morrison’s shamanic dancing and aims of enabling the crowd, which is described further elsewhere.³⁴ We have a concept of play in the so-called primitive tribes: “The game, the game of it all! Everything they did must be *fun*, or they could not do it. They could not abstract themselves to a routine. Never. Everything must be fun, must be variable, must be a bit of an adventure.”³⁵ However this is a childlike *but not childish* quality, reminiscent of Brown’s reference to the child: “Children! But then not at all children. None of the wandering *insouciance* of childhood. Something dark and cognisant in their souls all the time: some heavy weight of resistance. They worked in fits and starts and could be very industrious; then came days when they lay about on the ground like pigs... Careless in their

³¹I have not been able to determine whether Morrison read *The Plumed Serpent*. It is difficult to obtain a *comprehensive* list of his reading material (though it is certain that as a child and young adult he read extensively). Some information on his favourite books is in biographies and biographical articles. They do not specifically mention this title, though that is not conclusive obviously.

³² “Indians and Entertainment” in Clark, “Introduction”, *The Plumed Serpent*, p. xxx.

³³ in Clark, *ibid*.

³⁴ see Myth chapter.

³⁵ Lawrence, *The Plumed Serpent*, p.150.

morals, always changing their loves... It was the women that drove them on... ”³⁶ It is worth bearing in mind that Lawrence was interested in psychoanalysis and dealt with it in such works as *Fantasia of the Unconscious* and *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*. In the former work he makes a very Morrisonian comment: “very few people surpass their parents nowadays... Most men are half-born slaves.”³⁷ Though it has been said that it is “a reaction against the psychology of Freud with its emphasis on sex and the incest-motive”³⁸, he substitutes instead a series of parts of the body that he posits as centres of emotion and thought. And in *The Plumed Serpent*, among the tribes “sex was a powerful, potent thing, not to be played with or paraded. The one mystery. And a mystery greater than the individual.”³⁹ This is therefore an interesting connection between individual and collective consciousness - personal and political. Later in the book one of the characters (Ramón) says the following: “Let us seek life where it is to be found. And having found it, life will solve the problems. But every time we deny the living life, in order to solve a problem, we cause ten problems to spring up where was one before..” It is better to:

turn to life; and from the clock to the sun and the stars, and from metal to membrane. This way we hope the problem will dissolve, since it can never be solved. When men seek life first, they will not seek land nor gold. The lands will lie on the lap of the gods where men lie. And if the old communal system comes back, and the village and the land are one, it will be very good. For truly no man can possess lands... in our haste to have a child, it is no good tearing the babe from the womb. Seek life and life will bring the change.⁴⁰

And again: “Kate herself had convinced herself of one thing finally : that the clue to all living and to all moving-on into new living lay in the vivid blood-relation between man and woman. A man and a woman in their togetherness were the clue to all present living and future possibility. Out of this clue of togetherness between a man and a woman, the whole of the new life arose. It was the quick of the whole.”⁴¹ And: “I must not recoil against Cipriano and

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ Lawrence, *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, p.25.

³⁸ Hobsbaum, *A Reader's Guide to D.H. Lawrence*, p.93.

³⁹ Lawrence, *The Plumed Serpent*, p.152.

⁴⁰ *op. cit.*, p.361.

⁴¹ Lawrence, *op. cit.*, p.399.

Ramón, they make my blood blossom in my body. I say they are limited. But then one must be limited. If one tries to be unlimited, one becomes horrible.”⁴² It is also important that at the end of the book Ramón states “You needn’t commit yourself to *us*. Listen to your own best desire.”⁴³ Clark, in his introduction to the Penguin edition of *The Plumed Serpent*, cites two other essays, the first being “Dance of the Sprouting Corn”: “Through dance the Santo Domingos call down the universal energies that produce their corn, in a ritual of participation rather than invocation.” The other essay is called “The Hopi Snake Dance”: “The Hopis, conveying their message through the snakes they dance with, put themselves ‘into relation with the vast living convulsions of rain and thunder and sun.’ ... the earth’s dark centre holds its dark sun, our source of isolated being, round which our world coils its folds like a great snake.”⁴⁴ This in particular links back to Morrison’s above quote describing the world as a snake - that this embodies basic life processes.

Morrison was keen on embodying his poetry with emotion on stage, even the humble love lyric (which occurs in songs such as “Blue Sunday”, “Indian Summer” and others) can be seen as important and not merely frivolous. Morrison commented in an interview: “love is one of the handful of devices we have to avoid the void, so to speak.”⁴⁵ Julia Kristeva has mentioned reasons why the notion of love is so crucial to humanity - these shed some light on its importance to the *performer*. “Love is a creative daimon, and that is why the philosopher, lacking and seeking beauty and a work, is a lover as much as he is a creator.” She quotes Plato’s *Symposium* when answering the question “what activity will deserve the name of love?”: ‘The object which they have in view is birth in beauty, whether of body or soul’ (206b). But why give birth? ‘Because to the mortal creature, generation is a sort of eternity and immortality, she replied, and if, as has already been admitted, love is of the everlasting

⁴² op. cit., p.438.

⁴³ op. cit., p.444.

⁴⁴ Clark “Introduction” and Lawrence, “The Hopi Snake Dance” in op. cit., p.xxx.

⁴⁵ Salli Stevenson interview [1970] in Sugarman, *Doors Illustrated History*, p.161.

possession of the good, all men will necessarily desire immortality together with good.’ (207a).”⁴⁶ Morrison’s use of humour becomes clearer: “Jamming life into death, leaving no space in between them, melancholy is a constant *anxiety* on the moral level, a painful *impotence* on the sexual one.”⁴⁷ The word impotence has new significance when compared with radicalised, sexualised 60s youth groups.

Charles Baudelaire’s poetry, which influenced Morrison is pointed to by Kristeva when thinking about the poetics and contradictions of love. She poses the question: “What is this ideal agency that appears to be the ultimate addressee of such writing, which is nevertheless elated by evil?”⁴⁸ This in fact refers to the idea that what Baudelaire seems to be doing is offering a means of re-examining the nature of such concepts; it is a recurrent theme in postmodernist literature including poetry, and Foucault also would recognise that emotive words such as “evil” need to be challenged, and standards of morality examined for their ‘truth.’ Surely this is what the concept of “flowers of evil” is dealing with. In the 60s what is considered in society as being the “truth” is being challenged more widely. Brown quoted Nietzsche (one of Morrison’s favourite philosophers) that pain is important for the artist and Kristeva admits that Baudelaire’s poetics consist of “the worship of expanded sensations expressed by means of music” (quoting Baudelaire’s “My Heart Lay Bare”)⁴⁹ and cites lines from “The Solitary’s Wine”: “The violin rips like a blade seeking the heart” ... “Sounds of an irritating, tender music / Like distant cries of human pain”. This makes for us the connection between music and solitude, music and altered consciousness, even music and human sympathy (or love). It is exactly that music is emotional, once again, which creates its power. Kristeva is of the opinion that in Baudelaire’s poetry “Every metaphor points to the crossroads where the writer (or the lover) finds himself magnetised on all sides, toward

⁴⁶Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, pp. 73-4.

⁴⁷op. cit., p. 77.

⁴⁸op. cit., p.320.

⁴⁹op. cit., p.324.

Flowers and toward *Evil*, torn between the ‘language of flowers’ and that of ‘mute things.’

”⁵⁰ It is the “*elevation*” of meaning and though she is of the opinion that this creates a problem with an infinity of connotation leading to a “void” of non-meaning, it is difficult to see how free thought is possible without at first acknowledging a large number of possibilities.

Kristeva is well aware of the historical (societal) reappraising potential of these concerns: “Romanticism, especially its late variants, following upon the institutional and religious crisis inaugurated by the French Revolution, put into words an unheard-of instability in the individual. Formerly, the powerful Earth, Sovereign, and God myths put a damper on wanderings at the borders of the speakable and visible. Or else, when that subjective instability was spoken, miraculously and provisionally harmonized codes, such as the courtly code, took charge of it.”⁵¹ In the face of realism, the “atomising of the self” was “enunciated only under the aegis of the divine ideal, through ecstasy or music. Nevertheless, a society based on productivity and need ... could only discredit the amatory experience and consign the writing of *jouissance* to the ‘parasitic’ level.” If through a writing “that is synonymous with the amatory condition - an experience at the limits of the identifiable - the writer can find no other place in the bosom of bourgeois society than that of a refugee at the side of nonproductive nobility or of the Church, which protects fetishes under the symbolic umbrella, we can only interpret that as an indictment of that very society rather than the evidence of the writer’s error or “failure.”⁵² Social agreement “the more so as it emphasises efficiency and the production of material goods, is put together by excluding - imbuing with a sense of guilt - the discourse of *jouissance* that is coextensive with the amatory condition.”⁵³

This seems to bear out the universal effect of Brown’s repression arguments.

⁵⁰ Kristeva, *op. cit.*, p.330.

⁵¹ *op. cit.*, p.339.

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ *ibid.*

Many theorists, such as Simon Frith and others, seem nevertheless to be of the opinion that the use of sexual imagery in art is counterproductive to a goal of achieving societal change. From a Marxist point of view, they point to the keen involvement of capitalist organisations in the production and performance of music. The same is claimed of sex - that not only business but also science has convinced us that our liberation is involved with discovering the “truth” about our sex lives - though what Foucault is saying is that this is the same truth we have known for generations, essentially only an illusion of novelty. This is surely what Morrison is talking about when he says that sex can sometimes be an “entrapment” and that it is “full of lies” when the “body tries to tell the truth”. This can be an erotic truth though, just one that the dominant hegemony - perhaps the “moral majority” - may be frowning upon - at the same time as it is apparently tolerating free thought. The 1960s was not just about sex, it was a fusion of sex and politics - with an equal emphasis on both. Morrison did feel that he was able to use his sexuality (in the early part of his career at least) to gain attention of an audience, only to then unsettle them. Morrison changed his mind about this later on when he realised it was his image that was controlling him, rather than the other way around. More generally it is worth pointing out that the idea that the Pill and its introduction shows a certain materialism in sex, could of course be used as part of an indictment against the financial priorities of such a *society*, not against those that were advocating change.

Accounts of Doors performances frequently stress Morrison’s lack of self-control on stage - enthusiasm (though admittedly sometimes approaching hysteria) and the sense in which what is being performed has an authenticity - are key in these descriptions. In other words, reporters are convinced that what they are watching is *real*. Rock musicians are accomplished at creating a form of tightly controlled chaos - an example being Roger Daltrey of The Who smashing his guitar at the Isle of Wight festival. This was not even Daltrey’s

original idea - being pioneered by Jimi Hendrix at the Monterey Pop Festival of 1967. Even Hendrix got to the point where if he didn't smash his guitar it was not seen as a good performance. He began to suspect that much of his audience were not attuned to his innovative (often technically impressive) guitar playing and instead wanted their own personal performance. In other words, they wanted to see what *they* hadn't seen before, rather than what audiences generally hadn't seen before. Paul Caruso has said that this has origins in the soul band : "I guess out of boredom, doing the same thing. There was a lot of routine in those soul bands, the steps and everything. The guitarist, as sort of a sly prank would play the guitar behind his back or with his teeth. This is a way of breaking the pattern, breaking the law... I've heard things like from Don Covey telling stories about Wilson Pickett pulling a gun on a drummer, just gimmicks like that." Hendrix understandably reacted badly to the word gimmick as referring to his *entire* performance and talent : "I'm tired of people saying we're all gimmicks. The world is nothing but a big gimmick - wars, napalm bombs and all that. People getting burned up on TV and its nothing but a big gimmick. Yes, we do *[ironic tone]*." ⁵⁴ Unfortunately some of these techniques became routine in itself, though Hendrix's music continued to evolve in new directions toward the end of his life. Like a horror film, we like being scared just as long as we are not personally threatened. There are often more, slightly different rules for the concert environment.

In contrast, however, with certain more self-consciously rebellious artists who caused no trouble at all to their managers, Doors performances seemed uncomfortable - at least for promoters, and even other band members (drummer John Densmore threatened to leave the group after the Isle of Wight performance in 1970 because of Morrison's behaviour).

⁵⁴"Jimi Hendrix", Warner Bros., 1973.

Morrison was the first music performer to be arrested on stage.⁵⁵ Audiences came to see the unexpected, but the results were not always in tune with what the audience wanted. Referring to an Aug 12 1967 show at Queens New York, *Variety* magazine's reviewer complained that Morrison "goes into paroxysms of caterwauling every other number" and posed the question, "Is it for real or is he doing it for the money?"⁵⁶ And in relation to an Oct 14 1967 show in Pennsylvania, the reviewer of the *Crusader* specifically referred to Morrison's sexualised performance in a highly negative review : "The whole picture was completed by the way he caressed the microphone stand, did a fertility dance around it and eventually made love to this simplest of all phallic symbols. The whole show should have been a required abnormal psychology exhibition, not a \$3.00 or more per person, entertaining concert."⁵⁷ The concert was in fact "warped obscenity, both visually and vocally" and consisted of the "howling, screeching, groaning effusions of our boy Jim."⁵⁸ Above all it wasn't fitting in with the expectations of what seemed to be a conservative audience : "[During the concert] the audience of 'Patti Duke' types seem shocked and unable to respond... the minimal applause provides Morrison with ample opportunity to heckle the audience, and reviews of the show focus on the band's long hair and shaggy appearance."⁵⁹ A final point may be added from the *Crusader*'s editor-in-chief who felt moved to respond to the concert personally in that October issue : "The Doors were heard to remark that if everyone had walked out on their performance they would have achieved their purpose. It is obvious their purpose and our

⁵⁵New Haven Arena, New Haven, Connecticut, Dec 9 1967. At the time New Haven police were being cited in newspaper articles for excessive force concerning an antiwar demonstration. In circumstances not entirely clear Morrison was maced prior to the show, found *in flagrante* with a girlfriend backstage and police officers, apparently thinking he was an audience member in a restricted area, maced him again. Although police initially allowed the performance to go on, Morrison chose to talk to the audience about what had happened. He was arrested mid-song although later on he was released on bond. Charges against him were eventually dropped.

⁵⁶Herm, "Simon and Garfunkel hit 71,000 capacity gross at Forest Hills fete", *Variety*, Aug. 1967, in Shaw, *Doors on the Road*, p.53.

⁵⁷Richard Poinsett, "15-4," *The Crusader*, Oct 19, 1967, in Shaw, op. cit., p.69.

⁵⁸ibid.

⁵⁹Shaw, op. cit., p.68.

purpose (providing big-name entertainment) do not coincide.”⁶⁰ They were clearly not preaching to the converted - and were actually trying to provoke a response among certain people by means of sexuality. If further proof is needed of Morrison’s spontaneity and real-life danger it lies in an account of the Jun 9 1967 show in Fillmore Auditorium, San Francisco. During the show Morrison was “perilously twirling his microphone like a lasso over the heads of the people in the audience. When he is less than a dozen feet from the stage Morrison’s microphone somehow zips past everyone else in the audience to strike Bill Graham [promoter] square in the head.” Graham reportedly had strong words to say to him after the show.

Audience *confrontation* was always part of his sexualised persona. Towards the end of the Dec 14th 1968 show at the LA Forum, after the obligatory “Light My Fire,” Morrison proceeded to recite his “Celebration of the Lizard” poem / song.⁶¹ *Cash Box* magazine describes the scene:

A feeling of indescribable tension filled the Forum as the music stopped and the poetry began. ‘Is everybody in? The ceremony is about to begin,’ said Morrison, crouching with microphone in hand in front of the audience. The crowd squirmed, fidgeted and started shouting obscenities. They wanted Morrison to sing, not to recite. He realized what they were waiting for, and in a mocking voice still wallowing in his own glow, proceeded to recite more poetry.”⁶²

There are many, many other examples of the sexual performance at the same time becoming a confrontational one - where the audience are made to be confused and disorientated. It would have the ultimate expression in the Miami problem.⁶³ It was Morrison’s belief that it could only be after apocalyptic chaos that reconstruction could begin. That would mean not

⁶⁰Sam Clapper, editor-in-chief, *The Crusader*, Oct 19, 1967, in Shaw, op. cit., p.69.

⁶¹Although this appears as a poem (*American Night* pp. 37-47 - and in the album inlay for *Waiting For the Sun* during Morrison’s lifetime) when performed some portions were recited, and other parts sang. It reinforces Morrison’s commitment to both poetry and song. The piece was originally to form an entire album but only the “Not to Touch the Earth” section survived (as a song on *Waiting For the Sun*). It was only released in live versions after Morrison’s death (*Doors in Concert* and *Doors Box Set*). For the sake of simplicity I have occasionally referred to this as a poem in this thesis.

⁶²“Talent On Stage,” *Cash Box*, Dec 28, 1968.

⁶³See Miami incident chapter.

performed subversion, but actual subversion, to the point where leadership is critiqued and the individuals in the crowd have to find themselves - within the crowd.

Kristeva has recognised that so-called “primitive” peoples (we can recall Morrison’s interest in shamanism here) have a language that is beyond itself - that in fact is (felt to be) more real: “What first strikes ‘modern’ man - experienced in today’s theory and linguistic science, and for whom language is exterior to the real, a fine film whose only substance is conventional, fictitious, and ‘symbolic’ - is that in societies that are ‘primitive’ ... language is a *substance* and a *material* force.”⁶⁴ He does not know “communication to be an act of idealization or abstraction, but knows it instead as *participation* in the surrounding universe.” It is also worth noting : “For the Dogons [an African tribe living southwest of the Niger]... the various elements that compose speech are found in a diffuse state in the body ... to the extent that every social act presupposes a speaking exchange, and to the extent that every individual act is itself a means of expressing oneself, ‘speech’ is sometimes a synonym for ‘undertaking’ or ‘doing.’ ” Kristeva quotes Calame-Griaule : “each ‘speech’ within this system corresponds to a technique or institution, a plant (as well as a specific part of a plant), an animal (and one of its organs) and an organ in the human body.”⁶⁵ But the Sudanese Bambaras have an even more unambiguous link between sexual energy and language. Kristeva mentions a Bambara maxim: “Man has no tail, he has no mane; the ‘holding’ point of a man is his mouth.”⁶⁶ She argues : “If one were to listen analytically one would easily discover in these comparisons the extent to which the Bambara conception of speech is *sexualised* and seemingly indistinct from the sexual function.” The organs of speech are represented as the head and the heart, the bladder, the sexual organs, intestines, kidneys, lungs, liver, trachea, throat, and mouth (tongue, teeth, lips and saliva). The sexual organs “by

⁶⁴Kristeva, *Language: The Unknown*, p.50.

⁶⁵op. cit., p.54.

⁶⁶op. cit., p.55.

means of movements that are a simplification of the gestures accomplished during coitus, give the verb the pleasure and taste of life.” The entire body “participates in the articulation of speech ... to speak is to bring out an element of one’s body: to speak is *to give birth*.”⁶⁷

When Morrison was around 12 years old he started drawing bizarre sexual and scatological drawings along with writing radio commentaries. An example of his drawings, according to Hopkins and Sugerman, is one of “a man with a Coca-Cola bottle for a penis, a mean-looking can opener for testicles, one hand held out and dripping with slime hanging from his anus.” Another “showed a man with an erect penis the size of a baseball bat, a small boy kneeling in front and holding on, licking his pointed teeth in anticipation.” Radio commentaries discussed masturbation and “butt-picking”. Poetry and songwriting were nowhere to be seen at this time. Obviously humour was a part of this pre-Beat art - but it shows also a rebellion against norms of language. There was no way that these themes could be explored in stylistically formal discourse such as the short story - they were surrealist and positively anti-language. The passivity of the act of reading in which the human body does not appear at all is not the way to express action over endless reflection. Some imagery that would be used in poetry would match his sort of bizarre surrealist representations. He also started to paint - De Kooning nudes for example - but always destroyed his work or gave it away. The body and creativity were already being linked in an imaginative, though irreverent, way. Morrison as the performer on the stage, for a large part of his career at least, was employing sexual symbolism (leather, youthful image) in an attempt to remind audiences of the pleasure of the teenage love-relationship as an escape from the domineering code of parental control. This is always going to be at least as important as the lyrical content however, which made Morrison, later in his career, distrust the level to which audiences were understanding the complete package of ideas that he was interested in. If Morrison was

⁶⁷ibid.

interested in the expressiveness of the body as a metaphor for potent, creative energy in a more general sense, he was also aware of the value of literature. There was already perhaps a nascent form of linkage between the two. Riordan and Prochnicky quote Morrison as saying, “The key to education is reading basically. You can do the same thing on your own. Anything and everything is at the library.”⁶⁸ There is also corroboration of this broad idea from Danny Sugerman who states when Sugerman was a teenager, and told Morrison he was interested in going out and having a “good time” that Morrison surprised him by recommending that he concentrate on reading more.⁶⁹ There is a distrust of authority here in his breaking with institutions and asserting the necessity to read on your own. But there was certainly some desire that leads Morrison from poetry, reading and painting - all very solitary activities - to performance, *involving* others. There was a form of coevolution here in which one was dependent on the other for progression to occur. From the time of his own puberty, his obsession was to be able to turn his poetry into a mass event - to challenge the realities of others directly, sonically and bodily.

Morrison would surely have agreed with Baudrillard that the predominant and presumably problematic nature of representational art is that of a “hyperreality” where art seems to break entirely from the real world. Take the following line from *The Lords*: “Imagery is born of loss. Loss of the ‘friendly expanses’ ... You may enjoy life only from afar. You may look at things but not taste them. You may caress the mother only with the eyes. / You cannot touch these phantoms.”⁷⁰ There is an artificial nature to much of culture, a form of desperation - an alternative to bodily life. Morrison continues: “More or less, we’re all afflicted with the psychology of the voyeur ... in our whole physical and emotional stance before the world.”⁷¹ And: “Films are collections of dead pictures given artificial

⁶⁸Riordan and Prochnicky, *Break on Through : The Life and Death of Jim Morrison*, p.35.

⁶⁹ Sugerman (ed.) “Introduction” *The Doors : The Illustrated History*, pp. ix-x.

⁷⁰Morrison, [*The Lords and the New Creatures*] *The Lords*, p.15.

⁷¹Morrison, op. cit., *The Lords*, p.13.

insemination ... Films [*sic*] spectators are quiet vampires.”⁷² Note the use of the word quiet, implying that all sound in these films, like the action in them, is predictable. The alternative would seem to be a Doors concert, where your favourite songs may not be played - and you as an audience member may be subjected to abuse for calling for them, as we have seen. The music will sometimes be improvisational (a blend of jazz and rock), a form of chiding as a response to the audience expecting to be entertained. With the loss of childhood - the inability (once an adult) to sing, dance and play, or to bend rules without offence, is lost when work and routine is imposed (possibly without crucial elements of enjoyment) once we have all “bought into the system”. What is provided in society is often a solitary entertainment - contained within the boundaries of what is created for the audience, and which the audience cannot involve themselves with *directly*. “Cinema is the most totalitarian of the arts... The body exists for the sake of the eyes; it becomes a dry stalk to support these two soft insatiable jewels.”⁷³ The represented body is dry but the actual parts of the body watching are jewels though in this context they are also insatiable (insatiable as physical organs of the body perhaps, but still conveying only one sensory experience to the person). “Cinema has evolved in two paths. / One is spectacle. Like the Phantasmagoria, its goal is the creation of a total substitute sensory world. / The other is peep show, which claims for its realm both the erotic and the untampered observance of real life, and imitates the keyhole or voyeur’s window without need of color, noise, grandeur.”⁷⁴ The peep show only *claims* to be erotic, and to be the untampered observance of real life but it is very limited to what can be seen, not experienced. The following comments describe hegemonic control in society : “The Lords appease us with images. They give us books, concerts, galleries, shows, cinemas. Especially the cinemas. Through art they confuse us and blind us to our enslavement. Art

⁷²Morrison, op. cit., *The Lords*, p.17.

⁷³ibid.

⁷⁴Morrison, op. cit., *The Lords*, p.22.

adorns our prison walls, keeps us silent and diverted and indifferent.”⁷⁵ This is all very similar to Baudrillard’s complaints about simulacra - e.g. “To simulate is to feign to have what one hasn’t”⁷⁶ and “In this passage to a space whose curvature is no longer that of the real, nor of truth, the age of simulation thus begins with a liquidation of all referents - worse: by their artificial resurrection in systems of signs, which are a more ductile material than meaning, in that they lend themselves to all systems of equivalence, all binary oppositions and all combinatory algebra.”⁷⁷ Baudrillard allies simulation to conventional politics: “Since Machiavelli politicians have perhaps always known that the mastery of *simulated* space is the source of power, that the political is not a *real* activity or space, but a simulation model, whose manifestations are simply achieved effects.”⁷⁸ Something with which Foucault would surely agree. Image suddenly becomes very important. Morrison obviously came to believe that with *participative* performance the one-way nature of the “masturbating voyeur” could be circumvented. This becomes all the more convincing (and it gives the Sixties a particular *raison d’être*) when it is given a *political* dimension.

When asked in a New York Times Magazine interview by Bernard Wolfe about his clutching his genitals in performance, Morrison replied with irritation, “Because they’re there. Because to have is to hold. Because the audience wouldn’t be stirred if I reached for my nose or my elbow. Because I’m a politician and politicians have a long reach. Because there’s no drink to reach for. Because these vinyl pants are too f—king [*sic*] tight. Because.”

⁷⁹ The temptation to smile at this remark is strong - but Morrison did sometimes temper his more serious comments with humour or satire. The point is that the audience would only be stirred through a form of sexual / political power - i.e. in light of his attention gathering.

⁷⁵Morrison, op. cit., *The Lords*, p.32.

⁷⁶Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, p.167.

⁷⁷ibid.

⁷⁸Baudrillard, op. cit., p. 158.

⁷⁹Wolfe, “The Real-Life Death of Jim Morrison” , reprinted *Esquire*, June 1972, in Rocco (ed.) *The Doors Companion*, p.120.

When asked if he consciously became a sex symbol on stage he replied: “Everybody has to stand for something, that’s what we’re here for. If Spiro Agnew stands for law and order, all right, say I stand for sex. Chaos. Movement without meaning. Cop baiting. Fifty-two week paid vacations with double overtime every year.”⁸⁰ So his use of the word politician in the Wolfe response is notable, as is his *political* cop baiting idea. Coupled with his interest in Brecht and The Living Theatre, along with lyrics like “We want the world and we want it now” along with many others, we may speculate as to what kind of a politician he would make. He is certainly trying to make clear that he is not *apolitical*. The concept of work as fun is also mentioned, which seems to be key to the idea of taking ideas beyond the academic and into the popular arena. Wolfe follows this up by asking if encouraging free sexuality, *advocating* it, means to be a *symbol* of it. Morrison replies: “Every entity in the world is a symbol. It can’t be helped. I mean everything parades as itself but really stands for something else, everything you see and smell is a small deposit of the intangible, the everywhere mystery ... If there were real things in the world instead of just a panorama of symbols all the poets would have been accountants and census takers.”⁸¹ His next comment acknowledges the artificiality of much of the discourse of life, discussing his poem consisting of just one line, “They are filming something in the street in front of our house”: “People have the feeling that what’s going on outside isn’t real, just a bunch of staged events, all I did was to record this feeling.”⁸² So Morrison seems to be claiming that language can be used in a special context, the peculiar passion to move beyond it is sexual. This chaos has a firm theoretical grounding when we consider psychoanalysis and Morrison’s oedipal lyrics.

Morrison in his interview with Wolfe talks about “Light My Fire” as a “liberation from the cycle of birth-orgasm-death ... I’m just saying there’s one cure for the plague, run away

⁸⁰Wolfe, op. cit., p.115.

⁸¹Wolfe, op. cit., p.116.

⁸²ibid.

fast and come back slow.”⁸³ We should always bear in mind that Morrison saw a very obscure connection between sex and death - a possible answer comes from a partially anonymous source from Wolfe’s article, named Sherry - who claims she was an acquaintance of Morrison : “Who knows what kind of death he’s talking about anyway, maybe he’s referring to the death of the deadening, sex-squelching sides of him, the sides he’s killing and deadening off.”⁸⁴ This could refer therefore to his on-stage persona, though this would have to have been foretold by Morrison in 1966 at the very beginning of his career (when he wrote the song). It could also refer to the death of childhood - and that death is necessary for reconstruction. Morrison’s lyrics sometimes had multiple meanings that shifted over time and were able to conjure up different ideas. Morrison’s intention was to reach his fans with poetry, not music, but sex got in the way of that : “Its f-ing [*sic*]⁸⁵ humiliating being spear-carrier to your meat.” And : “Nietzsche was right. In *Rebirth* [*sic* - transcription error for *The Birth?* ⁸⁶] of *Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*. About lyrics and music being incompatible. At some point as rock develops the poets and the musicians will walk away from each other.” This was presumably part of his “Rock is Dead” prediction. After Miami Morrison changed his view about sex in performance : “... it’s very, very hard to just get up on stage and sing a song when you’re a sex symbol. They didn’t come to hear my mouth, they were ogling my pants. The way they refuse to grant your mouth when they’ve been taught you’re all below the waist is very frustrating for a poet.”⁸⁷ Of course Morrison was to give up his sexual persona completely after 1970 wearing more ordinary clothes and sporting a beard (see Miami chapter and photographs), to general derision from commentators (as well as presumably ogling teenage girls). This also was a risk he was taking with his image and could

⁸³op. cit., p.119.

⁸⁴ op. cit., p.118.

⁸⁵i.e. language is censored in the original.

⁸⁶Morrison was very familiar with this book and it is hard to believe he would have made an error in the name of this work. The real name is phonetically similar to Wolfe’s transcription.

⁸⁷Wolfe in Rocco, op. cit., p.125.

have done his persona some damage. It could be a question of how far you confront your audience at the same time, referring to his lyric in "The End" : "The snake is long / Seven miles" Morrison explains it in Oedipal terms : "Six inches isn't going to establish you're finally disentangled from the Ogress. Seven miles just might." Escape from the routine is necessary for *political* reconstruction - in the *same article* Morrison says : "If the erotics I work with make the Agnews tear their hair, I guess they're political. I guess patricide and incest are political, once you start killing and balling your parents no telling how far you'll go, you might go on to governments. I don't make programs, the way I see myself I primarily open doors." ⁸⁸ For those who claim that Morrison is a conservative there is a great deal that does not add up. For more concrete answers about Morrison's stance, *The Lords and the New Creatures* contains the answer, because it was in the personification of a confrontation with those who were controlling thinking through language, that Morrison carried out his most necessary role.

⁸⁸Wolfe, *ibid.*

Mythology and Religion

This chapter will look at how shamanism had a key influence on Morrison's idea that a crowd could be taught how to think, and to escape from their surroundings by means of action beyond words; and that central to this was a link back to days before consumer culture dictated the confines of performance. An introductory background section will explore the influence of New Age beliefs, and how this ethos connected with the drug culture. Campbell, Nietzsche, Frazer and Roszak will be looked at along with Native American and Greek religion. We shall see whether it is valid to think of youth culture of the 1960s as a deep emotional connection with an aim higher than that of everyday reality and whether this connects religious thought with the affirmative sense of the "possible" - the urge to reconstruct society - that was at the heart of the decade.

In the transition from the Fifties to the Sixties we have, side by side with political thought (the antiwar movement being an example in what was then an atomic age with an attendant fear of imminent death), an artistic or aesthetic need for a deeper, spiritual and moral sensibility, which often found expression in an awareness of some type of religion or mythology. This can be connected with the value of song in bringing dry political thought to *emotional* life in the 1960s, and we shall look at whether Morrison was part of this. In the modern western world scientists and philosophers often critique religion or myth with some sort of a logical framework, pointing to the mutually exclusive nature of certain religions. Nevertheless the enduring popularity of various forms of belief and the prevalence of "new age" views in the 1960s make it necessary for the nature of, and justification for, their existence to be explored here.

Morrison was keenly interested in the Beats while growing up, and for them it is clear that rebellion involved a mystical visionary experience. Theodore Roszak points out: "Allen Ginsberg ... professes the quest for God in many of his earliest poems, well before he and his

colleagues had discovered Zen and the mystic traditions of the Orient.”¹ This seems to illustrate that there was a more abstract longing for some kind of belief - rather than a pious following of a localised regional religion. Ginsberg turned to Zen in 1954 and Jack Kerouac also showed his enthusiasm for this in *The Dharma Bums* (1958). Roszak further comments that Zen’s “commitment to a wise silence, which contrasts so strongly with the preachiness of Christianity, can easily ally with the moody inarticulateness of youth.”² He contends however that Zen is important because of its “radical critique of the conventional scientific conception of man and nature.”³ Instead of dominating nature through knowledge there is more humility. Indeed this provides us with a link from the Beats to the youth culture that was to follow in the 1960s - the idea of religious-inspired critique.

We have to ask the question of what was it that inspired drug-taking among the Beats, with substances such as Benzedrine for Kerouac and Ginsberg. It is true that this does not inspire the same hallucinatory effect as LSD, but it is nevertheless a psychoactive substance - it is taken for its effect on the mind (a speeding up of thought and body processes in the case of amphetamines). So we already have mind-altering substances coupled with spirituality. When Aldous Huxley talked of his mescaline experience in *The Doors of Perception* (1953) - a book that would partly inspire the name of Jim Morrison’s band - we have an account of a *visionary* experience. Indeed Huxley was of the opinion that such drugs were capable of transforming reality for the person experiencing them - a concept that we could easily extrapolate into a necessary function of *lateral* thought (i.e. finding new solutions to a problem). Huxley states : “Under a more realistic, a less exclusively verbal system of education than ours, every Angel (in Blake’s sense of the word) would be permitted as a sabbatical treat, would be urged and even if necessary compelled to take an occasional trip through some chemical Door [*sic*] in the Wall [*sic*] into the world of transcendental

¹ Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, p.125.

² Roszak, *op. cit.*, p.134.

³ *op. cit.*, p.136.

experience... the Angel might lose a little of the confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning and the consciousness of having read all the books.”⁴ A useful phrase he uses to describe transcendence is as “a felt immanence, an experienced participation.”⁵

If rebellion is to mean anything at all there has to be some sense of moving beyond the status quo - a challenge to it has to take place by means of a reference to something beyond it. The psychoactive substance is a modifier of consciousness, but one which could result in a social effect. In Huxley’s words some of the effects may be “social and technological in nature, others religious or psychological, others dietetic, educational, athletic.”⁶ This is a much larger idea than merely sedating or releasing inhibitions with delusions, it is a question of large-scale reappraisal of reality - it could, in other words, have social consequences. If it is argued that there is a danger to one’s own health in doing so, nevertheless this could part of the reflection on the nature and quality of life.⁷ The social connection is symbolised by Michael McClure (who retained a keen interest in Morrison’s poetry) in his “Peyote Poem” (1958). McClure wrote this poem while he was experimenting with psychedelics as a means of psychic liberation. There is in fact an interesting connection with society in his autobiography *The Mad Cub* (1970) where he explained a connection between his interest in ecology and his early peyote experiments. Charters quotes his comment in this work that these experiments with drugs taught him “the separate consciousness of my being ... I am aware of the creature that is stomach and the one that is solar plexus and the one that is brain and chest and all the fragmented creatures of my being that form the totality ... In reading biology I hope to make the discoveries that will liberate man to exist in timelessness and a state of superconsciousness.”⁸ There is little doubt, even if it is claimed that there is a

⁴ Huxley, *Doors of Perception*, p.55.

⁵ Huxley, *ibid.*

⁶ Huxley, *op. cit.*, p.44.

⁷ see also “Romanticism, Pre-Raphaelitism and Death” chapter.

⁸ McClure in Charters (ed.) *The Penguin Book of the Beats*, p.264.

dependence on the supplier, that the result is a shaking up of external reality - what would happen in the 1960s is that this would be taken to a macroscopic level.

As the revolt began to take shape through youth culture therefore, spirituality enjoyed a great upsurge. Alongside the musical changes that were occurring, drugs - particularly LSD and marijuana - seemed, like other psychoactive drugs in the past such as mescaline, to herald a new (mystical) way of seeing. This was what The Byrds's "Eight Miles High", which is considered one of the first songs of the hippie culture, was apparently advocating. Anderson states: "While the Byrds soared 'Eight Miles High,' others declared that their cosmic trips brought them closer to religion or as an observer wrote 'a spiritual agility and a gracefulness which leads them to believe that they have achieved an unusual unification of the mind, the soul and the senses' [Washington Free Press, 7 March 1968]." ⁹ The young and destitute Jim Morrison, just after graduating from UCLA, wrote many of the songs that would appear on the first two critically acclaimed albums while living on a rooftop in Venice Beach and eating acid "like candy": "There was far more to life than he had thus far experienced. Greater meaning, wondrous sensations, higher heights to climb to, and deeper depths to tumble to. And he could have it all." ¹⁰ Tom Wolfe's *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* described the general 1965 hippie scene - LSD, he felt, was the alternative to the ethic of the citizens who expected only three options for young people: "go to school, get a job or live at home. And how boring each was! - compared to the experience of the infinite... the attuned ones amid the non-musical shiny-black-shoe multitudes." ¹¹ Though Wolfe seemed on occasion to emphasise the apolitical nature of the movement (although in 1965 it may well have been less specifically political), nevertheless his language is mystical ("experience of the infinite") and also connected with an attempt to overcome materialistic concerns - a key concept of many religions (including Christianity). Drugs seemed to be a means to this same end. This

⁹ Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, p.259.

¹⁰Riordan and Prochnicky, *Break on Through*, pp. 70-71.

¹¹Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, p.62.

was part of the general attempt to “drop out” of society - connected with minimising of the owning of material goods, and communal activities; *heightened* experience of oneself *and others* being a key concern.

Communes established themselves from about 1962 with an alternative to Western tradition - starting with two, one entitled Esalen, on the California coast, and the other Findhorn in north-east Scotland. The Institute of Esalen would include both the writer Huxley and the singer Joan Baez. ¹² Communes are frequently derided as having frequently been run on sexist principles - where “free love” was a burden on women, but as Anderson points out : “much more common were communes where hippies became partners agreeing on various sexual arrangements while at some only monogamous couples could reside.” ¹³ Some were exclusively devoted to Yoga, Hinduism, Hare Krishna and even Christianity (“Jesus Freaks”). Roszak stated :

Maybe none of them will work. But where else is there to turn? ... the young who have greater expectations of life than their elders and who are more intolerably sensitive to corruptions should find an enduring mode of life that will safeguard those expectations and sensitivities... these frenzied and often pathetic experiments in community will simply have to succeed. ¹⁴

In 1967 the Beatles reflected the trend towards alternative religion by themselves exploring Eastern religion with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. ¹⁵ Yogic Meditation classes were also held at the Woodstock festival in 1969. The leader of this group told the hippies that had gathered that beginning exercises were superior to drug use : “It’s the same energy that drugs give you [to] force a rush on with, right. It’s the same channels - only drugs do it for you and this way you can do it yourself. You can do it when you want to, you don’t have to score to be able to do it - all you got to score is some clean air...” ¹⁶ A connection was made with smoking DMT, with the recommendation that the Yogis had been practising this

¹²Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, p.52.

¹³Anderson, op. cit., p.271.

¹⁴Roszak, op. cit., p.204.

¹⁵Heatley (ed.), *Virgin Encyclopedia of Rock*, p.165.

¹⁶*Woodstock*, Warner Bros., 1994.

kind of altered perception for 6000 years “and getting very high behind it.”¹⁷ Various attempts were being made to opt out of American civilisation - that methods differed is not surprising; multiculturalism often reveals the parochial nature of religion. In other words, the fact that religion is very localised - it depends on what part of the world you live; a single religion cannot be exclusively true, to the detriment of all others. However there may be metaphorical truths - moral and ethical codes or an emphasis on society. What was significant is that this was an annexe to flexibility of thought as well as moral / ethical questioning and experimentation. The communal environment helped establish an awareness of common humanity, in opposition, as far as it was possible to do so, to materialist capitalist society (underground newspapers by the end of the decade were becoming opposed to the more profitable aspects of the music industry and groups such as the Diggers promoted free services for “drop outs”¹⁸).

Of course, in a pure early Marxist sense (organised) religion is a pernicious “opium of the people” - working essentially by three modes of power - alienation, reification and fetishism.¹⁹ In the first motif the *estrangement* of people from themselves, nature and society finds expression in the separation of sinful humanity from the loving God. This is reminiscent of Charles Olson’s idea of standing estranged from that which is most familiar. In the second motif, ideology is concealment - that which is actually changeable is represented as immutable and a law of nature. And lastly in fetishism supernatural powers are granted to things which actually belong to social relationships. The role of religion and its relationship with the social order was recognised centuries ago with Francis Bacon, Michel Montaigne, Thomas Hobbes (especially in *Leviathan*) and of course Niccolo Machiavelli.²⁰ This was probably more true formerly than now. It is difficult also to see how these can

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ see Anderson, *op.cit.*, p.266 and Politics chapter for the Diggers.

¹⁹ Turner, *Religion and Social Theory*, p.68.

²⁰ Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, pp. 9-17

possibly apply to *experimental* religion in a communal (or festival) environment. Firstly, concepts of morality were so open to question that “sin” became subordinated to a quest towards understanding selfhood and experience. Secondly, flexibility was seen as the ultimate virtue by many in such gatherings and was a reaction against fixed and settled rules of society outside. And thirdly, social problems were the reasons why such hippie communities were set up in the first place. Marx’s 19th-century world was not that of lifestyle experimentation - his comments seem to have been directed against *institutionalised* religion which can indeed be (and was in the past) the offshoot of the ruling (class) system. Of course it could be argued that performers themselves became seen as demigods among the masses of youth; although this view is largely irrelevant if we take the position that what was organised was precisely a revolt. Equally possible is that the audience was attracted to the possibility of social change. Even if so doing seems naïve, it could be seen as being preferable to a partial or total capitulation to societal constraints. Though music sometimes had some of the trappings of religion it in addition symbolised and epitomised some of its higher moral purpose.

It may nevertheless seem that belief is a blunt instrument; that it has very limited relevance to the essence of “critique” (in the sense of a largely constructive opposition to a prevalent, but unnecessary and possibly overprotective restriction of thinking). We should look here at the lyrics and poetry of Jim Morrison. Wallace Fowlie, in his academic study of the connections between the 19th-century French poet Arthur Rimbaud and Morrison, has perceptively described the contradiction at the heart of the artist. He compares the poet to the *voyou*, whom he defines as “the man who escapes from everything that normally holds back other men ... the founder of a race of men who live outside their real life and whose soul vigour was their poetry”²¹ :

[Rimbaud’s poem “Le Jongleur de Notre Dame”] reveals the paradox of this double vocation : the man who amuses the public in the open air, and the other adventure of the same juggler, piety. In

²¹Fowlie, *Rimbaud and Jim Morrison : The Rebel as Poet*, p.136.

leaving the open world of the street and the city square for the silent and closed world of the monastery, the juggler discovers that his vocation of an acrobat is his one sanctification and the one reality of his life. The new love for God by which he wishes to live is bound up with his clown's tricks. He has to serve Our Lady in the one way he knows. The purity of his intention - his dance will be a kind of prayer - converts a popular amusement into a religious celebration.²²

This exposes the deep *moral* quest of the artist which manifests itself at the same time as the expressive impulse that is the exploration of the self. The contrast is one at the centre of everyday life - the desire for security *and* adventure; Morrison was at once a performer with a ready audience and a poet alone with his thoughts, in hopes of a less excitable, empathetic and unseen audience.

Although direct references to religion are relatively rare in Morrison's poetry there are some notable examples. In "An American Prayer" Morrison wrote "O great creator of being / grant us one more hour to / perform our art / & perfect our lives."²³ But interestingly the next line : "The moths and the atheists are doubly divine and dying" seems more sceptical. How might we understand this seemingly contradictory validation of religion and simultaneous description of atheists as "divine"? We must understand that religion is the "opium of the people" and has too often been used as an instrument of power by the social order. Both Althusser and Montaigne see ideology as "so powerfully internalised in consciousness that it results in misrecognition; we understand it (insofar as we 'see' it at all) eternally or naturally given instead of socially generated and contingent."²⁴ Another Morrison line : "Let's reinvent the gods, all the myths of the ages / Celebrate symbols from deep elder forests."²⁵ We can take lessons and ideas without necessarily believing the reality (hence only "*symbols*") of every myth. But his description of the Christian afterlife is bleak indeed : "We live, we die / & death not ends it / Journey we more into the Nightmare. / Cling to life / our passion'd flower / Cling to cunts and cocks of despair".²⁶ This is an interesting

²²ibid.

²³Morrison, *The American Night*, p.4.

²⁴Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, pp. 17-18.

²⁵Morrison, *The American Night*, p.3.

²⁶ibid.

ironic reference to life after death (“death not ends it”); it seems to refer to a state of existence where the death of art (music) leads us into an even greater nightmare. Even sexual existence is not enough when the existence of art is threatened. Morrison, in a recently released bootleg recording ²⁷ recited : “The death of rock is the death of me, and rock is dead.” The American Prayer lines therefore seem to refer to the death of artistic integrity among rock performers and of the dwindling power of music - at least in the way it was being used. Morrison was to finally prove this in the Miami incident. Coupe rightly claimed that in this poem : “Morrison seeks to realise this new mythic awareness and challenge the logic of modern rationality which culminates in war.” ²⁸ If this is mythical therefore it is also political, out of chaos comes a curious sense of order. There is a need for a form of “insanity” - an “insane theatre” as he puts it ²⁹ - which will put easy, everyday reality into sudden and dramatic examination.

In “An Afternoon of Summer” there seems to be a clear awareness of the unsatisfied demands of the pious : “everyone wants a Christ and no-one will give it to him / Mohammed, the enchanter / Keeper of Harems / Buddha, inkindergardened ³⁰ under his tree, w/ / not a moon glow, / mindless Thought for you / & me.” ³¹ Morrison’s work as a whole therefore shows an awareness of the power of myth. In “The end of the dream” Morrison is flirting with Buddhism, suggesting that this religion of selfhood, i.e. in which the search for satisfaction takes the form of self-examination (God is present in our own being) could be a possible source of salvation : “The end of the dream will be when it matters / all things lie / Buddha will forgive me / Buddha will.” ³² It is notable that this has connections with his idea of revolution having to take place in our own personal being before it can take place at a

²⁷ *The Doors Box Set Part One* (Elektra, 1998)

²⁸ Coupe, *Myth*, p.49.

²⁹ Morrison, op. cit., p.5.

³⁰ sic. A Morrisonian neologism.

³¹ Morrison, op. cit., p.175.

³² op. cit., p.189.

political level (though he is not without political ideas in his lyric verse and poetry), as well as having links with Norman Brown and psychoanalysis.

In “It Has Been Said” he reflects : “It has been said that / on birth we are trying / to find a proper womb / for the growth of our / Buddha nature, & that / on dying we find a / womb in the tomb of the / earth. This is my / father’s greatest / fear. It shouldn’t be./ Instead, he should / be trying to find me / a better tomb.”³³ It is interesting that the Christian god seems to be being referred to as the object of this poem entitled “The Blues” (recalling Nietzsche’s “noble” form of death): “O how could this be done to me / great dancer’s Witness / God you are a satyr in disguise / Thus cruelly and uselessly to / Rend my life awry / I’ll lie here stolen, in cold wind / in the road, until peace freezes over / & hallows me. / Rude ghost bastard. / Ah! Who comes now.”³⁴ This supposedly all-powerful god is not able to help Morrison’s suffering in the world. What is interesting about these poems is the apparently positive references to Buddhism (albeit ones qualified with pessimism). It is sometimes thought of as an atheistic religion since it does not acknowledge the existence of a single creator - Buddha is just one of a number of “enlightened beings” .The reference to God in “The Blues” is an active indictment of Christianity - the word “Rude ghost bastard” referring to the Christian god, is blasphemous. The dialogue with God therefore seems to be ironic - since it would be inappropriate language for a real prayer - ghosts are sometimes thought not to exist. This might lead to godless Buddhism as a much less pernicious religion - without some of the rigid rules present in Christianity (especially as interpreted by fundamentalists).

The Buddhist notion that God is present in our own minds and bodies could well have appealed to Morrison; at least as metaphor, as part of a (symbolic?) opposition towards single omnipotent deities. In a segment of *The Lords and the New Creatures* Morrison inverts God by spelling His name backwards and removing the obligatory capital letter. The image seems

³³op. cit., p.188.

³⁴op. cit., p.174.

to be one of a car accident where the person is returned to nature through death : “Ensenada / the dead seal / the dog crucifix / ghosts of the dead car sun. / Stop the car. / Rain. Night. / Feel.”³⁵ The warmth of the Mexican city becomes the raw suffering of contact with harsher elements outside the protection of the car. Despite the mood of rejection and cynicism which betrays the suffering that Morrison evidently felt, there is more than a suggestion of a quest that is of its very nature mystical. Compare a fragment from The Village Tapes poems : “We scaled the wall / We tripped through the graveyard / Ancient shapes were all around us / .../ A girl got drunk and made the dead / And I gave empty sermons to my head / Cemetery cool & quiet / Hate to leave your sacred lay / Dread the milky coming of the day.”³⁶ And in “Thank You Oh Lord” there is even an element of worship : “Thank you O Lord / For the white blind light / A city rises from the sea / I had a splitting headache / From which the future’s made.”

³⁷ However the headache suggests that Bacchus (Dionysus) might have been a more appropriate deity - and this repeats his “blasphemous” ideas of Christianity. Morrison in “The Wasp (Texas Radio and the Big Beat)” (released as a song) says : “I tell you this / No eternal reward will forgive us now for wasting the dawn.”³⁸ What stands out overall is that there is a value in *personal* belief - but this is something that moves beyond the private and provides the grounds for a larger questioning of the nature of existence, fate and, in particular, Western belief.

Morrison first encountered Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy* (1872) around 1964 at University of California, Los Angeles in his leisure time (while studying for a degree in Fine

³⁵Morrison, [*The Lords and The New Creatures*] *The New Creatures*, p.18. Both this poem (up to the “Stop the car” line) and the following extract from Village Tapes were used in different versions of Morrison songs (during mid-song musical interludes), the first a version of “The End” - performed at the Hollywood Bowl, Jul 5 1968, the second “Light My Fire” at Boston Arena, 10 Apr 1970. Both recordings on *Doors in Concert* (Disc 2).

³⁶Morrison, *Wilderness*, p.180. The “milky” line may refer to a hangover cure coupled with gradual wakefulness waking up *in the real world* (of the 1970s?).

³⁷Morrison, *The American Night*, p.191. Included in *The American Night* CD.

³⁸There seems to be an error here on *The Doors Lyrics* p.78 - where this is transcribed as “I’ll tell you this” and “can forgive”. I have corrected them according to my own listening of the audio (*LA Woman*, digitally remastered CD).

arts and Cinematography). He discussed it and other of Nietzsche's works with Dennis Jakob, a graduate student friend.³⁹ It is worth looking at this book in detail. Tanner states that the book is "as close [to Dionysiac] as a discursive work could come."⁴⁰ Certain clear thoughts stand out from the text. A distinction is made between on the one hand, the illusory art of the sculptor named after the Greek sun-god Apollo; and on the other, music which is concerned with ecstatic reality (though with the *tragic* knowledge of the self-destruction that results from it), and is named after Dionysus, Greek god of wine. The Apolline world is full of "dream images, whose perfection is not at all dependent on the intellectual accomplishments of the individual";⁴¹ while the Dionysiac world is an expression of "that *dread* that grips man when he suddenly loses his way amidst the cognitive forms of appearance."⁴² The Dionysiac artist is "most immediately understandable to us in the analogy of *intoxication*..."⁴³ This is not a notion of drunken aimlessness though, more a sense of questioning received reality and straining at the leash of the modern world - which is often concerned with repression and reality by proxy (TV culture, advertising etc.). In the festival "the artistic power of the whole of nature reveals itself to the supreme gratification of the primal Oneness."⁴⁴ It is difficult not to bring to mind free love at communes of the 1960s, and rock concerts such as Woodstock etc., when Nietzsche describes Dionysiac festivals held from Rome to Babylon : "Almost universally, the centre of these festivals was an extravagant lack of sexual discipline, whose waves engulfed all the venerable rules of family life."⁴⁵ Pleasure is more important than tradition - sexual freedom rather than puritanical religious piety.

Importantly, Nietzsche does state that there is a significantly unique role that music can play in intensifying expression beyond language :

³⁹Hopkins and Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, p.44.

⁴⁰ibid.

⁴¹Nietzsche, op. cit., p.18.

⁴²op.cit., p.16.

⁴³ op.cit., p.17.

⁴⁴op.cit., p.18.

⁴⁵op.cit., p.19.

A new world of symbols was required, the whole of the symbolism of the body, not only the symbolism of the mouth, the eye, the word, but the rhythmic motion of all the limbs of the body in the complete gesture of the dance. Then all the other symbolic forces, the forces of music - rhythm, dynamics and harmony - would suddenly find impetuous expression.⁴⁶

This is made clearer : “The noble man does not sin, the profound poet tells us: through his actions every law, every natural order, the whole moral world can be destroyed, and through these actions a higher magic circle of effects is drawn, founding a new world on the ruins of the old, now destroyed.”⁴⁷ We are therefore abandoning the old elitist forms of education and the artist is enabling people to *be* physically true to their own inner being. In the 1960s of course this would be clearly aligned to political concerns. Art is the one avenue through which to pursue these goals, *at least* theoretically. How “could nature be forced to offer up her secrets if not by being triumphantly resisted - by unnatural acts?”⁴⁸ Socrates is representative of the non-mythical scientific rationalist who “attributes the power of a panacea to knowledge and science, and sees error as the embodiment of evil.”⁴⁹ The theme of the technocratic society would of course be pursued with vigour in the 1960s by Theodore Roszak and others. The quality of dissonance could be said to embody the spirit of critique made bearable by music : “if we could imagine dissonance becoming man - and what else is man ? - then in order to stay alive that dissonance would need a wonderful illusion, covering its own being with a veil of beauty.”⁵⁰ He refers to Indian Buddhism which “requires those rare states of ecstasy with their elevation over space, time and individuation”⁵¹ - this could apply equally to music. At the same time it can also use poetry as a means to “clarify the word from within”⁵² - as Morrison was to demonstrate.

⁴⁶op. cit., p.21.

⁴⁷op. cit., p.46.

⁴⁸Nietzsche, op. cit., p.47.

⁴⁹op. cit., p.74.

⁵⁰op. cit., p.117.

⁵¹op. cit., p.99.

⁵²op. cit., p.103.

Morrison constantly referred to shamanism in interviews.⁵³ This technique, his use of it in the concert environment, and his understanding of it, is one thing that marks him out amongst his contemporaries. Michael Harner in *Way of the Shaman* describes the shaman's role as follows :

...the shaman helps his patients transcend their ordinary definition of reality, including their definition of themselves. The shaman shows those in his audience they are not emotionally and spiritually alone in their struggle against illness and death. The shaman shares his special powers and convinces these people, on a deep level of consciousness, that another human is willing to offer up his own self to help them. ... one's usual cultural belief and systems and assumptions about reality are essentially irrelevant.”⁵⁴

Riordan and Prochnicky define shamanism as “the primitive religion of many American Indian tribes and some Ural-Altaic peoples of northern Asia and Europe, in which the unseen world of gods, demons and ancestral spirits can be interacted with through the shamans of the high priests of the tribe”. Crucially however they add that it “can also occur independently as a psychological technique that employs religious notions.”⁵⁵ Indeed it is possible to secularise this activity. Morrison's own comments tend to acknowledge a psychological effect in a particular social context : “Think of it as a seance in an environment which has become hostile to life; cold, restrictive. People feel they're dying in a bad landscape. So they gather together in a seance in order to invoke, palliate, and drive away the dead through chanting, singing, dancing and music. They try to cure an illness, to bring back harmony into the world.”⁵⁶ Riordan and Prochnicky further say : “The onlookers become participants, experiencing a catharsis during the trance state that results in a sort of psychological healing.”⁵⁷

⁵³For example, WNET-TV *Critique* interview in Hopkins, *Lizard King*, p.213, Lizzie James interview Part II, 1967, in Sugerman, *Doors Illustrated History*, p.123 and many others. Also more oblique references in poetry, and songs such as “Texas Radio and the Big Beat”.

⁵⁴Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, in Sugerman, *Doors : Illustrated History*, p.42.

⁵⁵Riordan and Prochnicky, *Break on Through*, p.191.

⁵⁶op. cit., p.194.

⁵⁷op. cit., p.194-5.

Music has the unique quality therefore to make people *actively* react to a system of reality with disorder (a “sensuous panic” as Morrison described it ⁵⁸) at the same time as referring to it via the art form. This is very similar to what Nietzsche described. The cultural materialist significance of music is its ability to reach people via emotion and help underpin the revolt against the status quo. Although festivals (and the movement generally) were essentially communal events these were not usually specifically in the form of shamanism, and this is what marks Morrison’s approach out. Roszak refers to the shaman as “ordinarily one who discovers his vocation upon being seized up by powers beyond his comprehension.” ⁵⁹ This is reminiscent of a story Morrison told about witnessing a car accident - apparently involving Indians when he was four years old. He claimed that he was suddenly seized with fear for the first time, and that the souls of the victims inhabited his body.⁶⁰ A Morrison poem in *Wilderness* makes clear how he thought of shamanism as a means of uniting a group - a challenge to individualism : “Ceremonies, theatre, dances / To reassert Tribal needs & memories / a call to worship, uniting...” ⁶¹ The shaman “ordinarily becomes one who stands apart from his people - not in a position of institutional authority, but in a position of talented uniqueness... he becomes adept in cultivating those exotic states of awareness in which a submerged aspect of his personality seems to free itself from his surface consciousness...” ⁶² Riordan and Prochnicky state that drumming (and the maracas that Morrison tended to play) have origins in shamanic lore where they were used to sustain the shaman’s trance :

“Laboratory research has demonstrated that drumming produces changes in the central nervous system. Electrical activity in many sensory and motor areas of the brain is affected because a single drumbeat contains many sound frequencies and transmits impulses along a

⁵⁸Morrison, [*The Lords and the New Creatures*] *The Lords*, p.24.

⁵⁹Rozzak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, p.246.

⁶⁰Sugerman, *Doors : Complete Lyrics*, p. 189. Original “Dawn’s Highway” audio interview piece, *American Prayer* CD (transcription in CD liner notes, p.4).

⁶¹Morrison, *Wilderness*, p.14.

⁶²Rozzac, *Making of a Counter Culture*, pp. 246-7.

variety of nerve pathways.”⁶³ This presumably means that the reaction is different in each person but at least has a potential of influencing the listener (and the singer).

Morrison had read James George Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (1922) and based some lyrics of “Celebration of the Lizard” on it.⁶⁴ Frazer points out that among the Maidu Indians of California “the shaman was, and still is, the most important individual... In the absence of any definite system of government, the word of a shaman has great weight : as a class they are regarded with great awe, and as a rule are obeyed much more than the chief.”⁶⁵ In addition Frazer mentions, in passing, the comments of one of the earliest settlers on the coast of Brazil who reported that the Indians “hold these *pages* (or medicine-men) in such honour and reverence that they adore, or rather idolise them. You may see the common folk go to meet them, prostrate themselves and pray to them...”⁶⁶ Laurence Coupe however is of the opinion that though Morrison originally read Frazer, “his enthusiasm for the role of shaman must be radically distinguished from the rationalist calm of Frazer’s documentation.”⁶⁷ It is certainly true that Frazer seems to dismiss Dionysus :

His ecstatic worship, characterised by wild dances, thrilling music and tipsy excess, appears to have originated among the rude tribes of Thrace, who were notoriously addicted to drunkenness. Its mystic doctrines and extravagant rites were essentially foreign to the clear intelligence and sober temperament of the Greeks. Yet appealing as it did to that love of mystery and that proneness to revert to savagery which seem to be innate in most men, the religion spread like wildfire through Greece...⁶⁸

There is however little subversive potential in the idea of learning to move on from myth to the enlightened modern world; there is still relevance in old religious thought - if only when used as a metaphor for a force of renewal. Coupe quotes Hans Bertens’ idea of “postmodernism of immediacy and presence” - which is most clearly present in

⁶³Riordan and Prochnicky, *Break on Through*, pp. 196-197.

⁶⁴Hopkins and Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, p.179. The table of contents of *The Golden Bough* was used for the “Not to Touch the Earth” section, released as a song on *Waiting for the Sun* album.

⁶⁵Frazer, *The Golden Bough (Abridged edition)*, p.115.

⁶⁶Frazer, op. cit., p.116.

⁶⁷Coupe, op. cit., p.51.

⁶⁸Frazer, op. cit., p.509.

“performance art”; and Suzi Gablik’s comment : “through his own personal self-transformation, the artist as shaman ... develops not only new forms of art but new forms of living ... a mystical, priestly *and political* figure.”⁶⁹ Riordan and Prochnicky systematically document the many aspects of Morrison’s behaviour, on stage and off, that have shamanic origins. The end result was :

Morrison believed his art could heal “sick” minds and that his mental revolution could lead the way to freedom. He attempted to lead the audience on a metaphysical trip in much the same way the shaman leads the tribe on such encounters, by subjecting his body to a trance brought on by rapid movement and chanting. And there are those who believe that he sometimes achieved it.⁷⁰

According to Coupe, “Rock n’ roll, with its amplified music and universal appeal, has mythic potential in its own right” and “Morrison may be envisaged as a myth-maker in the sense of offering a means to Levy-Bruhl’s ‘mystical participation’; or, in McLuhan’s formulation [in *The Medium is the Message*], giving ‘young people’ the very formula for ‘putting on the universe’ which they are looking for.”⁷¹ This would have had a clear political significance among 1960s audiences of course. The urge to, in Morrison’s words, “Break on through to the other side” is opposed to Eliot’s elitist high modernism in two ways. According to Coupe : “Firstly it is subversive in so far as it impels and organises alternative forms of solidarity (‘the other side’ as the counter culture) ... Secondly, and more importantly for Morrison himself, it signifies the possibility of a spiritual renewal (access to the ‘other side’) which does not deny, but rather transforms, the life of the body.”⁷² This is therefore an important connection between Morrison’s personal philosophy *and society*.

The former point is not necessarily subordinate to the latter - it is possible to reconcile shamanism with subversive thought generally. Part of the appeal of the shaman is that he lies at the edges of culture and society - his “primitive” culture predates much of modern consumer culture (advertising etc.). It is a performance that is carried out in person (much

⁶⁹Coupe, op. cit., p.51. Italics mine.

⁷⁰Riordan and Prochnicky, op. cit., p.195.

⁷¹Coupe, op. cit., p.52.

⁷²op. cit., p.57.

modern technology means that art is carried out through another medium, which is not 'live'). Elements of participation and spontaneity made for an intense experience for members of the audience and journalists alike. We should note a negative review at this stage, which nevertheless betrays the intensity of the performance : "The Doors [are] an electronically rigged combo with a lead singer who goes into paroxysms of caterwauling every other number. Is it for real or is he doing it for the money?"⁷³ Richard Goldstein put it another way : "Humiliating your audience is an old game in rock and roll, but Morrison pitches spastic love with a raging insolence you can't ignore. His material ... is literate, concise and terrifying."⁷⁴ In another review Goldstein adds : "Morrison is never far from the sexual shaman that Mick Jagger represents, but his is a darker, bleaker war dance ... He stands like a creature out of Kenneth Anger ... what he says has been called 'Artaud rock' by UCLA Bruin."⁷⁵ The changes in consciousness (or in outlook / viewpoint) are *happening* in the shaman before the audience - it is in some sense "real" and not a performance. There is an extra element of belief involved which can affect the crowd that witnesses it. The "professional hysterics" and its participatory element help the audience feel that they too can reject the reality around them in pursuit of a higher goal.

Coupe acknowledges the power of the creation myth. Rather than the fertility myth being the source of myth and religion, Mercia Eliade was of the opinion that it was creation instead. Fertility came only with the invention of agriculture around 8000 BC. Eliade's assumption, according to Coupe : "was that the first myth must have been the creation myth. The archaic mind knew that, for the world to be lived in, it had first to be founded: hence the essential narrative would have been one of creation and not of fertility... poets such as Eliot and Morrison need to be understood in this context."⁷⁶ Coupe's bizarre conflation of the art

⁷³ *Variety* magazine, Aug 1967, in Shaw, *The Doors on the Road*, p.53.

⁷⁴ *Village Voice*, Mar 1967, in Shaw, op. cit., p.32.

⁷⁵ *Village Voice*, Jun 1967 in *Doors : The Illustrated History*, p.22

⁷⁶ Coupe, *Myth*, p.58.

of Eliot and Morrison aside, in this idea there is nevertheless “an implicit justification for Morrison’s belief that paradise may be regained by pushing the fallen imagination to the point where it may ‘break on through to the other side.’ ” To put it another way :

It is by reaffirming form, that is the ‘archetype’ or primordially creative image, through the very act of returning to chaos, that archaic humanity is cured of the fall from paradise. It is in this respect that Eliade helps us appreciate Morrison’s art and conduct, extravagant and indulgent though it may seem. For neo-shamanism is an attempt to push the experience of the profane to its limits, until a new sense of the sacred becomes possible. The only way is to ‘break on through to the other side.’ ⁷⁷

It is worth noting connections with Native American Indian culture - some of it worked in similar ways to Morrison’s ‘multimedia’ form (in Morrison’s case adding together visual, literary and sonic elements with his fusion of film⁷⁸, poetry and song). In their traditional poetry American Indians carried out unique experiments in realising their thoughts actively by means of poetic experimentation *coupled with* the performance. Before the ‘civilising’ influence of European invaders (with their Puritanical beliefs) were to decimate the population, art was playing a useful role in helping to provide a platform for a wide variety of ideas to be expressed. Afterwards oral traditions continued and incorporated certain contemporary themes even after their land had been redesigned by means of a European blueprint. Part of Jim Morrison’s interest in shamanism was a desire to help people to help themselves, itself a religious concept. A person becomes a “leader” only as an intermediary for a much higher force. Amongst the Indians it is curious that much of their poetry is strikingly similar, in spite of the difference in time and context, to late-60s European avant-garde work. Not only this but there are also indications that they were starting to take

⁷⁷ op. cit., p.61.

⁷⁸ Morrison made two films - *Hwy* and *Feast of Friends* - as well as numerous cine films that Morrison shot for his own use. *Feast of Friends*, an amalgam of cine footage of Doors concerts, won Gold Medal Awards for Morrison and film editor (also photographer) Frank Lisciandro at the 2nd Atlanta International Film Festival on Jun 21st 1969. *Hwy* was a truncated version of a longer screenplay entitled “The Hitchhiker - An American Pastoral” (the latter text included in Morrison, *The American Night*, pp. 69-83.) The edited version was released in order to raise money to complete the project, but this was never achieved. A 16 mm film of “The Unknown Soldier” was produced in 1968 as a promotional clip for Elektra, but was banned by the music company, because of a sequence where Morrison is tied up and “shot” - a gruesome sequence in which he “vomits” blood ensues. It is probably a bizarre coincidence that Morrison reportedly coughed up blood on various occasions shortly before his death. After Morrison’s death UCLA established The Jim Morrison Film Fund to help future film enthusiasts.

great care about the performance. A body was to be added to the words. It is therefore valid to compare them to avant-garde work of more modern times. Rothenberg has said about the poetry : “the range of the tribal poets was even more impressive if one avoided a closed, European definition of “poem” & worked empirically or by analogy to contemporary, limit-smashing experiments (as with concrete poetry, sound poetry, intermedia, happenings, etc.) ... tribal poetry was almost always part of a larger situation (i.e. was truly intermedia).”⁷⁹

A few examples need to be taken to back up these assertions. One example of what Nietzsche would recognise as the Apolline dream world (utopianism) being given a Dionysian, active significance is the Iroquois Indians’ “Dream Events I and II” which are described as follows :

Dream Event I : After having a dream, let someone else guess what it was. Then have everyone act it out together.

Dream Event II : Have participants run around the center of the village, acting out their dreams & demanding that others guess & satisfy them. ⁸⁰

Morrison once said that the shaman was “interested in pursuing his own fantasies” ⁸¹ but this is given a somewhat wider significance in an interview with Jerry Hopkins, when Morrison was questioned about the word “ritual” in a musical context and replied : “It’s kind of like human sculpture. In a way it’s like art, because it gives form to energy, and in a way it’s a custom or a repetition, a habitually recurring plan or pageant that has meaning. It pervades everything. It’s like a game.... Music is definitely a ritual.” ⁸² To go back to the Iroquois “events” it is interesting that participants are involved in realising the dreams of their spiritual “healer.” The idea that dreams are to be satisfied is very reminiscent of ideas that were prevalent in the 1960s. The human sculpture of people in what could be termed the Indian communal environment can be connected with the idea of acting out your dreams in

⁷⁹ Rothenberg (ed.), *Shaking the Pumpkin*, p. xx.

⁸⁰ op. cit., p.149.

⁸¹ Richard Goldstein interview, 1969, in Hopkins, *The Lizard King*, p.213.

⁸² Jerry Hopkins interview, 1969, in op. cit., p.228.

an atmosphere of what Morrison termed a time of “total freedom” or “carnival”. This is not to say that this was entirely achieved in the 1960s, merely that it was an aim - one that was not given up on (and which it could be argued came to some success).

The Iroquois work does not refer to poetry directly as being connected to the acting out of dreams apart from the very form in which these instructions are written down - in verse. However Rothenberg quotes Father Fremin : “The Iroquois, strictly speaking have only one divinity - the Dream.” Rothenberg also notes “dream was central to the creative and intellectual experience of most Indian groups - as source of vision & song, & key to that ‘dream time’ to which the Australian aborigines ascribed all outcroppings of the sacred, etc.”

⁸³ A crucial feature of poetry and art is when : “it calls for total performance & participation : a maximisation of human activities to allow the world to remake itself at that level of intensity (= *reality at white heat*).” ⁸⁴ In “The Archaic Song of Dr Tom the Shaman” Tom says : “I want to find thy sickness. I know thy sickness. / I will take thy sickness.”⁸⁵ And in “Magic Words” : “In the very earliest time, / when both people and animals lived on earth ... All spoke the same language. That was the time when words were like magic. The human mind had mysterious powers. / A word spoken by chance / might have strange consequences. / It would suddenly come alive / and what people wanted to happen could happen - / all you had to do was say it. Nobody could explain this: That’s the way it was.” ⁸⁶

One poem in particular is very similar to a Morrison work - making much use of animal symbolism - “Magic Words To Feel Better” : “you GULL up there dive down / come here / take me with you in the air!” ⁸⁷ This can be compared with Morrison in “Bird of Prey” : “Bird of Prey, Bird of Prey / flying high, flying high / Take me on your flight.” ⁸⁸ The concept is that of the leader *enabling* another to fly, opening doors for others to go through, it being

⁸³ Rothenberg, op. cit., p.379.

⁸⁴ op. cit., p.378.

⁸⁵ Rothenberg, op. cit. p.56.

⁸⁶ op. cit., p.41.

⁸⁷ op. cit. p.42.

⁸⁸ Morrison, *Wilderness*, p.139. Reading of the poem is included on *An American Prayer* CD.

their choice whether to take this route outside of their reality. The notion of flying is very important to notions of the sublime whether religious or not, and it also may bring to mind Huxley's drug-induced visionary mysticism - which challenges fixed notions of (political) reality. Morrison felt guided by some kind of "power" (without strictly speaking a divinity in the case of Buddhism) but at the same time thought he had the means of allowing others to be free. The "Magic Words" poem is an example of what all poetry was supposed to provide - the shaman would move beyond ordinary speech and use instead "the special language of the shamans (=seers or proto-poets)" ⁸⁹ in which "all things and all beings were called by other than their usual names or by circumlocutions. This immediately put a whole new set of images at their disposal. The angakoks [shamans] thus trained themselves in new and unusual word combinations. As a result they could write many poems." ⁹⁰

Rothenberg notes some interesting ideas about the connection between shamanism and song (performance) in *Technicians of the Sacred* also. The shaman, he says, "can be seen as a protopoet, for almost always his technique hinges on the use of special linguistic circumstances - i.e. of song & invocation." ⁹¹ The shaman is initiated through the use of dream and vision but is then required to transform that vision into a song. This is therefore made more tangible and communicable to others. The central image of shamanism is that of "a connected & fluid universe" - thrust on him is a "unifying vision that brings with it the power of song & image, seen in his own terms as power to heal-the-soul & all disease viewed as disorder-of-the-soul, as disconnection & rigidity." ⁹² Rothenberg quotes Eliade that the shaman-poet : "like the sick man is projected onto a vital plane that shows him the fundamental data of human existence, that is, solitude, danger, hostility of the surrounding world... But...[he has] succeeded in curing himself." ⁹³ Rothenberg also points out :

⁸⁹ Rothenberg , op. cit. [notes] p.350.

⁹⁰ ibid.

⁹¹ Rothenberg (ed.), *Technicians of the Sacred*, p.424.

⁹² op. cit., p.425.

⁹³ op. cit., p.426.

“something more than literature is going on here : for ourselves, let me suggest, the question of how the concept & techniques of the “sacred” can persist in the “secular” world, not as nostalgia for the archaic past but (as Snyder writes) ‘a vehicle to ease us into the future.’ ”⁹⁴

This is important with regard to the glamorising of the current state of reality - and the necessity for something to challenge it. In another commentary Rothenberg quotes the Beat poet Kenneth Rexroth:

Songs, like other things which we call works of art, occupy in American Indian society a position somewhat like the sacraments and sacramentals of the so-called higher religions. That is the Indian poet is not only a prophet. Poetry and song does not only play a vatic role in society , but is itself a numinous thing. The work of art is holy, in Rudolph Otto’s sense - an object of supernatural awe, & as such, an important instrument in the control of reality on the highest plane. ⁹⁵

Just like Morrison living out the role of a shaman, it is thus not just portraying a role - it actively becomes what it is promoting; its *effect* is healing rather than simply being descriptive of it. This is a notion that is seen as very important in postmodern aesthetics generally. Reality is elevated, in the minds of the collective audience, beyond the everyday accepted norms and values - art is in the control of this higher reality. That it refers explicitly to “reality” is vital for the understanding of the significance of this idea. It is possible therefore that the rock concert seems almost like a form of chapel where the communal worship brings a kind of togetherness in adversity - and provides a focus in vital matters. For Morrison however there was an extra element of confrontation that was necessary, nevertheless. It was the dreams and visions that he hoped to appropriate himself for the “way out”: “To kill childhood / innocence / in an instant.” ⁹⁶ Though ties are broken, at the same time there was a recognition of the safety of childhood protection that a communal environment could perhaps provide : “Ceremonies, theatres, dances / To reassert tribal needs and memories.” ⁹⁷

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁵ *op. cit.*, p.474.

⁹⁶ Morrison, *Wilderness*, p.25.

⁹⁷ Morrison, *op. cit.*, p.14.

This leads us however to consider why Morrison wanted to move *beyond* the framework of poetry - and the political activity of his time. It seems that he wanted to infuse culture with an emphasis on empowerment of the individual beyond that of a spectator desiring to be entertained (or informed for that matter). We may consider the ideas of Charles Olson, as a precedent for similar ideas. Olson, who transcribed a Mayan myth in his Human Universe essay (“Myth of the Human Universe”⁹⁸) reaffirmed the need for poetry to go beyond everyday reality. He stated in this essay that in society :

The notion of fun comes to displace work. Spectatorism crowds out participation as the condition of culture. And bonuses and prizes are the rewards of labor contrived by the monopolies of business and government to protect themselves from the advancement in position of able men or that old assertion of an inventive man, his own shop. Passivity conquers all. ⁹⁹

And in fact it is not good enough merely to theorise over these uncomfortable facts :

It is easy to phrase, too easy, and we have had enough of bright description. To say that in America the goods are as the fruits, and the people as the goods, all glistening but tasteless, accomplishes nothing in itself, for the overwhelming fact is, that the rest of the world wants nothing but to be the same. Value is perishing from the earth because no one cares to fight down to it beneath the glowing surfaces so attractive to all. ¹⁰⁰

This is to state that the individual needs to care enough “to fight” beyond the attractive surface reality, which merely conceals the problems that lie beneath it. The notion of fun could well apply to hippie culture (using a strict definition of this term), with its antagonism to politics. Ken Kesey and the Pranksters breaking up an antiwar Vietnam Day Committee meeting at UC Berkeley (described memorably in the *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*¹⁰¹) provides one example. There is a sense in which communes were *alternative* societies and did not provide a means for confronting the world outside. The notion of fun does not seem to refer therefore to the more confrontational kind of protest in which Morrison, and politically active protesters, were interested - one that stimulates action against the prevailing reality, rather than passivity among the converted. Olson stated in a 1965 lecture, “one of the

⁹⁸ Also in Rothenberg, *Shaking the Pumpkin*, p.69.

⁹⁹ Olson, *The Human Universe and Other Essays*, p.8.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, p.192.

reasons why I'm trying to beat the old dead word 'mythology' into meaning is that I think it holds more of a poet's experience than any meaning that the word 'mysticism' holds. The principle would seem to be that the only interest of a spiritual exercise is production."¹⁰² And : "if there is any legitimacy to the word that we call mythology it is literally the activeness, the possible activeness and personalness of experiencing it as such."¹⁰³ He stated that a legitimate aim should be the overturning of culture and establishment, though he substituted poetic structure as means of 'action' : "the discovery of formal structural means is as legitimate as, *is* for me a form of action. The radical of action lies in finding out how organized things are genuine, are initial ... We have our picture of the world and *that's* the creation."¹⁰⁴ It is possible however simply to look at these comments as support for the ideas expressed by Rothenberg about Native American Indian poetry - that (mythical) language works when it is accompanied by some physical, bodily accompaniment. This provides the extra push that is needed to shake people out of their indifference by means of emotion.

If the Native Indian concept of shamanism was a great influence on Morrison (especially when coupled with a desire for moving beyond the restrictions of audience in formal poetry), his reading of Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* provided him with the model of the Dionysian reveller. It is useful to look at the Greek religions of ecstasy. The Cretans (often called the pre-Greeks) seemed to show environmental awareness in their love of life (*zoë* in Greek) and nature (*physis*).¹⁰⁵ In the late Minoan period there is evidence that opium was used to achieve what Kerényi refers to as "transcendence" - to give rise to visions. A figurine found in Gazi revealed incisions depicted in the poppy leaves - the way opium is obtained. Kerényi cites Baudelaire's "Le Poison" in *Les Fleurs du Mal* (a poet with whom Morrison identified - and Baudelaire's work, like Morrison's was also marked with bitterness, agony and despair) :

¹⁰² Olson, *Causal Mythology*, p.12.

¹⁰³ op. cit., p.9.

¹⁰⁴ op. cit., p.36.

¹⁰⁵ Kerényi, *Dionysos : Archetypal Image of Indestructible Life*, p.7.

“Opium enlarges the boundless, Extends the unlimited, Gives greater depth to time.”¹⁰⁶ The stimulation of the visionary faculty (recalling Huxley again) is therefore important when imagining the overpowering of *rational* (and possibly non-emotional) mind. What is substituted is that which can be *imagined*, to replace that reality which is familiar (which might be called the anaesthetic of familiarity). The use of peyote by the North American Indians (and Beats) parallels this. Dionysos was identified firmly with a vine which needed little light or sustenance - it grew in the cold. This is consistent with Apollo who has “more of the Sun and the day, of order and light and reason, Dionysos more of the Earth and the Moon, of the divinity of Night and Dreams. Moreover Apollo is of man’s life separate from the rest of nature, a purely human accomplishment; Dionysos is of man’s life as one with nature, a communion not a segregation.”¹⁰⁷ Morrison said in the song “End of the Night” : “Take the highway to the end of the Night /.../ Realms of bliss / Realms of light. / Some are born to sweet delight /.../ Some are born to the endless night / End of the night.”¹⁰⁸

The Doric month Apellaios was named after the festival Apollaia : “The word ἀπελλαῖος is, Hesychius tells, Laconian for ἐκκλησιαῖος. It means therefore to ‘hold’ or ‘summon’ or ‘be member of’ an assembly... Is Apollo the god of the fold and those within the fold? Is he the Good Shephard ? or the arch-politician?... Apollo will prove, I think, to be the god of the fold (σηκός), but it is the fold of human sheep.”¹⁰⁹ These sacred rites are intended as a puberty initiation before a young man could attend the ‘assembly’. That this is therefore a means to adulthood is important when considering that it was *youth* movements that were central to revolt in the 1960s. Apollonian thought therefore became a means towards entering society, Dionysian revelry to try increasingly to live according to more natural, emotional drives. The phallic, half-human, half animal beings that were companions

¹⁰⁶ op. cit., pp. 25-6.

¹⁰⁷ Harrison, *Themis : A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*, p.443.

¹⁰⁸ *The Doors Lyrics 1965-1971*, p.17.

¹⁰⁹ Harrison, op. cit., p.439-440.

to Dionysos in Minoan culture were imitated by human dancers in great festive processions (Herodotus compared these with Egyptian processions). It is interesting that the artistic representations of these scenes are not to be found in the walls of the great palaces - only on familiar objects.¹¹⁰

The mysteries, i.e. secret rituals, consisted of the Lesser Mysteries of Agrai and the Great Mysteries of Eleusis - based on the myth of the slaying and dismemberment of the “greatest Kouros” - the child Dionysos. He is murdered as he looks in the mirror (which catches his soul and ensures his immortality). His phallus and the pagan secrets were reputedly carried in a basket to the Etruscans. Although he ascends to Heaven with Ariadne, according to the Orphics, wine was his last gift to man the god and he nevertheless inhabits the vine as his dwelling place. Feasts and *zoë* follow - the spirit of the god is transferred to the wine that is drunk - “the rigid posture of the dancing men and women - their upturned faces - reveals an erotic agitation enhanced by flute playing.”¹¹¹ The phallus thereafter represented the god in many terracotta reliefs. We should keep in mind however that the birth of Dionysos from Zeus’s thigh (after committing incest with his mother, recalling “Mother I want to [fuck you]...” section of “The End”) is sometimes represented as having been made possible by being stitched into his leg. One version has him emasculating himself and a ram’s testicles thrown into the goddess’s womb. The phallus had to return to the Great Mother in order that the endless cycle of births should continue. In Greece and possibly in Crete “Dionysian colleges of women replaced the Mother Goddess and represented themselves *only* as the god’s nurses... Eunuchism was as characteristic of Dionysus as of Attis.”¹¹² On Cyprus “the person who imitated a woman in labor, so recalling the labor pains of Ariadne dying in childbirth, was not a Zeus-like man but a youth.”¹¹³ Metaphorically speaking there

¹¹⁰ Kerényi, *op. cit.*, p.71-2.

¹¹¹ *op. cit.*, p.271.

¹¹² Kerényi, *op. cit.*, p.277.

¹¹³ *ibid.*

seems to be a corrective to masculine energy being introduced here. It is also important to be aware that there were two separate forms of idols of Dionysus - phallic and decidedly non-phallic.¹¹⁴ In the latter non-phallic form of Dionysus the emasculated dead god is represented by means of a garment and mask only. The representative of the god never wears a phallus in processions - only his companions the sileni and satyrs do so. Indeed the phallic pride which was sometimes interpreted from such festivals - the “masculine achievement of his own realm .. is not always easy for men to bear and it ultimately consumes them.”¹¹⁵ Representations on a black figure cup show a form of self-satire when comparing the relationship between mortal man on the one hand and the divine phallus on the other.¹¹⁶ Accordingly we should not jump to conclusions about any alleged predatory nature of Greek sexuality, but rather perhaps see it more as part of a quest towards changing perception.

It is Homer that Nietzsche holds as lacking the sense of barbarism that *Dionysiac* man recognises in his own suffering : “The chanting and gestures of these revellers with their dual inspiration, was something new and unheard of in the Homeric and Greek world; and Dionysiac music in particular induced feelings of awe and terror.”¹¹⁷ This was the stimulation of positive awareness of the power of the dance and the ritual - benefiting the collective rather than the individual. We should use Harrison’s comment : “we have some modern prejudices to overcome. Dancing to us is a form of recreation practised by the quite young from sheer *joie de vivre*, and essentially inappropriate to the mature.”¹¹⁸ But in ancient cultures “as a man passes from childhood to youth, from youth to mature manhood, so the number of dances increase and the number of these dances is the measure *pari passu* of his social importance. Finally in extreme old age he falls out, ceases to exist *because he cannot*

¹¹⁴ This is reminiscent of the twin forces of Osiris and Isis in Egyptian mythology - Osiris being the ruler of the realm of death but also interestingly the source of renewed life since he is regenerated to sire his son Horus.

¹¹⁵ *op. cit.*, p.288.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, p.20.

¹¹⁸ Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual*, p. 30.

dance."¹¹⁹ This is important because of the desire to *act* that is often (though not exclusively) a feature of youth. As in the young girl at play whose "intense desire finds utterance in an act."¹²⁰ This becomes incrementally more intense when practised as a rite : "The Greek word for a rite ... is *dromenon*, 'a thing done' ... the Greek had realised that to perform a rite you must *do* something ... you must not only receive an impulse, you must react to it."¹²¹

Harrison referred to the apparent incompatibility of art and ritual - with the ritualist unduly concerned with fixed forms and ceremonies, whereas the artist is free in thought and unconcerned with convention.¹²² While it is quite possible to think of individuality as a positive, solo virtue, it can be practised within a group environment where it is at least tolerated - if not celebrated - as a right to free expression. It can also be a representation of an individual group (i.e. youth) as against the dominant group (adults). If it is coupled with an overt realism (rationalism) however it begins to lose its humanistic façade and the individualistic revolt turns against any idea / collective that it finds threatening to its own existence. Harrison refers to the sayings of the Upanishads that man "is altogether desire (*kama*); as is his desire so is his insight (*kratu*), as is his insight so is his deed (*karma*) ... This oneness of desire and deed, which the Indian mystic emphasises, comes out very clearly in the simplest forms of magic when the magical act is only an uttered desire."¹²³ It is obviously analogous to the Apolline / Dionysiac distinction. The fundamental presupposition of magic however is :

not the order and uniformity of nature, not a thing mechanical, but a belief in something like the omnipresence of life, of power, something analogous to the Stoic conception of the world as a living animal, a thing not to be coerced and restrained, but reverently wooed, a thing not inimitable at all, but waxing and waning, above all not calculable and observable, but wilful and mysterious... "¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ op. cit., p.31.

¹²⁰ op. cit., p.33.

¹²¹ op. cit., p.35.

¹²² op. cit., p.9.

¹²³ Harrison, *Themis*, p.83.

¹²⁴ Harrison, *Themis*, pp. 84-5.

This sounds closer to Dionysiac man and at the same time an important rejoinder to arrogance - a restorer of humility. If music is emotional and the “mainspring of magic is emotion, desire” then the *musical* medium could act as a “sort of spiritual unity behind the visible differentiation of thought ... join[ing] not only man and man, but man and all living things, all material things possessed by it, it is the link between the whole and the severed part. Things can affect each other not by analogy, because like affects like, but by that deeper thing *participation*, in a common life that serves for link.”¹²⁵

One religion that links the Beats and Morrison is (Zen) Buddhism. It is important to realise that it was founded by an ordinary person (i.e. not a son of God or holy man) - Siddhartha Gautama, in the 5th Century BC. He was conscious of human suffering as the key concept to be addressed in spiritual life. The Buddha was simply an ‘enlightened’ being - Sivaraksa describes him as “a doctor for the ills of humankind”¹²⁶ which provides a connection with shamanism. He discovered this enlightenment, as others could have and have done so since. The Buddha condemned extreme austerity and asceticism always stressing that there is a middle path by starting to “look deeply into one’s own body, feelings, mind, and the objects of mind.” The idea is that too often the sad, dark aspects of our life are *hidden* by the external distractions of much of consumer culture, and the hectic bustle of modern life. The first step would be to identify our own problems that cause suffering. Instead of reinforcing partitions in society based on wealth and power, Buddhism teaches that we should be willing to *share* the suffering of others. Most people seek positive experiences and try to avoid the negative at all costs, but those who practice the Buddha’s teaching take both positive and negative as they come. A “Good friend” (*kalyana mitta*) of any age or background is assigned to a person to help them and provide encouragement.

¹²⁵ op. cit., p.84.

¹²⁶ Sivaraksa, Sulak. “Buddhism With a Small b.” <www.nonviolence.org/>

It is not just on a personal level that Buddhism works however, which is a crucial point to consider when thinking about its relation to the 1960s. Ross points out that although the Buddha was not deficient in human sympathy or human understanding, “he never retreated from his uncompromising presentation of the truth as he saw it. ‘All that we are is the result of our thoughts; it is founded on our thoughts; made up of our thoughts.’ So spoke the unflinching psychologist.”¹²⁷ The concept of no-self or interdependence is : “primarily a method of overcoming the limits or restrictions of the individual self. Buddhism is not concerned just with private destiny, but with the lives and consciousness of all beings. This inevitably entails a concern with social and political matters, and these receive a large share of attention in the teachings of the Buddha as they are recorded in the Pali Canon.”¹²⁸

Though Sivaraksa states that Buddhism can be regarded as : “a prescription for both restructuring human consciousness and restructuring society ... [nevertheless] in most Asian countries [it] serves mainly to legitimize dictatorial regimes and multinational corporations.” That most leaders are engaged in “greed, hatred and delusion” means that the individual “must become more and more selfless. To do this, we have to take moral responsibility for our own being and our own society. This has been the essence of religion from ancient times right to the present.” There is a suggestion in the article that Western Buddhists do not always understand this necessity “to bring about meaningful and positive social change, or even in their struggle to transform their ego.” Ross states that in the original Buddhist teachings there was strong emphasis on :

both the impermanence of all things (*anicca*) and the absence of substance in all things (*anatta*). It taught that only by grasping the basic truths embodied in these two terms could the way to deliverance be found. Through profound meditation it was possible for a man to gain insight into the true nature of existence - that it is impermanent and substanceless and thus capable of causing man to suffer because in his blindness he does not perceive these great truths and attaches himself to things persons, life itself.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Ross, *Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen : An Introduction to their Meaning and Arts*, p.114.

¹²⁸ Sivaraksa, “Buddhism with a Small ‘b’ ” & subsequent cit.

¹²⁹ Ross, op. cit., p.120.

The formula known as Dependent Origination was “devised to guide a disciple seeking to comprehend the difference between the seeming reality of the physical world and its *true* reality.”¹³⁰

The precise offshoot from Buddhism that would have such a profound influence on the Beats and later on in Sixties youth movements was Zen - a mixture of Indian abstraction, Taoist paradox and Confucian pragmatism. It is useful to consider that the Taoist work the *Tao Te Ching* (translated as *The Way and Its Power*) “utilized a kind of contradictory, seemingly illogical style in an obvious attempt to rouse the mind from familiar ruts.”¹³¹ In other words there is a manipulation of language and a shaping of it that seems similar to avant-garde poetry such as that which Morrison was familiar with (and contributed to). There are two main schools of Zen - the Rinzai School and the Soto School. In the first, bizarre riddles (‘koans’) are used to distort perception and then enable it to be restored but in a different way. The encouragement is always to deflate our egos and awaken new thought-processes - personal experiences that are difficult to explain except in terms of linguistic subversion. The thing itself is seen to be different from the reality. The Soto Zen consists of sitting down and meditating in an attempt to concentrate without thinking in a conventional way. While it might be argued that this is directly analogous to postmodern relativism - in its most negative and nihilistic formulation, there is a way of turning this into positive criteria for imaginative solutions to familiar, recurrent problems. Ross quotes Suzuki:

The world in which we live is an old world, yet we have not exhausted its contents ... we can never reach the end of our researches as long as we limit ourselves to the fields of sense and intellect... This is the very nature of the human constitution ... Yet strangely enough as soon as we quit the realm known as objectivity and turn *inward* and go in the direction of resolution and persistency we come to a gate ... known as “the gate of all wonders.” We enter it and find ourselves in the field of Emptiness where our being is firmly rooted. [This is the] treasure house behind the consciousness where all sorts of potentialities have been kept in imprisonment.¹³²

¹³⁰ *ibid.*

¹³¹ *op. cit.*, p.141.

¹³² Ross, *op. cit.*, p.187.

This suggests that these potentialities are concepts of *truth* that are being ignored in society as a whole, which leads us back to the social reality (as well as the personal reality) that should characterise Buddhism. We are, at any rate, back to the notion of a *personal* search for new realities - to “turn inward” is seen as important. This is of interest when relating Buddhism to postmodernism, however we do come up against problems when we try to apply this to a theory of performance. Morrison was certainly more interested in the active *conflict* with the assumptions of the group (in Morrison’s case his audience as well as the various authorities outside). Shamanism is a more effective way of explaining his performance - the linking to his interest in Buddhism seems to be intellectual only, forming a background to his beliefs.

Both Charles Olson and Gary Snyder were both interested in Zen Buddhism, as were many other Beat poets / writers, as well as later 60s artists. They felt that the language of the poem was itself capable of creating physical change, though without the shaman’s use of performance. Also, Olson’s notion of spontaneous performance has a particular resonance in respect to Morrison and has connections with David Antin, as we shall see. In “Projective Verse” Olson talked about the “kinetics of the thing” in relation to poetry - that the poem is “a transfer of energy and as such has a kinetic nature” he speaks of the poem’s “category of activity” and that discoveries could be made by listening to the language. William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound had developed the concept of the poem as an “energy-construct.”¹³³ This echoes Morrison’s description of the *ritual* that it “gives form to energy”¹³⁴ but we have to conclude that it is with somewhat more powerful effect in the case of the performance. Thomas F. Merrill commented that Olson’s comprehensive stance “involves the status of man (be he poet or not) in relation to his environment.”¹³⁵ This dynamic “union of world and acting agent” seems much more relevant to the musical performance of “poetry” i.e. lyric,

¹³³ Bollobás, *Charles Olson*, p.16.

¹³⁴ see above, p.188.

¹³⁵ in Bollobás, *op. cit.*, p.17.

since it is expanded to perform to a much larger audience. Additionally in Morrison's hands (and possibly others) the performance itself makes poetry physical - more corporeal and tangible.

The fact that Olson employed a form of imaginative risk-taking in order to combat *ennui* also links Olson's poetry to Morrison's performance. Though with Morrison the risks were actually played out in the performance itself - the audience was hit by the unexpected and was not allowed simply to hear what they wanted (a series of his hits performed as per the records). They were, in other words, unsettled with much improvisation that they were not *always* appreciative of (he would goad the audience, prompting criticism). Being interested in ritual as a poet is not quite the same as actually performing it in person. Bollobás uses a slightly different definition when describing Olson's verse : "unpremeditated, unforeseen discourse; it is loyal to experience in the sense that is spontaneous and simultaneous with the composing act. The lack of visual spacing, of prosodic spatiality, seems to be consonant with a lack of a governing focus existing prior to the act of composition."¹³⁶ This is to be compared therefore with metered poetry. But the problem is that it is not *performed* spontaneously. It may still be composed over some time even if does not have to be worked according to rigid rules of form. To be sure, there are similarities in the aim of Olson to state the unknown - to make new connections in the reader's mind as well as the poet's. However the poet will always find that he is in some sense "preaching to the converted" in that those who come to see the poet will have attended specifically for that purpose. But in Morrison's case his audience came to see a rock concert and was instead, or additionally, introduced to a more complicated poetic experience. It seems that he was aware that he was confronting an audience that was perhaps more attuned to a more simple lyric message (if the audience was paying attention to lyrics) - always challenging their expectations. This is of value when we consider that in order to find imaginative solutions to political problems we need to

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, p.64.

reappraise what we traditionally conceive reality to be. Hence the need for change in consciousness *among the masses*.

Morrison was aware of the elitism surrounding the availability of a great deal of poetry, which would often be confined to libraries and academic institutions - large numbers of people would not often hear it. Morrison felt that the populace - the audience, which would presumably be mainly younger people, should be allowed to experience poetry. Morrison obviously was not interested in patronising his audience. Although he attended a few poetry readings, the vast majority of his career he was concerned with introducing improvisational poetry into his songs (during instrumental interludes in songs such as “The End” and “When the Music’s Over”). For example on Aug 2 1968 at Flushing Meadows, Queens, NY, Morrison included seven separate sections of improvisational poetry into that night’s version of “The End.”¹³⁷ In fact most Doors concerts would contain Morrison poetry, often improvised on the spot on that particular night, and rarely recorded in written form.¹³⁸ David Antin said in the early 1970s : “poetry ... is made by a man up on his feet, talking.”¹³⁹ Perloff quotes T.S. Eliot who (no doubt unconsciously) seems to acknowledge the need for communication with large numbers of people : “Whether poetry is accentual or syllabic, rhymed or rhymeless, formal or free, it cannot afford to lose contact with the changing face of common intercourse ... So while poetry attempts to convey something beyond what is conveyed in prose rhythms, it remains, all the same, *one person talking to another*. Every

¹³⁷ Shaw lists them by name : “Fall Down Now, Strange Gods Are Coming, “ “The Sea is Green”, “I’m Coming Hear You Calling”, “The Creature’s Nursing Its Child; Leave this Child Alone!, “Don’t Come here, Don’t Come In”, “Ensenada” and “The Killer Awoke Before Dawn.” The song “When the Music’s Over” also includes unique poetry that night.

¹³⁸This is just one example of many nights when Morrison interjected poetry - Jul 10, Aug 3 and 4, Sept 6 and Nov 10 etc. being other nights that year. The vast majority of Doors concerts contained unique set lists and / or poetry - performed only for that one night. Filmed concerts for *Doors Are Open* (at Roundhouse, London) and *Doors at the Hollywood Bowl* (at Los Angeles) videos also show improvisation in certain songs compared with album versions of music, as does live material for *Doors In Concert* and *Box Set* CDs. All concerts are described in detail by Shaw in *Doors on the Road*. Shaw includes lists of improvisations for each Doors concert - the majority of performances, though not all, containing them - main songs chosen would tend to be “Back Door Man”, “Light My Fire”, “The End” and “When the Music’s Over” which would each have the necessary instrumental passages in order to insert new material.

¹³⁹ quoted in Perloff, *Radical Artifice*, p.30 (italics are Perloff’s).

revolution in poetry is apt to be, and sometimes to announce itself to be, a *return to common speech*.”¹⁴⁰ Perloff comments that in this sense, common speech means “not the speech of the lower classes, but that which is *common* to everyone, that is, *natural* or everyday speech as we perceive it in our daily lives.”¹⁴¹ Of course whether Eliot achieved this with *his* poetry is highly unlikely, but the point is important (and quite unambiguous) nevertheless, if ironic in Eliot’s case. Morrison was trying to reach beyond the simple pleasures of music and to explore new poetic avenues spontaneously - which is similar to what Ezra Pound referred to as “departing in no way from speech save by a heightened intensity.”¹⁴² Perloff refers to Antin’s sense that “the poetic text was to be understood less as an object than as a ‘score’ or ‘notation’ to be actualized in performance, the implication of such ‘scoring’ being that ‘phenomenological reality is “discovered” and “constructed” by poets.’”¹⁴³ This can be the only possible reason for Morrison retaining an interest in poetry - something that was not profitable in itself and which in fact seemed to mystify and confuse audiences (who would invariably clamour for hits such as “Light My Fire” to the intense irritation of Morrison). The use of shamanism was a further way to disrupt and reconfigure reality for the audience by means of disorientation.

In an interview with Michael Helm in 1979 poet Gary Snyder referred to shamanism as a practice which “has at its very center a teaching from the nonhuman, not a teaching from an Indian medicine man, or a Buddhist master. The question of culture does not enter into it. It’s a naked experience that some people have out there in the woods.”¹⁴⁴ There is relatively no dogma associated with shamanism - it is more a physical than a written religion. He suggests that religions / myths do not have the same common thread but that there are truths that can be gained from their use : “I would not argue that all paths necessarily lead to the same goal -

¹⁴⁰ op. cit., p.29.

¹⁴¹ Perloff in op. cit., p.30.

¹⁴² ibid.

¹⁴³ Perloff, *Poetry On & Off the Page*, p.4.

¹⁴⁴ Snyder, *The Real Work*, p.156.

I think some paths go to other places. But there is a body of paths which do come to the same goal - some with a more earthly stress, some with a more spiritual stress. But what they share in common is the exploration of consciousness itself..."¹⁴⁵ And on the tribalism that was part of the 1960s : "Tribalism is I guess what we mean in suggesting that there's an alternative to the fragmented and alienated kind of social fabric we have now which lacks community and lacks communication...the subculture had its roots 40,000 years ago... We're *not* talking about fads..."¹⁴⁶ Peter Coyote stated about Snyder's poetry :

Organizing one's perceptions of the world, whose vastness and complexity is unimaginable, requires *discovering* areas of order and then linking them in coherent patterns that can be recognized readily enough to be useful... The artist and the Zen teacher lead us ultimately in the same direction, through the gates of our individual imaginations and perception into the realm of limitless possibilities... This is the *ground of being* that offers us a place to settle, outside our own personal or cultural loyalties and limitations, to identify with the universe..."¹⁴⁷

This "ground of being" outside personal or cultural loyalties is clearly what Morrison was offering by means of his "ceremony." Snyder admits in an interview that communal poetry has "been practised much through time ... But it seems very hard to do now..."¹⁴⁸ It can be said that music is a communal poetry - and this was what Morrison was trying to achieve in reading his poetry in performance and fusing it with popular song. Though the commercial aspect of performance can be a problem, it is necessary to use the system in order to reach large numbers of people and it is obviously important to be popular. It is the active aspect of performance that reconfigures our relationship with the real. Some of the extreme audience reactions - sometimes resembling a type of riot or disorder, were a tangible consequence of what happened on stage. In the rarefied concert atmosphere it was possible to create a mood that is connected to, but at the same time somewhat different from, the political reality outside. Morrison wished to develop his role as a poet by appearing at poetry readings saying

¹⁴⁵ op. cit., p.68.

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Halper (ed.), *Gary Snyder : Dimensions of a Life*, p.168.

¹⁴⁸ Snyder, *The Real Work*, p.75.

that he “admired” those who did this,¹⁴⁹ but felt that there is a connection between writing poetry and listening to music : “I think a lot of poetry is very close to music ... When you write a poem often you ... have to be in a state of mind that music can put you in, with its hypnotic quality, that leaves you free ... just to let the subconscious play itself out wherever it goes.”¹⁵⁰ The word “hypnotic” implies changes of consciousness again of course, and Morrison seems to feel that in everyday life there is a repressive instinct (recalling Norman Brown) that becomes one’s reality - something that can be, and must be, combated.

Having considered Morrison’s poetry and some ideas that influenced him, it is useful at this stage to look at specific songs and how precisely Morrison’s ideas translated themselves to lyric form. One in particular that needs looking at properly is “The End”. This introduced the Oedipal myth to young audiences. Nietzsche refers to Oedipus in *Birth of Tragedy* :

Oedipus his father’s murderer, his mother’s husband, Oedipus who solved the riddle of the sphinx! What can we learn from the cryptic trinity of these fateful deeds?... the man who solved the riddle of nature must also ... transgress the sacred codes of nature.. anyone through his knowledge casts nature into the abyss must himself experience the dissolution of nature. ‘The blade of wisdom is turned against the wise; wisdom is a crime against nature’ ; such are the awful sentences that the myth cries out to us.¹⁵¹

Nietzsche underlines his point by referring to the “*dignity*” of “sacrilege”.¹⁵² The difficult process of breaking ties with parents is rather like transgressing against society. In American history this may bring to mind the Declaration of Independence - itself a reaction to specific grievances; problems symptomatic of an over-enthusiastic rule. The *wisdom* of conflict seems to carry a price however when it is carried out - there is a counter-reaction. Morrison stated in one of his more interesting interviews :

Teachers, religious leaders - even friends, or so-called friends - take over where parents leave off. They demand that we feel only the feelings they want and expect from us ... We’re like actors - turned loose in this world to wander in search of a phantom ...endlessly searching for a half-forgotten shadow of our lost reality. When others demand that we become the people they want us to be, they

¹⁴⁹ Richard Goldstein interview, Spring 1969, in Hopkins, *The Lizard King*, p.214. This interview was recorded for WNET-TV *Critique* programme for PBS, and appears uncut on *Doors : Soundstage Performances* DVD.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, pp. 47-8.

¹⁵² *op. cit.*, p.49 [Italics are Nietzsche’s].

force us to destroy the person we really are. It's a subtle kind of murder ... the most loving parents and relatives commit this murder with smiles on their faces.¹⁵³

When asked about his admiration of primitive people Morrison expressly allied the personal to the political : “They don’t build war machines and invest millions of dollars in attacking other countries whose political ideals don’t happen to agree with their own ... Our society has too much - too much to hold on to, and value - freedom ends up at the bottom of the list.”¹⁵⁴ And : “Our society places a supreme value on control - hiding what you feel. Our culture mocks ‘primitive cultures’ and prides itself on suppression of natural instincts and impulses.”¹⁵⁵ “The End” includes the lines “Lost in a Roman wilderness of pain / And all the children are insane ... / Ride the king’s highway ...” And later in the song “The killer awoke before dawn ... And he came to a door, And he looked inside; ‘Father?’ ‘Yes son?’ ‘I want to kill you.’ ‘Mother, I want to [fuck you].’ ”¹⁵⁶ Coupe notes : “this takes us back to the curious custom of Nemi, noted by Frazer as having survived into classical civilisation, standing even then as a reminder of the Roman empire’s savage past.”¹⁵⁷ This shows “Morrison’s perceptiveness in seeing the hidden link between Freud and Frazer. The child who fantasises about killing his father and marrying his mother is here economically aligned with the runaway slave who wishes to replace the reigning King of the Wood at Nemi.”¹⁵⁸ By juxtaposing the two stories, “he intensifies the sexual content of Frazer’s material and the mythic content of Freud’s psychoanalysis.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³Lizzie James Interview Part 1 ,1967, in Sugerman, *The Doors : The Illustrated History*, p.65.

¹⁵⁴op. cit., p.67.

¹⁵⁵op. cit., p.66.

¹⁵⁶ *The Doors Lyrics 1965-1971*, p.19. The final words after “I want to...” were censored from the debut album version but were included in most live performances of the song. Morrison did occasionally obscure the offending word (such as at Hollywood Bowl 1968 with “fug” or at other times “fu” etc) with the context making the meaning clear. So called “open profanity” was a misdemeanour offence at the time and was one of the charges at Miami (see Miami chapter). There is no doubt however that in other moods he used bad language very clearly on stage.

¹⁵⁷Coupe, *Myth*, p.56.

¹⁵⁸ibid.

¹⁵⁹ibid.

Though some of this might have been lost on audiences (and Morrison admitted that this was a freeform piece that meant something different every time he heard it¹⁶⁰) the bizarre succession of images coupled with Morrison's distinctive and powerful delivery (ear-piercing screams, dropping to the ground suddenly, sudden changes in tone and pace, etc. - many features consistent with shamanic lore) made for some sort of *reaction*, positive or negative. Hopkins comments on its performance : "Whenever the Doors played the song, it stopped an audience dead. For this reason, the band usually played an up-tempo song right afterward, to return the audience to life. On the self-titled debut album 'The End' was the final cut, leaving the listener at home to deal with [the] depression as best he or she could."¹⁶¹ In case there is any doubt about the effect of the performance of this song, a contemporary reporter John Stickney described the conclusion to one concert :

Morrison dislodged the microphone and staggered blindly across the stage as the lyrics and screams which are "The End" poured out of his mouth ... He stumbled and fell in front of a towering amplifier and sobbed to himself... He sat up on his knees and stretched out his arms in an attitude of worship toward the cold amplifier, the impartial mediator between the virtues and absurdity of a music dependent upon circuits and ohms. The audience did not know whether to applaud or not. The guitarist unplugged the electric cord which makes his instrument play, the organist stepped off left, the drummer threw his sticks to the ground in contempt and disgust, and Morrison had disappeared through the velvet curtain without a wave or a smile.¹⁶²

It is no coincidence that this was the song the band were performing at the Whiskey A-Go-Go club, one of their first important venues, the night they were fired. Morrison had invented the Oedipal sequence and on its first outing, according to keyboardist Ray Manzarek :

"Everything just sort of stopped. It was really weird. When we finished no one applauded or even talked. Mario (the manager) just said, 'Those guys are nuts - get them out of here' and we were fired."¹⁶³ And in 1968 the New York Post reported that two people were arrested and three injured during a chair-throwing incident : "The violence began when Jim Morrison... ended his last song called "The End" by falling back on the stage and screaming.

¹⁶⁰Jerry Hopkins, "The Rolling Stone Interview : Jim Morrison" *Rolling Stone*, 26 July 1969, in Sundling, *Doors : Artistic Vision*, p.45.

¹⁶¹Hopkins, *The Lizard King*, p.73.

¹⁶²Stickney, *Williams College News*, 1967, in Sugerman (ed.) *The Doors : The Illustrated History*, p.37.

¹⁶³Digby Diehl, *Eye "The Doors Story"* in Sugerman (ed.) *op. cit.*, p.13.

Some of the audience began throwing paper cups, others broke chairs and threw the legs at the stage, and still more threw chairs... Fifteen private policeman held back part of the audience from the stage but others outflanked them and stormed the stage. The entertainers fled.”¹⁶⁴

These are but three examples, another may be Hopkins and Sugerma’s story about Morrison’s putting out a non-existent fire in the studio, in the middle of recording the song for the first album, while repeating the two Oedipal lines;¹⁶⁵ which may indicate a peculiar effect on *Morrison*. When describing the psychological effect of the line “My only friend The End” [and by implication the final line “This is the end.”] Morrison stated : “..people fear death even more than pain... Life hurts a lot more than death. At the point of death the pain is over. Yeah - I guess it is a friend.”¹⁶⁶ The performance of the song was as relevant to its effect as the lyrics - it drew on the many-layered meanings of mythic language and coupled it with the psychology of crowds to create a psychological effect of Dionysian disorder. Those that did not pick up on subtleties, nevertheless understood that something unsettling was taking place - something (which could occasionally be ill-defined or subliminal) to which they felt they had to react.

Though other songs had a less immediately traceable effect, their intentions seem consistently clear. The song “Moonlight Drive” uses highly visionary, mythical language. One definition of (religious) myth that certainly fits Morrison’s songs and poetry is that of “a story with a veiled meaning.”¹⁶⁷ In this case “Parked beside the ocean / On our moonlight drive”¹⁶⁸ and the sexual and romantic connotations explored are enhanced by lines such as “Penetrate the evenin’ that the city sleeps to hide,”¹⁶⁹ “the city” which Tony Magistrale has interpreted as “a general metaphor for passive acceptance of the status quo.”¹⁷⁰ The

¹⁶⁴*New York Post*, “End of pop concert starts Queens melee” in op. cit., p.84.

¹⁶⁵Hopkins and Sugerma, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, p.100.

¹⁶⁶Lizzie James interview Part II, 1967, in Sugerma, op. cit., p.124.

¹⁶⁷*Chambers English Dictionary*, p.1115 [“myth” - entire second definition].

¹⁶⁸*The Doors Lyrics 1965-1971*, p.24.

¹⁶⁹ibid.

“sleeping city” is an “indictment of the masses who lack both the interest and inclination to explore the ‘waiting worlds that lap against our side.’”¹⁷¹ Among the themes which emerge are “the indulgence of imagination as the key to growth; and the significance of risk-taking over passive resignation, since only through action conceived in faith and spirited by the imagination can truth be apprehended and the soul made to expand.”¹⁷² The lines “Let’s swim to the moon / Let’s climb through the tide” are statements of activity - of having to journey towards something. There are changes of consciousness again - as Doug Sundling points out “How can we ‘Swim to the moon’ save on a drug trip? How can we climb through the tide unless we are floating? How can we ‘penetrate’ the seductive evening ‘the city sleeps to hide’ unless we explore the unknown?”¹⁷³ Our “dark mysterious inner self”¹⁷⁴ is also the unknown of the outside world that many - especially those outside the counterculture - are ignoring, preferring living by proxy (by means of cultural artefacts - programmes on television etc.). We are back to Huxley’s visionary drug use - of changing one’s outlook and viewpoint and allowing the imagination to come up with solutions to problems. Therefore, the symbolism is suggesting that societal as well as personal constraints could be overcome by a reappraisal of what constitutes (political, personal or social) reality.

The communications studies critic Yasue Kuwahara has referred to Morrison’s work in the context of the American “myth of the Promised Land” .It should be said first of all however that part of Kuwahara’s argument - that Morrison made frequent reference to Christian apocalypse in his works - seems to be based on some misreadings of lyric and a lack of awareness of some of Morrison’s central beliefs. For instance Kuwahara contends :

¹⁷⁰Magistrale, “Wild Child : Jim Morrison’s Poetic Journeys”, *Journal of Popular Culture*, in Rocco (ed.) *The Doors Companion* p.83.

¹⁷¹ibid.

¹⁷²ibid.

¹⁷³Sundling, *The Doors : Artistic Vision*, p.62.

¹⁷⁴ibid.

“Morrison consciously models his vision after ‘The Book of Revelation’ as observed in his use of symbols such as a horse and other animals, reptiles, numbers, the river and blood.”¹⁷⁵

Animals and natural symbols such as the river are important constituents of shamanic lore however and it is much more likely that this rather pagan belief system is what Morrison had in mind. Many of Kuwahara’s “connections” with this biblical text can easily be dismissed as coincidental, such as his claim that the line “Blood in the streets runs a river of sadness” in the song “Peace Frog” connects with Revelations : “the rivers and the springs of water on the earth turn into blood when the angel pours out the third of the seven bowls of Gods anger.”¹⁷⁶

However this is much more likely to refer instead to bloody protests in the city of New Haven - and Morrison is more interested in the “atheistic” Buddhist religion rather than Christianity. More important is Kuwahara’s connection between myth and society. Kuwahara implies that Morrison was effectively fighting myth with myth, and the target of his art was “the myth of the promised land” . This myth is essentially the idea “that America is a special place, that which promises unlimited oppurtunities for anyone who wishes to make his or her dream come true - is the oldest and most powerful cultural belief in America.”¹⁷⁷

Morrison’s preoccupation with LA (songs such as “LA Woman” and poetry) is clearly important here. In “LA Woman” the city is represented as a lover: “are you a lucky little lady in the city of light / Or just another lost angel ... / Never saw a woman so alone...”¹⁷⁸ This lover has become “a whore, whose wanderings are confined to freeways, midnight alleys and topless bars.” With ideas taken from John Rechy’s novel *City of Night* we are confronted with a nightmare world of “destruction, disease, disaster and disillusionment.”¹⁷⁹ Pichaske describes the song as a “stroke of genius” in that it combines Morrison’s “typical sexuality

¹⁷⁵Kuwahara, “Apocalypse Now! : Jim Morrison’s Vision of America,” *Popular Music and Society* (Summer 1992) in Rocco (ed.) *The Doors Companion*, p.100.

¹⁷⁶Kuwahara in *ibid.*

¹⁷⁷op. cit. p.94.

¹⁷⁸Sugerman, *Doors : Complete Lyrics*, pp. 148-9.

¹⁷⁹Pielke, *You Say You Want a Revolution* in Sundling *The Doors : Artistic Vision*, p.160.

with a sociological theme.”¹⁸⁰ As Kuwahara points out : “named after the imaginary utopia in a popular romantic novel... warm climate ... the rich concentration of entertainment industries ... Disneyland” all signified the “fantastical image of the region” .¹⁸¹ The idea may have been that if myth and image is such an important part of the dominance of society, it may be appropriate to draw attention to this myth-making in order to provoke a contrary response.

“The Soft Parade” is another interesting song to study here. Its structure represents what it seems to describe - “the fragmentary nature of drug trips.”¹⁸² Shamanic imagery is present here, but unlike more revolutionary songs such as “Five to One” and “When the Music’s Over” on earlier albums, this picture of the world is one of resignation - “Everything must be this way.”¹⁸³ We may be able to understand this by thinking about the reaction of the listener to this unusual (for Morrison) *use* of mythical imagery. We have to recognise a tone of satire that is quite unexpected, until we realise that this song was written in 1969 and as well as the personal crisis of the Miami incident (and the “Rock is Dead” lyric¹⁸⁴), as early as 1968 underground newspaper writers and hippies alike were recognising that events were undermining rather than supporting the efforts of the counterculture. This is of importance when considering the cultural materialist significance of Morrison. The critical tone of Morrison towards society is apparent also in “Ship of Fools” (in *Morrison Hotel*, 1970) referring to the (then recent) moon landings : “People walking on the moon / Smog will get you pretty soon”¹⁸⁵ - this “technocratic” project was hardly a positive event for those urging a return to primal origins. In “An American Prayer” the phrase “Do you know we are ruled by TV?”¹⁸⁶ was never more true than in the moon landing event - Rev. Hosea Williams (of the

¹⁸⁰Pichaske, *The Poetry of Rock : The Golden Years*, p.84.

¹⁸¹Rocco, op. cit., pp. 96-7.

¹⁸²Sundling, p.118.

¹⁸³*The Doors Lyrics 1965-1971*, p.56.

¹⁸⁴See Romanticism / Pre-Raphaelitism chapter for the satirical lyrics in this song.

¹⁸⁵*The Doors Lyrics*, p.64.

¹⁸⁶Morrison, *The American Night*, p.4.

Poor People's Alliance) estimated that the cost of the space programme was such that the same amount could have fed "every hungry person in America."¹⁸⁷

The idea is that Morrison in "The Soft Parade" (and songs like it) is goading the audience into realising exactly what it is letting itself in for, so to speak : "Can you find me soft asylum / I can't make it anymore / The man is at the door... Welcome to the Soft Parade ... There are still a few animals / Left out in the yard / But it's getting harder / To describe / Sailors / To the underfed."¹⁸⁸ If it is true that "Successful hills are here to stay," nevertheless "All our lives we sweat and save / Building for a shallow grave." A booming economy is not enough. In case this "shallow grave" reference sounds ironic when thinking of Morrison it is worth pointing out that every person is mortal, and we are all, in a sense, building for our own graves (though some of us may be more aware of death than others, for many reasons). Morrison would emphasise this in his song "Someday soon" - "And I hate to remind you but you're going to die."¹⁸⁹ At this point, towards the end of the Sixties, it is much "harder to describe" enemies to people who are becoming so jaded they cannot identify them anymore. It is rapidly becoming useless to try - people are too tired of conflict and a new decade is approaching in which that will die (as "underfed" people may die). Instead, in the same song, there are stubborn hopes for a *future* for society under shamanic instruction - "calling to the dogs' reflects the shaman still calling to the other world of spirits of power animals"¹⁹⁰ there is also frustration as the modern world intrudes : "the lights become brighter and the pulse of our modern world interjects - the moaning radio."¹⁹¹ There is a tension between the necessity for a more imaginative society, and the awareness that not everyone shares this knowledge or is willing to act on it. There is a Hobson's choice between inactivity

¹⁸⁷He stated that America had spent \$24bn in total on the exploration of outer space, that for the previous 3 years they had spent \$3bn and that this was enough to feed the poor of America; archive interview of Williams, *Man on the Moon*, BBC, 1994.

¹⁸⁸*The Doors Lyrics 1965-1971*, pp. 56-7.

¹⁸⁹*The Doors Box Set*, 1998. Lyrics not available in any lyric books available to me.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *ibid.*

(acceptance) and possibly futile activity. The only option seems to be to attempt possible solutions - whether the answers are found or not. The bright high notes of the music add surrealism to the sometimes sinister language in "The Soft Parade": e.g. "Winter women growing stones ... (Carrying babies to the river)"¹⁹² creating a mood of uncertainty that is clearly reflecting the irritation and impatience Morrison is feeling towards society. By saying "Meet me at the crossroads" (recalling Oedipus's meeting with Laertes - there are many references to the Oedipal myth in Morrison's "The End") there is the final invitation to find "something or something new."¹⁹³ Morrison was beginning to feel his own powerlessness as time marches on.

A generally hostile reaction to the album prompted a return to more of a blues style - and after Miami Morrison's life slowly began to veer out of control. By 1970 *Waiting for the Sun* featured the lines : "At first flash of Eden we raced down to the sea / Standing there on freedom's shore ... Can you feel it, now that Spring has come / That it's time to live in the scattered sun."¹⁹⁴ The past tense of the first two lines and the *scattered* sun of the last, are significant - these lines make it clear that he has resigned himself to very limited objectives. His final album featured the song "The Changeling" with the lines : "I'm leaving town / On the midnight train / Gonna see me change".¹⁹⁵ Morrison's own mythical language soon failed him completely - a different kind of myth, in the form of a cult, was to follow his death. The supreme event of "sensuous panic" - the disorder necessary for rebirth, attempted in Miami and other concerts, did not materialise properly for Morrison, with the particular methods he used. Increased self-destruction followed as, like some other Sixties utopians, he became a very reluctant pessimist.

¹⁹²op. cit., p.56.

¹⁹³op. cit., p.57.

¹⁹⁴op. cit., p.63.

¹⁹⁵*Doors Lyrics*, p.71.

There are other influences for Morrison which are of use in pinning down the role of religion and mythology. Firstly a book Morrison read, according to the academic Wallace Fowlie,¹⁹⁶ was Joseph Campbell's *Hero With a Thousand Faces*. This provides support for the unusual connection between myth and political change. Campbell, at the outset, quotes Sigmund Freud in *The Future of the Illusion* (1927) :

The truths contained in religious doctrines are after all so distorted and systematically disguised ... that the mass of humanity cannot recognise them as truth. The case is similar to what happens when we tell a child that new born babies are brought by the stork. Here too we are telling the truth in symbolic clothing, for we know what the large bird signifies. But the child does not know it. He hears only the distorted part of what we say and feels he has been deceived ...¹⁹⁷

And if we compare this to the poem "An American Prayer" : "Let's reinvent the *gods, all the myths / of the ages / Celebrate symbols from deep elder forests*"¹⁹⁸ we see that apparently Morrison feels the same way. Religions and myths are merely *analogous parallels* to reality. It is not necessary to believe in the spiritual reality of shamanism, just as it is not necessary to believe in Apollo and Dionysus (or any other deity) as literal supernatural beings. It may be that "freedom exists in a school book"¹⁹⁹ but Morrison felt that to reach a large number of people entertainment was important. Christianity, it could be argued, uses the mythic technique, particularly in accounts such as the Book of Revelations, describing an impending apocalypse. It is possible to heed moral concepts and follow certain abstract principles that underlie a particular religion (for example certain of the Ten Commandments - thou shalt not kill, bear false witness against a neighbour etc.) and yet still be an atheist. Many biblical historians posit that religious ideas are symbolic *and* that there are social reasons for understanding them. But in myth, dry concepts are dramatised and imbued with colour, and in the case of music, with sound as well; creating a total sensory (today we would say multimedia) experience. The start of this process is to produce the myth, a *story* that engages

¹⁹⁶ Fowlie, *Rimbaud and Jim Morrison : The Rebel as Poet*, p.6. The two main biographies of Morrison currently available (Riordan and Prochnicky, *Break on Through* and Hopkins and Sugerman *No One Here Gets Out Alive*) do not specifically mention this book.

¹⁹⁷ Campbell, *Hero With a Thousand Faces*, p. vii. (Preface)

¹⁹⁸ Morrison, *The American Night*, p.3. (italics mine)

¹⁹⁹ Morrison, op. cit., p.7.

the emotions but is also of practical social importance. To reach these truths we have to access them by means of myth and appropriate their techniques of learning through entertainment.

To return to Joseph Campbell, we see that he is at pains to point out throughout the book that many religions and myths of the world have core beliefs that coincide if we look beneath the surface symbolism. If religions are to be taken mainly as useful allegories with a social effect, then differences between them which may be important if taken literally, are not so crucial when taken as metaphors. This should not be confused with cultural opinions *generally* being collapsed into one view; this is merely to allow for some core truths to be apparent underlying many religions. Morrison was more interested in two myth systems generally - shamanism and Buddhism, as already discussed, which, it is reasonable to assume, are allied with protest. Campbell mentions the *adverse* effect that a dominant community can have on the subordinate group : “From the standpoint of the way of duty, anyone in exile from the community is a nothing. From the other point of view however, this exile is the first step of the quest. Each carries within himself the all; therefore it may be sought and discovered within.”²⁰⁰ He goes on to say that the “differentiations of sex, age and occupation are not essential to our character but mere costumes which we wear for a time on the stage of the world ...”²⁰¹ According to Campbell, the core personality should not to be confused with this. We think of ourselves “as civilised Christians. We are either virtuous or sinful... [but they] denote only accidents of geography, birth-date and income ... What is the core of us?”²⁰² Primitive tribes had little to concern themselves but the problems of everyday living, so their single-minded focus shaped society into one where egoism was limited. Both plant and animal worlds “were brought under social control”²⁰³ and the “life-rituals” of

²⁰⁰ Campbell, op. cit., p.385.

²⁰¹ Campbell, *ibid.*

²⁰² *ibid.*

²⁰³ op. cit., p.390.

planting and reaping were associated through myth with those of procreation, birth and maturity. The final paragraph is surely of interest when thinking about utopianism (and would have seemed relevant to Morrison's future plans) :

The modern hero, the modern individual who dares to heed the call ... cannot, indeed must not, wait for his community to cast off its slough of pride, fear, rationalised avarice, and sanctified misunderstanding ... It is not society that is to guide and save the creative hero, but precisely the reverse. And so every one of us shares the supreme ordeal - carries the cross of the redeemer - not in the bright moments of his tribe's great victories but in the silences of his personal despair. ²⁰⁴

There are some extra insights to be gained from another of Morrison's favourite books -

Norman Brown's *Life Against Death*. Brown claims :

the original sublimator, the historical ancestor of philosopher, prophet and poet, is the primitive shaman, with his techniques for ecstatic departure from the body, soul-levitation, soul-transmigration, and celestial navigation... Platonism and hence all Western philosophy is civilised shamanism - a continuation of the shamanistic quest for a higher mode of being - by new methods adapted to the requirements of urban life. ²⁰⁵

His chapter "Apollo and Dionysus" repeats a fair amount of Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*,

but with some intriguing additions with respect to Western thought. Links between

shamanism and Western philosophy are Pythagoras's soul-migrations and "Parmenides's

rationalistic vision vouchsafed to him by the goddess after a ride through the sky to the

Palace of Night."²⁰⁶ Psychoanalysis and the history of Western philosophy are linked by

means of these shamanic origins : "The shaman is far enough from us so that we can

recognise that he is to put it mildly a little mad; and ... psychoanalysis discerns an intrinsic

insanity in sublimation. 'Pure intelligence' says Ferenczi [in *Final Contributions*], 'is in

principle madness.'" ²⁰⁷ The unresolved paradox is that it is *essential* to reject the very

boundaries of one's existence, *and yet* remain in society. The very activity becomes very

difficult and possibly self-destructive (hence 'mad'). The act of writing poetry *is* a form of

immortality nevertheless however, since ideas and a vestige of the personality remains.

Brown quotes Spender : "Writing poetry .. is a spiritual activity which makes one completely

²⁰⁴ op. cit., p.391.

²⁰⁵ Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death*, pp. 157-8.

²⁰⁶ op. cit. p.158.

²⁰⁷ Brown, *ibid*.

forget, for the time being, that one has a body.”²⁰⁸ Brown sees this as a problem, since this is a form of desexualisation, which results in neurosis. His “way out” involves the Dionysian capacity for calling into play, quoting Nietzsche, “the entire symbolism of the body... the whole pantomime of dancing.”²⁰⁹ The instinctual reality which comes from the Dionysian faith is useful for denying the crushing instinct of self-consciousness, and affirming the craving for satiation. Dionysus reunifies “male and female, Self and other, life and death.”²¹⁰ It is impossible to fuse these concepts, but only to be newly aware of both separately. The role that Brown gives to psychoanalysis - that of a form of sublimation that is not Apollonian (i.e. “soulful”, unlike every other form), may well be what Morrison hoped for as a *Dionysian* shaman. It would seem from reading Nietzsche (despite the contrary interpretation offered above) that utopianism involved Apollonian instincts and therefore is discredited. However according to Brown, Apollonian wisdom is theoretical and involves *separation* from the world with dream. It is characterised as : “Nothing too much ...Observe the limit, fear authority, bow before the divine.”²¹¹ The world is kept at a distance via mythology. Dionysian sublimation would involve precisely the opposite - with a rejection of those very boundaries that *appear* to deny realities and instead clandestinely reaffirm them by desexualising life and experiencing it by proxy. This is a radical way of perceiving mythology - as a form of *action* - that seems puzzlingly contrary to Nietzsche (and Apolline in the sense of reconstructing the world); it seems to connect with Morrison’s stated intention to free people by means of the ritual.

In Colin Wilson’s *The Outsider*, another book that Morrison read as a teenager,²¹² there is a strong defence of the role of the “visionary faculty” in the make-up of the particular kind of artist that Wilson calls the “outsider”. Wilson cites Buddhist scripture (the Surangama

²⁰⁸ op. cit., p.157.

²⁰⁹ Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, in Brown op. cit., p.175.

²¹⁰ *ibid.*

²¹¹ Brown, op. cit., p.174.

²¹² Hopkins and Sugarman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, p.17.

Sutra) referring to a form of enlightenment based on concentrating the attention (sounding suspiciously like what we would today refer to as self-hypnosis). Wilson claims that a hundred scriptures from around the world could be cited for similar examples pointing to the same idea : “a discipline of the mind leads to a completely different way of *seeing* the world.”²¹³ This provides us with a reason for certain references in Morrison’s poetry to Buddhism. It is William Blake’s visionary faculty - “the result of a long, rigorous, discipline of the senses, a discipline that tries to force the mind in a direction that is completely foreign to its everyday activities, and as different from it as vertical is from horizontal.”²¹⁴ The “outsider” is a similar concept to that of the “rebel” but it soon becomes clear that the exile, mad as he is by the standards of society, is a particularly *moral* person : “For the Outsider, the world into which he is born is always a world without values. Compared to his own appetite for purpose and direction, the way most men live is not living at all; it is drifting.... all men have a herd instinct that what the majority does must be right.”²¹⁵ When he looks at others sympathetically the Outsider realises that there is a *little* of the poet in everyone but he says “the sense of purpose that makes me a poet is stronger than theirs.”²¹⁶ Nietzsche realised : “intellectual discipline is not enough. Zarathustra [in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*] is primarily an intellectual, like his creator. He is also a mystic ..He is also a lover of the physical .. he never ceases to liken himself to a dancer ... Zarathustra also sings the body electric.”²¹⁷ Morrison used his physical presence on stage to bring this sort of myth alive and turn it into Dionysiac, shamanistic reality (as described above). Wilson also refers, in another chapter, to Hermann Hesse’s novel *Steppenwolf* (1928) the main character of which, Harry Haller (whose nickname is Steppenwolf) makes the distinction between two sides of his nature - the “civilised man” and the “wolf man” (reminiscent of the Apollonian and Dionysian

²¹³ Wilson, *The Outsider*, p.233.

²¹⁴ *ibid.*

²¹⁵ *op. cit.*, p.143.

²¹⁶ *ibid.*

²¹⁷ Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-4.

distinction, though not accurately so). Most of the time these are kept apart - there are different scenarios in which either come into play, but it is when the two coincide that, Haller feels :

akin to the gods. In these moments he is no longer envious of the bourgeois who find life so comfortable ... He, as self-realiser, has deliberately cultivated his two opposing natures until the conflict threatens to tear him in two, because he knows that when he has achieved the secret of permanently reconciling them, he will live at an intensity unknown to the bourgeois. His suffering is not a mark of his inferiority, even though it may render him less fit for survival than the bourgeois; unreconciled, it is a sign of his greatness; reconciled it is manifested as 'more abundant life' that makes the Outsider's superiority over other types of men unquestionable.²¹⁸

And in a paragraph that is strangely reminiscent of Foucault's concept of a symbiotic relationship between the powerful and the powerless, there is an odd connection between the Outsider and the society that affects opposition to him :

Without [the Outsider] the bourgeois could not exist. The vitality of the ordinary members of society is dependent on its Outsiders. Many Outsiders unify themselves, realize themselves as poets or saints. Others remain tragically divided and unproductive, but even they supply soul-energy to society; it is their strenuousness that purifies thought and prevents the bourgeois world from foundering under its own dead-weight; they are society's spiritual dynamos.²¹⁹

This is a curious reconciliation between the primitive (sinful, in Christian terms) and the virtuous (conformist) impulses, yet under the umbrella term "spiritual"; as if there is a higher sort of understanding that allows for, if not purely life-affirming excess, then at least a profound struggle between these two facets of human nature - that quite plainly do exist in the world, whether we want to recognise them or not. This is not traditional Christianity, though Wilson refers to Blake who did not see his religion as body-negating. This was just part of his wider protest at conventions in religious thought. Just in case these thinkers can be dismissed as using mythology to such an extent that they become romantics, in the most naïve sense of a dreamer with no thought of reality (the archetypal Apollonian), Wilson devotes an entire chapter to artists who "attempt to gain control" (T.E. Lawrence, Vaslav Nijinsky, and T.E. Hulme) - and "who actually made a determined effort to find such a way

²¹⁸ Wilson, op. cit., p.59.

²¹⁹ *ibid.*

of living by going out and looking for it.”²²⁰ Morrison (as well as Sixties youth groups) surely recognised the problem. It seems to be a “mad” idea on the surface of it - to reject one’s *everyday* reality - but it was one which was central to the reform-minded, progressive ideas of the 1960s (and to Buddhism). To repeat a quote from Roszak, “these frenzied and often pathetic experiments in community simply have to succeed.” And, “there was in our society No Exit... [there is instead] a painfully American answer, *Do It Yourself*. If there is no community for you, young man, make it yourself.”²²¹ If this sounds like a tall order, commune environments (sometimes bound up with some kind of belief, as stated earlier), for a time attained some success. But for those who found this unsatisfactory (perhaps the knowledge of the outside world remaining the same) the despair that results from the impotence of the individual is reflected in the pessimistic tradition of art. What happens then is a difficult question to answer, especially when the revolutionary moment has passed. Wilson seems to answer it by means of religion itself, though it is hard not to resist the idea that it is a convenient individual solution (to guarantee immortality) at the expense of the world at large. An awareness of society’s problems can result in no total escape (no experimenting with “real” society itself), except through visionary states of being (though this can be unsatisfactory when there are still those, some with a great deal of power, who do not subscribe to this) or death (coming back to Morrison’s claim - defeatist though it seems - that life hurts much more than death). If Morrison wanted to reinvent the religious spirit in order to metaphorise it he may have still found it difficult to deal with failed attempts to suggest a partly *carpe diem* philosophy (but imbued with moral purpose) to those he considered should be most receptive to it. What would it mean to be forced to abandon such a crucial goal?

We could return to Huxley at this stage for his view of perception :

²²⁰ *op. cit.*, p.67.

²²¹ Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, p.204.

To be shaken out of the ruts of ordinary perception, to be shown for a few timeless hours the outer and the inner world, not as they appear to an animal obsessed with survival or to a human being obsessed with words and notions, but as they are apprehended, directly and unconditionally, by Mind at Large - this is an experience of inestimable value to everyone and especially to the intellectual.²²²

Though Huxley was careful not to equate the mescaline experience exactly with that of the spiritual enlightenment that he regarded as the ultimate aim of society, he did, as this passage shows, see the value of what could be termed the “outsider experience.” If this can be applied to a rock concert, perhaps with a fusion of experimental poetry and performance - then what started out as individual entertainment could become a serious artistic force. Doors performances frequently brought high praise²²³ - The *Seattle Daily Times* of July 15, 1968 for instance describing a Doors concert of July 12 as “one of the finest rock concerts offered in this city” offered the following description : “Morrison presents, the songs, largely social commentary, in an exciting, compelling manner... he creates the impression that he cares about and believes in what he is saying. There is no feeling of hypocrisy, no sense that he is merely offering the commodity for which the audience has paid.”²²⁴ If this is a little vague, a concert in Canada the following day demonstrates this when, after a particularly “engaging” series of screams and chants, he leads off several songs with his improvisational poetry. In the finale that follows “hundreds of people vault onto the stage overwhelming security personnel who vigorously try to restrain the crowd. Their efforts at clearing the stage are futile; there are just too many people. Those who manage to squeeze through the human barricade surround Morrison in a circle of wild enthusiasm and insane dancing.”²²⁵ This is of importance when considering what happened in Woodstock, Isle of Wight and Atlanta pop festivals (one of which the Doors attended, and all of which Jimi Hendrix attended²²⁶), and possibly others, when people successfully stormed the fence that was erected to keep a

²²² Huxley, *The Doors of Perception / Heaven and Hell*, p.51.

²²³ see Shaw, *passim* for quotes from press.

²²⁴ Shaw, *The Doors on the Road*, p.116.

²²⁵ Shaw, *op. cit.*, p.117.

²²⁶ Isle of Wight 1970. More details of these festivals, and a brief discussion of the improvisational aspects of Hendrix's performances and riots at his concerts are in “Politics” chapter.

barrier between the singers and the crowd. This is all a translation of a communal mood into a form of action, something which in itself would have seemed unlikely if we took the hypothesis that rock music is listened to passively. We have to face the argument that a unifying sense of belief - though a multifarious one - helped establish an otherworldly sense of union between people. Morrison's was a particularly potent blend of beliefs.

We must now come back full circle to the role of music and religion / myth generally in America. A contemporary (1970) critic Benjamin de Mott pointed out :

That the idea of the new pop music as a religious force is so far credible only to With-Its does not signify, however, that it will never gain credibility for others. Rock is already being taken seriously in many quarters usually thought to be proof against chichi or frivolity - the upper echelons of the United Presbyterian Church, for one (the leadership of this institution recently retained a rock group called the Astrakhan Sleeve to produce religious records; a spokesman explained that rock is a 'forum for serious messages far removed from the moon-June variety.')²²⁷

He also points out : "The third issue of *New American Review* carried a discussion of rock music by Prof. Albert Goldman of Columbia in which a rock composition was compared to 'King Lear' and the group called The Doors was said to 'achieve their purpose as gurus, which is to confront their audience with the most basic unbearable truths.'"²²⁸ However De Mott begs to differ, offering the rather reductive explanation that The Doors' "trade" depends "not upon musical freshness, but upon exploitation of the sexiness of the singer Jim Morrison."²²⁹ Quite apart from the dismissiveness of this claim - the unwillingness to enter into any constructive literary / musical criticism in the piece (this is all the comment it takes to dispose of the group), its only insight is in stating that Morrison is a victim of his own sexuality, a concept that had no doubt already occurred to him (especially from 1969 when he cultivated a bearded persona to howls of protest from teenyboppers across America).²³⁰ As

²²⁷ De Mott, "Rock as Salvation" in White (ed.) *Pop Culture in America*, p.192.

²²⁸ op. cit., p.193. I have, regrettably, been unable to obtain this issue of *New American Review*.

²²⁹ De Mott, op. cit., p.197.

²³⁰ According to Roy Carr, Morrison, interviewed by Carr in 1969, commented: "Things are now being reduced to the level of meat!" No doubt he was referring particularly to Miami. Nevertheless Carr points out that Morrison still "spoke of his unshakeable belief in the mystical power inherent in certain kinds of music. Some artists were, in their own way, sorcerers, capable of casting spells through the sheer energy of their performance." "Strange Days" <www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~nuboy/data.htm>

a one-line summary of the band however, it remains woefully inadequate. Murphy and Gross in the same volume come to a less dogmatic general conclusion pointing out that the essential elements of rock music are the use of mythology for truthful ends, not all that different from what poets of many ages past have tried to express : “A heightening of reality, a telling of the truth, an utterance of prophecy - these, after all, are what poets have traditionally aspired to. To the degree that contemporary verse falls short of these ideals and rock lyricists achieve them, the latter may be doing even more than taking their place in ‘real poetry’ .They may be reinventing it.”²³¹

It should be clear therefore that it is indeed a valuable (perhaps even a virtuous) vocation to attempt to counter the atrophy of mere existence. Belief has its role as a metaphor - symbolic of a need to transcend, at least in some sense, today’s materialistic civilisation. Many of the tensions about fixed and rigid American society were largely shared at the beginning - though differences crept in over time. The Hippies would eschew the claims of art to change society and instead drop out of it to create their own mini-community; an escalation of the alienation effect of the 1950s. For the less politically-oriented Hippies the Vietnam War may have contributed to a final breaking of the link between a counterculture and the society it opposes; for other youth protesters it intensified the need to oppose it directly rather than escaping from it. This becomes the very difficult paradox that youth in the 1960s was trying desperately to solve, with differing results that led eventually to a diluting of the opposition itself. For a time, it was important for youth, and for Morrison, to fight the myth of the moral society with an enabling and inspirational *performed* myth.

²³¹ Murphy and Gross, “All You Need Is Love. Love Is All You Need” in White (ed.), op. cit., p.221.

The Miami Incident

This chapter will cover a watershed moment in Morrison's career and life. At the Dinner Key Auditorium in Coconut Grove, Miami, Florida on March 1 1969, events were set in motion that ultimately resulted in Jim Morrison's arrest for crimes carrying prison sentences, though the exact circumstances were highly doubtful. This doubt became one of the central questions of the trial. Did the alleged acts, including indecent exposure, even take place? It was surely not a coincidence that the week before the concert Morrison had attended a succession of performances by The Living Theatre (whom he had showed an interest in before), which culminated in their most controversial offering entitled *Paradise Now*. He also contributed money to the troupe - saving them from bankruptcy, and he twice appeared with them, as shall be seen. *Paradise Now* contained the line "I am not allowed to take my clothes off" and much of the monologue with which Morrison "attacked" the audience, mirrors that of the play, or refers to it (as we shall see later). This in turn refers us to the movements of Dada and Surrealism as applied to theatre. If the Living Theatre performances lit the fuse, it was one that had been present in some form for some time. What happened in that concert has connections with Morrison's high-school reading of Norman O. Brown's *Life Against Death*, which had influenced his thinking a great deal, also with the philosophy of Foucault, and the death of the Sixties that was to come.

This chapter will look at this Miami concert (often referred to as the "Miami incident") in detail, but before looking at the incident itself it is necessary to set a context by looking at what happened before it. Therefore we need to look carefully at The Living Theatre, which, I shall argue, must have fired Morrison's imagination and led to these watershed events in the career of Morrison that would eventually play a part in the demise of the Doors. According to Hopkins, Jim Morrison had known of the avant-garde theatre troupe for some time and had asked *Los Angeles Free Press* writer John Carpenter for details of them when the latter said

he had a friend who was in the group. Morrison had also read an article in “Ramparts” magazine and had gained information from the poet Michael McClure who had known the co-founder of the Living Theatre, Julian Beck in New York ten years earlier. He obtained 16 front-row tickets from The Doors’ secretary for each of the performances. ¹

In their biography, Hopkins and Sugerman record the time when Morrison met Mark Amatin, the advance man of The Living Theatre. They quote Amatin : “I was doing what I thought was political and spiritual work ... and that’s what Jim wanted to find out about. His work had been a religious experience, but it had become entertainment, and he was extremely dissatisfied.” ² The Living Theatre was a revolutionary theatre group that specialised in engaging with their audience directly, often by talking with, or shouting their viewpoints to, members of the audience. Amatin went on:

The Living Theatre was made up of people who had come to see them and couldn’t leave, and Jim wanted to know about that enthusiasm. He said he wanted to find ways to incorporate a political message into what he was doing, but he didn’t know how to go about it, or where to begin. He felt everyone was waiting for him to speak ... and this was a tremendous responsibility, but Jim didn’t know what to say.³

Morrison had then asked Amatin, “What is it about the Living [Theatre] that causes such enthusiasm? ... How can we get that same sort of commitment and devotion? What do I have to do?” ⁴

Performances of the Living Theatre, particularly *Paradise Now*, included “Actions” where actors would interact with, and even engage in conversation with the audience, sometimes leading them out into the street outside the theatre. In the anarchist society envisaged by the Living Theatre, according to Theodore Shank “the individual would no longer be a slave of money, of sexual taboos, of repressions by the state respecting freedom of movement, and other restrictions With *Paradise Now* they hoped to aid this interior revolution by changing the perception of the audience, by making them realise that a

¹ Hopkins, *The Lizard King*, p.111.

² op. cit., p.221.

³ op. cit., p.221-2.

⁴ op. cit., p.222.

transformation is possible and urgent.” They were an integral part of the disturbances in May 1968 in Avignon and in fact at that time “the city obtained a court summons demanding the withdrawal of the play for disturbing the peace.”⁵ The suppression of the play shows a certain amount of apparent fear concerning the power of it. Whatever words can be said about the Living Theatre, “politically conservative” should not be among them. In Living Theatre co-founder Judith Malina’s book “The Enormous Despair” written from her diaries in 1972 (which is primarily about her experiences with the troupe and only mentions Morrison in the two instances below), she comments on a later appearance by Morrison on-stage : “March 5, 1969... Michael McClure and Jim Morrison - poet and pop singer - do a great number on race relations in the Capetown scene with Rufus”.⁶ She also describes a meeting with Morrison : “March 10, 1969... All day there are financial problems. In the midst of the crisis Mike McClure and Joanna McClure come to visit us and we sit around and talk lazily. They have brought Jim Morrison (of the Doors) who is very quiet and easygoing ... Julian talks on the phone about the desperate money matters, and Morrison, who says very little, offers to help. He’ll send money.”⁷ And his donation clearly helps them out : “March 13 ... Jim Morrison gives us twenty-five hundred dollars. Saves our skins.”⁸ It is unclear whether there were more such financial donations after April 1969.⁹

Though it is *Paradise Now* that has the most obvious parallels with Morrison’s comments to the audience, as will be seen, the other plays¹⁰ that Morrison saw are also of great relevance to his general outlook. They were all performed at Bovard Auditorium in the campus of University of California Los Angeles from Feb 24th to Feb 28th 1969.

⁵ op. cit., p.215.

⁶ Malina, *The Enormous Despair*, p.204.

⁷ op. cit., p.212-3.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ Unfortunately the book ends at April 1969 and I have not been able to verify the existence of any other of her diaries. *The Enormous Despair* itself is out of print (obtained via interlibrary loan).

¹⁰I will use the term “play” throughout in relation to the Living Theatre’s productions, though the term in the sense of “drama or dramatic performance” (Chambers Dictionary) seems inadequate when describing the *participative* exchange between the audience and the actors which was such a crucial feature of the Living Theatre’s works, as shall be seen.

Commencing with *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces*, they continued the following day with *Frankenstein*, with *Antigone* on the 27th and ending with *Paradise Now* on the 28th.

According to keyboardist Ray Manzarek : “[Morrison] even joined the troupe onstage for the last performance. Ranting and raving himself. Leaping about the stage and shouting out his cries for freedom.”¹¹

Mysteries was the first play seen by Morrison that week in February 1969.¹² It opens with a motionless actor who, according to Biner, symbolises death. After some time (the audience response determines how long) he is joined by other actors who are soldiers performing aimless tasks routinely - “mechanical puppets” as Biner calls them. Morrison would have recognised such representations of military discipline from his father, a US Navy admiral. Riordan and Prochnicky comment : “Jim Morrison was Steve and Clara’s first born and that in itself carried a burden of expectation.” In addition there was “the rigid and intense mentality of the navy way and the almost continuous relocation of the family.” At one point, when Morrison was home (unusually) he “chose this period to establish a steady diet of strict discipline, only to discover that both boys [Morrison and his brother Andy] deeply resented it. Steve Morrison was accustomed to giving orders and having those orders obeyed without question.”¹³ Slotkin describes Thoreau’s American epic as a “moral and psychological struggle against the forces that imprison the body and against the *torpor* of mind and spirit that bind the soul to Satan or (to use a term more appropriate to Thoreau) to death or deadness.”¹⁴ The death or deadness (as with the motionless actor here) is clearly meant to refer to an apathy stemming from the power that the state (or any established system that is

¹¹Manzarek, *Light My Fire : My Life with the Doors*, p.311.

¹²The following descriptions are taken principally from detailed summaries of the performances by Biner, a briefer one of *Antigone* by Tytell, and the book *Paradise Now : Collective Creation of the Living Theatre*. (Biner, *The Living Theatre*, pp. 84-91, pp. 115-41, pp. 145-148 and pp. 181-213 respectively; Tytell, *The Living Theatre : Art, Exile and Outrage*, p.220-1, and *Paradise Now*, *passim*.) Also works by Shank and Aronson will be referred to for brief comments. There are very few other *detailed* descriptions of these performances that exist, so it will be mainly these sources will be used here.

¹³Riordan and Prochnicky, *Break on Through*, pp. 28-9.

¹⁴Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, p.538; italics mine.

difficult to critique) sometimes has to render the subordinate group *impotent* to determine their destiny. This can be applied to the situation for young people during the Vietnam War - they were *conscripted* to fight (and it was America that was *asserting* herself to fight communism). A form of civil disobedience (to use Thoreau's term) is called for.

Morrison in fact used his own ingenuity to avoid the draft, as did the other members of The Doors. Hopkins and Sugerman refer to Morrison's strategy when called in 1966 : "First Jim tampered with his blood pressure, blood sugar, heartbeat, respiration, vision, and speech with a wide and plentiful assortment of drugs, marched into the army induction center for his physical, told the doctors he was a homosexual and if they took him they'd be the sorriest motherfuckers on the face of the earth. He was refused for service."¹⁵ In the Miami performance he would call his audience "a bunch of slaves" but he was referring more generally to their unquestioning reliance on his role as an authority or leader (based on his image) *within the concert arena*. This was precisely what he was suspicious of in society : "What were they doing there anyway... The basic message was ... you're not really here to listen to a bunch of songs by some fairly good musicians. Why not admit it and do something about it."¹⁶ What Morrison attempted to achieve in Miami went beyond music, but despite Morrison's intentions, the audience was not willing to desert their singer / leader (along with the industry that propped him up) and discover the world for themselves imaginatively and above all *actively*.

In the following scene of *Mysteries* an improvised Hindu *raga* is performed to a guitar. The senses are rising against the society and providing sensual pleasure, though the rigidity that follows suggests the inability to sustain sensual pleasure in the real world. This sensual awareness is continued in Scene 3 where the delights of smelling are achieved by means of incense sticks that enfold the spectators with clouds of incense. (This is reminiscent of a poem

¹⁵Hopkins and Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, p.84.

¹⁶Salli Stevenson interview, Winter 1970, in Hopkins, *The Lizard King*, p.246.

fragment in *Wilderness* where Morrison describes how he has fulfilled 4 of his senses - strangely not including sight.)¹⁷ In *Mysteries*, a political poem then follows whose theme can be summarised as “Find a way... Make it work ...” which has echoes of Morrison’s “We must try to find a new answer instead of a way.”¹⁸ This all parallels the boredom of institutional death summarised in the first scene.

In the second part of *Mysteries* the body is paid homage to again with the “*tableaux vivants*,” a wood structure which is divided into four compartments in each of which a different human reaction is presented. This is to show that whatever emotion the body assumes it is in some way fascinating or beautiful. This has interesting connections with the idea expressed by Brown that : “We are all in practice idealists, alienated from our bodies and pursuing, like infantile sexuality itself, ‘no real aim.’ ”¹⁹ This naïveté, rather than referring to a particular group, seems to refer to the wide population that does not think of itself in these terms. The nature of this might be an unquestioning belief in the status quo and in what they would regard as the basic equality of society, the morality of market economics, etc.

The penultimate scene consists of an improvised sound and movement from each actor, the one obtaining the most satisfaction being replicated. The end scene is one called The Plague and is influenced by Artaud’s description of the 1720 Marseilles plague - even the dying try to possess their fellow victims; the dying trying to defeat death. The stubborn individual soldier of the opening scene is also lying on the ground (this is suggestive of the character in Morrison’s song “Unknown Soldier” who also cannot defeat the Vietnam War). Brown’s neurotic “death-in-life” (a term used by Coleridge and also Poe) is probably referred to here as well, the collective disease. We should be careful here to distinguish a mere feeling of “phoniness” (to use Holden Caulfield’s complaint in Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye*) on the

¹⁷Morrison, *Wilderness*, p.32

¹⁸“Well I’ll tell you a story,” in Morrison, *Wilderness*, p.145.

¹⁹Brown, *Life Against Death*, p.166.

one hand and what is referred to here which is much more closely bound up with concrete political thought. This kind of phoniness is not merely an indefinite and flimsy sense of aggression against conformity, but an awareness of the true waste of life when a subject is powerless in thought and action. This concept does not involve rhetoric concerning the battle between individual and the state. It refers to the death of a person's individual voice, and therefore a person's life *in society*. This happens in the midst of an authority that takes over the decision-making process, whether it is the business that employs a person, or the government that makes a person's decisions with only a minimum opportunity for the individual to show consent. We are back to a more subtle way of resolving the tensions between individual and state with a view to producing a balance of *both* that is far more fair to those who need help. In certain performances the final plague scene elicited a response from the audience. When the performers enacted the physical and mental deterioration of the plague, according to Shank, "spectators participated. Some died with the actors and were placed in the pile, some tried to comfort the dying, others touched the bodies, hit them or tickled them to get a response."²⁰ Shank points out that certain performances of *Mysteries* were "stopped or banned by the authorities because of the nudity of some performers or the participation of the spectators who refused to be controlled by officials."²¹

In *Frankenstein*, the second play seen by Morrison, a large structure (a large-scale version of the *tableaux vivants* stage) of fifteen equal compartments each, with ladders and gangplanks, is used. The first scene takes place with a girl speaking in flat tones into a microphone. She is called The Control Booth - the actors on the stage are ruled by her. She announces that they are trying to levitate another character named "Mary Mary". Everyone keeps watch on each other, however, under the dominant gaze of the control booth. This is reminiscent of Foucault's panopticon and of Big Nurse keeping watch over the Combine in

²⁰Shank, *American Alternative Theatre*, p.14.

²¹*ibid.*

Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* - where McMurphy plays the role of the outsider who brings a fresh perspective to life among the ruled. In the *Frankenstein* play, everyone's concentration is broken - the attempt to levitate Mary Mary fails and she herself is picked out as the cause and killed. Biner states generally: "the crowd kills the hero if he disappoints them."²² When one man tries to resist with positive protest he is caught and executed - another protests against this and in turn is killed, and so on. The following scenes are based on the implicit accusation of modern society that is present in Mary Shelley's novel, on which the play was based. In the novel the Creature is portrayed as an innocent, both created and corrupted by an immoral society. He learns of "the strange system of human society ... I heard of the division of property, of immense wealth and squalid poverty; of rank, descent and noble blood."²³

It is highly significant that the Creature is an outsider himself, who is *set apart from* society. Shelley had read Rousseau who stated that the "solitaire" is caught in a vicious circle, which seems to be impossible to break free of: "His conduct is vicious, because it has a tendency to render him miserable."²⁴ Rousseau also claimed that this "solitaire" cannot be a moral being which seems simplistic if we apply a definition of "outsider" that includes everyone with radically different opinions or lifestyle - since not all these people are necessarily violent. The Creature is reacting to the circumstances of his creation, a result of forces he could do nothing about. Frankenstein abandons his creation despite telling the Creature that he will create a companion. It is enormously crucial also that the blind De Lacey, whom the Creature reveals himself to after skulking around his cottage observing him and his family, is only sympathetic towards him because he cannot make judgements based on *sight*. When he reveals himself to the others they are horrified, and the Creature realises how powerless he is. All of these events combine to make him into the murderer he later

²²Biner, *The Living Theatre*, p.117, footnote 2.

²³Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p.116.

²⁴Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, quoted in op. cit., p.xxix.

becomes. Morrison knew the detrimental effects of the culture of the spectacle, which, as with Frankenstein, has links with the sexual *image*:

Ask anyone what sense he would preserve above all others. Most would say sight, forfeiting a million eyes in a body for two in the skull. Blind, we could live and possibly discover wisdom. Without touch, we would turn into hunks of wood.

Mates are first chosen by visual. Not odor, rhythm, skin. It is an error to believe that the eye can caress a woman. Is a woman constructed out of light or of skin? Her image is never real in the eye, it is engraved on the ends of the fingers.²⁵

This also has links with Baudrillard's concept of simulacra, which is discussed elsewhere.²⁶

The point seems to be that sometimes forces of destruction can be hidden behind an appealing image. Morrison is, in a sense, agreeing with feminist thinking that refers to the oppression of the male *gaze* - and a reliance on looks only. To Morrison, the eye is not able to caress a woman - only touch can do this. Morrison feels that touch is a better sense since it cannot be fooled.

Industry and machines, in the Frankenstein play, are seen as gradually dehumanising mankind. Brown contends that society is neurotic under the pressure of civilisation;²⁷ other commentators in the sixties such as Theodore Roszak took up this theme more precisely of course. And C. Wright Mills spoke of "crackpot realism." We could be reminded of the precise controlling tendencies of Big Nurse in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. What is "real" is a self-fulfilling prophecy, and is consented to by default - an imaginative reappraisal involves *not* consenting to established reality. In the play, Frankenstein makes his appearance and steals the body of the woman - capitalism, medicine and the military are implicated in his move to a government project. In Act II he begins to reanimate the corpse, but once alive the creature feels his "otherness" and his attempts at betterment lead nowhere - his innocence

²⁵Morrison, [Untitled poem], *Eye* magazine, Oct 1968, in Riordan and Prochnicky, *Break on Through*, pp. 273-4.

²⁶"Sex" chapter.

²⁷Brown, *Life Against Death*, p.11.

becomes bitterness and drives him to murder. In Act III, the compartmentalised structure has become a prison - this symbolises the world people have built for themselves.

Brown, echoing Thomas Hobbes' philosophy, contends that we have created society in order to repress ourselves.²⁸ This has relevance when considering the crossover from the 1950s to the 1960s. The censorship of art and literature (including alleged "communist" art) created a climate where certain voices seemed marginalised within a powerful state that was able to censor *ideas*. This is another example therefore of the state's "protection" of its subjects becoming stifling. In the *Frankenstein* play, the departure of one prisoner heralds an arrival of another - there is perpetual movement inside the machine. Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* visualised the prisoner, in common with everyone else, as being made to conform through 'normalisation.' In his cell Frankenstein starts a fire and foments a revolt during which a guard is killed. This is a violent end - the prisoners seem to have perished. From the ashes however "dead" people begin to reform themselves and build a new creature - one that lets the net and lamp (that were the symbols of victimisation in Act I) drop down. The new creature (or monster) has discarded torture and is defenceless - "made by man for man". The flaw of the play according to Shank is that it was a "theatrical metaphor." Except for the opening meditation scene the whole play was a "theatrical illusion." It was lacking in those elements of reality that characterised the Living Theatre and in fact set it apart from the absurdists. New theatrical techniques were developed but audience participation was not present to the same degree as in "plays" such as *Paradise Now*.

Antigone, the third play seen by Morrison, is according to Biner a "true celebration of civil disobedience"²⁹ - the version is Brecht's (based on Sophocles's play) - a version that changes its emphasis from the divine to the political. In this version Creon, a cruel tyrannical ruler has begun a war against Argos to loot its iron mines (war and capitalism united) and has

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ Biner, *The Living Theatre*, p.145.

ordered that Polynices, the brother of the virgin heroine Antigones, be left as carrion for the vultures. In Greek culture this means to be left in perpetual restlessness (the soul is unable to enter Hades) and Antigone in a defiant act buries her brother with the dust she collects. In this play therefore morality is beyond the overwhelming power of the state. Shank comments : “For many the play seems to be a metaphor for the war which the United States was waging against Vietnam. The spectators are the victims.”³⁰ This refers to the scenes in which the audience is made to represent Argos and the stage Thebes. The actors have been looking at the audience and talk among themselves in a hostile manner directed against that Argive audience. The audience is made to feel the war physically when the sound of gunshots, air-raid sirens and other noises are played. Polyneices is killed among the spectators, who are made to feel the war as physically and emotionally as possible.

It is, however, with *Paradise Now*, watched by Morrison (after the other plays, as above) the day before the Miami performance, that the most parallels emerge (with general protest during the Sixties as well as with what was said in Coconut Grove). As discussed previously, Morrison had met Mark Amatin of the Living Theatre, read pertinent magazine articles, appeared in one performance, and made at least one important financial contribution to the group. Much of what Morrison said in Miami has *direct* parallels with what is said during *Paradise Now*. We will look at this in some detail therefore. The play consists of eight Rungs (instead of a ladder it represents a step on a map consisting of different levels - a copy of the map was given out to each member of the audience) and every rung contains a “rite”, a “vision” and an “action.” The play is described as a means of showing “the way to Paradise” but Biner points out : “some critics wanted to take the play for the revolution and the paradise the play speaks of. It is not so. Even if the audience feels ... a physical and mental exaltation bordering on ecstasy, the play remains nevertheless a *didactic practicing of joy*.”³¹

³⁰Shank, op. cit., p.16.

³¹ Biner, op. cit., p.173.

(Morrison once referred to his unfulfilled desire to write a song that was a “pure expression of joy”³² and this connects with Brown’s description of *jouissance*). The real change is to take place outside the play - to be achieved by the audience.

The play’s purpose is to *lead* the spectator into “a state of being in which non-violent revolutionary action is possible”³³ - the play is just the catalyst that attempts this through this “physical and mental exaltation” that shows up the ‘possible.’ The rite prepares something pleasurable for the actors to perform, the vision is a more cerebral clarification of the subject matter and finally the action is where an improvisation is carried out in collaboration with the audience (communicating that it is only after seeing that action is possible - a point reinforced at the end of the play). The power relationship of the artist to the audience is therefore problematised.

The rite of the first rung is entitled “The rite of Guerilla Theatre” and while the spectators are filing into the theatre the actors file silently in and approach them at random. They then utter statements such as “I am not allowed to travel without a passport” that indicates inability to move freely around the world that belongs to the people collectively - there is no choice of the country of birth, yet we are subject to the laws of that country (nationalism is also implicated). The actor repeats the statement despite the lack of any verbal response from the audience member - this makes it more intense. After about two minutes of this the actor lets out a great shout - releasing a collective tension in the audience as well as the actors. Nothing the audience does can reach the actor - the frustration cannot be released with politeness, only with anger. “I don’t know how to stop the wars” is the next sentence uttered in the same way. Happiness is experienced on a world-view level - victims are not remote from consciousness because they are on a foreign stage and the actors are concerning themselves with this question as if it were *their* very lives at stake. The next

³² *Doors Are Open* documentary, 1968.

³³ Biner, op. cit., p.174

sentence : “You can’t live if you don’t have money” - relationships with other people are coloured by our appraisal of their monetary worth; life is based on competition, overproduction, greed, envy and useless work. The next line : “I am not allowed to smoke marijuana” - society refuses to allow modification of consciousness while it condones killing of its citizens in war (for the advancement of capitalism overseas, as in Vietnam or Korea) or through poverty. The offender is criminalised and jailed for victimising himself, as a response to what he cannot change (reminiscent of Morrison). Lastly : “I am not allowed to take my clothes off” - the body should be seen as beautiful; this is an all-inclusive statement directed particularly to those for whom this is particularly true - those rejected as not conventionally beautiful. At the end of this the actor takes off “as much clothing as the law allows.” The important connections for Morrison therefore are the taking of drugs, awareness of the Vietnam War (particularly *The Unknown Soldier* and some of his poetry), and a hatred of nationalism (e.g. “We want the world and we want it ... Now!” in “When the Music’s Over”). These were all issues with which Morrison was concerned, and in the Miami incident the final statement was drawn attention to as an incitement towards “indecent exposure.” This was also the case in wider society - among youth protesters in particular.

The vision of this rung is entitled “The vision of the death and resurrection of the American Indian” and consists of the actors passing a peace pipe representing Indians - they stand erect, form a totem pole through the positioning of their faces and begin to move forward - there is a gunshot sound and the actors fall to the ground. This calls to mind Morrison’s fragment of poetry with the first-line title “Bird of Prey” : “Indians scattered on dawn’s / Hiway bleeding. / Ghosts crowd the young child’s / fragile egg-shell mind”³⁴; there are also other Morrison poems dealing with the Indians. The ‘action’ is similar to this: the dialogue asks the audience to change the culture by imagining themselves as the city of New

³⁴Morrison, *Wilderness*, p.139. A recording of Morrison reading this poem appears on the posthumous “An American Prayer” CD.

York, to imagine the hypocrisy of the police that show violence while simultaneously preaching anti-violence. The exhortations made by the actors show that the actors feel a form of helplessness: “If I could turn you on / If I could drive you out of your wretched mind / If I could tell you I would let you know” (Morrison’s helplessness after the Miami incident is discussed later³⁵). The audience is invited to come up on the stage, but told “don’t step on the Indians” - the company does not pretend to have all the answers but asks people to at least pose questions (to form a critique).

After this general introduction, we move to specifics in subsequent rungs. In Rung II the rite of prayer affirms that everything that the eyes look upon has some sanctity (this is useful when considering things generally that others turn their eyes away from - a form of repression) - the actors advance toward the audience touching parts of the body using the adjective holy coupled with that part of the body. This could be compared with Allen Ginsberg’s “Footnote to Howl” which repeats the word Holy fifteen times at the outset before continuing: “The world is holy! The soul is holy! The skin is holy! The nose is holy! The tongue and cock and hand and asshole holy!”³⁶ The poem however comes across as exhibiting a disturbing tendency sometimes present in postmodern literature collectively, namely relativism, in its vague profusion of “holy” concepts, some of which seem to be contradictory. “Paradise Now” precisely refers to the body as being something to be celebrated rather than avoided in a repressive way, Ginsberg’s poem, while also celebrating the body, refers to the “vast lamb of the middleclass” as being holy and “New York” as being holy, along with the “solitudes of skyscrapers and pavements.”³⁷ The lack of focus seems evident and any precise connections between the works seem dubious.

In Rung II, the vision is of the discovery of the North Pole - a human pole is created by the actors standing back to back but this seems to burst forth with energy when the actors

³⁵see below.

³⁶Ginsberg, “Footnote to Howl” in *Collected Poems 1947-1985*, p.134.

³⁷Ginsberg, *ibid.*

split and run towards the audience and ask such questions as “Where are you?” “What do you want?” and “How long will you live?” The background of this vision is reflective of the mystery of the North Pole when it was first discovered - no human being having been there, and the explorers realising that they are aliens in that world (a similarity could be made with the exploration of the moon and the planting of the *U.S.* flag instead of a neutral flag - e.g. a U.N. one - there). A voice asks “What is anarchism?” - the actors change formation to the word “paradise” and shout “Now” in unison. In the action, a group of Bolivian revolutionaries discuss guerrilla strategy and exploitation of man in the tin mines - non-violent participation is encouraged. Other locales are sometimes suggested and the audience is invited on to the stage to discuss whatever problems occur to them (this breaks down the barriers between actor and audience, removing power from the former, as Morrison tried to do in Miami) - no time limit is set for this.

In Rung III the rite of study is symbolised by actors improvised Tantric gestures - none of the others know which ones are going to be chosen and, according to the energy felt, the timing of the lines said will vary, and also the order. The word is all powerful here. The vision is of the creation of life - the actors move slowly about the stage with eyes closed. They then run into each other symbolising aggregation of particles at the dawn of organic life. It shows the value of collective action when it is a positive creative force - an individual can be helpless without others. In the vision the company has gathered information on the particular place they are playing - local problems are interspersed with prepared material pointing out the practicalities of what could happen to provide services in an alternative culture.

Rung IV contains the rite of universal intercourse - not performed literally but symbolised through caressing and embracing those next to them - “Willhelm Reich and Norman O. Brown are avidly read by the company.”³⁸ Physical awareness is seen as part of

³⁸Biner, op. cit., p.196.

political voyage - Brown refers to the superior artist needing “to restore the integrity of sensuality and the emotional power of all things.”³⁹ Power can be linked with integrity and joy. The vision is of apokatastasis - meaning restoration. A few groups of an executioner and victim decide through awareness of their own *humanity* (touching each other) that anti-violence is the way forward. Warfare (particularly modern warfare) tends to use methods (the careful use of language, machines, etc) whereby soldiers are not *reminded* that they are killing people. The censorship of art very often shows more concern over sex than it does about violence. The personalised massacre pairings reflected a 1968 photograph by Edward Adams depicting a Saigon police officer with a pistol to the temple of a Vietcong officer in the street. Spectators frequently get up in the stage and try to stop it, but in society violence only intensifies the problem - awareness is the first step instead. The action is set in Jerusalem, and the Israeli-Arab conflict. “Fuck the Jews. Fuck the Arabs. Fuck means peace,” the actors shout - the touch barrier needs to be broken down - mutual awareness. It is sexual repressiveness that contains the root of violence. Certainly, the performance tends to be successful in reminding the audience that machine-led wars or the reaction of conservative groups to controversial art, sometimes tends to remove any outlet for communication between human beings (the body identifying one’s humanity). It becomes more persuasive to argue from this standpoint that state-sanctioned violence in this context (such as wars of aggression) become easier to tolerate within society, or antisocial tendencies in a personal context may be heightened.

Rung V starts with the rite of the mysterious voyage - in this a person struggles “with demonic forces” that he allows to enter into him - crying and shouting, as if in a self-willed trance - “if the community can help the subject boldly to confront and attack these forces, he will emerge from the ordeal purified.”⁴⁰ There is a struggle here against fear and the

³⁹Brown, *Life Against Death*, p.73.

⁴⁰Biner, op. cit., p.201.

unknown - he communicates his state of mind afterwards. If we metaphorize the mysticism here we have something similar to Morrison's Miami appeal for the audience to join him in a celebration of fun (in the sense of work being made entertaining - see incident analysis below). The vision is of integrating the races - rival groupings meet on stage and call out their defensive labels - "black / white" "old / young," etc. They point at themselves and the spectators saying "I-thou; thou-I" - this reaffirms the relationship between one and the other; and that all self-respect is preserved. The 'action' is Paris in May 1968 - The Living Theatre played an important part in Paris as the city was almost brought to a standstill through collective action. An actor asks "How does it feel to burn money? How do you enact the fall of the state?" - some of the spectators burn money at this stage, though the actors never do.

Rung VI starts with the rite of opposite forces - a subject in the centre of a circle through breathing carefully and having his body grasped and manipulated - sometimes hoisted on somebody's shoulders - is energised by this process (it is reminiscent of stage diving at rock concerts - including those of The Doors). It has a large element of improvisation to it. The vision is of the magic love zap - a bizarre twenty second sequence involving the formation of the statue of Mammon from which two priests brandishing an imaginary knife approach the victim who receives the "knife" but at the last minute become instantly less hostile. The action is set in Capetown and Birmingham, Alabama and is titled : "The blacks are confronting the whites with revolution. How do they overcome?" An actor states: "Be the music of Africa." The birthplace of humanity is the birth of revolution. A rhythmic dance follows (music and action - this recalls protest songs linked with civil rights - a fairly successful group political action).

Rung VII starts with the rite of new possibilities - for five minutes the actors perform sounds that are neither human, animal nor electronic; in total darkness. This is sensory stimulation but is quiet enough for the audience not to hear it - it is therefore integrated into

the vision. This is of a landing on Mars - phrases from a Lucretius atomist treatise is combined with flashlights; a spaceship is heading towards the planet. An actor is accompanied by others - they represent another galaxy. This represents the spirit of discovery - it also seems to add a touch of humility; political 'reality' is insignificant in the vastness of space. This could remind us of the 'Earthrise' photograph of Edwin Aldrin - the first time the earth had been seen from the moon (it added some impetus to the environmental movement, though if that was all that was achieved imagination would have been more cost-effective). The action of this rung is an imaginary reconciliation between Hanoi and Saigon that leads to triumphant anarchy - "No money. No laws. No bureaucracy. Breathe. Get high. Fly. In heaven they teach you how to breathe." In Avignon in 1968 the words "breathe" and "fly" was matched by the actors and spectators throwing themselves from a section of ruined wall called the Carmelite Cloister. Two rows of actors caught them in their clasped arms - it requires complete confidence and trust in the people around (like stage diving again). There is probably a confrontation with death here - where fear has to be abandoned and the faller has to surrender completely to faith and trust, in order to experience them.

The final rung (VIII) begins with the rite of I and Thou. This follows on neatly from the previous action - the Tibetan *Book of the Dead* provides an exercise where an actor breathes so deeply so as to induce loss of consciousness. There is a connection with drug use and transcendental altered states of being. Just when the actor feels he is approaching death he tells the others of his fright and they all touch each other (to reaffirm life). The vision is that of the tree of knowledge - a group of actors form this. A summary of much of the dialogue of the play follows, and a reversal of Genesis where the tree of knowledge is represented as the tree of life - a spectator tastes the first fruit and the actors spill out into the audience. The audience is conducted into the street. This is the final action of the play - spontaneity is released in its purest form as jubilation. In Avignon two hundred people surrounded the

actors that united them; a sound issued from the crowd as it split into two and marched down two long streets. Life is the final action - one that has no definite end - except in this concept of play and the knowledge of its inconsistency with repressive reality. In the anarchist society envisaged by the Living Theatre, according to Shank : “the individual would no longer be a slave of money, of sexual taboos, of repressions by the state respecting freedom of movement and other restrictions With *Paradise Now* they hoped to aid this interior revolution by changing the perception of the audience, by making them realise that a transformation is possible and urgent.”⁴¹

It shall be seen that this is intimately connected with what happened at Miami. Norman Brown described Freud as saying that art’s aim was “in the veiled presentation of deeper truth; hence it wears a mask, a disguise that confuses and fascinates our reason.”⁴² It liberates repressive instincts and makes the unconscious conscious. This provides a reality to the force of the dream. Morrison combined political commentary with visions and new ideas in just this way. Brown also provides some perspective on the relationship of the artist with the audience - identification can bind members of an authoritarian group together or the audience to the artist but it is only with the latter that the function will be liberation.⁴³ This provides the distinction between different types of audience manipulation - separating libertarian art from fascism.⁴⁴ Morrison knew that it was a two-way process : “we only open doors - we can’t drag people through.”⁴⁵ It is worth pointing out that in June 1960 the Living Theatre had utilised the services of composer John Cage who would later work with the rock band The Velvet Underground that often played unusual experimental music, linked with altered states of consciousness.

⁴¹Shank, *American Alternative Theatre*, p.21.

⁴²Brown, *Life Against Death*, p.63.

⁴³ibid.

⁴⁴op. cit., p.65.

⁴⁵quoted in Rocco, *The Doors Companion*, p.89.

Shank comments that for the Living Theatre : “life, revolution and theatre had become one”. This was more than fictional illusion. In the Action portions of *Paradise Now* unrehearsed actual behaviour was stimulated by the performance. It was not unusual for “spectators to smoke marijuana, burn money or take off all of their clothes.” It was always up to the audience to resolve society’s problems, and to resolve the reality principle. This principle was defined by Freud as an allegiance “to that which is real, even if it should be unpleasant.” Like the pleasure principle, this is also one which “at bottom also seeks pleasure” but it is “a delayed and diminished pleasure, one which is assured by its realization of fact, its relation to reality.”⁴⁶ In fact this is itself a rather comforting naiveté. Art, on the other hand, penetrates reality, sets up a situation where instincts can be presented or stimulated freely, cutting through the artifice of reality in an attempt to get us in touch with our deeper emotions. Doors audiences were probably expecting to hear their favourite hit song, but instead were given poetry, or were subjected to the verbal assault based on *Paradise Now* that he gave them at Miami, as we shall see. For Morrison, this was ideal for the Living Theatre’s form of positive manipulation. Living Theatre audiences however were coming to see this show, possibly with some idea of what they were going to hear. In some sense they may have been preaching to the converted on occasions. To be surprised and caught unawares however, as Doors audiences were, has extra value. It was always up to the audience to resolve these matters, as the Miami concert was to show.

With this detailed knowledge of some of the connections that must have struck Morrison between this troupe, some of his own ideas and one of his favourite books at university, Brown’s *Life Against Death*,⁴⁷ it is easier to understand what happened in Miami on Saturday, March 1 1969, the day after he saw *Paradise Now*. Morrison had had an argument

⁴⁶Brown, op. cit., p.57.

⁴⁷Hopkins and Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, p.35; Riordan and Prochnicky, *Break on Through*, p. 50. Both sources agree that Morrison took particular interest in this book during his year at Florida State University (before he transferred to UCLA), Hopkins and Sugerman state that he first read the book in high school.

with his girlfriend Pamela and was drunk on the flight; in addition to this he found out that the promoters had taken out the seating in the Dinner Key Auditorium but had not divulged this information - drastically overselling the venue. Shaw states that at this point : “The Doors’ formerly sophisticated audiences have been replaced by teenyboppers who want only to hear their hits and who become noticeably irritated at Jim’s poetic aspirations.”⁴⁸

Morrison’s style before and after Miami was a very controlled incitement to a chaotic freedom - freedom of expression had to be within a framework of dictated style (quietness shifting to loudness - musical simplicity to complication) designed to bring out the most confused response. This confusion was a destruction to create a regeneration. The artificial context of the festival is magnified in a way that is not usually possible. Film recordings of two Doors concerts⁴⁹ show the element of improvisation that provide a counterpoint to the sense of preparation and controlled delivery.⁵⁰ With Miami the spontaneity for the first (and possibly the last) time *involved* the audience rather than dictated to it - Morrison was to pay heavily for this. It will bring to mind Jonathan Dollimore’s remark concerning literary texts that they may “express the contradictions of the social reality in which they are produced.” This knowledge is therefore helpful and has relations with what the responses are to it.

We must look more closely at some of the events of this controversial Miami performance. A reference tape recording was made by a member of the audience - the Shaw transcript is used here.⁵¹ Here is some discussion of selected excerpts. A conversation with the crowd may have been in progress at the time the tape started. Curiously, one of the earliest comments Morrison made after appearing on stage was “I ain’t talking about no revolution. And I’m not talking about no demonstration.” He then clarified himself by adding

⁴⁸Shaw, *The Doors on the Road*, p.149. Note that the descriptions in this book of actual concerts are, curiously, written in the present tense, perhaps to reproduce an effect of immediacy, of actually “being there”.

⁴⁹*Doors Are Open*, 1968 and *Doors at the Hollywood Bowl*, 1968.

⁵⁰see also Shaw, *The Doors on the Road*, *passim*.

⁵¹ Shaw, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-4. A 7 min 29 second extract appears in *Doors Box Set Part One*. The complete recording of the entire set (which was used at the Miami trial) circulates unofficially among tape collectors, and may have been the source for this complete transcript.

“I’m talking about having some fun.” Some allowance could be made for his drunkenness, or it is possibly satirical. As a poet, Morrison may have deliberately used the double negative (which equals a positive) - he repeats these two lines twice more during the course of the transcript (with some time between them) and each time uses the same double negative. In Morrison’s improvised piece “Rock is Dead”, recorded separately in a studio in May (i.e. after Miami) a similar double negative is again apparent.⁵² Whether this is true or not, what he was talking about clearly *was* revolutionary. We shall see that later comments such as “I want to change the world” (see below) clarify this reading of Morrison’s opening remarks, speculative though this analysis may seem. Brown would describe it in terms of the pleasure principle and the reality principle, art being “instrumental in overcoming the automatic machinery of defence.”⁵³ But there *was* a specific kind of revolution / demonstration that Morrison was against. In an interview for John Tobler (*Zigzag* magazine, October 1970) he stated “you have to be in a constant state of revolution or you’re dead”⁵⁴ but also in the same interview he criticised the Woodstock festival film and *its* concept of revolution:

I’m sure that these things get highly romanticised ... I saw the film. It seemed like a bunch of young parasites, being kind of spoonfed ... They looked like victims or dupes of a culture rather than anything, but I think that may have been sour grapes, because I wasn’t there, not even as a spectator, so I think that even though they are a mess, and even though they are not what they pretend to be, some free celebration of a young culture, it’s still better than nothing. And I’m sure that some of the people take away a kind of myth back to the city with them, and it’ll affect them.⁵⁵

Morrison might have had a slightly different opinion had he reflected on the incident of the “storming of the fence” (this was not included in the film - Morrison may or may not have heard about it) - which was repeated at several other festivals.⁵⁶ That was despite the businessmen that were trying to control this sort of festival, and would perhaps lead us to the

⁵²Analysis of the relevant “Rock is Dead” line - “I don’t wanna hear no talk about no revolution” becomes complex - since it is not clear whether the “don’t “ becomes a third negative, thereby equalling a negative. But it is possible to read this with the “don’t” negated itself as redundant, with the line therefore becoming a double negative (positive). Whichever is the case, “Rock is Dead” is clearly satirical of the numbing decade which was to follow (see Politics chapter).

⁵³Brown, *Life Against Death*, p.65.

⁵⁴Hopkins, *The Lizard King*, p. 233.

⁵⁵Hopkins, *ibid.*, p.232-3.

⁵⁶see Politics chapter.

conclusion that there *were* many attempts to bring about what Morrison calls a “free celebration of a young culture”. Julian Beck (co-founder of the Living Theatre) in *Life of the Theatre* describes the “Woodstock Nation : the Hippie Love Rock Life Style Music Revolution. The establishment encourages it : it has buying power.”⁵⁷ The concept of personal revolution also need not be a statement of capitalist freedom; but more a statement of individual thought that is closer in analogy to the severing of ties from the protection of one’s parents. In the quote above “a constant state of revolution” is still revolution but one which critiques itself. The idea of “having fun” is closer to Brown’s *jouissance* (serious joy) and the Foucauldian concept of play, though with the realism of social reform added to it. In a Spring 1969 interview Morrison mentions play directly and posits the idea of a national carnival, “a week of total freedom. That’d be a start,” but “the power structure wouldn’t really alter.”⁵⁸ He says in the Miami transcript that he used to think that it was a “big joke” but that now he wants to “change the world.”⁵⁹ So he is talking about revolution, despite the earlier claim (assuming we do not take that earlier comment as a double negative). The basic idea is that political revolution *starts* with the self, not the other way around : “There can’t be any large-scale revolution until there’s a personal revolution on an individual level... You can take away a man’s political freedom and you won’t hurt him - unless you take away his freedom to feel. That can destroy him.”⁶⁰ This would have extra resonance for someone who was described by a journalist as shy,⁶¹ and who in early Doors performances kept his back to the stage, not being able to face the crowd.⁶² If he overcame his shyness via substances or

⁵⁷ Beck, *Life of the Theatre*, Chapter 90. Note that references to this work cite chapter numbers only, since, most unusually, the book is not paginated.

⁵⁸ Jerry Hopkins interview, “Rolling Stone” magazine, in *The Lizard King*, p.228.

⁵⁹ see below.

⁶⁰ Lizzie James interview Part I, 1967, in Sugerman (ed.) *The Doors : The Illustrated History*, p. 64.

⁶¹ Journalist Patricia Keneally, later involved with Morrison, recalled saying to him, at the height of his Lizard King persona, that he was “the shyest person I’d ever met ... He thought that was just incredibly perceptive and very mean of me to say so.” Jones, *Jim Morrison - Dark Star*, p.144.

⁶² For example of Morrison’s early stage behaviour see Shaw p.8 (Feb-May 1966 at the London Fog) :
Continued on next page...

behaviour, this can be extrapolated to the people overcoming their collective shyness to authority. And it seems that he wanted to go further *during* this concert, inspired by the Living Theatre. The song “Whisky & Mystics & Men” (which was originally a poem) contains the lines : “If all of the teachers and preachers of wealth were arraigned / I could see quite a future for me in the literal sands.” This seems quite unambiguously to refer to *capitalist* control. The song “End of the Night” with its lines : “Some are born to sweet delight, Some are born to the endless night” (a lower tone in the second line making clear that this is a different group) strongly suggests a lack of control reminiscent of Marx’s comment that “men and women make their own history, but not in conditions of their own choosing.”⁶³ This backs up Morrison own comment made to the Living Theatre’s advance man that he wanted to put politics in his performance but *wasn’t sure how to do it* (see Politics chapter). He could not replace authority figures with new authority figures (he commented that “when you make peace with the authority, you become the authority”), he had to let the consent come from the people, hence the reason that the *participatory* performances of the Living Theatre appealed to him. Many singers became a vicarious release for the audience, rather than an enabling force.

The transcript continues: “... you all come out to LA ... We’re gonna lie down there in the sand and rub our toes in the ocean and we’re gonna have a good time. Are you ready [*eight times*]?!”⁶⁴ Morrison presented a critique of the city in his poetry and also in the title song of the album “LA Woman” (1971), e.g. : “drive through your suburbs into your blues”⁶⁵. The comment could be a message to subvert the *serious* purpose of the capitalist city - this relates to what he said in the Hopkins interview (quoted above) about “carnivals” to use

“Morrison frequently stands facing the band rather than the small audience”. This changed later though his admission of his shyness *offstage* remained : “The only time I open up is on stage ... I feel spiritual up there... I’m shy except when I’m onstage...” (Riordan and Prochnicky, *Break on Through*, p.188.)

⁶³Marx, *Selected Works*, p.96.

⁶⁴Shaw op. cit., p.150.

⁶⁵*Doors Lyrics 1965-71*, p. 74.

Bakhtin's term, and their restorative (anti-repressive) power. He continues : "Hey listen I'm lonely! I need some love you all ... Ain't nobody gonna love my ass! Come on! ... There's so many of you out there ... I need ya." ⁶⁶ At first reaction there is something comical about the idea of a rock star idolised by teenagers across America, and with a "social life" as active as Morrison's, to remark about being lonely, but the word crops up continuously in his poetry - the two volumes unpublished during his life. The song "People are Strange" contains the lines : "People are strange / When you're a stranger / Faces look ugly / When you're alone / Women seem wicked / When you're unwanted / Streets are uneven / When you're down." ⁶⁷ In 1969 Morrison told Jerry Hopkins : "Most of the songs I've written I wrote in the very beginning, about three years ago. I just had a period when I wrote a lot of songs." ⁶⁸ So this song was most probably written on Venice Beach long before Morrison became famous and when his shyness still made him feel awkward. Also, to look at the song from another point of view, it is possible to be loved by those you would rather be unloved by - people not recognising you for reasons you would want (in Morrison's case loving his image rather than his creativity and ideas).

It is significant that throughout the transcript Morrison constantly uses the word "love" instead of the coarser expletive "fuck" (the latter word is used only in its interjectional and intensifying adjective forms): "I can't take it without no good love." ⁶⁹ This may go beyond the idea behind The Living Theatre's Rite of Universal Intercourse ⁷⁰ therefore and relate more to what is *depicted* on the stage - touch and oneness. Morrison once said that what was important about the concert environment is that people "get to rub up against hundreds of other people like them. It reinforces their trip." ⁷¹ Not exactly frottage, more communal and emotional than sexual, reaffirming humanity against socially created divisions (a theme of

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Sugerman, *Doors : Complete Lyrics*, p.67.

⁶⁸ Hopkins, *Lizard King*, p.224.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Paradise Now*, Rung IV - see above.

⁷¹ Bob Chorush interview, Spring 1971, in *The Lizard King*, p.254.

The Living Theatre - *Paradise Now* Rung V Vision⁷²). Morrison comments in an interview : “I’ve never thought that an audience should be as passive as they’ve become. I think that an audience should be an active participant in creating what’s happening.”⁷³ This interview was post-Miami of course - 1971.

In Miami, Morrison then stated : “Nobody gonna come up here and love me, huh? Come on !” It is at this point that he realised that nothing is happening - that the crowd is behaving as usual. It may be related to what Morrison said about egotism in journalism, that beyond the headlines there is “a little sub-world in which everybody is sleeping. This whole other world that everybody’s trying to forget, but which we remember ... But people love the game. The Game. They really dig it and nobody is supposed to admit that it’s a game.”⁷⁴ Or more clearly : “you can do anything as long as it’s in tune with the forces of the universe, culture, society whatever. If... you’re on a different track from other people around... it’s going to jangle everybody’s sensibilities. And they’re either going to walk away or put you down for it... As long as everything’s connecting and coming together, you can get away with murder.”⁷⁵

Back in Miami, Morrison states “You’re all a bunch of fuckin’ idiots !!! [*loud audience applause and laughter*].”⁷⁶ He wants the audience to put into question the environment around them by doing something spontaneous. In general however, he doesn’t think that they are idiots individually, as an interview quote makes clear. When someone in the room (with Morrison and the interviewer) mentions that he is a “leader of a mindless crowd” Morrison says : “If you print that John I won’t kill you, I’ll haunt you. They all have minds. Maybe collectively ... a crowd together really has no mind. Individually everybody does... I bet there’s more philosophy in some sixteen-year-old chick’s mind than you ever dreamed of in

⁷²see above.

⁷³Bob Chorush interview, *ibid.*, p.259.

⁷⁴John Carpenter interview, Summer 1968, in Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p.208.

⁷⁵Jerry Hopkins interview, *op. cit.*, p.227.

⁷⁶Shaw, *op. cit.*, p.150.

your whole cigarette.”⁷⁷ The capacity to know the serious meaning of the word “fun” may be referred to in the latter thought. This quotation was pre-Miami and in the latter incident he must have wanted to test his own assertion about a collective vs. individual mind, an outcome that he evidently was not happy about.

The transcript continues: “How long do you think it’s gonna last?! How long are you gonna let them push you around? ... Maybe you love it ! Maybe you love getting your face stuck in the shit ! Come on ! You’re all a bunch of slaves.”⁷⁸ In *Mysteries* the Living Theatre had pursued the theme of slavery and linked it with the military - of course in Vietnam U.S. *conscripts* were being killed daily. Morrison doesn’t refer to this specifically but clearly refers to the influence of The Living Theatre when he states (Miami transcript) : “I used to think it was something to laugh about. And then the last couple of nights I met some people who were doing something. They’re trying to change the world, and I want to get on that trip. I want to change the world.”⁷⁹ This is an important idea - that even if nothing happens, somebody is doing *something*.

As with *Mysteries*, the point is, at the very least to *try to change* - and not to accept willingly the *easy* solution of slow moving change (where generations of people die before a better society is brought about) or even status quo. Transcript : “I can’t believe all those people sitting way over there, man. Why don’t you all come down and get with us man ... What are you in the fifty-cent section or what?”⁸⁰ The audience cheers and laughs but no attempt is made by anyone in the crowd to get on to the stage, or do anything but calmly stand, bemused. Transcript : “I want to see you roam around.”⁸¹ This may have echoes of The Living Theatre’s “I cannot travel without a passport.”⁸² Transcript : “I want to see you paint the town. I want to see you wring it out. I want to see you shout... I want to see some

⁷⁷ John Carpenter interview, in Hopkins, p.209.

⁷⁸ Shaw, *ibid.*, p.150-2

⁷⁹ Shaw, *op. cit.*, p.152.

⁸⁰ Shaw, *op. cit.*, p.153.

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² *Paradise Now* : Rung I rite, see above.

fun from everyone.”⁸³ Always the emphasis is on the audience freeing *themselves*. Transcript : “There are no rules. There are no laws.”⁸⁴ In *Paradise Now* the phrase “No Laws” is contained in the action (i.e. an audience *participation* piece) about a hypothetical reconciling of the opposite regions of Vietnam⁸⁵ - a political connection perhaps. Morrison is handed a lamb that belongs to an environmental campaigner towards the end of the “concert” and he repeats comments about joining him on stage : “Anybody that wants to come up here and join us and do some dancing and have some fun, just get on up here.” When somebody - Shaw mentions a promoter Ken Collier - shouts, “Somebody’s gonna get hurt!” Morrison says : “We’re not gonna leave ‘til we all gets our rocks off.” Morrison is flipped off the stage and creates a snake dance in the crowd. The band leaves the stage and Morrison disappears as well, only to reappear on the balcony to observe what is happening in the crowd. What the transcript does not make clear is when the alleged sexually suggestive incidents happened - that is dogged by highly inconsistent testimony.

What is interesting is that though the Sixties may have been judged permissive by some, there were still those in authority who felt it necessary to prosecute alleged erotic behaviour on flimsy evidence for the sake of standards of decency that were judged by young people themselves as having become outmoded. Far more crucial, in any case, was the notion of confrontation with the crowd - Morrison’s Miami performance was not “preaching to the converted” as The Living Theatre could be said to have been, the people who came to the Miami performance were coming for a musical concert (though *perhaps* being aware that it had *elements* of improvisation). With Morrison it was unexpected - in practice, if not in theory. The audience in Miami was taken by surprise.

In an interview after Miami, Morrison described the incident as: “the culmination, in a way, of our mass performing career. Subconsciously I think I was trying to get across in that

⁸³Shaw, *ibid*.

⁸⁴*ibid*.

⁸⁵*Paradise Now* Rung VII action - see above.

concert [*sic*] - I was trying to reduce it to absurdity, and it worked too well... there's a certain moment when you're right in time with your audience and then you both grow out of it and you both have to realise it ... it has to go on to something else." ⁸⁶ This seems to be a very defensive reaction of his own efforts however : by "a culmination" he was partly referring to his decision to change to more blues-oriented music, but this may have been a reaction of futility. Another reaction:

I was just fed up with the image that had been created around me, which I sometimes consciously, most of the time unconsciously cooperated with. It just got too much for me to really stomach and so I just put an end to it in one glorious evening. I guess what it boiled down to was that I told the audience that they were a bunch of fucking idiots to be members of an audience. ⁸⁷

This can be compared to what he said in another interview :

How can I set free anyone who doesn't have the guts to stand up alone and declare his own freedom... people claim they want to be free. But that's bullshit! People are terrified to be set free ... They fight anyone who tries to break their chains... People resist freedom because they're afraid of the unknown. The only solution is to confront them - confront yourself - with the greatest fear imaginable. Expose yourself to your deepest fear. After that fear has no power and fear of freedom shrinks and vanishes. You are free." ⁸⁸

In general this concept of "freedom" has a great deal to do with an awareness of the value of youth while it remains (and therefore of death itself, recognising that maturity has a great deal to do with in C. Wright Mills's phrase "buying into the system" and the so-called "gerontocracy" - voters of appreciable age that often constitute a majority). It is a participative process and an enabling process rather than a fascistic leader relationship, and lyrics will be looked at, by young people, for revolutionary statements (like "We want the world and we want it now!" in Morrison's "When the Music's Over"). The wearing of leather is also symbolic of the role of sex in severing ties with an overarching authority (the pubescent child breaking away from parental control⁸⁹). Like the Living Theatre in Paris, the idea is to lead young people out of the concert arena and into the streets.

⁸⁶ Ben Fong-Torres interview, Spring 1971, Hopkins, op. cit., p.265.

⁸⁷ Salli Stevenson interview, Winter 1970, Hopkins, p.246.

⁸⁸ Lizzie James interview Part 1, 1967, in Sugerman (ed.), *The Doors Illustrated History*, p.64.

⁸⁹ see Fashion chapter.

We need, at this point, to think carefully about other connections to this incident. The Living Theatre had some connections with Antonin Artaud, who in turn is regarded as having links with theatrical surrealism. The difficulty though is that surrealism is noted for its rejection of reason and its concern with not allowing the dominance of any discourse (this is also a theme running through Foucault's works). However, in some Sixties themes there was some agreement between groups, e.g. concerning the nature of capitalism as a dehumanising force, support for civil rights groups, or antiwar views. Already quoted above are specific political ideas of Morrison (consider "Whisky Mystics & Men", "End of the Night", "Ship of Fools" or "Unknown Soldier"⁹⁰) and his "change the world" comment at Miami, along with many others, which are incompatible with Artaud's in this sense. Matthews quotes Artaud in a letter criticising another surrealist, Roger Vitrac: "If you want to make a theatre to defend certain ideas, political or otherwise, I will not follow you in that direction. In the theatre only that which is theatrical interests me, to use the theatre to launch any revolutionary idea (except in the domain of the spirit) seems to me the basest and most repugnant opportunism."

⁹¹ Though it is of course in the bracketed comment that an important qualification is contained - an idea he makes clearer in *A la Grande Nuit ou Le Bluff surrealiste* (1927): "The revolutionary force of any movement ... [is] capable of throwing the present basis of things off axis, of changing the angle of reality ... It is a matter of that shift in the spiritual centre of the world, of changing the levels of appearances, of that transfiguration of the possible ... All matter begins in spiritual derangement."⁹²

This is similar, in some ways, to Morrison's ideas about artistic techniques of confusion (especially in performance) *but* it contains elements of negativity, an unwillingness to be specific about notions of reality. Indeed, the Living Theatre didn't read Artaud's ideas until

⁹⁰These songs are quoted in detail in Politics chapter, "Whisky Mystics & Men" and "End of the Night" are cited briefly above.

⁹¹Quoted in Matthews, *Theatre in Dada and Surrealism*, p.152.

⁹²in Matthews, *op. cit.*, p.144.

later. Julian Beck stated: "Artaud was completely unknown to me in the early years [of performances]." ⁹³ This idea seems to be echoed by Martin Esslin in his comments on Jack Gelber's *The Connection*, which Gelber personally delivered to the Living Theatre in 1958. ⁹⁴ This play actually had musical elements - a jazz quartet improvising on stage during the performance and portrayed the use of drugs. But Esslin comments : "*The Connection*, brilliant in parts, founders in its uncertainty as to which convention it belongs to - the realist theatre of social reform or the Theatre of the Absurd." ⁹⁵ He seems to be hinting at the lack of direction that sometimes results with the "absurd" avant-garde playwrights. And Shank points out : "Beck saw that their work differed from Artaud's theatre of cruelty in that Artaud imagined horror could be created from the fantastic. To Beck horror is not in what we imagine but in what is real." ⁹⁶ That said, Artaud spoke in the 1933 essay "Theatre and Cruelty" that "in order to affect every facet of the spectator's sensibility we advocate a revolving show, which instead of making stage and auditorium into two closed worlds without any possible communication between them, will extend its visual and oral outburst over the whole mass of spectators" ⁹⁷ - this is because "the masses think with their senses first and foremost." ⁹⁸ This appealing to the majority is important, though he does also know that the masses *have* to be stimulated in this way because mass culture has become inert. To sum up the link here, it seems that Artaud (in common with the "absurd" playwrights) has *some* ideas that are similar to that of the Living Theatre, but differs in the degree (if not the concept) of pointed political reform. Morrison was interested in retaining some of the personal self awareness of Artaud and his concept of a "full scale invocation of cruelty and terror, its scope testing our entire vitality, confronting us with all our potential" ⁹⁹ *but* was

⁹³ Beck in Biner *The Living Theatre*, p.28.

⁹⁴ Aronson, *American Avant-garde Theatre*, p.56. According to Aronson he couldn't afford the postage to send it to them.

⁹⁵ Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, p.227.

⁹⁶ Shank, *American Alternative Theatre*, p.13.

⁹⁷ Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, p.66.

⁹⁸ *ibid.* p.65.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p.65-66.

certainly stimulated by many of the political ideas of The Living Theatre. There is some indication (from biographies¹⁰⁰) that Morrison read Artaud but, bearing in mind poetry, comments and behaviour, he cannot have shared the lack of political stance that all too often came from Artaud's works.

It is also important to mention that along with the other connections with the Living Theatre (described above) there is a more overt connection with Bertold Brecht, discussed in cultural materialist terms in Dollimore's *Radical Tragedy*. Brecht's thinking influenced the Living Theatre in the early years of its work : "As for Brecht, we were familiar with his theories mainly through Piscator. He was rarely performed."¹⁰¹ The Living Theatre's version of *Antigone* (as seen by Morrison pre-Miami, as described above) was a reworking of Brecht's version which followed Friedrich Hölderlin's translation of Sophocles. Brecht in turn was influenced by Jacobean tragedy, the subject of study for Dollimore.¹⁰² Brecht's performance, derived from his study of the Elizabethan stage, was that of "a stage with minimal technical resources, incapable of creating illusion or mesmeric "atmosphere", depending for its effects upon word and gesture."¹⁰³ No large scale light shows were present in Doors performances, or some of the projection effects that were present at some San Francisco venues - the effects were very much ones produced by Morrison's gestures and comments directed at the audience. Morrison's attitude to the audience also can be compared to Brecht's desire to attack bourgeois Aristotelian theatre in which contradictions are "smoothed over" creating "false harmony" and "idealization."¹⁰⁴ This would apply to Bubble gum bands such as Tiny Tim and The Who, or easy listening bands like the Carpenters, whose concerts seemed to be performed with a rigorous set structure. This was noticeably absent in Morrison's performances, where it seemed that other band members had

¹⁰⁰Riordan and Prochnicky, *Break on Through*, pp. 159-161.

¹⁰¹Biner, op. cit., p.28.

¹⁰²Most notably in Dollimore's *Radical Tragedy*.

¹⁰³Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, p.67.

¹⁰⁴op. cit., p.65.

no idea what a concert would consist of.¹⁰⁵ In bourgeois theatre “conditions are reported as if they could not be otherwise. ... If there is any development it is always steady, never by jerks; the developments always take place within a definite framework, which cannot be broken through. None of this is like reality, so a realistic theatre must give it up.”¹⁰⁶ In this alternative theatre, “genres are juxtaposed, sometimes jarringly so” and the ‘obvious’ is demystified. Morrison performed two songs which appeared in Brecht and Kurt Weill operas - firstly, from *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, “Alabama Song” which appeared on the Doors debut album. The opera, premiered in 1930 in Berlin, is about the rise of a paradise city - Mahagonny - born from the ashes of a world destitute and permeated with evil. “Alabama Song” is sung by the main women characters who arrive in Mahagonny and express the central theme of the opera - a world governed by leaders who are disconnected from their own fundamental humanity to the point where even prostitution seems virtuous in comparison. A second song, “(Ballad of) Mack the Knife” was occasionally performed in live shows.¹⁰⁷ It was originally from the *Threepenny Opera* - this opera, based on *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) by the English dramatist John Gay, was a caustic satire on capitalism and became Brecht's greatest theatrical success. Staged first in Berlin in 1928, it was produced in the United States in 1933. These are specifically political works therefore, which reinforces the idea that Morrison’s views were much closer to the political Living Theatre rather than the surrealist Artaud. As Jonathan Dollimore says, “For Brecht the sense of a deeply inadequate historical moment combines with a non-nostalgic wish to know rather than relive the difference of the past, learning being a precondition for understanding and being able to change the present.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵See introduction for some examples.

¹⁰⁶Brecht, “Brecht on Theatre” in *Radical Tragedy*, p.65.

¹⁰⁷For example on Sept 20 1968 at Konserthuset, Stockholm, Sweden (see Shaw, *Doors on the Road*, p.133).

¹⁰⁸ Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, p. xlv.

In order to see whether the Miami performance had any affect on its audience and the “inert” community outside of it, it is instructive to consider the legal issues surrounding it. A 20-year-old clerk in Dade County Sheriff’s Office, Dade County, Florida acted as the complainant on March 5 1969 - Morrison was charged with lewd and lascivious behaviour, indecent exposure, open profanity and drunkenness. He was released on \$5,000 bail on April 4. On July 27 he was lucky not to have been indicted for “open profanity” again when he continuously ridiculed the audience - initially prompting them to shout obscenities back at the stage. A fan threw a cup at Morrison, and after another shouted particularly strong abuse, Morrison shouted back “Get it all out - all the little hatreds, everything that’s boiled up inside of you. Let me have it.”¹⁰⁹ At the end of the set “he silently strikes a crucifixion pose and the red spotlight and maintains it long after the applause from the bewildered audience has died down.”¹¹⁰ According to Led Zeppelin singer Robert Plant he had gone on stage and shouted “Fuck you all” and started saying “strange things” that were “miles above everyone’s head” (his poetry?).¹¹¹ Not for the first time, Morrison had used obscenities in his performance without being reported for it, and apparently without causing offence. It was only amid the other charges related to the Miami performance that the obscenity had the maximum effect on the jurors - when it was compounded with the other counts (part of a larger “moral” issue). A postscript to this crucifixion “pose” was his sending of a postcard to the other members of the Doors from St Louis Cathedral in New Orleans just before the end of his trial in September 1970 - it was a picture of the Sacrifice of the Divine Lamb; the message was “Don’t worry the end is near. Ha Ha!”¹¹²

The FBI had become involved over Miami on November 9 on the pretext that Morrison had made an interstate flight to avoid prosecution. After the performance, unaware that he

¹⁰⁹Shaw, op. cit., p.172.

¹¹⁰ibid.

¹¹¹op. cit. p.173.

¹¹²op. cit., p.212.

had attracted the attention of the authorities, Morrison had taken a holiday in the Caribbean. Meanwhile, the Living Theatre had put an unhampered performance of *Paradise Now* (presumably including the line “I am now allowed to take off my clothes”) at Bayfront Park in Coconut Grove (the same *district* of Miami that the Doors incident took place) on November 9, coincidentally the very date that Morrison made bail. Meanwhile, another Morrisonian debacle, over charges relating to interfering with a stewardess on a flight to Phoenix, was dropped when the complainant had mistaken Morrison for the other defendant (Morrison’s reputation went before him as usual). It was in August 1970 that the trial started at Metropolitan Dade County Justice Building in Miami.

The witnesses (some of whom were in the front row of the auditorium) could not agree about whether Morrison had exposed himself. Testimonies of two months previously and those in the trial did not correspond and no arrests had been made on the night in question by any of the 26 police officers who were there (this is significant because the law made a judgement nevertheless). One hundred photographs were taken during the performance by Jeffrey Simon - none of them showed any indecent exposure; Simon had been 3-5 feet away from the stage and testified that Morrison did *not* expose himself. The other band members though with a grudge against Morrison at this point (after the Isle of Wight August 1970, before the end of the trial, drummer John Densmore almost quit the band calling Morrison an “asshole”), nevertheless testified that Morrison was innocent of the central charge. Manzarek maintains to this day that the indecent exposure was a fiction (he compared it to the “vision of Lourdes”¹¹³) and it could possibly have been confused with frivolous drunken gestures by Morrison (which *were* captured on photographs) when he poked his finger out of his trousers at the audience (in mockery of the crowd’s expectations, ironically). Despite the direction the trial was taking Judge Murray Goodman refused to allow any material concerning “contemporary community standards.” A policewoman testified that no arrest had been made

¹¹³*Dancing on the Street*, BBC documentary, 1996.

on the night because of a fear of a reaction against it in the crowd but Morrison's lawyer Max Fink pointed out that an arrest could have been made in Morrison's dressing room. He said that there had been no crime "until the 'news media fueled a hysteria' and essentially coerced the police into filing charges."¹¹⁴

It is significant that the decency rallies (such as the Teenage Rally for Decency) played a large part in convincing promoters to cancel many subsequent concerts - these were widely reported in the news media also. It is almost as if it was an easy opportunity to stress traditional conservative values that are easy political vote-winning issues. On the alleged incident itself, prosecution witnesses had said that Morrison had mentioned the act of exposing himself before he had done so - the recording (summarised above) was played and showed no such reference (ironically on this day *Hair* was premiered at Coconut Grove). The verdict came on September 1970 - not guilty on felony charges of lewd and lascivious behaviour and public drunkenness, but guilty of the misdemeanours of open profanity and indecent exposure (however according to Shaw, Judge Goodman had said in chambers that it was "already proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that Mr. Morrison did not expose himself."¹¹⁵). Also, it seems possible that the logical contradiction (based on the fact that the tape clearly betrayed much slurring in Morrison's speech, yet he was found not guilty of public drunkenness) could be explained by the fact that the jury must have considered this less important than the other charges. But it clearly shows the arbitrariness of the jury system - judges instruct jurors that they must base their judgement on the facts and the law, whether or not they agree with the law. The jury are not always logical judges; it is disturbing that so much of the *system* of law is based around the possible whims of a random sample of people. On October 30 Morrison was given two months for profanity and six months for indecent exposure to be served in Dade County Jail. He would not live to see out his appeal.

¹¹⁴Shaw, op. cit., p.208.

¹¹⁵Shaw, op. cit., p.212.

This whole incident, and other aspects of Morrison's life and performing career, can be compared with the comedian Lenny Bruce. Bruce also had trouble with the law - after starting his stand-up comic act from around 1948 (after a brief stint in the army) he was arrested on 29 September 1961 for possession of drugs (he had actually started a lifelong heroin habit around 1951). It was dropped when they were discovered to be authorised prescriptions. Bruce publicly announced that a law enforcement official had attempted to buy him off. His first serious brush with the law over his act was on 4 October 1961 for violation of the California Obscenity Code - this was for the use of the word "cocksucker" in his routine (he was acquitted). In 1962 he was banned in Australia after only 2 gigs - and a televised interview with him was banned. He was subsequently arrested for possession of drugs (again) and had another arrest for obscenity - his crime this time was to say, "Where is that dwarf motherfucker?" at Troubador Theatre, Hollywood, California. His trial for obscenity this time, in San Francisco was seen by many as an important test of certain freedoms set forth in the First Amendment to the Constitution (his attorney had won a victory for Lawrence Ferlinghetti and City Lights Publishers in the case over Allen Ginsberg's collection of poetry "Howl and Other Poems"). The District Attorney Albert Wollenberg (later a judge) during the trial asked one of the witnesses : "In other words, Doctor Gottlieb, you say Mr Bruce is just up onstage trying to get laughs? That's all?" Gottlieb replied : "Yes Mr District Attorney - that's the professional comedian's duty." Wollenburg : "Well Dr. Gottlieb - do you think there's anything funny about somebody getting up in a public place and saying 'cocksucker'?!" Gottlieb : "Well it isn't very funny when *you* say it!"¹¹⁶ Bruce was acquitted.

Freedom monologues featured in his shows thereafter and he was arrested yet again in December 1962 for anti-religious remarks in Chicago. There was a bizarre episode when

¹¹⁶Audio recording liner notes, Lenny Bruce Originals Vol.1 in Jones / McCarter, <<http://bot.fringeware.com>>

Lenny found out about a leper colony and formed an organisation to support it - when he raised the money however he dressed up as a catholic priest (he was charged with impersonation of a priest rather than fraud). The inconsistency of the law is clearly an issue here. In a January 1963 arrest for narcotics the testimony was entirely that of a sheriff's squad member who was himself under suspicion for drug smuggling (the squad member was later arrested). In a visit to Britain in 1963 Bruce was stopped in the airport and forced to leave London. On return customs officials performed a thorough search of his person including a finger search of his rectum (Bruce remarked "It's pure Kafka").

After a 1964 trial for obscenity a petition was signed by such people as Gregory Corso, Joseph Heller, Gore Vidal and Allen Ginsberg (who assisted in drawing it up). It was at this performance that he was accused of making masturbatory gestures - unseen (or not complained about) by anyone except the police officers. He appeared at San Francisco field office of the FBI on October 10, 1965, to lodge a complaint that the New York and California courts were conspiring to violate his civil rights. No action was taken. Because of legal expenses and boycotting by club owners Bruce claimed to have earned \$2,000 that year. In March 1965 while taking DMT Bruce fell out of a window and fractured his ankles and legs. There was another narcotics bust in 1966 - one year suspended, \$260 plus 2 years probation. He died of a morphine overdose on 3 August 1966 - on his typewriter were the words "Conspiracy to interfere with the fourth amendment const..." (This amendment refers to the right of people to be secure against unreasonable searches). The faster decline after legal entanglements, the drug use, and the use of language and humour to try and cut through apathy all have connections with Morrison. They were both used as methods of combating a perception in middle America of the threat of subversion - a subversion by means of language and a confrontation with repressive instincts. A jury or judge is empowered to make a judgement that is predicated on the desire to control *ideas* as much as; or at any rate the

effect being as such. Profanity conveys urgency, wakes people up, incites them to abandon self-control; but this can be a way of alerting people emotionally.

The essential point is that when the power of the law is greater than that of witnesses, commentators or artists to modify it (or even to *effectively* question it), authoritarianism becomes intolerably strong - civil liberties and the ability to question are threatened. If Supreme Court Justices cannot agree unanimously as to the law, and if the people themselves (who the law is supposed to serve) are unsure about whether to have more or less intervention in matters of censorship (performances included), then it is clear that simple judgements that might be adequate in cases of murder, rape, etc., are more difficult to arrive at when we are referring to art. Art is strongly bound up with society but unlike with political thought it does not attempt to restrict itself to the *real*, as socially defined by the particular times that we live in. Julia Kristeva has referred to the *dissident* who will give “voice to each individual form of the unconscious, to every desire and need.” In the course of this will be a attempt to call into play “the identity and/or the language of the individual and the group. Become the analyst of every kind of speech and institution considered socially impossible. Proclaim that we reveal the Impossible.”¹¹⁷

Instead of the formal control of the conscious mind the artist tries to attempt the dissolution of authority, or, in Brown’s terms, allegiance to the reality-principle. The politician’s argument is similar to one of Freud’s arguments that instinctual renunciation is the key to “growing up” in society : “Grow up and give up your infantile dreams of pleasure, recognize reality for what it is.”¹¹⁸ However Freud was uncertain and offered another contradictory argument of the nature of humanity : “Change this reality so that you may recover lost sources of pleasure.”¹¹⁹ The important point is that pleasure is a societal concern - and one that is bound up with law and the language of it. Kristeva opined that

¹¹⁷Kristeva “A New Type of Intellectual : The Dissident” in Moi (ed.) *The Kristeva Reader*, p.295.

¹¹⁸Brown, *Life Against Death*, p.57.

¹¹⁹Brown, *ibid*.

“psychoanalysis and its spiritual spin-offs ... still remain today a site of active dissidence in the face of an all-embracing rationality.”¹²⁰ Brown stated that : “All Freud’s work demonstrates that the allegiance of the human psyche to the pleasure principle is indestructible and that the path of instinctual renunciation is the path of sickness and self-destruction.”¹²¹ We should be aware that it is also a matter of *quality* as much as quantity of life that is at issue here. It is a matter of open-mindedness as to the nature of the law and therefore, to the real.

Brown states that wit is a method of liberation from repression : “humor is the highest of all defense mechanisms; quite unlike repression, humor openly confronts ideas that are in themselves painful or are connected with painful images, and thus it is instrumental in overcoming the automatic machinery of defense.”¹²² This is connected with wider concepts of play and art itself. As well as a personal role it also has a social function - there is a complicated link (especially in the 60s) between the pleasure principle and social truth. Bruce commented, “All my humor is based on destruction and despair. If the whole world were tranquil, without disease and violence, I’d be standing in the breadline - right back of J.Edgar Hoover.”¹²³ And : “The role of the jester within any society is crucial. Who else can speak the truth without fear of losing fame, fortune, power or their head? The jester ... forces the question of what function the rules, laws, boundaries and taboos serve.”¹²⁴ This is reminiscent of feasts of misrule and the role of the ‘fool’ in *King Lear*, or Feste in *Twelfth Night* in the sense that it is only through a disguise based on mad rule-breaking and dissent that an active voice (with the advantage of popularity - to speak to large numbers of ordinary

¹²⁰Kristeva, *ibid.*

¹²¹Brown, *ibid.*

¹²²Brown, *Life Against Death*, p.65.

¹²³Jones/McCarter, “The Essential Lenny Bruce” <<http://bot.fringeware.com>>

¹²⁴“Subcultural relevance” essay, *ibid.*

people?) unbiased by self-interest, is obtained. Morrison once said he had a “soul of a clown.”¹²⁵ It is because the comedian has a problematic role in society - described as an unofficial one perhaps - that he is allowed a unique ability to observe. Morrison may have shared this sense of freedom on stage, by virtue of *his* unusual role. Criticism is an important corrective to authoritarianism.

There are two main counter-arguments to be made concerning this. Firstly, there is the problem of the situation in America in the present day, where the country is deeply conservative (whichever party is in power, especially in the South). Dissent and demonstrations at the present time are less prevalent than in the Sixties. Secondly, in Morrison’s day, he was prosecuted and, some allege, even victimised by officials all too keen to make an example of his behaviour (Hoover kept an FBI file on Morrison¹²⁶ as he had with certain other musicians such as John Lennon¹²⁷). Riordan and Prohnicky claim that it was FBI involvement rather than the local Miami police that made Morrison’s misdemeanour offence into a felony. An FBI informant’s report states : “warrants will be obtained for MORRISON’s (*sic*)¹²⁸ arrest on misdemeanor charges. In addition the matter will be discussed with the State Attorney’s office to determine if MORRISON (*sic*) can be charged with a felony.”¹²⁹ It is interesting that this report is headed “Possible Racial violence. Racial Matters” and is prefaced by a report on general racial conditions in Miami. Could it be that the FBI considered Morrison’s “riot” able to activate a more general protest? Equally important is the fact of vast amounts of money that was *lost* by promoters over cancelled shows after Miami -

¹²⁵Salli Stevenson interview Part I, “Circus” magazine, Winter 1970 in Hopkins, *The Lizard King*, p.243.

¹²⁶Scans of a selection of these files (94 pp) are at Rockmine archives
<<http://www.rockmine.music.co.uk/Archive/Vault/Doors1.html>>

¹²⁷Wiener, Jon “John Lennon : FBI Files” based on his book about these files - *Gimme Some Truth : The John Lennon FBI Files*. Scans of a small selection of these documents are available at his website : <<http://www.lennonfbifiles.com/fbi.html>>

¹²⁸This is quoted exactly as it appears in the original. FBI reports tended to use this convention of using capital letters to highlight the surname of the suspect / defendant.

¹²⁹Riordan and Prochnicky, *Break on Through*, p.305. Also a scan of this report is at Rockmine archives 79-82 - see <http://www.rockmine.music.co.uk/Archive/Vault/DoorsFBI/D_FBI79.html> etc.

23 were cancelled in 1969. Morrison was never cleared over the Miami charges, and could have spent time in jail (again, made *an example* of) - eight months in total, if he had lived to see out a failed appeal. Mayors of various cities such as Philadelphia took an active stance in making sure that The Doors did *not* perform. Morrison was only admitted in more liberal venues to perform again (i.e. where management thought he was worth the risk - these were by no means numerous, see Shaw) - and these would have dried up if he had returned to any suggestion of his former behaviour (and Morrison was not one to compromise easily, as has been shown here).

Near-riot situations disturbed the police of various cities - and even some other bands that witnessed them. Shaw describes a concert in August 1968 where Pete Townshend of The Who (a band that tried to create some theatrical “outrageousness” themselves) was reportedly “fascinated and appalled” by Morrison’s apparent indifference to a near-riot situation where people began demolishing the wooden seating and hurled the portions of it onto the stage, forcing the police to set up a barricade. He later wrote a song entitled “Sally Simpson” influenced by Morrison’s “aloof and mystifying demeanour” in the face of such chaos.¹³⁰ Executives at another concert in Arizona on November 7 1968 barred the band from future appearances at the venue.¹³¹ The music industry was very fond of artistic experimentation, but not when it created genuine disorder, as The Doors certainly did.

The idea that there is a neat *relationship* between the system on the one hand, and the critique of it on the other, is invalid if we are to accept evidence from concerts such as Miami - not a completely isolated incident in the case of the Doors (and possibly Jimi Hendrix¹³²). It is valid that there was a repressive system that at this point was being challenged - but there is not a comfortable complicity lurking underneath this relationship - in the case of The Doors at any rate, it was a highly stormy and potentially destructive relationship, a far cry

¹³⁰Shaw, *The Doors on the Road*, p.120.

¹³¹op. cit., p.140.

¹³²see above, Politics chapter, p.88.

from the rather too playful “rebellion” of many bands of the time. When Morrison referred to people being involved in “a secret complicity with their oppressors”¹³³ he was all too aware that this comfortable scenario was not an option for his band, and it was to cause him plenty of trouble before his death.

Both Brown and Foucault talk about resistance - Foucault refers to the need to resist while Brown is of the opinion that art can achieve this troubling form of resistance - that which prompts the law to intervene and restate its authority. Brown states that “it is only from this tension between contemporary currents and the artist’s untimely conception of life that there arises a series of small discharges [*Befreiungen*] which are the work of art.”¹³⁴ Morrison’s comments during the Miami incident seem to suggest that one’s own *sexual awakening* reminds us of fundamental questions of instinctual liberation (which should be considered along with Brown’s idea that an artist is bound to his audience group in order to achieve liberation¹³⁵). Although Foucault was highly suspicious about this, stating that all knowledge was simply a form of power, some of his own comments suggest something different. As Hunt / Wickham point out,

He does not simply reverse the optimism of the ‘sexual revolution’ of the 1960s, nor does he join the ‘new puritanism’ of radical feminism. In important respects his views are more unsettling. The scenario he paints is one of a succession of discourses on sexuality which all aspire to reveal ‘the truth of sex,’ through which we can hope to discover and even master our sexualities and eventually be able to ‘tell the truth of sex’ (HoS [History of Sexuality] 1978 : 57).¹³⁶

But they continue:

There is a disturbing ambiguity in his conclusions. On the one hand he parodies the cults he associates with the ‘Californian cult of the self’ - through the interrogation of our sexuality we may hope to decipher the truth of self and sex through sexual self-inspection and psychotherapy (GE [“On the Genealogy of Ethics” in Rabinow, *A Foucault Reader*] 1984 : 362). Yet on the other hand he was himself committed to the exploration of the ‘limit experience’ of our sexuality (*Remarks on Marx*, 1991 : 29).¹³⁷

¹³³Lizzie James Interview Part II” in Sugerman (ed.) *The Doors : The Illustrated History*, p.123.

¹³⁴Brown, *ibid*.

¹³⁵see above.

¹³⁶Hunt / Wickham, *Foucault and Law*, p.12.

¹³⁷Hunt / Wickham, *ibid*.

On the power of theatre or performance, it is interesting to consider what Dollimore in his cultural materialist study of theatre states : “The authorities feared the theatre. Time and again it was alleged that the theatre was a breeding ground for irreligion, corruption and riots ... the theatre was successfully demystifying religion and the state.”¹³⁸

It seems that what Foucault and nearly everyone else cited in this chapter are troubled by are *settled* views, political, legal, etc. that are not open to question and not susceptible to reappraisal - the opposite of critique in other words. We need always to be in a dynamic relationship with our egos - something which is unnatural for us to contemplate. When this is combined with the power of politics and law, this becomes a subjugation of the capacity for resistance. Incidentally, if the Living Theatre seemed a bit too much in awe of sexuality in their Rite of Universal Intercourse¹³⁹ it was also aware of the allegations of feminism - in Beck’s *Life of the Theatre* he discusses these questions : “The fundamental revolution of culture is the liberation of the sexual pattern: the work of freeing ourselves from our enslavement to our masochistic-sadistic character.”¹⁴⁰ To assert that all sex involves corruption would be puritanical indeed. This involves more *complication* than usual “Utopian” visions - one that recognises complexity in intercourse, one that does not confine pleasure to the male.

Morrison’s ideas sometimes *seemed to be* more concerned with personal revolution than with the political *but* in this incident, as the transcript discussion shows, he was clearly trying to incite some mass response, of the order that was intimated in *Paradise Now*. We need to consider the similarities with the riots that happened at *many* Doors concerts, not just a few.¹⁴¹ This form of crowd action can be connected with the “storming of the fence” incidents at certain major festivals.¹⁴² It may have been that the crowd in these situations, as

¹³⁸Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, p. 23.

¹³⁹see above.

¹⁴⁰Beck, *Life of the Theatre*, ch. 102.

¹⁴¹see Shaw, *Doors on the Road*, *passim*.

¹⁴²see Politics chapter, below, pp. 201-6.

well as in free festivals such as Rolling Stones in Hyde Park 1969, did not realise what power they could have wielded, had they been consistent. The crowd was asserting its right to existence - they were individuals acting together to disturb the reality of the (concert) environment and carry that feeling out in the streets with them. Morrison may not have noticed this connection enough to utilise it properly.

A criticism of this idea comes from Herbert Marcuse, a sociologist broadly sympathetic to the notion of revolt, but who finds it hard to take seriously the concept that art can produce any change. In *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (1972) he comments on Artaud : “today, what possible image can crush and hypnotize minds and bodies that live in peaceful coexistence (*sic*) and even profiting from genocide torture and poison? ... has not the audience, even the natural audience on the streets long since become familiar with the violent noises, cries which are the daily equipment of the mass media sports highways places of recreation.”¹⁴³ However, not only did Morrison create such uproar among authorities that the band barely recovered from it, but performances of Artaud and The Living Theatre can hardly have degraded the ambition of political movements that were adding support to the New Left, and may even have spawned other such organisations (or been responsible for more personal reappraisals). The limits of theatre seem to match that of any book or academic text, but not when the spectators are led out of the theatre into the streets, and not when the music leads them to action. The consequence of not trying is a form of death.¹⁴⁴ When commenting on the Living Theatre Marcuse adds in a footnote in his book that the group had been incarcerated in the summer of 1971 by the fascist government in Brazil - this sits uneasily with the idea that the Living Theatre’s philosophy “vitiates the political impulse.”¹⁴⁵ The leaders of Brazil obviously didn’t agree.

¹⁴³Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, p.112.

¹⁴⁴Beck, *The Life of the Theatre*, ch. 103.

¹⁴⁵Marcuse, *ibid*.

Morrison wanted to incorporate politics into his work ¹⁴⁶ but was unsure how to do it without becoming the fascist authority figure that he disliked. He also felt self-conscious about not having studied politics.¹⁴⁷ Unlike almost every example of art up until that time, perhaps only in his experience, Morrison must have seen that in the Living Theatre there was an example of political thought that did not involve a didactic fascist instruction, from a performer. There was instead a very rare example of engagement with the audience - where equal responsibility is placed upon them. Despite Morrison's desire to "change the world" he didn't really pursue anything terribly revolutionary post-Miami - a look at his life reveals a shift to a less focused form of blues-oriented music and a gradual personal decline into drunkenness and desperate behaviour. That he felt some sense of failure is uncertain - he seemed to deny that he had tried anything out in Miami. We could speculate that there was a subliminal (subconscious) sense that the only route left was a self-destructive one.

Rather than focusing on existential enjoyment, he displayed not an infantile denial of death, but an acute awareness of it (like most drug addicts, though this is not often stressed). For example in "The Blues": "O how could this be done to me / great dancer's witness / God you are a satyr in disguise / Thus cruelly and uselessly to / Rend my life awry."¹⁴⁸ And also his angry last poem "Paris Journal": "Now I'm a lonely man / Let me back into the Garden ...& now my dream is gone / Let me back into Your garden / A man searching / for lost Paradise / Can seem a fool / to those who never / sought the other world / Where friends do lie & drift insanely in their own private gardens."¹⁴⁹ The phrase "lost paradise" could well refer to *Paradise Lost*, reinforcing the idea that this was a watershed moment. The last line could refer to a need to find oneself (but in a *group* of "Friends") when living in an insane

¹⁴⁶see Politics chapter.

¹⁴⁷John Tobler interview, 1970; Hopkins, *The Lizard King*, p.233.

¹⁴⁸Morrison, *The American Night*, p.174.

¹⁴⁹Morrison, op. cit., p.200.

state without definite aim; though the suggestion that his dream is gone seems to add a note of futility (“rock ’n’ roll is dead” again).

For comparison with Morrison’s approach we could take another political artist with connections to rock music - John Sinclair. Jim Morrison was uncertain of the role of the leader, and that in accepting leadership there is an invitation to fascism, there is also a negation of the role of the audience - power is shifted away from them. This would have made him even more popular, but popularity was not his main concern. Sinclair, on the other hand, was an advocate of direct action and was perhaps more specific occasionally in his indictments of US society than Morrison. Where Morrison relied more on simple emotion (“we want the world and we want it now”), along with combating expectations and shifting responsibility onto his audience, Sinclair advocated programs for change that were more ambitious and detailed. Since it is difficult (if not impossible in retrospect) to measure emotion and to catalogue its use (i.e. how this affects an audience) we cannot say whether Sinclair’s programs had more impact than Morrison’s words. Specificity carries many advantages though in a curious sense can lack emotional impact. Sinclair contributed articles to various student newspapers such as “Michigan Daily”, “Ann Arbor Sun” and others.

Sinclair, as well as creating the White Panther Party was also a manager for the band MC5 that was explicitly political in their performances - burning the American flag, etc. Certain venues began to ban them from performing including Bill Graham’s circuit. The band even performed a free concert in Ann Arbor, according to Sinclair’s account getting them arrested for disturbing the peace.¹⁵⁰ Other members of the band started objecting once the band started to suffer financially but Sinclair’s point was clear in *Guitar Army*: “We can work within those old forms, infusing them with our content and using them to carry out our work ... giving [the people] the information they need to free themselves from the death

¹⁵⁰John Sinclair, *Guitar Army*, p.93

culture once and for all and get busy freeing other people.”¹⁵¹ He defined the death culture as follows : “separation, isolation, competition, selfish individualism, industrial uniformity, lacklove [*sic*] and fear” and the goal must be a “post-industrial economic revolution”.¹⁵² He lampoons the products of the consumer economy : “Eighty-seven different brands of toothpaste! Millions of junky automobiles! That’s all they are junk that people have been hooked on by the junk pushers of capitalism.”¹⁵³ Rather than the audience being fooled by bands’ money interests, Sinclair suggests it is the power structure : “we can disguise ourselves as simple economic forces like rock and roll bands, newspapers etc., and continue to carry out our work with the blessing of the power structure because they are so easily fooled by a graspable form.”¹⁵⁴

Sinclair was incarcerated on a marijuana charge in 1969 and became even more of a counterculture hero. He was not just drumming support for his band but urging more social activism : “It is extremely important for urban groups to organise themselves around some form of popular cultural activity like a rock and roll band, a community newspaper, guerrilla theatre groups, health clinic, or whatever you can put together.”¹⁵⁵ Sinclair’s grasp of the issues is not in doubt in his writings; though he withdrew into more eclectic music appreciation in later years¹⁵⁶, his ideas still have a resonance today. For instance his comments on money do not ignore the important issues : “Pop artists have been - and continue to be - overly cautious about their public image because they know that if they get too far out they won’t be allowed to get the money which is of course their overriding desire. It isn’t all they fault of the musicians, because their lives are tightly controlled by a bunch of greasy greed-heads who have colonized our culture ... But there are some of us now who are

¹⁵¹op. cit., p.116

¹⁵²op. cit., p.32.

¹⁵³op. cit., p.119.

¹⁵⁴op. cit., p.116.

¹⁵⁵op. cit., p.119.

¹⁵⁶Sinclair’s website <www.johnsinclair.us> contains a brief biography and some account of his jazz and blues contributions in recent years.

waking up to the fact that the greed creeps depend on us to make their money for them, not vice versa.”¹⁵⁷ Stars can in fact have a “tremendous liberating effect on millions of people [by] injecting blatantly revolutionary content into their cracked old forms.” So it is not so much a matter of indicting musicians for making money, it is a more a question of effect produced and the large audience reached, and is therefore different from other businesses. Of course it was not quite enough to produce the revolution hoped for and cannot be ranked as more successful than Morrison’s lyrics.

The poetry in *Wilderness* and *The American Night* was not published during Morrison’s life, along with a large amount of other material that exists, so this supports the idea that his work was not finding an audience (or he was not finding an audience for it). Of course this can be applied to the 1970s when revolutionary ideas eventually died out. But it is the exact nature of the failure that should be reflected upon - whether we are really better off as conformist subjects rather than questioning subjects. Is it the artist or the audience that failed in the Sixties? It may be that academics and journalists want to achieve some kind of a fundamental reappraisal of popular opinion by means of their work, but they are not labelled as naïve. The naïveté of the 1960s might well have been in expecting change to happen using these *particular* strategies. The real failure was in the readiness to *abandon* their efforts and not to look for other, perhaps only slightly different, solutions, and then to consolidate them. Morrison was convinced that people had to look to themselves and their own experiences of liberation from protection. Riordan / Prochnicky states that “In [Morrison’s] short time on earth he had screamed ‘WAKE UP!’ a thousand times in a thousand ways to thousands of people and only a few eyes had even flickered. Maybe what destroyed him was their refusal to let him set them free...”¹⁵⁸ Beck was of the opinion that historical examples such as the Ukraine in Russia between 1917-1921, Spain 1936-7 and Paris in May ‘68 provided

¹⁵⁷Sinclair, op. cit., p.124-5.

¹⁵⁸Riordan and Prochnicky, *Break on Through*, p.465.

inspiration and a certain concreteness to their “dreams.” He said : “The system ...is going to tell the people that this idea can’t work”¹⁵⁹ and that “only the people have the strength that is needed”¹⁶⁰ The book, the performance, the play was only one half of the equation. In Beck’s terms, in order to “break out of the prison, the theatre, into the world”¹⁶¹ the statement that needed to be addressed was “I have set before you life and death : choose.”¹⁶² In the decade to come (from around 1974) youth would reject the very notion of liberation from the state, and instead form a deadly embrace with it.

¹⁵⁹Beck, *Life of the Theatre*, ch. 121.

¹⁶⁰ibid.

¹⁶¹Beck, *op. cit.*, ch. 123.

¹⁶²*op. cit.*, ch. 90.

Conclusion

Morrison's statement "Rock is dead" predicted the end of the sixties. One of the first notable Sixties rock fatalities occurred on July 3rd 1969 when Brian Jones, a pivotal member of the Rolling Stones, drowned in his own swimming pool. Morrison wrote a poem about him, which was distributed (at Morrison's own expense) during concerts at the Aquarius Theater, Hollywood, California from 21-22 July 1969. It was entitled "Ode to LA While Thinking of Brian Jones - Deceased" : "I hope you went out smiling / Like a child / Into the cool remnant of a dream / The angel man / w/ Serpents competing / for his palms / & fingers / Finally claimed / This benevolent / Soul / Ophelia... The gardener / Found / The body, rampant, Floating / Lucky stiff / ... / Requiem for a heavy / That smile / That porky satyr's / leer / has leaped upward / into the loam"¹

On Dec 12 1970 at a venue known as The Warehouse in New Orleans what was to become the last Doors concert was not going well. Morrison began omitting key lyrics to songs and at one point slumped down against the microphone stand. He half-heartedly told some jokes to the audience which were basically unintelligible. The crowd went very quiet and were disorientated for the last time. After smashing the stand against the wooden stage with such force that the boards splintered, he left the hall. For years afterward the owner of the stage refused to repair it - thinking it was of significance in musical history.

Morrison had correctly identified to friends that after the deaths of Hendrix and Janis Joplin, that they were "drinking with Number Three". Morrison died on July 3rd 1971 in circumstances which are still not fully clear. What is certain is that he died of heart failure, but in a man of 27 this is obviously not the whole story. The most convincing argument comes from a 1991 article by Alain Ronay and Agnes Varda in *Paris Match* magazine (and

¹ Morrison, *Wilderness*, pp. 129-132.

later other accounts) where they allege that he died of a heroin overdose. Jimi Hendrix had died of a sleeping pill overdose on September 28 1970 (not of an illegal drug overdose as is sometimes claimed) - the coroner recorded an open verdict. A box of Vesperex sleeping tablets was almost empty and there was a lethal amount of quenalbarbitone (from the pills) in his blood. He had choked on his own vomit. Whether it was an accident or suicide was never established but a song lyric / poem² was found near the body which was taken by some to indicate a depressed state of mind (though many of Hendrix's lyrics if found could have given the same impression). Janis Joplin died of a heroin overdose on October 4 1970. The fact that Hendrix and Morrison have often been identified as drug-related deaths without telling the full events and the different accounts of them (which still continues to this day in short summary articles), probably tells us more about simplistic reporting than it tells us about the Sixties. There were other deaths which had even more of an impact on the streets - that of Dr Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy.

It seemed as if with the main Sixties singers gone the Seventies could arrive and the music could change. Trying to run against the ending of the Sixties became like trying to stop the tide. Glam rock, the so-called New Romantics (e.g. Depeche Mode) and various other genres ending with punk ensued. It is fair to say that radicalism among young people became unfashionable in the 1970s and in particular the conservative 1980s. Michael McClure, in his afterword to the Morrison biography *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, quotes a George MacDonald poem : "Death alone from death can save." In a personal sense it was precisely Morrison's awareness of his death that fuelled his desire to achieve more in his life. He could not merely be a poet, or merely a filmmaker, or merely a singer, he had to be all three. He posed the question "Did you have a good world when you died ? / Enough to base a movie

² The text read "I am you searching to be free / The story of life is over in the wink of an eye / The story of love is Hello and Goodbye / Until we meet again."

on?"³ Morrison's philosophical challenges about the nature of existence - namely whether we can possibly achieve the necessary amount of "life" without change of consciousness in some way, need to be *added* to his political ideas - not only the Living Theatre connection (as discussed in the Miami chapter) but also his lyrics discussed in this thesis - "We want the world and we want it now" from "When the Music's Over" or "We must try to find a new answer instead of a way" in "Whiskey Mystics & Men". The connection between emotion, entertainment and the protests that were outside is very important. To imagine the Sixties without music is a nearly impossible task - to imagine that young people would be interested in politics unless it is made fun is quite unrealistic. Music and politics were interlinked. His introduction of ideas and enabling of the festival crowd was not a fascist leadership because it was precisely concerned with making his audience aware of their potential, a potential that was shown in so-called riots at major festivals in which the crowd often fulfilled their goal of defeating capitalist authority. Morrison invoked philosophy and poetry - mingling education with entertainment, radicalism with poetics.

Musicians provided the record companies with profits, some of which went into legitimate record production costs, some of which were no doubt providing large pay cheques to company bosses, managers and others. Musicians became rich themselves of course, though Morrison, as pointed out in this thesis, seems to have had little regard for property and lived mainly in hotels; those close to him were surprised by his lack of regard for materialistic concerns. Whether this is the case or not, it is strange indeed to regard musicians as being particularly fond of money and supplying an *overwhelming* contribution to capitalism - this ignores the wider problems of capitalism in society which was being challenged in the 1960s, with music supplying radicalism's "martial tunes".

³ Morrison, "An American Prayer," *The American Night*, p.11.

Who or what killed the Sixties? It may have had something to do with the Lords “born of sloth and cowardice” people who Morrison felt were controlling art :

Events take place beyond our knowledge or control. Our lives are lived for us. But gradually, special perceptions are being developed. The idea of The Lords is beginning to form in some minds... The Lords appease us with images. They give us books, concerts, galleries, shows, cinemas. Through art they confuse us and blind us to our enslavement. Art adorns our prison walls, keeps us silent and diverted and indifferent.⁴

It may have been that the “special perceptions” were not being developed after all. Protest was always more than the Vietnam War - though it perhaps enabled a greater unity of purpose which was then *used* to symbolise more general problems in society. The People’s Park protest in San Francisco for instance, or events in various American universities in 1970 (UC Berkeley, Columbia, New York and of course Kent State) can be connected with what was happening in Paris in 1968, or the demonstrations in Britain (such as Grosvenor Square - even though Britain had little direct connection to the Vietnam War). New forms of literature, underground newspapers, awareness of the excesses of consumerism and capitalism, all resulted from what happened in the Sixties. But the Vietnam War did perhaps provided a certain kind of “glue” that held together people of different opinions and ideologies (though not all of them helpful). Only a vestige of radical culture remained. Meanwhile Watergate and subsequent revelations about Nixon’s attempt to break up leftist and radical groups seemed to confirm the very “demonising” of the government that radicals were then criticised for. In the Reagan era, with the phenomenon of the junk bond, capitalism became even more mercenary - “downsizing” became a reality for many people. Certain bands today have radical political lyrics - two examples are Pearl Jam and Rage Against the Machine. Others are trying to produce more thoughtful music than that of mainstream rock - Death in Vegas is one example.⁵

⁴ Morrison, *The Lords and the New Creatures*, [The Lords], p.32.

⁵ The “adult version” of a video for a song entitled “Dirge” (to be played after the watershed) includes
Continued on next page...

In a new century where the gap between rich and poor is greater in the United States than ever before ⁶ where elections have produced record low turnouts in United States and Great Britain, and where the politics of centre or centre-right predominate in all political discourse, the necessity for some kind of radical thinking seems clear. May Day anti-capitalist protests and other local actions continue to occur - a notable event occurred on June 18 1999, billed as “global carnival against capital.” Naomi Klein has described it as follows :

On June 18 1999 a coalition of groups, including Reclaim the Streets and People’s Global Action held the second Global Street Party ... to coincide with the G-8 meeting in Cologne, Germany. The event ... took aim squarely at corporate power. All around the world, parties and protests were held in financial districts, outside stock exchanges, superstores, banks and multinational headquarters. With simultaneous action in seventy different cities, the day was the coming-out party for this new global political player: it displayed all of the movement’s promise and creativity - and showed more forcefully than ever before just how much anticorporate rage is brewing. ⁷

However, a recent act of terrorism on Sept 11 2001 has been used as a cloak for some widespread erosion of civil liberties (especially with the so-called Patriot Act), and a re-establishment of broadcasting censorship, particularly on the television networks. It was Bob Dylan who first said “Patriotism is the last refuge to which a scoundrel clings.”

Meanwhile, there is work starting to be done on popular music, much of which has been cited in this thesis. There is a necessity for academia to treat all forms of art from whatever source - be it popular or obscure - with equal weight and to analyse them in a detailed manner. Also there is a need to, as Jonathan Dollimore puts it, “challenge a politically conservative way of doing criticism.” Dollimore describes his attempt to make his work “interdisciplinary, oppositional, intellectually challenging rather than academically stifling,

a succession of images of actual gunshot victims along with a brief description of what happened to them. Another video for a song entitled “Aisha” is a satire on sexual iconography - consisting of a woman being chased by the camera through a forest (with obvious sexual connotations) only to arrive behind the scenes at the set where they are to shoot the next sequence.

⁶ See Banks, Blundell and Smith, “Wealth Inequality in the United States and Great Britain” Institute of Fiscal Studies, 1 Nov 2000 esp. pp. 12-16. Available in pdf format from <www.ifs.org> See also the writings of Andrew Dilnot’s (also of IFS), his documentary “Politics Isn’t Working : More Unequal than Ever” (Lion television for Channel 4 2001), Naomi Klein, George Monbiot (for the UK mainly), and many others.

⁷ Naomi Klein, *No Logo*, p.444.

politically engaged rather than spuriously impartial.”⁸ The greatest way to include large numbers of young people to be enlisted in a cause is to make it entertaining - so that there is no distinction between work and leisure. It is to be hoped that new studies, new works of art and forms of thinking that challenge the status quo will be developed in the future, for, in the familiar phrase from history, “those who do not learn from the past are condemned to relive it.”

⁸ Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, p.xiii

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