Decoding the Poetical Genius of American Poet Jim Morrison

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ABSTRACT
In the 1960s, a young poet (Jim Morrison) shattered America’s literary tradition with his acidic blend of music, theater, lyric, and daring. He formed The Doors, a darkly creative, informed, and bizarre music group, with some Los Angeles youths. Jim Morrison, the lead singer of The Doors, has built a literary treasure chest through his lyrics, which combine wild lyricism with a mesmerizing rock rhythm. Morrison always believed that he was a poet, but most pundits and critics never recognized or considered him as one. The current little research available on Morrison never attempts to find out who he really was or what he tried to accomplish with his poetry. The researchers intend to solidify Morrison’s position as a serious literary poetic genius in the American tradition which never took him seriously as a poet. A serious investigation has been undertaken on his poetry and lyrics from an analytical and critical point of view. Critics have continually distorted his work with drug culture, blasphemy, and pessimism. Both fans and critics of Morrison would be able to discover the poetic tradition and his legacy that he left behind after going through this critical piece. Descriptive research methods such as case studies, naturalistic observation, and surveys on Morrison’s literary expedition has been employed as effective tools in solving the research problem. In short, a serious effort has been made in this analytical essay to unveil the deconstructive shadow of criticism and showcase Morrison as a poet that changed America’s literary landscape in the 1960s creating a new poetic renaissance/genre.

1. Introducing an enigmatic American poet

Jim Morrison tried to revolutionize lyrics in contemporary American poetry in his own bizarre style. He rebelled against conformities to social and sexual norms imposed on his generation in the 1960s. The Doors concerts, pregnant with psychedelic war dance rhythm and sensual intimacy, were one-of-a-kind satanic extravaganzas. Morrison documented the unrest, threat that poisoned the air of the sixties like venomous oxide through his lyrics in a mesmerizing freshness that never blossomed before. According to William Cook, Morrison’s poetry is a combination of both the surreal and the symbolic. A pervasive sense of the irrational, chaotic, and violent pervades his work, which is aided by unexpected juxtapositions of images and words. Morrison tried to cater to the oldest function of poetry, disrupting the conventional consciousness by the use of more specific
and highly charged language, as well as to provide new instruments for discovering the underlying relatedness of all existence. He indeed lived fast and died young leaving behind his satanic legacy of electrifying performances, sexual adventures and thirst for psychedelic experience and inspired a whole era. The verses of Morrison arose from sociopolitical shifts in the American and global history. His poetry demonstrates a profound investigation of the world of literature, particularly the traditions that shaped the poetry of his period, in addition to the social and political ideas. His poetry brilliantly reflects his own real-life observations, opinions, and growth as a poet – from anthologies like “The Lords and the New Creatures” to his final poems in “Wilderness” and “The American Night.” We shall be able to demonstrate what sets Morrison apart as an exemplary American poet by critically analyzing the poem in terms of his poetic vision. Morrison’s poetic tradition is marked by ambiguity of meaning, which tends to shed light on subconscious thoughts and feelings (a quality often associated with the Postmodern). His poetic power lies in the fact that it has a mammoth, surrealistic effect upon its readers by using haunting words and images in his poems. We often come across chaotic, apocalyptic sense in his verse. Morrison’s poetry reveals a bizarre world, which sometimes emerged from the streets of Los Angeles back alleys and eccentricities of his mind. The after-effect of Morrison’s poetry is to portray the nightmarish modern existence through obscure words and imagery, yet striking at the same time in the minds of the readers. Morrison’s poetic style is akin to Rothenberg’s poetic tradition. Morrison was much impressed by Arthur Rimbaud & William Blake’s style and philosophy. The 1966 translation of *Rimbaud: Complete Works* and *Selected Letters* by Wallace Fowlie highly impacted his creative poetical intellect as a rebel poet.

2. **Untangling the poetic genius of Morrison**

Morrison’s eccentric poems, lyrics and philosophy are analyzed under the perspective of creative research. Descriptive research tools such as case studies, naturalistic observation and surveys on Morrison’s literary expedition will provide effective tools in solving the research problem. To consider Morrison as a poetic genius, researchers must go through his verses dissecting his poetic goal, rather than the mythological rituals of a dead rock icon. Critical analysis of poems by Morrison and investigation into his philosophy, poetic aspects, and the poet’s vision behind the veil of chaotic verses has been executed by the researchers. It is expected that the strategies implemented will strengthen the case for Morrison’s coronation as a serious poet in the American literary tradition. Apart from that, researchers intend to find answers to questions like 1. Is Morrison a serious poetic genius in the American Literary Tradition? 2. How far are the uses of frank treatment of sexuality justified in his verses? 3. Does the poetry of Morrison reflect or speak for his era? Are the verses of Morrison contemporary? 4. Is there any correlation between Morrison’s creative imagination and drugs? 5. To what extent was Morrison’s poetry influenced by William Blake?

3. **Critical analysis of Morrison’s poetry & poetic philosophy**

In Morrison’s “An American Prayer,” the imagery and language are perplexing, irrational, and even sometimes filthy:
Cling to cunts & cocks
Of despair
We got our final vision
By clap
Columbus’s groin got
Filled w/green death
(I touched her thigh & death smiled)

In his verse, there is a tone of cynicism intended at both him and the readers. He had a habit of turning taboed sufferings and sacrifices into cultural freedom, as if for the readers’ sake rather than his own.

Words are healing
Words got me the wounds

Morrison’s pessimistic political idealism is highlighted in this example from his mystical poem “Lament for the Death of My Cock.” Morrison’s concept of societal duty, as well as his knowledge of its flaws is a reflection of his own personal dissolution of false American notions. He represented the apocalyptic evocation of a trance-like existence in the Western dream: “We are from the West. The world we suggest should be new Wild West, a sensuous, evil world, strange, and haunting.” Another major characteristic of Morrison’s poetry is that it uses a modernist and symbolist method to depict American cities: “We all live in the city,” he says, using the metropolis as a metaphor for civilization. The city creates a circle, often literally but always psychically. It’s a game. A death ring with sex at its Center which leads toward the city’s outskirts. His poetry unearths the encounter of his age with the zones of sophisticated depravity and boredom, such as child prostitution. He believed that the only true crowd of our city is in the street life, night life, which existed outside of the day-light business districts; “Disease specimens in dollar hotels, low-rent boarding homes, bars, pawn stores, burlesques, and brothels, in dying arcades that never die, and in streets upon streets of all-night cinemas” are the places with throbbing vibrant life of common people without any hypocrisy. Here we get references to Baudelaire’s passage about the “Swarming City, City Full of Dreams, where ghosts in broad day-light grab the walker’s sleeve,” as well as T.S. Eliot’s green city, which he mentioned in “The Wasteland,” beautifully echoed here.

“The attraction of the cinema rests in the fear of death,” Morrison said, using every day prosaic images from television or the movies to relate them to the eternal philosophical and observational theme of life. With the added hardship of living in an era where stimuli like sex, quasi-religion, and the Cultural Revolution were the norms, it’s no surprise that his verses were pessimistic.

We live, we die
& death not ends it
Journey we more into the
Nightmare . . .
We’re reaching for death
Do you know how pale & wanton thrillful?
Comes death on a strange hour
Unannounced, unplanned for
Like a scaring over-friendly guest, you’ve
Brought to bed
Death makes angels of us all
And gives us wings

In the midst of all of this chaos, there is a sense of hope. The poet asks life to be thrilling in “An American Prayer” by rejecting the chaotic present, infected by the thorns of materialism and war, in favor of a beautiful past period full of significance and vitality.

Let’s reinvent the gods, all the myths
Of the ages
Celebrate symbols from deep elder forests.
(Have you forgotten the lessons?
Of the ancient war)

Morrison’s poem “If Only I” exemplifies his poetic simplicity. Here, the poet admits to being disillusioned with the concept of self. The poet’s cynicism with life has led him to a man’s land, where his senses have grown numbed and he is unable to identify his own existence.

If only I
Could feel
The sound
Of the Sparrows
& feel child hood

Morrison’s picture of the suffering poet afflicted in the age of the psyche’s abyss is a symbol of a terrible fight between birth and death. We find a similar frantic search for the ideal which is analogous to Nietzsche’s own sentiment and passionate expression of pain in his poetry (Fled are the wonderful Dreams):

Fled is the past . . .
I have never experienced
The joy and happiness of life.
I look back sadly

Morrison’s depiction of death, which frequently resembles a narcotic overdose (a mix of suicidal excess and artistic idealism), imbues the above-mentioned poetry with autobiographical components in regard to his vision, aim, and philosophy. He describes death, fate, and the game’s implications in his early poem, “The Lords.”

When play dies it becomes the Game.
When sex dies it becomes Climax.
All games contain the idea of death . . .

Morrison’s deciphering of death reflected an existential worldview (as expressed in his poem “IF Only I.” The connection between the physical and the real world is sex, which is populated by other game players. Love is more of an emotional explosion that results in the metamorphic termination of the self during the ejaculation process. Confronting the nothingness or abyss of one’s own self leads to rejection of one’s own self. When Morrison says, “Love is one of the handfuls of devices we have to avoid the voids as to speak,” he is being sardonic. Isolation is another important characteristic that he emphasizes in his poetry. His sensation of solitude comes full circle in his idea of the game – “it
is existential in its inescapable net of death, and the performance or existence is his only saving grace.” It’s more of a confession of the poet’s narcissistic attitude to constructing a new personality, offering and psychic pain of parturition:

Urge to come to terms with, Outside, by absorbing, interiorizing it. I won’t come out; you must come in to see me. Into my womb—garden where I peer out. Where I can construct a universe within the skull, to rival the real.

The themes of power and brutality in “The Lords and New Creatures” are other significant issues to consider. The gloomy and warped characteristics of the 1960s are captured in this compilation. Morrison’s words mirrored death and love at the same time, indicating a link to the end of an era. Keep in mind that the Vietnam War was in full flow at the time, as were civil rights protests and executions, and the end of hippie naivété was looming. “It’s different now,” Morrison says, summarizing why things have changed. (Pause) It used to create a movement – people coming out in mass protest – denying to stay grounded what Blake refers to as “the mind forged manacles” . . . The love street era is over. Sure, there can be transcendence – but not on a large scale, and certainly not as a global revolt. Now everything must take place on a personal level – every man for himself, as the saying goes. Violence isn’t necessarily a bad thing. The obsession with violence is the real evil. As a result, we can see that Morrison is not simply a poet of his day, but also a socially conscious guy. Morrison’s poem is an accurate reflection of his age and pace, making him very current. His greatest strength is his ability to treat current events in a timeless manner, even wrapping the ancient in a metaphorical clock. The gruesome Tate-LA Bianca massacres by Charles Manson and his associates are converted into an emblematic image of violence power in the Lords. Morrison’s attitude on the media events of his day is beautifully depicted metamorphic ally their seize in Death Valley California, waiting for the apocalyptic race war to begin.

It takes large murder to turn rocks in the shade
And expose strange worms beneath. The lives of
Our discontented madmen are revealed.

The New Beings, another text by Morrison, is often contrasted to the Lords by emphasizing the demonic existence of other subordinate creatures. The New Creatures’ odd imagery and surrealistic character of lines form a unique collection of poems that appears to be irrational at times. Most readers will find the information to be highly subjective. The majority of the visuals and allusions are hidden and jumbled in an ineffective manner. With the interaction of words and imagery, Morrison had produced a tone that was similar in strength to the lyrics he composed for The Doors. Often, he ignited and breathed life into them with his performance on stage.

Ensenada
The dead seal
The dog crucifix
Ghosts of the dead car sun.

The majority of the poems in The New Creatures provide readers a bizarre hint about Morrison’s poetic style. His poetry has a cinematic quality to it in terms of style and effect. He realized that “stream of consciousness” is the ultimate form of modern art: “I am interested in films because to me, it’s the closest approximation in art that we have to
the actual flow of consciousness.” Morrison’s poetry has a surrealistic cinematic quality to it. The juxtaposition of thoughts and discoveries about the world has an intellectual dreamlike sequence to it. Morrison employed crowd manipulation as one of his main stage techniques. In poetry, he also exploited pause to great advantage.

Savage destiny
Naked girl, seen from behind,
On a natural road
Friends

This pause in the subject’s flow provides the verse with a multitude of pictures. In a nutshell, the poem is a reenactment of stream of consciousness’ nonsensical reasoning. In terms of quality, this poetry is like philosophical depictions of dramatic experiences, hypnotizing the reader with an intoxicated condition that characterized Morrison’s indulgence with alcohol and narcotics. Some of Morrison’s poetry evokes the sensation of sifting through notes while on an LSD trip. His poetry, vision, hallucinogenic pictures contemplated into a unique perception of the world, was strengthened by the foregoing ingredients. Morrison’s hallucination of experience, which he contrasts in his verses, could be an interpretation of his real-life occurrences and the 1960s as a whole. Poetry fuels Morrison’s desire for pictorial cinematic graphic, improvisation, and musical verses. His poem “An American Prayer” intellectually reflects reminiscence of Frazer’s “Golden Bough,” as well as Artaud and Nietzsche’s visionary predictions.

Let’s reinvent the gods, all the myths
Of the ages
Celebrate symbols from deep elder forests . . .
We have assembled inside this ancient
& insane theatre
To propagate our lust for life

T.S. Eliot’s vision of ruined western civilization in “The Wasteland” is very close to Morrison’s view of modernity. Morrison was always blaming the television culture for polluting modern civilization. It’s a bit of a paradox that he backed the filmmaker’s perspective of the world through a camera lens. He felt that power emanated from the lens of a camera at all times. To raise the philosophy and art of his verse, he employed much violent, negative, and evil imagery. However, we should keep in mind that his writing has many autobiographical components that are obscured by patterns and symbols.

Snakeskin jacket
Indian Eyes
Brilliant Hair
He moves in disturbed
Nile Insect
Air

We find many testimonials related with his wearing styles, Indian philosophy, Alexandrine hair, and Shamanic dancing techniques in new creatures – it is a portrait of himself. The following lines give us a glimpse of how the poet views his audience:

You parade thru the soft summer
We watch your eager rifle decay
Your wilderness
Your teeming emptiness

"You" are the reader along for the journey; "we" are the lords, the poet speaks – enlightened ones, the ones you can see "your wilderness" . . . America? He continues: You are lost now; we are still the ones who can see what reader cannot." Morrison gives us a glimpse into his universe while keeping the reader at a safe distance. The residents of the world are introduced in the following section, with their ill state and misery heightened by pictures of punishment ultimatums dancing in the background. A bizarre world is offered by the poet with various rituals from Sir James Frazer’s "The Golden Bough,"

Bitter grazing in sick pastures
Animal sadness & the daybed
Whipping.
Iron curtains pried open.
The elaborate sun implies.
Dust, Knives, Voices.
The wet dreams of Aztec king.

War, communism, and fascist oppression are all made easier by the iron curtain. The sun might point out to the east, from where it rises (or Ohio), and it could also be an indication to the ancient/antique nature of the origin or creation. The Aztec King gives the "Sun" significance since the ancients utilized human sacrifices of "Blood" to strengthen the sun's daily trip through the sky. The nightmare creatures are an allegory for modern human living in a fractured world, which reflects us via the author’s perspective.

Moment of inner freedom
When the mind is opened & the
Infinite universe revealed
& the soul is left to wander
Dazed & confused searching &
There for teachers & friends.

Here Morrison’s vivid, naked, and truthful poetic philosophy is vividly revealed through the lines of the above poem, titled "The Opening of the Trunk." This particular poem is the revelation of Morrison’s true poetic self and the evolution of the poet as a person. The poem depicts the poet's wakening moment, discovering the power of the soul. The opening of his mind came with realizing the infinite harmony of the cosmos. We love the poet’s skillful implementation of small words in a simple yet meaningful way.

Moment of Freedom
As the prisoner
Blinks in the sun
Like a mole
From his hole
A child’s 1st trip
Away from home
The moment of Freedom.
By opening ourselves, we will rediscover what lies inside us. Once we do that, everything on the outside will seem sensible and reveal the interconnectedness of the surroundings with us. The poet beautifully celebrates “oneness” with the universe. Self-realization leads to knowing others and everything. The poet encourages the readers to free themselves, as true freedom comes from within.

In “Stoned Immaculate” we come across bizarre lyrics such as:
I’ll tell you this . . .
No eternal reward will forgive us now
For wasting the dawn.

The above lyrics give us a picture of the journey from childhood to youth and the evolution of life. “For wasting the dawn” might be a reference to the time between adolescence and youth, or suggest a connection between night and day. “No eternal reward” signifies the futile expectation of a reward as we grow older to reinforce us. We emerge from the shelter of our parents into a cruel world. ‘One summer night, going to the pier, “Pier” recalls the imagery of the bridge that connects childhood and youth. This impromptu appearance of freedom is beautifully expressed through the words “Ran Into.” The word “enterprise” comes with a lot of interpretations. It might be a reference/allusion to a relationship or chasing a dream. “The two girls” represents a poetic expression of youth narrating a story about life. It might be the experiences encountered in the personal life of the poet.

Reaching your head
With the cold, sudden fury
Of a divine messenger.

These lines are as unpredictable as “Life” itself. Interpretation of many things in life is not possible, but rather experienced or felt.

Let me tell you about heartache
And the loss of god.

A sincere reader would observe that the “g” of God is not capitalized. It means not the loss of God, but rather the loss of faith in God.

Wandering, wandering in hopeless night
Out here in the perimeter there are no stars

The above poetical expression brings out the hopelessness of different moments in life. Again, the ambiguous meaning is expressed by the words “no stars.” The word no might refer to hopelessness, but “stars” indeed represent hope.

Out here we are stoned
Immaculate.

“We” (the poet’s past and present) “is” (used to represent “we” as one person) is stoned clean in the midst of all the commotion of existence. The word immaculate means clean or pure.

In “Power” a poem from the collection Wilderness: The Lost Writings of Jim Morrison, the potential of the human race is celebrated by the poet in a unique style.
I can make the Earth stop its track.
I made the blue cars go away.
I can make them invisible or small.
I can become gigantic & reach the farthest things.

Here, through the usage of “I,” the poet honors the idea that lies in the spiritual strength of the human form. Here, Morrison’s concept of his identity is very much like Blake’s. He blatantly refuses to consider himself as a fixed object. He rather identifies himself with an object which is spontaneous or in motion. Here Morrison uses three adjectives: “invisible,” “small” and “gigantic,” giving us a glimpse into how far stretched his perception of identity was. Here, the above adjectives are not used to give us a hint of changing our physical shape. Here, striking adjectives are used to radically alter the reader’s as well as the poet’s perception of his own identity. While the physical structure of the body remains unchanged, employing the opposed terms, he regulates his articulation of infinite belief, longing, and expression. Now a serious reader may have several questions, such as what the self-image of Morrison relates to? In what ways does the poet describe his identity? There is no definite answer to it. Here we get a Blakean echo regarding the singular identity of the self. The identity of the poet is unknown, indefinable and left for interpretation. Here the poet uses the term “infinite” to solidify his claim of the elasticity of his identity. Opposite adjectives like “Big” and “Invisible” describe his refusal to perceive his identity within the static structure of binaries. Thus, the poet’s identity has no limits and can overcome any obstacle empowered by the strength of the mind. In this poem we come across the dual theme of the poet’s relationship with his own identity as well as his connection with the exterior world. We also come across various allusions and references to his reality in the lines below:

I can change the course of nature.
I can place myself anywhere in space or time.
I can perceive events in other worlds.

Here, the reality of the poet is not established upon a fixed system of order, and this in turn influences his perception of the outside world. The imagination of the poet can perceive reality not only in any singular world but in multiple dimensions. The poet rebels against the fixed system of order which limits human existence. Just like Keats’s wings of poetry, the poet uses imagination to transform his perception of identity and reality into the infinite. This in turn enabled him to break the confines of fixed reality and allowed him to venture into various zones of unrealized visions.

We come across a similar theme reading the lyrics of the song “Moonlight Drive” from The Doors album “Strange Days”:

Let’s swim to the Moon.
Uh-huh
Let’s climb through the tide (1–3)

The poet’s whimsical lexicon is paced upon the potential of the human form through imagination. The poet is successful in breaking the boundaries of his perception by employing words like swimming and climbing. The poet fancies swimming to the moon instead of climbing. Thus, he denounces the traditional structure within which the body is accustomed to functioning. The poet creates a cosmic playground through the power of
imagination. He urges his companion to accompany him and “swim to the Moon/climb through the tide,” denouncing a fixed system of order. In line 13 of the poem, we come across the poet’s appeal to his date to “surrender” her “to the waiting world.” The reader should pay attention to the plural form of “worlds,” similar to the argument he used in the poem “Power.” Breaking the boundaries of the five traditional senses, united with his imagination, offers an outlet for the poet and his companion to encounter unrealized opportunities in multiple worlds. Thus, the poems “Power” and “Moonlight Drive” celebrate freedom, which transcends us beyond the horizons of “The Doors.” “The Doors” is plural and not solitary. Thus, to sum up, the poet rebels against static structure, doctrine, and the ecosystem, which stop him from realizing what his imagination tries to achieve.

In this section we will explore a particular poem which exemplifies how the poet, through his lyrics, tries to liberate us, stamping out social oppression and taking us back to the primal, pure and open form of existence. The poem, “The End”:

The killer was awake before dawn.
He puts his boots on.
And he came to a door.
And he looked inside.
Father?
Yes, son?
I want to kill you.
Mother, [I want to fuck you] (46–52)

The highly controversial lyrics have been subject to immense criticism. The widely available interpretation often argues that the poet wants to indulge in a fraticide to follow the repressed sexual desire for involvement in sexual intercourse with his mother. But the above argument is subject to argument. But readers should not read these lyrics literally. The poet here employs the lines about the killing of his father and sexual intercourse with his mother symbolically. My argument is supported by Paul Allen Rothschild [legendary record producer who worked with The Doors] who states that “kill” here symbolically signifies the termination of everything impure. “Fucking” the mother should not be interpreted literally, but rather it denotes our primeval state of existence before the act of birth. Morrison describes the process of death as a falsity self-created by the sperm of his father, but he also stresses the rebirth leading to a pure form of existence. These lines are a reminiscence of the fact, speaking of our potential to go back into our primeval state of existence free from any false consummation. But the poet’s version of existence was never harshly linear. The poet believes that we have the potential to destroy the alien world, which we perceive as “The Doors,” structures our existence and, in the process, liberates ourselves back into our primeval self-image. The poet illustrates the process of achieving an existential state that we possessed before our mother was impregnated by our father. Thus, the poet symbolically uses the killing of the father to abolish all things that influence any external jurisdiction/dominance over him. This is valid proof of Morrison’s radical poetic ambition. He insists that even ordinary people can achieve an open-form existence at any given time/moment. The poetry of Morrison is not contextualized in recapitulating any self or theory that is unable to become a reality. Rather, on the contrary, the visionary world of Morrison exists beyond our senses and tangible world. The poet believes his visions and content can be easily realized by any individual.
Morrison always preached that people should create their own universe/world and individuals should not become slaves to the system. He inspired people to deconstruct the old world to recreate their own individual or personalized world. He encouraged people to continue the process of creating their own world and free themselves from the shackles of a fixed order created by the system. To strengthen our argument, we will analyze The Door’s hit single “Break on through.” Morrison states.

You know, the day destroys the night.
Night divides the day.
Tried to run
Tried to Hide
Break on through to the other side. (1–5)

Morrison shatters the binaries that rule our reality. The poet uses words like “Day” and “Night” to strengthen his argument against the binaries of night and day. This can be interpreted as binaries that dictate the possibilities or events during the twenty-four hours of a day. If we abide by the rules or structures of “day” and “night,” we are indeed living in a linear way, as we plan or organize our days (eating, awaking, college) and nights (sleeping) all set in keeping with fixed rules. Freedom cannot be realized within the fixed structure and the poet never encourages us to “run” or “hide” from these binaries. The poet speaks of a state that pressurizes us to stick to these binaries, but also to, “Break on through to the other side.” This move breaks all the fixed structures and gives us access through “The Doors” into the infinite. The poet further writes:

I found an island in your arms.
A country in your eyes
Arms that chained us
Eyes that lied
The gate is straight.
Deep & wide

Morrison integrates the symbol used by Blake, “the gate,” with the imagery of “the doors.” This is basically the framework that distinguishes between what is real and what could be real. His imagination helps him to recreate a picture of the person among the lyrics of the song, going beyond her physical appearance. The poet here envisions not just physical “arms” but rather an “island in your arms.” Instead of viewing “eyes,” the poet fancies a “country in your eyes.” Thus, while transcending into the infinite, the poet describes his process of the creation of a chaotic world beyond the boundaries of “The Doors,” leading to the construction of the observed person’s portrait. Morrison uses his imagination to deconstruct the old order and recreate an infinite new world order. Moving to the other hand, this deconstruction of the old order sanctions the reconstruction of the infinite into the customized image of the person.

In “No One Here Gets out Alive,” Morrison states:
Five to one, baby.
One in five
Now
You get yours, baby.
I'll get mine.
Goanna make it, baby.
If we try
The first stanza of the song revolves around the rhetoric of the counterculture. By reading the opening lines, it seems that Morrison and The Doors were influenced by the counterculture and the poet affirms its victory. But this lyric is often misinterpreted because the first two stanzas are frequently listened to, excluding the next stanza. This stanza pulls out all the praise of the counterculture movement, criticizing the direction and efforts of the same.

Your ballroom days are over, baby.
Night is drawing near
Shadows of the evening crawl across the years . . . .

The poet here exhibits his frustration with his sex symbol status:

You walk across the floor with a flower in your hand.
Trying to tell me no one understands

Here the poet frankly portrays his disapproval of the direction of the movement. According to the argument of Prochnicky and Riordan, the poet reminds the girl in (Five To One) that her ballroom days are numbered. The imagery of her walking across the floor represents the poet’s vision of the revolution in America, but also the failure on their part to stop it. (Prochnicky and Riordan 248). “Night is drawing near” and “Shadows of the evening” bring out the aim of the counterculture to establish peace all over the world, while the natural order of the universe acts as the opposite force, thwarting the movement. The suppression of the effort is explained by the emergence of “Night.” While the movement aimed at the liberation of individuals from the various conventions of the west. Again, when the poet in the song comes face to face with the flower child, he informs:

### 3.1. Trade e(s) in your hours for a handful of dimes

These lines exemplify that, in spite of the child’s action being revolutionary, it is placed within the confines of a closed system of order. The flower child, instead of breaking on to the other side, chose a monetary value. This reward is not a product of her imagination but is obtained or given to her by her employer or boss. Thus, this reward is not free from external influence, as per the philosophy propagated by both Morrison and Blake. Morrison, by employing the symbol of the “flower child,” does not address any particular member of the counterculture; rather, his appeal signifies a vast cultural statement. The poet here expresses his distaste toward individuals who are slaves to specific guidelines or rules created by others to secure “reward.” “Five to one” is an example of the poet’s growing hostility toward his audience. This theme of anger about his generation hit a massive note during the Doors’ 1969 concert in Miami. The poet insults his fans:

Let people tell you what you are going to do.
Let people push you around.

Morrison criticizes his generation for indulging in working for an entity alien to them. The remark by the poet about his generation as “all a bunch of slaves” is echoed in the Lords (1969), where the word “slaves” reappears. Here the poets indicate that the Lords
or the leaders of society subjugate individuals through various media, such as cinemas, concerts, books, etc. The poet implemented similar motifs or metaphors in Miami and used the word “slave” to narrate his audience controlled, oppressed, or living by the rules set forward by something else.

Last but not least we have kept in the list the poem “Awake.” We believe that this is the toughest poem to analyze. Surrealism employed by Morrison makes it a difficult read. Going through the verses makes the reader pass through a plethora of experiences or inner thoughts rather than offering a coherent meaning. Our interpretation of the poem demystifies the liberation of sexuality as intended in the poem by the author.

- Is everybody in?
- Is everybody in?
- Is everybody in?
- The ceremony is about to begin.
- Wake up!

This is basically a 21-line poem with a distinguishable rhythmic pattern. The craftiness of Morrison as a poet can be observed in his tone where he employs various metaphors reflecting the mood of the 70s. Apart from that he concludes the poem with an end rhyme, which was a risky initiative in the 70s poetry scenario.

3.2. *Shake dreams from your hair…*

The above line tempts the reader to dream big and is also an invitation for relaxing. The imagery of shaking hair is a symbol of relaxed posture. The poet here urges the readers to indulge in their desire.

3.3. *My pretty child, my sweet one*

Here the poet is not taking to his actual child. This is basically a spiritual outburst addressing the human race. This phrase above relates the readers again to the 70s and again this is a sincere effort to reflect his time tinged with a universal appeal.

- Choose the day and

Now this is indeed an enigmatic expression. It is not possible to choose the day. The reader here should not be confused with the ambiguous verses. The hidden meaning is indeed intense. Here the addressee is motivated to accept the day as it is, whether good or bad. Here the poet used circumlocution in a skilled fashion. We should keep in mind that such usage in poetry was radical in that era.

- The day’s divinity

An intense intellectual appeal is reflected in the above line. The poet celebrates the fact that each day is a new opportunity. Here the concept of divinity is juxtaposed with the culture of the age. People were motivated by eastern religion and supported ideals of harmony and love.

- First thing you see.
Another interesting fact about the poem is that it is written in second-person, unusual in the sixties. The poem efficiently elaborates the readers about the events as described in the poem. Morrison employs the brilliant literary device of narrating the story through the perspective of the readers.

A vast radiant beach
in a cool jeweled moon

A nice contrast and duality of imagery here is employed by the poet. The beach is akin to the bright yellowish glow because of the sand. Here radiance is the catalyst for developing the image. A sharp contrast is noticed with the usage of the imagery of the waning moon signifying dawn or morning. As Morrison was inclined to pagan religion the moon might be a reference to femininity.

Couples naked race down by its quiet side

The above line is metaphorically interpreted as the freedom the soul. The striking comparison in the above line must not be missed. The people are racing but in a tranquil manner. There is no cacophony. Antithetical imagery is intellectually juxtaposed.

Smug in the woolly cotton brains of infancy

Innocence is the personification of childhood. A deliberate attempt is made to remind us about our childlike side.

Choose, they croon, the Ancient Ones

The coherence along with the vocabulary used in the poem acts as a refrain. “Croon” in the modern context generally refers to melancholic emotional singing. Here the ancient might be a reference to religion or the contemporary music or poetry of the age. Morrison always wanted to break the stereotypical poetry of his age and he indeed used the term ancient in a derogatory sense.

Enter again the sweet forest
Enter the hot dream

The above lines are direct allusions to sex. To Morrison sex was always divine and holy. Morrison portrays the sexual adventures of his personal life, which pervaded in his poetry. Again, his attempt to include erotic imagery in poetry in the 70s is groundbreaking. The poet interprets that sex is synonymous with a trance or dream-like state which people chooses to indulge in. He wanted sex to be free from social taboo and skepticism.

Come with us
Everything is broken up and dances.

These lines provide a twisted turn to the poem. Indeed, there is a sexual undercurrent in the above lines. “They” is plural and there is a proposal for the reader to participate. The poem has indeed sexual innuendoes and the poet calls for a threesome. Here the poet rebels against the moral policing and has not judged the sexual activities in terms of right and wrong. He insists whether the reader wants to participate is his or her desire or free will. This is also an allusion to the authoritative sensor implemented on frank treatment.
of sexuality in literary landscape or even personal life. Apart from that the counterculture movement saw various snatching of human rights from common people. The poet wraps up describing the occurrence of spiritual happiness born out of exercising free will or what the heart desires. This poem is indeed a protest against the forceful implication of right or wrong decided by a system terminating the individual point of view.

4. **Lensing the poetic genius and elements of creativity, empowerment, positivity in the verses of Morrison**

Morrison’s richly crafted verses are often lost in his controversial way of life involving narcotics. But his sheer genius as a poet cannot be ignored. Morrison has been often misinterpreted, confining his poetic abilities to the medium of the rock genre. Most people label him as a sex symbol. His anger and rebellious attitude became more prominent as he realized his words/lyrics were not rightly decoded and overlooked. He flaunted his image as a sex symbol to have influence and hold on the target group he was trying to reach. Discussion of the following of Jim Morrison’s masterpieces may solidify the claim that Morrison needs to be taken seriously as a poet-prophet.

- **Awake** - Morrison romanced surrealism in his verses. He practically drowned himself in it. Regular rhyming was also not his cup of tea. The ambiguous nature of verses makes it a little difficult to decode them. Take “Awake,” for instance: reading it is like getting astray among the layered strokes of a painting. It’s like embracing a hot dream after suddenly waking up from sleep.

- **Leading Lines** - “We laugh like soft, mad children/Smug in the woolly cotton brains of infancy/the music and voices are all around us.”

- **Power** - The main reason for the popularity and craziness of Morrison lies in his skill at empowerment. He used his voice and vision to showcase the power of possibility and the individual. In the case of the poem “Power,” once the reader goes through it, he/she feels like achieving anything in life. Morrison believes he can make the earth stop. So, this is the poem for anyone who wants to achieve his dream. Once read, it is just like a power station, reviving the will to keep on trying. Reaching the goal/destination is not the point, but it’s about the journey and the benefits that come with the simple act of trying.

- **Leading Lines** - “I can make myself invisible or small/I can become gigantic and reach the farthest things/I can change the course of nature/I can place myself anywhere in space Or time.”

- **If Only I** - Morrison’s longings were portrayed in verse through hallucination and dreamscape knitted skillfully stanza by stanza. This poem summarizes it all. He longs for the sounds of sparrows, the innocence of childhood and the primary stages of life, just like all of us. Just like all of us, he is entangled in the complexity of growing up. He greeted the stage of life as a radical vision. This verse is far behind a musical. These lines hit the readers strong enough.
• **Leading Lines**—"If only I could feel myself pulling back again and feel embraced by reality again, I would die/gladly die."

• **The Hitchhiker**—The lyrics of this poem earned Morrison the most compelling hit of Jim Morrison. The lyrics are magical. It is an intellectual composition questioning the essence of how people view life. Poetically speaking, it’s about coming face to face with primitive instinct.

• **Leading Lines**—"Riders on the storm/into this world we’re born/into this world we’re thrown/Like a dog without a bone/an actor out on loan."

• **The Opening of Trunk**—The author sits on a throne in the middle of a maze in this poem, which reads like a metamorphic graphic piece. This is similar to the poet lifting “the lid of life” and the contents spilling out all over the floor out of Pandora’s Box. The intellect matures, and the soul begins its journey toward liberation.

• **Leading Lines**—"Let’s re-create the world/the palace of conception is burning/Look. See it burn/Bask in the warm hot coals."

• **Stoned Immaculate**—Scripted in a more realistic setting, it starts with “I will tell you this” and then goes on to denounce accepted notions of the afterlife in western thought. He rechristens death as an “eternal reward,” but reminds us that it won’t grant forgiveness unless one embraces “uncertain dawns.” It is a verse that preaches living without fear.

• **Leading Lines**—"Soft driven, slow and mad/Like some new language/Reaching your head with the cold, sudden fury of a divine messenger/Let me tell you about heartache and the loss of God/Wandering, wandering in hopeless night."

5. **Traces of blakean influences impacting the verses and poetic aspect of Morrison**

In the lyrics of Jim Morrison, it is often seen how he has tried to neutralize unruly impulses, melancholic moods, and traumatic crises through his creative poetical ventures. Morrison’s poetic genius produces poetry which has profound psychedelic effects on his readers. He uses picturesque, time-tested words and images in his poems. As researchers we would love to quote T.S Eliot on this occasion: “Bad Poets Borrow, Good Poets Steal.” What follows below is the prologue from Morrison’s Posthumous Collection of Poetry “Wilderness”:

> I’m kind of hooked on the game of art and literature; my heroes are artists and writers . . .
> I wrote a few poems, of course . . . Real poetry does not say anything, and it just ticks off the possibilities. (#)

Thus, Morrison used poetry as a medium to break the boundaries of conventions and of realities. The infamous “Doors Concerts” were in vogue because of Morrison’s wild use of poetry to excite his audience into a state of detached frenzies and transcendence. Jim Morrison not only believed in the power of words to touch people and transform their lives, but he also considered them as a spiritual outlet for the evolution of tradition, history, and art. Once, Alexander Pope said, “Learn hence for ancient rules and just
esteem. To copy nature is to copy them.” Morrison was greatly influenced by William Blake. Blake’s philosophy had a significant impact on his poetry. His band name “The Doors” indeed originated from the “Doors of Perception,” but the phrase is borrowed partly from Aldous Huxley’s hallucinogens and partly from Blake’s “Marriage of Heaven and Hell.” William Blake, the legendary mystic poet, proposed that realism or self-image are infinite and not fixed and are highly inconsistent and shift from time to time. This bullet-proof idea by Blake rebelled against the conventional notions of the Enlightenment period, which tried to view the world through logical reasoning and traditional senses. Blake’s influence on Morrison’s poetic style and philosophy is as infamous as the poet himself, but little research has been done to explore the interconnectedness between the two. Blake’s poetical ideas were the “Lazarus Pit” and the source of Morrison’s lyrical poetry. Indeed, Blake influenced Morrison in a major way. Blake’s poetry clarified and modified Morrison’s concept of the human form and it’s potential. Morrison divided the human form into two parts: 1. A framework or system within which an individual perceives reality and self-identity, i.e., “closed form of existence,” a closed world, which is realized only through our five senses. 2. Morrison also speaks of another state in contrast to the above, i.e., “open form,” which liberates individuals from the clutches of static or fixed existence and in turn makes them realize the infinite potential of the human soul. The open form or existence, allows us to realize the universe’s infinite potential while feeling its oneness. The above are all Blakean echoes found in “No Natural Religion” by Blake himself, who believes in the infinity of the self. Blake always believed in the desires of individuals. But this identity cannot be measured in terms of bodily structure. The recreation of identity is directly linked with the changing perspective, desire, and thought process of the individual. Blake’s philosophy is not only related to creating individual identity but also focuses on its relation to the external world. Blake opined that those human perceptions are akin to the “Doors” that would help us to foresee the “infinite,” which is the true nature of the world going beyond the five senses.

“If the Doors of perception are clesened everything would appear to man as infinite. For man has closed himself up . . .”

Both Morrison and Blake believed that the traditional boundaries or structures of governmental authority, educational institutions, literature, philosophy, and orthodox religion imposed a viewpoint on people in perceiving the reality of their surroundings. Blake has already stressed the importance of cleaning the “doors of perception” that would help us perceive a world which is truly “Infinite,” breaking the fixed system of order that the authorities impose on us. Thus, through the doors of perception lies the salvation of an individual freeing themselves from the fixed boundaries set by the authorities, which counter the individual’s possibilities to experience the infinite scope of the world, reality, and vision. Blake has already argued that “Man has locked himself up, through the narrow chinks of the cavern,” which essentially means that people representing nineteenth-century England were prisoners trapped within the illusion of their minds. Thus, they had created a close system of order and failed to realize the infinite possibilities of the world. The above philosophy is echoed in Blake’s poem “London,” highlighting the fact that people are instructed or influenced by fixed rules set by outside stimulus that are not innate. Blake, through the phrase “Mind forged Manacles,” reflects the entrapment or prison without a jail condition of people unable to think freely and spoon-fed them the rules or procedure to view reality. This is disastrous.
in the sense that self-perception, reality, and the five senses of an individual are unable to connect to nature, failing to realize its infiniteness. The lives of such individuals revolve within a fixed structure with static or superficial perception, reality, and ideology. Readers would be able to decode the complex poetic philosophy of Blake and untangle the obscure metaphors used by him and the interconnectedness with American poet Jim Morrison while going through this section of the paper. Morrison was tremendously influenced by the poetical idealism of Blake, and Blake’s concept of the human form was highly responsible for Morrison’s psychedelic poetry. He believed that the “Doors” exist between the known and unknown thresholds, and that they are nothing more than a Blakean echo. Morrison preaches that it’s high time we break free from the static framework that dictates our reality and beliefs and perceptions and encourages us to make our transition beyond the threshold of “Doors” for the unification of perception, identities, and imagination.

A serious reader of Blake’s poem would be astonished by phrases used by Morrison, such as “Auguries of Innocence” in “End of the Night” or on the debut album: “Some are born,” “some are born to Endless Night.” This is not just a coincidence. In many interviews, Blake appeared spontaneously on Morrison’s lips. During an interview conducted by John Carpenter in 1968, Morrison made an impromptu remark, “Opposition is true friendship, ha!” Morrison’s first “apocalyptic vision” uniquely celebrated Blakean influences. Blake also fueled his philosophy of erotic mysticism. The body will not work as a well-oiled machine unless it is backed by five senses. He believed the senses were the “windows of the soul.” If sex is viewed as a concept that is sensory or sensual, it might transcend from natural to paranormal experience. The previous line might not successfully interpret the meaning of the cleansing of the doors of perception, but it is difficult to deny the indulgence of “sensuous enjoyment” as found in “Marriage of Heaven and Hell,” establishing interconnectedness to “Visions of the Daughters of Albion” and Blake’s transition from windows to doors and modification into perceptual inlets that are translucent. In The Everlasting Gospel, Blake interprets senses as “windows of the soul,” claiming that a lie can be believed as truth when seen with our own eyes. Morrison began “Notes on Vision” in 1964, later popularized as “The Lords.” It is very true that it had traces of Artaud’s theater of cruelty and inspiration from Rimbaud’s theory of derangement of senses, but it would be foolish to discard the Blakean echo. Major portions of “The Lords” are echoed in “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.” A sincere reader would find similarities and parallels. “The Lords” is composed as a mixture of prose and verse, swinging between literary composition, sensual imagery, and cultural interpretation. As the composition evolves, readers come across form, content, and vocabulary similar to Blake’s “Marriage of Heaven and Hell.” Morrison beautifully states:

The aim of the event is to cure boredom, wash the eyes, and make childlike reconnections with the stream of life. (39)

In “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,” we find the body as an extension of the soul, distinguished by five different senses. The artistic talent of Blake is beautifully reflected in the concepts of purging and cleaning, leading to a drastic improvement in the process of sensual enjoyment. These lines, placed below by Blake and Morrison, have a striking resemblance.
“If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is: infinite. (“Marriage of Heaven and Hell” 14).

Morrison writes,

When men conceived buildings,
and closed themselves in chambers,

Blake’s lines regarding the cleansing of the doors of perception: ‘For man has closed himself up” (“Marriage of Heaven and Hell” 14), bear influence and resemblance to the above lines written by Morrison. Moreover, we cannot overlook the stanza related to shamanism in “The Lords.” Morrison’s usage of the phrase “Mental Travels” has a strong resemblance to a poem by Blake titled, “The Mental Traveler.” Blakean metamorphosis was highly instrumental while composing “The Lords.”

The eyes look vulgar.
Inside its ugly shell.
Come out into the open
In all of your brilliance (24)

The above four lines also echo and recapitulate the lines “Two little orbs . . . fixed in two little caves/Hiding carefully from the wind” from Blake’s “Book of Urizen” and the apocalyptic vision as expressed through the line “Expanding Eyes of Man” that “behold the depths of wondrous worlds” in Blake’s “The Four Zoas.” The reason why we have discussed this influence of Blake on Morrison is to show the extent to which Morrison benefited from the mysticism and romanticism of Blake. Like any cult poet, Morrison studied romanticism and various other forms of poetry and literature during his tenure as a student at UCLA. His bohemian book collection had titles such as Writings edited by Geoffrey Keynes, Poems of William Blake, Prophetic Writings of William Blake, and further selections by Amelia H. Munson, John Sampson, Alfred Kazin (The Portable Blake, 1946), and Frederick E. Pierce. He studied a lot in the sphere of literary criticism, going through the poems and art of William Blake in the book The Divine Vision and several edited versions of Blake by Ruthven Todd. Thus, Morrison learned from no minor poet but rather legends like Blake and Rimbaud. Being a serious reader and learner of the diverse studies in literature and literary criticism sparked many poetic lyrics, later when he formed The Doors. So, we can conclude that Blake’s poetry was highly responsible for the popularity of Jim Morrison’s lyrics or songs composed by the The Doors. As analyzed above, Morrison benefitted immensely from Blake’s writings. The Powell library, at UCLA Morrison came across several books on Blake and got lost in Blakean philosophy. Moreover, it is a documented fact that Morrison wrote an essay on romanticism based on Blake in his class. Morrison was highly influenced by the vision or hallucination effect induced by Blake in his poetry. The famous “Notes on Vision” by Morrison later known as “The Lords,” had several traces of Blakean reflection in it. This anthology had striking similarities in form, ideas, and lexicons influenced by Blake’s “Marriage of Heaven and Hell.” Aside from that, the volume contained a variety of vocabulary, such as “purging,” as well as the use of phrases such as “sensual enjoyment,” which connects it to Blake’s “Marriage of Heaven and Hell.” When Blake opined that the doors of perception must be cleansed, he meant breaking the physical boundary with the
mystical wings of imagination or vision created by the mind. This philosophy by Blake was again responsible for the naming of Morrison’s iconic rock band, The Doors. He even enquired from his instructor, Fredrick Burwick, whether Blake indulged in narcotics, but the answer was negative. In an interview promoting their first album, “Apocalyptic Vision,” Morrison claimed that Blake was instrumental in creating a revolt that had enough power to break the “mind-forged manacles” (coined by Blake). Thus, Morrison highly indulged in the peculiarity and mysticism of Blake’s poetry.

6. Concluding remarks

In the American literary tradition, Jim Morrison is often neglected as a poet. This essay is a real attempt by two fans to reveal not only his poetry, but also what the reader derives from his verses. Morrison aspired to be known as a prophetic poet. The current research on Morrison never tries to figure out who he was or what he was trying to achieve with his poems. Morrison’s status as a major literary poetic talent in the American tradition, which has never taken him seriously as a poet, is attempted in this critical article. While exploring the lyrics of “The Original Temptation,” “Break on through,” “Moonlight Drive” and “Power,” readers come across several elements that prove the poet’s control over nature through imagination or creativity and not through drugs. Morrison indulges in imagination to break a fixed system in order to transcend “to the other side,” sanctioning it to reframe the infinite into his own representation of “the other side.” This act of reframing or recreation convinced the poet that we could too recreate our own world beyond “The Doors.” But he was not aware of what the visionary realm would become. The failure of Morrison to define the other realm allows the poet to recreate his own world through the discretion of his mind, not drugs. Hence, it is proved that the poet can reimagine or recreate his own world because he is gifted with a special power of imagination and not due to alleged drug usage. The words of the poet encourage the readers to move beyond their own “Doors” according to their suitability and, in the process, to unlock all the doors of imagination. The poet once opined that his poetry tries to relieve themselves of the limited ways they see and feel. Like the poet, the readers can explore and experience the potential that remains in the undefined, spontaneous realm, also known as “the other side.” Morrison as well as Blake always opposed the closed-form environment. This closed system of order creates a barrier outside individuals influencing our perception of viewing/interpreting self-identity and the outside world. The poet’s most brutal criticism of this closed system is not for individuals succumbing to such conditions. Rather he blatantly criticized the established order comprised of teachers, government, parents, religious dictators, etc., confining people to a closed system of order to influence or control them. The poet’s main point of criticism is against the institutes of social standing that dictate people their lifestyle. Instead of permitting people of society to enjoy freedom, these institutions create several dogmas & doctrines which in turn confine people to live life in a rigid/specific way. The poet further points out that our feelings are unable to find an outlet for expression and in turn fail to achieve the infinite. Our feelings are limited within the framework dictated by the social institutions. But that destroys our true self enslaving us to live within the boundaries created by society. Morrison, through his verses, paved the way for the readers to liberate themselves
from their limited existence and reframe their own world through the power of imagination. Morrison, as a human being, had several failings, but as a poet he left behind some valuable intellectual examples of poetic genius. A strong faith in the strength and significance of the poet’s verses, has led us to this serious analysis of his poetic talent. To what extent this endeavor is successful in solidifying Morrison’s position as a serious literary and poetic genius in the American tradition, is for the readers to decide. Going through his lyrics, for instance, “Unknown Soldier,” “The End,” “Awake” and “Riders on The Storm” readers are exposed to the reflections of his intellectual insight. “The Hitchhiker,” famously known as Riders on the Storm” – is one of Morrison’s most read poems concerning the universal issue of questioning the vulnerability or fragile nature of the human mind. In 1969, he self-published two volumes of poetry before moving to Paris, which later became a best seller. He went to Paris to escape his celebrity status and focus on his literary expedition. We salute Morrison for being a poetic prophet who imparted mysticism into the literary tradition of the 1960s and, in the process, inspired a whole generation. If poetry is not found in the writings of Morrison, then where is poetry to be found?

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