

Weird Scenes Inside the Gold Mine:  
An Analytical Study of the Music of the Doors

by

David N. Johnson

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the  
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## **Abstract**

### Weird Scenes Inside the Gold Mine: An Analytical Study of the Music of the Doors

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David N. Johnson

Adviser: Professor Mark Spicer

The Los Angeles-based band the Doors remains iconic in rock music history and is synonymous with 1960s counterculture. Through their cultivation of a dark self-image and idiom, the band expressed, reflected, and artistically commented on the turmoil and social upheaval of late-1960s America. The Doors influenced the country's socio-cultural nexus for many reasons: their serious and often sober artistic intent, singular and pioneering styles of music, poetic ambition, theatrical inclination, countercultural affiliation, and psychedelic drug associations.

This is the first dissertation to focus specifically on the Doors' music, utilizing musicological and analytical tools to explore its *modus operandi* and its enduring appeal. This study attempts to establish a paradigm with which to read and parse the band's style and musical meaning. Rather than taking a chronological or encyclopedic approach, I examine their output via a taxonomy I have developed based on interlinked musical and thematic qualities: songs derived from existing musical forms, those delineated by subject matter, and epic song formats. Thus, I concentrate on a representative spectrum of songs—including many lesser-known compositions that have not been addressed to date—which aptly displays the group's ethos and musical imagination.

Moreover, this study is unique because I frequently consult live recordings that were captured during the Doors' extensive tours but released years later. These recordings and my analyses of them speak to the exceptional importance of the bands' live concerts, where theatrical and improvisational forays were plumbed, and which had a tremendous impact on bands in the Doors' wake. These inclusions, taken together with the landmark hits, fill out the Doors' portrait and serve to further underscore their musical innovations as well as the boundaries they transgressed. Finally, in contradistinction to the sociological and cultural studies approaches that have prevailed, which address Morrison and the Doors primarily as signifiers of the late 1960s per se, my considerations of cultural factors and context are tethered to the Doors' actual musical, lyric, and performative production, and as such they examine the complex ways these intersected with their audience and with the larger public sphere.

## Acknowledgments

I wish to first thank my adviser, Professor Mark Spicer, for his wisdom and patient guidance throughout the course of this dissertation. His perceptive insights and the breadth of knowledge he has provided were invaluable to its completion. The genesis for this project arose from his music theory course examining the music of the Beatles, and I discovered under his tutelage how energizing and rewarding a rock-music study could be. I am also grateful to my supervisory committee, including Professor Shaugn O'Donnell, Professor Jeffrey Taylor, and Professor Philip Lambert. Their advice was expert, constructive, and warmheartedly given.

Two professors under whom I have studied during my PhD coursework—though they were not directly involved with this dissertation—deserve mention and thanks. I have always found Professor William Rothstein's theoretical work (not to mention his pianism) brilliant and stimulating. But beyond these, he was for me an inspiring teacher during some difficult times and, although I doubt he has ever known it, his impact was significant. Professor Richard Kramer has taught me how to anomalously explore, wrestle with, and thereby come to perceive music in ways I had never imagined. His artistic erudition, as I see it, draws from a life observed without bias and embraced with spirit.

I am also grateful to Professor George Cochrane for his indispensable assistance in procuring obscure and elusive Doors recordings, many of which opened new avenues of thought and insight for my analytical chapters. He also possesses an encyclopedic knowledge of rock music at large and, in a contagious way, conveys an unbridled passion for it.

To my father, Dr. David N. Johnson, I owe gratitude for teaching me how to listen to music intellectually and emotionally in the same fantastical moment. I also thank my son, Nathaniel Johnson, for his understanding as I slogged for a seeming eternity to complete this work. I humbly trust that my efforts will be a worthy example as he pursues his own artistic endeavors. Lynn Winters first urged me, in 2003, to return to Graduate school and pursue the music I so loved but which I was denying myself. I am very grateful for her faith.

I am indebted in so many ways to Mimmetta Lo Monte, Dr. Richard Greene, and Erika Streuer. Their generosity and encouragement have helped immeasurably in keeping my progress steady and calm. Additionally, I have benefitted from numerous music discussions—Doorsian and otherwise—with J. Douglas Hollingsworth and David Keay. They sparked many satisfying revelations. Working under pressure, Maggie Stenz was my imperturbable editor.

The members of the Doors, living or dead, have created, in my unshakeable opinion, some of the most challenging and estimable rock music of their era. Their place in rock history has been permanently staked yet will always evolve with newer listeners. I applaud their fearless musicianship—the wellspring of this project—and wish them continued fulfilling careers and lives.

Finally, Dr. Vivien M. Greene deserves my deepest gratitude and recognition, as this dissertation would not exist without her unwavering inspiration and emotional support. Her musical viewpoints were most beneficial, as were her discriminating ideas, expert proofreading, and editing. My greatest inspiration has been her evidencing that life treats one well when it is treated well.

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## Introduction

Forty years after their dissolution, the Los Angeles-based band the Doors remains iconic in rock music history and is synonymous with the 1960s counterculture. Through their cultivation of a frankly dark self-image and idiom, the band expressed, reflected, and artistically commented on the turmoil and social upheaval in late-1960s America. The Doors influenced the country's socio-cultural nexus for many reasons: their serious and often sober artistic intent, singular and pioneering styles of music, poetic ambition, theatrical inclination, countercultural affiliation, and psychedelic drug associations. Their very name conjures the LSD experience—it was derived from William Blake's pithy line-cum-maxim: "If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite."<sup>1</sup> The band also knew the work of Aldous Huxley, who was openly familiar with hallucinogens and invoked Blake with his 1954 book *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell*.<sup>2</sup>

This is the first dissertation to focus specifically on the Doors' music, utilizing musicological and analytical tools to explore its modus operandi and its enduring appeal. This study attempts to establish a paradigm with which to read and parse the band's style and musical meaning. Rather than taking a chronological or encyclopedic approach, I examine their output in a taxonomy I have developed based on interlinked musical and thematic qualities: songs derived from existing musical forms, those defined by subject matter, and the epic and the "multisong" formats. Thus, I do not discuss each and every Doors song, but instead concentrate on a representative spectrum that aptly displays the

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<sup>1</sup> William Blake, "The Doors of Perception" (1793), in *The Portable Blake*, ed. Alfred Kazin, Viking Portable Library (New York: Viking Press, 1946), 258.

<sup>2</sup> Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1954); published in the United States as *The Doors of Perception* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956).

group's ethos and musical imagination. In addition to their most famous works, this selection includes many lesser-known compositions that have not been addressed theoretically to date. The existing discourse on the Doors' output focuses almost exclusively on the first and second albums, *The Doors* and *Strange Days*, respectively, and the final album, *L.A. Woman*.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, I have chosen to examine songs from all six of the band's studio albums (along with its sole commercial live album, released in 1970). Moreover, this study is unique because I frequently consult live recordings that were captured during the Doors' extensive tours and released years later. These recordings and my analyses of them speak to the exceptional importance of the band's live concerts, which incorporated groundbreaking performative practices that both shaped their musical style and molded the final form that songs would take when recorded. These inclusions, taken together with the familiar landmark hits, fill out the Doors' portrait and serve to further underscore their musical innovations as well as the boundaries they transgressed.

To date, the Doors' music has been examined only cursorily, and often in subjective terms by authors and journalists without musical training. Jim Morrison, the charismatic, controversial, and, many would say, near-mythic co-founder of the group, has been the foremost object of scrutiny—as person and persona—in various media.<sup>4</sup> He undoubtedly will continue to intrigue the rock world and beyond for years to come. In contradistinction to the sociological and cultural studies approaches that have prevailed, which address Morrison and the Doors primarily as signifiers of the late 1960s per se, my considerations of cultural factors and context are tethered to the Doors' actual musical, lyric, and performative

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<sup>3</sup> Though the correct spelling of "L.A. Woman" would include a space between the abbreviating letters, this dissertation adheres to the Doors' own usage of the title, appearing as it does on the album, its packaging, and on the band's current labels and websites. See <http://thedoors.com>, and <http://www.rhino.com>.

<sup>4</sup> A high-profile example would be Oliver Stone's 1991 film *The Doors*.

production, and as such they examine the complex ways these intersected with their audience and with the larger public sphere. Consequently, my discussions of Morrison's behavior and personality are circumscribed, and I evaluate these insofar as they affected the Doors' musical outcome. Morrison's often-enigmatic lyrics present a challenge in this regard. While integral to the band's art and to the formulation of their music and performances, these texts have also opened the door to ongoing and divergent attempts at (over)interpretation, frequently with a biographical bent. Many of these readings, perhaps not surprisingly, are unduly literal and do not seriously analyze the music to which the lyrics are bound. I base my own exegeses of Doors lyrics in text–music relations, because the Doors' music was intensely lyric-driven and thus requires more suggestive and nuanced analyses.

This study is also distinguished by its transcriptions of the Doors' music, usually in the form of brief notated examples.<sup>5</sup> These are necessary in illuminating the grooves, textures, melodies, lyric settings, and other factors that comprise the music. Only one song, "Light my Fire," has been, to some degree, transcribed previously.<sup>6</sup> Thus, this is the first work that provides a body of transcriptions beyond the rudimentary (and often inaccurate) lead sheets—usually limited to vocal melody and guitar tablature—that are issued by the music publishing business.

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<sup>5</sup> All transcriptions herein are by the author.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Hicks, *Sixties Rock: Garage, Psychedelic, and other Satisfactions* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 75–92.

## Scholarship to date

There are few existing musicological texts on the Doors. One concise example is the *Grove Music Online* entry, where John Covach penned that the Doors created “an often moody style of late-1960s blues-based psychedelia with a tendency to linger over the darker aspects of emotional life.”<sup>7</sup> Michael Hicks has written a fine analytical and cultural study of a single Doors’ song, the smash hit “Light My Fire.”<sup>8</sup> Scholarly writings on the band from related fields of study (such as music criticism, cultural studies, and history) certainly complement musicological inquiry but lack strict musical readings and findings. Authored under the rubric of cultural studies, critic Greil Marcus’s book on the band culls from personal experience and opinion in its attempts to elucidate both good and bad attributes of the band. His intermittent musical observations rely on intuition and are only broadly glossed. There is also Steven Erkel’s recent master’s thesis that parses Jim Morrison’s poetry and lyrics.<sup>9</sup> Wallace Fowlie has examined Morrison’s poetry vis-à-vis one of the singer’s literary idols, Arthur Rimbaud.<sup>10</sup> Through rigorous archival work, Melissa Ursula Dawn Goldsmith has constructed a rich narrative of Morrison’s career with the Doors by examining accounts in contemporaneous underground newspapers. Particularly, she has provided a blow-by-blow account of Morrison’s legal travails—after the notorious Miami concert of March 1, 1969,

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<sup>7</sup> John Covach, “The Doors,” *Oxford Music Online* <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/46631> (accessed January 8, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Hicks, *Sixties Rock*, 75–92.

<sup>9</sup> Greil Marcus, *The Doors: A Lifetime of Listening to Five Mean Years* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011); and Steven Erkel, *The Poet Behind the Doors: Jim Morrison’s Poetry and the 1960s Countercultural Movement* (M.A. thesis, Georgetown University, 2011). The recent publication dates of these works further attest to the continuing interest in the Doors.

<sup>10</sup> Wallace Fowlie, *Rimbaud and Jim Morrison: The Rebel as Poet* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994).

during which he allegedly exposed himself—as reported in the *Miami Herald*.<sup>11</sup> Besides Hicks, Goldsmith is the only scholar to attempt occasional, if basic and brief, analyses to illustrate her points.

In contrast to these few examples of insightful musicological analysis, there is a profusion of biographical and autobiographical materials available on the Doors, some specious and others more reliable. The thoughts and opinions of the members of the Doors are documented in a variety of sources. Keyboardist and co-founder Ray Manzarek and drummer John Densmore, for example, have both written autobiographies that cover their years with the band.<sup>12</sup> Manzarek, Densmore, and guitarist/songwriter Robby Krieger—along with singer/songwriter Jim Morrison—also freely gave interviews to magazines and newspapers. Anecdotal tales about the Doors have mushroomed over the years, often penned by friends, acquaintances, or journalists who were particularly close to the group.<sup>13</sup> It can be difficult, if not impossible, however, to discern truth from fancy or exaggeration with such sources, and many of them suffer from a tendency to simply pilfer information or “facts” from writings that came before, and there are always the hazards of exaggeration and fuzzy memories. These non-scholarly materials—in particular, by Doors’ acquaintances who have

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<sup>11</sup> Goldsmith also opines in her opening remarks that the Doors’ “music was essential to Morrison’s creative development and image, so why do so few published works about Morrison examine the songs themselves?” See Melissa Goldsmith, “Criticism *Lighting His Fire*: Perspectives on Jim Morrison from the *Los Angeles Free Press*, *Down Beat*, and the *Miami Herald*” (M.A. thesis, Louisiana State University, 2007), viii.

<sup>12</sup> See Ray Manzarek, *Light My Fire: My Life with the Doors* (New York: Berkley Boulevard Books, 1999); and John Densmore, *Riders on the Storm: My Life with Jim Morrison and The Doors* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, James Riordan and Jerry Prochnicky, *Break on Through: The Life and Death of Jim Morrison* (New York: William Morrow, 1991); Patricia Kennealy, *Strange Days: My Life With and Without Jim Morrison* (New York: Dutton, 1992); Stephen Davis, *Jim Morrison: Life, Death, Legend* (New York: Gotham Books, 2004); Jerry Hopkins and Danny Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive* (New York: Warner Books, 1980); Jerry Hopkins, *The Lizard King: The Essential Jim Morrison* (New York: Fireside, 1992); Patricia Butler, *Angels Dance and Angels Die: The Tragic Romance of Pamela and Jim Morrison*, 2nd ed. (London: Omnibus Press, 2007); Michael Burgan, *Jim Morrison* (Mankato, MN: Edge Books, 2005); Linda Ashcroft, *Wild Child: Life with Jim Morrison* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1997).

seized the opportunity to capitalize personally on their contact with the group—are therefore of limited use to the study at hand, but do emphasize the public’s fascination with the Doors’ colorful and rebellious reputation.

### **Chapter Outline**

I begin Chapter 1 by delineating the historical atmosphere in which the Doors formed in 1965 and then gained national recognition in early 1967. America was at the time a fractured and deeply troubled country, and the band drew from the social and cultural tumult even as they contributed to it. I include brief biographies of the four members who, somewhat unusually for an American rock band of the late 1960s, were all college-educated and had received training in myriad musical genres, including art music, jazz, blues, flamenco, and even marching band. The give and take of these backgrounds helped define the Doors’ unique sound. This chapter also traces the Doors’ formation and their signing to a record label, and provides an overview of the band’s short, tempestuous, but successful career.

Rock music has provided the field of musicology with a new set of challenges and, consequently, rock scholarship is enlivened by several analytical systems, philosophies, and debates. In Chapter 2, while reviewing existing scholarship and considering different perspectives, I will detail my own approaches to the Doors’ music. As with any music that is analyzed, rock must be allowed its own stylistic identities. My methods to understand the Doors’ idiolect involve analyzing form, harmony, texture, and the more subtle (and often thorny) area of text–music relations. I also describe how songs unfurl in real time through multiple means. I consistently employ figures that match lyrics with prominent or salient

musical features, which can differ from song to song. Transcriptions will further clarify my points.

In Chapter 3 I discuss the ways that the Doors customized existing forms. In many of their songs the Doors relied on standard pop and rock structures, including contrasting verse–chorus form and the twelve-bar blues template. But given the nature of Morrison’s lyrics—and often his poetry, which was fashioned into lyrics—new musical solutions were needed to find their appropriate expressive ends. The same could be said of Krieger’s compositions. The songs that emerged often involved some kind of adaptation of existing forms. Because form comprises multiple other musical elements and therefore has a more sweeping function, an examination of these solutions is revelatory to understanding the Doors’ deeper musicianship.

In Chapter 4 I plumb songs with especially charged themes, dynamic musical settings, and the Doors’ preferred subject matter. I have established a typology to group their most characteristic motifs—namely the psychedelic, the psychosexual, and the morbid—so as to analyze the narrative and musical content of these songs. More than that of other contemporaneous bands, I believe, the Doors’ music is spurred by the evocative tenor of the lyrics. These songs are particularly penetrating and illuminating examples of this compositional tactic that also convey key social, cultural, and historical issues of the era.

The Doors’ embrace of theatrical operations and their experimentation with performative strategies were defining features of the band’s music and image. Songs that best exemplified this approach were their so-called “epic” songs, or those with particularly grand themes that the band chose to set within large musical structures. These structures, which need not be complicated (though some were), had a scale manifesting a broad

musico-poetic journey. In Chapter 5 I look at these epic songs, both in live performances, which best allowed for the open-ended music-making the Doors sought to realize, as well as those issued on studio recordings. Musical form is again the platform on which my analyses stand, but the variability of these songs' central sections permitted other modes of departure to take place, including lengthy instrumental improvisations or—most vividly—Morrisonian dramatic conceits and soliloquies. The latter were either planned or extemporized, or both, and the epics' very unpredictability was one of the hallmarks of Doors performances.

The closing chapter briefly examines the Doors legacy and the subsequent careers of the band's surviving musicians. Despite their legendary status and musical importance in the rock canon, the Doors had a remarkably short career, which officially began in 1967 with the release of their revolutionary first album, *The Doors*, and came to a somber close in 1971 when they issued in April their last, equally revolutionary though more reflective, album, *L.A. Woman*, and when Jim Morrison, their notorious frontman, died in July. Yet their impact on the rock world was substantial and they had an enormous influence on subsequent rock acts. Their longevity is confirmed by the continuing popularity of the Doors in record sales and digital downloads. As older listeners modernize and expand their libraries with new Doors material and enhanced re-releases of existing albums, younger generations satisfy their thirst for earlier rock that paved the way for the music of their present. All of this testifies to the historical durability of the band whose popularity has not waned, but rather has increased with time.

## Chapter 1: Origins and Ethos

Our task became, how to incorporate our artistic backgrounds into the Doors. How do we bring the drama, how do we bring the depth of emotion, how do we bring the pathos, the joy, the sorrow, the terror into rock ‘n’ roll music? How do we bring the terror, indeed. *That’s* what the Doors are all about.

—Ray Manzarek, *Light My Fire: My Life with the Doors*

For rock music 1967 was a pivotal year in an already tumultuous decade.<sup>1</sup> From the UK came the Beatles’ landmark, phantasmagorical *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* album, and nascent bands as diverse as Pink Floyd, the Jimi Hendrix Experience, Cream, the Velvet Underground, and Big Brother and the Holding Company were staking claims with their definitive debut recordings. The United States was wrestling with momentous social matters that included the escalation of the Vietnam war, civil rights struggles, the sexual and feminist revolutions, the increasing use of illicit drugs, the rise of the so-called generation gap, antiauthoritarianism in general, Eastern religion and mysticism, ecological destruction, and more. By 1967 the growing youth counterculture had reached a groundswell of historic proportions. Along with these socially and politically disenchanting youth, there were also leftist radicals who harbored darker, angrier ideologies. If older, conservative Americans were alarmed that youth culture was withdrawing into its own incomprehensible world, then

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<sup>1</sup> Social and cultural chronicles of the 1960s are abundant. The standout publications that informed my thinking are Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines, *Takin’ It to the Streets: A Sixties Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Morris Dickstein, *Gates of Eden: American Culture in the Sixties* (New York: Basic Books, 1977); Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987); Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); David Farber, ed., *The Sixties: From Memory to History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); and Peter B. Levy, *America in the Sixties—Right, Left, and Center: A Documentary History* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998); Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). An insightful contemporaneous account is Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (New York: Doubleday, 1969).

the rise of political activists—including Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Weather Underground, Jerry Rubin, Abbie Hoffman, and others of the New Left—was proof that the counterculture also presented threats of physical danger, even violence.

Such widespread disillusionment called for its own artistic outlets. Among these, rock music was a main conduit for youth to exchange ideas and celebrate collective countercultural values. The rock groups of this generation, which took shape amidst such a maelstrom of contentious issues, responded with music that expressed their autonomy from a perceived mass madness while often railing at the “Establishment.” Chief among these groups was the Los Angeles band the Doors, whose members were singer-songwriter Jim Morrison, keyboardist Ray Manzarek, guitarist-songwriter Robby Krieger, and drummer John Densmore. As John Stickney synopsised,

The Doors do not cater to the nameless faces beyond the footlights. The group is not kind, and they do not entertain in any traditional sense. They allow other people to witness the manner of their existence and the pain and pleasure inherent in their imaginations. The Doors are closely akin to the national taste for violence, and the power of their music forces each listener to realize what violence is in himself.<sup>2</sup>

The Doors’ dissident vision articulated and responded to their era.<sup>3</sup>

The youth and musical countercultures of the 1960s were not monolithic entities. New York, Detroit, and—most relevant for this discussion—the Doors’ Los Angeles were key urban centers where music was created and from which it was disseminated. Yet, San

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<sup>2</sup> John Stickney, “Four Doors to the Future,” in *The Doors: The Complete Lyrics*, ed. Danny Sugerman and the Doors (New York: Delta, 1991), 163.

<sup>3</sup> In early 1969, well into the Doors’ career, the FBI generated a case file on the band, entitled simply “Subject: *The Doors*.” In one letter to Director J. Edgar Hoover, the author (whose name was redacted) wrote, “I thought you would be interested in the enclosed record disc [of the Doors]. ... Certainly, the great majority of decent Americans will applaud any efforts to make record racks and newsstands refrain from peddling such filth.” The same author sent another letter to U.S. Senator Sam J. Ervin, effusing that “I believe you will agree with me, after you have listened to the enclosed disc, that it is the filthiest and most vulgar thing the human mind could possibly conceive.” He even suggested that the record be played for President Nixon, who would soon be naming a new Supreme Court Chief Justice. It is uncertain which Doors record was at issue. See <http://nara-wayback-001.us.archive.org/peth04/20041015042447/http://foia.fbi.gov/foiaindex/thedoors.htm>, or <http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS97638> (accessed August 31, 2012).

Francisco was the progenitor of psychedelic rock (a full picture of which is painted in Chapter 4), and a primary influence on and symbol of the counterculture.<sup>4</sup> From roughly 1965 to 1968, when LSD was the countercultural drug of choice, San Francisco lived the more luminous and carefree side of the acid experience.<sup>5</sup> The city was the youth movement's peace-and-love locus, presented to the world initially by the Human Be-In of January 1967. Later the "Summer of Love" drew tens of thousands of hippies to the epicentral Haight-Ashbury district. The region produced exceptionally innovative rock: important Bay Area bands included Jefferson Airplane, Moby Grape, Quicksilver Messenger Service, the Grateful Dead, Sopwith Camel, and Country Joe and the Fish.

Despite San Francisco's conspicuous motifs of peace, love, and flower power, Los Angeles saw the emergence of such rock artists as Love, Frank Zappa, Captain Beefheart, the Beach Boys, the Byrds, Buffalo Springfield, and the Mamas and the Papas. Los Angeles was comparatively a brash and commercial city, and therefore seemed suspect to some San Francisco musicians. But it was in Los Angeles that musicians were more pointedly seeking direct, experimental, and aggressive musical styles and purposes. Confrontation, provocation, and transgression were among the Doors' own emergent goals. Thus, while there was a good deal of musical traffic between the California cities, and—as we shall

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<sup>4</sup> Though the true origins of "psychedelic" rock are difficult to pinpoint, many fans see the Austin, Texas-based Thirteenth Floor Elevators, founded in 1965, as the first avowed LSD-inspired band. For their history, see Paul Drummond, *Eye Mind: The Saga of Roky Erikson and the 13th Floor Elevators, the Pioneers of Psychedelic Sound* (Port Townsend, WA: Process, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> California was the first state to legally ban the use of LSD in October 1966. The federal government imposed a nationwide ban the following year.

see—the Doors did interact personally and professionally with San Francisco’s most acclaimed musicians, Los Angeles was their home base of choice.<sup>6</sup>

### **The L.A. Scene**

The Los Angeles rock scene in the mid-1960s was a hotbed of experimentation and diversity, driven by a collective, rebellious impulse to find new musical expression at the edge of evolving cultural attitudes. Active bands included the Beach Boys, Love, the Byrds, the Seeds, Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention, Alice Cooper, Buffalo Springfield, Captain Beefheart and His Magic Band, and others. West Hollywood’s Sunset Strip was the place for trailblazing rock artists, and the Whisky a Go-Go, where the Doors became the house band, was the premier venue for shows.<sup>7</sup> Manzarek put the Whisky in the context of contemporary culture: “People who had let their hair grow long, people who saw the Beatles and the Stones and the English invasion and thought that was definitely the way to look ... the Strip was a safe haven for that kind of person, the freaks, the outsiders, the different people.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Densmore stated, for example, “It felt bohemian to be playing San Francisco, the city of poets and acid rock bands.” He especially admired Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin, and Country Joe and the Fish, the last of which “sounded like acid itself.” See John Densmore, *Riders on the Storm: My Life with Jim Morrison and The Doors* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1990), 104. Manzarek was also enamored with the city: “In L.A. you had to be a winner, hang the cost—especially in the film industry. San Francisco played an altogether different game. It was called ... elegance. I liked that game much better. Much more civilized. Much more sophisticated. Much more adult.” See Ray Manzarek, *Light My Fire: My Life with the Doors* (New York: Berkley Boulevard Books, 1999), 67.

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed account of the history and significance of the Whisky a Go-Go (sometimes erroneously spelled “Whiskey” and, even on the club’s website, written as both “Go Go” and “Go-Go”), see Eric Quisling and Austin Williams, *Straight Whisky: A Living History of Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘n’ Roll on the Sunset Strip* (Chicago: Bonus Books, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Jac Holzman, *Follow the Music: The Life and High Times of Elektra Records in the Great Years of American Pop Culture* (Santa Monica, CA: FirstMedia Books, 2000), 157. For his part, Morrison saw the English Invasion as positive and stimulating: “I think it was the success of those English groups that gave hope to a lot of musicians over here; they say, ‘We can do the same thing.’” See Morrison, interview by

The Whisky spotlighted a diversity of musical acts, nearly all of whom the Doors encountered in some manner.<sup>9</sup> The Seeds, for example, founded by Sky Saxon (1937–2009) in 1965, was a local band that often shared the bill with the Doors.<sup>10</sup> The Seeds’ clean, unadorned verse–chorus forms were set in an unruly garage style: rudimentary structural sense, uncomplicated lyrics, a simple chord vocabulary, a generally invariant beat, and an often coarse sound. Not least, Saxon’s sneering vocal style projected clearly a rebellious, proto-punk attitude.<sup>11</sup>

Arthur Lee (1945–2006), founder and singer-songwriter of the group Love, was a highly esteemed musician and quirky personality on the Strip and at the Whisky. The group was represented on the Elektra label, whose president, Jac Holzman, recalled, “In every way Love was a fresh beginning and an experiment.” And regarding Lee as a multi-instrumentalist, “Arthur frequently played someone else’s instrument if he thought he could play it better, and he always could.”<sup>12</sup> As for Lee’s eccentricity, Elektra producer Mark Abramson remembered, “Love, the whole band, was just about as strange as you could get.

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BenFongTorres, February 1971, in *The Jim Morrison Scrapbook*, ed. James Henke (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2007), audio CD.

<sup>9</sup> I will restrict my discourse in this section to contemporaneous bands performing in the Los Angeles area with whom the Doors had direct interaction, and will consider these bands’ then-recent album releases and songs that were likely on set lists and were destined for release in the near future.

<sup>10</sup> Barney Hoskyns, *Waiting for the Sun: A Rock ‘n’ Roll History of Los Angeles* (Milwaukee: Backbeat, 2009), 160.

<sup>11</sup> The Seeds had two hits to speak of, including “Pushin’ Too Hard,” which charted nationally on the *Billboard* Hot 100 from December 24, 1966, to March 4, 1967, and “Can’t Seem to Make You Mine,” which received wide exposure on Los Angeles radio stations in 1965. Coincidentally, Seeds keyboardist Daryl Hooper, like Manzarek, used a separate bass keyboard to compensate for the lack of an actual bass guitar.

<sup>12</sup> Holzman, *Follow the Music*, 130–31.

And Arthur—what an incredible guy. He was this kind of brooding, dark presence. He had this look of a kind of berserk intellectual or teacher or a judge or a guru of some sort.”<sup>13</sup>

The music of Love commanded as much respect as Lee himself.<sup>14</sup> After hearing the Byrds and their novel folk–rock blend, Lee flirted with their style before finding his own idiosyncratic voice. Love’s second album, *Da Capo*, was released in January 1967. The band may well have been working on its tunes the previous summer at the Whisky. The album was eclectic, ranging from the raucous “Stephanie Knows” (which featured metric shifts from 9/8 to 12/8 and 5/8), to the hazy, LSD-inspired reverie of “Orange Skies” (with its first lines of “Orange skies / Carnivals and cotton candy / And you...”), to the hard-driving, proto-punk “Seven and Seven Is.”<sup>15</sup> Lee’s vocal style, accordingly, ran the gamut from tender lyricism to maniacal bellowing. Love also liberally laced their textures with flute, sax, harpsichord, and percussion (for example, maracas and sleigh bells). Certainly the keyboardist Alban “Snoopy” Pfisterer’s organ timbre echoed Manzarek’s addition to the Doors’ color palette. As a recording artist, Lee’s boldest stroke, which outdid even the grand “epic” album programming by the Doors (see Chapter 5), was the inclusion of a nineteen-minute jam–track, “Revelation,” which occupied the record’s entire B side. Despite his many undeniable talents, Lee was a difficult man with an obsession for privacy that crippled the band’s career; Love was also fraught with internal frictions and problems with heroin

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<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Andrew Hultkrans, *Forever Changes* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 16.

<sup>14</sup> Both Manzarek and Densmore harbored pipe dreams of playing with Love. See, for example, Densmore, *Riders on the Storm*, 71.

<sup>15</sup> “Seven and Seven Is” became Love’s most successful single when it charted at no. 33 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 in September 1966. But *Forever Changes*, their third album, is the most profound statement of Love’s legacy. It was released in November 1967, and is listed at no. 40 in *Rolling Stone’s 500 Greatest Albums of All Time* (New York: Wenner Books, 2005).

addiction. In the end, these unfortunate conditions robbed them of the national exposure they deserved.<sup>16</sup>

Los Angeles also nurtured the avant-garde end of the musical spectrum, with Captain Beefheart (1941–2010) and, especially, Frank Zappa (1940–1993). Zappa was familiar with art music composition and was self-taught on a number of instruments, going on to earn considerable international acclaim through his musical brilliance and unflinching personal audacity.<sup>17</sup> He began recording with the newly formed Mothers of Invention in 1965. Their first two albums—*Freak Out!* (1966) and *Absolutely Free* (1967)—were well-known in the Los Angeles area, and the former charted in *Billboard* at number 130. Zappa provided caustic social commentary through his highly original rock music imagination and a sharp-witted use of art music elements. *Freak Out!* was an album that criticized shallow, self-absorbed pop and hippie culture and whose songs traversed (in order) more simply and comfortably structured pop statements to fragmented, experimental collages and mini-dramas.<sup>18</sup> Along the way, stylistic diversity progressed from doo-wop (“Go Cry on Somebody Else’s Shoulder”) and parodic garage (“Hungry Freaks, Daddy”), to goofy pop (“Wowie Zowie”) and random recitation over tonic vamping (“Help, I’m a Rock”). The album’s final and highly episodic track, “The Return of the Son of Monster Magnet,” was a gleeful hodge-podge of extemporaneous elements—spoken dialogue and other recitation

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<sup>16</sup> Hultkrans, *Forever Changes*, 19.

<sup>17</sup> Scholarly articles on Zappa include Jonathan W. Bernard, “The Musical World(s?) of Frank Zappa,” in *Expression in Pop-Rock Music*, ed. Walter Everett, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1–44; and James Borders, “Frank Zappa’s ‘The Black Page’: A Case of Musical ‘Conceptual Continuity,’” in *Expression in Pop-Rock Music*, 45–61. For one fine book (out of many) on Zappa, see Greg Russo, *Cosmik Debris: The Collected History and Improvisations of Frank Zappa*, 2nd ed. (New York: Crossfire Publications, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> *Freak Out!* can be considered one of rock’s earliest “concept albums,” which are defined as records whose songs are linked by a common theme. Other notable early examples include the Kinks’ *Face to Face* and the Beach Boys’ *Pet Sounds*, both also from 1966. These predate by a year the Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*, imputed by some as the first concept album.

(intelligible or not), open-ended improvisation, electronic bleeps, and an extended interior jam with layers of howls, noise, and sped-up tape—that concluded the album on a decidedly bizarre and hilarious note. It was a recording of fearless innovation and a seeming disregard for any wide commercial success. Finally, it deserves mention that during his days on the Strip, Zappa expressed an interest in producing the Doors, but according to Krieger, “We didn’t want a producer, we wanted a record contract.”<sup>19</sup>

The Irish band Them, with a young and brazen Van Morrison (b. 1945) as frontman and lyricist, arguably made the greatest impression on the young Doors. Them, who arrived as members of the British Invasion, was a scrappy R&B group that performed original material and covers of blues standards in a lean and passionate manner. Their music sometimes had an improvisatory quality due to an understated blurring of boundaries between verses, or between verses and choruses, which were realized through the instinctive, arbitrary addition or subtraction of beats. The effect, through an almost inaudible loosening of meter, was that of an impromptu, “single-take” approach which often occurs in live recordings. This allowed Van Morrison a good deal of freedom in his vocal timing and expressive pacing.<sup>20</sup>

During a two-week booking at the Whisky in early June 1966, having reached the end of an arduous U.S. tour (after which Van Morrison would quit the band), Them was scheduled to play several gigs with the Doors. The band’s most compelling feature was Van Morrison himself: a performing dynamo, burgeoning master lyricist, complex personality,

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<sup>19</sup> Holzman, *Follow the Music*, 162.

<sup>20</sup> A case in point is Them’s cover of “Baby Please Don’t Go,” released in the U.S. in 1966 as the B side to “Gloria” (Parrot Records PAR 9727), and written and first recorded in 1935 by Big Joe Williams. Them’s own studio version features an introduction of 23 ½ measures, verses of 12 ½ and 17 ½ measures, a solo of 13 ½ measures, and so on.

deeply committed musician, and unabashed hard drinker.<sup>21</sup> According to Manzarek, “Jim was transfixed by Van. He studied his every move. He put the eye on him and he absorbed.”<sup>22</sup> The Doors, in all their unruliness, countered Them in force. Manzarek also recalls the two bands joining for an electrifying and now-infamous jam on Them’s final night:

Yeah, there were some good times at The Whisky a Go-Go. We played with Them; Van Morrison was insane. When he was with Them, the guy was *all over* the stage, man. Absolutely insane. He did that thing of holding the microphone stand upside down, and singing, and smashing the mic stand into the stage. Then the last night we played we had a jam—the Doors and Them, together on stage, the two Morrisons. Mmh!<sup>23</sup>

The song was, in fact, Van Morrison’s own “Gloria,” which would become one of rock’s most beloved and frequently covered songs and one the Doors covered their entire career.<sup>24</sup>

My Chapter 4 will compare versions by Them and the Doors.

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<sup>21</sup> A Van Morrison biography that also includes some musical analysis is Clinton Heylin, *Can You Feel the Silence?: Van Morrison, A New Biography* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2004).

<sup>22</sup> Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 189. Densmore recalls that “the last night before Them went back to the Old Sod, we all played ‘Gloria’ together. Two keyboards, two guitars, two drummers, Alan—the lovable but always into the ‘drrrink’ bass player—and two Morrisons. The song went on for about twenty minutes. What a night!” But Densmore was more profoundly moved during a Van Morrison solo performance at Whisky agent Ronnie Harran’s home later that night: “I wished Jim had been there. The apartment fell silent and all eyes were riveted on Van. Hearing him sing about ‘walking in gardens all wet with rain,’ I found my eyes welling up. It was as if he couldn’t communicate on a small-talk party level, so he just burst into his songs. We were mesmerized. It didn’t seem appropriate to shower Van with compliments, because his music came from such a deep place. So when he finished there was silence for a minute or so. A sacred silence.” See Densmore, *Riders on the Storm*, 76.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Laurence, “Ray Manzarek: The Audio Interview,” *Audio* 67, no. 12 (December 1983): 40 ff.

<sup>24</sup> Them’s version of “Gloria” did not chart significantly upon its 1966 U.S. release. The Chicago band Shadows of Knight, however, stole Them’s thunder with their own cover of the song (Dunwich Records S666), which charted in *Billboard* at no. 10 in May. See Barry Miles, *The British Invasion: The Music, the Time, the Era* (New York: Sterling Publishing, 2009), 136.

## **Beyond the Strip**

The biggest internationally known acts of the day, of course, were the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and the Beach Boys. Although the Doors were keenly aware of these rock giants, the three groups had varying degrees of influence on the band. At some risk of generalizing, a rough split can be made between the Beatles and the Beach Boys on one side and the Stones and the Doors on the other, with, respectively, clean image and sound versus rough image and sound—at least initially. The Beach Boys’ founder, Brian Wilson (b. 1942), had a feverish musical imagination and brought the band in a mere five years from being the kings of teen surf and hot rod music to the rock masters behind *Pet Sounds*, the landmark 1966 album that played such a role in the famous tussle of influence with the Beatles.<sup>25</sup> The Beach Boys, with their tremendous innate musicality, carried their early overtones of sweetness and innocence into more complex themes, and used musical tools such as tightly structured and “arranged” (in the orchestral sense) styles, novel tonal plans, unusual instrumental choices, and not least their trademark vocal harmonies, which were polished to an unprecedented degree.<sup>26</sup> But, in glorifying the golden teen life of Southern California, the Beach Boys—and Brian Wilson in particular—were the Doors’ polar opposite.

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<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Philip Lambert, *Inside the Music of Brian Wilson: The Songs, Sounds, and Influences of the Beach Boys’ Founding Genius* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 222 ff. Daniel Harrison describes *Pet Sounds* as “a complex treatment of love and loneliness, moving between these two with an attitude that itself alternates between naïve fantasy and budding cynicism. Though the subject matter is considerably removed from their earlier topics, the use of current and faddish idiom in the lyrics is familiar. This time, however, the specialized language of beach and garage is replaced by that of the nascent California counterculture of the 1960s, spiced with some leftover beatnik lingo.” See Daniel Harrison, “After Sundown: The Beach Boys’ Experimental Music,” in *Understanding Rock*, ed. John Covach and Graeme Boone (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 38.

<sup>26</sup> On *Pet Sounds*, Brian Wilson made use of the storied Wrecking Crew, a group of the most talented session musicians in the Los Angeles area. For a history, see Kent Hartman, *The Wrecking Crew: The Inside Story of Rock and Roll’s Best-Kept Secret* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2012).

The Beatles receive very little mention in the literature on the Doors, and any perceptible influence by the Britons seems negligible.<sup>27</sup> They represented a rock otherness that held slight interest, and the Doors members themselves—though they surely picked up musical cues—mentioned the Beatles mostly in passing. The sheer intellectual power of the Beatles was inescapable, but that of Morrison was far more elliptical and irrational.

The Stones, on the other hand, were a force with which to be reckoned, especially as they paralleled the Doors in very heady ways: the presence of a strutting and impudent frontman, their grungy demeanor and appearance (though Morrison in time would don his infamous and priapically revealing leather pants), frankness of expression, immersion in the drug culture, celebration of the degenerate, and unfettered musical language. The Stones were an act to push against, and they forced the Doors to segregate their musical profile even further.<sup>28</sup> According to Manzarek, “The Stones were the really big influence, in hip America. They were dope smokers and they were playing rock ‘n’ roll music. At that point Jim and I thought, ‘Wow, we could play rock ‘n’ roll music,’ just like that. The Rolling Stones blew our minds.”<sup>29</sup> Densmore made his feelings known during a discussion of the

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<sup>27</sup> Beatles scholarship would indicate a lack of interest in the other direction, as well. In Walter Everett’s monumental study of the Beatles’ music, for example, the Doors are dismissed from the discourse in a single sentence. See Walter Everett, *The Beatles as Musicians: Revolver through the Anthology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 94. It is telling, however, that the Beatles and the Doors were side by side at the top of the charts in the summer of 1967.

<sup>28</sup> Densmore remarked on early Doors photo shoots, “It was awkward being photographed over and over. We didn’t know how to look. Casual? Angry? Pouting? Pompous? I think we mostly copied the attitude in old Stones’ photographs that we had pored over.” See Densmore, *Riders on the Storm*, 95.

<sup>29</sup> Ben Fong-Torres and the Doors, *The Doors* (New York: Hyperion, 2006), 6. Fong-Torres (b. 1945), a respected radio disc jockey, author, and rock journalist since the 1960s—he was with *Rolling Stone* magazine almost from its inception—was especially close to the Doors. In this dissertation I will initially be citing Fong-Torres and the Doors’ book to a slightly greater extent than other sources. It has an abundance of fresh quotes by Doors members and their families not to be found elsewhere, but also benefits from Fong-Torres’s wide knowledge of the rock world in general. Finally, I will shorten the book’s authorial ascription in this paper simply to “Fong-Torres.”

problematic search for a potential bass player: “We sounded too traditional. Adding a bass [guitar] made us sound like every other rock ‘n’ roll band. Too much like the Rolling Stones. Although we loved them and talked endlessly about their new record, *Aftermath*, we were determined to do almost anything to sound different.”<sup>30</sup>

### **The Doors’ Formation**

Having considered the Doors’ larger musical context, we may now step back to trace the biographies of the band members and the history of their beginnings. Keyboardist Raymond Daniel Manzarek (b. 1939), a Chicago native, by his own account had a bucolic childhood and a stable family. Though he majored in economics at De Paul University, he cultivated a deep love for art and film. In 1962 he enrolled in film school at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), earning his MFA in cinematography in 1965. Film would remain a passion for Manzarek, and his autobiography is punctuated with references to directors, actors, cinematic technique, and the expressive effects of particular movies and characters. Importantly, he would come to see film in a complex interrelation with the Doors’ music and stage presence. While at UCLA, for example, Manzarek took a directing course with the eminent German ex-patriate Josef von Sternberg: “It changed my life. He changed my outlook on art. He was the one who took me into that world of dark, brooding film noir. I know he had a profound effect on the Doors’ music.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Densmore, *Riders on the Storm*, 51. *Aftermath* (released April 15, 1966) was the Stones’ fourth studio album, and represented a remarkable development in that band’s career. They were expanding their senses of theme and style while branching out timbrally. Such instruments as the marimba, dulcimer, and sitar gave the album its wide color palette.

<sup>31</sup> Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 64.

Several years of classical piano lessons as a youth piqued Manzarek's inquisitive musical mind. He went on to listen ravenously to the radio and to the street musicians he encountered, absorbing new styles—especially blues, jazz, and 1950s rock 'n' roll—and then returning to his own keyboard to assimilate them. By the time the Doors took shape, he was an accomplished keyboardist. Along with the Vox Continental organ, he also played a Fender Rhodes bass keyboard in place of a bass guitarist in concert. (For studio recordings other than the debut album, however, outside session bassists were used.<sup>32</sup>) This allowed Manzarek a more personal and controlled voicing of the bass line in live shows and on the first album. More significantly, this also defined much of the Doors sound, whose sonic bass range was somewhat hollow and thin even as the keyboardist maintained the organ timbre.

Guitarist Robert Alan “Robby” Krieger (b. 1946), who hails from Los Angeles, was exposed to music at a young age by his parents, who listened to classical music at home. He played trumpet and piano briefly, but by high school he was attracted to the guitar. The most memorable concerts he attended as a teenager were performances by Chuck Berry and Bob Dylan.<sup>33</sup> Soon, however, he began formal flamenco training while continuing to work in other styles.<sup>34</sup> Krieger's work in the flamenco style led him to use, unusually for rock, a finger-picking technique while with the Doors. In his 1967 Elektra Records biography, he credited the Paul Butterfield Blues Band's style for pulling him toward rock, and their blues influence is apparent.<sup>35</sup> Also interested in Eastern music, he took lessons on the sitar at the

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<sup>32</sup> Bassists who recorded with the Doors include Doug Lubahn, Lonnie Mack, Harvey Brooks, and Jerry Sheff.

<sup>33</sup> Fong-Torres, *The Doors*, 23–24. Berry inspired Krieger to switch to a Gibson SG guitar, though for bottleneck style he played a Les Paul Custom.

<sup>34</sup> Krieger's solo intro to “Spanish Caravan” from the third album, *Waiting for the Sun* (1968), is representative of his flamenco talents.

<sup>35</sup> Danny Sugerman, *The Doors: The Illustrated History* (New York: William and Morrow, 1983), 3.

Ravi Shankar School (also known as the Kinnara School) in 1968, a step which greatly impacted his sound and technique with the Doors. Krieger only took up songwriting after the Doors had formed, yet he composed most of their hit singles, including “Light My Fire,” “Love Her Madly,” “Love Me Two Times,” and “Touch Me.” He attended the University of California, Santa Barbara and UCLA.

Drummer John Paul Densmore (b. 1944), also from Los Angeles, grew up in an artistic home, where his father was an architect and sometime actor and his mother was a commercial artist. He played piano briefly before acquiring his first drum kit as a young teenager. He took up percussion in junior high school (where he was impressed by the tympani because of its dramatic power) and, as I will show below, his drumming experience in the high school marching band would later inform the unique grooves of several Doors songs.<sup>36</sup> Densmore had a strong taste for jazz and in high school attended numerous shows by musicians including Bill Evans, John Coltrane, Art Blakey, and McCoy Tyner. His favorite drummer was Elvin Jones. (Once the Doors formed, Densmore’s admiration turned to the Who’s drummer Keith Moon.) In his late teens, he played with several jazz bands at local venues and befriended Krieger; the two were in a band called the Psychedelic Rangers. Like his cohort, Densmore became intrigued by Eastern music and began to study the tabla. He attended Santa Monica City College and San Fernando Valley State College.

Singer–songwriter James Douglas Morrison (1943–1971) had the most peripatetic upbringing of any Doors member. He was born in Melbourne, Florida, but—due to his

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<sup>36</sup> Commenting on his rock drumming, Densmore said, “I was fortunate to learn the drum instruments separately, so that I had a thorough understanding when I put them all together.” Quoted in Fong-Torres, *The Doors*, 16.

father, Admiral George “Steve” Morrison (1919–2008),<sup>37</sup> climbing the ranks in the U.S. Navy—spent time in New Mexico, Texas, Virginia, and several cities in California.<sup>38</sup>

Regarding Morrison’s problematic relationship with his father, Wallace Fowlie notes a striking resemblance between Morrison’s background and those of two of his literary heroes: “Rimbaud and Nietzsche were born at almost the same historical moment, and they testify to the same fermentation of revolt and ecstasy. Both refer to unhappy memories of childhood and youth, and both believed in a life of voyage and displacement.”<sup>39</sup>

According to Morrison, one of his defining life moments occurred during a family trip through New Mexico when he was four or five years old. In Morrison’s memory, they came upon a highway wreck, which had scattered the bodies of several Native Americans across the road, bleeding and possibly dead. Morrison stared at the scene and ostensibly sensed, as he recounted years later, that the spirit of one or more of the men entered his own soul. The incident—as he remembered and recast it—was critical to Morrison’s self-image and to the shaman role he played for his rock fans.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Admiral Morrison was the fleet commander during the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Incident in Vietnam. His relationship with his son was fraught, and Jim Morrison harbored a lifelong antagonism toward his father. As one obituary phrased it, “Rebellion met blank incomprehension.” “George S. Morrison, Admiral and Singer’s Father, Dies at 89,” *New York Times*, December 9, 2008, B14. In an interview, the elder Morrison said, “I had the feeling that he felt we’d just as soon not be associated with his career, and stay in the background. He knew I didn’t think rock music was the best goal for him. Maybe he was trying to protect us.” Quoted in Fong-Torres, *The Doors*, 9.

<sup>38</sup> Clara Morrison, Jim’s mother, reports that by the time he was sixteen, the family had occupied some eighteen residences in nine states. In some cases, he was sent to live with grandparents. See Henke, *Jim Morrison Scrapbook*, 6.

<sup>39</sup> Wallace Fowlie, *Rimbaud and Jim Morrison: The Rebel as Poet* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 62.

<sup>40</sup> Morrison would incorporate the incident into his music and poetry. In the song “Peace Frog” (from the album *Morrison Hotel*, 1970), he recites: “Indians scattered on dawn’s highway bleeding / Ghosts crowd the child’s fragile eggshell mind.” The full poem appears in Jim Morrison, *Wilderness: The Lost Writings of Jim Morrison*, Vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1989), 139. The episode was also depicted vividly in Oliver Stone’s 1991 film *The Doors*.

Rather than making music as a child, though he certainly listened to it, Morrison's interests were primarily literary.<sup>41</sup> He wrote and drew in notebooks and began composing poetry while in junior high school. Friends, acquaintances, and teachers who knew Morrison all concur that he was extraordinarily well read. According to Morrison's sister, Anne, "When he graduated from high school, he asked our parents for the complete works of Nietzsche. I think my parents thought it was rather strange."<sup>42</sup> Nietzsche's most resonant conception for Morrison was the dialectic of Dionysus and Apollo.<sup>43</sup> Though Morrison's public persona with the Doors was multifaceted, the concept and spirit of Dionysus was a constant force.<sup>44</sup>

Morrison attended St. Petersburg College in St. Petersburg, Florida (where he was for a time a set designer), and finally UCLA, where he enrolled in the Theater Arts Department to study film.<sup>45</sup> There he met Manzarek, who was in the graduate program. Morrison made one film at UCLA, which proved controversial, at least to the class instructor. Manzarek

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<sup>41</sup> Both Morrison's father and maternal grandmother were proficient piano players. See Fong-Torres, *The Doors*, 10.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 12. Manzarek reported that later, while at UCLA, Morrison had to move his belongings, with most of them being sent back to his parents' house in San Diego. He noted that some of the books Morrison kept were by James Joyce, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Arthur Rimbaud, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, other Beats, Norman Mailer, Truman Capote, Carson McCullers, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, T. S. Eliot, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. See Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 107.

<sup>43</sup> After the Doors were underway, Manzarek recognized a more personal truth in the mythical relationship: "[Morrison and I] had the opposing inclinations of Dionysus and Apollo. My Apollonian sense of order, fitness, propriety, and harmony as opposed to—or, more accurately, balancing—Jim's wild-man ways." See Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 132–33.

<sup>44</sup> Paul Kantner of Jefferson Airplane expounded on this aspect of Morrison: "They called [the youth experience] tribal. Jim was saying it was like a Dionysian experience, like a religious experience; it's what religion should have been—just total joy, exaltation, and the Doors were, for me, one of the few Los Angeles bands that would incite that in their audience." See The Doors, *The Doors—Europe 1968*, DVD (New York: Eagle Rock Entertainment, 2004).

<sup>45</sup> Morrison explained his passion for film: "I'm interested in film because to me it's the closest approximation in art that we have to the actual flow of consciousness, in both dreamlife and in the everyday perception of the world." Quoted in Jerry Hopkins, "The Rolling Stone Interview: Jim Morrison," *Rolling Stone*, July 26, 1969, 16.

seemed to interpret it on its own terms when he deemed it “a disjointed juxtaposition, a collision of images. It was cinema as poetry, rather than cinema as storytelling.”<sup>46</sup> The film included scenes of pot-smoking students, a nuclear bomb explosion as their “high,” and a German girl in a state of risqué dishabille dancing on a television set, which, in turn, was showing old Nazi footage; she then sat straddling the set, so that the soldiers appeared to be marching out of her.<sup>47</sup> Morrison graduated from UCLA film school with a bachelor’s degree in cinematography in 1965.

Both Morrison and Manzarek also found inspiration in the Beat poets, who were their immediate antecedents and whose experiences revolved around not only poetry, but also jazz, the drug experience, Eastern religion, and the road trip. Much of Morrison’s work celebrated the act of travel, whether by car or by hallucinogens, and Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* (published in 1957) was a treasured inspiration. Allan Ginsburg’s poem “Howl” (published in 1956) was also a touchstone. In an interesting parallel, both writers were taken to court on obscenity charges, Ginsburg in 1957 and Morrison in 1969 (see below). In venerating the Beats, the Doors were maintaining a heritage of dissent while embodying the hippie-era avant-garde (where only Frank Zappa would be their superior with his experimental music).

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<sup>46</sup> Henke, *Jim Morrison Scrapbook*, 14–15.

<sup>47</sup> In 1969 Morrison would co-write and act in a film called *HWY: An American Pastoral*, in which he played a lone hitchhiker. This character type— itinerant, solitary, searching—is a recurring one found in both Morrison’s published poetry and in the Doors’ songs. In an interview with Ben Fong-Torres, Morrison stated: “[*HWY*] is a fiction thing. I don’t think it has much commercial appeal. I would like people to see it, though; it was more of an exercise for me; kind of a warm up for something bigger. It’s more poetic; there isn’t a story or anything.” Quoted in *ibid.*, audio CD.

Before he became a rock singer himself, Morrison's eclectic musical tastes ranged from his most-favored Delta blues, to the Kinks, Love, and Bob Dylan.<sup>48</sup> He admired Elvis Presley, but the vocalist he listened to most was Frank Sinatra. Morrison expressed on several occasions a desire to be someone other than a rock singer. Mostly he wished to write (fiction, poetry, screenplays) and make films. Morrison, after all, took up serious attempts at singing only as the Doors were forming. His poetry was published both in his lifetime and posthumously,<sup>49</sup> and his written work has been critically analyzed from non-rock viewpoints.

After recording what would be the Doors' last album, *L.A. Woman* (1971), the spiritually and physically exhausted Morrison moved to Paris to rest, but he would never return. The cause of Morrison's death on July 3, 1971, is still unknown, though it is most widely believed to have been a heart attack, possibly caused by a heroin overdose. His girlfriend, Pamela Courson, found him in their apartment bathtub, but, curiously, no autopsy was performed, and he was soon after interred at Père Lachaise Cemetery. His death remains controversial to this day.<sup>50</sup>

The formation of the Doors was facilitated by two very different institutions: UCLA and the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi Meditation Center (whose practice was known as Transcendental Meditation, or TM). In 1965, Manzarek—using the stage name Screamin' Ray Daniels—and two of his younger brothers were in a surf music band called Rick and the

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<sup>48</sup> Densmore believed that Morrison's blues singing "was the most dramatic way he could deal with his pain and the most effective release valve for pent up rage." See Densmore, *Riders on the Storm*, 141.

<sup>49</sup> See Jim Morrison, *The Lords and The New Creatures* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969); *An American Prayer* (Los Angeles: Western Lithographers, 1970); *Wilderness: The Lost Writings of Jim Morrison*, Vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1989); and *The American Night: The Writings of Jim Morrison*, Vol. 2 (New York: Vintage, 1991).

<sup>50</sup> Pamela Courson died of a heroin overdose herself in 1974. Like Morrison, she was twenty-seven years old.

Ravens. He already knew Morrison from film school, and was pleased to “feature” his schoolmate occasionally as a guest singer at the band’s drunken gigs. Morrison was at this time, more accurately, a good-natured howler. They had gone their separate ways after graduation from UCLA. Later that summer, in July 1965, Morrison and Manzarek had their fateful chance encounter on Venice Beach. On the spot, with some coaxing, a shy Morrison sang a handful of songs he had written. Manzarek was captivated and inspired: “As he’s singing, I’m hearing an entire recording taking place in my mind’s ear! Drums, bass, guitars, backup vocals; and I’m playing a funky organ over the whole thing.”<sup>51</sup> The two immediately agreed to form a band.

In the same period, after too many LSD trips, good and bad, Manzarek decided to try meditation to achieve an altered state of mind. At a Transcendental Meditation lecture, he met Densmore and they discovered common musical ground. During the discussion, Densmore also mentioned a guitarist—friend—from their time in a band called the Psychedelic Rangers—named Robby Krieger, who was also practicing TM.<sup>52</sup> Rick and the Ravens had lost their drummer and Densmore replaced him. It was then that the (future) Doors’ six-song demo tape, which still exists, was recorded. The band played the maiden songs for numerous labels, but was repeatedly rejected. Billy James, of the prestigious Columbia Records label, stated with confidence that he could work with them, but his promise would soon fall through. Finally, the younger Manzarek brothers grew impatient

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<sup>51</sup> Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 97. At this time Manzarek was pondering his ideal band: “The guitar player *will* be a rocker who knows jazz. And the drummer *will* be a jazzier who can rock. These were my prerequisites. This is what I had to have to make the music I heard in my head.” *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>52</sup> The Doors were somewhat amused when, in 1968, the Beatles traveled to India—amidst much press coverage—to study with the same Maharishi. In “progressive” Los Angeles, the Doors had been practicing some three years earlier.

and left the band. A guitarist was then needed, and Densmore brought Krieger aboard. The four Doors had come together.

The group saw from their earliest rehearsals that they easily blended their diverse musical backgrounds. As Densmore observed, “With my jazz, Ray’s early classical training and then exposure to blues, Robby’s folk and flamenco, and Jim’s obsessions with old black blues singers, we were slowly forming the Doors’ sound.”<sup>53</sup> Manzarek’s musicianship was also galvanized:

Jim was coming up with more variations and permutations on his lyrics that required more and more invention of the keys from me. . . . I was constantly pushing myself to try different and more imaginative chord changes, harmonic patterns, solos, rhythms. Funk grooves, blues riffs, and jazz and classical modes of playing to support and embellish his poetry.<sup>54</sup>

One highlight was the band’s discovery of Krieger’s bottleneck guitar technique, something that was new to them on an electric instrument rather than the more familiar acoustic one. They were awestruck by the mysterious, sexy, liquid sound. Krieger’s bottleneck skills would later become a singular expressive voice within the Doors’ textures. It was in this formative period of rehearsals that the Doors fashioned their extensive early repertoire, which included both cover versions and an ambitious roster of original songs.

The Doors next goal was to be booked into the celebrated cluster of bars on Hollywood’s Sunset Strip and, finally, in February 1966, the band secured an engagement at a seedy venue called the London Fog.<sup>55</sup> Audiences at the club consisted of sailors on leave, prostitutes, hoodlums, and others of questionable repute, but this ironically was a blessing,

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<sup>53</sup> Densmore, *Riders on the Storm*, 51.

<sup>54</sup> Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 113.

<sup>55</sup> At about this time, the Doors agreed, per Morrison’s insistence, to split all future profits evenly amongst the four of them.

because the Doors were able to build and experiment with their material while maturing as a group without undue pressure. This proved an advantage when they then recorded their early albums. As Krieger observed,

The songs were really worked out onstage. We might rehearse a few times and get the basic gist of the song. But then we'd be playing so many clubs that we would really work it out onstage. So the song would grow in person, which is a good way to do it because you can tell by the audience reaction if something is working or not. The first two albums were very easy to record because of that; the songs were so together that all we had to do was turn the tape recorder on and record.<sup>56</sup>

Morrison also began finding himself as a performer at the Fog. In the beginning—and against all he would later be known for—he sang softly, hesitantly, and literally kept his back turned to the audience. But he quickly gained confidence, facing the patrons, emboldening his vocal technique and stage manner, while improvising lyrically. It was here that the Doors' learned flexibility in lengthening songs through soloing and Morrison's impromptu poetic recitations.

A turning point in the Doors' career came when the Whisky a Go-Go's booking agent, Ronnie Harran, decided to hire the Doors to perform at the club. They became the house band there in May 1966. The band quickly gained confidence and essayed new musical arrangements and theatrical experiments, as well as attracting a larger audience and the notice of fellow musicians and other important figures from the music world.<sup>57</sup> Elektra's Jac Holzman was persuaded to watch a set by the band.<sup>58</sup> His first impression of the Doors was

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<sup>56</sup> Rhino Records, "The Doors: 40th Anniversary Interviews," Rhino.com, <http://www.rhino.com/video-doors-40th-anniversary-interviews> (accessed February 9, 2012).

<sup>57</sup> The Doors' notorious final performance at the Whisky, in August 1966, was incendiary enough to cause the firing of the band and portend their tempestuous future: having tinkered with the improvised central section of "The End" for over fifty performances, Morrison streamed that night into his infamous (and first) "Oedipal" rendering. In the process, he set the taboo standard for all future performances of the song, including the version on the debut album. I will analyze "The End" in Chapter 5.

<sup>58</sup> Since it was launched in 1950, Elektra had always been a folk music label, but Holzman had recently begun

negative, but during a later visit he intuited their uniqueness and potential.<sup>59</sup> A contract was signed on August 18, 1966. Holzman assigned Elektra's Paul Rothchild (1935–1995) to be their producer, and Bruce Botnick (b. 1945) of Sunset Sound Recording Studio (in Hollywood) was hired as audio engineer.<sup>60</sup> Rothchild, too, had an unfavorable initial reaction to the band but, like Holzman, felt they could be worked into a formidable act. Holzman and Rothchild both took especial note of Morrison's performative magnetism, along with the band's ability to enthrall audiences by alternating hard-rocking numbers with songs of sustained dramatic atmosphere.

## **Recordings**

Once the Doors were signed with Elektra, their music and message were finally circulated through records and radio, though the door was also opened to touring, where their maverick ideals, musically and theatrically, were most sharply defined. I will first discuss the six albums released by the band (although I touch on certain details of these albums in my analyses below, and thus will only broadly outline them here.) I will then give a brief account of their touring.

Recording sessions for the eponymous debut album began at Sunset Studios in the fall of 1966. The release date would be January 1967.<sup>61</sup> The band was hungry to make the

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to diversify its genres.

<sup>59</sup> Arthur Lee of Love was sufficiently impressed with the Doors to recommend them to Holzman. See Holzman, *Follow the Music*, 162.

<sup>60</sup> When the Doors began working with Rothchild, they recognized his utter professionalism, but were also impressed by his recent incarceration for marijuana possession. Botnick played an important role throughout the Doors' career, being their audio engineer for every album, and acting as producer for their last.

<sup>61</sup> Holzman made rock history by advertising an album, for the first time, on a huge billboard. It was situated on Sunset Boulevard and featured a photograph of the band.

recording, which required only ten days and ten thousand dollars to make. The Doors' club days, where so many songs were learned so well, were paying off. In addition to mostly original material, the Doors recorded the Willie Dixon blues classic "Back Door Man" and a cover version of the Bertolt Brecht–Kurt Weill number "Alabama Song (Whiskey Bar)," which lent the album a moment of faux sophistication and prewar European élan. Fittingly, the song was originally written for the theater.<sup>62</sup> For this album, Krieger had written the song "Light My Fire" (to be discussed in detail in Chapter 3). Its genesis typifies how many of his songs came to full fruition. When Krieger first ran through the song's basic ideas in rehearsal, the rest of the band found the tune disconcertingly lounge-like, but they began adding their own enhancements. Densmore, for example, decided to shift between a Latin beat and a backbeat. The song then took shape musically, but Krieger still needed lyrics for a second verse. Morrison promptly composed them, and with the introduction and instrumental solos added, the song was basically complete. Krieger's tunes were thus brought to rehearsals relatively intact, and the band could determine their musical direction rather quickly. Morrison's songs, however, required a different strategy. He would have the lyrics and, usually, a melody to teach the others, but a more in-depth collaborative process was needed to craft the song. Morrison's incipient tunes required the band members to play a larger creative role.

The opening song, "Break On Through (To the Other Side)," was issued as a single but did not perform as well as expected. Reports from radio stations, however, enthused about "Light My Fire," though at seven minutes in length it was too grand for the AM radio format. Rothchild believed the band could produce a true hit single from the song, and

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<sup>62</sup> Manzarek's girlfriend and future wife, Dorothy Fujikawa, first suggested the song to the band. See Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 174–75.

truncated it by editing out most of the soloing. Manzarek and Krieger were disgruntled to lose their handiwork, but the band agreed to release it. Rothchild's hunch was correct, and the Doors biggest single went to number one nationally in the summer of 1967.

The first album was a critical triumph and ranks among the most arresting debut albums in 1960s rock. Paul Williams, founder and editor of *Crawdaddy!* magazine, gushed that

*The Doors* is an album of magnitude. Thanks to the calm surefootedness of the group, the producer, the record company, there are no flaws; the Doors have been delivered to the public full grown (by current standards) and still growing (standards change). Gestation may have been long and painful; no one cares. The birth of the group is in this album, and it's as good as anything in rock. The awesome fact about the Doors is that they will improve.<sup>63</sup>

The album's success led Elektra to bring the Doors to New York and book them at the trendy club Ondine, which was famously frequented by Andy Warhol. (It was to be the first of many visits paid to the city, which Manzarek dubbed "The Beast.") The Doors also were invited to an outrageous party at the Factory, where Morrison volleyed with a clearly infatuated Warhol, and where he met the Velvet Underground's chanteuse Nico.

After the first album's release, the Doors' options multiplied. They were invited to perform on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, where the band had the opportunity to play on the national stage. Before the show (which was broadcast live on CBS every Sunday evening), a producer told Morrison that the word "higher" in "Light My Fire" ("Girl we couldn't get much higher") required a substitution because of its clear drug connotations. Morrison agreed, but when the moment came during the performance, the singer sang the taboo word

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<sup>63</sup> Paul Williams, *Outlaw Blues: A Book of Rock Music* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1969), 93.

anyway and it rang out on millions of American television sets. Sullivan was incensed and banned the Doors' from any future performances on his show.<sup>64</sup>

Because the Doors still had a repertoire of original songs at their disposal, the recording of the second album—to be called *Strange Days*—was also trouble-free. It was released in October 1967, only nine months after the debut album, and was another critical and popular success. To further psychedelicize the album, the Doors made use of new studio technology, including eight-track recording equipment and the new Moog synthesizer. Musical and thematic material was even more bizarre and disturbing, with songs such as “People Are Strange” (also issued as a single), “My Eyes Have Seen You,” and the moody, lengthy closer, “When the Music’s Over.” The other, more successful single from the album was Krieger’s “Love Me Two Times,” which the songwriter suggested referred to a soldier imploring his girlfriend just before he was shipped out for duty, possibly to the Vietnam War. Manzarek offered his view of the album: “*Strange Days* was a commentary on the times. But it was a commentary on post–World War II America more than just the sixties. The Doors were not so much commenting on the hippie era. We had a beatnik foundation, a literary foundation, a film foundation.”<sup>65</sup> A *Rolling Stone* article summed up the album by saying, “One must think of the Doors in a theatrical rather than a musical way. Their whole album, individual songs and especially the final track [“When the Music’s Over”] are

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<sup>64</sup> The Doors performed on other nationally broadcast television shows, including *The Jonathan Winters Show* (December 1967) and *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* (December 1968). While still coming of age on the Strip, they had made several appearances on local Los Angeles shows.

<sup>65</sup> Quoted in Fong-Torres, *The Doors*, 96. Morrison’s and Manzarek’s interest in the Beats held some irony, as most Beats regarded the 1960s youth movement as self-indulgent and immature. Allen Ginsberg, who became something of a hippie mascot, was an exception.

constructed in the five parts of tragedy. Like Greek drama, you know when the music's over because there is catharsis."<sup>66</sup>

When the Doors returned to the studio in January 1968 to record their third album, *Waiting for the Sun*, they were ill-prepared for the process: all of their material had been used to fill the first two albums and the pressure of a busy touring schedule made song composition far more daunting. The album, though it contained Krieger's hit single "Hello, I Love You," received decidedly mixed reviews. Jim Miller, writing in *Rolling Stone*, had praise for some of the songs (and the instrumentalists' talents), but his conclusion expressed unequivocal disappointment: "The Doors are not a particularly exciting hard rock band and Morrison is something like rock music's equivalent to Rod McKuen. Whether all this adds up to the praise that has been heaped on the Doors in some circles is open to question. As for the music, great rock it isn't—but then Morrison is supposedly our generation's sex symbol. Anyway the cover is pretty."<sup>67</sup> Perhaps the most damning collective view of the album was simply that the Doors did not sound like the Doors: the subversion and explosive originality of their first two records was missing. But Harvey Perr took a more sympathetic position:

The real tragedy of their public image [may have been] the fact that they were praised too much too soon and were forced almost immediately, before getting a chance to move on in their own direction, to become a commercial commodity, to have to live up to an already overblown success image. There's something about the underdog (and the harsh reviews of [*Waiting for the Sun*] suddenly turned the heroes into underdogs) and the vulnerability of

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<sup>66</sup> "Records," *Rolling Stone*, November 23, 1967, 18. *Rolling Stone* was still a fledgling rock publication, having been founded by Jann Wenner in November, 1967. From the magazine's beginnings, it also covered politics and youth culture. Although *Rolling Stone* was only one of many press outlets in the mid- to late 1960s, I quote them with some preference in this chapter if only because of their high countercultural profile and influence.

<sup>67</sup> Jim Miller, review of *Waiting for the Sun*, *Rolling Stone*, September 28, 1968, 28.

the underdog that forces one to consider and appreciate more genuinely where it is he has failed.<sup>68</sup>

Notwithstanding these negative reviews, the public, perhaps still stirred by the previous album, bought enough copies of *Waiting for the Sun* to make it the Doors' third gold record in a row.

The Doors' next album, *The Soft Parade* (released in July 1969), brought them, in the public's mind, to their musical nadir. The project cost an astounding two hundred thousand dollars to produce: Paul Rothchild's perfectionism became exasperating, his endless retakes vexed the band, and outside musicians were added. It was chiefly Manzarek's idea to augment the band with backing instruments, including strings and horns, because he felt it was time to try new directions, but meshing the band with a small orchestra was a gamble. The strings and horns only jarred most fans, and much of the musical and thematic material was perceived as bizarre, gimmicky, and certainly uncharacteristic. The great promise of the debut album was going unrealized. Still, the eclectic *Soft Parade* produced, ironically, four singles—the most of any Doors album. Krieger, who took a more active writing role as Morrison drank heavily and became increasingly detached, penned all of them. *The Soft Parade* had its champions in the media, but the naysayers easily drowned them out. *Rolling Stone* magazine again saw the band in a precipitous fall: “*The Soft Parade* is worse than infuriating, it's sad. It's sad because one of the most potentially moving forces in rock has allowed itself to degenerate. A trite word, but true.”<sup>69</sup> Despite these negative forces, the album became yet another gold record for the Doors, though Elektra facilitated this by aggressively promoting its singles in the pop market.

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<sup>68</sup> Harvey Perr, “Stage Doors,” in *Complete Lyrics*, 106.

<sup>69</sup> Alec Dubro, review of *Soft Parade*, *Rolling Stone*, August 23, 1969, 35.

*Morrison Hotel*, the Doors' fifth album (released in February 1970), represented a kind of comeback for the band. Still reeling from the Miami concert that left Morrison facing serious obscenity charges, the band was buoyant nonetheless during the recording sessions: friends were visiting the studio to offer support, John Sebastian of the Lovin' Spoonful played harmonica on the opening track, and bass players Lonnie Mack and Ray Neopolitan added to the album's engaging grooves.<sup>70</sup> The record's success was thanks, in large part, to its opening and closing songs, "Roadhouse Blues" and "Maggie M'Gill," respectively. These were hard-rocking songs that featured Morrison returning to his full-throated fortitude. "The Spy" (to be analyzed in Chapter 4), in contrast, was a blues-drenched mind game.

*Circus* magazine was impressed with the release, writing that "*Morrison Hotel* is possibly the best album yet from the Doors: it will convert new adherents to Morrison's faith, and reassure those like me who thought the last two sets were bummers. Good hard, evil rock, and one of the best albums released this decade. More power to Morrison's leather pants."<sup>71</sup> Writing in *Rolling Stone*, however, critic Lester Bangs (a critic who harbored consistently ruthless feelings for the Doors) raved about the opening song, only to turn cold: "This could have been a fine album; but the unavoidable truth—and this seems to be an insurmountable problem for the Doors—is that so much of it is out of the same extremely worn cloth as the songs on all their other albums. It's impossible to judge it outside the context of their other work."<sup>72</sup> Bangs raised an issue that plagues all popular artists, and the

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<sup>70</sup> Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 335.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Jerry Hopkins and Danny Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive* (New York: Warner Books, 1980), 284.

<sup>72</sup> Lester Bangs, review of *Morrison Hotel*, *Rolling Stone*, April 30, 1970, 53.

Doors had long since confronted it: do they continue in the same stylistic vein, but risk boring fans? Or do they explore new material, but risk losing fans?

Perhaps to please both camps, in July 1970 the Doors released *Absolutely Live*, a double-LP set that was culled from multiple performances (owing to the meticulous editing efforts of Rothchild). It was the only live recording to appear during the Doors' career and would be subsumed, along with other material, into the 1991 album *In Concert*. I will touch on *Absolutely Live* later in this study.<sup>73</sup>

The Doors' final record, their sixth from the studio, was *L.A. Woman* (released in April 1971), which saw the band in a vastly improved musical vein. Though the Doors had had a falling out with Rothchild, they recovered and proceeded with Bruce Botnick, their engineer, as producer. Rather than losing their way, they found another one: the album was back-to-basics and heavily blues-oriented, and it exuded confidence in both musico-poetic material and execution. In the press the album was almost universally praised. *Rolling Stone* devoted a lengthy review to *L.A. Woman*, summing it up by saying, "You can kick me in the ass for saying this: this is *the Doors' greatest album* and (including their first) *the best album so far this year*. A landmark worthy of dancing in the streets."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> In November 1970 the Doors released a compilation album called *13* (Elektra LP EKS 74079), which peaked at no. 25 on the album charts.

<sup>74</sup> Robert Meltzer, review of *L.A. Woman*, in *Rolling Stone*, May 27, 1971. Another critic, however, had a quite different reaction, clearly preferring Morrison's theatrical efforts over his straight-up rock singing: "With Jim Morrison gone, the Doors presumably will fade into the vague anonymity that always drifted just below the surface of their music. In their own unique fashion, the group *did* create a kind of classic, and highly fragile rock style. When Morrison tries to sing the blues in "Been Down So Long," "Cars Hiss By My Window," and "Crawling King Snake," his musical failings are obvious. What it comes down to—and the evidence is on the recording—is the fact that theater was Morrison's true medium, and he knew it well, using the Doors as a setting for his instinctively effective melodramatics." See Don Heckman, "Jim Morrison at the End," *New York Times*, August 8, 1971. Curiously, Heckman's album review was published over a month after Morrison's death, and by that time the album in question had been on the market fully five months. Perhaps Morrison's death spurred the author's broader musing on the Doors' career.

The title song was an ambitious signifier: the city of Los Angeles, where the Doors were born, was metaphorically portrayed in all of its glory and shadow. “L.A. Woman” was recognized in time as Morrison’s great valediction to his adopted home. Still, the band members were utterly exhausted and sensed the Doors’ imminent demise. Though Morrison in particular had been run ragged by the Miami ordeal, he somehow gathered positive energy and passionate singing for the recording.

Shortly after the album’s completion he would leave for Paris. During the three remaining months of his life the record would achieve the band’s most critical and popular acclaim since *Strange Days*. Only on their last album did the band—wiser and more sanguine even while facing their impending collapse—finally relax and regroup. The result is an honest, numinous last musical word inextricably linked with the tragic human dimension that created it. Today *L.A. Woman* is viewed as a bookend of excellence to the Doors’ oeuvre, being a ripe Doorsian complement to the first two albums. It was also the band’s seventh straight gold record.

## **Performance**

A lot of our most interesting songs develop over a period of time playing night after night in clubs. We’d start out into a fairly basic song and then the music would settle into a kind of hypnotic river of sound which would leave me free to kind of make up anything that came into my head at the time. I like songs but that’s the part of the performance that I enjoy the most, to pick up vibrations from the music and what’s coming from the audience and just kind of follow it wherever it goes.<sup>75</sup>

A brief evaluation of the Doors’ live performances is crucial to this discussion. The band felt they could only be truly understood in concert. It was, as mentioned previously, on stage that

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<sup>75</sup> Morrison, interview by Richard Goldstein, quoted in Jerry Hopkins, *The Lizard King: The Essential Jim Morrison* (New York: Fireside, 1992), 214.

they experimented with and formulated their songs' structures and duration. Playing live before an audience also permitted them to develop and hone their unique performative approach and spearhead a new performer–audience dialectic in rock music.<sup>76</sup>

The Doors began extensive touring after the debut album and were as engrossing to watch—the Doors might prefer the term “experience”—as they were to hear. The band's stage demeanor, however, was baffling to some. Pete Johnson, an *L.A. Times* critic, observed that

the Doors are a hungry-looking quartet with an interesting original sound but with what is possibly the worst stage appearance of any rock ‘n’ roll group in captivity. Their lead singer emotes with his eyes closed, the electric pianist hunches over his instrument as if reading mysteries from the keyboard, the guitarist drifts about the stage randomly, and the drummer seems lost in a separate world.<sup>77</sup>

Films and videos of the Doors' performances show how the group behaved onstage, and Johnson's observations remained largely valid through the band's career.<sup>78</sup> The Doors' physical arrangement onstage never changed and was not unusual: Morrison was out front at his mic stand, Densmore's kit was at the rear center, Krieger stood stage left, and Manzarek sat stage right. Krieger confined himself to a small circle and used minimal gestures. Oddly, the rhythms of his occasional stepping or rocking were completely out of sync with the music being played, so that he seemed to be floating above it all. Manzarek, as Johnson

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<sup>76</sup> This relationship was, of course, prescribed by venue size to some extent. Morrison made a clear-cut distinction between playing large arenas and more intimate clubs: “Concerts are great but it gets into a crowd phenomenon that really hasn't that much to do with music. The sheer excitement of the event, the mass of people mingling together, generates a kind of electricity. It's mass hysteria. In a club there's a different atmosphere. They can see you sweat and you can see them. In a club you have to turn people on *musically*. If it doesn't cut it, everyone knows.” Italics added. Quoted in Jerry Hopkins, “The Rolling Stone Interview: Jim Morrison,” *Rolling Stone*, July 26, 1969, 15.

<sup>77</sup> Quoted in Sugerman, *Illustrated History*, 15.

<sup>78</sup> See, for example, *The Doors—Europe 1968; No One Here Gets Out Alive*, DVD (Livingston, NJ: Hollywood Heartbeat Productions, 1981); *The Doors Are Open*, DVD (Seoul: Gravity, 1992); *The Doors Collection*, DVD (Universal City, CA: Universal Studios, 1999); and *Soundstage Performances*, DVD (New York: Eagle Rock Entertainment, 2002).

indicated, focused intently on his keyboard, rocked his head back and forth (also out of time with the beat), and appeared hypnotized. Densmore maintained a discernible focus despite his level of gesticulation. Morrison, however—when not standing immobile with his eyes closed as he sang—provided the most dramatic gestures, including, for example, lasciviously handling the mic and its stand, spontaneously flailing, suddenly dropping hard to the floor (an act usually cued by lyrics), dashing out into the audience, or, more ritualistically, dancing trance-like in a small circle. All of this is to say that despite the deserved reputation for being a “theatrical” group, the term was better applied to the nature of their words and music, to the atmospheres they created, than to implications of their stage manners. While the members appeared independently ruminative, they were in fact highly attuned to each other. As proof of this, the long, changeable, and largely improvisatory songs they repeatedly performed live were navigated as a tight, cohesive unit—yet these were rarely done the same way twice.<sup>79</sup>

The Doors’ star rose quickly, and their iconoclastic ethos combined with Morrison’s increasingly audacious stage conduct changed the performer–audience relationship to the point of literal tactility. Morrison fervently sought “total sensual contact with an audience,” a sentiment to be taken several different ways.<sup>80</sup> Early in the band’s career, the singer would sometimes walk the very edge of the stage as if on a tightrope. Soon he advanced to falling onto the audience, and ultimately he was leaping into their outstretched arms. Though some

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<sup>79</sup> The Doors also spurned uniformity in dress. As Fong-Torres described them, “they were a motley crew. Krieger and Densmore’s outfits were flower-powered; Manzarek, the elder, was preppy, with Ivy League sport coats and slacks. Morrison, before he discovered—or could afford—black leather, seemed content with getting his clothes at Goodwill Industries.” See Fong-Torres, *The Doors*, 53.

<sup>80</sup> Quoted in Richard Goldstein, “The Shaman as Superstar,” in *The Doors Companion: Four Decades of Commentary*, ed. John Rocco (North Yorkshire, UK: Quill Publishing, 1991), 9.

observers at the time dismissed the action as a kitschy stunt, Morrison has since been credited with the first stage-diving in rock history.

The Doors gave their fans exhilarating and compelling shows. But, to the Doors' chagrin, increasingly rowdy audiences began flocking to their concerts. Rather than simply mirroring the Doors' stage act, the boisterous behavior of these fans, in truth, had intricate roots. Morrison the performer—who believed “there are no rules at a rock concert; anything is possible”<sup>81</sup>—embodied a paradoxical mix of music, poetry, improvisation, sexuality, shamanism, mysticism, altered perceptual states, psychic wandering, humor, disruption, drunkenness, and confrontation. Ritual and theater framed the discourse between artistry and its absorption. However, Morrison's capricious stage behavior, his performing personae, the Doors larger ethos, fans' wide-ranging expectations, and the pressure of public scrutiny complicated the realization of this dramatic principle. It is, in fact, an impossible task to disentangle the many “Morrison” from his many audiences (be they concertgoers, an eager press, or American society) because such myriad causes and effects were in perpetual flux.

The Doors had a string of concerts which degenerated in uproar, police presence, and even arrests, including the first ever of a musician (Morrison) onstage during a performance.<sup>82</sup> There were disorderly shows in Chicago, New York, Phoenix, Cleveland, St. Louis, and other cities. Most of these ended with injuries, detentions, and some turned to near-riots.<sup>83</sup> Sometimes the band played on without Morrison. On their European tour with

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<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Andrew Doe and John Tobler, *The Doors in their Own Words* (London: Omnibus Press, 1988), 61.

<sup>82</sup> This occurred in New Haven, CT, in December 1967. Following Morrison's arrest, a melee between the concert crowd and policemen intensified outside the arena, where three people—a *Village Voice* critic, a researcher for *Life* magazine, and a *Life* photographer—were arrested. See “New Haven Police Close ‘The Doors,’” *New York Times*, December 11, 1967, 58.

<sup>83</sup> See, for example, “Doors Concert Starts Riot in Long Island,” *Rolling Stone*, September 14, 1968, 4.

Jefferson Airplane in fall 1968, for instance, Morrison was hospitalized in Amsterdam and Manzarek took over the show, demonstrating his considerable musical talents and stage presence. Grace Slick, singer from Jefferson Airplane, observed, “And that’s where Manzarek comes in. The man is amazing. I don’t know another band member where the keyboard player can just all of a sudden take over and do the rest of the show, *and* sing, *and* play the piano, *and* get all the phrasing right and do the whole thing, probably never having done it before.”<sup>84</sup>

The Doors’ most infamous concert occurred on March 1, 1969, at Miami’s Dinner Key Auditorium. It was a moment that radically redirected the band’s trajectory, and one from which they never completely recovered. As the story is well known, I will limit my discussion to its most salient points.<sup>85</sup> In early 1969, Morrison (without his band mates) was in California immersing himself in radical theater. Morrison’s performative theories were already motivated by the work of Antonin Artaud who, with his Theater of Cruelty, wished to shock the audience out of complacency. As the playwright and director wrote,

The Theater of Cruelty proposes to resort to a mass spectacle, to seek in the agitation of tremendous masses, convulsed and hurled against each other, a little of that poetry of festivals and crowds when, all too rarely nowadays, the people pour out into the streets. The theater must give us everything that is in crime, love, war, or madness, if it wants to recover its necessity.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> *The Doors—Europe 1968*. Italics added.

<sup>85</sup> Accounts of the event and Morrison’s subsequent trial were published in newspapers across the country. The *Miami Herald* was particularly thorough (and, many would say, negatively biased) in its reporting. For other comprehensive chronicles, see Melissa Goldsmith, “Criticism *Lighting His Fire*: Perspectives on Jim Morrison from *The Los Angeles Free Press*, *Down Beat*, and *The Miami Herald*” (M.A. thesis, Louisiana State University, 2007), 46 ff.; Fong-Torres, *The Doors*, 162 ff; Hopkins and Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, 227 ff.

<sup>86</sup> Antonin Artaud, “The Theater and Cruelty,” quoted in John Rocco, *The Doors Companion: Four Decades of Commentary*, 31.

Morrison was appropriating dramatic radicalism of his own era through the Living Theatre, founded in 1947 by Julian Beck and Judith Malina, who modeled themselves in part after Artaud. The Living Theatre's brutal confrontational style demolished the theater's fourth wall, with the audience forced to play its own role of direct interactant with the performers and to be subject to their performative choices. Immediately before the Miami concert, Morrison attended several Living Theatre performances in Los Angeles and San Francisco. In Miami, the dramatic antagonism he had witnessed would be realized to an extreme.

At the concert, the band repeatedly attempted to start songs, but an inebriated Morrison, primed with the Living Theatre's incendiary politics and tactics, broke them off over and over to rave and pontificate. In his most acerbic remarks to the audience, he shouted, "You're all a bunch of fucking idiots. How long are you gonna let them push you around? You love it. You're all a bunch of slaves. What are you gonna do about it? What are you gonna do about it? What are you gonna do?"<sup>87</sup> Morrison's expressed convictions about the constraints of social conformity and personal fears were embarrassing and sloppy, but perhaps the truth of audience hypocrisy was coming to a head: why had they really attended the show that night?

The greater problem, however, came about an hour later when the frontman was inspired to undress. The Doors' roadie, Vince Treanor, ran to him and physically held up his pants. Nonetheless, while holding his shirt in front of himself, there was the question—boiled down to an instant—of whether Morrison exposed himself or not. Additionally, the singer knelt in front of Krieger during a guitar solo, another gesture that would invite trouble. Although it was not stressed after the fact, the atmosphere in the hall was riotous in

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<sup>87</sup> Fong-Torres, *The Doors*, 165.

the jubilant sense with no evidence of audience outrage. Backstage after the show, there was no inkling that harm had been done and, according to Krieger and others, even the police joined in drinking a few beers.<sup>88</sup>

Only days later, however, an article by a young *Miami Herald* reporter brought the (now re-characterized) events to light and a warrant was issued for Morrison's arrest. The authorities brought felony charges of lewd and lascivious behavior, which included exposure, feigning oral copulation (an interpretation of Morrison's kneeling in front of Krieger), and feigning masturbation. There were also misdemeanors of public drunkenness, profanity, and indecent exposure. Morrison was facing a possible sentence of seven years in prison. Meanwhile, the conservative city of Miami was livid at Morrison's behavior and sought a way to recover its tarnished image. Three weeks after the concert, the municipal authorities retaliated by mounting a "Rally for Decency," which was headlined by, among others, Anita Bryant and Jackie Gleason. It drew some thirty thousand attendees.

Morrison was acquitted of some charges but convicted of others; he was sentenced to sixty days for profanity, six months of hard labor for exposure, and a \$500 fine. Because he was charged twice for the same crime—the felony exposure and the misdemeanor indecent exposure—however, his lawyers filed for an appeal. No further consequential actions occurred in the nine months leading up to his death.

The Doors were blacklisted and across the country venues canceled shows or prohibited the band from performing. Their album sales fell off. Once the band could play again, they found in their contracts a new stipulation—the Doors members called it a "fuck clause"—that mandated civil behavior, to be strictly enforced. The band was artistically hampered and spiritually deflated. A year later Morrison reflected on the ordeal:

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 167. See also Hopkins and Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, 234.

I think it was more of a political than a sexual scandal. I think they picked upon the erotic aspect because there would really have been no political charge they could have brought against me; it was too amorphous. Really it was a lifestyle that was on trial, more than any specific incident. The basic message was [to] realize that you're not really here to listen to a bunch of songs by some fairly good musicians; you're here for something else.<sup>89</sup>

The Doors' final concerts were in Dallas (on December 11, 1970) and New Orleans (on December 12). After a few songs in New Orleans, Morrison suffered from what most witnesses described as a severe mental breakdown. Several numbers into the show, he began repeatedly and furiously slamming the mic stand into the stage until the floorboards began to splinter, then sat quietly while the band played on. Densmore reports that Morrison was not drinking, and felt that "it did seem that Jim's lifeforce was gone."<sup>90</sup> Manzarek, Krieger, and Densmore agreed backstage that the end had come.

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<sup>89</sup> Morrison, interview with Salli Stevenson, October 1970, in *The Jim Morrison Scrapbook*, audio CD.

<sup>90</sup> Densmore, *Riders on the Storm*, 261.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

Because the analysis of rock music is still a young and somewhat contested field, I will survey in this chapter the scholarship that has guided me as well as what I have worked against. In doing so, I will lay out my own analytical techniques as they are applied in this dissertation. Despite its relative youth, the province of rock analysis has a solid foundation laid by a small group including John Covach, Walter Everett, Susan McClary, Richard Middleton, Allan Moore, Mark Spicer, Philip Tagg, Robert Walser, and Sheila Whiteley. Social and cultural historians such as Simon Frith and Theodore Gracyk have also made important contributions. The musically trained members of this group, many of them postwar baby boomers, have entered the ranks of traditional musicology with the music of their youth in tow. Thus, they probe rock's history with the same rigor and zeal that art music scholars have long applied to their own disciplines. The musicology of rock music is equally compelling, and conflicting intellectual viewpoints enliven its analytic discourse even as ardent, field-wide self-reflexivity validates it. The multitude of approaches has been invaluable for me.

McClary and Walser team up to both criticize and sympathize with musicologists who contend with rock music:

Many of them tend to regard physically and emotionally oriented responses to music as naive and childish. Yet if rock has any political power (and those of us who lived through the sixties cannot doubt that it does), then that power most likely does not reside in the sophisticated abstractions that the theoretically trained alone are able to discern. Musicologists have to be able to use their analytical skills to explain how the effects listeners celebrate are constructed; they should not—in their attempts at establishing intellectual legitimacy—turn the object of study into something unrecognizable to the fan.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Susan McClary and Robert Walser, "Start Making Sense! Musicology Wrestles with Rock," in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, ed. Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), 287.

This is an earnest plea whose agenda lies in power—specifically political power. But how can rock music best illustrate and implement this power? McClary and Walser highlight an inherent problem: musicologists must survey rock music with their usual diligence while altering analytic language and concepts to render them comprehensible to rock’s fandom (who presumably lack theoretical training). This is a sticky task that would require drastic changes in the way findings are presented. There is also the question of how important analysis is to fans in the first place; many of them, I believe, would dismiss such ventures as being dry and overthought, not to mention antithetical to the experiential, cultural, and corporeal aspects of rock’s ethos. The very definition of musicology, after all, implies scholarship, but if analysis were to falter in bridging the gap between scholars and fans, no great harm is done. Rock fans have their shared senses of communicating with each other about the music they love, no matter a lack of analytic training; fans will always recognize the “object of study” in their own ways.

What I appreciate about McClary and Walser’s remarks is their overall concern for listener response. (My own study, I believe, will bear this out.) Analysis, as they suggest, often stays boxed in abstraction. Musicologists must keep listening not only critically, but also enthusiastically. Therefore, because rock analytic discourse often relies on tools that the fan finds inscrutable, it is imperative to proceed while staying true to the spirit of rock.

My analytical techniques rely on numerous rock musicology writings, though the scholarly contributions mentioned herein are hardly exhaustive. I concur with Walser’s entreaty for “a conception of analysis that is self-reflexive about methods and goals, tactical rather than absolute, less interested in describing or legitimating than in understanding how

music works and why people care about it.”<sup>2</sup> Without expounding too “absolutely,” however, this dissertation also takes a hermeneutic approach: there will be discussion of meaning—musical and extra-musical—and the acknowledgment that meaning can reside in multiple guises and potentialities. Thus, I will be interpreting not only the often-arcane lyrics of Jim Morrison and Robby Krieger, but also the instrumental support and the overall thrusts of songs taken in the cultural contexts discussed in Chapter 1.

There is much debate over how pop-rock musicologists and theorists should most appropriately and truthfully analyze their subjects. The broadest problematic is the application to rock music of the traditional theories intended for and drawn from art music. As Lori Burns remarks,

In the fields of musicology and music theory, there is little agreement on our analytic methodologies for rock music. Theoretical approaches range from basic letter-name chord labels to detailed Schenkerian analysis. Regardless of the chosen approach, every analyst ought to be aware of the difficulties of analyzing popular music using the theoretical systems devised for common-practice tonal music. The potential exists in any theoretical system for bias, false judgment, or the ascription of privilege, but when the system was admittedly intended for a different application, the interpretive problems abound.<sup>3</sup>

I will address in this chapter some of these interpretive problems. As a starting point, we can look at basic correlations that do exist between art music and rock, which include the concepts of tonality and a hierarchized harmonic vocabulary, rhythmic and metric behaviors, the province of form, text–music relations, timbral expression, and taxonomies of style and genre. Other correlations operate on more equivocal levels, such as rhetoric and affect, tension and release, narrative interpretation, temporal perception, movement versus stasis,

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Walser, “Popular Music Analysis: Ten Apothegms and Four Instances,” in *Analyzing Popular Music*, ed. Allan Moore (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 38.

<sup>3</sup> Lori Burns, “Analytic Methodologies for Rock Music: Harmonic and Voice–Leading Strategies in Tori Amos’s ‘Crucify,’” in *Expression in Pop-Rock Music: Critical and Analytical Essays*, ed. Walter Everett, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 63.

the role of “hooks,” and musical meaning—the last issue being perennially contentious in its own right.

Some of the problems to which Burns alludes, however, involve ontological questions: What are musics’ respective purposes? To whom is an analysis addressed? How interested is the analyst in the psychic state (or music–analytic competence) of the listener? Is there, or should there be, an appropriate level of detachment from the music being studied? Does analysis purport to apprehend the historical culture from whence it came, or can it only speak to the reader of the present? The last question evinces the field of sociology, which chronicles rock’s very life and to which rock is inextricably linked. Dave Headlam stresses the need to balance different analytical stances: “Critics of a purely musical [analytical] approach may protest that what is left is an impoverished discussion of notes and rhythms in a vacuum. There is no need to leave out the social histories and cultural studies, however, merely a need to allot musical analysis its proper place.”<sup>4</sup> Above all, pertaining to Burns’s “ascription of privilege,” my own investigation will not deliberate value judgments. To my mind, the debatable appraisals of so-called high art and low art—though the Doors had one foot in each camp—is, in the early twenty-first century, a moot point.

### **Existing Rock Analytical Scholarship**

Multiple analytical paradigms have been developed in rock scholarship’s relatively brief existence. Though my own analyses eschew Schenkerian treatment, I will begin by briefly discussing for illustrative purposes the application of Schenkerian analysis to rock music, as it is both widely practiced and controversial. Everett’s monumental study of the Beatles’

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<sup>4</sup> Dave Headlam, “Blues Transformations in the Music of Cream,” in *Understanding Rock: Essays in Musical Analysis*, ed. John Covach and Graeme Boone (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 86.

music, for example, employs Schenkerian techniques, but in a profitably modified form.<sup>5</sup>

Moore, however, finds Everett's methods (some of them non-Schenkerian) falsely exercised: "Walter Everett, in applying an established music-analytic methodology to music for which it was not developed, is effectively making unsubstantiated assertions about the music of the Beatles."<sup>6</sup>

Middleton has carefully considered Schenkerian analysis and its feasibility in rock.<sup>7</sup> His findings are mixed, and they point to modality as being a core problem: "There seems no reason why Schenker analysis could not be applied to popular songs governed by functional-tonal processes," he writes.<sup>8</sup> Yet he also offers a simple case where the technique falls short—namely, the Wham song "I'm Your Man," with its contrastive verse-chorus couplings. The verses finish with strong V-I cadences and the melody line follows a  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  contour; yet, as Middleton rightly asserts, "Harmonically the chorus is built on a modal cell (I-IV-bVII), which is treated as a riff. Undoubtedly, the Schenker approach registers something important about the song; but at the same time it distorts the whole structure, which surely is a two-leveled process: sections of riff-based circularity are *set against* sections with cadential closure."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Walter Everett, *The Beatles as Musicians: The Quarry Men through Rubber Soul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) and *The Beatles as Musicians: Revolver through the Anthology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). Aside from analytic method, Everett also takes a comprehensive approach and gives each and every Beatles song thorough consideration.

<sup>6</sup> Allan Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text: Developing a Musicology of Rock*, 2nd ed. (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2001), 30.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 1990), 193–203. For examples of modified Schenkerian techniques (out of many), see Walter Everett, "Swallowed by a Song: Paul Simon's Crisis of Chromaticism," 113 ff.; and Matthew Brown, "'Little Wing': A Study in Musical Cognition," 155 ff., both in *Understanding Rock: Essays in Musical Analysis*.

<sup>8</sup> Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 193.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

Several rock theorists, however, have found Schenker's method to be malleable. Burns, in setting forth a revision of Schenker's means, objects primarily to the method's lack of rhythmic indication, to its inability (as mentioned) to account for rock's often-modal harmony, and to the bias of its *Ursatz* toward an underlying I–V–I foundation.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, many rock songs have no dominant chord at all. Instead, Burns has devised an interlocked three-tiered modification which proves to be effective in her subsequent analysis.

Despite rock musicology being a nascent field, a profusion of books and journals are available that examine rock music theoretically. Among those that were particularly useful for me were the books *Expression in Pop-Rock Music*, *Sounding Out Pop*, *Studying Popular Music*, *Analyzing Popular Music*, *Rock: The Primary Text*, and *Understanding Rock*, and the Cambridge University Press journal *Popular Music*.<sup>11</sup> Monographic articles in scholarly journals and books—there are far too many to mention here—use a variety of theoretical tools as well. Here, models for my own thinking include Mark Spicer's focus on derivations of style(s) in the music of the Police; Shaugn O'Donnell's tracing of a coherent tonal plan through Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon*; and Albin Zak's essay on Bob Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower" and its profound metamorphoses in Jimi Hendrix's cover version.<sup>12</sup> The number of such articles is growing, as are more audience- and fan-friendly resources such as the eighty-six (to date) books on individual rock albums in the *33 1/3*

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<sup>10</sup> Burns, "Analytic Methodologies for Rock Music," 66–68.

<sup>11</sup> Everett, *Expression in Pop-Rock Music*; Mark Spicer and John Covach, eds., *Sounding Out Pop* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010); Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*; Moore, *Analyzing Popular Music*; Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text*; and Covach and Boone, *Understanding Rock*.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Spicer, "'Reggatta de Blanc': Analyzing Style in the Music of the Police," in *Sounding Out Pop*, 124–153; Shaugn O'Donnell, "'On the Path': Tracing Tonal Coherence in *The Dark Side of the Moon*," in *Speak to Me: The Legacy of Pink Floyd's The Dark Side of the Moon*, ed. Russell Reising (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005), 87–103; and Albin Zak, "Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix: Juxtaposition and Transformation 'All Along the Watchtower,'" in *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 57, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 599–644.

series, which gives broad latitude to its authors on how to consider their topics. Some installments are more analytical than others.<sup>13</sup>

Rock analysis is a lively and debated enterprise, and Schenker's technique is only one of the paradigms to which I referred above, even in a modified form. His very presence, in fact, is further proof of the entangling of art music with rock. But rock scholarship is a rapidly burgeoning field simply because the new music it would examine is pouring into the market at a blistering pace and in profuse hybridities of style and genre.<sup>14</sup> Graeme Boone and John Covach assess the fluidity of rock musicology:

Academic job listings around the country show an unprecedented demand for popular specializations. These developments result in a new kind of irony, for there is, as yet, no clear "discipline" of rock studies, no consensus on what might constitute its focus or its limits, as a field of study or a set of approaches; and it is not clear that there ever will or should be.<sup>15</sup>

As rock music swiftly evolves, then, and as younger musicologists enter the field—regardless of their measure of art music theory training or the broader state of their discipline—novel analytic methods will follow.

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<sup>13</sup> *33 1/3* series, ed. David Barker (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2003–)

<sup>14</sup> The music-streaming website Spotify, for example, boasts over 15 million songs, with ten thousand new tunes being added every day. See David Pogue, "Online Music, Unshackled," *New York Times*, July 27, 2011, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/28/technology/personaltech/spotify-unshackles-online-music-david-pogue.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/28/technology/personaltech/spotify-unshackles-online-music-david-pogue.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all) (accessed August 17, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> Covach and Boone, *Understanding Rock*, vii.

## On the Listening Experience

Fundamental to my analytical philosophy in this dissertation is the experiencing of music—in large part subconsciously—as a continuous unfurling. Regardless of music’s inner structural divisions or open-endedness, of musical motion or stasis, of fixed or shifting sound quality, a piece’s unabated *becoming* is for me a continual listening impulse.<sup>16</sup> Henri Bergson’s particularly germane dictum characterizes the listener’s “pleasure of mastering the flow of time and of holding the future in the present,”<sup>17</sup> while Robert Newell speaks of the listener’s “dynamic awareness,” that is, a concentrated anticipation of what is to come.<sup>18</sup>

This unbroken experiential immersion runs parallel to and undergirds all other musical elements working together in building the gestalt. It has led me in the first place to examine songs in the following chapters in their entirety. Moreover, as rock songs are often formally repetitive with their recalling of previous sections (for example, verses, choruses), they are often perceived as “circular” in nature. But, perhaps counterintuitively, even as I recognize such repetition, my core listening impressions prioritize the passage from a song’s beginning to its end regardless of surface events or formal turns. Thus, in my experience, linearity largely trumps circularity.<sup>19</sup> As a result, sectional repetitions do relate to each other, but also

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<sup>16</sup> Other musicologists have explored this phenomenon. Janet Schmalfeldt, for example, examines the notion of “form coming into being,” informed by Hegel and applied to early Romantic composers. See Schmalfeldt, *In the Process of Becoming: Analytic and Philosophical Perspectives on Form in Early Nineteenth-Century Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 10 ff.

<sup>17</sup> Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. Frank Lubecki Pogson (New York: MacMillan, 1910), 12.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Newell, “Four Tiers on the Foundation of Time,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 7, no. 2 (December 1976): 151.

<sup>19</sup> Some musicologists experience both linearity and circularity in rock music simultaneously. In his review of Ken Stephenson’s book on listening to rock, for example, Shaun O’Donnell writes of “the wheel metaphor, with its ability to spin repeatedly back to the same location, yet allowing one to traverse space and time.” Further he aptly relates this dual-natured wheel to Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*, the landmark Beat novel that was penned during rock and roll’s earliest days. See Shaun O’Donnell, review of Ken Stephenson, “What to

adopt distinct formal roles because they accrue new meaning—musical and textual—in relation to their predecessors; they are more heavily invested. That said, my analyses do regard localized sectional repetitions as well as those of the whole.<sup>20</sup> In fact, one might define unfolding musical time as the changing relationships of sections relative to each other.

The concepts of time and motion are integral components in addressing such musical unfurling. For the purposes of this dissertation, time and motion will only be discussed very briefly, and in the most basic terms, as they are subjects long since scrutinized and problematized in their infinite degrees. Three well-known thinkers of the past who have explored the relationship of time and music, and from whom I gain inspiration, are Henri Bergson, Suzanne K. Langer, and Victor Zuckerkandl. Music is a time-based art, from the global sense—“clock” time and the more plastic musical time are utterly unrelated—to local senses, in which beat, meter, harmonic change, and formal proportions organize musical time in their interlinked fashions. In either case, apprehension of time is inevitably fluid and subjective. Zuckerkandl eloquently describes how time couples with tone:

Certainly time requires the *tones* in and through which it becomes manifest as rhythm. But it is not true that here only the tones are concrete experiential content, with time as an abstract, empty form, only to be apprehended in reflective thought. No—*through*

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Listen for in Rock: A Stylistic Analysis,” in *Music Theory Spectrum* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2006), 137. See also Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (New York: Viking Press, 1957). I am grateful to Professor O’Donnell for pointing out this crucial conception.

<sup>20</sup> In the case of the Doors, with their broad palettes of instrumental color, rock sub-styles, and grooves, many of my analyses pay especial attention to the song introductions in which these elements—especially grooves—are established. Grooves can be difficult to convey (or define) with either language or transcription. Spicer has provided my working definition of “groove” as “the tapestry of riffs—usually played by the drums, bass, rhythm guitar and/or keyboard in some combination—that work together to create the distinctive rhythmic/harmonic backdrop which identifies a song.” See Mark Spicer, “(Ac)cumulative Form in Pop-Rock Music,” *twentieth-century music* 1, no. 1 (2004): 30.

*tones, time becomes concrete experiential content; the experience of musical rhythm is an experience of time made possible through tones.*<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, the phenomenon of motion, bound with time—indeed, it requires time—is foundational to the musical experience, and yet motion is music’s greatest illusion. Langer merges time and motion when she observes that

we hear marching, flowing, or driving progressive motion. Yet in a musical progression there is nothing that is displaced, that has gone from somewhere to somewhere else. Musical movement is illusory, like volumes in pictorial space. By means of this purely apparent movement, music presents an auditory apparition of *time*; more precisely, of what one might call “felt time.” Instead of vaguely sensing time as we do through our own physical life-processes, *we hear its passage.*<sup>22</sup>

Such abstract thinking will not play an overt role in the analyses that follow, but I hope that these concepts will continue to inform the reader from beneath the surface.<sup>23</sup> The Doors, as I will show, were certainly masters, consciously or not, of the power to manipulate Langer’s “felt time” for maximum theatrical and musical effect.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Victor Zuckerkandl, *Sound and Symbol: Music and the External World*, trans. Williard R. Trask (1956; reprint, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 203. Italics added.

<sup>22</sup> Suzanne K. Langer, *Problems of Art* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1957), 37. Italics added.

<sup>23</sup> My analyses follow a basic template: a short discussion of the song’s background, a table of complete song lyrics, an exegesis of salient musical elements (with occasional transcriptions), and a conclusion. Analyses are also given varying emphases depending on what I feel are a song’s strengths.

<sup>24</sup> More recent authors who explore the interrelationships of musical time, motion, and space (of which the last concept is unfortunately beyond the scope of this study)—many working from metaphor theory as developed by George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, and Mark Turner—include Robert Adlington, “Moving Beyond Motion: Metaphors for Changing Sound,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 128, no. 2 (2000), 297–318; Janna Saslaw, “Forces, Containers, and Paths: the Role of Body-Derived Image Schemas in the Conceptualization of Music,” *Journal of Music Theory* 40 (1996), 217–43; Eric Clarke, “Meaning and the Specification of Motion in Music,” *Musicae scientiae* 5 (2001), 213–34; Arnie Cox, “The Metaphoric Logic of Musical Motion and Space” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1999); Lawrence Zbikowski, “Metaphor and Music Theory: Reflections from Cognitive Science,” *Music Theory Online* 4, no. 1 (1998), [http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.98.4.1/mto.98.4.1.zbikowski\\_frames.html](http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.98.4.1/mto.98.4.1.zbikowski_frames.html) (accessed August 15, 2012).

## Form

Rock song forms are relatively few in number and are well known: the most common types include those with verse–refrain or verse–chorus patterns, twelve-bar blues, open-ended repetitive progressions,<sup>25</sup> and through-composed (as in some progressive rock). Chapter 3 complements my discussion of form here. I will cover the Doors’ most favored forms and the ways in which these were adapted to dramatically heighten lyrics.

My own method of evaluating form closely follows that put forth by Covach:

Harmonic structure tends to be a primary factor in determining formal units at all levels of structure. Typically the analyst determines the meter of the song, analyzes the chord progressions, and charts the number of measures in a section, considering phrases within that section where applicable. These sections then add up to articulate the form of the song, which will often fall into one of the general types.<sup>26</sup>

As with any musical style or genre, there are parameters that define norms, but that also work with compositional gestures to upset those norms. On the one hand, a typical rock form norm is a formal section (or sentence) which is built of two-, four-, or eight-measure phrases, and the resultant sense of symmetry is as common to rock as it has been to song or dance-oriented music for hundreds of years.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, the occasional irregular hypermeter consisting of, say, a five- or seven- or ten-measure phrase is cause for special attention. As in art music, these asymmetrical components serve to thwart listener anticipation, heighten dramatic expression, accommodate lyrics, or a combination thereof. A good illustration is the Beatles’ “I Feel Fine,” whose verse’s ten-measure division into 6 + 4 underscores the arresting shift from narrative material to the exuberant refrain (with its

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<sup>25</sup> I examine the practice of vamping, for example, in Chapter 3 in the song “The Wasp.”

<sup>26</sup> John Covach, “Form in Rock Music: A Primer,” in *Engaging Music: Essays in Music Analysis*, ed. Deborah Stein (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 66.

<sup>27</sup> Walter Everett has devised the now-familiar acronym SRDC—or Statement, Restatement, Departure, Conclusion—as being the parts of a typical rock sentence.

descending parallel triads in the voices, verse measure seven) and is supported by congruent musical changes. Similarly, as we will see, the Doors not only utilized flexible phrase structure, but also sometimes devised *dissimilar* inner sections (in other words, different verse “types”) in order to—using Covach’s words—“articulate the form of the song.” Such a song likely has a more varied formal topography than usual.

Finally, discussions of form run the risk of rendering a song inflexible while diluting the fluid effect of the whole. As I analyze the Doors’ song forms in this study, however, I maintain to some degree my abovementioned awareness of continuous unfurling, which has a buffering effect on structural divisions. As Middleton observes, “Instead of ignoring ‘form,’ one reconceptualizes it in terms of *process*.”<sup>28</sup>

## **Rhythm**

As Robert Walser bemoans, “Rhythm has been particularly neglected in Western theories of musical meaning. This is usually explained in terms of the difficulty of generalizing rhythmic concepts except on the simple metric level.”<sup>29</sup> This lament for a systematization of rhythm is certainly applicable to rock music, as the “simple metric level” sums up the whole of rock rhythm for many listeners. But the picture is far subtler. Dave Headlam problematizes rock rhythm in terms of a lack of integration: “Discussions of rhythm in rock music in relation to riffs, forms, and other levels of durations and proportions are often hampered by a confusion between rhythm and meter and how these arise from the grouping

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<sup>28</sup> Richard Middleton, “Form,” in *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture*, ed. Bruce Horner and Thomas Swiss (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999), 142.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1993), 48.

structures of harmonies, melodies, bass notes, phrasing, and other musical features.”<sup>30</sup> This chasm between the natures of rhythm and meter is due both to conflicting interpretations of terms and to how these are musically applied. From my perspective, rhythm is an audible force, durationally flexible, multileveled, and musically and temporally “felt.” It certainly demarcates time, but is not the music’s temporal engine. That is the province of meter, an *inaudible*, rigid, imaginary, and abstract construct. Meter is the invisible framework that holds all of music’s other senses of rhythm, and against which they are discerned.

Christopher Hasty characterizes meter and rhythm, respectively, as a “tension between the fixity of what can be grasped as order in abstraction and the fluidity of a felt order in experience.”<sup>31</sup> Returning to Walser, he glosses on the basic dialectic between steady meter (embodying control) and extemporized elements (embodying freedom) which together allow a *layering* of a song’s momentum: “Accents and rhythmic deviations, whether performed by the vocalist, the guitar soloist, or the whole band, are all the more significant for being played *against* the solid pulse.”<sup>32</sup>

I must now, however, bring rhythm into an experiential context. For most rock fans, “rhythm” simply connotes “beat”—described as “pounding,” “relentless,” “driving,” “sexual,” and so on. The beat *is* rock, many would say, and it has enjoyed notoriety since the genre’s beginnings. A few historical cases will demonstrate this point. The hard, raw beat of 1950s black musicians required mellowing for white musicians’ cover versions; during a taping of his television talk show, host David Susskind began reading banal pop lyrics from

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<sup>30</sup> Headlam, “Blues Transformations in the Music of Cream,” 87.

<sup>31</sup> Christopher Hasty, *Meter As Rhythm* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3.

<sup>32</sup> Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 49. Italics added.

a page only to be interrupted by guest Phil Spector's rhythmic pounding on the coffee table—"What you're missing is the beat";<sup>33</sup> "going electric" via the guitar was not the only problem folk fans had with Bob Dylan in 1965—they also detested his new beat; and, to cite a more extreme example, in the 1960s Christian leaders would routinely warn their flocks of the rock beat's insidious, Satanic powers of debauching the body and poisoning the soul.

Drummers are the heroic keepers of the beat, and their early reputation as the musically crudest band members has rightly been dismissed. Ginger Baker, of the psychedelic group Cream, for one, exhibited superb musicianship through his experimentation with beat patterns, accents, and his kit's timbral possibilities. For that matter, Frank Zappa's rhythmic complexities (and therefore his percussionists') were on a par with many twentieth-century art music composers. As we will see in my analyses, Doors drummer John Densmore was similarly imaginative. His ability to shift styles at fitting moments—backbeat, four-on-the-floor, jazz, highly syncopated, metrically obscuring—not only propelled but psychologized the music, especially in tandem with the lyrics.

Rock music rhythm has other far-reaching consequences. The commonest include its perceived primitivism (which holds vestiges of colonialism and racism<sup>34</sup>), its arousal of bodily movement, and the insinuation of sex. Others have discussed all of these thoroughly at the cultural level.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Tom Wolfe, "The First Tycoon of Teen," in *The Pop, Rock and Soul Reader: Histories and Debates*, ed. David Brackett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 114.

<sup>34</sup> Ray Manzarek understood the social impact of rock rhythm: "We started a regimen of rehearsals. People hate to hear a rock band rehearsing. The old farts always blow the whistle and call the cops. It's the drums. The 'savage tom-tom beat' of the drums unnerves them. Africa begins to loom and threaten the European ear." See Ray Manzarek, *Light My Fire: My Life with the Doors* (New York: Berkley Boulevard Books, 1999), 146.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin, eds., *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990); Theodore Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock*

In this dissertation I examine variously a number of rhythmic aspects, including phrase rhythm, harmonic rhythm, the hypnotic streaming of jams, the kit's changeable beat patterns, the lyrics' rate of unfolding meaning, poetic scansion, and, on the largest scale, formal proportions, process, and plasticity. Additionally, the hallucinogenic time- and rhythm-bending properties of LSD are explored in Chapter 4.

## **Harmony**

With respect to rock harmony and analysis, the primary dispute centers, not surprisingly, on the use of classical tonal principles as a benchmark. Perhaps the most pertinent question here concerns harmonic *functions*, in which chords relate to each other and to the tonic in a hierarchized manner. Rock musicians do not typically perceive harmony in functional terms, but rather as letter-named chords that are intuitively heard to work well together and are informed by familiar backdrops—that is to say, *styles*. As Moore observes, “One place at which [musical] meaning is produced is in the friction between a song and the style that it is engaged in constituting.”<sup>36</sup> When looking to chordal identification, the issue arises as to whether functional harmonic treatment is appropriate if most rock musicians themselves discern harmony in a completely different relational manner. From my perspective the issue is unproblematic for the simple reason that readers (that is to say, the intended audiences) of such analyses are functionally literate, and, irrespective of musical competence, *functions are present* in the music in any case, to be mined for their expressive potentials.

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(Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); Robert G. Pielke, *You Say You Want a Revolution: Rock Music in American Culture* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1986); and Herbert I. London, *Closing the Circle: A Cultural History of the Rock Revolution* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1984).

<sup>36</sup> Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text*, 195.

My own thoughts on rock harmony align with Everett's common-sense exegesis:

The tonal systems of rock can be classified according to certain characteristics ... as somewhat progressively further removed from common-practice tonal behaviors. These normal behaviors should be understood not only as those characteristic of historical stylistic forebears in pre-rock popular-music genres, but also as basic, ageless principles of tonality that are more or less reflected in all subsequent styles. To state this central point another way: while the underlying principles of tonality are unchanging, *rock has evolved several different ways of relating to that tonal background.*<sup>37</sup>

One unfortunate result of art music harmonic hegemony can be the construal of rock's chords, progressions, or resolutions as inherently special or unusual—"aberrant" or "deviant"—when, in fact, they are perfectly normal. Rock practices are, thus, not being considered in their own right. We can look, for example, at the wide use of rock modality (which ostensibly removes us from art music) and its role in cadences. The minor blues scale degrees  $\hat{1}$ ,  $\hat{b}3$ ,  $\hat{4}$ ,  $\hat{5}$ , and  $\hat{b}7$  produce (as roots) the chords  $i$ ,  $bIII$ ,  $iv$  (or  $IV$ ),  $v$  (or  $V$ ), and  $bVII$ . These can yield a number of rock harmonic formulae of which art music has no equivalents. Cadential progressions such as  $bVI$ – $bVII$ – $I$  (the Aeolian progression) or  $bVII$ – $IV$ – $I$  (the so-called double plagal) or even  $II\#$ – $I$  easily come to mind.<sup>38</sup> Rock musicians likely would conceptualize these cadences using chord letter names, but most saliently, the progressions sound "right" according to the prevailing style simply because of one's personal cognizing of chordal relationships.

Another characteristic of rock harmony (again involving modality) has grown straight out of the blues—namely, the modal mixture that results from, typically, a major-key accompanimental framework which is overlaid with a vocal or instrumental melody that

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<sup>37</sup> Walter Everett, "Making Sense of Rock's Tonal Systems," *Music Theory Online* 10, no. 4 (December 2004), [http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.04.10.4/mto.04.10.4.w\\_everett.html](http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.04.10.4/mto.04.10.4.w_everett.html) (accessed September 10, 2011). Italics added.

<sup>38</sup> Nicole Biamonte, "Triadic Modal and Pentatonic Patterns in Rock Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 32, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 101. The familiar "Hey Joe" progression uses a quadruple plagal pattern:  $bVI$ – $bIII$ – $bVII$ – $IV$ – $I$ .

draws from the minor blues scale. The resultant clashes between, say, flat- and natural-third, or flat- and natural-seventh scales degrees, are a perfectly normal component of rock's sound, and they need not be considered as dissonances that require "resolution."<sup>39</sup> In such cases, at least in my own analyses, it is the accompaniment that dictates the working key or mode of the moment, with melodic blue notes considered as expressive embellishments.

Because the Doors members were musically literate, they oscillated between these two realms of intuitive rock understanding and traditional musical education. Harmony, therefore, is an especially pivotal component to study in the band's music. The Doors' use of harmony is often idiosyncratic and ranges widely from simple triadic droning (which often underpins theatrical forays) to traditional three-chord groups to the twelve-bar blues template to more unorthodox and experimental progressions. I consequently examine harmony closely in my analyses as it is carefully coupled with text while contributing to the bands' distinguishable sound.

## **Timbre**

As Walser writes in the context of heavy metal music, "Of all musical parameters, timbre is least often analyzed, but its significance can hardly be overstated."<sup>40</sup> Indeed, there is a notable scarcity of theoretically ordered timbral discussion in the literature, yet the linguistically elusive, even ineffable ingredients of timbre—along with beat and groove—are widely regarded as among the signature traits of the rock song. In depicting timbre, the analyst must turn to an array of language-based, adjectival descriptors, none of which could

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<sup>39</sup> This harmonic-textural phenomenon has been thoroughly explored in Naphtali Wagner, "'Domestication' of Blue Notes in the Beatles' Songs," *Music Theory Spectrum* 25, no. 2 (Fall 2003), 353–365.

<sup>40</sup> Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 41.

ever convey the essence of sound to the reader. One exemplar would be guitar distortion, which became an increasingly prevalent expressive timbre in 1960s rock, from the guitar work by Dave Davies of the Kinks (especially in their 1964 hits “You Really Got Me” and “All Day and All of the Night”) to the apex of creative distortion in the music of Jimi Hendrix. Yet distortion, too, as only a segment of rock’s total sound, has its own infinite range of colors and intensities.<sup>41</sup> In short, language and musical sound are intrinsically disparate, leading to the conclusion that the reader, ideally, should become the listener.

Timbre, however, is the most capacious of musical elements, especially when enhanced by the studio. For Albin Zak, “timbre is the parameter that allows for the greatest range of experimentation in rock music. While highly chromatic melodies and irregular meters are unusual, the range of sound colors encountered on records is vast and ever increasing.”<sup>42</sup>

Zak suggests another decisive role of rock timbre, namely *rhetoric*, in which expressive sound—with the help of technology—mutates and adapts to rock perspectives that are ever advancing historically: timbre’s limitlessness “is not simply the playground of individuals’ imaginations but a product of historical accumulation. The rhetorical sense of sounds develops through the process of cultural practice.”<sup>43</sup> The guitar timbres, to recall them, of the Kinks or Hendrix speak beyond mere sound to connote performers’ evolving time periods, cultures, moods, thematic meanings, musical substyles, performative attitudes, and more. Timbre is thus a powerful *associative* device that depends upon sundry musical

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<sup>41</sup> For an impressive explanation of the causes and acoustical complexities of guitar distortion, see *ibid.*, 41–44.

<sup>42</sup> Albin Zak, *The Poetics of Rock: Cutting Tracks, Making Records* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 63.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 63–64.

styles and the cultures that decode them. Kevin Holm-Hudson has coined the term “sonic historiography” in tracing how incompatible (and unexpected) timbres can reframe the meaning of a song by conjuring divergent musical styles or time periods. He thus holds that “any accurate analysis of rock music must therefore ultimately account for its timbre and studio production at least as much as on the traditionally analyzed parameters of tonality, harmony, and meter; in other words, *how* the song sounds is as important—if not more so—than *what* is sounding.”<sup>44</sup> By way of illustration, Doors keyboardist Ray Manzarek took full advantage of expressive timbre by exploring the wide color range of the organ and by relishing mid-song timbre changes. But he summoned other associations through his use of the piano (with its “natural” acoustical properties, though adaptable to numerous styles), harpsichord (evoking the distant courtliness of Baroque music), and tack piano (reeking, say, of bawdy Western saloons). Above all, with the use of an astute musical imagination, any of these keyboard instruments could conjure the psychedelic qualities of which the Doors were masters.

Although timbre is incommensurable with other (simultaneous) musical elements, it nonetheless interacts with them in the *construction* of song. Timbral shifts, for instance, can sharpen the differences between formal sections. Timbre also delineates texture, and timbre morphs reciprocally with intensifying crescendos and accelerandos.

A more humanized expression of rock timbre, however, lies in vocal quality and its affective capacities. A singer’s words and emotional state can carry enormous power to subtly or appreciably manipulate a song’s message. Consider this description by Allan Moore of a track from *Roxy Music* (1972): “[Brian] Ferry’s highly distinctive vocal style, in

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<sup>44</sup> Kevin Holm-Hudson, “The Future is Now ... and Then: Sonic Historiography in Post-1960s Rock,” *Genre* 34 (Fall/Winter 2001), 245.

which he almost chokes the words out, with a tremble to the voice, which is apt to shoot out uncontrolled to an unexpected pitch at any moment. The actual lyrics are perhaps ordinary, but within the strange environment Ferry's agonized vocal delivery of them suggests less the plaint of the lovestruck than the anguished cry of the possessed."<sup>45</sup> This vivid portrayal makes the reader crave to hear Ferry's fevered state, which, once audible, would still eclipse any verbal picture. Therefore, brilliant as the passage is in language, Moore's own point that descriptive words cannot do justice to music's sound is only further reinforced.

One could draw similar conclusions when examining Jim Morrison's vocal style. Though he began singing late in his short life, Morrison possessed a flexible voice, a wide range (reaching from deep baritone depths up to arresting shrieks and screams), and a natural feel for manipulating his voice relative to lyrics and musical mood. But no matter whose voice is being heard, one cannot express in words the sonic experience of timbre.

Even more awkward to convey with our analytical terms (and to transcribe as lyrics, let alone as timbres) are the grunts, groans, and other guttural vocal eruptions that add so much to rock songs—James Brown comes to mind as one of the greatest practitioners—not to mention rock's ubiquitous “yeahs,” “heys,” and “c'mons” which, on paper, can seem insignificant or clichéd, but in performance can carry tremendous expressive power and authority, often more than lyrics themselves. If lyrics in the purest sense come from the writer's or performer's mind, then vocal outbursts, beyond language, are sheer emotion. As an example, Willie Dixon's blues tune “Back Door Man” is a salty tale composed years before the Doors formed.<sup>46</sup> On the band's debut album, the cover version of Dixon's song is given a decidedly salacious twist: before a single word is sung, the intro builds in the

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<sup>45</sup> Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text*, 127.

<sup>46</sup> “Back Door Man” is discussed in the “Blues Variants” section of Chapter 3.

accompaniment while Morrison emits unrestrained animalistic grunts and barks which, because the listener grasps them by association, are already giving the song its unabashedly vulgar tone. The moment's tenor also depends upon the singer's dramatic conviction, which, in this case, is unmistakable. These improvised rock vocables are both overlooked and undervalued in demonstrating the singer's need for self-expression beyond a song's lyrics. In my analyses below such outbursts are notated at a minimum—except when, in my judgment, they have an exceptional impact. It is better that they speak for themselves as recorded human *cris de cœur*.

### **Text–Music Relations**

The correspondence between lyrics and accompaniment in song is an inexhaustible area of study. As Jim Morrison was the Doors' chief lyricist and a poet in his own right, the surveying of his texts—and those of Robby Krieger—is crucial to this dissertation.<sup>47</sup> The Doors' often-provocative textual themes either explored hitherto unfamiliar psychological territory or reoriented conventional subject matter—via their musical settings—toward unaccustomed meanings.

Musicologists and critics can hold widely differing views on the importance, even the necessity, of words in rock. At one extreme is Theodore Gracyk, who (perhaps in playing a rhetorical role) denies any serious worth in rock lyrics.<sup>48</sup> Though I disagree with Gracyk's position, I believe he touches on several important issues. He quotes Sinéad O'Connor, Bob

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<sup>47</sup> The importance of the Doors' lyrics was fully grasped during their career. In one concert review, for example, a critic wrote, "It was hard to hear the lyrics, and a large measure of the Doors's value is based on those lyrics. . . . Few lyricists can match Mr. Morrison's ability to create effective, often terrifying images." See Mike Jahn, "20,000 Hear Doors Give Rock Concert In a Packed Garden," *New York Times*, 25 January, 1969, 24.

<sup>48</sup> Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, 63–65.

Dylan, and David Byrne, all of whom emphasize their penchant for texture or sheer sound (or both) at the expense of thematic content. Gracyk states that “in rock music most lyrics don’t matter very much. Or, to be more precise, they are of limited interest on the printed page, divorced from the music.”<sup>49</sup> Rock lyrics are less studied “on the page” than in sound, and *as* sound, where they engage in a discourse with music, although written rock lyrics have an interesting history. Using Covach’s concept of the “hippie aesthetic” as a guide, however, we know that the importance of rock lyrics and “big themes” took a huge leap forward in the mid-to-late 1960s, when some bands made the choice to print their lyrics in the record packaging.<sup>50</sup> Not all musicians subscribed to this practice, of course, yet a signal was sent out to the rock world that its poetry had finally come of age—even if late when compared to the likes of Dylan and other folk artists. Words and ideas now mattered in rock.

Gracyk also points out that lyrics are often unintelligible (though pop styles foreground lyrics more clearly than rock styles), and rightly indicates that lyrics are often penned only after a song’s music is recorded. Further, “decades of research” have shown that only a small minority of rock fans pays any attention to the lyrics of even its most beloved songs. Instead, the elements of overall sound and musical beat are what matter. I find some truth to this last contention, yet it also flies in the face of what I have personally observed at many live shows, where fans roar out the lyrics along with the singer on stage, regardless of painful sound levels churning from the amps. It would seem that these rock fans are having a far richer experience than those purported by Gracyk: they are absorbing

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>50</sup> See John Covach, *What’s That Sound?: An Introduction to Rock and Its History*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 2009), 310–11. The Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper* album was the first such instance, in 1967.

all at once the rock beat, the sound, and lyrical meanings in a web where musical and thematic elements are only strengthened through their mutual interaction.

As for the practice of composing lyrics after the musical fact, this does not necessarily indicate weak thematic material. Perhaps the music is a songwriter's keenest inspiration, or perhaps the post-music lyricist is exceptionally talented with verse. An example of the latter is Nirvana's Kurt Cobain, who pronounced that music came first and lyrics followed. He was known to pen lyrics very late in the creative process, often just moments before recording began.<sup>51</sup> Despite this seeming offhand treatment of words, Cobain's lyrics are widely viewed by fans, musicologists, and sociologists as speaking for a substantial swath of disenchanting youth in the early 1990s.

Simon Frith, however, is insightful when comparing words-as-poetry (on the page) and words-as-performance (as music). His notion is worth quoting in full:

Edward Cone . . . makes the point that poetry as *read* is much more "open" for the reader, in terms of both sound and pace, than poetry as *heard* (whether being read aloud or set to music). The reader makes her own decisions about "speed, emphasis, tone, accent, and inflection." A performance of the poem doesn't allow such flexibility; once a verse is set to music, "the mind is so to speak chained to the vehicle of the moving sound." We can't stop the music. We have to move from beginning to end and be satisfied with what we immediately perceive; our compensation is that the music makes the words more "vivid." A musical setting of a poem, then, is a *choice* of meaning given a special intensity, such that, in Mark Booth's words, the "content" of the song become its effect, becomes what it makes us feel.<sup>52</sup>

The musicalizing of words, then, allows them, in part, to be defined as new manifestations: the listener gives himself over to the words and to their tendering not only ideas but also the reconstituted manner in which those ideas are voiced.

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<sup>51</sup> Alan di Perna, "Grunge Music: The Making of *Nevermind*," *Guitar World* (Fall 1996), np.

<sup>52</sup> Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music*, 178–79. Italics added.

My own view of song lyrics in this study has been profoundly influenced by Richard Middleton, beginning with his tripartite categorization of words under the rubrics of “affect,” “story,” and “gesture.” Under the category of affect, words are used “as expression”; they “tend to merge with melody”; and “voice tends toward ‘song.’” Under story, words are “as narrative”; they “tend to govern rhythmic/harmonic flow”; and “voice tends towards speech.” Under gesture, words are “as sound”; they “tend to be absorbed into music”; and “voice tends toward becoming an instrument.”<sup>53</sup>

I also find beneficial Middleton’s views on the dualistic nature of both words and music: “In practice, the music/lyric relationship is a complex one, rather than a question of two extremes. In part, this is because ... music and words, as signifying systems, are not simply antithetical; music has a syntagmatic, even narrative aspect, and words have a musical side.”<sup>54</sup> Relatedly, he points out the bidirectionality between words and music: “The vagueness and ambiguity of musical meanings can be focused, pinned down, made more precise by associated lyrics.”<sup>55</sup> This last point is discussed in Chapter 4, in which a hypothetical song of “commonplace” music can be psychedelically charged by its pairing with trippy lyrics.

I would add to these constructs another decisive facet of singing, specifically, the *pace* of textual delivery—and hence, of meaning—as it reaches the listener. Dai Griffiths discusses what he calls “verbal space” in song:

Verbal space is the pop song’s basic compromise: the words agree to work within the spaces of tonal music’s phrases, and the potential expressive intensity of music’s

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<sup>53</sup> Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 231.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

melody is held back for the sake of the clarity of verbal communication. [Poetic] lines can be full or empty, and words can be positioned at various points on the line. The potential of verbal space depends crucially upon the speed of a song and the way it is phrased, but once these are established, we can develop ways of talking about the proportional relationships within the verbal space of any particular song.<sup>56</sup>

Griffiths invokes “the relative density within and between each line”<sup>57</sup> and illustrates it using a fine early Beatles song, “Please Please Me.” In the verses, two to four words occupy each measure: “(rest) Last night I | said these words to | my love.” Then, in building to the climactic refrain, four measures are used to contain essentially one idea that is repeated eight times by way of call and response—that being the plea “Come on.” Thus the music has agreed to extend and support the single poetic thought. Finally, in the bridge, words suddenly tumble out with rapidity: “I don’t want to sound complaining | but you know there’s always rain in | my heart.” This long sentence, pregnant with a different meaning than the repeated and escalating “come on,” is uttered in only three measures. Griffiths cites songwriter Leonard Cohen’s notion of *syllabic density* as an analogy.<sup>58</sup>

In my own analyses, I will occasionally use the shorthand term RUM (inspired by Philip Tagg’s acronymic style) to stand for a song text’s *rate of unfolding meaning*. I would paraphrase Griffiths with my own definition: RUM is the potentially flexible speed of vocal delivery and its concomitant textual meaning relative to the containing phrase structure. But some explication is in order. First, my notion of unfolding is not related to issues of large-scale voice leading as it is used in Schenkerian analytical practice. Second, in my analyses, RUM relates closely to my earlier gloss on how a song unfurls in time, and I attempt to

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<sup>56</sup> Dai Griffiths, “From Lyric to Anti-Lyric: Analyzing the Words in Pop Song,” in *Analyzing Popular Music*, 43.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>58</sup> See Paul Zollo, *Songwriters on Songwriting* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1997), 341.

associate related musical and thematic elements in the expressive process. The lyrics' meaning and the pace of their delivery play a critical role. Third, RUM engenders a distinct psychological reaction in the listener, especially when it abruptly slows or quickens.<sup>59</sup>

The repetition of lyrics also requires some explanation vis-à-vis their meaning. If the same two-word lyric is repeated over and over (such as the Beatles' "come on"), there is no actual new meaning being added to the song, and yet such repetitions do affect their *existing* meaning, if only because they are reinforcing and drawing it out. Therefore, I deem repeated lyrics to impart a single textual meaning, for while their very repetition is stretching the word count in a literal sense, the *rate* at which new meaning unfolds is greatly slowed, if not stalled, in the process.<sup>60</sup>

Rests that occur *within* a vocal line pose another problem. As Roger Waters put careful thought into the use of space in Pink Floyd's songs, I will use as a case in point "Us and Them" from *Dark Side of the Moon*. If I notate one of its lyrical lines here by using the quarter note, then the listener hears (in 4/4 time) "With, (rest, rest, rest | rest, rest, rest)

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<sup>59</sup> The genre of hip hop music is known for the power of its rhyming, yet fosters a larger fascination with the entire poetic line's ability to communicate. According to the website *Hip Hop Archive*, "To flow in hip hop refers to an MC consciously producing lyrics within a system of: representation and fragmentation, dislocation and symmetry, disruption and order and contradiction and unity. . . . There are many formulas to calculate [quality of readability]. These formulas consider things like number of syllables in a word and sentence length." See anon, "Prepare Yourself," <http://www.hiphoparchive.org/prepare-yourself/deeper-how-read-a-lyric> (accessed August 15, 2012). Hip hop, then, relies on primarily steady rhythm as articulated by the syllable and by number of words per line(s), whereas RUM in rock concerns itself with the rhythmic *flexibility* (and/or frequency) of syllables and words per line(s). Both musics thus have their individual systems for appraising the delivery of meaning in time, but have in common a thorough grasp of expressive syntactical construction and manipulation. Additionally, Kyle Adams has thoroughly studied text-music relations in rap, especially investigating "how rappers incorporate rhythms, groupings, and motives from the underlying music into the rhythm of the music." See Kyle Adams, "Aspects of the Music/Text Relationship in Rap," *Music Theory Online* 14, no. 2 (May 2008), <http://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.08.14.2/mto.08.14.2.adams.html> (accessed August 31, 2012).

<sup>60</sup> It is important to note, however, that even if textual repetition adds no new literal meaning, such a passage's *emotive* meaning and impact can be profoundly affected.

without” | (rest, rest, rest, rest | rest, rest, rest, rest | rest).<sup>61</sup> In this case, the line’s single-word meaning is indeed being carried through the rests simply because it is not yet fully stated. The rests after “without” uphold the meaning because the following lyrical line (not shown) is related to *it*—indeed continues it. Thus, the entire line’s RUM would be very slow: two words span seventeen beats, whereas the very next line speeds up the RUM with “And who’d deny it’s what the fighting’s all about,” using only ten beats.

A more abstract view of lyrical meaning concerns subsequent melodic rests. A vocal line might end, say, with its final word on a downbeat after which the music continues for a time without vocal. But if that vocal’s melody is echoed exactly by an instrumental melody, then meaning can somehow intangibly be drawn beyond the actual words because we remember the vocal melody and what it said. In such a case, I would not attribute any new unfolding meaning, but the mysterious qualities in the relationship between words and music would certainly be enriched.

To sum up, the rate at which textual meaning strikes the listener’s ear has as much expressive effect as vocal–melodic contour, volume, grain, phrasing, enunciation, and more. RUM can induce states of mind in the listener that range from urgency to reflection, anticipation to repose.

In listening to a song, not only do we inevitably project something of ourselves into the lyrics, but we also take heed of what the performer/persona projects. Further, authorial voice is a complex topic (to be addressed in Chapter 3) and involves multiple layers of performative intention and reception. This is especially tempting in Jim Morrison’s case,

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<sup>61</sup> This particular verse is more effective for my argument than the song’s earlier, similar lines, where faint one-beat echoes of the two-word lines extend their meaning more palpably.

given his compelling public profile. Projection can lead us astray, however, from the poetry as pure idea. Suzanne Langer sees poetry as an autonomous artifact:

Poetic statements are no more actual statements than the peaches visible in a still life are actual dessert. The real question is what the poet *makes*, and that, of course, depends on how he goes about it. The task of poetic criticism, then, is not to learn from any and all available records what was the poet's philosophy, morality, life history, or psychosis, and to find the revelation of his own experiences in his words; it is to evaluate his fiction, the *appearance* of thought and feeling or outward events that he creates. . . . To read poetry as a psychological document, in a context of the author's life, putting in further meanings is to do violence to the poem.<sup>62</sup>

Although I utterly agree with Langer's idealization of poetic inherence, in the case of the Doors I will clearly be doing "violence" to the poetry, for I examine the lyrics and their thematic meaning in song while linking them with accompanimental support. Scrutiny of authorial voice also destroys poetic autonomy. At the same time, however, I attempt to exercise restraint and avoid too-concrete conclusions regarding said thematic meaning and the songwriters' intentions.<sup>63</sup> I raise Langer's point simply because, in my analyses, I also strive to keep one eye trained on lyrics per se.

Finally, the *Urtext* of Doors lyrics to date is Danny Sugerman's *The Doors: The Complete Lyrics*, published in 1991.<sup>64</sup> A few words are due about the book along with some of the ways I departed from it. Sugerman (1954–2005) goes through the Doors canon chronologically, by album and track, using in nearly all cases the studio-released versions. In rare cases there are discrepancies between his word choices (or phrase repetitions) and

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<sup>62</sup> Langer, *Problems of Art*, 152–53.

<sup>63</sup> *Song* necessarily invokes the many-layered phenomenon of authorial voice, a topic I discuss in Chapter 3 in regards to "Shaman's Blues."

<sup>64</sup> Danny Sugerman and The Doors, *The Doors: The Complete Lyrics* (New York: Delta, 1991). Sugerman was a rebellious fourteen-year-old when he was befriended by the Doors (especially Morrison) and, through his diligence and dedication, gained their complete trust. He became their manager in 1972, one year after Morrison's death, as the three remaining Doors members tenuously kept the band alive.

what is clearly audible on recordings; I have corrected these.<sup>65</sup> When entire sections are restated verbatim later in songs, Sugerma n and I include them. Not only do they clarify overarching poetic structure, but, as I stated earlier, they can also infer different shadings of meaning as the result of new narrative information learned in the meantime.

My main editing of Sugerma n’s work concerned layout. At times I have readjusted capricious line or section breaks and, more typically, I have occasionally regrouped poetic lines to organize their sense and their coexistence with the accompaniment. In songs as complex as “The End” (discussed in Chapter 5), I have given the episodic and improvisatory central sections their line breaks according to both evolving subject matter and lengthy narrative–vocal pauses.

\* \* \*

This chapter has focused in part on whether or to what lengths the listener—or in other words, rock fans—should relate to rock music analysis. How, if at all, would analytical comprehension affect their musical or cultural experience? It may make no difference whatsoever, in which case the question would circle around once more to why (or for whom) we analyze in the first place. Musicologists should have no trouble acknowledging that rock analyses and rock listeners rarely if ever cross paths. I previously stated that an intellectual evaluation of rock music is anachronistic to the very thing it observes, with the latter instead constituting a profoundly “felt” and lived phenomenon. As my dissertation analyzes the Doors’ music in pursuit of a fuller understanding, the conclusions may likely remain (per McClary and Walser) “something unrecognizable to the fan.” I would wish the

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<sup>65</sup> One particularly problematic track was the mammoth “Celebration of the Lizard,” which, because of its troubled recording history, has no definitive version. For more on this song, see Chapter 5.

reader to consider that in this study, a fortunate fan is also the analyst. Rock music has proven worthy and robust in rewarding many approaches.

## Chapter 3: Analyses—Customizing Existing Forms

### I. Introduction

The Doors' unique mixture of musical training and backgrounds, as detailed in Chapter 1, greatly impacted their sonic and compositional idiolect. In this chapter, I look at a selection of Doors songs that adapted existing forms from rock and from blues genres. Formal analysis will be the main tool for this endeavor, and always with an ear for how form undergirds and enables other elements in order to have maximal impact. As musical form is a container that supports and allows the interaction and interpenetration of discrete elements, it thus takes on a body of expression and becomes, in turn, a conveyance of collective personality; it has a psychology. Further, I invoke William Caplin's distinction between formal "type" and formal "function," in which the former deals with paradigms (hierarchy, groupings, stylistic context, and so on), while the latter focuses on temporal unfolding (akin to my previous chapter's primal thesis) and how the interactions of constituent parts help define their expressive roles. Temporal aspects, in turn, orient the listener—and his or her interpretation of smaller musical parameters—within the musical entirety. It is this situating of ideas within real time, and their interactive functions, that induce the greatest psychological impact.<sup>1</sup> I will be primarily interested in the spirit of the latter notion and in how musical unfolding affects the listener in constantly changing ways. This is undoubtedly a subjective enterprise, in which my own reactions to the traversal of the musical landscape will differ from others'. But it is hoped that some elucidation of the Doors' usage of form adds to the larger dialogue regarding their unique language.

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<sup>1</sup> William E. Caplin, "What are Formal Functions?," in *Musical Form, Forms, and Formenlehre*, ed. Pieter Bergé (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2009), 21–23.

The songs concentrated upon in this chapter involve, most often, verse–chorus forms that begin as expected, but which depart from the paradigms in order to better serve the evolving tales being told. I will focus on songs—with the exception of the hit “Light My Fire”—that received less public attention (especially through less radio exposure). These need close examination as much as their better-known, even pop-marketed ones, because, in collaboration with the hits, they complete a more honest and fruitful picture of the Doors’ singular musical vision. Toward this goal, formal analyses here will consider concomitant workings of complementary elements, including poetic themes, text–music relations, tonal design, groove, jazz and blues borrowings, and vocal inflection.

Morrison’s and Krieger’s lyrics are often charged with allusive, metaphorical, and psychologically probing concepts. Thus, a crucial aspect of the Doors output is that the literary potency and originality of their lyrics often result in the fashioning of corresponding, non-normative (by late-1960s rock standards) musical support. In starting with and subverting recognizable paradigms, numerous Doors songs—even those of three- to four-minute duration—sound more like a journey than many other rock songs that have recycled verse material and only minimal alterations to round out the narrative. This Doorsian predilection for inventive directionality often results in a climactic payoff. Even when conventional verse forms are used without any notable changes, however, a teleological effect is still achieved through a song’s tremendous heightening of intensity. This was a pattern pervasive enough for the rock world to attribute to the Doors’ music qualities resembling orgasm or transcendence.

The Doors, at a nascent moment of confidence when they had nothing to lose, were eager to stir the rock world with their eponymous debut album. They succeeded wildly, with

*The Doors* (1967) reaching no. 2 on the *Billboard* album chart.<sup>2</sup> From that album, I begin with “Light My Fire” and “I Looked At You,” the latter of which is a satirical rendering of common pop song formulae, but which ends with a morose twist.

I will then analyze three songs from *The Soft Parade* (1969), the album widely regarded as epitomizing the Doors’ mid-career crisis (as mentioned above), especially when pitted against the confidence and raw creative spirit of their first two albums. While the Doors at that time were afflicted with artistic exhaustion and a weakened directional plan, they were still capable of measuring up to their earlier innovative material—they were only producing less of it. However, the lesser-known songs, including “Wild Child,”<sup>3</sup> “Do It,” and “Shaman’s Blues,” to be examined next in this chapter, each represent an anomalous treatment of standard verse forms. These are made with the same gusto and imagination of their earlier material. Given the boundaries pushed in “Shaman’s Blues” and its multivalent autobiographical topoi, my analysis of this song may be regarded as the centerpiece of this chapter.

This stylistic progression is followed through to their last record, *L.A. Woman* (1971), with an analysis of “The Wasp.” While the song is another example of verse-form expansion, I will delve into other issues such as the relationship between spoken narrative and music, and the nature and behavior of tonic vamping. To conclude this larger idea of adaptation of standard rock song forms, I will round off the chapter with an overview of the Doors’ work with blues variants.

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<sup>2</sup> They finally achieved this ranking in mid-September of 1967 after hovering at no. 4 for a month. *The Doors* never reached no. 1 because the Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* raced to the top and remained there just as the Doors’ popularity was cresting.

<sup>3</sup> “Wild Child” did appear as the B side to the single “Touch Me,” which briefly charted in January 1969. It was released six months before the album. See Ben Fong-Torres, *The Doors* (New York: Hyperion, 2006), 170–73.

Deciphering the modifications of pre-existing forms requires, of course, an understanding of established models. Basic templates, as analytic wisdom goes, are rarely used literally, but they do serve as kernels from which sprout variations and elaborations. The latter, in turn, exhibit how songwriters and performers have personally refashioned the templates. Lori Burns explains that verse–chorus song form is “common to much rock music, in which a story is developed as each verse presents new lyrical material, while a more general message is repeated in the chorus.”<sup>4</sup> Verses, that is, serve to narrate or describe a story or situation, and only occasionally repeat their lyrics in later statements. But importantly, as John Covach observes, “the focus of the [verse–chorus] song is squarely on the chorus.” This is due to its catchy hooks, heightened intensity, and invariant lyrics upon its repeats; in some cases a sing-along quality is evoked. Thematically, a chorus serves to reflect or otherwise comment.<sup>5</sup>

Covach makes a distinction between two verse–chorus types: *simple* verse–chorus form utilizes the same chord changes for both verse and chorus, whereas *contrasting* verse–chorus form, as the name suggests, uses a different chord pattern for the verses and choruses. Songs in this chapter will be of the latter type, though I will continue to use the shorter generic term of verse–chorus form, which serves well the purposes of this chapter because of its sheer ubiquity in 1960s pop and rock. Whether in the United States or Great Britain, many bands employed the form and, attesting to its flexibility, added their own subtle twists within the basic formula. And many Los Angeles-based bands with which the Doors interacted early on relied heavily on verse–chorus form.

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<sup>4</sup> Lori Burns, “Meaning in a Popular Song: The Representation of Masochistic Desire in Sarah McLachlan’s ‘Ice,’” in *Engaging Music*, ed. Deborah Stein (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 138.

<sup>5</sup> John Covach, “Form in Rock Music: A Primer,” in *Engaging Music*, 71.

Vital to the understanding of verse and chorus sections is their relationship to one another. This starts with their basic functions within the whole, but extends to their temporal juxtapositions. Subsectional *repetitions* later in the form elicit new affective responses, as the memory of intervening material puts restatements for the listener in a new relief. As Victor Zuckerkandl states, “The repetition of a tonal statement never simply says the same thing over again; it accomplishes its particular share in the metric process, whether as the fulfillment of a demand for symmetrical complementation or as a link in the chain of intensification.”<sup>6</sup> Zuckerkandl’s observation can have a direct bearing on text. If we hear a next verse in the chain, for example, it can either have new lyrics or be a repetition of lyrics already heard. If lyrics are new, there is advancement in the action. If lyrics are returning, they are taking us back to what was meant the first time, when no further knowledge of the story had unfolded. They also contribute, as Zuckerkandl indicates, to structure. In the same way, identical recurrences of a chorus are richer in meaning, as they are commenting on a larger experience than they did previously.

Beyond verse–chorus form, the more elementary strophic form (sometime called “simple verse” form) is also prevalent in rock. Its simplicity is complemented by a greater focus on an unbroken linear narrative. Examples of strophic form in the Doors’ hands, though few, also receive (as in the case of “Shaman’s Blues”) idiosyncratic treatment.

Another beloved rock form was the twelve-bar blues, which in the early 1960s enjoyed a huge resurgence in popularity and would inspire many rock musicians on both sides of the

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<sup>6</sup> Victor Zuckerkandl, *Sound and Symbol: Music and the External World*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 219.

Atlantic with its inherent plasticity and rich emotional history.<sup>7</sup> The last of these was a necessary ingredient for rock's perceived integrity. Most often, of course, a full twelve-bar pattern served as a verse, chorus, or both, either in verse–chorus or strophic formats. The blues template's malleability is shown in a number of ways by those who employ it, most commonly through transformations in its (traditional) *aab* lyric scheme, harmonic pattern (with the template's cadential chords of V–IV–I often refashioned), metric extension, or a combination thereof.

Interior jams gained popularity throughout the 1960s, borrowing from the jazz predilection for improvisation, and were a signature component of many of the Doors' songs. The mainstream media was taking note and appreciating this new structural dimension:

Jam sessions, long a basic and indispensable part of jazz, now are becoming popular in rock as well. In jazz, after-hours jam sessions are regarded as the highest form of the art. In rock, they have always been a prize catch for the initiated who know where to look. Within the last few months, the rock jam session has become conspicuous.<sup>8</sup>

Rock jams, no matter the scope, were rooted in and grew from the traditional instrumental solo, which itself was often an elaboration of a song's basic verse structure, both harmonically and metrically. In jams within vocal music forms, song lyrics gave way to instrumental music, whose expressive relation to the voice and text thereby shifted from being accompanimental to being complementary; the songs were usually rounded out by a

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<sup>7</sup> The 1964 Newport Folk Festival saw the enthusiastic “rediscovery” of such ageing country blues performers—otherwise largely forgotten—as Skip James, Mississippi John Hurt, and Reverend Robert Wilkins. See Ronald D. Cohen, *A History of Folk Music Festivals in the United States: Feast of Musical Celebration* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008). Vanguard Records was the leading record label to capture the Newport performances. See *Newport Folk Festival: Best of The Blues, 1959–1968*, Vanguard 115, CD, 2001; and *Blues at Newport: Recorded Live at the Newport Folk Festival, 1959–1964*, Vanguard 116, CD, 1991.

<sup>8</sup> Mike Jahn, “Jam Sessions Gain Popularity With Rock Artists Across U.S.,” *New York Times*, November 5, 1968. The article goes on to mention several venues, including the Fillmore (East and West), and the Whisky a Go-Go, all of which the Doors played.

return of a verse, chorus, or both.<sup>9</sup> I will examine variations on song jams in Chapter 5, and show how the Doors' purely instrumental versions would be overtaken by vocally defined ones, considerably enriching the picture through the presence of human thought, language, and corporeal delivery. It was largely Morrison, through his stream-of-consciousness poetry, who would at times wrest control of the Doors' jams. The resultant landscapes, unpredictable and dramatic, were a key ingredient to their magic, drawing listeners into an eccentric, irrational web of states that were alternately magnetic, otherworldly, perverse, moody, or psychedelically bizarre. The Doors' jams, in short, moved beyond musical journeys to explore the margins of human psychology.

## II. Analyses

### “Light My Fire”

The release of their energized and inspired 1967 debut album, *The Doors*, established the band nationally. The album's songs had been in the Doors' repertory for at least a year and had been subject to retooling and shaping in an atmosphere of creative freedom. Along with their second record, *Strange Days*, released in September of the same year, the early work quickly signaled a defiant path. The archetypal Doors song, “Light My Fire,” written by Robby Krieger, is our logical starting point.<sup>10</sup> This is the one song that has been analyzed at length and more than any other, and to this day it remains their biggest hit. Though I stated

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<sup>9</sup> The Grateful Dead, of course, were the kings of extended jams in the late 1960s, creating seemingly endless musical space and time for their LSD-inspired audiences.

<sup>10</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all songs in this chapter are from the widely available Elektra Records 40th Anniversary Mixes studio CD re-releases. These songs synchronize with timings in this chapter's figures.

earlier that I would focus in this chapter on lesser-known songs, it would behoove us to examine not only how the band finessed conventional form in this case, but to hear other crucial Doors' musical ingredients working at their best.<sup>11</sup> "Light My Fire" combines verse-chorus structure with extensive interior jamming and concludes with a rapturously heightened repeat of the first verse, but ties it all together with idiosyncratic tonal and harmonic schemes. As I will show, the song, in fact, lacks a wholly convincing tonal center, or, depending on the listening, has one that is only briefly but firmly defined within the migratory tonal landscape. The full-length version, with extended organ and guitar solos and (in the CD format) clocking in at 7:00, appeared as the last song on the debut album's A side, and will be the version primarily considered in this analysis.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See Michael Hicks, *Sixties Rock: Garage, Psychedelic, and Other Satisfactions* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 75 ff. Hicks's full chapter on "Light my Fire" is the most rigorous examination of this song and, in fact, a rare example of thorough musical analysis being applied to the Doors' music in a serious manner.

<sup>12</sup> Producer Paul Rothchild's truncated single was released in April 1967 and by the summer would chart for nine weeks, being no. 1 in *Billboard* from 29 July to 12 August. Perhaps because the song was such a huge hit, it was edited more than the average rock song and thus had several versions. Michael Hicks reports that "the producers" slowed the tape to enrich Morrison's vocal timbre—the actual playing time was 7:05—but with speed-correction (and a rise in pitch) the true length was "approximately 6:45." There was also a discrepancy between the original LP label (with the erroneous timing of 6:30) and the LP sleeve (showing a timing of 6:50). See Hicks, *Sixties Rock*, 79. Furthermore, Albin Zak, following a private communication with Walter Everett, writes of two different singles versions, including "the 2:52 edit that appeared on both stock 45 [rpm] copies and promotional singles ... and an FM edit that had some, but not all, of the organ/guitar solos." See Albin Zak, "Rock and Roll Rhapsody: Pop Epics of the 1970s," in *Expression in Pop-Rock Music*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter Everett (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 358n4.

Figure 3.1: “Light My Fire” formal and lyric design, *The Doors* version

	<b>A<sup>1</sup></b> (as Introduction) organ solo	
0:09	<b>B<sup>1</sup></b> —Verse 1 [Am <sup>7</sup> –F#m <sup>7</sup> (x4)]	You know that it would be untrue You know that I would be a liar If I was to say to you Girl, we couldn't get much higher
0:24	<b>C<sup>1</sup></b> —Chorus [D: IV–V   I   IV–V   I–VI#   IV–I   V/V   V/V]	Come on baby, light my fire Come on baby, light my fire Try to set the night on fire
0:37	<b>B<sup>2</sup></b> —Verse 2	The time to hesitate is through No time to wallow in the mire Try now we can only lose And our love become a funeral pyre
0:52	<b>C<sup>2</sup></b> —Chorus	Come on baby, light my fire Come on baby, light my fire Try to set the night on fire
1:04 organ 3:12 guitar	<b>D</b> —Solos [A Dorian: i–ii]	
5:22	<b>A<sup>2</sup></b> (as Retransition)	
5:31	<b>B<sup>3</sup></b> —Verse 2	
5:46	<b>C<sup>3</sup></b> —Chorus	
5:59	<b>B<sup>4</sup></b> —Verse 1	
6:13	<b>C<sup>4</sup></b> —Chorus (extended) [D: IV–V   I (x2)   bIII–bVII   I (x4)]	Come on baby, light my fire (x2) Try to set the night on fire (x4)
6:36	<b>A<sup>3</sup></b> (as Conclusion) [ends on held A major chord]	

Michael Hicks sums up the status of “Light My Fire” as an example of a highly novel rock song, with a prominent jazz presence to boot, flourishing in the commercial pop market:

The way the Doors composed “Light My Fire” shows how diverse musical sources could converge in a “psychedelic” whole. The way mass culture co-opted “Light My Fire” shows how a strikingly unusual rock song could quickly become a pop standard. And the Doors’ persistent mutations of the song in performance suggest how a late-1960s rock group could continue embellishing a work on stage, long after it was “finished” in the recording studio.<sup>13</sup>

The success of “Light My Fire” lies in its melding of superb song craftsmanship with a theme of dark ecstasy.<sup>14</sup> This theme is polysemous—springing as it does from the rich metaphor of fire, with its associations of ignition, desire, consumption, orgasm, destruction, and rebirth—and congruous in both the drug and the sexual realms, and, says Hicks, “Its imagery made it a veritable theme for arsonists in racial uprisings [and] for soldiers in Vietnam.”<sup>15</sup> Both text and music quickly and firmly established the Doors’ psychedelic reputation in the public’s imagination. I will be surveying aspects of psychedelic rock in Chapter 4, but it is important to note for now that two chief LSD-associated traits of the song are its characteristically somber, reverb-drenched sound, along with the time-suspending interior organ and guitar solos.

Before discussing the song’s text and tonal plan, I will examine the diverse musical styles referred to by Hicks, and how their particular arrangement puts a distinctive stamp on what is an otherwise established form. Let us look more closely at the musical elements of

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<sup>13</sup> Hicks, *Sixties Rock*, 75.

<sup>14</sup> Krieger acknowledges the help he received from his band mates in finalizing the song: “Ray had the idea for the opening part, which was the real hook; Jim helped me out on some of the lyrics, too, and the beat was John’s idea.” See Andrew Doe and John Tobler, *The Doors In Their Own Words* (London: Omnibus Press, 1988), 20.

<sup>15</sup> Hicks, *Sixties Rock*, 75.

the song’s four discrete units, those being the introduction, the verse, the chorus, and the solo section (as designated A, B, C and D, respectively, in Figure 3.1 above<sup>16</sup>), after which I will discuss their interaction with the text.<sup>17</sup> In the introduction, we first hear a single snare drum crack—which turns out to be an anacrusis—then Manzarek’s famous opening motto (see Example 3.1), mentioned by Krieger above, as it instantly identifies the song and recurs twice as a major structural pillar. This is the oft-described “Baroque” organ figuration that was zealously conceived after fellow band members were ordered to leave the room, and it is probably the single most recognizable Doors riff.<sup>18</sup>

Example 3.1: “Light My Fire” introduction; organ part



There are fascinating aspects to this opening. The first is the Baroque-like melody that Manzarek lays atop the harmony. Clearly his youthful training in Bach is showing here; perhaps we are hearing an incipient twist on a two-part invention. But the matching of rapid

<sup>16</sup> In this dissertation’s figures, items marked in boldface connote elements that are, in my opinion, most pertinent to the song at hand, especially formal section designations and significant harmonies.

<sup>17</sup> I will use the term “solo” as a shorthand reference to Section D, where, in fact, a Manzarek organ solo is followed by a Krieger guitar solo; the two then jam together in an intensifying crescendo toward a climatic finish, and proceed to a retransition.

<sup>18</sup> Manzarek describes its genesis: “All my classical studies came to fruition. ... [A] simple circle of fifths was the answer. The chords were G to D, F to Bb, Eb to Ab (two beats on each chord) and then an A for two measures. Run some Bach filigree over the top in a kind of turning-in-on-itself Fibonacci spiral—like a nautilus shell—and you’ve got it. ... [A]n illuminati moment ... you have to be ready for them.” Ray Manzarek, *Light My Fire: My Life with the Doors* (New York: Berkley Boulevard Books, 1999), 151.

melodic notes to the harmony is not quite right, especially beginning with the Bb chord. Obviously the Baroque style is more evoked here than precisely replicated. As for the unusual harmonic progression, it establishes, then upsets in quick succession, one's hearing of tonic. The first G–D<sup>7</sup> is undoubtedly a I–V<sup>7</sup> relationship. But the F, Bb, Eb, and Ab chords in descending fifths at the progression's heart are Manzarek's true stroke of genius, as they rather incongruously flesh out the opening of this Doors mystical rock journey with a brief, harmonically destabilizing technique that was fashioned, ironically, from his classical background. Thus, a rising fifth (tonic–dominant) progression and a chain of falling fifths are separated by the chromatic-*mediant* relationship of D major to F major. Finally, the A major chord (which can sound as a brief tonic but more likely as V/D) appears as even more of a surprise because it immediately wrenches from the distant and very chromatically related Ab major.<sup>19</sup> The introduction's other notable features include the hard-driving rock beat in the kit, the quarter-eighth-eighth rhythmic figure in the bass, and the loud dynamic.

The subsequent first verse (Section B) shifts abruptly to the parallel A minor chord. The verses' highly unusual two-chord oscillation, also seen in Figure 3.1, between Am<sup>7</sup> and F#m<sup>7</sup>—which creates a C/C# cross relation—signifies either i<sup>7</sup>–#vi<sup>7</sup> or iii<sup>7</sup>–i<sup>7</sup>, or no definitive tonic at all. The two are opposite readings from each other, but each is possible because of the acceptability of tonic as an initiator or as a concluder. In both cases, neither chord supports the other as tonic in any traditional way. But all of this is dependent, too, on

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<sup>19</sup> The five-measure section's harmonic rhythm and asymmetrical phrase structure are interesting as well. Manzarek chose to abandon his fifths cycle after two measures, or a total of three measures in the song thus far, and then leap to the concluding held chord for two whole measures. One way to “balance” things, if it were desired, would be to keep the A major concluding chord to a single measure. But holding the chord twice this long sets A major deeper in the ear, and allows the unit's five measures to offset the more symmetrical eight measures of the upcoming verse.

the surrounding harmonic context: in the “Light My Fire” introduction, nothing prepares us tonally for this oscillating vamp in the verse.

In his discussion of pop and rock music passages constructed on one or two chords, Philip Tagg writes about “different types of harmonic function, of chords and of chord changes, not just as harmonic travelling—‘somewhere worth going’—but also as harmonic *being*—‘somewhere worth *staying*’. Clearly, the experience of ‘being in one place’ does not necessarily mean that nothing happens there or that the experience is dull.”<sup>20</sup> After the rapid harmonic motion of the introduction, the verse’s oscillation slows matters substantially, having the effect even of hovering in place as rhythmic motion pushes the listener ahead. There are also the distant relationship between the chords and the lack of a discernible cadential goal. Tagg also categorizes, and identifies in specific songs, so-called “submediantal shuttles” (I–vi, I–VI#, and i–bVI, the last an example of an Aeolian shuttle), and finds only a single instance of i alternating with #vi—that being the “Light My Fire” progression at hand.<sup>21</sup> In any case, I will again examine the effects of this chordal toggling on the text in a moment. Other aspects of the verses include the regularity of four two-measure phrases, a harmonic rhythm that slows to one chord per measure, and a suddenly hushed dynamic. Importantly, Densmore’s kit greatly colors the verse style by switching to a

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<sup>20</sup> Philip Tagg, *Everyday Tonality: Towards a Tonal Theory of What Most People Hear* (New York and Montréal: The Mass Media Music Scholars’ Press, 2009), 162. Tagg’s notion of harmonic “going” versus “staying” will apply to my discussion of vamping in “The Wasp,” later in this chapter.

<sup>21</sup> Tagg identifies the chords as being Abm<sup>7</sup> and Fm<sup>7</sup>, possibly due to pitch differences in playback equipment. And for his part, Tagg hears the first of the two chords as being the sectional tonic. Tagg, *Everyday Tonality*, 185.

simple Latin beat (not quite a rumba or a clave), in which a gentle rim knock is played on beat two and the second half of beat three.<sup>22</sup>

The chorus (Section C) in “Light My Fire,” as it should be, is musically memorable while being poetically redolent with the song’s meaning. The kit reverts to the backbeat of Section A, the energy is ramped up, and here we irrefutably shift to D major, which is clarified by its IV–V–I harmonies. But the chorus plays two important tonal roles: in addition to its interior IV–V–I progression (defining D major), it also segues into the next verse with a different V–(i) progression that tonicizes A minor. The final chorus is the exception, staying in D major (instead of switching as previously to E major) for its final held chord.<sup>23</sup> When Section A then takes up for the final time, its initial G major sonority—which appeared in a vacuum at the song’s outset—is heard again, at least locally, as tonic. But it will end the song as it did the introduction: on an A major chord.

The lengthy, John Coltrane-inspired interior solo section (labeled D in Figure 3.1), presents yet another harmonic case. The oscillation between Am<sup>7</sup> and Bm<sup>7</sup> throughout adds the song’s first Dorian inflection (though Krieger plays at times in Aeolian as well).<sup>24</sup> The band wished to explore jazz techniques in the song—indeed, Manzarek viewed it as having a jazz format: head theme, solos, and a return to the head theme—and the solo section was the

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<sup>22</sup> A rim knock is played by keeping the tip of the drumstick resting on the snare drum head while gently knocking the stick body against the rim.

<sup>23</sup> The held chord of the final chorus also gives it the importance of imparting poetic and structural closure. With the textual message finished, the last organ flourish (Section A3) can act as a self-standing outro.

<sup>24</sup> Ray Manzarek: “I suggested we quote Coltrane on Robby Krieger’s song. It worked so well that Robby and I would extend our solos for upwards of ten to fifteen minutes in concert. It was such a joy to float over that repeating figure and to interact with each other that we never got bored with the piece, even though we played it at every concert.” See Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 78.

place to make it happen.<sup>25</sup> The Coltrane tunes that sparked the two-chord oscillation were “Olé” (from the album *Olé Coltrane*, released in 1961) and “My Favorite Things” (from *My Favorite Things*, released in 1960).<sup>26</sup> The choice of i and ii chords for the solos (with each chord lasting two beats) is an interesting one, having no apparent relation to any harmonic behavior elsewhere in the song. One’s sensation of tonic in this oscillation is both the same and different than in the verse: a kind of hovering is again present because of the harmonic stasis, but tonic is far more grounded in the A Dorian mode.

Krieger, when first presenting the song to the band, had completed lyrics for the first verse, but only partial ones for the second. It was Morrison who provided lines two and four of the second verse, which add the element of death to the story.<sup>27</sup> The verses’ RUM is achieved through one full measure of text followed by another measure’s pause, giving the listener time to reflect and anticipate. The rhythmic push and pull is perfectly suited to the uncertainty of tonic, and this in turn complements the text’s double-negative syntax: it would be *untrue* that we *could not* get higher. The same *abab* rhyme scheme applies to both verses, which denotes a structural rigor even amidst the reflection. Any sense of irresolution, however, is thoroughly cast out with the positive turn of the chorus, whose urge and desire

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<sup>25</sup> The interior solos (Section D, lasting 4:18) are substantial in proportion to any of the song’s verse–chorus units (typically lasting 0:28), and thus the song, appearing on the band’s debut album, strongly conveyed to the public the importance of improvisation to the Doors. But while Section D is clearly jazzy in respects, the kit maintains a strong rock backbeat throughout.

<sup>26</sup> John Coltrane, *Olé Coltrane*, Rhino Records 8122736992, CD; *My Favorite Things*, Atlantic SD-1361, CD. Coltrane’s two chords in “Olé” are C Major–Db major (over a C pedal), and in “My Favorite Things” are E minor–F# minor. See Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 78; and “Ray Manzarek on ‘Light My Fire,’” *Fresh Air from WHYY*, NPR Music, October 20, 2006, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6353311> (accessed February 18, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> The savvy Paul Rothchild, who always gave Morrison enormous latitude in his personal behavior, professed to dislike only these lyrics in “Light My Fire.” Perhaps at this early juncture he was still learning his way with the lead singer–poet’s psychological disposition. See Chuck Crisafulli, *The Doors: When The Music’s Over* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2000), 30.

are given unfailing support by D major and the more anchoring rock beat. Though the mood shifts completely, the keyword “fire” in the chorus fits into the rhyme scheme of the verses (as another *b*). This gives a satisfactory completion from “liar” through “higher” to “fire.” And in verse two, the same *b* rhymes are thicker with the song’s titular indications, from “mire” to “pyre” and “fire.”

After the solos, these same verses return in reverse order. But now the pair’s chemistry is also changed with the final (and formerly first) verse’s greatly escalated intensity. As Example 3.2 shows, the vocal shifts up by the interval of roughly a fifth, and sings, now *forte* (in A minor),  $^7-^5(-^4)$ , instead of the earlier  $^3-^2(-^1)$ . And in the last chorus, the vocal is roughly an octave higher than before. This gesture, along with a thicker organ texture and hardened beat in the kit, finishes the lyric with an enormous upsurge in conviction. The final chorus’s apotheosis is prepared for well.

Example 3.2: “Light My Fire” vocal melody in the verses

The image displays a musical score for the song "Light My Fire". It is divided into two sections: "Verses 1, 2, 3" and "Verse 4". The score is written in 4/4 time. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staff. The lyrics are: "You know that it would be un-true" for Verses 1, 2, and 3, and "know that it would be un-true" for Verse 4. The key signature changes from D major in the first section to A minor in the second section. The piano accompaniment features a steady rock beat with a prominent bass line and organ textures.

The overall shape of “Light My Fire,” then, is a straightforward contrasting verse–chorus with extended soloing in the middle. But the song’s formal secret lies in the fine-tuning of its distinct components and their relational placement in shaping the variable

musical and poetic flow: the opening organ gesture establishes energy and fantastical harmonic color, verses are moody and hesitant, choruses break out with a driving expectancy, the solos allow the mind to wander in their free-form psychedelic improvisation, the last verse–chorus combination confirms that euphoria has been reached, and the final organ restatement is the journey’s ebullient capstone.

All that remains is to make sense of the song’s tonal plan, and to try to determine, after hearing its many tonal planes, if there is indeed a center. It would first be helpful to clarify how there are various levels of tonic reliability. Mark Spicer has identified tonics that possess, in relation to the whole of a song, lesser degrees of their customary stability. An “emergent” tonic is one that finally sounds only after an extensive passage with other related chords (such as  $|: ii^7-V^7 :|$ ) has merely *suggested* it. The effect of finally unveiling tonic in this way is to experience deeper satisfaction and release of tension than usual. Then there are “fragile” tonics that are voiced in first or second inversion and possibly sound on metrically weak beats; these are not fully realizing their *raison d’être* of providing groundedness. Finally, “absent” tonics are those that never truly sound at all, though are continually suggested by the harmony. One might think of these as would-be emergent tonics that are ever postponed and never made material.<sup>28</sup>

We can review moments in “Light My Fire” when keys are prominently or apparently tonicized: G major at the very opening; V/D major (or possibly A major) at the end of the introduction; A minor or F# minor or no definite key in the verses; a solid D major in the choruses; A minor when the  $E^7-Am$  progression (issuing from the chorus) launches verses 2–4; A Dorian in the solos; and V/D major again (or possibly A major again) at the song’s

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<sup>28</sup> Mark Spicer, “Absent Tonics in Pop and Rock Songs,” paper presented at the 2009 meeting of the Society for Music Theory, Montreal.

final held chord. At the very least, the sense of tonality in “Light My Fire” is progressive.<sup>29</sup> But if, as discussed earlier in the chapter, the chorus is the formal core of a verse–chorus song, then we need to consider the chorus of “Light My Fire” as performing basic formal functions. Indeed, we know that the key stated there—D major—is the most clear-cut of any section of the song due to its IV–V–I progression, and this is linked with the title lyric and catchy melody. D major, if only because of its being formally delayed, might therefore be a kind of emergent tonic.<sup>30</sup> But the main criterion—that of being preceded by suggestive harmony—is wholly missing. Thus, it is a different kind of emergent tonic: it appears not as a resolution or completion (or both) of previous unresolved harmony but as its own independent tonal fact. It might be considered as a “self-determined” tonic, isolated, self-standing, and not reliant on surrounding tonal material. In any case, “Light My Fire” problematizes the notion of discerning tonic when its various tonal planes are so large and far-flung.<sup>31</sup> Many listeners, however, would count on the chorus, amongst all sections, to fulfill its obligatory formal role of anchoring a song and commanding our most focused attention.

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<sup>29</sup> Musicologist Dika Newlin coined the term “progressive tonality” in 1947, which simply referred to a symphonic movement that began and ended in different keys. See Dika Newlin, *Bruckner, Mahler, Schoenberg* (1947; reprint, New York: W.W. Norton, 1978). This tonal practice is commonly used in rock, as well. Walter Everett has expanded the term’s definition. Although writing in the context of the Beatles’ music, it is universally applicable: Progressive tonality is “a system characterized by the modulation from one key area to another without return or any other indication of an overriding single tonal center.” See Walter Everett, *The Beatles as Musicians: Revolver through the Anthology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 317.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Hicks’s designation of D major as the song’s tonic is correct, but his method of relating *all* material to that key is highly suspect, beginning with his assigning to the introduction’s chords (G, D<sup>7</sup>, F, Bb<sup>7</sup>, Eb, Ab, and A natural) the following functions: IV–V<sup>7</sup>/IV | bIII–V<sup>7</sup>/IIb [*sic*] | bII–bV | V | V. The first problem is that the opening two chords, as stated, are the very first sonorities to strike the ear. They therefore sound overwhelmingly as I–V<sup>7</sup>, and not as an opening home-key subdominant moving to *its* dominant. There is simply no harmonic history against which to gauge these functions. The subsequent four chords immediately scramble the quick intimation of key, and can hardly be heard within the framework of any single key, let alone D major. Similarly, Hicks’s verse is heard improbably as v/D–iii/D. All of this problematizes the notion of determining a tonic.

<sup>31</sup> The song can be heard, for example, as ending on a massive half cadence.

## “I Looked at You”

On the first album, the Doors also included the sugary and banal “I Looked at You,” which has a bit of perverse fun with the lighter music of its day. Other than one crucial deviation—ultimately the point of the exercise—the song’s array of commonplace pop elements suggests an intentional mocking of the prevailing mass-consumed music: minimally altered verse–chorus form (see Figure 3.2), balanced (usually eight-measure) structural divisions, breezy and insipid lyrics, tidy phrase rhythm, a light and innocent beat, clean timbres, and so on. The mode is cheery C Mixolydian.<sup>32</sup> Thus the song nimbly communicates the same antiestablishment stance as the album’s more brutally forceful songs. Further, its shrewd placement on the album, tucked between the raucously sexual “Back Door Man” and the disconcertedly acid-drenched “End of the Night,” highlights the irony through these jarring juxtapositions. Other stylistic winks occur in the kit, shifting the beat from pop-surf watusi in the verses to foursquare backbeat in the choruses, and the organ, whose solo is pitch perfect in its ribbing of 1960s, moptop-shaking fever.<sup>33</sup>

Though the scenario is paper-thin, the vocal is calculated to inspire the listener as well. In the verses, Morrison adopts a sunny, agreeable grain, and the vocal double tracking is virtually in sync. In the chorus, however, the song breaks loose with its sudden enthusiasm and rasping, hollering voice. Double tracking splits the vocals to an octave apart and the upper voice especially conveys a new urgency in its invitation to flee.

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<sup>32</sup> “I Looked at You” thus has the not uncommon trait of using both bVII and V chords, which invoke both the lowered and raised scale degree  $\hat{7}$ . The bVII chord here can be heard either as a dominant substitute (or a second *type* of dominant) or as a neighbor chord to I.

<sup>33</sup> As an example, the stereotypical Monkees, the saccharine and commercially invented American Beatles alternative, were being skewered here.

Figure 3.2: “I Looked at You” formal and lyric design, *The Doors* version<sup>34</sup>

	Intro	8 mm.		[C Mixo:] I <sup>7</sup> vamp
0:12	Verse 1	8	I looked at you You looked at me I smiled at you You smiled at me	I   I bVII   I I   I bVII   I
0:24	Chorus <i>a</i>	8	And we’re on our way No, we can’t turn back Yeah, we’re on our way And we can’t turn back	V   V I   I V   V I   I
0:38	<i>b</i>	6	’Cause it’s too late Too late, too late Too late, too late	<b>i</b>   bVII bVI   <b>bV</b> V   V
0:47	<i>a</i>	8	[repeat]	
1:01	Organ solo	8		IV   I   IV   I   VI   I   IV-V   I
1:13	Verse 2		I walked with you You walked with me I talked to you You talked to me	
1:26	Chorus <i>a</i>	8	[repeat]	
1:39	<i>b</i>	5	[repeat]	<b>i</b>   bVII   bVI   <b>bV</b>   <b>i</b> (held)
1:51	Reprise: Chorus <i>a/b</i>	8+5	[repeat]	<b>i</b>   bVII   bVI   <b>bV</b>   <b>i</b> (held)

The ominous twist first appears in the middle area of the chorus, labeled *b* in the figure. An abrupt shift to the minor, followed by a whole-tone chordal descent to the very remote bV chord, supports the lyrics’ forbidding turn. The first *b* utterance is left tonally

<sup>34</sup> In the Figure, the crucial bV chord and the phrase-ending minor tonic chords are shown in boldface.

open—with bV slipping up to the dominant—but the immediate repeat of chorus Section A regrounds the major key’s spirit. When the chorus returns after verse two, however, Section B provides closure, a formal technique that we will see again below.<sup>35</sup> Four beats of silence precede the surprise reprise, which initially offers a potential corrective to the discomfiting false ending. Instead, we hear simply a repeat of the *a/b* chorus combination, leaving the song hanging with ersatz anxiety. Much of this has to do with the final minor cadence flipping around the more common minor-to-major traversal heard in pop and rock. In a small but telling detail, then, the open-endedness of the phrase “too late,” along with its unexpectedly bleak harmonic diversion, succinctly spoil the song’s faux chasteness. “I Looked at You” allows the Doors to inject a dark premonition into a carefree pop exuberance.

### “Wild Child”

The Doors’ fourth and most problematic album, *The Soft Parade*, released in July 1969, brought the band to the nadir of their career up to that point. The band’s first two albums, *The Doors* and *Strange Days*, were declarations of sex, death, psychedelia, and madness. But their third record, *Waiting for the Sun*, released in August 1968, showed the band’s first weaknesses. Morrison was becoming increasingly erratic and indifferent, sometimes showing up at the studio drunk. The band was also bereft of the familiar material they had mastered while playing live shows. New songs suddenly needed penning. “Third album syndrome” was how Krieger—who was contributing more songs (and lyrics) than ever—summed up the situation: “Usually a group will have enough songs to record one, maybe

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<sup>35</sup> The cadential jump here from bV to tonic is peculiar not only in rock harmony, but may also subliminally reference art music’s treatment of the tritone and its nefarious past. It also predates a favorite heavy metal harmonic device.

two albums, then they'll go off on tour and not have time to write any more material. So by the third album, you find yourself trying to write stuff in the studio ... and it shows."<sup>36</sup>

*The Soft Parade* fared even worse, as discussed in Chapter 1, with its use of strings, horns, and harpsichord as accompaniments for some songs, while others were either experiments in pastiche or perceived as acts of near-desperation (for example, "Easy Ride," with its cheeky, hop-along beat, or "Runnin' Blue," with its weird plunges into square dance's fiddling motifs). Despite an irksome process, Manzarek defended the product:

The horns and strings were my idea. It was time; we had three albums as the small group. We can't do the same thing *again*, for God's sake. And that's what you did, you did an album with horns and strings, you got some jazz and you got some classical and you got some country and western in there. ... I worked with [instrumental arranger] Paul Harris and told him what I wanted and he scored the whole thing and put in a bunch of good stuff on his own. So if it didn't work out, it's my fault. But *The Soft Parade* is Doors music just like all the other albums. We just brought in a little whipped cream to put over the top.<sup>37</sup>

Public expectations were high for the band to recover from the blandness of *Waiting for the Sun*. But the new project was bloated, tedious to record, and outlandishly expensive by Doors standards. The effort unfortunately backfired, with many fans and critics finding the band's ethos increasingly muddled. Morrison remembered: "It got out of control and took too long in the making. It spread over nine months. An album should be like a book of stories strung together, with some kind of unified feeling and style about it, and that's what *The Soft Parade* lacks."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Chuck Crisafulli, *The Doors*, 58.

<sup>37</sup> Ben Fong-Torres, *The Doors* (New York: Hyperion, 2006), 170.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

Figure 3.3: “Wild Child” formal and lyric design, *The Soft Parade* version

		Intro [G Dorian:] i vamped groove	6 mm.	
0:16	<b>A</b>	Verse 1 [i vamp]	5 mm.	Wild child Full of grace Savior of the Human race Your cool face
0:30		Instr <sup>l</sup> refrain + re-intro [II#   bII   i]	2 and 2/3 + 2 mm.	
0:43	<b>A</b>	Verse 2	6 mm.	Natural child Terrible child Not your mother’s or your Father’s child You’re our child Screamin’ wild
1:00		Instr <sup>l</sup> refrain		
1:14	<b>B</b>	Guitar solo [IV   IV   i   i   IV   IV   I   I]		[spoken: “An ancient lunatic reigns in the trees of the night”; sarcastic laughter]
1:36	<b>C</b>	Bridge + refrain as conclusion [bIII   IV   bIII   IV   bIII   II   bII   i]	8 mm.	With hunger at her heels And freedom in her eyes She dances on her knees Pirate prince at her side Staring into The hollow idol’s eyes
1:58	<b>A</b>	Verse 3 [ : i   IV :   (x6) -> I]	13 mm.	Wild child Full of grace Savior of the Human race Your cool face Your cool face Your cool face  [spoken: “Remember when we were in Africa?”]

Chuck Crisafulli reads a primal impulse into “Wild Child”: “By the time Morrison wrote ‘Wild Child,’ he had read extensively about primitive cultures and the song is something of a tribute to a creature untouched by the constraints of civilization.”<sup>39</sup> But Manzarek addresses the more anecdotal speculation that Morrison composed an oblique portrait of the young Doors devotee Danny Sugerman, describing the song as “Jim’s autobiographical (and acknowledgement of Danny Sugerman) ‘Wild Child.’”<sup>40</sup>

“Wild Child” features a spare poem (see Figure 3.3). Two stanzas of pithy observation—with lines starting off the beat—are followed by the final stanza, with longer, more flowing lines that all start on the beat. The poem also shifts from the title character’s description to the character’s action, and the musical response to the shift affords this enigmatic personage a fuller, richer portrait. Sugerman may well be the child in this case but, as happened with a number of Doors songs, the encroachment of Morrison’s personal story overpowered and imparted a progressively autobiographical and pseudo-mythic quality to the song. A snowballing cycle was fully in motion: Morrison’s efforts to construct a larger-than-life persona were having an effect, with public expectation and reaction—positive or negative—spurring him to revise his image. In turn, as Morrison wrote and performed to satisfy the demand, his persona became his operative creative personality.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Crisafulli, *The Doors*, 84.

<sup>40</sup> Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 301.

<sup>41</sup> We know the song is Morrison’s because *The Soft Parade* is the first album to have individual attributions of song composition. This change was prompted by a dispute over Krieger’s lyrics to “Tell All the People” (on the same album)—chiefly the phrase “get your guns”—which Morrison only agreed to sing if his name was not attached to it. See Crisafulli, *The Doors*, 78. For song credits see The Doors, *The Soft Parade*, Elektra/Rhino R2 101187, CD, 2007.

Numerous Doors songs (and those of other rock bands) are characterized by introductions that Mark Spicer has described as “accumulative”:

Many current pop-rock songs feature at some point on their musical surface a cumulative process of textural growth: various interlocking riffs—such as drum rhythm, bass line, and guitar vamp—are introduced one by one until the groove is complete. . . . This technique is often the defining feature of smaller formal units within larger compositions, and so it seems to merit a descriptor all of its own which I refer to as *accumulative*. Listening to an accumulative beginning is not unlike assembling the pieces of an aural jigsaw puzzle: only when all the layers of the groove are put together can we understand the complete picture.<sup>42</sup>

A song’s feel thus coalesces from a series of incremental refinements, some of them quite dissimilar, in color, texture, and rhythm (see Example 3.3). Entering first in “Wild Child,” the solo guitar lick (using a dropped D tuning) has a particularly nasty disposition—with its coarse timbre and wavering, slightly flat minor third—followed by the kit, then the organ, which fleshes out the texture and the G Dorian mode with Chicago-bluesy seventh chords.<sup>43</sup> But the kit is the most stylistically removed. The military-like pattern laid down by Densmore, including a four-on-the-floor bass drum line, imparts a stiff gait and hardness that is out of character with the sexualized pitched elements. The Doors drummer calls the eighth-note snare drum roll on beat two “another Art Blakey press roll” (similar to the one used in a pattern in “Moonlight Drive,” from the album *Strange Days*).<sup>44</sup> But to my ears, Densmore is calling on his marching band background—in the process adding a distinctive and very Doorsian flavor to a blues-colored and gritty rock song—made even more effective

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<sup>42</sup> Mark Spicer, “(Ac)cumulative Form in Pop-Rock Music,” *twentieth century music* 1, no 1 (2004), 32–33.

<sup>43</sup> With the only notes in the entire texture of the verses being G, Bb, D, and F, the G minor pentatonic scale can also be considered here.

<sup>44</sup> See the booklet to *The Doors Box Set*, Elektra 62123-2, CD, 43.

through its strategic contrast with the thick backbeat used later.<sup>45</sup> (Other song introductions later in this study will be considerably more involved.)

The intro’s groove becomes an invariant tonic vamp underscoring the opening two verses, with each of them followed by a three-measure instrumental refrain and a two-measure re-intro. These verses constitute the first half of the AABA form. I consider this idea an instrumental refrain because it brings closure to the open-ended tonic harmony and because it returns in later verses (see Example 3.4). It serves as a cadence after both the poetic idea and the static harmony have played out simultaneously. And it will return, in fact, as a larger and re-purposed formal element at the song’s apex.

Example 3.3: “Wild Child” introduction/groove

$\text{♩} = 86$   
 (Verse 1)  
 Vocal: *Wild child...*  
 Guitar  
 Organ  
 Kit: *tr*

<sup>45</sup> The “pressed roll” effect used in “Moonlight Drive” also gives way to a prominent backbeat, demonstrating the strategic thinking used by Densmore in giving different song sections their idiosyncratic rhythmic profiles.

The refrain comprises a web of hooks: the syncopation that breaks the previously steady riff, the 3/4 metric hitch, the bottleneck's timbral surprise, and the sudden textural contrast.

Deserving close attention, the ensuing guitar solo/bridge plays an unexpected role, where formal direction pivots not after, but during it. It begins with the major IV chord, which adds the song's first Dorian  $\hat{nat}6$  to the harmonic palette. At same time, the kit, with a fat, slightly late backbeat, finally completes the sexualized groove that the rhythm section has striven for all along. After four measures of a distorted toying with scale degrees  $\hat{4}$ ,  $\hat{b}3$ , and  $\hat{1}$  (and in the third measure echoing the refrain's syncopated 3/4 motif), the bottleneck emerges again, singing woozily in its high range. Quickly, the bridge's last two bars flip the modality to *G major*, rendering the section unable to end in the song's minor tonic, in turn acting not as closure so much as a transition to the new and final stage.

Example 3.4: "Wild Child" Section B, instrumental refrain (organ part approximate)

♩ = 88 Swung sixteenths

The musical score is arranged in four staves. The top staff is for Guitar (concert pitch), the second for Organ, the third for High-hat, and the fourth for Kit. The piece is in 4/4 time and consists of three systems. The first system is in 4/4 time. The second system is in 3/4 time. The third system is in 3/4 time. The guitar part features a melodic line with a syncopated 3/4 motif in the third measure. The organ part provides harmonic support with chords and a bass line. The high-hat and kit parts provide a rhythmic groove with a backbeat.

A return to a verse (probably final) that resembles the first two is expected, but the song has changed directions. Instead the text enters a pseudo-ritualistic realm at Section C, and the story's character is painted through a repositioned narrative view. A tectonic shift is

also signaled by several musical factors: the unforeseen harmonic slip to bIII, which produces the piquant cross relation between the guitar solo's B natural (or  $\hat{3}$  of G major) and the ensuing Bb major chord; the more elongated vocal melody; and new poetic scansion. Thus the listener plunges back into blues-like harmony as the groove's pocket deepens appropriately.<sup>46</sup> The bottleneck, too, thickens the texture through disorientated counterpoint with the vocal. Section C, then, does provide further narrative exposition, yet its musical elements only contrast with the earlier verses (save for the crucial return of the refrain).

The AABA variant in "Wild Child" initially follows the expected pattern but, in differentiating and elevating the text's final stage (Section C), mutates into its unusual shape. Though narrative and linear qualities are terse and suggestive, the unfolding has a clear sense of directionality: the end result is an interlinked climax of both music and abstruse poetry. This is greatly aided, increasingly as the song progresses, by the presence of two "voices," one being the vocal utterance of text, the other Krieger's lead bottleneck guitar.

Allan Moore has developed a taxonomy of what he calls "persona–environment" relations, in which songs' accompaniments can occupy a spectrum of roles in relation to the lyric as delivered by the singer. Somewhere in the middle of that spectrum is the accompaniment that *amplifies* the meaning of the song, and the bottleneck guitar fills that role here. Moore might also hear its voice as a "wordless melody."<sup>47</sup> Beyond this, Krieger's guitar "voice" is also another unique ingredient in the escalation of form: it begins as a key

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<sup>46</sup> The toggling between bIII and IV chords provides, much like the "Light My Fire" i–#vi oscillation, a sensation of movement while being suspended, which, in "Wild Child," is in sharp contrast to the grounded trudge of verses 1 and 2.

<sup>47</sup> Allan Moore, "The Persona–Environment Relation in Recorded Song," *Music Theory Online* 11, no. 4 (October 2005), <http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.05.11.4/mto.05.11.4.moore.html> (accessed November 3, 2011).

riff component, but in gradually transforming to a distinctive contrapuntal voice (being some of the guitarist's finest work in this style as a Doors member), it teams with Morrison's vocal so as to bring the accompaniment—of which it is the lead spokesman—into equal discourse with the voice, and therefore with the text.

As noted in Chapter 1, Morrison often conjured words and music nearly simultaneously. Considering his lack of musical training, he was most likely to link a melodic line to his words, while his treatment of harmony (other than perhaps basic notions of tonic and dominant), rhythmic nuance, and form was nebulous. This was where his bandmates played a principal role. Morrison's "Wild Child" is driven by story—epigrammatic as it is—with the musical support intimately linked and responsive, while the song's unfolding strongly suggests that the text is controlling the musical form. No less than four narrative perspectives are explored within the compact time frame (2:38), shifting from the first person ("your cool face") to the third person ("she dances on her knees"), the latter line describing in the final verse someone who may or may not be the title character. In between, a single spoken line during the solo (the third perspective) emanates from without the story, and the coda's one-line narrator utters from yet another plane in referencing the real world.<sup>48</sup>

In setting up the climax, the instrumental refrain returns to close the bridge—and thus is a cohering agent within a mutating form—though with two notable differences. First, its earlier II# function was tacked on as a tonic foil and a brief diversion. It also halted the

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<sup>48</sup> The Doors felt strongly enough about "Wild Child" as self-representative—and perhaps as an antidote to the "softer" and/or slickly produced numbers on *The Soft Parade* (such as "Tell All the People" and "Wishful Sinful")—to perform it on the nationally broadcast (and politically controversial) *Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* in December 1968. Additionally, unlike the Doors' more improvisatory songs, the televised version of "Wild Child" required tight control, and thus is virtually identical to that of the studio version, even in its minute details of rhythm and melodic pitch in the vocal and guitar solo.

verses' march. Now it acts as a large structural cadence, being seamlessly integrated into a IV–bIII–II#–bII–i descent. Second, the refrain's former purely instrumental capacity is here joined with climactic text, in the process interlacing the bottleneck with the vocal as call and response. The 3/4 glitch of before is realized in stop-time, serving to highlight the final line: "(staring into) the hollow idol's eyes." More potently, the final cadence utilizes a doubled emphasis of tonic's re-arrival, with both the harmonic resolution and the poetic conclusion occurring together. But this falls *within* the bridge (in the last of its eight measures), whereas the very next downbeat, the first of the concluding verse, wallops on tonic again as the *beginning* of a new phrase structure. Our sense of climax, then, is informed through weak as well as strong metric means, and is certainly given unusual formal placement.

In "Wild Child," the notion of climax, however, is complicated—and the song made more powerful—by the intense nature of the last verse (by which time the narrative has essentially finished): tonic vamping returns but now consists of i–IV chordal toggling that emphasizes the Dorian mode. The vamping is, in fact, the most brutally executed in the whole song, with the vocal's repetitive text uttered at its highest pitch thus far (^8), and the groove and texture at their densest. The kit hammers a four-on-the-floor beat, and above it all is the now fully independent voice of the bottleneck. Its mourning glissandi team with the vocal's harsh shouting of (ironically) "your cool face." Ultimately, the bottleneck guitar, as the somber accompanimental agent, has stepped up to proclaim as much in singing as the vocal melody. In some listeners' minds, the guitar may be the wild child itself.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> As for the notoriously cryptic final line of text, guilefully spoken and thick with reverb, just before the abrupt finish—"Do you remember when we were in Africa?"—many Doors fans interpret it as a reference by Morrison to one of his own idols, the poet Arthur Rimbaud, who lived in Ethiopia as a weapons dealer toward the end of his short life.

## “Do It”

Critic Alec Dubro’s scathing review of “Do It,” from *The Soft Parade*—the album “represent[ing] a clear and present decline in musicianship”<sup>50</sup>—was echoed by many in 1969. He opined, “It’s hard to imagine Doors’ poetry getting more excessive than it is ... and if, as Morrison himself says, the words don’t count and the mood created is the important facet of the Doors’ rock, then they’ve really bummed out on this one.”<sup>51</sup> But Dubro and others were perhaps looking in the wrong places for the strengths of “Do It.” If moribund poetry failed to satisfy the mind, then the mood and tonal design were quixotic, perhaps more usefully sensed in the body and not demanding over-interpretation.

Figure 3.4: “Do It” formal, tonal, and lyric design, *The Soft Parade* version

	<b>Intro</b>	<b>F:</b> I <sup>5</sup> vamp (with V <sup>7</sup> /IV   IV   I) 16 mm.	[sarcastic laughter] Please me, yeah, please me
0:47	<b>A1</b>	<b>G:</b> I (x8)   IV   V   (drum fill)   11 mm.	Please, please, listen to me children Please, please, listen to me children Please, please, listen to me children Please, please, listen to me children You are the ones who will rule the world
1:13	<b>A2</b>	(repeat A1)	
1:39	<b>B</b>	<b>A:</b> I <sup>5</sup> vamp (echoes intro) 8 mm.	You gotta please me All night
1:58	<b>A3</b> (truncated)	<b>G:</b> I   I    <b>A:</b> I   I   4 mm.	Please, please, listen to me children Please, please, listen to me children

<sup>50</sup> Alec Dubro, “Soft Parade,” *Rolling Stone*, August 23, 1969, 35.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

Figure 3.4, continued

2:08	<b>C</b> (instr'l)	<b>G<sup>5</sup></b>   (G <sup>5</sup> )   <b>E<sup>5</sup></b>   (E <sup>5</sup> )   F# <sup>5</sup>   (F# <sup>5</sup> )   <b>A<sup>5</sup></b>   <b>D<sup>5</sup></b>   <b>B<sup>5</sup></b>   (solo kit fill)   10 mm.	Please! Yeah, please me (I'm asking you)
2:31	<b>A4/Outro</b> (fades)	<b>A</b> : I vamp c. 13 mm.	Please, please, listen to me children [etc.]

The “excess” in this case lies chiefly in the copious repetition of text, which is reducible to three essential poetic notions: “Please listen to me, children”; “You gotta please me”; and—uttered only twice, but acting as a potent punch line—“You are the ones who will rule the world.” The word “please,” as an adverb and a verb, is particularly spotlighted throughout the song, with iterations ranging from metrically fixed lyric and melodic incorporation, to staccato shouts, to those that arch melismatically across two whole measures (in the process highlighting the diverse rates of unfolding meaning, such that there is). With so much literary flair and arty fustian in the Doors’ past, it is small wonder that fans and critics were split as to the artistic validity of “Do It.” It is also arguable if such repetition acted to reinforce the song’s message—whether vapid, inane, or earnest—or if the issue was mere laziness, even a dearth of ideas.

The song’s peculiarity, however, works in the opposite way by counterbalancing sameness of text with musical tools that induce a jaunty restlessness through an idiosyncratic tonal plan and shifting of beat patterns. At the heart of the song, as in the previous analysis, is the unique marriage of Morrison’s idea to Krieger’s music. Here is a good example of true writing teamwork between the lead singer and the guitarist. Chuck Crisafulli states that “‘Do It’ was not the first song that Jim and Robby had shared on a creative give-and-take basis,

but it was the first one to bear a ‘Morrison–Krieger’ songwriting credit, in keeping with the new individualized credits first seen on *The Soft Parade*.<sup>52</sup>

“Do It” is another multi-themed Doors song that toys with authorial possibilities (see Figure 3.4).<sup>53</sup> Some potential readings might include: A fictional guru addresses his followers, seeking spiritual adoration and offering their reward of ruling the world; the real-life Morrison addresses his fans, seeking public adoration of him as a rock god and offering their reward of ruling the world; or the real-life Morrison addresses his fans with humor by mocking the entire dialectic of performer and audience, making “ruling the world” an ironic joke.

In its traditional role of setting up the main event, the long intro (lasting forty-seven seconds) seems to falter after a few measures and wax aimless, even ironically grand. Above the long tonic pedal in F major, a nexus of patterns in the guitar, organ, bass, and kit do not constitute a groove so much as a lurching warm-up that soon requires release.

Section A adds the next offbeat touch, abruptly shifting to G major (colored with the vocal’s blue notes), while kicking with the first steady, hard-driving, and quickened beat. As opposed to the well-known “breakout” chorus, we instead have a breakout verse.<sup>54</sup> Such

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<sup>52</sup> Crisafulli, *The Doors*, 82.

<sup>53</sup> Authorial voices operate on multiple levels. In recent scholarship, Lori Burns has developed a hierarchical taxonomy of authorial voices that is based on the work of narratologists Susan Sniader Lanser and Seymour Chatman (although her graphic presentations also seem indebted to literary theorist Roman Jakobson). Here I use my own not dissimilar, but simplified system, in which the voice migrates from a literal level to more metaphorical ones. See Lori Burns, “Vocal Authority and Listener Engagement: Musical and Narrative Expressive Strategies in the Songs of Female Pop-Rock Artists, 1993–95,” in *Sounding Out Pop: Analytical Essays in Popular Music*, ed. Mark Spicer and John Covach (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 154–92.

<sup>54</sup> Christopher Doll defines a breakout chorus as one that “contrasts with its previous verse by conveying an increase in intensity with respect to various parameters, including loudness, lyrical content, pitch level (both melodic and harmonic), rhythmic and textural activity, and timbral noise.” See Christopher Doll, “Rockin’ Out: Expressive Modulation in Verse–Chorus Form,” *Music Theory Online* 17, no. 3 (October 2011), <http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.11.17.3/mto.11.17.3.doll.html> (accessed July 15, 2012).

upward modulations are common in pop-rock music, but not normally so soon and so suddenly. In this case, as well, the new key has no dominant preparation. The rhythm section's busy noodling suggests a whimsical rock version of Dixieland jazz's unbounded non-imitative polyphony. The bass guitar, for example, switches freely between typical root emphasis and agile neck work.<sup>55</sup>

As I am showing in several of my analyses, the application of traditional formal terminology is often awkward, if not misleading. In this case, Sections A1 and A2 are formally positioned as verses, but the lyrics are merely incantational and have no true narrative qualities; certainly Morrison's customary verbosity is missing. So we might be hearing more of a *chorus* in these minimal, repeated lyrics and collections of musical hooks. The latter include the bass and guitar's quick melodic cell (a chromatic walkup) of  $\hat{\text{nat6}}-\hat{\text{b7}}-\hat{\text{nat7}}-\hat{\text{8}}$  (x2) at the lyrics' line endings, followed by the heavily accented four-on-the-floor beats of the IV and V chords (at "You are the ones") which forcefully break the polyphonic momentum.<sup>56</sup> Further, it is not unusual, of course, to begin a rock song with its chorus, but not often is it repeated immediately.

Section B brings a return of the introduction, its texture and stuttering rhythms intact, but at only half the length. Again the accompaniment's open fifths are joined with  $\hat{\text{b3}}$  in the vocal. Yet its key is abruptly bumped up from G major to A major, such that the same material now signals new territory rather than restating the old. Section A3, though brief, begins exactly as Section A1 (with the same lyrics, becoming frustratingly dull by now), but

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<sup>55</sup> "Do It" utilizes a true bass guitar, played here with aplomb by either Harvey Brooks or Doug Lubhan. Both are credited for playing on the album, but the tracks are not specified. While each has been identified elsewhere with certain songs, the bassist here remains unknown.

<sup>56</sup> The pounding chords here not only halt the preponderance of tonic, but also invigorate the new lyrics, "You are the ones who will rule the world."

only discombobulates by immediately modulating yet again from G to A. The false verse quickly becomes a short-lived transition.

The instrumental Section C’s modal progression (realized in power chords, sans vocal; see Example 3.5) continues the song’s G major/A major frolic, though on a grander scale. The unexpected and potentially disorienting harmonies in between the two centers travel farthest from any of the song’s tonic instantiations.

Example 3.5: “Do It” Section C modal progression

The musical notation shows a bass clef with a series of power chords on a single line. The chords are labeled as follows: G: I, VI, VII, II, V, III, [A: II, I. The key signature changes from G major to A major at the end of the progression.

After this, when “please listen to me, children” takes up yet again, the listener is fooled as the outro is actually underway, with a *ritardando* bringing the madness to a halt using a held and appropriately dissonant chord.

“Do It” is an atypically light song by Doors standards. Poetic analysis yields little depth, but musically the Doors are clearly having good fun. In my view, Morrison is mocking his own god-like status—and everyone is in on the joke—while Krieger and his band mates create a dizzy, rollicking backdrop. A facetious message has still elicited music of considerable sophistication that involves a changeable and ultimately progressive tonality, jumbled beat patterns, and an imaginative mutation of verse–chorus form. In the end, “Do It” is a tonally ungrounded song, with “choruses” and other transitional sections (i.e., B and C), but no verses at all. Music, for a change, has trumped text.

## “Shaman’s Blues”

Now I embrace the poetry  
of business & become—for  
a time—a “Prince of Industry”

A natural leader, a poet,  
a Shaman, w/ the  
soul of a clown.

—Jim Morrison, *Wilderness*

The Doors, and Morrison in particular, again explored problems of authorship in “Shaman’s Blues,” another song from *The Soft Parade*. In discussing the most immediate source of authorship, in which the performer is perceived as conveying his or her personal point of view, David Brackett states, “There exists the possibility that a song and a recording may present a range of affect that *exceeds* the composer/performer’s intentions: listeners may interpret a song in a way that has little to do with what the performer ‘felt’ when he or she recorded or wrote it.”<sup>57</sup> Brackett goes on to detail many layers of authorship, including those to which even instrumentalists contribute. But in the case of “Shaman’s Blues,” alternative *narrator-identity* interpretations come easily, with Morrison’s typically multivalent possible intentions. Though the Doors’ frontman had defined and helped market his image both inside and out of the presumed demographic, the singer’s notoriety in the late 1960s took this accountability to new heights. Melissa Goldsmith explains Morrison’s “game”:

Most of the public equated him onstage and offstage with the dark aesthetics or world of the Doors. But Morrison was also playing with the public’s interpretation of him, manipulating the media, aligning his poetry . . . with the aesthetics of beat writers, and experimenting with theatrical presentations inspired by Antonin Artaud and Bertolt Brecht in ways that were intended to break through the boundaries of audience, artist, and present experience.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> David Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 15.

<sup>58</sup> Melissa Ursula Dawn Goldsmith, “Criticism Lighting His Fire: Perspectives on Jim Morrison from the *Los Angeles Free Press*, *Down Beat*, and the *Miami Herald*” (M.A. thesis, Louisiana State University, 2007), 10.

But Morrison would grow weary of this stratagem as it mushroomed out of his control. To the Doors' utter chagrin, more of its audience was attending live shows to witness a debacle, not the musical and mystical experience that the Doors had always wished to convey. Morrison countered with "Shaman's Blues," the text of which suggests multiple, even contradictory points of view. This analysis will consider these interpretations in order to investigate the formal choices that elucidate them.

A surface reading tells of a desperate man pleading with a lover, an unnamed Other, who has severed relations. But this is easily read as a metaphorical real-world narrative of Morrison's tangling with curious and increasingly mean-spirited social spectators. He might be confessing that his audience's confusion and misunderstanding are inducing in him an acute anguish. But keeping in mind Morrison's sardonic humor, the entire scenario might be mere satire on his part, putting the incipient love-hate relationship with his audience on full display. A more ironic exegesis has the performer-audience dialectic reversed, with the *audience* playing narrator, in turn expressing dissatisfaction with Morrison's abandonment of them. Their belief in his bad-boy credibility had vanished. In Morrison's mind, the audience's viewpoint would be adopted in order to expose and scorn *their* hypocrisy. The most cryptic moment in this scenario occurs, as a kind of mob rule, with the taunting spoken lines of the outro.

The title of "Shaman's Blues" deserves attention, as it says a great deal about the track and about Morrison himself. The idea of Morrison as shaman was a provocative one which fed critically into his public image.<sup>59</sup> And at least in his most devoted acolytes'

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<sup>59</sup> Morrison perpetuated this image of himself in his behavior and his writings. See, for example, his passage on the shaman in Jim Morrison, *The Lords and the New Creatures* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 71. The public and press were quick to pick up on this fabrication, which persisted in their ideation of Morrison.

expanded minds, he was perceived as a medium to otherworldly spirits and forces.<sup>60</sup>

Morrison's stage behavior often involved an intense but contained kind of circular dance, another trance-like shamanistic practice, which physically enacted the Doors' penchant for ritual and theatricality. The only instruments he played, and occasionally at that, were a pair of maracas or a tambourine, further eliciting ancient and loosely anecdotal associations with a pagan high priest.

As for the reference to the blues, the song's downcast tenor (regardless of narrator identity) and persistent minor key are certainly factors. "Shaman's Blues" is best read as a strophic form adaptation, with the twelve-bar template comprising each verse. I am not, however, discussing the song as a blues variant (a topic to be treated below) for several reasons. First, six verses are used to tell the shaman's story, but these employ three different blues-pattern permutations arranged in unpredictable ways (see Figure 3.5). Thus, the listener, encouraged by Verse 1 to relax into the assumed and familiar twelve-bar framework, is kept continually off guard. These changeable patterns contribute to the protagonist's agitated mindset. Second, the typical blues *aab* lyric scheme is replaced by rapid free-association, thereby eschewing the psychology of traditional blues lyrics, namely "question / question repeated / payoff." And third, instead of comprising snapshots of mood or scenario, the narrative is shaped teleologically toward the anguished climax.

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See Richard Goldstein, "The Shaman as Superstar," in *The Doors Companion: Four Decades of Commentary*, ed. John Rocco (New York: Schirmer, 1987), 5–12.

<sup>60</sup> Morrison addressed shamanism in a 1969 interview with *Creem* magazine's Lizzie James: "The shaman is similar to the scapegoat. I see the role of the artist as shaman and scapegoat. People project their fantasies onto him and their fantasies by destroying him. I obey the impulses everyone has, but won't admit to. By attacking me, punishing me, they can feel relieved of those impulses." Quoted in Danny Sugerman, *The Doors: The Illustrated History* (New York: William and Morrow, 1983), 123.

Figure 3.5: “Shaman’s Blues”: the three twelve-bar permutations (marked as phrases),  
G minor

**A** = | i i i i || iv iv i i [i] || bVII bVII i i ||

**B** = | i i i i || bVII bVII i i i i i i ||

**C** = | i i i i || iv iv i i [tonic extended] ||

As can be seen, permutation A differs from the norm by containing an extra measure in the second phrase (indicated by brackets) and substituting the bVII chord, which is bluesier (or, more strictly, Aeolian) and weightier than the more typical V–IV (or v–iv for minor blues) progression. Permutation B, heard only once, excises the second phrase altogether, thereby compressing normative syntax, then vamps on the concluding tonic to reinforce the song’s only instance of text repetition, as will be seen. Permutation C is a special case. It truncates the norm by omitting the third phrase, and all three C instantiations are given their own kind of extension to become agents of formal preparation or redirection.

“Shaman’s Blues” is given its impassioned ebb and flow, however, through the textual slowing (sometimes with silences) at the end of each verse. These afford the listener brief moments of reflection and anticipation. Also key to the form’s psychology is its low-energy point, followed a short time later by the climax; these are carefully positioned at the ends of Verses 2 and 4, respectively, and are well opposed to each other in terms of musical elements and the narrator’s state of mind.

The song’s groove, like that of “Wild Child,” is carefully constructed through the eight measures of its terraced introduction, with a diversity of styles timbrally blended in a distinctively Doorsian texture (see Example 3.6): the kit’s lightly syncopated jazz; the

walking, Chicago-blues bass-and-guitar riff; the gothic electric harpsichord; and the lead guitar's fuzz-tinged lick (which will act yet again as a prominent counterpoint to the vocal melody).<sup>61</sup>

Example 3.6: "Shaman's Blues" introduction/groove

♩ = 48 (Swung sixteenths)

Lead Guitar

Guitar

Elec. Hpschd. (gliss.)

Bass Guitar

Cymbal

Kit

<sup>61</sup> The track as a whole features a particularly rich array of overdubbing by Krieger.

Example 3.6, continued

The various methods of narrative RUM need to be observed in detail (as shown in Figure 3.6). In lines one through four of Verse 1 (and of all the verses), vocal delivery is rapid. At all verse endings, however, fewer words and syllables cover more beats, which effectively slows the RUM along with the harmonic rhythm.<sup>62</sup> The effect on the listener is one of hearing the protagonist finishing his point for the moment, and either reformulating his thoughts or simply catching his breath.<sup>63</sup> Verse 2 is the song’s quiet spot, though it is paradoxically so, considering the moment of victory experienced by the protagonist, who seems to have temporarily wrested psychological control. The seven-time reiteration of “and your mind” is properly accompanied by an insistent, hypnotic tonic. Through sheer

<sup>62</sup> This slowing is reflected in Figure 3.6. Most lyric lines occupy a single bar (and are not marked so), but lines at the verses’ endings which occupy two measures are marked “2.”

<sup>63</sup> Interestingly, the first verse’s harmonic resolution is not provided on “anyway,” which introduces the bVII chord, but with the more offhand “All right.” Thus the plea ends ambiguously—either the speaker and Other were together “anyway,” as if against some unsaid difficult odds, or the utterance is a simple shrug of helplessness (“...anyway...”).

repetition, textual RUM is stalled again and the voice is low in its tessitura. Additionally, the verse tapers off with no new harmonic movement, letting stay the calm confidence of the story at this particular point. The passage is smudged into an eight-bar bridge, which functions richly (in turn) as extension, guitar solo (with Krieger adding harmonic color through descending parallel fourths), harmonic diversion, and half-cadence-cum-structural pillar.

Figure 3.6: “Shaman’s Blues”: formal and lyric design, *The Soft Parade* version  
 (Boldface letters indicate blues-template variants; all lyric lines comprise a single 6/8 measure; those marked “2” use two measures)

	Intro	8 mm. [G minor:] (groove, i vamp)			
0:20	Verse 1	<b>A</b>			
				There will never be another one Like you There will never be another one who can Do the things you do, Oh Will you give another chance? Will you try a little try? Please stop and you’ll remember 2 We were together 2 Anyway 2 All right!	i     iv  i  bVII  i

Figure 3.6, continued

0:53	Verse 2	<b>B</b>		And if you have a certain evening You could lend to me I'd give it all right back to you Know how it has to be, With you I know your moods And your mind And your mind And your mind And your mind And your mind And your mind <sup>64</sup>	i  bVII  i (etc.)
1:22	Bridge	8 mm. (i   i   i   i   bVII   bIII   V   V)			
1:42	Verse 3	<b>C</b>	2	Will you stop to think and wonder Just what you'll see Out on the train-yard Nursing penitentiary It's gone I cry Out long	i    iv  i
2:01	Solo	12 mm. (i vamp) + 4 mm. re-intro (bVII   bIII   V   V)			

<sup>64</sup> In an interesting twist, the seventh and final line of Section B is given as “And you’re mine!” in Sugerma’s *Complete Lyrics* (114), although there is no audible difference on the recording. This raises the question of how privy he was to textual nuance through his close personal association with Morrison, but the line would also cement the protagonist’s momentary triumph over the addressee.



Figure 3.6, continued

	Outro	11 mm. [vamp]	[Spoken:] “He’s sweatin’, look at him . . . optical promise . . . [Heh, heh, heh] you’ll be dead and in hell before I’m born . . . sure thing . . . bridesmaid the only solution . . . Isn’t it amazing?”	i
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Verse 3 metaphorically references the real world and again we finish with sustained lyrics. The song’s first half essentially ends here, followed as it is by the twelve-measure harpsichord solo with the interwoven lead guitar. But Verse 4 holds the climax, in fact the crux of the song. Rich imagery—grizzly bear jaws as anxiety, the juxtaposition of cold and hot, and the incongruity of whisper—paves the way for the ironic, trenchant notion of having it all (but to what end?), and the climactic plaint for psychic relief (Example 3.7). As can be seen, the entire passage, from the end of Verse 4 (“ask for *more*”) through the climax to the beginning of Verse 5, gets great strength by sitting completely on tonic harmony.

Example 3.7: "Shaman's Blues" climax (end of Verse 4)

♩ = 48 Swung sixteenths

Vocal

Do you of-ten stop and whis - per in Sat - ur - day's shore The whole world's a sav - ior, who could

Guitar

Elec. Hpschd.

Bass Guitar

Kit

Detailed description: This system contains the first four measures of the climax. The vocal line is in bass clef with lyrics. The guitar line is in treble clef. The electric harpsichord is in grand staff. The bass guitar is in bass clef. The kit is in bass clef. The tempo is 48 Swung sixteenths.

4

Vocal

ev - er, ev - er, ev - er, ev - er, ev - er, ev - er ask for more?

Gtr.

Hpsd.

Bass

Kit

Detailed description: This system contains measures 5-8. The vocal line continues with lyrics. The guitar line continues. The harpsichord, bass guitar, and kit parts continue with triplets in measures 6-8. The tempo is 48 Swung sixteenths.

Figure 3.7, continued

7

Vocal

*Do you re-mem - ber? Will you stop, Will you stop, The pain?*

Gtr.

Hpsd.

(white noise/roar)

Bass

Kit

(Verse 5)

12

Vocal

*There will never be an - oth - er one like you (you)*

Gtr.

Hpsd.

Bass

Kit

In the end, the spoken outro, over the accompaniment that lugubriously grinds to a halt, is sarcastic and biting. The anguish is gone, and the song's final thoughts are a combination of "pure" poetry (as *spoken*) and musical utterance through the singing lead guitar.<sup>65</sup>

Strophic form is an effective choice in "Shaman's Blues" for uninterrupted storytelling, and the lack of a chorus—with its functions of intensification, commentary, and catchiness—is notable. Instead, the existing musical and narrative threads substitute these functions with their own means of focus and rhythmic variability.

### **"The Wasp (Texas Radio and the Big Beat)"**

The Doors' final album, *L.A. Woman*, released in April 1971, was a return to the simplicity of style that characterized their earliest days. Their longtime producer, Paul Rothchild, had quit the band over creative differences, but the Doors—desiring to take their own reins again—quickly recovered, reassembling their recording and producing apparatus, and either writing new songs or resurrecting older material. The band had been severely humbled, having endured public scorn due to their mid-career artistic crises and, more profoundly, Morrison's personal ordeal of felony criminal prosecution with potential jail time. The onstage debacle in Miami had left him shaken and undeniably mortal. To recover from this enervation, the band turned with renewed purpose to their music. Unfortunately, Morrison's self-destructive behavior was more pronounced, and alcohol had long since replaced mind-expanding LSD as his choice of subsistence. Although at his most unreliable personally, he

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<sup>65</sup> Densmore describes how the final spoken passage was created: "On the ride out [outro] ... we slid the vocal tracks in and out spontaneously and came up with spoken ad-lib bits that Jim had done on the various vocal takes." See John Densmore, *Riders on the Storm: My Life with Jim Morrison and The Doors* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1990), 205.

surprised his band mates by rallying for the recording, and was engaged enough to offer a last, best musical effort on the album, just three months before his death.

Figure 3.7: “The Wasp”: formal and lyric design, *L.A. Woman* version

	Intro [ <b>E Mixo</b> : I <sup>5</sup> vamp]	4 mm.	
0:08	<b>A<sup>1</sup></b> Verse 1 [I <sup>5</sup> vamp] spoken	12	I want to tell you about Texas Radio and the big beat It comes out of the Virginia swamps Cool and slow, with plenty of precision, with a backbeat Narrow and hard to master
0:32	<b>A<sup>2</sup></b> Verse 2 [I <sup>5</sup> vamp] spoken	10	Some call it heavenly in its brilliance Others, mean and rueful of the Western dream I love the friends I have gathered together on this thin raft We have constructed pyramids in honor of our escaping This is the land where the Pharaoh died
0:52	<b>B<sup>1</sup></b> Chorus and verse closure [ <b>E Dor/major</b> ] (unison instrumental melody)	8	
1:08	<b>A<sup>3</sup></b> Verse 3 [ <b>E Mixo</b> : I <sup>5</sup> vamp] spoken	12	The negroes in the forest brightly feathered They are saying “Forget the night! Live with us in forests of azure Out here on the perimeter, there are no stars Out here we is stoned — immaculate”

Figure 3.7, continued

1:32	<b>B<sup>2</sup></b> Chorus [ <b>E Dor/major:</b> ] (unison melody with vocal)	8	Listen to this I'll tell you about the heartache I'll tell you about the heartache and the loss of God I'll tell you about the hopeless night The meager food for souls forgot Tell you about the maiden with wrought iron soul
1:49	<b>C</b> Truncated Verse → guitar solo [ <b>A Aeolian:</b> i vamp]	16	I'll tell you this No eternal reward will forgive us now For wasting the dawn ...
2:29	<b>D</b> (as closure to solo and as transition) [ <b>C# min. pent.,</b> embellished]	8	
2:45	<b>E</b> Truncated Verse → organ solo → climax [ <b>E Aeolian</b> ]	30	I'll tell you about Texas Radio and the big beat Soft driven, slow and mad like some new language ...
3:45	<b>F</b> Kit solo (as closure to solo and as transition)	4	
3:54	<b>B<sup>3</sup></b> Chorus [ <b>E Dor/major</b> ]	8	Now listen to this I'll tell you about Texas I'll tell you about Texas radio I'll tell you about the hopeless night The wandering in the Western dream Tell you about the maiden with wrought iron soul

“The Wasp,” or rather its subtitle, refers to the phenomenon of “border blaster” broadcasting, a fascinating chapter in North American radio history. Transmitters erected in Mexico beamed their signals across the Texas and California borders beginning in the 1920s, and were able to greatly exceed the signal powers that in the United States were restricted by federal law. Programming was quirky and often highly amusing, but rock music—beginning

in the 1960s with deejay Robert Weston “Wolfman Jack” Smith—was for a time an important component.<sup>66</sup> Chuck Crisafulli describes radio’s influence on the creation of “The Wasp”:

Powerful signals from Mexico and Texas could be heard as far away as Chicago and, as the signal faded in and out, Jim was exposed to blues shows, R&B programs, strange rock ‘n’ roll songs, ethnic music, and many other exotic sounds that would never be made available on commercial pop stations. The odd mix of compelling music had a greater effect on Jim than all the Top 40 stations ever would and “The Wasp” was the eventual result.<sup>67</sup>

In September 1968, during the European tour with Jefferson Airplane, the Doors performed and taped “The Wasp” for Copenhagen television. Compared to the ambitious and exuberant version that would appear two years later (to be examined below), this earlier incarnation was a slower, far more muted venture (“The Wasp” in Copenhagen is timed at 1:54, as opposed to 4:16 on the album).<sup>68</sup> Its function at first was merely as a trippy prologue to the next song, “Love Me Two Times,” at the time one of their hit singles, and it embodied a simple poetry reading, reposeful and spatially vast, that evoked the Beat spirit. According to Manzarek, “In the Danish footage, Jim is doing ‘Texas Radio’ as an introduction to ‘Love Me Two Times.’ ‘Texas Radio’ is a poem about rock and roll coming out of the dark, deep swamps of the South. ‘A backbeat narrow and hard to master.’ That’s the two and four, that’s the beat of sex: the backbeat.”<sup>69</sup> But the poem as recited wandered in seeming free association, flowing through exotic and, at times, randomly related imagery.

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<sup>66</sup> For an in depth and colorful study of border blaster history, see Gene Fowler and Bill Crawford, *Border Radio: Quacks, Yodelers, Pitchmen, Psychics, and Other Amazing Broadcasters of the American Airwaves* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002).

<sup>67</sup> Crisafulli, *The Doors*, 134.

<sup>68</sup> The Doors, *The Doors: Soundstage/No One Here Gets Out Alive*, DVD (New York: Eagle Rock Entertainment, 2004).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

Much of the “The Wasp” is spent standing on the tonic chord with a continuous driving beat underneath. To digress for a moment, the nature of vamping is, for me, called into question by this number, as it is in many Doors songs (and other artists’, of course), being an unfailing accompanimental strategy.<sup>70</sup> The paradox of vamping lies in the tension between stasis—especially as manifest in lack of harmonic movement—and any number of other self-evident indications that an unfolding or a forward process is still occurring.<sup>71</sup> Despite the passage of time, the “static” position implies that little new *musical* meaning is being added.<sup>72</sup> For the sake of simplicity, let us assume two basic types of vamping: metrically structured and open-ended. As an example of the former, we can imagine a song verse that is underpinned by the repetition of a single tonic chord. Above it, however, is a vocal melody that utters in distinct phrases, employs a rhyme scheme, and has a melodic contour toward a final tonic. In this case vamping is utterly predictable as to its length; in fact, we fully experience a verse regardless of the static harmony—yet the term vamp is perfectly acceptable. The other vamping is open-ended and, regardless of an insistent tonic chord, there are no harmonic or phrase-structure bearings for the listener, such that the forward motion could conceivably endure for any length of time. The former type of vamping is teleological; the latter is processual.

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<sup>70</sup> According to the entry for “vamping” in *Oxford Music Online*, “The word, said to date from the early eighteenth century, was used in the early days of music hall, when ‘vamp till ready’ indicated that a progression was to be repeated indefinitely until a soloist entered.” See Peter Gammond, “Vamping,” in *The Oxford Companion to Music*, ed. Alison Latham, *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e7062> (accessed March 8, 2011).

<sup>71</sup> Philip Tagg’s observation of such single-chord passages as being “somewhere worth *staying*,” noted in the previous chapter, is certainly applicable here.

<sup>72</sup> Victor Zuckerkandl offers a fascinating examination of repetition, concluding that any and all selfsame musical “repetition” is an illusion, as such because of the theoretical impossibility of repeated *time*. See Zuckerkandl, *Sound and Symbol*, 212 ff.

In a discussion of repetition, Richard Middleton sets forth *musematic* and *discursive* operations. The former is at the level of the cell (especially its rhythmic aspect) whose back-to-back repetitions embody, most often, riffs or other ostinati. The latter is at the structural level, wherein formal subsections are heard to return later in the piece. (A nice example of this would be AABA form.)<sup>73</sup> “The Wasp” is an instance of one type melding into the other: purely musematic vamping grows into a large enough subsection—that being a repeated verse—as to become discursive. But “The Wasp” is also a special case, with its open-ended verse vamping being determined by the spoken lyric delivery, which would have wide variability depending on Morrison’s mood. The two types of vamping described above have discrete effects on the listener: structured vamping lends itself to predictability while the processual type loosens his sense of time.

Phrase ending is another complication with vamping. If a tonal-music phrase travels toward its goal of the cadence, then vamping, by definition, lacks this tool of progression as a sectional or formal marker. The results can vary, from the aforementioned open-endedness of phrase and structural clarity, to the dependence on propulsion techniques (such as the waxing organ and kit gestures during the initial verses here) to induce a more purposeful momentum.<sup>74</sup> “The Wasp” works on both levels.

On the finished album, “The Wasp” is radically reconstructed and expanded, becoming a brash foil to the gloomy, iconic closer “Riders on the Storm.” The heart of the song’s expression lies in the interaction of text and music, which undergoes gradual

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<sup>73</sup> Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 1990), 269.

<sup>74</sup> Manzarek uses an organ stop here that is particularly rich in overtones and produces aggressive chiff. The onomatopoeic “chiff,” a phenomenon of the pipe organ that is electronically reproduced in electric keyboards, is the very first instant of sound attack and often adds a consonant-like effect. With chiff and overtones working for him, all Manzarek needed to do was play notes as normal in “The Wasp” verses to have them sound as though accented. The tone is heavy with vibrato as well.

metamorphosis from the complementary to the integrated. Instead of unadorned poetic recitation as in the song's previous incarnation, we have now a descriptive and commanding story telling; the Doors' ability to conjure such a deeper and richer setting from the original version is remarkable. The song's text is still spoken, but Morrison projects authority and persuasion from the outset (as opposed to the Copenhagen-style expansive calm) and flanging gives the voice immense space. Narrative is greatly broadened while music—formally and stylistically (including blues and non-blues elements)—is given a higher degree of compositional consideration. Figure 3.7 outlines the song's form, but cannot also convey its transmutable unfolding. The refashioned narrative of "The Wasp" travels a curious path, from the present time and a poetic real-world reality; to a timeless, primitive, ecstatic, even hallucinogenic milieu; and finally (in the choruses) to a world-weary despondency that is difficult to square with what we have heard before.

The introduction is a stock electric-blues riff that stomps with an unabated four-on-the-floor beat (therefore lacking a backbeat, ironically, considering Manzarek's earlier referencing of its "beat of sex") and a catchy  $^1-\text{b}7-\text{b}8$  melodic hook.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Densmore yet again unleashes the backbeat only later in the song during solos.

Example 3.8: “The Wasp” introduction/groove and partial Verse 1; text is spoken

$\text{♩} = 120$  Swung eighths

Vocal

Guitar  
(stopped-string tap)

Organ

Bass Guitar

Kit

5 (Verse 1)

Vocal  
I want to tell you about Texas Radio and the big beat It comes out of the Vir-

Gtr.

Org.

Bass

Kit

Example 3.8, continued

10

Vocal

ginia swamps  
Cool and slow, with plenty of precision and a backbeat narrow and hard to master

Gtr.

Org.

Bass

Kit

14

Vocal

Gtr.

Org.

Bass

Kit

In the first verse, Morrison’s flexible spoken delivery—according to my discussion of vamping above—determines the section’s duration. Verse 2 is followed by the “composed” instrumental passage B<sup>1</sup> (the first chorus) which is both self-standing and sectionally closing. As one outcome of vamping, Section B<sup>1</sup> in this case is its peroration (see Example 3.9).

Example 3.9: “The Wasp” Sections B<sup>1</sup>/B<sup>2</sup> (choruses); main melody sounds one octave lower, two octaves lower (vocal), and three octaves lower (bass line)

♩ = 120

(Now lis - ten to this I'll tell you a - bout the heart - ache I'll  
 tell you a - bout the heart - ache and the loss of God— I'll  
 (V)  
 tell you a - bout the hope - less night The mea - ger food for souls for - got  
 Tell you a - bout the maid - en with wrought i - ron soul)

This interesting first chorus is sans vocal, giving the musical support sudden prominence. Most notably, the entire passage introduces true melody for the first time in the song. It is stated in octaves with subtle parallel fourths (shown below the main melody in the example) in the guitar and organ, and its thirdless, open quality echoes the verses. Additionally, the melody begins in E Dorian but concludes in E *major*, with a thirdless “proxy” dominant (and not the bVII chord) appearing midway. Thus, in breaking off the

previous vamping and the spoken-word narrative, Section B<sup>1</sup>—upon its delayed appearance—benefits from a broad i–V–I progression that carries great cadential leverage.

Section A<sup>3</sup> continues the narrative and is closed by the second iteration of the unison chorus (Section B<sup>2</sup>). The addition here of Morrison’s vocal, however, is an important step in bringing the textual expression closer to the instrumental: the narrative (spoken) voice is becoming a musical one. Section C modulates to A Aeolian and in short order becomes a false verse that yields to the guitar solo. From this point on the vocal narration begins fragmenting to share more formal space with the instruments.

Section D (see Example 3.10) bursts in to interrupt the solo and is yet another new “composed” passage—this in surprise C# minor, with embellishing and leading tones—and is similarly self-contained and the agent of closure to the solo (instead of to text, as before). It is played in octaves by the entire band, with the snare drum playing the rhythm strictly, as well. Section D, like the choruses, features a clear mid-point dominant chord and a final cadence on the tonic.

Example 3.10: “The Wasp” Section D melody (including one and two octaves lower)

Corresponding to Section C, another truncated verse (i.e., Section E) segues into the lengthy organ solo, such that spoken word and music are again sharing the dialogue. With the text describing the “big beat” and all of its colorful origins and connotations, the two solos have stepped in to embody the beat in a diegetic manner; they *become* the big beat of the narrator’s imagination.<sup>76</sup> The organ solo gradually builds toward the song’s frenzied climax (into Section F), which is given a battered release by the kit. When the final chorus (Section B<sup>3</sup>) enters—with slight, but significant alterations in the lyric—its formal function has changed again: whereas the previous statement reverted to the level of the spoken word (at Section C) and its fantastical world, now the narrative voice utters the song’s final lyric as a dark moral and is again in unison with the instruments. Thus, the song ends with its text not as spoken word but as music. By the same token, instrumental significance rises toward the voice and joins with it to communicate the message with as much proficiency.

“The Wasp,” then is an unorthodox song which, although it features verses, choruses, and solos, treats them in atypical ways: verses are spoken over instrumental vamping and contrast highly with what I have called composed passages (or other instrumental regions); the latter formal elements create closure, or climax, or both. Since the listener likely experiences such spoken narrative as distractive from the free phrasing underneath, the eight-measure neatness of the choruses and Section D has a startling clarity. In all, pliable formal proportions and quirky stylistic shifts make the song nearly Zappaesque. Finally, who is the song’s narrator? I have pointed out the very different worlds of the verses and the choruses, with their conventional formal–thematic relationships having

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<sup>76</sup> Krieger’s guitar solo is notable for its melodic singing and construction, while Manzarek’s organ solo is highly illustrative of his penchant for building long improvisational passages with shrewd use of gradated four-measure increments.

been essentially erased. Perhaps we are hearing multiple narrators. Or the song's (il)logic might be LSD-inspired; or, at the least, Morrison is simply blending favored themes in his Delphic fashion. The possibilities are many, and delightfully so, with the Doors adroitly challenging and rocking their fans fully through the final album.

### **Blues Variants**

All of the Doors members professed an especial love for the blues, and examples of original songs and blues covers appeared throughout their career. These warrant a brief, overall examination. Several of the band's blues tunes are in the traditional style, including the twelve-bar, three-phrase formal design, the *aab* lyric scheme, and certainly typical blues themes. The previously analyzed "Shaman's Blues" uses blues patterns in an unusual arrangement which was keenly relevant to the story. Other original blues songs include the abovementioned "Love Me Two Times," from their second album, *Strange Days*, which extends the twelve-bar pattern to sixteen bars, and substitutes, in the third phrase: [ bVII | bVII | bVII | bVI<sup>7</sup> | bIII–bVII | bIV<sup>7</sup>–V<sup>7</sup> | i ]. The sustaining of bVII is followed, therefore, by quicker motion to the cadence.

A similar formal principle is used in "Love Her Madly," from the swansong *L.A. Woman* album, one that contains a particularly rich panoply of blues tunes. Here the twelve-bar pattern is expanded to [ i | i | i | i || IV | IV | i | i || i | bIII | bVI | IV || i | i (cadential extension 1:) i | V | i | i | (cadential extension 2:) i | V | i | i ]. The traditional blues cadence has thus been converted to a strongly authentic one,<sup>77</sup> while the extensions underscore the verse's surprise ironic and stinging text: "Don't you love her as

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<sup>77</sup> The cadential extensions also make the listener wait for the verse's stinging and ironic final lines, "Don't you love her as she's walking out the door / Like she did one thousand times before."

she’s walkin’ out the door / Like she did one thousand times before.” This, too, is interspersed with other formal segments that move away from blues patterns. “Been Down So Long” has a raw and downbeat blues spirit<sup>78</sup>—the tempo is extremely slow and perceived as such through seemingly doubled note values—and cycles through six twelve-bar patterns comprising verses and solos (though the second guitar solo is truncated). Its lyric scheme is straightforward *aab*. The druggy and lethargic “Cars Hiss By My Window” also uses *aab* lyrics, but the intro is cleverly meshed with Verse 1, with a twist on the not uncommon strategy of bringing in the vocal in the second phrase. Thus, in E major:

[ (as intro or phrase 1) I | I | I | I || (add vocal: *a* lyric) IV | IV | I | I ||  
 (*a* lyric repeated) IV | IV | I | I || (*b* lyric) V | IV | I | I ].

The vocal entry can be heard, then, either as a delayed second phrase or as the start of the first twelve-bar pattern (despite beginning on IV). The subsequent verses are traditionally arranged. “Crawling King Snake,” a greatly loosened cover of a song by John Lee Hooker—whose version plays over an invariant tonic vamp—is another lazy, back-to-basics blues reading (see Figure 3.8), utilizing seven traditional patterns. These morph improvisationally as the song progresses, however, with Morrison as the incantatory poet embellishing the lascivious, hokum-blues lyrics along the way (most notably in Verse 4).

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<sup>78</sup> The title of the track was taken from the then-recently published novel by Richard Fariña, *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up To Me* (New York: Random House, 1966), whose main character explores every aspect of the psychedelic counterculture in the archetypal quest for meaning. Fariña was also a folk singer, active in the Greenwich Village folk scene of the early 1960s. He was killed in a motorcycle accident just two days after the book’s publication. The tragic end to his life might have further added to the cult appeal of his book for the Doors.

Figure 3.8: “Crawling King Snake” formal and lyric design, *L.A. Woman* version

	Intro	
0:35	Verse 1	traditional <i>aab</i> ( <i>a</i> includes title)
1:11	Verse 2	<i>b</i> becoming a new, sped lyric
1:47	Guitar solo	
2:23	Verse 3	<i>a</i> , still newer, with sped couplet / <i>b</i> (with title) as refrain
2:59	Organ solo	
3:35	Verse 4	lyrically and metrically free-ranging
4:11	Verse 5	repeat Verse 1

The Doors’ fifth album, *Morrison Hotel*, released in February 1970, played a somewhat recuperative role in their career, pulling away from the previous *Soft Parade* by combining *sui generis* styles and themes with renewed edginess, bawdy sex, and other traces of their early days. The opening track, “Roadhouse Blues,” combines the timeless road trip experience with cathouse patronage on the wrong side of the tracks. In an ingenious formal reorganization (Figure 3.9), two verses plus chorus serve as a large-scale, three-phrase pattern (though with the cadential chords reversed).

Figure 3.9: “Roadhouse Blues” formal design

	Intro	12 mm. [i vamp]
0:24	Verse 1 + re-intro	12 + 4 mm. [i vamp with <i>aab</i> lyric]
0:55	Verse 2	12 mm. [i vamp with <i>aab</i> lyric]
1:19	Chorus	8 mm. [ IV (x 6)   V ]

1:35	Guitar solo/jam	50 mm. [all i vamp / free poetry]
3:15	Verse 3	12 mm. [i vamp with <i>aab</i> lyric]
3:39	Chorus	8 + 1 mm. [repeat; finishes i]

Finally, one of the most often-performed live songs by the Doors was the Willie Dixon–composed “Back Door Man,” captured on a live recording as early as March 1967 at the Matrix in San Francisco. The promiscuous adulterer is a frequent subject in blues traditions, in this case referring to a man, boasting in the first person, who sneaks out the back door before (or as) his lover’s husband returns. Manzarek, as a close Morrison confidant, adds a second layer: “‘Back Door Man’ is about anal intercourse. Or, a song about a guy who just sneaks around and comes in the back door when the man’s away ... a gigolo; a Lothario.”<sup>79</sup> The title character’s triumph is summed up in the refrain “The men don’t know, but the little girl understands.” In the Doors’ hands, the song was frequently performed in live shows, eliciting a variety of unfoldings, from a straightforward cycling of blues patterns (as verses), to truncated versions sutured into medleys, to those that begin with verses and, like “Maggie M’Gill” (the closing track from *Morrison Hotel*), simply trail off with vamping and impromptu Morrisonian poeticizing. There are also, not surprisingly, incorporations of lengthy interior jams that return to a final verse. Much of the elaboration depended on the frontman’s degree of inebriation.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *The Doors: Soundstage/No One Here Gets Out Alive*.

<sup>80</sup> In one of his more bizarre and self-indulgent renderings, performed in Seattle in June 1970, Morrison intones that “Love hides in familiar places ... love hides in narrow corners ... love comes when you least expect it ... love hides inside the rainbow ... love hides in molecular structures ...” and so on. See The Doors, *Jim’s Alive: The Ultimate Seattle Tapes*, Tuff Bites Records TB 94 1009, CD, 1994.

But, because of its international dissemination, the debut album features the archetypical version of “Back Door Man,” and thus had a huge impact on how the band was initially perceived by the public. The reading is an early and unvarnished example of the Doors’ love for the genre. This studio version begins with an intro that gradually builds steam (lasting thirty-two seconds), over which Morrison (as detailed in Chapter 2) emits primitive grunts, shrieks, and other suggestive exhortations. Five twelve-bar patterns are then played, including a central guitar solo. The last of these is an added, fourth verse, which rises to a stunning sexual apotheosis. Here Morrison, howling with distortion at the top of his range, brings an unequivocal commitment and passion to the character. On the whole, it is easy to presume autobiographical underpinnings.

\* \* \*

This chapter has looked at a cross section of Doors songs that enterprisingly reshape common molds in order to validate unusual rock lyrics. It is a difficult task to select such representative songs, as the Doors’ output is highly diverse and imaginative beyond those works examined. And, undisputedly, no single song can convey the darkness that defines the Doors’ legend. Yet, the larger the group of works considered, the more such darkness coalesces with other contrasting artistic impulses and inventions, significantly enriching the picture. To better fill out this picture, my analyses in the following chapter will focus more specifically on the Doors’ thematic content.

## Chapter 4—Analyses: Thematic- and Content-Driven Songs

### I. Introduction

This chapter focuses on Doors songs with especially rich and charged themes, and on the ways in which the band shaped musical elements to give these songs their greatest impact. Such themes—manifest in the lyrics—are organized into three broad sections: the psychedelic, the psychosexual, and the morbid. The particularly poetic nature of Jim Morrison and Robby Krieger’s lyrics compelled the Doors to craft innovative musical support to sustain these songs.<sup>1</sup> Poetry, however, is intrinsically the most open and allusive form of writing. Likewise, highly poetic lyrics purposely suggest multiple, layered, or indeterminate concepts or narratives, without an obvious, conclusive, or definitive meaning. Thus, the interpretation of these lyrics is subject to debate and, as over-analysis can lead to spurious conclusions, I tread carefully in my readings of the songs’ meanings. Notwithstanding these caveats, to merely understand the structure of the songs one must explore the words of these writers, whether for their emotional evocations, for allegorical messages, or, simply, for overall significance. With some songs in this chapter, however, a more literal reading of the poetry is also fruitful.<sup>2</sup>

I have chosen to examine a selection of the Doors’ most provocative texts and, again, many of these were not among their list of hits. I employ several methods when discussing

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 1 discussed Jim Morrison’s poetic ambitions and accomplishments, including the volumes of poetry published in his lifetime. The words for Morrison-penned Doors songs were sometimes drawn from “poems”—whether complete or partial—as they were written originally, but also came into being simply as “lyrics.” This chapter will deal with lyrics as they appear in the songs, and not as published in their own right, except where noted.

<sup>2</sup> The songs falling into the psychosexual and morbid categories tend to focus on Morrison because they are lyric-driven (by the words he primarily penned), and shaped by his experience and interpretive performance.

the ten songs herein. Formal analysis, as in Chapter 3, constitutes my primary approach. Text–music relations remain at the forefront of my readings, often with their correlative—rate of unfolding meaning (RUM). In addition, my analyses for certain songs include close comparisons between song versions; a discussion of the consequences of technological innovations; considerations of literary and historical contexts; and a small, considered degree of psychoanalytical interpretation.<sup>3</sup>

The songs termed “psychedelic” are just that. Because it can be a complicated designation—the term is an umbrella for many styles and formats—I will identify the elements of a song that make it psychedelic in that section’s introduction. Suffice it to say here that the main wave of psychedelia was taking place just as the Doors formed and, as I have stated before, they—along with other Los Angeles- and San Francisco-based bands—comprised the vanguard of acid rock in the United States. “Psychosexual” songs include those emphasizing sex, love, human relationships, and protagonists’ concomitant psychological states of mind and pathologies. As noted in Chapter 1, the projection of sexual appetite and attitude, especially on the part of Morrison, was a major weapon in the Doors’ public image arsenal. Finally, the “morbid” songs are those which contemplate death,

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<sup>3</sup> Simon Frith and Lori Burns have developed schemas for levels of authorial voice in rock, and I addressed the issue in Chapter 3 in relation to the song “Shaman’s Blues.” For our purposes here, I consider four levels of authorial voice at work. There is the narrator as representative of wider *cultural* customs and assumptions, followed by the indigenous, omniscient narrator to the specific story at hand. Then there is the more personal narrative delivery that emanates from the singer *as performer*, in which the signer’s public persona is doing the interpretive telling. Finally, there is the most personal level, in which the performer–narrator is simply an individual, with private intentions and points of view. See Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 198; and Lori Burns, “Vocal Authority and Listener Engagement: Musical and Narrative Expressive Strategies in the Songs of Female Pop-Rock Artists, 1993–95,” in *Sounding Out Pop: Analytical Essays in Popular Music*, ed. Mark Spicer and John Covach (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 154–92.

whether in and of itself, or as a fated outcome of otherwise positive or normative life situations.<sup>4</sup>

In contextualizing the Doors' rock ethos, Sheila Whiteley states that the Rolling Stones' "'Dancing with Mr. D' [of 1973] evokes memories of Jim Morrison who had established the sex and death motifs that were intrinsic to the Doors and which were reflected in his own death in 1971."<sup>5</sup> It was Morrison's death that gave an uncanny validation to much of his musical and poetical conceptions as an artist, and the most devoted fans would likely say he merely died apropos of what he preached. His vision was his life's reality.

## II. The Psychedelic

Suppressing our inclination to discriminate and focus, psychedelics strip away the crust of habit. We see again as a child sees. Not a sequence of isolated perceptions muffled and dulled by reason and inference, but one fabric of still sharp and indiscriminated phenomena that surround and include us.

—Nicolas Bromwell, *Tomorrow Never Knows*

Just as 1960s rock was anything but monolithic, so also the subgenre of psychedelic rock was splintered and highly divergent in its views of LSD and in its interpretations of the drug's fraught mythos. From the East Coast, counterculture spokesman and former Harvard University professor Timothy Leary issued his famous "turn on, tune in, drop out" axiom, which resounded with the peace-and-love crowd all the way to Haight–Ashbury in San

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<sup>4</sup> The poles of sex and death addressed in the psychosexual and morbid categories could also be termed Eros and Thanatos, but as I am not undertaking a Freudian reading here I am employing broader terms that I hope are less loaded with psychoanalytical connotations.

<sup>5</sup> Sheila Whiteley, *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender* (London: Routledge, 1997), 90.

Francisco. In the purview he espoused, the acid trip's "set and setting" was key to a positive outcome. In San Francisco, post-Beat generation writer Ken Kesey and his entourage, the "Merry Pranksters," believed an acid trip should take its own direction without predetermined boundaries to guide it. Kesey saw the trip as an active adventure or an uninhibited game, which directly contradicted Leary's emphasis on the spiritual dimension of the trip's internal journey. No matter which attitude was embraced, when applied to rock, "authentic" psychedelia referred to a musical idiom accompanied by an apposite lifestyle.

Among the seminal LSD bands and tracks in the late 1960s were Jefferson Airplane ("White Rabbit"), the Jimi Hendrix Experience ("Are You Experienced?"), Cream ("Sunshine of Your Love"), Pink Floyd ("Astronomy Domine"), the Mamas and the Papas ("Creeque Alley"), and the Grateful Dead ("The Golden Road").<sup>6</sup> These groups publicly and unapologetically celebrated the incorporation of the drug in their music and, presumably, in their lifestyles. This promotion of LSD gave them credibility and increased their appeal to the underground contingent. Commercial pop groups, too, jumped on the psychedelic bandwagon and issued dozens of hits, though these bands merely brought the surface appearance and sound of psychedelia to their music and demographic without advocating or living out the implied lifestyle behind it. Psychedelic music, in other words, quickly became a recording world commodity. The song "Incense and Peppermints" (1967) by the Strawberry Alarm Clock is a good example, as is "Crimson and Clover" (1968) by Tommy James and the Shondells.

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<sup>6</sup> All tracks listed here date from 1967.

Psychedelic music can express itself in a number of ways, either thematically or musically. It can describe, advocate, or simulate the LSD trip. It can suggest that the musicians understand and embrace the trip. It can assume that the listener understands the trip (or is at least curious about it) and wants to relive it vicariously through music. Most importantly, it can provide a new and strangely appropriate dimension in which the tripping listener can euphorically lose himself. As for the interaction between theme and music, we can see that the influence flows in both directions: music that sounds hallucinogenic (to be discussed below) automatically psychedelicizes the message, no matter its content, while hallucinogenic lyrics psychedelicize a song no matter its sound.

Beyond the mechanics of psychedelic music, the largely negative social view of LSD was a constant subliminal factor. From 1966 on, glossy national magazines published articles that spoke in distressing terms of how LSD was dangerous, even life-threatening, and was contributing to the destruction of youth culture.<sup>7</sup> To engage in psychedelic activity in any way, then, was to act subversively, if not recklessly, in society's eyes.

Michael Hicks describes three main characteristics of the psychedelic experience: dechronicization, depersonalization, and dynamization.<sup>8</sup> The first relates to the unrealistic sense of the passage of time. On an LSD trip, a moment feels like hours or days, while infinity might be grasped in the blink of an eye. In rock music, the rise in popularity of the

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, "A Remarkable Mind Drug Suddenly Spells Danger: LSD," *Life*, March 25, 1966, 28; and "Drugs: The Dangers of LSD," *Time*, April 22, 1966.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Hicks, *Sixties Rock: Garage, Psychedelic, and Other Satisfactions* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 63.

extended jam certainly related to a distortion of time. The jam's open-ended structure made it feel as though it were infinite, and during a lengthy jam the listener could forget how long the song had lasted. Depersonalization refers to the loss of oneself within the contexts of place and time (and to which we could add sound). As Nicholas Bromell writes, "Brought into the world's radical pluralism, the user of psychedelics can respond in any number of ways—from ecstasy to terror—but what underlies any and all responses is a profound redefinition of the relation of one's self to the world. This feeling of being brought *into* life, of experiencing one's self as a part of the manifold streams of existence, was commonly understood as an experience of the divine."<sup>9</sup> Dynamization implies the animation of inanimate objects. Walls quiver and flow as though liquid, steady tones bend, colors are electrically vibrant, and so on. Musical technique and sound had their own equivalents in dynamization. Hicks's designations imply a state of synesthesia for the late-1960s fan that was otherwise unattainable.

I would add *despatialization* to Hick's listing of states. Space can become indefinite or something alternate to actual reality, it can change its look or feel, or the individual can form a new or different relationship to his or her surrounding space. Bromell also speaks of another way of experiencing space: "Music not only annihilates the space that lies between us and it, it also establishes a feeling of space *inside* us, and when it opens up this space, it enlarges us. We feel that only a force intimate with and even coextensive with our self could accomplish this enlargement, and when we behold the existence of space within

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<sup>9</sup> Bromell, *Tomorrow Never Knows*, 69–70.

ourselves, our relationship to spatiality itself changes.”<sup>10</sup> The normal experiences of inhabited and lived-in space are demolished and replaced by paranormal ones. Alastair Gordon describes a linking of inner space and psychic movement:

Frequently, the [LSD] experience was characterized as a mental geography or “mindscape” through which the subject progressed in a pilgrimage of revelatory pathways and detours—as if such random psychotropic events existed as three-dimensional shadow plays, complete with their own topography and spectrum of dazzling colors. Somehow, the human mind found ways to translate the stimuli into a sequential journey of self-discovery with a beginning, middle, and end.<sup>11</sup>

The hallucinogenic music associated with psychedelia came into being concurrently with technological advances. The guitar was instrumental in bringing new sounds to rock textures. In creating musical dynamization, such effects wrought by the wah-wah pedal, amplifier-induced distortion, feedback, and fuzz-tone were important ingredients. At the same time, extreme note bending using the tremolo arm was widespread, and the Rickenbacker twelve-string guitar added its jangly timbre. As mentioned in Chapter 2, various keyboard instruments added new colors and bizarre anachronistic connotations. Exotic Eastern instruments such as the sitar and tabla made their appearance. Drummers began eschewing the backbeat for alternative ways of defining rhythmic patterns.

The recording studio also added a great deal to the psychedelic sound. First and foremost was the use of heavy reverb, first exploited around 1960 by surf bands such as the Ventures. Now reverb would envelop the vocal along with any and all instruments, which in

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>11</sup> Alastair Gordon, *Spaced Out: Radical Environments of the Psychedelic Sixties* (New York: Rizzoli, 2008), 19.

turn enveloped the listener. The Beatles pioneered other studio techniques, including tape loops (sometimes fed through the player backwards), noise, stereo panning, variable speed pitch control (vari-speed), and the like. There was also the possibility of achieving sheer textural saturation through overdubbing and mixing down.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to lengthy jams, unusual instruments, and new recording technology, music was also made hallucinogenic through disorienting harmonic or tonal structures, and sheer loudness. Poetic lyrics would become free-associative, surreal, nonsensical, otherworldly, pithy, or any combination thereof. Lyrics could also tell a perfectly straightforward story, yet their reality was loosed through a psychedelic musical setting.

The Doors did not advertise the LSD lifestyle in the extreme manner of some of their contemporaries. They did not adopt the exterior trappings of more commercially driven pop bands. Nor did they musically endorse LSD in the open way that, say, John Lennon did by writing “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds.”<sup>13</sup> But the hallucinogenic experience was a defining aspect of the Doors’ image, even as it was more implied than described. More important, the band members were thoroughly familiar with the drug and understood the psychedelic sensibility.<sup>14</sup> However, they thought the drug gave them a larger purpose. As

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<sup>12</sup> For an exhaustive and authoritative investigation into the Beatles’ recording methods and equipment, see Kevin Ryan and Brian Kehew, *Recording the Beatles: The Studio Equipment and Techniques Used to Create Their Classic Albums* (Houston: Curvebender Publishing, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> It is well known that Lennon denied any specific connection between the song and the drug, though “Lucy” is almost universally accepted as a classic acid track.

<sup>14</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Doors’ name was inspired by the literary antecedent, William Blake’s book *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1793). Blake, in turn, was also the inspiration for Aldous Huxley’s *The Doors of Perception* (1954).

John Densmore says, “Acid gave us visions, and a realization of the power we had.”<sup>15</sup>

Rather than blatantly celebrating the drug, the Doors used it to inform the style and content of many of their songs.

Many, if not most, Doors songs can be heard as fundamentally psychedelic. This presents difficulties in choosing works that are definitively so. Therefore the boundaries that I draw are to some degree arbitrary. Gray areas characterize my typology in general, as songs in all of their complexity can slip between designations, or, more often, belong to multiple types. But my interpretations of differences in sound, space, structure, and theme have helped determine the songs’ manifold meanings and weighted them more in the direction of one category over another.

Since I have already discussed “Light My Fire,” and mentioned its LSD aspects in brief, I begin here with “Strange Days,” a song presenting frightening imagery and situations, and revealing that the Doors could comfortably explore the negative side of LSD known as the bad trip. I then address another disconcerting song, “End of the Night,” which for many readers will also touch on the subject of death and morbidity. Finally, “Waiting for the Sun” presents another fictive hallucinogenic world in which the passage of time is severely distorted. The protagonist’s reality both stands still and passes endless time in moving toward an unattainable horizon. These three songs are representative of the dark ways in which the Doors adapted psychedelic sound and content to suit the band’s goals.

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Andrew Doe and John Tobler, *The Doors in their Own Words* (London: Omnibus Press, 1988), 80.

## “Strange Days”

From the very first track of the Doors’ album, *Strange Days*, the knell of doom is sounded. Like some folk-tale curse, an unnamed force has cast a pall over the land.

—David Dalton, *Mr. Mojo Risin’*

The Doors’ second album, *Strange Days* (released in September 1967), captured the band at the peak of their powers, heightening already written, but unrecorded, songs with radical technological advances. “Strange Days,” the opening track from the album, uses psychedelic poetic content and musical support to launch the album on an appropriately bizarre note. Producer Paul Rothchild had installed in Sunset Studios the latest eight-track Ampex recording gear, and he worked alongside Bruce Botnick, the Doors’ chief audio engineer, who demonstrated an immediate grasp of the new technology. The expanded musical potential of additional tracks especially intrigued the instrumentalists Manzarek and Krieger. Ray Manzarek later recalled their enthusiasm:

*Strange Days* is when we began to experiment with the studio itself, as an instrument to be played. It was now eight-track, and we thought, “My goodness, we can do all kinds of things. The first album was four-track, but now we’ve got eight tracks to play with.” It seems like nothing in these days of digital recording, but to us, those eight tracks were really liberating. So, at that point, we began to play—it became five people: keyboard, drums, guitar, singer, and studio.<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, Paul Beaver, one of the leading experts on the still-new Moog synthesizer, was brought in to alter and enhance the band’s instrumental and vocal textures. In fact, *Strange Days* has the honor of being the first rock album to use this cutting edge equipment.<sup>17</sup> The Moog would quickly catch on with rock bands that were expanding their

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<sup>16</sup> Ben Fong-Torres, *The Doors* (New York: Hyperion, 2006), 96. Even the Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper* (June 1967) had availed itself of only four-track equipment.

<sup>17</sup> The Moog immediately captivated Ray Manzarek: “Paul Beaver brought his huge modular Moog system into the studio and began plugging a bewildering array of patch cords into the equally bewildering panels of

timbres along with the LSD-induced listening experience. *Strange Days* as a whole went a long way in positioning the Doors as the leaders of psychedelia's dark league.

Mention must be made of the album's cover art. In general, rock packaging was making increasingly relevant statements about the band and the music inside. Of the seven releases by the Doors (with the exception of *Absolutely Live*, which featured only Morrison), only the *Strange Days* album cover went beyond a posed photograph of the band. The photographed scenario consisted of an assemblage of carnival performers and other unusual types meant to foster a sense of surreality and to suggest the notion of madness. Morrison later recalled, "I hated the cover of our first album. So for *Strange Days* I said, 'I don't want to be on the cover. Put a chick on it or something. Let's have a dandelion or a design' ... and, because of the title, everyone agreed. ... We wanted some real freaks though, and [art director William Harvey and photographer Joel Brodsky] came out with a typical side-show thing. It looked European. It was better than having our fucking faces on it though."<sup>18</sup> The Doors themselves did end up on the cover, in fact, but only at the extreme left and right edges, where they were pictured on wall posters that publicized the first album. In any case, the very direct connection on *Strange Days* between the visual and the musico-poetic was the strongest of their career.

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each module. He'd hit the keyboard and outer space, bizarre, Karlheinz Stockhausen-like sounds would emerge. ... Who knew what he was doing? And then he turned to us, all huddled in the control room, and said, 'If you hear anything you want to use, just stop me.'" See Ray Manzarek, *Light My Fire: My Life with the Doors* (New York: Berkley Boulevard Books, 1999), 256. Within just two months, releases by the Rolling Stones (*Their Satanic Majesty's Satanic Request*) and the Monkees (*Pisces, Aquarius, Capricorn, & Jones, Ltd.*) would feature the Moog, as did Simon & Garfunkel in their song "Save the Life of My Child" from early 1968 (*Bookends*). The Beatles would also employ the synthesizer on *Abbey Road* (1969).

<sup>18</sup> John Carpenter interview with Jim Morrison, *Los Angeles Free Press*, July 19, 1968, 38.

Figure 4.1: “Strange Days” formal and lyric design, *Strange Days* version

	Introduction	
0:15	Verse 1	Strange days have found us Strange days have tracked us down They're going to destroy Our casual joys We shall go on playing Or find a new town Yeah!
1:00	Instrumental refrain	
1:16	Verse 2	Strange eyes fill strange rooms Voices will signal their tired end The hostess is grinning Her guests sleep from sinning Hear me talk of sin And you know this is it. Yeah!
2:01	Instrumental refrain	
2:17	Verse 3	Strange days have found us And through their strange hours we linger alone Bodies confused Memories misused As we run from the day To a strange night of stone

The lyrics of the song “Strange Days” are an apparently random collection of nightmarish images that exemplify a bad trip (Figure 4.1). In the first line, the narrator mentions “us,” which can either mean the narrator plus his fictive companion(s), or the narrator and the listener. In “finding us” and “tracking us down,” strange days are menacing and have an actionable agenda. Or they may embody a kind of negative parallel existence, which, for whatever reason, the listener has now encountered. In any event, the song’s

disturbing images and ideas would have been grasped by the acid-initiated as even more terrifying because they were LSD-induced. The song also degenerates section by section, mimicking the descent into madness. Verse 1 acts as a statement of fact or a kind of warning, while Verse 2 is stocked with odd people and associates the concept of sin with the strange days. In Verse 3, any grasp of reality has almost completely broken down. In particular, the final line's frightening reference to running into "a strange night of stone" is pithy and cryptic.

The song's simple and compact form keeps the message focused. There are three verses but no choruses or solos, and the final verse comes to an unexpected halt without any coda, plainly and matter-of-factly. The only formal element to offset the verses—to be examined more closely below—is an instrumental refrain. As I have laid them out, the verses each have six lines, or three couplets. These couplets, in turn, feature different harmonic and tonal strategies. The first couplet is in the tonic key, E minor (using the progression *i-iv-i-iv*), and ends on a hammered, two-measure F# chord that suggests *V/V*. But this resolves deceptively, and the tonality takes an ominous, intensifying turn to the remote *biii* key of G minor (again with *i-iv-i-iv*) for the second couplet. The Doors' penchant for using chromatic third relations is evidenced again. The third couplet is a special case (shown in Example 4.1). Here the harmony becomes truly disorienting, as G minor gives way to the chords G, B, Bb, and F (or *I-III#-bIII-bVII*, with one chord per measure). The last F chord resolves not back to G (as its *bVII* chord), but instead to E major (as its *bII* chord). The ensuing instrumental refrain recalls the third couplet's progression at double the speed (in

playing it three times) and finally “corrects” the mode back to the minor. Despite the verse–refrain units’ considerable harmonic wandering, then, they are tonally closed.

Example 4.1: “Strange Days” verse ending and refrain (harmonic reduction)

♩ = 126 (End of Verse 1)

We shall go on play - ing or find a new town Yeah!

G B Bb F E

Refrain (3x)

G B Bb F e

A close look at the three verses’ final couplets reveals that they have in common some form of action (or the suggestion of it) on the part of the protagonist and those who accompany him. Taking each verse in turn, we are told “*we shall go on playing*,” “*hear me talk of sin*,” and “*as we run from the day*.” The couplets are conclusive in nature because they contain a decision to act upon the previous lines’ chain of events.<sup>19</sup> As the final couplets are set to the least stable harmonies of the song, the human resolve within them is

<sup>19</sup> The second verse’s “Hear me talk of sin and you know this is it” is also the moment of most transparent understanding.

potentially compromised by an undermining accompanimental voice. There is also manipulation of RUM throughout each verse. The first four lines occupy fully four measures of music, whereas this RUM is doubled in the final couplets.

The song is made sonically weird chiefly by subjecting the vocal to various studio electronic techniques, giving it a wobbly, hollow, and echoic sound. Eerie timbre and content are well matched. The vocal delivery might be expected to transmit some degree of fear, but Morrison is effective instead for singing with a largely even, non-judgmental tone. At the same time, the organ line is set to a vibrato so rapid that it induces agitation. In the kit, the snares are turned off, and toms provide textural color until the refrain.

While the first album was eclectic in its way, songs such as “The End” already pointed to certain saturnine themes, which would continue to take shape. Opening the Doors’ second and arguably most psychedelic album (which also featured the song “People Are Strange”), the song “Strange Days” bolstered the band’s reputation and lent them a darker image. It introduced a sinister note to the album and, by association, to the band’s public persona, through its narrative of LSD-engendered paranoia.

## “End of the Night”

Every night and every morn  
Some to misery are born  
Every morn and every night  
Some are born to sweet delight

Some are born to sweet delight  
Some are born to endless night

—William Blake, *Auguries of Innocence*

The moody and somber ballad “End of the Night” is the ninth track on the debut album.<sup>20</sup> It immediately follows—and counters—the bubbly “I Looked at You” (discussed in Chapter 3), and shifts the album’s tone to one of introspection. The song can be heard as an implicit Morrisonian aperçu of Louis-Ferdinand Céline’s novel *Journey to the End of the Night*, published in 1932. The novel’s details are eliminated while its bleak and fatalistic tone is maintained. Lines are also borrowed from the English Romantic poet William Blake. “End of the Night” is an extremely hallucinogenic track for thematic as well as musical reasons. But it is also a song that easily exceeds my typological boundary of psychedelia, as the specter of death is also an underlying motif. The lyric is minimal—there is only a single verse, a chorus, a guitar solo, and a second chorus—though text repetition is used as a potent tool. Between the theme, the word repetition, the languid pace, and the deep reverb, the song creates a tremendous amount of psychic space.

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<sup>20</sup> “End of the Night” was also one of the six songs recorded for the Doors’ original demo tape of 1965.

Figure 4.2: “End of the Night” formal and lyric design, *The Doors* version

	Intro	
0:19	Verse	Take the highway to the end of the night End of the night End of the night Take a journey to the bright midnight End of the night End of the night
0:45	Chorus	Realms of bliss realms of light Some are born to sweet delight Some are born to sweet delight Some are born to the endless night End of the night End of the night End of the night End of the night
1:24	Solo	[uses Chorus chord progression]
2:04	Chorus	Realms of bliss realms of light Some are born to sweet delight Some are born to sweet delight Some are born to the endless night  End of the night End of the night End of the night End of the night

The psychedelic tenor of the song is apparent with the very first chord. In dark and reverb-heavy E minor, the bottleneck guitar strums a downward arpeggio (seen in Example 4.2), and the tonic chord it lands on takes such a slow, broad bend down to bVII and back up as if to sound liquid. (Walter Everett describes Krieger’s effect as “seasick.”<sup>21</sup>)

<sup>21</sup> Walter Everett, *The Foundations of Rock: From “Blue Suede Shoes” to “Suite: Judy Blue Eyes”* (Oxford:

Example 4.2: “End of the Night” opening and refrain (heard with and without vocal)

The musical score is divided into two sections: "Opening (freely)" and "Refrain" with a tempo marking of  $\text{♩} = 72$ . The score is written for four instruments: Vocal, Guitar, Organ, and Kit, all in a 4/4 time signature with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

- Vocal:** The vocal line begins in the "Refrain" section with the lyrics "(End of the night)".
- Guitar:** The guitar part features a melodic line with triplets in the opening and refrain, and sustained chords throughout.
- Organ:** The organ part consists of sustained chords in the opening and a more active melodic line in the refrain.
- Kit:** The drum part features a steady bass drum and snare pattern, with cymbal taps on the downbeats of every other measure, labeled as "(rim knock)".

The bottleneck guitar throughout the song provides atmospheric lines that are often slightly out of tune and warped in their sustained tones. These traits allow the guitar to simulate an altered state of mind while singing in a highly dynamized voice.

The short introduction contains what will become the song’s crucial refrain, which will be heard within the verse, as well as repeated after both the verse and the choruses. It consists of open fifths based on  $\text{^b7-^nat7-^8}$  (or D/A–D#/A#–E/B). The song’s minor mode is filled in by the G-naturals played mainly by the guitar. To ghostly effect, the organ uses a very fast vibrato. Consistent with all Doors songs, Densmore’s textural creativity with the kit adds much to the overall timbre. There is no ride cymbal used in the verse. Instead, carefully placed cymbal taps sound only on the downbeats of every other measure. The instrument’s role here is minimal even as it aids subtly in demarcating entire phrases.

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Oxford University Press, 2009), 50.

The bottleneck solo (which uses the same chord progression as the choruses) complements the lyric's wandering despair and plays a significant role in rendering the music psychedelic. Both technological manipulations as well as the guitarist's technique induce instability in the listener's mind. Krieger deploys an austere, sluggish style, and his sound is highly reverberant, full of mournful tone bending, and disorientated in pitch in general.

Aside from the line "end of the night," there are only two lines to the verse (see Figure 4.2). Morrison moved the word "journey"—the reference to Céline's novel—from the first to the fourth line, replacing it up front with "highway," a loaded term suggesting modern road trips. Yasue Kuwahara observes,

It is interesting to note that Morrison draws upon the analogy between life and driving. In *The Lords and The New Creatures*, he writes, "Modern life is a journey by car. The passengers change terribly in their reeking seats, or roam from car to car, subject to unceasing transformation." Viewed from this perspective, some of his songs about driving also prophesy the end or describe an escape from the disaster. For example, the following phrase in "End of the Night" seems to indicate the end of the life: "Take the highways [*sic*] to the end of the night." Through [the song's] phrases, Morrison implies that his life will be over with summer—the time of pleasure and gaiety.<sup>22</sup>

The song's extremely lethargic unfolding is also tinged paradoxically by the automobile's allusion to speed.

On a larger scale, the reappearance of the chorus after the solo and re-intro urge the form along, for we are fully expecting a verse (as we heard previously). The choruses have only three essential lines (again, other than the refrain lyric). The words "light" and "bright"

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<sup>22</sup> Yasue Kawahara, "Apocalypse Now!: Jim Morrison's Vision of America," in *The Doors Companion: Four Decades of Commentary*, ed. John M. Rocco (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 99.

offset the dark saturation of “night”—clearly the lyric is heavy with the “-ight” phoneme—and momentarily suggest that something positive might await us at the end. But the song’s finish does not realize this. It runs into the bleakness with which it started instead of an apotheosis.

In the choruses, which borrow from Blake, the notion of being born to “sweet delight” is contrasted with being born to the “endless night.” Upon the latter phrase, the music immediately reverts to the funereal refrain. This is especially effective in the second chorus, where Morrison has broken out, *forte*, impassioned and in a higher range, but the refrain again pulls the emotion back down to the now familiar bleak night.

Mirroring the psychedelic effects of dechronicization, the song’s refrain plays with the listener’s sense of time. In discussing the repetition of words versus music, Victor Zuckerkandl observes, “Language [without music] fails in attempting to do what tone is privileged to do. The reason for this would appear to lie in the different capacity of word and tone to act as the medium of time perception.”<sup>23</sup> But tying time perception (especially vis-à-vis language) to RUM somewhat complicates the picture. If the line “end of the night” conveys no new meaning to the listener upon its many repetitions, then with each next utterance the *existing* meaning is reinforced and furthered. As Zuckerkandl indicates, it is the music that makes this possible. Moreover, when utterances of the line are separated by different text, the RUM that was cut off before now materializes again, such that meaning *and* its rate are augmented even as they necessarily embrace what was learned in between.

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<sup>23</sup> Victor Zuckerkandl, *Sound and Symbol: Music and the External World*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 220.

The point to consider is how these situations affect the listener's experience of the song. The refrain's frequent recurrence can have multiple connotations: we feel as though we are stuck, whether in a thought or in our very existence; we are in some hypnotic state, or our few bright, positive intimations are inevitably snuffed out. The repetition merely delays the thematically unresolved end. If the listener in "Strange Days" ran to "a strange night of stone," here the listener is perched on a cusp, not knowing whether relief or explanation awaits, and unaware that it will never arrive, because the song's end foils the theme's end.

### **"Waiting for the Sun"**

The world constructed in "Waiting for the Sun"—a song that was meant for the third album (by the same name) but appeared instead on the fifth album, *Morrison Hotel*—is another that can be understood literally or allegorically. The sun as a symbol—of birth, dawn, hope, healing, warmth—has been the subject of many rock songs.<sup>24</sup> A great deal of the psychedelic nature of "Waiting for the Sun" has to do, as above, with text repetition and its particular influence on the perception of time. In this case, text and theme are melded in an effectual way: as the listener is "waiting" along with the narrator, textual sameness reinforces the humdrum experience. The central section of the song, however, reveals a new layer of anxiety and offers new insights. Additionally, Krieger's guitar,

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<sup>24</sup> The Beatles' "Here Comes the Sun" from *Abbey Road* (1969) is a good example. But there are many other psychedelic sun-themed songs, including the Beatles' "Sun King" (also from *Abbey Road*) and "Good Day Sunshine" (1966), Pink Floyd's "Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun" (1968), Cream's "Sunshine of Your Love" (1967), and Jethro Tull's "Look Into the Sun" (1969).

Figure 4.3: “Waiting for the Sun” formal and lyric design, *Morrison Hotel* version

		Introduction Dm: V <sup>7</sup> /iv   IV   iv   I <sup>5</sup>	
0:11	<b>A</b>	Verse 1 Dm:  : V <sup>7</sup> /iv   IV   iv   i <sup>5</sup> :	At first flash of Eden we raced down to the sea Standing there on freedom’s shore
0:35		Chorus G:  : bVI–bVII–I :  bVI–bVII–V	Waiting for the sun [x3]
0:48	<b>A</b>	Verse 2 Dm	Can you feel it, now that spring has come That it’s time to live in the scattered sun
1:12		Chorus G: (ends bVI   bVII   I )	Waiting for the sun [x4]
1:27	<b>B</b>	Central Section Gm:  : i   bIII   bVII   i :	Waiting [x8]
1:48		Gm:   i   bVII   i   i [x4]	Waiting for you to come along Waiting for you to hear my song Waiting for you to come along Waiting for you to tell me what went wrong
2:32		Gm: i–bVII–bVI–V–i	This is the strangest life I’ve ever known
2:49		Solo [w/ motive x8] Dm	
3:11	<b>A</b>	Verse 3 Dm	Can’t you feel it, now that spring has come That it’s time to live in the scattered sun
3:35		Chorus G (ends I)	Waiting for the sun [x4]
3:53		[Final motive x2] Dm	

largely in slide mode, supplies a substantial psychedelic element with its frequent bent and scooped tones. Manzarek's creepy, very fast organ vibrato, with rapid decay, induces an atmosphere of anxiety. We are seeing a pattern in Manzarek's uses of vibrato and timbre in contributing to a psychedelic sound.

Two important musical elements are established early on. First, the four-measure introduction features a descending lament figure in the melody, as  $\text{^b7-^{\#}6-^6-^5}$ . This will carry on through the verses, where the vocal sings the same line. The second idea, heard initially after the first line of text and always stated *forte*, is the motive as shown in Example 4.3.

Example 4.3: "Waiting for the Sun" motive



By the end of the song, this figure will become a kind of leitmotif that portrays the heaviness and agony of waiting. The motive, as heard each time, is extraordinarily rich in bass tone, no doubt augmented by the Moog synthesizer. The phrase structure is asymmetrical, with the motive first heard once after the first line of text (measure 4), and then twice after the second line (measures 8 and 9).<sup>25</sup> The first appearance of the motive is powerful, adding sudden sonic impact, but also because it provides the song's first sign of modal quality. Nothing

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<sup>25</sup> In toying with listener anticipation, the Doors omit the (expected) motive altogether from the last verse.

before it has defined major or minor as the third is missing. But the motive proclaims that we are definitely in D minor. Just as powerfully, the song's choruses shift to G *major*, thereby opposing the verses in modality as well as key. Even contrary motion separates the two: the verses' downward lament is offset by bVI–bVII–I in the choruses. It is this Aeolian progression, in fact (mentioned in Chapter 2), that tonicizes G major (instead of, say, a secondary dominant).<sup>26</sup>

“Waiting for the Sun” thus alternates between two tonal planes, but there is also some interesting tonal play at the junctions of verses and choruses. The first chorus, having shifted to the subdominant, ends harmonically open, on V to be exact. However, this is also the tonic chord of the verses, or at least the major version of it. Immediately after this, Verse 2 takes up on the same pitch level (but with the chord V/iv).<sup>27</sup> Likewise, the shift from verse to chorus is smooth, as the verse's tonic is the dominant of G, such that the chorus progression bVI–bVII–i is heard as starting on the verse's bII chord.

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<sup>26</sup> Nicole Biamonte rightly calls this particular use of the bVI–bVII–I (Aeolian) progression “closed,” being a cadence whose tonic is prepared for convincingly. But she also explains alternative chordal functions for it: “Aeolian progressions comprise two successive root movements upwards by whole step, and can be interpreted as either a substitution by third for the tonal cadence IV–V–I ... or an expansion of the modal subtonic cadence bVII. Both readings *imply* the harmonic functions S–D–T, a satisfactory interpretation because bVI contains the subdominant degree  $\hat{b}6$  ... and bVII contains forms of the dominant degrees  $\hat{2}$  and  $\hat{7}$ .” Nicole Biamonte, “Triadic Modal and Pentatonic Patterns in Rock Music,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 32, no. 2 (2010): 101. Italics added. Biamonte may or may not be validating the Aeolian cadence through its implications of traditional diatonic closure. But while (modal) bVII is widely heard in rock as a (tonal) dominant substitute, I find it problematic to base this on what Biamonte calls “forms” of dominant degree  $\hat{7}$ . To my ears, a true dominant-chord resolution relies on a *leading tone* as much, or nearly as much, as the root motion V–I. Thus, common tones can facilitate chordal substitution, yet there is a great deal of difference between a  $\hat{b}7$  and a  $\hat{nat}7$  sounding over the V root. (Relatedly, I find the designation “minor dominant” [or v] to be oxymoronic, while “modal dominant” is appropriate in the current context.) In short, the dominant-function “feel” of bVII may lie in other immanent factors that do not necessary relate to or derive from the traditional V (or V<sup>7</sup>) chord; or perhaps its use in the music itself has, over time, taught our ears to interpret such a function; or both. See also Allan Moore, “The So-Called ‘Flattened Seventh’ in Rock,” *Popular Music* 14, no. 2 (May, 1995), 185–201.

<sup>27</sup> The second chorus, however, with its extra line, harmonically closes in G minor and sets up the central section.

Kuwahara situates the narrator's (in other words, Morrison's) viewpoint (see Figure 4.3 for lyrics) within a larger personal context: "The anticipation of the revelation which constitutes Morrison's apocalyptic vision is clearly expressed in 'Waiting For The Sun.' The character who has escaped from the 'strangest life' in 'Eden' reaches 'freedom's shore' and there waits for the sun, which will allow him to live again."<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, the embedded condition of waiting overrides all of the other thematic elements: has the narrator actually escaped from his "strangest life"? The sun may give him his life back, but does the sun ever rise? These are never determined within the song, though the listener may project these imagined outcomes onto it. The ponderous tenor here indicates that the waiting has stretched out interminably; however, and its mere continuation (that is, its existence) offers the possibility of hope. Morrison delivers even the song's first lines, which mention "racing" down to the sea and to "freedom's shore," with ennui. Likewise, in the second verse, where spring has come and the "scattered sun" is eagerly sought, the message is anticipatory while the mood is oddly sober. Morrison's voice takes on an incantatory grain in the choruses, singing robustly and later in harmony, and is bathed in reverb. The narrator's presence suddenly gains gravitas. The abrupt intrusions of the motive's massive sound-blocks also add to the song's incongruity; it is the choruses that equate the theme and the music more directly. The (in)action of waiting is fully articulated and manipulates the listener's experience of temporality.

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<sup>28</sup> Kawahara, "Apocalypse Now!," 99.

The song's theme is considerably complicated in the middle, or B section, whose expanded dimensions alone are one of the notable features of the AABA form.<sup>29</sup> I hesitate to call this section a bridge, as it lacks the function of a turnaround dominant at its conclusion. Nevertheless, it does have several bridge-like qualities. Everett notes that, in general, bridges "provide greatest contrast to the verse," and that "the lyrics may become deeply introspective or begin to reach out more desperately. Sometimes the bridge reflects a singer's consideration of an alternative view to that expressed in the song's main thrust."<sup>30</sup> This applies to the B section in "Waiting for the Sun."<sup>31</sup> The first lines, especially, trudge in their eight-fold repetition of "waiting," and are weighty in their use of the i–bIII–bVII–i chords (with one chord per word) along with a far thicker texture.<sup>32</sup> But when the pleas occur at "Waiting for you to come along..." and so on, what is the meaning of the decisive lines that ask "what went wrong," and then confess to the narrator's "strangest life"?<sup>33</sup> One reading sees this as the song's melancholy climax that may represent the end of hope on the narrator's part, with Morrison's ensuing screams before and during the solo functioning as

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<sup>29</sup> The measure counts in "Waiting for the Sun" are as follows: verses, 9; choruses, 4 1/2 or 5 1/2; solo, 8; and central section, 30.

<sup>30</sup> Everett, *The Foundations of Rock*, 147.

<sup>31</sup> The importance of musical contrast in a B section (of AABA) is certainly fulfilled here but, notably, its G key center has been retained over the same tonic G center (though shifted from major to minor) of the previous A section.

<sup>32</sup> The Moog heavily colors the entire B section, and Morrison shifts his enfeebled vocal tone in the verses to a sturdy calling out (which is later harmonized).

<sup>33</sup> Whether or not the narrator is addressing his comrade(s) or the sun is ambiguous. The song's psychedelic nature is enhanced by consistently slow RUM. Each line of the verse occupies four measures, while the ensuing "waiting for the sun" effectively stalls the unfolding for three measures. The B section's eightfold "waiting" appropriately halts narrative motions for eight measures, while the narrator's crucial "strangest life" (sung at *mp*) is given its spacious, transparent texture across six measures.

outbursts of utter fury and frustration. The solo is an integral part of that anger, comprising an eight-fold statement of the motive, *forte*, laced with a distorted and choppy guitar timbre in its very low range. The conclusion of such a reading is that Verse 3 and the final chorus are only a coda, an extension of waiting that rubs salt into the narrator's psychic wound. The text of Verse 3, in fact, is merely a repetition of that in Verse 2. Yet another reading sees Verse 3 and its chorus as a renewed hope after being dragged through and enduring the solo.

The song would seem to suggest more hopelessness than boredom. There is great potential and reason for celebration in "Waiting for the Sun" (not least because of its oscillations between major and minor tonics), with many possibilities staked on the rising of the sun: warmth, new life, emerging, a corrective, knowledge, dignity. But the repetitive structure—stalling time and reality to psychedelic ends—literally frustrates these possibilities by forcing the listener to wait and then denying a satisfying resolution, both in the narrative and musically.

### III. Psychosexual

The Night is young  
    & full of rest  
I can't describe the  
    way she's dress'd  
She'll pander to some strange  
    requests  
Anything that you suggest  
Anything to please her guest  
    —Jim Morrison, *Wilderness*

The Doors oeuvre is underpinned—and, in instances, dominated—by raw sexuality. Much of this originates with Morrison's seductive stage persona. While my primary purpose here is not to psychoanalyze Morrison, but rather to explore the Doors' unique sound and to foreground text–music relations, the role Morrison's sexual identity played in the latter warrants attention when it functions as a central feature of a song.<sup>34</sup>

Morrison exhibited his sexuality as a singer and performer, but it was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, he cast himself as the sexually unrestrained frontman and his erotic performance was one quintessential element that characterized the Doors. In many ways, he fit Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie's description of "cock rock," which "presents an ideal world of sex without physical or emotional difficulties, in which all men are attractive and potent and have endless opportunities to prove it."<sup>35</sup> As a singer, Morrison relied on his projection of sexual energy and hunger: he wore leather and snakeskin, posed with a visibly

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<sup>34</sup> Morrison's mental and emotional states have been (over)examined by numerous authors, often biographers and friends. See, for example, James Riordan and Jerry Prochnicky, *Break on Through: The Life and Death of Jim Morrison* (New York: William Morrow, 1991); Patricia Kennealy, *Strange Days: My Life With and Without Jim Morrison* (New York: Dutton, 1992); Stephen Davis, *Jim Morrison: Life, Death, Legend* (New York: Gotham Books, 2004); Jerry Hopkins and Danny Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive* (New York: Warner Books, 1980); Jerry Hopkins, *The Lizard King: The Essential Jim Morrison* (New York: Fireside, 1992); Patricia Butler, *Angels Dance and Angels Die: The Tragic Romance of Pamela and Jim Morrison*, 2nd ed. (London: Omnibus Press, 2007); and Michael Burgan, *Jim Morrison* (Mankato, MN: Edge Books, 2005).

<sup>35</sup> Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie, "Rock and Sexuality," [1978], in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, ed. Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), 382.

priapic presence for publicity shots, salaciously embraced the microphone stand in concert, delivered lyrics with suggestive or vulgar insinuation, and welcomed lunging and groping fans onto the stage. On the other hand, his public and overt sexual behavior at the infamous Miami concert on March 1, 1969—which was inspired by the confrontational ideology of the Living Theatre—landed him in serious legal trouble when he allegedly exposed himself. Even with the new openness of the late 1960s and the dissemination of the counterculture (of which the State of Florida did not seem to have approved) he had gone too far.

To consider the Doors—or the Rolling Stones, for that matter—and their frontmen as simply cock rockers, however, is to vastly oversimplify the issue. Despite the band's unabashed sexualized image, their musical and thematic ranges are simply too broad and eclectic to be so categorized—and hence the multiple categories of my study. But the psychosexual songs are among the most memorable, personal, and controversial, thereby gaining the public spotlight and ruling the Doors' reputation. Though the songs falling under the category I call psychosexual either directly or indirectly deal with sexual themes, the category should equally be understood as considering *relationships* between a protagonist and an Other.

Morrison's reputation with women is well known. His longest-lasting relationship, though tempestuous and often disrupted, was with Pamela Courson.<sup>36</sup> But in between were many sexual encounters with friends and strangers. Relations between Morrison and Courson were complicated, as Jerry Hopkins states: “[Courson] was jealous when he saw other women, even if they were groupies who followed him home to his motel room; in retaliation, Pam frequently went out with other men. Yet, it was to Jim that she was

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<sup>36</sup> Morrison was also married in a Celtic handfasting ceremony to Patricia Kennealy in June 1970.

committed. In Venice, when they met, Jim called her his ‘cosmic mate’ and that was the role she took for herself.”<sup>37</sup> According to Robby Krieger, “You could tell that she was really the one that he wanted to be with. He would always come back to her, no matter what happened. She was just as crazy as he was, so it kind of worked out perfectly.”<sup>38</sup> Morrison’s relationship with Courson inspired many of the Doors’ psychosexual songs, including “Love Street,” “We Could Be So Good Together,” “Unhappy Girl,” “Hello I Love You,” “You Make Me Real,” “Blue Sunday,” and “Queen of the Highway” (the last with music credited to Krieger). These songs, too, demonstrate that Morrison (and Krieger, in his own compositions) did not view all relationships as trivial, doomed, or dysfunctional.<sup>39</sup>

If his sexuality was front and center, Morrison was also articulate about it in interviews: “Sex can be a liberation, but it can also be an entrapment. Puritanical attitudes die slowly. How can sex be a liberation if you don’t really want to touch your body, if you’re trying to escape from it?”<sup>40</sup> He also placed sex in a societal context, in which he saw it as distorted and subdued: “Sex is full of lies. The body tries to tell the truth, but it’s usually too battered with rules to be heard. We cripple ourselves with lies. Most people have no idea of what they’re missing—our society places a supreme value on control, on hiding what you feel. It mocks primitive culture and prides itself on the suppression of natural instincts and impulses.”<sup>41</sup> In the realm of performance, Morrison thoroughly understood how

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<sup>37</sup> Hopkins, *The Lizard King*, 96.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in James Henke, *The Jim Morrison Scrapbook* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2007), 41.

<sup>39</sup> For his part, Robby Krieger also composed richly psychosexual Doors songs, including “Love Me Two Times,” “Touch Me,” and “Love Her Madly.”

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Doe and Tobler, *The Doors in their Own Words*, 80.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

to wield his sexual power in live concerts, and proposed theories about it long before he ever took the stage. Stephen Davis relates, “For a psychology course [at Florida State University], he wrote a paper on the sexual neuroses of crowds with an extensive bibliography that included Freud, Jung, Aldous Huxley, and George Orwell. The paper presciently discussed the use of music to arouse the sexual energies of a captive audience.”<sup>42</sup> Morrison would come to formulate his own concepts regarding sex as a formidable dramatic ingredient in the relationship between the Doors and their audience. He spoke of sex as a catalyst for the ideological communion between performer and viewer:

A Doors concert is a public meeting called by us for a special kind of dramatic discussion and entertainment. When we perform, we’re participating in the creation of a world, and we celebrate that creation with the audience. It becomes the sculpture of bodies in motion. We make concerts sexual politics. The sex starts with me, then moves out to include the charmed circle of musicians on stage. The music we make goes out to include the audience and interacts with them.<sup>43</sup>

In this section I examine a small cross-section of Doors psychosexual songs, first discussing their cover version of Van Morrison’s “Gloria,” a frank tale about a protagonist imagining his lover as she approaches his house. The Doors never released the song on a studio album, but they did perform it live frequently. In these performances they expanded its proportions in order to embellish the story and tell it far more graphically than the original version. In another song, “The Spy,” the protagonist describes to a nameless addressee—presumably a female—the emotional control he has over her. “I Can’t See Your Face In My Mind” follows a man as he wrestles with how to end a relationship. The song’s musical style strongly suggests that all is being done in a drug-induced haze. Finally, “The

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<sup>42</sup> Davis, *Jim Morrison*, 39.

<sup>43</sup> Morrison, quoted in Michael Lydon, “The Doors: Can They Still ‘Light My Fire’?,” *New York Times*, January 19, 1969, D22.

Crystal Ship” chronicles another relationship in distress while also conjuring an ancient legend that takes the story to a folkloric level. My exploration of these divergent songs showcases the wide-ranging stylistic and textual approaches that the Doors applied to tales of love and sex, again emphasizing the (consistent) eclecticism which paradoxically characterizes much of their oeuvre and sets them apart from many of their contemporaries.

### **“Gloria”**

As we saw in Chapter 1, Van Morrison and Them made an enormous impression on the Doors, and on Jim Morrison in particular, when the bands played together at the Whisky a Go-Go in June of 1966. The two groups’ notorious twenty-minute jam brought down the house with their joint performance of Van Morrison’s “Gloria,” which went on to become one of rock’s most beloved and covered anthems. The Doors gravitated to this malleable song and would go on playing it in live concerts for the rest of their career.

Figure 4.4: “Gloria” formal and lyric design, Them studio version, 1964

	Intro	4 mm. [E Mixo.] (I–I–bVII–IV established)	
0:08	Verse 1	16 mm.	Like to tell you 'bout my baby You know she comes around Just about five-feet four From her head to the ground You know she comes around here Just about midnight She makes me feel so good, Lord She makes me feel alright
0:38	(Extension)	6 mm.	And her name is g-l-o-r-i, G-L-O-R-I-A
0:49	Chorus	10 mm.	Gloria Gloria Gloria Gloria [shouted interjections:] I'm gonna shout it all night I'm gonna shout it every day
1:07	Guitar solo	12 mm.	
1:29	Verse 2	8 + 10 mm.	She comes around here Just about midnight She makes me feel so good, Lord I wanna say she makes me feel alright  Comes a-walking down my street She come to my house She knock upon my door And then she comes to my room Yeah, she makes me feel alright G-l-o-r-i-a
2:03	Chorus/outro	16 mm.	Gloria [x 6]

A comparison of the two bands' treatments of formal and thematic elements highlights Jim Morrison's propensity to indulge in eroticized performances and the Doors' instrumental ability to express the sexual personality of the song. Them's first recorded version of "Gloria" (1964) is the paradigm for all subsequent realizations of the song. Time would pass before Them's recording would become widely known,<sup>44</sup> but the highly respected Van Morrison was recognized as the song's definitive interpreter. His was also the version that the Doors would have known best and admired, and was closest in spirit to their subsequent adaptation.

"Gloria" recounts in succinct terms the singer's intense sexual desire and fulfillment with the eponymous Gloria. In Them's release, Van Morrison's explosive and declamatory delivery is remarkable. The most memorable musical ideas are the repeated I–I–bVII–IV harmonic riff, the guitar solo's quarter-note triplet motive, and the irresistible full-throated repetition of the title in the chorus. The organ timbre also tints both bands' sounds. In the Doors' cover the essential hooks were retained, but the expansion of its story and form best illustrated the band's leanings. In the interior jam, Morrison stretched and embellished the tale with an outright raunchy (many would say crass) seductive monologue, and in doing so, demonstrated the deliberately provocative side of Doors storytelling. As shown in Figure 4.4, the Them single is formally straightforward, though it is Van Morrison's fiery vocal—more declamatory than melodic—that gives the song its strikingly gritty tone. This

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<sup>44</sup> In fact, the Chicago-based Shadows of Knight stole Them's thunder when they released their own hit single version in December 1965. Them's release was problematic and received little attention initially because of poor distribution and spotty U.S. airplay.

combination of textual delivery and the groove's invariant double plagal harmonic pattern (bVII–IV–I) sharpen attention on the narrative.

The extended spelling of Gloria's name in the first verse builds considerable excitement. This, ironically, results in a dramatic slowing of the RUM even as the listener expects the climax at the breakout chorus. The second verse's parallel moment is clipped—six measures of extension are now two—which leads more swiftly into the chorus.<sup>45</sup> This verse constitutes the song's most detailed narrative description, in which Gloria is easily imagined in her approach to the protagonist. The final chorus is then doubled in length and morphs effortlessly into the ending.

In 1973, during a tour with his Caledonia Soul Orchestra, Van Morrison expanded "Gloria" by entering into a vocal and instrumental jam after the first chorus. While the guitar, organ, and backing horns vamped and improvised, Morrison fixated on the word "baby" (repeated some twenty-five times), thus distilling the story's sexual desire to a single word and, in effect, democratizing the vocal and its theme with the accompaniment.<sup>46</sup>

Such a texture is an intermediate (if later-recorded) step toward the Doors' explicitly sexualized handling of the song; their more digressive narrative required a broadened and plasticized formal solution. Their concerts provided the ideal opportunity to experiment with musical vehicles for the story, whose telling always varied. In these live renditions the band

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<sup>45</sup> Although the reiteration of a song's title suggests a *refrain*, which is normally attached to the end of a verse structure, the "Gloria"-rich chorus here has the essential characteristics of invariance, fuller dynamics, and forceful backing vocals. At the same time, the lead vocal's continued declamations carry their own vigor and passion across from the verse.

<sup>46</sup> The highly acclaimed performance was captured on the recording *It's Too Late to Stop Now* (1974), Polydor 537 453-2, CD, 1997.

musically shadowed Jim Morrison's unpredictable performance. One of the Doors' great strengths was the combination of rock, dramatic atmosphere, and visuals. John Densmore's understanding of the Doors' live performance is illuminating:

[It was] total theatre. It wasn't planned or conceived in the studio, it was fairly subconscious. Jim was magical—he never knew quite what he was going to do each night, and that's what was so exciting, the suspense, because obviously we didn't really know either. Our music was the framework, but it didn't seem that rigid: somehow we could go off at a tangent for twenty minutes or so, and Jim would stretch out, improvise some poetry, and we'd vamp along, comment on his poetry, improvise a while, then we'd get back into the chorus of the song. That was what made it so exciting.<sup>47</sup>

Ray Manzarek, instead, tells of the “obscene” renderings that the Doors conjured back in their days at the London Fog.<sup>48</sup> Thus, even before their paths crossed with Them, they knew the song and were beginning to make it their own.

At least four live Doors' recordings of “Gloria” are available. Though they differ in the details, the thematic and formal treatment is in many ways similar. I will study one specific recording and then look at other variations.<sup>49</sup> One key performance happened in January 1970 at New York City's Felt Forum, where Jim Morrison dismantled the traditional notion of jam and instead rambled through a theatrical and exploitative fantasy.<sup>50</sup> The forty-measure introduction indicates that the listener will have a sprawling voyage. At Verse 2 Morrison's impromptu lyrical reinterpretation begins to steer the song from the Van

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<sup>47</sup> John Densmore, *Riders on the Storm: My Life with Jim Morrison and The Doors* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1990), 46.

<sup>48</sup> Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 183.

<sup>49</sup> Other versions of “Gloria” are included on *Live at the Aquarius Theater: The Second Performance*, Bright Midnight Archives/Rhino Records 77907, CD, 2004; *The Doors Box Set*, Elektra Records 62123-2, CD, 1997; and *In Concert*, Elektra Records 9 61082-2, CD, 1991.

<sup>50</sup> The live recording of this performance was included on *Live in New York*, Rhino Records R2521457, CD, 2009.

Morrison model. (The lead vocal throughout is delivered in a snarling, grunting, even perverted tone—[Jim] Morrison’s voice had also been run ragged from oversinging.) After this, the song enters uncharted territory through Morrison’s seamy, one-sided conversation with, or crude seduction of, a seemingly innocent young woman—“What’s your name? Where’d you go to school?” and so on. After forty-one measures of this scenario—which, in effect, replace the original guitar solo—the chorus appears for the only time. Forty-eight measures of vamping then set up a continuation of the fantasy, though in more symbolic language, which comprises 180 measures and lasts fully 6:21. The thematic content has grown more obscure and, even, quasi-mythical: “Coda [?] queen / Be my bride / Rage in darkness / By my side // Seize the summer / In your stride / Take the winter / In your pride,” and so on. This is where the song’s shape gains musical interest with, in order, a lengthy deceleration, a slow section, an acceleration, the insertion of a truncated version of the song “My Eyes Have Seen You” (from *Strange Days*), and a return to “Gloria” with a furious rush toward its very dissonant ending. This is the only time a final chorus is omitted.

Other versions follow this same general construct, but with additional formal subsections. On two occasions Morrison launches into another interior monologue: “You were my queen and / I was your fool / Riding home / After school / You took me home / took me into your room / showed me your thing / why’d you do it, babe?” and so on. The tempo gradually slows as he narrates, at which point the accompanimental pattern sometimes changes from the original |: I–I–bVII–IV :| to a simple |: bVII–I–I–I–I–I–I :| (as eighth notes, with open fifths above). Simultaneously, as the tempo speeds up again,

Morrison's account of the implied sex act intensifies, and the guitar and organ jam more prominently. At other times the narrative theme completely strays. At an Aquarius Theater concert in Hollywood in 1969, for example, Morrison sings "Gotta meet me at the crossroads / gotta meet me at the edge of town," and so forth, which he says after he has already met and begun to seduce the girl.<sup>51</sup>

Performing the show at New York City's Madison Square Garden in 1970 emboldened the singer to present his most trenchant rendition—many would say the most lewd or self-indulgent—in which he entreats the girl for sex in totally explicit terms: "Wrap your lips around my cock / wrap your legs around my neck / wrap your arms around my feet / it's getting harder / it's getting too fast / too late / too late" and so forth.<sup>52</sup> Surprisingly, the New York concert took place *after* the Miami debacle, which had caused massive cancellations of booked shows and otherwise put the band under severe scrutiny. The Madison Square Garden performance proved that the Doors did not always self-censor despite working under precarious circumstances. Nonetheless, the analyses below will demonstrate that Morrison and the Doors were capable of producing more subtle and multifaceted tellings of psychosexual stories.

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<sup>51</sup> See *Live at the Aquarius Theater: The Second Performance*.

<sup>52</sup> *The Doors Box Set*.

## “The Spy”

The voyeur, the peeper, the Peeping Tom, is a dark comedian. He is repulsive in his dark anonymity, in his secret invasion. He is pitifully alone. But, strangely, he is able through this same silence and concealment to make unknowing partner of anyone within his eye’s range. This is his threat and power.

— Jim Morrison, *The Lords and the New Creatures*

Appearing on *Morrison Hotel*, the languid and bluesy “The Spy” is a first-person enactment of sheer emotional voyeurism. The opening line (see Figure 4.5) references Anaïs Nin’s 1954 novel *A Spy in the House of Love*, in which the protagonist Sabina engages in illicit sexual adventures. The song’s narrator is not trustworthy. The repetition of the refrain line (“I know your deepest secret fear”) is a significant clue, along with the eerie, soporific musical setting, all of which suggests a prurient wink. The protagonist is a spy who knows the addressee’s dreams, longings, and fears, all intimate emotional components of the psyche.

Figure 4.5: “The Spy” formal and lyric design, *Morrison Hotel* version

	Intro	
0:27	Verse 1	I’m a spy in the house of love I know the dream, that you’re dreaming of I know the word that you long to hear I know your deepest, secret fear
1:12	Verse 2	I’m a spy in the house of love I know the dream, that you’re dreaming of I know the word that you long to hear I know your deepest, secret fear  I know everything Everything you do Everywhere you go Everyone you know
2:21	Verse 3	I’m a spy in the house of love I know the dream, that you’re dreaming of I know the word that you long to hear I know your deepest, secret fear I know your deepest, secret fear I know your deepest, secret fear
3:23	Outro	I’m a spy I can see What you do And I know

The core words to all three verses are the same, though each verse has its own discrete length, phrase structure, and manner of conclusion. What the verses have in common, however, is their starting in Mixolydian and ending in Dorian, which gives them deep accordance with the text and its mingling of love, suspicion, and anxiety. Verse 1 is the most succinct, giving the later ones a quality of variation. It begins as a twelve-bar blues pattern but expands the template interiorly with four extra measures of tonic (at “I know the word”) after the first IV chord. At the refrain line, however, the accompaniment concludes the

pattern (and emphasizes the text) by switching to a heavy bIII–bVII–i cadence—that is, with a shift to the minor—plus a measure of stop time. Verse 2 pushes on further with textual elaboration, and the music responds to the four new lines with the chords bVII–i, pounded four on the floor, and more stop time. Thus the extended cadence contains not only more textual information but provides a more solid musical finish to the verse. With Verse 3, the refrain line sounds three times (again using bIII–bVII–i), and is followed by a cadence on a held E minor chord. When the music resumes in the form of vamping for the outro, it personifies the protagonist’s calm gait as he fades away. Morrison sings the very last word (“and I *know*”) on E2, at the bottom of his range.

The groove established in the introduction is extremely languorous (see Example 4.4). Krieger’s lethargic, sexualized guitar work (full of bent tones), Manzarek’s honky-tonk piano playing, and Densmore’s brushes create an ironically apt setting for the narrator’s sinister, confident attitude. One of the song’s successes is this tension between the unsettling lyric and the cool musical support. Example 4.4 might seem to conflict with the descriptions above of the verses’ E minor conclusions. In fact, the three-sharp key signature indicates the song’s Mixolydian mode, which is fleshed out undeniably by the piano in measure seven. The opening guitar lick (with its G-naturals) implies a minor blues only temporarily because the line is unaccompanied. What truly drives the song harmonically is the modal mixture so typical of the blues (and discussed in Chapter 2): a major-third harmonic framework—nearly always the Mixolydian mode—which is embellished by blue notes, usually  $\text{^b3}$  and  $\text{^b7}$ , in a *melodic* capacity. Such a song’s vocal or a solo instrument supplies the “crunch” (often pitting  $\text{^b3}$  against  $\text{^nat3}$ ) that is so characteristic of mixed-modal coloring.

Example 4.4: “The Spy” introduction/groove

♩ = 76 Swung eighths

Vocal

Guitar

Piano

Bass

Kit

*I'm a spy*

Brushes

The lyric comprises not so much a narrative as a menacing whisper in the ear. The verses’ unexceptional text repetitions serve as a baseline against which each closing passage secures its strength. By the third verse, the same words are beginning to needle, and an increased frustration is induced in the addressee because the musical setting never deviates. “The Spy” is a song that quietly gains insistence as it unfolds. Rather than being mere

voyeurism from afar, the protagonist surveils the addressee on a close personal and private level. We can also consider the performance vis-à-vis the autobiographical: do we interpret a lyric as threatening because it is inherently made so in the song, or do we also consider what we know of Morrison's own behavior and personal life?

Finally, in a performance recorded live in Boston, Morrison embellished the lyric and spoke in the vernacular for the long outro: "I seen you making it with that other man last week, I saw you. I saw you sneaking around. I wish you wouldn't do it, darling. I want love, babe. I wanted some love, baby. But you've been messing around all over town."<sup>53</sup>

Morrison may have simply decided to take this alternate and more transparent direction on the spur of the moment, as he was wont to do. Some listeners might find that this spoils the song by stripping away its compelling mystery. But he may have only been making audible what he sensed was the narrative's undercurrent all along: his dominance over a female love interest. Or, if read from a strictly biographical stance, he could have had Pamela Courson in mind. Nin's story about the licentious ways of Sabina may have provided an allusion to Courson's infidelities. Regardless, both lyric options leave open the question of whether the protagonist will act on what he knows and, as with several of the songs discussed in this chapter, leave the situation unresolved.

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<sup>53</sup> *Live in Boston*, Bright Midnight Archives/Rhino Records R2 216124, CD, 2007.

## “I Can’t See Your Face in My Mind”

The subtlest song on *Strange Days*, “I Can’t See Your Face In My Mind,” is the penultimate track on that record and a foil to the album’s epic closer, “When the Music’s Over.” This is another song that belongs to more than one of my typologies. It describes an ill-starred love relationship presented in emotionally aloof and foggy tones, and it provides a window into Morrison’s LSD-inspired interpretation of a commonplace situation.<sup>54</sup> The narrator describes the imminent collapse of his relationship with his lover using sometimes-hallucinogenic lyrics that intrude from without the narrative, yet ring within his mind (see Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6: “I Can’t See Your Face In My Mind” formal and lyric design, *Strange Days* version

	Intro	
0:10	Verse 1	I can’t see your face in my mind I can’t see your face in my mind Carnival dogs consume the lines Can’t see your face in my mind
0:50	Chorus	Don’t you cry Baby, please don’t cry And don’t look at me with your eyes
1:20	Verse 2	I can’t seem to find the right lie I can’t seem to find the right lie Insanity’s horse adorns the sky Can’t seem to find the right lie

<sup>54</sup> Ray Manzarek describes a different reading of the song as captured live at the Matrix in San Francisco (1967): “What a too cool Latino version of one of my favorite Doors songs. On the studio version we do this as a languid, oriental Bolero ... but here [live] we’re in Mexico at a seaside, salsa resort and the night is hot.” Quoted in *The Doors Box Set* booklet, 39.

Figure 4.6, continued

1:59	Verse 3 (beginning) (guitar solo)	
2:19	Verse 3 (cont'd)	Carnival dogs consume the lines Can't see your face in my mind
2:39	Chorus	Don't you cry Baby, please don't cry I won't need your picture Until we say goodbye
3:08	Codetta	

The song's form is marked by the striking full stops that conclude every verse and chorus. After speaking directly to the lover in Verse 1 and the first chorus, Verse 2 may be spoken internally (for example, "can't seem to find the right lie," presumably to exit the relationship with some outward grace). In an otherwise spare poem, there are a number of visual references: "Can't see your face," "don't look at me with your eyes," and "I won't need your picture." The speaker's efforts at disentanglement seem to be taking place face-to-face and with much difficulty.

The mounting complexity of harmonic schemes between sections is also notable. Successive progressions stray ever farther from the tonic of A minor. The introduction and first two lines of the verse (see Example 4.5) feature only two chords of the open fifth with added seconds and fourths. These happen on both I and bVII, and are collapsible into A, B, D, E and G, A, C, D, and clusters result because the notes are held.<sup>55</sup> The sonorities'

<sup>55</sup> The key of A minor is only obliquely suggested when the bVII chord includes the C natural, which is really only the eleventh of the chord itself.

thirdlessness reflects the speaker's emotionally hollow state and his sense of loss with regard to his predicament

Example 4.5: "I Can't See Your Face in my Mind" introduction/verse beginnings

♩ = 92  
8va

Guitar

Organ

Bass

By the late 1960s such sonorities were familiar to jazz styles, but were still quite new to rock. Krieger is careful to shape his guitar playing as a distinct contrapuntal voice, as opposed to more generic noodling. The first verse's third and fourth lines (see Example 4.6) briefly interpolate iv and use  $i^7$  and  $iv^7$  chords that hint at the blues. The "carnival dogs" and later "insanity's horse" may reflect a twinge of madness in the speaker's mind, or comprise a hallucination, or both.

Example 4.6: “I Can’t See Your Face in my Mind” verse (lines 3 and 4)

♩ = 92

Vocal

Car - ni-val dogs con - sume the lines

Guitar

Organ

Bass

Kit

v7 i7

Vocal

Can't see your face in my mind

8va

Org.

Bass

Kit

iv7 v7 i7 v

Then with an unforeseen touch (Example 4.7), the chorus asserts the *bvii* key of G minor (interestingly, via its subdominant), and its jazz-inflected richness (achieved through added tones) has traveled a good distance from the song’s opening two-chord swaying.

Example 4.7: “I Can’t See Your Face in my Mind” chorus, with vocal, chordal reduction, bass line<sup>56</sup>

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a vocal line, a chordal reduction, and a bass line. The key signature is G minor (one flat) and the time signature is 4/4.

- System 1:**
  - Vocal: *Don't* you cry
  - Chordal Reduction: Shows sustained chords in the right hand and a moving bass line in the left hand.
  - Bass Line: *am: i<sup>7</sup>* (first two bars), *iv<sup>7</sup>* (last two bars)
- System 2:**
  - Vocal: *Ba - by, please don't cry* *And*
  - Chordal Reduction: Shows sustained chords in the right hand and a moving bass line in the left hand.
  - Bass Line: *gm: iv<sup>7</sup>* (first two bars), *i<sup>9/7</sup>* (last two bars)
- System 3:**
  - Vocal: *don't look at me — with your eyes*
  - Chordal Reduction: Shows sustained chords in the right hand and a moving bass line in the left hand.
  - Bass Line: *am: i<sup>7</sup>* (first bar), *v<sup>7</sup>* (second bar), *i<sup>7</sup>* (third bar), *(v)* (fourth bar)

The G minor chord with added seventh and ninth is the song’s most opulent, coinciding with the vocal melody to emphasize the important line “Ba-by, please don’t cry.” Morrison approaches that goal with deliberation, and adjusts RUM to good effect: one syllable per half note here contrasts to the relaxed but quicker vocal syncopation elsewhere. In particular, no fewer than eight bars are used to essentially sustain the plea “please don’t

<sup>56</sup> The chordal reduction represents notes improvisatorially arpeggiated by Manzarek on the organ, which are in fact difficult to transcribe. The topmost notes, however, are those used in the part. I included no pivot chords between A minor and G minor (and back) because I personally don’t hear any such functions, as the shifts are unprepared.

cry,” while “don’t look at me with your eyes” is accomplished in two. The rhythmic push and pull reflects the text’s emotional fluidity.

The guitar solo is restrained, even timid, and it closely mimics the introduction’s texture. Thus it is also heard acting as a re-intro, but in truth, as can be seen in Figure 4.4, it constitutes the first half of verse 3. Then there are the song’s unique colorings: the xylophone-like taps during the intro and verse beginnings (possibly provided by the Moog), an ambling marimba floating in and out, and the change of organ timbres between sections. The kit also tailors its patterns to fit the words. In the chorus, a curious instrument is heard sounding on each quarter note beat—it is, in fact, a backwards tape of a cymbal tap. It is another experimental effect on this hallucinogenic album, reminiscent of what the Beatles were doing in the studio.

This story of an inevitable parting is experienced as a hazy, non-linear dream transported by unhurried Latin strains. As the song’s title indicates, the speaker has gradually extricated himself from a relationship and he is struggling to completely sever ties. The piece contrasts with the braggadocio present in much of the Doors’ oeuvre that emphasizes desire and the conquest of women. In this temporally compact song Morrison realizes a nuanced and sensitive narrative of an unraveling bond as seen through an acid-drenched lens, merging the psychedelic experience with a more traditional tale of heartbreak.

## “The Crystal Ship”

The final psychosexual song to be surveyed, “The Crystal Ship,” is especially difficult to categorize. It is certainly a psychedelic song, with numerous hallucinogenic sonic markers, including thick reverb and numerous patches of murky harmonies; at the same time, it is haunted by death because of the text. But since this is a suggestive account of a painful parting, designating it a psychosexual or love song is appropriate. The musical setting is smooth and eerily placid, except for mild intensification in the final verse. “The Crystal Ship” received more public exposure than other tracks in this chapter by occupying the B side of the hit single “Light My Fire,” released in April 1967. It is the third track on the debut album, and it had at least two different impulses behind its creation.<sup>57</sup> As Chuck Crisafulli informs, “The lyrics had their genesis in the pairing of both worldly and arcane inspirations—a romantic break-up and Celtic mythology.”<sup>58</sup> The tragic romance comprises the first three verses, while the mythological dimension takes shape in the fourth and last verse.

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<sup>57</sup> “The Crystal Ship” analyzed here is from the studio album *The Doors*, though the band did play it in live shows. It appears, for example, on *Live at the Matrix 1967* (Bright Midnight Archives/Rhino Records 516205, CD, 2008) and *Live at the Aquarius Theater: The Second Performance*. The band chose not to tamper with this song and always played it without embellishments or other alterations. Instrumental improvisation was apparently deemed inappropriate, as well.

<sup>58</sup> Chuck Crisafulli, *The Doors: When the Music's Over* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2000), 28.

Figure 4.7: “The Crystal Ship” formal and lyric design, *The Doors* version

	Verse 1	Before you slip into unconsciousness I'd like to have another kiss Another flashing chance at bliss Another kiss Another kiss
0:38	Verse 2	The days are bright and filled with pain Enclose me in your gentle rain The time you ran was too insane We'll meet again We'll meet again
1:08	Piano solo	
1:29	Verse 3	Oh tell me where your freedom lies The streets are fields that never die Deliver me from reasons why You'd rather cry I'd rather fly
1:58	Verse 4	The crystal ship is being filled A thousand girls, a thousand thrills A million ways to spend your time When we get back I'll drop a line

The song's form is strophic with an eight-measure piano solo after Verse 2 (see Figure 4.7), and there is no intro or outro. The verses begin in F minor. In the striking opening gesture, the vocal sings the first two words (“Before you...”) *a cappella* to the scale degrees of  $\hat{5}-\hat{nat}6-\hat{nat}7(-\hat{8})$ . Without using any prior information, the very first lyrical line projects three possible meanings: the addressee could be drifting into sleep, or slipping toward a drug-induced unconscious state, or teetering on the threshold of death. The remainder of Verse 1 is couched in romantic parlance and does not indicate at a relationship

in distress. Many of the harmonies, because of non-chord tones (especially in the bass line), are murky, thus contributing to the psychedelic cloud-like effect early in the song.

Morrison often turned to the symbols of the ship and the ocean: the ship signified travel, or an in-between state or space, and the ocean stood for the subconscious, or death. The lyric is affectionate and longing, but hints at the couple's troubled relationship in the past. Verse 2 (all verses except the last use an *aaaaa* rhyme scheme) intimates difficulties, juxtaposing "bright" with "pain" and revealing that the woman has left the narrator before. Perhaps "we'll meet again" was spoken at that time; perhaps it pertains to the present. Verse 3 asks the woman about her desires, after which the lyric presents an intriguing interpretational problem. All the other verses finish their thoughts at the ends of lines. There are no enjambments. But lines 3 and 4 of the third verse might be read as either "Deliver me from reasons why"—in which case the narrator is directly referencing the previous lines—or "Deliver me from reasons why you'd rather cry"—in which case her crying (and his subsequent "flying," or leaving) make more sense.

I have notated the vocal and piano parts of the second verse in Example 4.8 mainly because this verse has the most harmonic clarity on the recording.<sup>59</sup> Manzarek played both the organ and piano on the track. He fully understood the character of the verses' third chord, the IV<sup>maj7</sup>: "I knew that the Bb major 7 chord would cause trouble. ... The minor seventh *was* the darkness; but the major seventh was cool. It was jazz. ... And it had never been used in rock and roll."<sup>60</sup> Both the triad's major sonority and the raised seventh are

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<sup>59</sup> Not displayed is the transition between the first and second verses, heard again as closure to the piano solo. It uses the progression i–bVI –| bIII–bVII | V | V, thus having an interior double plagal descent.

<sup>60</sup> Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 109. Manzarek also relates that several friends who were familiar with the song asked him to change the chord because it sounded so out of place. Manzarek refused.

unusual in the context. Manzarek’s prized chord adds further flourish to a progression that is already imaginative:  $i-v-IV^{maj7}-bII (-I)$ .

Example 4.8: “The Crystal Ship” Verse 2, vocal and piano

Vocal

The days are bright and filled with pain En - close me in\_ your gen - tle rain The

Piano

time you ran was too in - sane We'll meet a - gain

We'll meet\_ a - gain

We can see other unique musical factors here. First, the verses’ accompaniments all begin in minor but at the third line switch to the major; such modal blurring will sound throughout. The song is locally cyclical, then, by repeatedly dispelling and recalling gloom. The fourth verse is given musically heightened intensity and moves the story outward. Second, there are clear examples of a so-called melodic–harmonic “divorce,” as outlined by

David Temperley and Allan Moore.<sup>61</sup> Not only do the vocal's flatted thirds clash with the accompaniment, but the singer also outlines an F tonic triad (with blue thirds) over the abovementioned Bb<sup>maj7</sup> chord as well as the following Neapolitan harmony. The resulting clashes contribute to the text's ungrounded feel. Third, RUM slows at line 3 to one-quarter the speed of the verse's beginning, and syncopations give way to long tones, allowing these words to sink in considerably deeper. The slowly climbing melodic shape underlying the third line—especially its last word—makes that line the verses' most important. Finally, the carefully crafted phrase structure of the verse gives it an asymmetrical eleven-measure form and affords poetic lines different characters. Lines 1 and 2 are laid across four measures, with a rhythm that gives them a somewhat discursive quality. Line 3 then arcs across three measures plus one beat, emphasizing the narrator's rumination. The last couplet returns to the first tempo. All of these qualities combine to give the verses a more organic shape and allow the lyric to breathe and swell like language and thought.

The crystal ship motif in Verse 4 refers to the legendary ancient Irish *Book of the Dun Cow*. As Crisafulli explains, "The hero was wooed by a goddess who whisked him away ... in a ship made of crystal, [which] knew its pilot's mind and was capable of flying over sea or land."<sup>62</sup> The description of the ship may mean that the protagonist plans on experiencing carnal pleasures elsewhere, though interestingly, "a thousand thrills" was

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<sup>61</sup> Among other musical phenomena, the melodic/harmonic divorce can exist in rock music when "the pitch organization is *stratified*: there are different frameworks for the melody and accompaniment." See David Temperley, "The Melodic-Harmonic 'Divorce' in Rock," *Popular Music* 26, no. 2 (2007): 328.

<sup>62</sup> Crisafulli, *The Doors*, 28.

originally “a thousand pills,” which perhaps kept the last verse in too earthly a setting.<sup>63</sup> So it is the narrator’s decision to leave the relationship, at least for the time being. The conversational final phrase, “I’ll drop a line,” is out of character with the rest of the song’s language; Morrison could not help his wry humor.

Finally, the song’s modal indecision—i.e., minor–major mixture—is summed up in its last held chord, which splits the third scale degree and presents both simultaneously. It is no mistake on the organist’s part. The sonority is quite deliberate and likewise appears on live recordings of the song. The sound is clashing, yet perhaps it contains the bittersweet nature of the lyric.

“The Crystal Ship” is a quintessential Doors song that travels to alternate planes and morphs as it progresses. Upon reaching the final verse, Morrison resorted to a myth that allowed the love song to enter another reality. As with the majority of the songs in the psychosexual category, he drew on his erudite background to produce an individual theme matched by the instrumentalists’ empathic response.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

#### IV. Morbid

Why the desire for death  
A clean paper or a pure  
    white wall. One false  
line, a scratch, a mistake.  
Unerasable. So obscure  
by adding million other  
    tracings, blend it,  
cover over.  
But the original scratch  
remains, written in  
gold blood, shining.  
    —Jim Morrison, *Wilderness*

It was Morrison who stated “no one here gets out alive” in the inscrutable song “Five to One.” Like this chapter’s “psychosexual” songs, biographical events in Morrison’s life also informed the Doors’ “morbid” songs. Indicative of Morrison’s fascination with the morbid (and possibly speaking to his dark sense of humor), he listed his parents as deceased in the biographical information he supplied early on to Elektra Records (when, in fact, they were quite alive). More significantly, and as detailed in Chapter 1, Morrison witnessed the morbid first hand as a child during a family road trip near Albuquerque. They drove past a serious highway accident involving a truck with Native American passengers; there were casualties among them. In Morrison’s mind, the experience became mystical: “It was the first time I discovered death. The reaction I get now, thinking back . . . is that possibly the soul of one of those Indians, maybe several of them, just ran over and jumped into my brain.”<sup>64</sup> With hindsight, at least, this was a pivotal moment in Morrison’s own mythopoesis and in his conscious conflation of death and shamanism.

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<sup>64</sup> Henke, *Jim Morrison Scrapbook*, 36. The incident would inspire a passage within a large Morrison poem: “Indians scattered on dawn’s / Hiway bleeding. / Ghosts crowd the young child’s fragile egg-shell mind.” See Morrison, *Wilderness*, 139.

The morbid typology considered in this chapter encompasses conceptions of death ranging from suicide to mass extinction. Many songs in the Doors repertoire deal with morbid themes, chief among them “The End,” one of their most important, poignant songs (to be discussed in Chapter 5). We could also include the songs “When the Music’s Over,” “Riders on the Storm,” and “The Unknown Soldier” (the last being the Doors’ most overt anti-war song).

The Doors’ listening public embraced the band’s songs about death as they did those on other difficult subjects. Indeed, fans saw morbidity as a fundamental component of the Doors’ ethos. Ray Manzarek complicates this purview: “Our music has to do with operating in the dark areas within yourself. A lot of people are operating on the love trip, and that’s nice, but there are two sides to this thing. There’s a black, evil side as well as a white, love side, and what we’re trying to do is to come to grips with that and realize it. Sensual is probably the word that best fits it.”<sup>65</sup> Of course, the fixation with the morbid is congruent with human nature: death holds an irresistible fascination for people. Keith Durkin, among others, in analyzing our outwardly death-denying culture, states that “our insulation from death causes us to crave some degree of information and insight concerning death, and we feed that craving through popular-culture depictions of death and dying.”<sup>66</sup> The Doors served this purpose at a time when death was not frankly discussed, unless in a religious

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<sup>65</sup> Quoted in Fred Powlage, “Wicked Go the Doors: An Adult’s Education by the Kings of Acid Rock,” *Life*, April 12, 1968, 90.

<sup>66</sup> Keith F. Durkin, “Death, Dying, and the Dead in Popular Culture,” in *Handbook of Death and Dying*, ed. Clifton D. Bryant (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 147.

context, and, yet, with the horrors of Vietnam, it dominated the news in the United States and was ever present in the American psyche.

This section parses three songs. “Yes, the River Knows” is a quiet, haunting song that deals with suicide and the sublime in nature. “Ship of Fools” weds a playful musical approach to an apocalyptic theme. The chapter concludes with “Moonlight Drive,” another upbeat song, but one that takes a dark turn at the end. (Embedded inside the song is another that is equally morbid, “Horse Latitudes.”) I will also show how “Moonlight Drive” evolved through the Doors’ career and exemplified their ability to grow musically, creatively adapting songs to their various moods and places.

### **“Yes, the River Knows”**

“Yes, the River Knows” is a highly melancholic ballad. It is the penultimate track from the Doors’ third album, *Waiting for the Sun*, situated between the convivial (by Doors standards) “We Could Be So Good Together” and the brutal, enigmatic closer “Five To One.” Early in the Doors’ history, Morrison exhorted his band mates to go home and write new songs and to concentrate, especially, on elemental themes. Krieger responded with “Light My Fire” for the debut album, and “Yes, the River Knows” was likely his corresponding composition with a water theme. Krieger’s lyrics in this case emulate Morrison’s authorial skills, but we can only speculate as to whether Krieger presciently had him in mind as his subject. The song could be a meditation on suicide —conscious or not—

with references to drinking, breathing underwater “till the end,” lyrics such as “I’m going, but I need a little time,” and so on.

Figure 4.8: “Yes, the River Knows” formal and lyric design, *Waiting for the Sun* version

	<b>A</b> Verse	Please believe me The river told me Very softly Want you to hold me, ooo
0:16	<b>B</b> Chorus	Free fall flow river, flow On and on it goes Breathe underwater till the end Free fall flow river, flow On and on it goes Breathe underwater till the end Yes, the river knows
0:42	<b>C<sup>1</sup></b> Verse	Please believe me If you don’t need me I’m going, but I need a little time I promised I would drown myself in mystic heated wine
1:09	<b>A</b> Verse	Please believe me The river told me Very softly Want you to hold me, ooo
1:26	Guitar solo	
1:51	<b>C<sup>2</sup></b> Verse	I’m going, but I need a little time I promised I would drown myself in mystic heated wine
2:05	<b>B</b> Chorus	Free fall flow river, flow On and on it goes Breathe underwater till the end Free fall flow river, flow On and on it goes Breathe underwater till the end

The two contrasting narrative strands in the song's lyric are reflected in the music. In Sections A and C (see Figure 4.8) the narrator confesses to a trustworthy Other. In Section A the river also urges the narrator, in muted and comforting tones, to enter the water and embrace death. Section C comprises a heart-wrenching plea to the Other.<sup>67</sup> Section B, however, acting as the chorus, is a grim paean to the river. All the sections and the guitar solo feature sharply disparate harmonic behaviors and they add up to a kaleidoscopic assemblage of overall form. This formal reshuffling discourages stability and mirrors the narrator's disconcerted mindset.

In reflecting the misty and vulnerable first lyric, the harmony in Section A (see Example 4.9) immediately wanders from A major—only briefly sensed as tonic because it is heard first—changing once per bar, and ascending by minor thirds (F–g#–b) before the plagal cadence in F# major. These chords cannot comprise audible functional relationships in any traditionally tonal way, save for the cadence on F# major. The drifting harmony, the diaphanous extemporizing in the piano's right hand, and the five-bar layout all contribute to the section's sense of open space and uncertainty.

The chorus (Section B), where the river is forbiddingly described, abruptly shifts to the parallel minor and displays an entirely new, structured sensibility: phrases are locked into eight measures, text is repeated twice, harmony changes on each beat (except bars four and eight) in mostly stepwise motion, and texture is thickened and consolidated. Most notably, the chordal motion (see Example 4.9) is reminiscent of parallel organum and, with

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<sup>67</sup> Both sections are verses, but they feature completely different music and are even in different keys. Thus there is a kind of contrasting verse–chorus form occurring here, but it uses contrastive verse *types*.

the beat evoking a driving march, the river’s inexorable flow is well depicted. The climactic line “Yes, the river knows,” which is rhythmically weak after the final bar’s downbeat—and all of this within the phrase’s weak eighth measure—seems almost an afterthought and is the only sung instance of the song’s title. Finally, Section C returns to the airier texture of A, though it has new qualities, including eight-measure phrasing, a shift to the dominant, and a more traditional progression than that heard in Section A. The cadence in the relative key of C# minor is the song’s only true pause. Because Sections A and C are verses with discursive qualities, Section B interrupts the narrative to assert the river’s presence.

Example 4.9: “Yes, the River Knows” harmonic reductions of the four sections<sup>68</sup>

A (approximate chordal voicing)

The musical score for Section A consists of two staves. The top staff is a bass clef line with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. It contains a vocal line with the lyrics "Please be - lieve me". The bottom staff is a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with the same key signature and time signature. It shows a piano accompaniment with a harmonic reduction. The chords are labeled as A, (f#:) iv, and I. A bracket labeled "Whole Tone" spans the interval between the (f#:) iv and I chords.

A:  
(f#:) iv I

<sup>68</sup> The chords in all reductions are, as indicated, only representative of the harmony as played especially in the right hand part of the piano. But their ranges and inversions are accurate. For most of the song Manzarek improvises delicate figuration around these main notes.

Example 4.9, continued

**B** (beginning, and final chord)

a: V i (etc.) I

**C1** (approximate chordal voicing)

E: I<sup>♯</sup> bVII<sup>♯</sup>

ii<sup>7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> (c#m:) iv<sup>7</sup> i V<sup>7</sup> i

**Solo** (harmony only; approximate chordal voicing)

(E:)

Whole Tone

The guitar solo's harmonic structure merits close attention. A hybrid culled from progressions elsewhere in the song, the passage initially sounds an E major chord but proceeds to wander harmonically in the spirit of Section A.<sup>69</sup> The second, unproblematic

<sup>69</sup> The E<sup>major7</sup> and D<sup>major7</sup> chords (sounding as I<sup>major7</sup>-bVII<sup>major7</sup>) are clearly derived from Section C; the g<sup>9</sup> chords are equivalent to the sonority in Section A; and the f<sup>7</sup> chord resembles the important pivot stated twice in Section C. The final two chords, g<sup>9</sup> and B minor appear in Section A (though Section A and the solo lead to different versions of F# chords). The ear can cross-reference the solo's harmonies in part because of the triads'

D<sup>maj7</sup> (bVII) chord, for example, is borrowed from the Mixolydian mode, yet the third chord, G# minor, would be the “proper” mediant chord in *diatonic* E major but can hardly be heard as such. The tritone leap in the bass from D to G# has effectively dissolved the key.

Other details keep the song flowing and ungrounded. The second-inversion chords at the beginning of the first C section soften the tonal shift’s impact while enriching the lyric’s uncertainty: “Please believe me, if you don’t need me.” The brief passages of whole-step movement as seen in Example 4.9 add unusual harmonic hues. Additionally, the restatements of Sections A and C thwart expectation by pointing in alternative directions than their earlier versions. The most jarring transition occurs after the second C section. Its first statement returned to the tranquility of Section A; now C plunges into the final statement of B, whose texture is the song’s thickest and heaviest. The song’s entire form, then, plays a kind of shell game with sectional juxtapositions and their changeable tonal transitions.

“Yes, the River Knows” avoids rootedness most fruitfully, then, through a tonal plan that conveys the lyric’s sense of drifting and ambivalence. A good deal of time is spent away from tonic A major. Example 4.10 clarifies the frequent shifting between and within sections of key centers and/or modes.

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distinctive added tones, which are elemental to the song’s coloring.

Example 4.10: “Yes, the River Knows” sections and tonal centers (Dotted lines indicate meandering progressions)

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Solo</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>B</b>
A---> F#	a-> A	E-> c#	A---> F#	E ---> b	E-> c#	a-> A

The A sections begin in the tonic of A major yet hardly support it. The B sections are solidly in A minor but end with Picardy thirds. The two tonic-to-submediant passages—A and C—take very different harmonic routes. The C sections and the solo make use of E major, but not for their closures. Thus, A major appears at crucial moments in the form, but acts more as a signpost than a sustained tonal underpinning.

The music of “Yes, the River Knows” exemplifies the lyrics’ irresolute poetic content. The narrator is emotionally torn. On the one hand he respects his companion. The critical line “please believe me” signals the trust that is necessary between them. The lines “If you don’t need me / I’m going” beg the question: Does the decision to stay or go (in other words, to live or die) depend on that need? On the other hand, there is the narrator’s allegiance and attraction to the river, with its hushed, seductive appeal. He affirms that, in offering the chance to “breathe under water till the end,” the river knows death.

Finally, the poem’s evocative coinage, drowning in “mystic heated wine,” carries associations steeped in legend. The narrator could simply be planning a good drunk before he dies; or, as he promised himself, *when* he dies it will be by the river, for which the wine is an equally apt metaphor. Hence we have the “old” musical response of Section B, and the twin time-expanding cadences in C# minor. The line “I’m going, but I need a little time” can

be interpreted as a decision already made, no longer hinging on need. If so, then the last chorus carries the narrator's deepest reverence for and acceptance of the river.

As the song's last musical scintilla, the ethereal solo piano echoes Morrison's earlier singing of the title line. Now the voice is finished, the narrator has left (though we can't know how or to where), and the smallest musical gesture remains to summarize one man's conflict and to recollect nature's immensity and magnetism.

### **“Ship Of Fools”**

Insanity in individuals is something rare—but in groups, parties, nations and epochs, it is the rule.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

Issues surrounding madness and sanity fascinated Morrison. This was a man, after all, who included a song called “Go Insane” on his band's early demo tape, and who, in the central section of “The End,” announced that “all the children are insane.” His song “Ship of Fools” (from *Morrison Hotel*) plays on these ideas and demonstrates that his interest in death went beyond the personal and the intimate.<sup>70</sup> While this is a structurally simple song, its social contexts are noteworthy.

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<sup>70</sup> The Doors also performed the song in live shows, where, typically, the form was drawn out. In a concert at Madison Square Garden, for example, the central section is preceded by an organ solo and followed by a guitar solo.

Figure 4.9: “Ship of Fools” formal and lyric design, *Morrison Hotel* version

	Intro [D major]	
0:14	A Verse 1	The human race was dyin’ out No one left to scream and shout People walking on the moon Smog will get you pretty soon
0:35	A Verse 2	Everyone was hangin’ out Hangin’ up and hangin’ down Hangin’ in and holdin’ fast Hope our little world will last
0:58	B (new intro) [D minor to B minor]	Along came Mister Goodtrips Looking for a new ship Come on, people, better climb on board Come on, baby, now we’re going home Ship of fools Ship of fools
1:45	guitar solo [D minor]	
2:00	A Verse 3 [D major]	The human race was dying out No one left to scream and shout People walking on the moon Smog gonna get you pretty soon
2:22	Outro	Ship of fools [x7]  Yeah, climb on board Ship’s gonna leave ya far behind Climb on board Ship of fools [vamp and fade]

Morrison would have been at least acquainted with the age-old allegory of the ship of fools—which dates back to the late Middle Ages—if not specifically with Sebastian

Brant's 1494 book of the same name.<sup>71</sup> Citing scholarship by Hans-Joachim Mähl, Peter Skrine notes that

The problem of the ship's destination is given four possible interpretations: [Brant] is said to describe either a journey to a fool's utopia, a deportation of fools so as to facilitate the restoration of traditional moral order, a voyage of self-discovery whereby folly can be recognized and, in the individual, overcome, or lastly *as warning of the inevitability of ultimate perdition from which only a handful of wise men will be saved.*<sup>72</sup>

Morrison referenced the last of these points by elevating this traditional tale to a planetary level: in an apocalyptic landscape, members of mankind were invited to board the ship and take a "trip" to escape the social and environmental harm sown by the normative or "sane" representatives of humanity and the ensuing catastrophe they will engender.<sup>73</sup> In a sarcastic tone the singer scornfully derides the fools, and the lyrics that achieve this are terse and well crafted.

The subject of mental illness was at the forefront of social thought in the 1960s and mental health questions were addressed in myriad fields of study; Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* (1961), Erving Goffman's *The Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (1961), Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), and Thomas Szasz's *The Myth of Mental Illness* (1961) are among the benchmark texts. Mental health care reform and definitions of mental illness were hotly

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<sup>71</sup> Other rock artists, including the Grateful Dead (1974), Van der Graaf Generator (1978), and Robert Plant (1988), have written songs with the same name.

<sup>72</sup> Peter Skrine, "The Destination of the Ship of Fools: Religious Allegory in Brant's 'Narrenshiff,'" *Modern Language Review* 64, no. 3 (July 1969): 580. Italics added.

<sup>73</sup> Robby Krieger sees a social dimension in the song, calling it "the first example of ecology rock—one more first for the Doors." See *The Doors Box Set* booklet, 30.

debated political issues. No matter whether Morrison was particularly well-read on the subject of mental health, these issues were widely discussed and would have been a backdrop to any exploration of insanity. Morrison *was* a serious student of film, however, and was likely familiar with Philippe de Broca's *King of Hearts* (originally *Le Roi de Coeur*) of 1966, in which the supposedly sane warmongers of World War I were contrasted with the far more humane "lunatics" from the local asylum. A year later, Frederick Wiseman released his documentary *Titicut Follies*, which recorded the horrific treatment of inmates in a hospital for the criminally insane. Though the film received only sporadic distribution, it garnered huge notoriety for containing disturbing subject matter and by being banned in 1968 because of the invasion of patients' privacy. Both films fueled the parlance of the day on questions of "madness."

The juxtaposition of a dark theme and a jovial musical setting is a critical strategy for projecting mordant irony in the song. Example 4.11 shows the beginning of Verse 1, with its call and response construction. The clashing rhythms between the vocal and the syncopated accompaniment speak of the text's turbulence, but the following descending thirds in the organ put a wry cheer on it all. "Ship of Fools," like many songs in this study, features a D major harmonic framework (except in Section B) mixed with numerous blue notes in Morrison's vocal.

Example 4.11: “Ship of Fools” verse (partial)

♩ = 84 Swung eighths

Vocal

*The hum-an race was dy-in' out*

Organ

Kit

*No one left to scream and shout*

The AABA form features an unusually large bridge, much like “Waiting for the Sun.” Verse 1 speaks of a shortsighted and shallow humanity (see Figure 4.9): death appears in the very first line. Screaming and shouting indicate madness, while the landmark first moon landing (having occurred only the year before) is just another folly. The lyric then swerves from the lofty to the quotidian with its mention of smog. Verse 2 sees humanity in a topsy-turvy state, and the speaker concludes that he only wishes well for “our little world.”

At the bridge the song introduces a new twist. The key shifts abruptly from D major in the verses through a new re-intro in D minor, then to B minor and its lengthy tonic pedal. After the first two verses' half cadences, the stasis of B minor in the middle section highlights the narrative's new stage and bolsters the situation's urgency. "Mister Goodtrips" steps in. His exact identity is unknown, but his name—an obvious play on words—suggests that a "journey" on LSD may provide the escape route to a safe haven from the world that has wrought madness. The "new ship" could also, by association, refer to the Biblical character Noah who, with his ark of innocent creatures, proffers salvation from the bleak reality on earth. Finally, the title line reappears in the last verse and confirms that the ostensibly mad fools boarding this ship are actually the sane ones.

Morrison was a social observer who loved voicing his concerns with mockery and sharp wit. His answer to the madness, which he nonetheless takes in stride, is to elude the supposed normalcy by boarding the ship and finding an alternative home and reality. The real ship of fools is the world itself, left behind to perish by its own hand. This song is less hermetic than many of the Doors', but one that speaks to the zeitgeist of the times to which even they were not immune.

## **“Moonlight Drive”**

“Moonlight Drive,” that wacky Waikiki track, the Ur song, the song with which the Doors began. Only children, madmen, visionaries and those in love are permitted to use these primal lullaby words with impunity. Too rich for the blood of mere humans.

—David Dalton, *Mr. Mojo Risin’*

This analysis will close the chapter by considering evolving permutations of “Moonlight Drive,” a song that the Doors changed in significant ways, spanning the breadth of their career. The band transformed several important songs in their repertoire over time, mainly through live performances. While I cannot examine every work that was subjected to major variations, it is instructive to do so in at least one case, for the metamorphic maturation certain songs underwent in the Doors’ hands is a distinguishing aspect of the band’s creative process. Since “Moonlight Drive” is the song that brought them together, and possibly the one with the most iterations, it seems the appropriate choice. The song did not achieve the skyrocketing success of “Light My Fire”; nonetheless it was a mainstay on concert tours and was beloved by the band and fans alike.

Figure 4.10: “Moonlight Drive” formal and lyric design, *Strange Days* version

	Intro	
0:18	Verse 1	Let’s swim to the moon, uh-huh Let’s climb thru the tide Penetrate the evening that the City sleeps to hide Let’s swim out tonight, love, It’s our turn to try Parked beside the ocean On our moonlight drive
0:56	Verse 2	Let’s swim to the moon, uh-huh Let’s climb through the tide Surrender to the waiting worlds that Lap against our side Nothing left open And no time to decide We’ve stepped into a river On our moonlight drive
1:29	Guitar solo	
1:55	Verse 3	Let’s swim to the moon Let’s climb through the tide You reach your hand to hold me But I can’t be your guide Easy I (to) love you as I Watch you glide Falling through wet forests On our moonlight drive
2:32	Outro (in some versions)	C’mon, baby, gonna take a little ride Going down by the ocean side Gonna get real close Get real tight Baby gonna drown tonight Going down, down, down

The song dates to July 1965, when Morrison first sang it to Manzarek on Venice

Beach, as mentioned in Chapter 1; Manzarek later recalled being “ensnared and enfolded”

by the lyrics.<sup>74</sup> The song would become a key piece of the *Strange Days* psychedelic journey two years hence, as well as a favorite in live concerts.<sup>75</sup> Krieger recollected, “The very first rehearsal/get together, we worked up ‘Moonlight Drive.’ It turned out to be a perfect song for my bottleneck guitar style, which Jim had never heard before. He loved it so much that he wanted me to use it on all the songs. That first day went so well that we knew we were a band.”<sup>76</sup> Through its music, but primarily through its lyrics, this song also fits more than one typology: the hallucinogenic, the morbid, and possibly the psychosexual (since John Densmore called it a “psychedelic love song”<sup>77</sup>). This trip is undone, however, by a single couplet at the end, which overturns the dreamy bliss that unfolds through the song.

The Doors reworked the song’s structure in performances over the years—from the early demo tape through both live and alternate studio versions—and they ultimately toggled between two basic versions, plus several others that combine smaller details. I will be examining here eight recorded performances between 1965 and 1970 to trace the evolution of the song’s form, vocal shape, and other musical elements.

The lyric in Figure 4.10 (save for the final outro lines) occurs in all versions, and the form is the first of the two basic versions. It is straightforward, with three verses and a twelve-bar blues solo between the second and third; there are no choruses. The harmony is

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<sup>74</sup> Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 96.

<sup>75</sup> “Moonlight Drive” appeared on the B side of the hit single “Love Me Two Times,” which reached no. 25 on the *Billboard* singles chart in January 1968.

<sup>76</sup> *The Doors Box Set* booklet, 28. In fact, the band had already been working on the song just prior to Krieger’s arrival.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

also simple, with the chords of I–I–V–I supporting the verses' four couplets. The mismatched verbs and nouns in the text foster hallucinogenic imagery that speaks of another reality, while the overriding tone is openly romantic.

Though the imagery is somewhat free-ranging, there is good textual cohesion in this early Morrison effort. The “-ide” phoneme is prominent here, though the verse rhyme scheme is *aaaa* with its slant rhyme of “drive.” The motifs of ocean, river, the tide, and “wet” forests are intertwined, variously, with the actions of swimming, climbing, driving, falling, and so on. Importantly, the words of the outro, taken as a unit, are what I will call the “drown/going down” ending of the song. These concluding lyrics, depending on the version, either appear in full or not at all. There are no partial uses of or variations on them. When present they comprise, therefore, a closing structural element while also having the final thematic word. Thematic closures thus vary between versions that have the “drown/going down” motif and those that do not. The difference, in my opinion, is pivotal, as these final lines give an entirely new meaning to the song. Indeed, it is with these words that the song crosses over from the merely psychedelic to the morbid.

Two main groove types are applied (one or the other) to all versions at hand. I will call these the “boogie” groove and the “march” groove, and the use of one or the other is tied to the song's musical growth. The boogie groove (see Example 4.12) is created mainly through rhythmic and harmonic patterns in the keyboard, though determining its mode is tricky, chiefly because of modal mixture. With a G center, the prevalence of F naturals would indicate Mixolydian, but countering this is the verse's larger harmonic framework

which includes (as mentioned) a solid dominant chord with its F# in the third phrases. Add to that the bass line (shown in the Example) that climbs through both F natural and F# on the fourth beat; to my ears, each pitch manages to harmonically color in its own way, but the F# leaves a stronger impression. Finally, there is the more typical melodic–harmonic divorce between the vocal’s blue notes and the accompaniment. On the whole, I hear the key of G major, though with very strong blues inflections. Example 4.13 shows a spicier subtype of the boogie groove that also features split tones (that is, both major and minor thirds, with ^#4 pressed against ^5). The march groove, as shown in Example 4.14, gets its name from Densmore’s martial style in the kit. When the march groove is chosen by the band, it will always shift at Verse 2 to a standard backbeat.

Example 4.12: “Moonlight Drive” boogie groove and partial Verse 1

♩ = 116-120

The musical score for Example 4.12 is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 116-120. The score consists of four staves:

- Vocal:** A single staff with a bass clef, showing a whole rest in each of the four measures.
- Guitar (concert pitch):** A staff with a treble clef. The first measure is a whole rest. The second measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note G4. The third measure has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4 beamed together. The fourth measure has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4 beamed together.
- Keyboard:** A grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The right hand plays a series of chords: G major (G-B-D), G major (G-B-D), G major (G-B-D), and G major (G-B-D). The left hand plays a bass line: E2, G2, B1, D2, E2, G2, B1, D2, E2, G2, B1, D2, E2, G2, B1, D2.
- Kit:** A staff with a drum clef. The first measure is a whole rest. The second measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note G. The third and fourth measures have a continuous eighth-note pattern: G, B, G, B, G, B, G, B.

Example 4.12, continued

(Verse 1)

Let's swim to the moon, uh-huh

Example 4.13: "Moonlight Drive" boogie groove with split tones

Keyboard

Example 4.14: "Moonlight Drive" march groove

♩ = 108

Vocal

Guitar

Piano

Kit

(2nd time)

Example 4.14, continued

(Verse 1)

Let's swim to the moon, uh-huh

Morrison sings a basic  $\hat{b}3-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  motion in Verses 1 and 2 no matter the recording's time period or style.<sup>78</sup> However, I wish to concentrate on the treatment of vocal shape in Verse 3, which elevates later song versions to a more intense plane. Example 4.15 shows three vocal lines that all begin halfway through Verse 3. Type *a* stays down low, sitting on  $\hat{2}$ , then followed by  $\hat{b}3$  and  $\hat{1}$ . Type *b* leaps to  $\hat{7}$  on the word “easy,” but the octave resolution is frustrated by a finish that proceeds back down through  $\hat{5}$  and then to  $\hat{1}$ . It is type *c* that carries the song to its true high point by melodically climbing from  $\hat{7}$  up to  $\hat{8}$  before either finishing there or dropping to the lower octave.

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<sup>78</sup> In fact, the  $\hat{b}3$  scale degree is often sung so flat that it lies more or less midway between that and  $\hat{2}$ , and the crunch produced by this note combined with the major-key accompaniment is a main coloring agent for the song.

Example 4.15: “Moonlight Drive” three vocal shapes of Verse 3, from three recordings

The image displays three different vocal lineations for the lyrics of "Moonlight Drive". Each lineation is presented on a musical staff with a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a 4/4 time signature. The lyrics are: "Ea-sy I(to) love you as I watch you glide We're fall-ing through wet for-ests On our moon-light drive".

- Lineation a:** Shows a more complex, melodic line with many slurs and ties, including a long slur over "glide— We're".
- Lineation b:** Shows a simpler, more direct line with fewer slurs and ties.
- Lineation c:** Shows a lineation similar to 'b' but with a long slur over "glide" that extends into the next measure.

I will begin with the “Moonlight Drive” version that was recorded for the Doors’ 1965 demo tape. In this version, the general tenor is foggy and very laid back, as Manzarek uses the boogie groove on the piano and Morrison sings vocal shape *a* in Verse 3. The vocal grain colors the easy, druggy narrative, and Densmore plays with brushes instead of sticks. Beyond these factors, this is the only version that does not modulate at the beginning of Verse 2 (all subsequent versions will), and does not have a guitar part—Krieger had not yet joined the band—but instead features a harmonica.<sup>79</sup> It is essential to understand these distinctions at the starting point in the song’s life.

<sup>79</sup> Manzarek’s brother Jim played the harmonica. Jim was a holdout from Ray’s previous band, Rick and the Ravens.

In a version recorded next at World Pacific Studios in August 1966<sup>80</sup> two important changes are implemented: an abrupt modulation from G major to A major between the first two verses and the introduction of the bottleneck guitar. The guitar, the key change, textural thickening, and the addition of a backbeat from Verse 2 onward, will all stay with the song through 1970. The bottleneck furnishes a bluesy feel, and the other gestures boost momentum while constructing an expanding overall shape. The vocal in Verse 3 now employs the more vigorous shape *b*. The vocal at the *beginning* of Verse 3 initiates another new (and thereafter permanent) feature. Instead of staying with  $\text{^b3-^2-^1}$ , as in the demo, the final verse melody now rises with  $\text{^nat3-^4-^5}$  (“Let’s swim to the moon”) and fully fleshes out A major without the blue note. More interesting is whether the verse finishes by either returning to the flat third or leaving the natural third intact, which musically brightens the end of the song. Both of these processes actually occur. By this time Manzarek had acquired his Vox Continental organ and Fender Rhodes keyboard bass, and he used these to play the split-tone boogie groove. The bottleneck guitar is the song’s most obvious psychedelic element. Krieger will toy with different repeated accompanimental patterns through the years and his solos will vary widely in expression.

I will now survey several new steps taken during a performance at the Matrix in San Francisco in 1967 (though it is difficult to determine—because of a scarcity of other early recordings to prove otherwise—if this was their first occurrence).<sup>81</sup> Typical of the Doors, the live setting spurred a very different conception of the song, shown in Figure 4.11, mostly through formal extension and improvisation.

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<sup>80</sup> This version and the demo were released only in 1997, on *The Doors Box Set*.

<sup>81</sup> *Live at the Matrix 1967*, Bright Midnight Archives/Rhino Records R2 516205, CD, 2008.

Figure 4.11: “Moonlight Drive” formal design, *Live at the Matrix 1967* version

	Intro (extended)
0:13	Verse 1
0:49	Verse 2
1:22	Guitar solo
1:46	Verse 3 (vocal shape <i>b</i> )
2:18	Vamping, with “drown/going down,” improvised poetry
4:14	Verse 3 repeat (vocal shape <i>b</i> )
4:47	Vamping, final I chord

First, the drown/going down “false” outro (which is both closure and transition in this case) is introduced to the song’s history and opens a darker direction.<sup>82</sup> Second, improvisation and vamping separate the first “completed” song (that is, the three verses) from a repeat of Verse 3.<sup>83</sup> This Verse 3 repeat begins in a hush then breaks out suddenly at the word “easy,” dramatically sculpting the song.<sup>84</sup> Manzarek again plays the boogie groove on the organ, and Krieger, to the song’s benefit, indulges in one of the weirder solos in this series.

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<sup>82</sup> In this recording, Manzarek does some of his most extensive co-singing with Morrison. During the drown/going down section, Manzarek continues in his own vein with a hypnotic (even ad nauseum) repetition of the words “down” and “sinking.”

<sup>83</sup> The repeat allows an opportunity, of course, for two different vocal shapes, but in this performance, as opposed to later ones, both verse iterations use vocal shape *b*.

<sup>84</sup> Later versions will truncate this verse repeat, starting it at the same “easy.” The explosive feeling is the same.

During the central improvised section, Morrison introduces graphic poetic imagery: “You got fishes for your friends, you got pearls for your eyes, you got water all around you, baby; you’re sinking.” The themes of drowning and going down into the water were striking new developments. But the passage may also foreshadow later live versions where, as I will show below, the plunging into a deep sea takes on broader implications. As the Matrix version illustrates, the tone and force the Doors unleashed in their live performances was very different from that in the studio.

The next three versions under consideration revolve around the album *Strange Days*. A version from late August 1967 was likely an alternate take from those sessions and is comparatively stripped down formally: Verse 1, Verse 2, bottleneck solo, Verse 3, and the drown/going down ending during the fadeout. The boogie groove is used again, and there is a crisper, edgier feel than in previous versions. Moreover, as an exception to all other versions, the song proceeds—one would presume deliberately—with a notable buildup of energy and a speeding up of tempo. Morrison reverts to vocal shape *a* in Verse 3 despite the song’s increasing intensity and his previous use of the more impassioned shape *b*.

I have arrived at the most familiar version of the song, namely the one chosen for inclusion on the *Strange Days* album. The song’s overall feeling here, not surprisingly, is one of consolidation and polish. The form is the same as the just-mentioned version, although the march groove now makes its first appearance, as does the memorable vocal shape *c* in the third verse. Morrison was known and admired for his deep baritone voice, yet when he climbs to the top octave, A4 (the A above middle C) in this version, his powerful,

raspy vocal grain takes the song to an ecstatic height heretofore unknown. We have come a long way from the bluesy cool of the demo tape. And the verse's juxtaposition with the ensuing drown/going down fadeout makes the latter textual element all the more striking, as it has been musically celebrated in the song up to this point. For further effect, the high A4 in the vocal is followed—sung during drown/going down—by the vocal's lowest (and last) note of the song, or E3, thus utilizing text painting at the same time.

Three months later, on December 27, the Doors performed “Moonlight Drive” on *The Jonathan Winters Show*. The instrumental track was pre-recorded—in fact, it was lifted straight from the tapes for the *Strange Days* album—but Morrison sang his vocal live. Instead of singing vocal shape *c*, as he had recently done for the album, he reverted instead to shape *b*. This points to two factors about shape *c*, no matter when it was performed. First, it required Morrison to sing with great exertion at the top of his range, so he had to feel vocally confident. He also had to consider his voice's condition and pace himself when performing a full concert. Second, shape *c* has an unquestionable expressive authority and persuasion that the other shapes lack. Morrison's mood, together with what he had learned from experimentation with shapes *a* and *b*, no doubt affected his choice on a given occasion.

Beginning in 1968, the conception of “Moonlight Drive” took a radical turn, and a second basic version of the song was born. In early concerts the Doors often performed without specific set lists, but later they crafted shows more carefully, not only in terms of song order, but by sometimes conflating two or more songs (for example, setting one inside another) or stringing several together—some of them truncated—into medleys. In this later

version, “Moonlight Drive” was melded with “Horse Latitudes.”<sup>85</sup> The band performed the pairing at numerous venues and concerts including the July 5, 1968, performance at the Hollywood Bowl.<sup>86</sup>

“Horse Latitudes” is an unusual Doors song and it requires a brief exegesis. (The choice to combine it with “Moonlight Drive” is canny due to its ocean setting.) In the definitive version on *Strange Days*, Morrison recites the poem—composed while he was in high school—over an accompaniment of acoustic and electronic noise (including the Moog synthesizer), shrieks and howls, and other evocative musical sounds. There are no beats, melodies, or harmonies. The lyrics are as follows:

When the still sea conspires an armor  
And her sullen and aborted  
Currents breed tiny monsters  
True sailing is dead

Awkward instant  
And the first animal is jettisoned  
Legs furiously pumping  
Their stiff green gallop  
And heads bob up  
Poise  
Delicate  
Pause  
Consent  
In mute nostril agony  
Carefully refined  
And sealed over

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<sup>85</sup> Both songs appeared separately on *Strange Days*, with “Horse Latitudes” coming just *prior* to “Moonlight Drive” in the track order.

<sup>86</sup> “Moonlight Drive” and “Horse Latitudes” were not included on the audio recording of the Hollywood Bowl concert (*Live at the Hollywood Bowl*, Elektra Records 9 60741-1, LP, 1987), whereas the songs do appear in the concert film (*The Doors Collection [Dance on Fire; Live at the Hollywood Bowl; The Soft Parade]*, Universal Studios 20542, DVD, 1999).

Morrison described the poem's inspiration in an interview for *New York Magazine*:

This song is called "Horse Latitudes" because it's about the Doldrums, where sailing ships from Spain would get stuck. In order to lighten the vessel, they had to throw things overboard. Their major cargo was working horses for the New World. And this song is about that moment when the horse is in the air. I imagine it must have been hard to get them over the side. When they got to the edge, they probably started chucking and kicking. And it must have been hell for the men to watch, too. Because horses can swim for a while, but then they lose their strength and just go down ... slowly sink away.<sup>87</sup>

The decision to combine these songs is inspired. "Moonlight Drive" conducts the listener down to unknown depths, the subconscious, or death. It transitions to "Horse Latitudes," which does the same, but where death is certain. In the first song death is actively chosen, while in the second it is forced upon the innocent equines.

The Hollywood Bowl version of "Moonlight Drive" is identical to the studio version (though Morrison sings vocal shape *b* in Verse 3). "Horse Latitudes" follows, takes over, and provides closure. (The songs will have a very different relationship after this.) In the Hollywood Bowl concert, the drown/going down ending after Verse 3 is accompanied by vamping for a short period before Morrison begins his poetic recitation. Another distinctive aspect of this performance is that the musical support begins shifting (starting at the words "tiny monsters") from the "Moonlight Drive" style to a freer, more open accompaniment that is appropriate to the recitation. Once the shift to the new milieu is complete, the instrumentalists have become a live, *tonal* equivalent to the atonal sonic construct on the studio album. The song gradually builds and finishes with a huge climax—loud, dissonant, and cacophonous. The bliss of "Moonlight Drive" is obliterated in favor of chaos and horror.

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<sup>87</sup> Quoted in Richard Goldstein, "The Shaman as Superstar," *New York Magazine*, August 5, 1968, 44–45.

A later live performance of the combination was placed on the album *Alive She Cried*.<sup>88</sup> Here is where “Moonlight Drive” reaches its apotheosis. The form of the song pairing is shown in Figure 4.12.

Figure 4.12: “Moonlight Drive/Horse Latitudes” formal design, *Alive She Cried* version

	“Moonlight Drive” intro (using march groove)
0:30	Verse 1
1:08	Verse 2
1:41	Guitar solo
2:05	Verse 3 (using vocal shape <i>b</i> )
2:46	vamping, “drown/going down” (singing of “Underwaterfall” <sup>89</sup> )
3:42	“Horse Latitudes” recitation
4:37	“Moonlight Drive” Verse 3 repeat (partial, using vocal shape <i>c</i> )
5:06	I–IV–I cadence (held chords)

As the figure shows, “Moonlight Drive” is allowed the last word by bursting back with Verse 3 *after* the conclusion of “Horse Latitudes.” Morrison reenters with “Easy I love you,” and in nearly screaming the lyrics he accentuates the quiet reverie of “Horse Latitudes” located within the now-energized moonlit journey. Note that vocal shape *c* is reserved for

<sup>88</sup> *Alive She Cried* was released in 1983 on LP and again in 1990 on CD (Elektra Records 9 60269-2), but was taken out of print upon its inclusion on the *In Concert* CD set. The liner notes to *Alive She Cried* (the title is taken from a line in “When the Music’s Over”) do not specify concert dates or venues, but list only the years 1968 to 1970 and the cities of Copenhagen, Los Angeles, New York, Detroit, and Boston.

<sup>89</sup> As evidence that Morrison often inserted his own impromptu poetry in live performance, he sings at this point a poem called “Underwaterfall”: “down down down down down deep below / children of the caves will let their / secret fires glow.” See Morrison, *Wilderness*, 108.

the very end, and that the drown/going down idea does *not* return, giving the song's finality a joy that it would otherwise lack. The underwater uncertainty has been addressed. Musical support is also different in this case: whereas it adopted the style and spirit of "Horse Latitudes" at the Hollywood Bowl, now the instruments stay with the "Moonlight Drive" groove through the whole of "Horse Latitudes," keeping the songs in the same musical vein. For those listeners familiar only with the *Strange Days* version of "Horse Latitudes," it is peculiar to hear its non-structured, ametrical accompaniment replaced by a propulsive beat. Morrison delivers the poem in a measured, natural cadence and a matter-of-fact tone. The drama is instead provided by the guitar, which furnishes the occasional panicky horse whinny. The song's finish, also tailored for live performance, is a grand I–IV–I cadence, with each chord being held.<sup>90</sup>

This particular version of "Moonlight Drive," if it can be heard as a single song, is probably the most satisfying in its balance of the planned and the spontaneous. The band sounds energized, Morrison is confident, and Krieger plays his quirkiest solo. The song is now self-possessed, even with the mellow opening verse, and its grander vision is allowed to unfold at a fulfilling pace.

Our last version needs only brief mention. The "Moonlight Drive"–"Horse Latitudes" pairing just described above, from *Alive, She Cried*, was recorded live at New York City's Felt Forum in January 1970. That night, instead of playing the march groove,

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<sup>90</sup> The *Alive, She Cried* version also initiates a subtle harmonic shift that further shapes the evolution of "Moonlight Drive." In earlier chordal alternation, seen in the boogie groove of Example 4.12, the bass root motion was I–V. In the *Alive She Cried* version, however, the root motion has shifted to the rounder I–IV (each chord still lasting half a measure).

which had long been in use, Manzarek chose to revisit the old boogie groove, proving that the original demo tape's salad-days spirit had come full circle.

It is not certain, then, whether the drowning at the conclusion of "Moonlight Drive" is frightening or sublime. Without "Horse Latitudes," the presence of which redefines the song and decisively limns a brief tale of death, we may well wonder whether the moonlight drive's plunging fadeout is merely a step into another, equally blissful Morrisonian reality beyond the present one. Regardless, many listeners would still consider this a morbid scenario. "Moonlight Drive" in its last incarnation is much more than simply an episodic succession; two songs have instead become one. Once it has undergone this series of transformations, fed by lessons learned during live performances, it has become, in essence, an epic song—the subject of the next chapter.

\* \* \*

The psychedelic, the psychosexual, and the morbid or, in their reductive forms, drugs, sex, and death, all represented taboos in the repressive yet fractured American culture of the 1960s. Despite the loosening of mores at this time (and, in part, as a reaction to this phenomenon), conservative views prevailed. Drugs and the psychedelic lifestyle were proscribed, sex was only for married couples, and death, not to mention suicide, was not discussed directly. The Doors were consciously transgressive in their performance tactics, music, and lyrics. By taking on these forbidden themes, they fulfilled a larger purpose, challenging society's staid morality and disrupting public expectation.

## Chapter 5: The Epic Songs

In this chapter I will examine a selection of the Doors' signature songs, namely the lengthy "epic" songs that elicited their extemporizing and trenchant sensibilities on a grand scale. We have already touched upon these kinds of songs in earlier chapters, namely with "Gloria" and the version of "Moonlight Drive" melded with "Horse Latitudes." But, unlike these two examples, there are a number of self-standing epic songs that were cynosures of Doors' concerts, though were quite purposely included on studio albums and, in those situations, were not subject to the ad hoc conditions of live performance. Their statements were very different from the shorter songs and remain an important part of the Doors' repertoire. The widely disseminated studio-recorded epics defined the band for a far greater audience who, once they had heard them, recognized the Doors as improvisational, enigmatic, and theatrical.

The term "epic" has two primary, related meanings. First, it is a drawn-out narrative recounting the adventures or journey—whether metaphorical or literal—of a mythical hero. Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are the classic(al) examples. The term can also be used adjectivally to refer to the qualities of an epic—"grand and heroic, impressive in scope."<sup>1</sup> My epic typology in this chapter describes songs with one or all of these qualities: monumental compositions of long duration, by 1967 rock music standards, in which the sheer extended scope of the setting reflects or magnifies the depth of the lyrics. Conversely, the songs' complex lyrics demand epic settings.

While Chapter 3 addressed songs within standard pop and rock forms which the Doors adapted to a multiplicity of ends, and Chapter 4 investigated songs through their thematic

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<sup>1</sup> *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary: On Historical Principles*, ed. Lesley Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 835.

commonalities and interpreted their text–music relations within these categories, the epic song type investigated in this chapter, arguably, is the Doors’ invention. Their epic songs had a philosophical purpose and a singular musical structure that enabled the Doors to achieve their multivalent objectives, from Morrison’s extended, often disjointed, lyrical narratives to the band’s overarching performative goals. Epic songs that appear on studio albums allowed, in effect, the reverse of the improvised live performance song revision that was discussed in Chapter 4. In the studio, the band could explore and concretize thematic tangents or other Morrisonian poetic conceits in a controlled and thoughtful manner for perpetuity. The musical mastery and the familiarity with each other that the Doors had gained over the years informed the studio versions of these songs;<sup>2</sup> the band probed the hearts of the songs and pushed each other as musicians. The epic songs, whether performed live or in concert, balanced planned or structured elements (verses and choruses, for example) with improvisation—both musical and poetic—on a monumental canvas.

The unfixed meanings, the possible diversity of readings, and, even, the apparent illegibility of Doors songs also come to the fore with the epic structure. Most Doors songs are characterized by some degree of mystery or impenetrability, fostered by their often-incongruent parts and frequent non-linear lyrics, but this is especially true of their epic songs. Their very length allowed time for a larger number of thematic and musical shifts, making the epic songs the Doors’ most enigmatic and defining works.

As Albin Zak points out, the epic rock songs that began blossoming in the mid- to late-1960s were forbears of burgeoning examples to appear in the 1970s. An astonishing

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<sup>2</sup> As John Densmore says of the Doors’ days on the Sunset Strip, “Since we had a kind of bizarre carte blanche to play what we wanted, we began experimenting. The long, jazzy instrumental solos in ‘Light My Fire’ and the stream of consciousness poetry of ‘The End’ were born at the [London] Fog.” See John Densmore, *Riders on the Storm: My Life with Jim Morrison and The Doors* (New York: Dell, 1990), 67.

diversity of musicians arose who experimented with epics, from Led Zeppelin and Queen to David Bowie, Patti Smith, and Billy Joel.<sup>3</sup> Zak also asserts that, other than using jams, epics of the 1960s could be constructed by building up a plethora of verses—Bob Dylan’s “Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands” (from *Blonde on Blonde*, 1966) is a good example. As for jams, the Grateful Dead was well known for this form, but other musicians such as Cream and Jimi Hendrix also used them prominently.<sup>4</sup> The Doors, of course, were not unaware of other groups writing long songs. As pointed out in Chapter 1, for example, John Densmore recalled that “the Stones had done ‘Goin’ Home,’ an eleven-minute cut [from *Aftermath*, 1966] that was attributed to our influence.”<sup>5</sup>

The idea and practice of theater, however, was also central to the Doors’ epic songs and clearly set the group apart. The band, the press, and concert audiences all construed the Doors’ performances as theater.<sup>6</sup> Manzarek was already profoundly absorbed in traditional theater during his undergraduate years in Chicago, long before the Doors had formed: “I wanted to do that, too. I wanted all of it. I was greedy and lustful and deeply desirous of that kind of passion.”<sup>7</sup> Densmore opined in 1968, “Our concerts are totally different from our

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<sup>3</sup> Albin Zak, “Rock and Roll Rhapsody,” in *Expression in Pop-Rock Music*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter Everett (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 345. On the east coast, the Velvet Underground featured “Sister Ray” on their album *White Light/White Heat* in 1968, clocking in at 17:27.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Cream’s double-album *Wheels of Fire* (1968) featured tracks such as “Spoonful” (written by Willie Dixon), clocking in at 16:43, and “Toad” (by Ginger Baker), lasting 16:15.

<sup>5</sup> Densmore, *Riders on the Storm*, 51. Despite Densmore’s familiarity with the Stones’ lengthy opus, his chronology is incorrect. The Doors’ debut album was released some nine months after the Stones’ record.

<sup>6</sup> As outlined in Chapter 1, both Morrison and Manzarek went to UCLA and, while they focused on film, they were both technically in the Theater Arts Department and were constantly exposed to theatrical practice. Moreover, as we know, Morrison in particular remained keenly engaged with theater and performance even after college, most famously with his interest in Antonin Artaud and with the Living Theatre.

<sup>7</sup> Ray Manzarek, *Light My Fire: My Life with the Doors* (New York: Berkley Boulevard Books, 1999), 51.

records. It's theater. You have to see us perform in person."<sup>8</sup> And as Morrison was quoted in the previous chapter, "A Doors concert is a meeting called by us for a special kind of dramatic discussion and entertainment."<sup>9</sup> But it was the press, witnessing the Doors' theatrical inclinations, who underscored that component most emphatically. In *Crawdaddy!* magazine, for example, Paul Williams declared, "The Doors are now the best performers in the country, and if the albums are poetry as well as music, then the stage show is most of all drama, brilliant theater in any sense of the word."<sup>10</sup> *New York Times* critic Mike Jahn commented that "the Doors are very conscious of the relation between rock and pure theater in their act: stances, motions and gestures not often seen in a rock theater."<sup>11</sup> Jahn might have included that the Doors fostered an all-embracing theatrical atmosphere on stage and in the auditorium. The Doors' shows were innovative and noteworthy in part because they presented theatrical rock that encouraged the audience to totally immerse itself in the music and spiritually meld with the band. The boundaries between performers and viewers were diminished, if not demolished. Epic songs were the ideal vehicles for the Doors to accomplish this.

In this chapter I will address two categories of the epic. The first applies to straightforward epic songs, which capture the characteristics outlined above. These stay in roughly the same musically stylistic vein throughout but are realized on a large scale, and

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Andrew Doe and John Tobler, *The Doors in Their Own Words* (London: Omnibus Press, 1988), 46.

<sup>9</sup> See Michael Lydon, "The Doors: Can They Still 'Light My Fire'?", *New York Times*, January 19, 1969, D22.

<sup>10</sup> As quoted in Danny Sugerman, *The Doors: The Illustrated History* (New York: William and Morrow, 1983), 28. One particularly theatrical song in concert was "The Unknown Soldier," in which Morrison—during a continuous snare drum roll—was "shot dead" by the firing squad enacted by Krieger, who pointed his guitar at him like a gun. When Morrison was hit, he dropped to the floor, paused, and then finished the song.

<sup>11</sup> Mike Jahn, "20,000 Hear Doors Give Rock Concert in a Packed Garden," *New York Times*, January 25, 1969, 24.

they often deal with metaphorical themes (at times mixed) that the Doors felt deserved fuller musical settings.

The second encompasses multisongs, which I define as an episodic song characterized by substantial contrastive sectional changes, including those of key, tempo, dynamics, texture, or theme. Not all Doors epic songs are multisongs, but nearly all multisongs are also epic songs, at least in scope.<sup>12</sup> Multisongs, which contain more disparate musical and textual segments than epic songs, raise a number of conceptual issues, which I will touch on below regarding legibility. Can an overarching meaning or message be ascribed to a song that is strung together from random, sometimes unrelated bits of poetry? Or can inchoate textual elements have a subliminal cohesion because they derive from a single songwriter? Regardless, does an investigation into text–music relations (to recall Chapter 2) have value if it only functions on an abstract level? Moreover, there is the matter of legitimacy. Does such a thematically sprawling song still have the same emotional potency or intellectual meaning for the listener as a more unified one? (That is to say, have the Doors’ expressive wishes been fulfilled?) I would propose that no matter what conclusions a listener might reach, the irrational aura that multisongs, in particular, generate, speaks to the psychedelic quality of the lyrics and music—for these are among the Doors’ most psychedelic songs—and simply represents the Doors’ style in its most extreme iteration.

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<sup>12</sup> One obvious epic precedent is the Beatles’ “A Day in the Life” from *Sgt. Pepper* (1967) in which one song—the middle area in E major—is sandwiched within another in G major. A multisong need not be relatively lengthy, though most are certainly longer than the three-minute pop or rock standard. Still, a song can qualify as a multisong even if it has, for example, a three-minute duration *if* sufficient transformations occur during the course of the song. Examples from the Doors include the just-mentioned “The Unknown Soldier” (from *Waiting for the Sun*) and “L’America” (from *L.A. Woman*). Arguably, the preeminent mid-1960s multisong of shorter length was the Beach Boys’ “Good Vibrations” (1966), with a duration of only 3:38.

Of the six songs to be analyzed in this chapter, some fall more neatly into one category than the other, but in fact there are often gray areas between the two types. I will discuss these ambiguities on both formal and thematic grounds. This chapter analyzes six songs: “Riders on the Storm,” the last track on *L.A. Woman*; “L.A. Woman,” which finished the first side of the same LP; “When the Music’s Over,” the closing song on *Strange Days*; “The Soft Parade,” the song that completed the album of the same name; and “The Celebration of the Lizard,” the grandest, though knottiest project the Doors ever attempted, which was ultimately excluded from any studio album—it was, however, captured in live performance, and as a studio-recorded working version that was only released years after they had disbanded; and finally, “The End,” perhaps the consummate Doors song.

With the exception of “L.A. Woman,” each of these epic songs provided closure to entire studio albums, taking the listener to contemplative heights at the end of the album experience. The idea of the LP as an all-inclusive listening journey—especially the singular theme “concept” album—was coming into its own in the mid-1960s. While the Doors’ LPs were not intentionally conceptual, the songs’ collective meaning accrued as the album progressed, if in a more abstracted, interconnected manner than on an actual concept record. Certainly, with the Doors’ releases, each new song on the album deliberately carried the momentum to the final, climactic one.

## “Riders on the Storm”

The concluding number on the Doors’ final studio album, *L.A. Woman*, is an epic song because of its breadth (with a 7:09 duration) and its ancient theme of the rider.<sup>13</sup> The song has a particularly wistful aura for many Doors fans because it provides closure, in fact, to the entire Doors studio canon. The song was released so late in the Doors’ career that they may have only played it once as a live concert piece.<sup>14</sup> The same holds true for all songs on the album. No doubt the band would have regularly included “Riders on the Storm” in their live performances if they had stayed together longer. The song’s prolonged structure and timeless allusions have intrinsic potential for the Doors’ typical elaborations during concerts.

Figure 5.1: “Riders on the Storm” formal and lyric design, *L.A. Woman* version

	Intro	
0:49	Verse 1	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 Riders on the storm

<sup>13</sup> The rider in Morrison’s lyrics could have several referents. He could be the knight in Arthurian legend, the Christian dragon-slayer St. George, or a mythical hero who undertakes herculean labors and conquers evil, such as the Greek epic hero Odysseus, who literally rides out the storms generated by Poseidon and endures twenty years of travails to reach his final goal of home. The Doors’ rider can conceivably shift from one character to another. As we will see, he goes from an unidentified abstract figure, to the rider in a car or the killer of the song’s story, to the rider-narrator, who undergoes a real or imagined road trip with pitfalls, challenges, a heroine, and so on.

<sup>14</sup> To my knowledge, “Riders on the Storm” was performed only during the Doors’ last full concert, in Dallas on December 11, 1970, though it may have been played in the tragic final (though incomplete) concert in New Orleans.

Figure 5.1, continued

1:16	Verse 2	There's a killer on the road His brain is squirming like a toad Take a long holiday Let your children play If you give this man a ride Sweet family will die Killer on the road
1:45	Guitar solo [Uses 12 mm. verse structure]	
2:17	Verse 3	Girl you gotta love your man Girl you gotta love your man Take him by the hand Make him understand The world on you depends Our life will never end Gotta love your man
2:46	Electric Piano solo [52 mm]	
5:04	Verse 4	[Verse 1 repeat]
5:33	Outro/fadeout	Riders on the storm [x4]

“Riders on the Storm” has a very basic structure that could comfortably fit into a 3:30 time frame. The form is strophic (with an interior solo over a lengthy vamp), the verses use the twelve-bar blues pattern, and Morrison does not engage in extemporized poetry in the central section (see Figure 5.1). But the Doors saw something in the theme and in the tone that invited them to use their improvisational talents to provide a larger and more atmospheric canopy. The song could have ended quite traditionally after Verse 3. Instead, the four-verse core was extended through instrumental soloing to expand psychedelic space and experience, as well as to conjure the feeling of a journey, making the song a trip in both

senses of the word. Thus, it functioned doubly as an epic in its length and in its allusive evocation of an odyssey.

Before launching the beat or the groove, the rain and thunder sound effects establish a grim nocturnal mood. The electric piano, which fills out the intro with the kit and bass, supplies a touch of text painting at the end of both the intro and the long solo. Its downward chain of interlocking descending thirds evokes the falling rain. An important part of the song's muted groove is the constant eighth-note walk in the bass guitar, which provides a palpable sense of forward movement.<sup>15</sup> The guitar plays short figures in a very fast vibrato when engaging in call and response with the vocal and when soloing.<sup>16</sup> The vocal imparts loneliness through an almost numb delivery and its limited range contained within the F minor scale degrees  $\hat{b}7$  to  $\hat{4}$  (though it slips up to  $\hat{5}$  in the outro). The accompaniment, however, in one of the song's most evocative strokes, uses a twelve-bar blues pattern (with a modified cadential phrase) but enunciates it in the Dorian mode. The walking bass line, for instance, is shown in Example 5.1.

Example 5.1: "Riders on the Storm": bass line, *L.A. Woman* version



<sup>15</sup> Jerry Scheff, who played the bass guitar for *L.A. Woman*, was also a member of Elvis Presley's TCB Band.

<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, Krieger's guitar timbre recalls that in composer Ennio Morricone's scores for Sergio Leone's contemporaneous violent and morally layered "spaghetti western" films from the 1960s. See, for example, *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964), *For a Few Dollars More* (1965), and *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1966). Indicative, perhaps, of the era's zeitgeist, one is tempted to draw parallels between the films' solitary anti-hero and the lonely, dangerous figure in Verse 2 of the song.

The tonic chord is thus made of small, subtle i–IV undulations. If *L.A. Woman* is widely heard as the band’s most bluesy album, it is nevertheless colored with vestigial hallucinogenic touches, in this case the default psychedelic Dorian mode being effectively tied to a disturbing and unsettled narrative.

Three verses and a repeat of Verse 1 are interspersed with guitar and electric piano solos (the latter played more overtly in Dorian). Each verse has a slightly different rhyme scheme, but there is structural consistency through the last line’s refrain-like recapitulation of the first. Though verses are structured as twelve-bar blues, their third phrases (for example, “Like a dog without a bone”) substitute bVII–bVI–i–i for the traditional chords of v–iv–i–i.<sup>17</sup> RUM is doubled at precisely this point, as if the uttered lines are emanating from the narrator with more urgency. The bVII and bVI chords also are given emphasis through syncopated accents and a temporary suspension of the groove’s walk. Thereafter, the unstructured piano solo plays the most significant role in the song’s musical extension and continues the lyrics’ dark mood.

The song’s theme morphs as it unfolds. Verse 1 speaks to fate’s role in determining human destiny. The next verse introduces death or, more accurately, murder, and relates it terrifyingly to that of innocent children. The killer on the road seems to be stalking nobody in particular; the crossing of his path with that of the family enjoying its holiday, therefore, is another fateful occurrence. In Verse 3, the narrator steps back to speak personally. The woman is the lynchpin to the entire story as well as to life beyond. She signifies comfort, love, salvation, and gives life meaning.

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<sup>17</sup> A IV chord could be substituted for bVI in the bVII–bVI–i–i progression, making the cadence double plagal. Additionally, though v–iv–i–i is the typical twelve-bar minor blues cadence, (major) IV could occur here because of the Dorian 6th.

The lack of choruses in “Riders on the Storm” obviates any chance for commentary. In the overall lyric, the three verses’ order culminates with the narrator addressing his woman as a means of coping. But the verses, in their contradistinction, could also be interpreted in an anti-linear narrative in which they collectively shape a *scenario*. Either way, they abstractly sketch the multifaceted, but interlinked human condition of fate, death, and salvation.<sup>18</sup>

A form featuring a return to the first verse, however, subverts or at least toys with the meaning explored above. The Doors’ renowned extended epics all follow a wandering course into distant psychic spaces (both of time, place, and sensorial experience), but—like jazz numbers that reprise a last restatement of the head theme—conclude their lengthy songs with a final verse (usually a repeat or variation of the first) that reminds the listener of how the piece began. The long journey will end with the message of Verse 1 being juxtaposed—after the central section’s piano solo—with other previous thematic material. Finally, with the first verse’s reprise, there is no answer to the conflict and trauma suggested in the song and the listener is left with a feeling of unresolved malaise.

Once again, with the manifold imagery and mythical narratives the song depicts, Morrison taps into and updates archetypal tropes, transforming them into modern experience. Fate, violence, and love are mingled in the song’s web of surreality through a marriage of terse lyrics and eerie musical components. As the song slowly fades with the

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<sup>18</sup> On the *American Prayer* album, discussed in my Epilogue, the remaining Doors members repurposed the Morrison poem named “The Hitchhiker,” which offered the killer’s perspective, by choosing to set the poem to the original “Riders on the Storm” music underneath. The killer narrates over the phone to an anonymous addressee, “I just got back into town ... I was out in the desert ... I killed someone ... it’s no big deal ... .” This could well have been connected in Morrison’s mind to “Riders on the Storm,” though it was the rest of the band that executed it.

same sounds of the never-ending thunderstorm, the narrator—and Jim Morrison—stroll into oblivion.

### **“When the Music’s Over”**

“When the Music’s Over” holds a pivotal position as the closing tune on the *Strange Days* album. This was the Doors’ most psychedelic album, and they obviously selected this song because its eclectic, free-form associative lyrics, its extended improvised central section, and its tribute to music as the most transcendent art, all embedded in the epic format, embodied the myriad elements woven through the extremely “weird” songs on the rest of the album. It also proved to be one of the Doors’ most durable songs on tour.<sup>19</sup> The tone is again grim and serious (the key is E Dorian), largely due to the spectrum of themes tackled in the song’s central section.

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<sup>19</sup> Live performances of the song were recorded in Boston, Detroit, New York (the Felt Forum), Pittsburgh, Hollywood (the Aquarius Theater), San Francisco (the Matrix), Vancouver, and numerous other locations in the United States, as well as various venues during the Doors’ 1968 European tour. Several bootleg performances of the song are also available. Versions range from roughly ten to twenty minutes in length. Timing differences occur because of solo length, the amount of space (in the form of vamping) between interior sections, and occasional extra solos.

Figure 5.2: “When the Music’s Over” formal and lyric design, *Strange Days* version

	Intro	
1:03	Verse 1	When the music’s over When the music’s over When the music’s over Turn out the lights Turn out the lights Turn out the lights
1:46	Verse 2	[Repeat of 1]
2:19	Chorus	For the music is your special friend Dance on fire as it intends Music is your only friend Until the end Until the end Until the end
2:53	Guitar solo	
4:11	Central section [Beginning of version A]	Cancel my subscription to the resurrection Send my credentials to the house of detention I got some friends inside
4:43		The face in the mirror won’t stop The girl in the window won’t drop A feast of friends alive she cried Waiting for me outside
5:21		Before I sink into the big sleep I want to hear I want to hear The scream of the butterfly
6:07		Come back, baby Back into my arms

Figure 5.2, continued

	Central Section [Beginning of version B]	<p>Something wrong, something not quite right          Something wrong, something not quite right          Something wrong, something not quite right          Touch me baby, all through the night</p> <p>All my world's a torn curtain          All my life's a bright circus          All my mind come tumbling down</p>
6:21		<p>We're getting tired of hangin' around          Waiting around with our                            heads to the ground          I hear a very gentle sound          Very near          Yet very far          Very soft          Very clear          Come today          Come today</p>
7:08		<p>What have they done to the earth?          What have they done to our fair sister?</p> <p>Ravaged and plundered          And ripped her          And bit her          Stuck her with knives          In the side of the dawn          And tied her with fences          And dragged her down</p>
7:38		<p>I hear a very gentle sound          With your ear down to the ground—          We want the world and we want it,          We want the world and we want it now          Now?</p>
8:09		<i>Now!</i>

Figure 5.2, continued

8:29		Persian night, babe! See the light, babe! Save us! Jesus! Save us!
9:41	Verse 3	[Repeat of 1]
10:14	Chorus	[Repeat]

“When the Music’s Over” had a long history, dating back to the Doors’ earliest days in West Hollywood. Manzarek described the band’s fondness for the song and the enthusiasm in preparing to record it for the studio album:

And the last song left to do was “When the Music’s Over.” For this one we would not use a bass player. This one was going to be à la Whisky a Go-Go. Live. Like the first album. ... No overdubs. ... And Jim was very excited. This is the way he loved to record. [The song], however, demanded his presence. It was improvisational. We needed Jim there, to follow him, to weave the music around his words. We couldn’t create the tapestry without him. ... We had played the song virtually every night onstage at the Whisky, and Ondine, and the Scene, and the Fillmore, and the Avalon, and now we were going to put it down on tape. One time for the ages. We were *all* excited.<sup>20</sup>

When it came time to record, the band was adrenalized. But the well-known studio version of the song was not recorded as planned, and would instead be realized partly through serendipity and partly because of the band members’ sheer familiarity with each other’s musicality. Morrison was incapacitated on the scheduled recording day and never came to the studio. To make the best use of time, and because they were simply eager and self-assured, the group proceeded to record the complete instrumental track without him, hoping that a future vocal track would somehow mesh with it. This was an ambitious undertaking

<sup>20</sup> Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 260–61.

given that the final studio version would ultimately last nearly eleven minutes. It was also a difficult task because the central section was free-ranging and highly dependent, as Manzarek suggested, on Morrison's poetic direction and timing. The musical support had to be responsive to the singer's cues from moment to moment. But, the band's intimate knowledge of the song and of Morrison's improvisational tactics gained through repeated live performances guided them when they recorded the track.<sup>21</sup> Morrison surfaced a day later and, when he sang the vocal to the instrumental playback from the previous session, the results coalesced down to the smallest detail. The process's success was a testament to the band's cohesiveness and intuition.

As Chuck Crisafulli observes, the song's meaning transformed over time: "Lyrical themes of personal mortality and the despoiling of the planet became more pronounced as the piece developed further. And the more the Doors played the tune, the more it began to develop a form, until finally the band knew quite well what to expect from Jim's words in the middle section."<sup>22</sup> Despite its multifarious themes, the song is literally and metaphorically about the relationship between music and the narrator's well-being and also can be seen to imbue in music a spiritual dimension.

The song's form is simple, like that of "Riders on the Storm" (Figure 5.2). There are two verses, a chorus, the long central section, and a final verse–chorus repeat. But in this case, the central section is not instrumental (as in "Riders"), but is instead poetic and

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<sup>21</sup> John Densmore stated that, "Fortunately, we'd done this song many times in person, so we could pretty much estimate where the poems would be. ... Ray, Robby, and I sensed that Jim would do his new little vignette, 'The Scream of the Butterfly,' so we left space. The obscure reference to the butterfly came from our most recent New York gig. On a drive past Eighth Avenue and 40th Street, a sleazy part of town, a porno theater had *The Scream of the Butterfly!* blazing across the marquee. If Jim could borrow from William Blake—as in 'End of the Night'—he could also borrow from skin flicks." Densmore, *Riders on the Storm*, 135.

<sup>22</sup> Chuck Crisafulli, *The Doors: When The Music's Over* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2000), 57.

passionate. While seemingly protean, it actually follows a well-plotted theme. Here Morrison spun one of his most personal and wide-ranging chronicles. As Crisafulli indicated, the song underwent changes over time, yet at a certain point two primary interpretations were reached and the central section became relatively uniform, subscribing to one or the other. As will be outlined below, various recordings contain one or the other of these two interpretations.<sup>23</sup>

The compellingly choreographed introduction deserves scrutiny. It telegraphs to the listener that s/he is entering a song of great import and sweep. As Example 5.2 shows (following the studio version), the solo organ begins by playing with open-ended phrasing the progression |:  $i^{7/5}$  (thirdless)<sup>24</sup>–IV<sup>6/4</sup> | i–IV<sup>6/4</sup> :|, immediately establishing the Dorian mode.<sup>25</sup> The kit improvises freely for twenty seconds or so, then drops out. Next, the organ gains in intensity and settles into a rapid hemiola rhythm, *forte*, again with open-ended phrasing. When the tension has built to the breaking point, a heavy fill in the kit launches a tremendous *fortissimo* tonic chord, at which point Morrison screams (sometimes the word “Yeah!”) and the guitar plays its bottom note, E2, and even dips below, all with harsh distortion. The energy thereafter slowly ebbs while Morrison readies to sing Verse 1. To illustrate the Doors’ considerable flexibility in pacing this intro from one performance to another, we can compare timings up to the first explosive *ff* chord, which range from 0:26

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<sup>23</sup> As proof of this, on the day the instrumentalists recorded, Manzarek himself sang all of the lyrics from memory into the other band members’ headphones so as to set up cues and transitions. The hope was that Morrison would follow suit. This meant, too, that when recording “When the Music’s Over” across two days in the studio, the band was consistently playing the song’s central version one way. See Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 260–67.

<sup>24</sup> The  $i^{7/5}$  is given its full flavor, however, by the crunch of  $\wedge\#4$  against  $\wedge5$ , as shown in Example 5.1.

<sup>25</sup> Note how the top voice of the organ,  $\wedge b7-\wedge6-\wedge5-\wedge6(-\wedge b7)$  inverts the far more familiar melodic shape of  $\wedge5-\wedge6-\wedge b7-\wedge6(-\wedge5)$ .

on the studio release to 1:10 in the live Vancouver version (dating from 1970).<sup>26</sup> Further, the timings that mark the beginning of the first verse (that is, the entry of the vocal) range from 1:04—again, on the studio release—to 1:45 at Vancouver.

Example 5.2: “When the Music’s Over” introduction, from *Strange Days*<sup>27</sup>

Organ *staccato*  $\text{♩} = 112$

Kit

(etc.) (0:22) (Figure greatly expanded in Vancouver)

(etc.) *f*

<sup>26</sup> See *Live in Vancouver*, Rhino Records R2 526 291, CD, 2010.

<sup>27</sup> This example shows only the beginning and ending of the Intro. It also highlights the insistent hemiola figure that alone would occupy some 0:38 of the lengthier Vancouver rendition.

Example 5.2, continued

The musical score consists of four staves. The top staff is for the Vocal line, written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It begins with a whole note on G4, marked *port.* (portamento), and is followed by a whole rest. The second staff is for the Guitar, written in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp. It features a melodic line starting on G2, moving up to A2, B2, and C3, with a *ff* (fortissimo) dynamic marking. The third staff is for the Piano, split into two systems. The upper system is in treble clef and shows a series of chords: G major, A major, B major, and C major. The lower system is in bass clef and shows a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes: G2, A2, B2, C3. The bottom staff is for the Drum set, showing a pattern of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, indicating a specific drum sound.

There was also an arresting visual component in concert to the song's opening. Morrison often crouched low, motionless, with his back to the audience and faced Densmore at his kit. As the organ ratcheted the anticipation, the singer remained still, focused, a dynamo ready to explode. Just as the huge chord erupted, Morrison spun around and unleashed the first cry into the microphone.

In a manner similar to some songs in Chapter 3, the opening verses and chorus are normatively positioned formally, but they hardly function traditionally. In fact, in a spoiling of typical formal expectation, their roles are reversed. The verses here contain minimal and extremely concentrated narrative information, using only two poetic lines (each repeated three times). The chorus is formally positioned as it should be, but is labeled as such almost counter-intuitively because it offers more textual information than the verse and has twice as many lines. The verses are also carefully paced (see Example 5.3). The space within the repeated line "when the music's over," whose RUM occupies nine measures with its three poetic lines, is followed by the quickened "turn out the lights," spanning four measures with

the same number of lines. A shift is also sensed from i-IV during the first three lines to a syncopated bVII-i in the last three.

Example 5.3: “When the Music’s Over” verse and beginning of chorus, *Strange Days* version (guitar omitted, organ right hand approximate voicing)

Verse (during repeat only)

Vocal

When the mu - sic's o - ver (Yeah) \_\_\_\_\_ When the

Organ

Kit (rim knock)

mu - sic's o - ver Turn out the lights Turn out the lights Turn out the lights

*f* *cresc.*

Chorus

When the mu - sic is your spe - cial friend

*ff*

An even greater shift occurs at the chorus, where accented staccato chords, one per beat, punctuate the texture. Also in the chorus, just after “Music is your only friend,” the band stops in silence for two whole measures, which particularly impresses the ensuing “Until the end” (also repeated three times) on the listener’s mind.

Since the guitar solo is placed after the first two verses and chorus, one might expect another verse to follow.<sup>28</sup> Instead—as this is an epic song—we reach the sprawling central section, which is highly variegated thematically and dramatically and holds the song’s real story. For purposes of this analysis, I consider the studio version from *Strange Days* to be the definitive text. There are several live versions whose central section lyrics mirror those found on the studio album (referred to as Section A). But a second significant version can be heard on numerous live albums, with the primary difference occurring in the lyrics of the central section (as notated in Figure 5.2 above).<sup>29</sup> I will refer to this as version B.

The relationship between the verse–chorus units and the central section is one of the key questions to consider with “When the Music’s Over,” or with any Doors epic song. Do they relate to each other thematically? Or is the central section self-standing and set off from the structured and sparser verse–chorus units? The stark contrasts between the two elements here are evident. The verses and choruses are terse, codified, and invariant; their three-line repetitions are hypnotic; they speak with conviction. The central section is episodic and advances through varying, even conflicting themes of personal faith, insecurity, ecological concern, and the control of one’s destiny. At the beginning of version B, the narrator is

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<sup>28</sup> The solo is unusual for Doors’ practice in that Krieger double-tracks two discrete, competing lines, both of which are heavily fuzz-toned, as well.

<sup>29</sup> In this second version the central Section Begins with Morrison intoning “Something wrong,” then proceeds to “we’re gettin’ tired.” See *Live in Pittsburgh Civic Arena*, DMC/Bright Midnight Archives/Rhino Records 271548-2, CD, 2008; and *Live at the Matrix 1967*, Bright Midnight Archives/Rhino Records R2 516205, CD, 2008.

especially tortured.<sup>30</sup> The various smaller sections, separated by line breaks in Figure 5.2, sometimes have cohering rhymes and sometimes do not. These smaller sections also have strong hallucinogenic lyrical properties, particularly in version A. Between the extreme poles of insecure self-loathing and the demand for the world, the central section, in short, can be seen as a dialectic between abjection and dominion, between struggle and ecstasy.

“When the Music’s Over” unfolds, then, from its opening statements of personal fact (the verse–chorus unit) to the wide-ranging drama of the narrator’s feelings about the world around him—including what he wishes to do before he dies—and back again to the final verse–chorus, where music is now a restorative to the uncertainty and flux. If, as discussed in Chapter 3, a song’s concluding verse carries additional meanings due to the intermediate material, then the last verse here justifies and restores order after the central section’s turmoil. The final line, “until the *end*,” contains the concluding and counterbalancing orgasmic eruption, and cements the knowledge that despite all hardship and doubt, music carries the narrator to his higher plane. The question of relating the verses’ music to the central section’s turmoil is answered: music is the balm. The song is a paean to music itself. Beyond that, in “When the Music’s Over” music assumes an almost religious quality, with powers to assuage the song’s gamut of troubles, from the intimate to the global. Fortunately we have a studio realization of this epic cataclysmic song, with divergent narrative strains, recorded in two separate moments by the band, and speaking to the Doors’ synchronicity in relishing their collective musical journey.

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<sup>30</sup> Of the song’s three climaxes, the greatest clearly occurs with Morrison’s handling of the “Persian night” stanza. The band is playing at full force and the singer is screaming out on high B4.

## “L.A. Woman”

The city forms—often physically, but inevitably psychically—a circle. A Game. A ring of death with sex at its center. Drive toward outskirts of city suburbs. At the edge discover zones of sophisticated vice and boredom, child prostitution. . . . Diseased specimens in dollar hotels, low boarding houses, bars, pawn shops, burlesques and brothels, in dying arcade which never die, in streets and streets of all-night cinemas.

—Jim Morrison, *The Lords and the New Creatures*

The Doors’ final album, *L.A. Woman*, emerged during a fraught moment in the Doors’ career and is unique within their output. Even as it began taking shape, the Doors faced, in addition to the distressing Miami fallout, another crisis: their longtime producer Paul Rothchild quit over creative and directional differences with the band. Rothchild later recounted about the early rehearsals for the album:

It was dreadful. Wall to wall boredom. Jim wasn’t into it at all. He’d get into his spoiled-brat thing and drag everything down deliberately. . . . I worked my ass off for a week, but it was still just fucking awful. I’d go into them and tell them that, hoping that it would make them angry enough to do something good: “This isn’t rock ‘n’ roll; it’s cocktail lounge music!” I finally said, “Guys, I think the best thing that could happen is for me to leave, because you’ve become too reliant on me to come up with the energy and the ideas and the direction, and I just don’t want to do it anymore. The only way you’ll survive is if you make this record yourself.”<sup>31</sup>

After Rothchild’s exit, audio engineer Bruce Botnick took initiative and suggested that he and the band co-produce the new project, which would be fundamentally different in spirit and execution. In sharp contrast to the laboriously over-produced *The Soft Parade*—and more in line with the fresh energy of the first album—they now wanted the recording process to be spare and simple with as few overdubs as possible. The album’s recording and mixing required only three weeks. According to Densmore, the new album “got us back to our roots. We’d started out in a garage in Venice, California, and we finished up in a

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<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Ben Fong-Torres, *The Doors* (New York: Hyperion, 2006), 196.

rehearsal studio, making *L.A. Woman* quickly, spontaneously, going for the feel.”<sup>32</sup> They also wanted a critical comeback after the tepid reviews for *Morrison Hotel*, which failed to produce a hit single. Perhaps most surprising was Morrison’s own productive and professional demeanor in response to the situation. As Densmore explained, “It turned out that we didn’t need to control Jim in the studio. He knew the reins were slackening, and he responded by taking more responsibility. But we couldn’t have gotten to this place without doing several albums with Rothchild.”<sup>33</sup>

Figure 5.3: “L.A. Woman” formal and lyric design, *L.A. Woman* version (words in boldface coincide with the four bVII–I–bVII–I progressions)

	Intro [A Mixo.]	
1:03	<b>A</b>	Well, I just got into town about an hour ago <sup>34</sup> Took a look around, see which way the wind blow Where the little girls in their Hollywood bungalows Are you a lucky little lady in the city of light Or just another lost angel?
	[bVII–I–bVII–I]	City of <b>night</b> City of night City of night City of night

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in “The Doors: This Way Out—*L.A. Woman*,” *Uncut Magazine* 172 (September 2011): 42.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Fong-Torres, *The Doors*, 199.

<sup>34</sup> Mondegreens, the misinterpretations of homophonically similar phrases, are, of course, common in rock music singing. The opening line of “L.A. Woman,” as shown in the Figure, is by far the most familiar and accepted one (and is included in Sugerman’s *Complete Lyrics*). Morrison, however, slurred the words on the studio album. Other recordings with different sonic clarities—*The Doors Box Set* or the Dallas final-concert bootleg recording, for example—virtually confirm that he actually sang “Well, I took a little downer ’bout an hour ago.” I am indebted to Professor Shaugn O’Donnell for calling this to my attention, and I thank J. Douglas Hollingsworth for identifying the phenomenon’s name.

Figure 5.3, continued

1:39	<b>B</b> Guitar solo [20 mm.]	
2:13	<b>C</b>	L.A. woman, L.A. woman L.A. woman, Sunday afternoon L.A. woman, Sunday afternoon L.A. woman, Sunday afternoon
2:33	[bVII– I– bVII– I]	Drive thru your suburbs Into your <b>blues</b> Into your blues Into your blue, blue, blues Into your blues
2:47	<b>D</b> Piano solo [16 mm.]	
3:20	<b>E</b>       [bVII– I– bVII– I]	I see your hair is burning Hills are filled with fire If they say I never loved you You know they are a liar  Driving down your freeway Midnight alleys roam Cops in cars, the topless bars Never saw a woman So <b>alone</b> So alone So alone So alone  Motel money murder madness Let's change the mood from glad to sadness <sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> This couplet appears in an untitled Morrison poem. See Jim Morrison, *Wilderness: The Lost Writings of Jim Morrison*, Vol. 1 (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 99.

Figure 5.3, continued

4:25	<b>F</b>	[Tempo shift to half speed]
5:02		Mister Mojo risin' [repeated; long accelerando] [also:] Got to keep on risin' [then:] Got the mojo risin' [then:] Goin' right in, right in
6:10	[bIII–IV–I]	[Original tempo]
6:27	<b>A</b>  [bVII– I– bVII– I]	Well, I just got into town about an hour ago Took a look around, see which way the wind blow Where the little girls in their Hollywood bungalows Are you a lucky little lady in the city of light? Or just another lost angel City of <b>night</b> City of night City of night City of night
7:18		L.A. woman, L.A. woman, L.A. woman You're my woman
7:29	<b>Outro/fade</b>	A little L.A. woman, L.A. Woman L.A., L.A. woman, woman L.A. woman, come on [etc.]

*L.A. Woman*, as mentioned, is regarded as the Doors' "blues" album. Several numbers use twelve-bar blues patterns and others use at least the minor blues scale along with an unambiguous blues feel. But "L.A. Woman" does not adhere to blues themes, styles, or feels (see Figure 5.3). Instead, its content is shaped by Morrison's metaphorical impressions of his adopted city. It is a multivalent song that personifies driving—the quintessential Los Angeles activity—and the physical pleasure of sheer momentum, all

within a trippy, poetic reality.<sup>36</sup> The car is a vehicle for travel and observation. We hear Morrison's experience of the urban landscape in its myriad guises: seedy, lonely, and exhilarating. The song also alludes to the interrelated subjects of a woman, sexual climax, and conquest (whether sexual or of the city itself).<sup>37</sup>

As mentioned above, the song closed the A side of the LP, giving the *L.A. Woman* album an unprecedented two epic songs on one disc. The venture was truly collaborative, according to Krieger: "I don't remember how it started but it just kept evolving. Jim made up the words as we went along and the song just grew without the luxury of playing it live on stage. A true group effort."<sup>38</sup> Though Morrison was overweight, drinking heavily, and singing with a thick rasp, he was in fine vocal form for the album and his singing was strong and expressive. The raspy grain, in fact, added a striking color and force not only to the song but also to the entire album's sound.

As the song begins, a short series of sound effects constitutes the most overtly psychedelic moment of the album. The gunning of a car engine is followed by strange hammered dulcimer-like sounds and various electronic swirls; here the scene of driving in the city is set and then developed.<sup>39</sup> The introduction continues with terraced instrumental

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<sup>36</sup> One could say that the song takes place entirely from the interior of an automobile. As Manzarek gushed, "A song about driving madly down the L.A. freeway. . . . You're a beatnik on the road, like Kerouac and Neal Cassady, barreling down the freeway as fast as you can go." Quoted in "The Doors: This Way Out—*L.A. Woman*," 43.

<sup>37</sup> Fong-Torres reports that a woman named Diane Gardiner was having a relationship with Morrison, and that he gave her a number of poems he had recently written. One of these was remarkably similar to the opening lyric of "L.A. Woman." The implication is that Gardiner was another inspiration for Morrison's composition of the song. See Fong-Torres, *The Doors*, 200.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in *The Doors Box Set*, Elektra Records 62123-2, CD, 1997, booklet, 41.

<sup>39</sup> On the 40th Anniversary Mix re-release of the (1971) *L.A. Woman* album, "L.A. Woman" begins with an added, highly distorted snippet of "My Country 'Tis of Thee" on the guitar, which adds about ten seconds to the song.



Example 5.4, continued


The musical score for Example 5.4, continued, features six staves. The top staff is a bass line. The second staff is a vocal line with lyrics "Took a look a-round see which". The third staff is a piano accompaniment with chords. The fourth and fifth staves are a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a piano accompaniment. The sixth staff is a guitar accompaniment with chords and a bass line.

In “L.A. Woman” traditional verse–chorus form is eschewed in favor of a more organic formal layout. The opening stanza serves as a verse, but we never hear this material again until the very end of the song, while everything in between is contrastive. Although this includes stanzas that feature their own music, a steady tonic sonority underscores nearly the entire song. A more spacious sense of form is given the song by the intermittent recalling of the  $bVII-I-bVII-I$  cadence (shown in boldface in Figure 5.3), which constitutes a set of foundational pillars while pronouncedly breaking the pervasiveness of tonic.<sup>41</sup> Two of these complete the outer “verses” mentioned above, and two others are interior.

Even the verses have an unusual asymmetrical construction that highlights certain words and phrases. The vocal in the first three lines ends on  $\wedge 5$ ,  $\wedge 1$ , and  $\wedge 1$ , respectively; a brief sense of intra-stanza closure is the result (and this despite the invariant tonic harmony underneath). But the very next line, the fourth (“Are you a lucky little lady”), begins again

<sup>41</sup> These cadential chords, as mentioned in Figure 5.3, also coincide with important lyrics.

only to finish on  $\hat{5}$ , then set up and emphasize “another lost angel,”<sup>42</sup> followed by the cadential repetition of “city of night.” The rhyme scheme is thus *aaa bcb*, which reinforces the structure’s bifurcation. The listener knows, too, that thematically the city is both light and night.<sup>43</sup>

The joyous guitar solo (Section B) follows this verse and sets up the ensuing text (“L.A. woman, L.A. woman,” Section C), which resembles a refrain even though it is separated from the verse by the solo. Here the second  $bVII-I-bVII-I$  cadence occurs, landing on the word “blues.” The next solo is by the tack piano (Section D), which ushers in the shift to a Latin-jazz style (at “I see your hair,” Section E). This also introduces the hypnotic repeated (truncated clave) rhythm,  $\sharp \frac{4}{4}$  , which is embellished by the instruments.<sup>44</sup>

The kit appropriately reverts to a backbeat at the word “driving” (though the other instruments, in a nice textural gesture, stay with the Latin idea), followed by the third  $bVII-I-bVII-I$  cadence (at the word “alone”). In the conclusion of this passage, Morrison’s alliterative couplet “motel money / murder madness” perfectly sums up the depraved side of the city, and the transition from “glad to sadness” is the cue for the heart of the song to follow.

The presence of a protracted central section in “L.A. Woman” puts it in league with several other epic songs discussed in this study. In the current chapter alone, both “Riders on the Storm” and “When the Music’s Over” have the same basic layout. But the central

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<sup>42</sup> The reference to “angel” has a double meaning and can address a girl, or a Los Angeles denizen, or both.

<sup>43</sup> In the only version recorded live, captured in Dallas, Morrison himself highlights the break in the midst of the verse by inserting a long pause after the third line.

<sup>44</sup> The only evidence of overdubbing is the playing of both electric piano and tack piano by Manzarek.

section of each of these three songs is divergent, having morphed from extended instrumental soloing in the first song, to textual improvising and story telling in the next, to the song at hand, in which structure and lyrics are textually, musically, and conceptually fixed (this, admittedly, because the song was possibly only performed live once, such that the band never had the time to improvise upon it or to change it).<sup>45</sup> Unlike the other two songs, the simpler structure of verse(s)–central section–verse does not apply here. In fact, it is difficult to choose any single moment where a central section would begin, so natural is the unfolding of further stanzas and solos after only a single verse. In that case, the song can be heard as being through-composed up to the point of the final verse repeat. Like the act of driving, the song thus possesses a sense of continual forward movement and avoidance of backtracking.

One could also argue that “L.A. Woman” is a multisong because of the arresting gesture of the abrupt tempo shift to half-speed, which brings the rolling groove to a halt, and because of the marked shift in theme. Here the song enters the passage that could be insinuating a sexual scenario. The superbly controlled *accelerando* that follows (which was Densmore’s brainchild) lasts over a minute, and accompanies the obsessively repeated lyric “Mr. Mojo risin’.” The term *mojo*, meaning sexual prowess and confidence, is a common one in blues music, and the *accelerando* is the perfect stroke of text painting for the idea of “rising” in all its possible connotations. (Morrison added another autobiographical layer to the song, revealing to his band mates during rehearsals that the phrase “Mr. Mojo risin’” is an anagram for “Jim Morrison.”)<sup>46</sup> The song’s (and the narrator’s) climax is realized at the

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<sup>45</sup> Like “Riders on the Storm,” probably the only live performance of “L.A. Woman” took place in Dallas on December 11, 1970.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, Densmore, *Riders on the Storm*, 259.

height of the accelerando sequence, where the original tempo and groove are re-established and Krieger's guitar sings out with exuberance. Most importantly, the crucial part of the climax—evoking pure delirium—is the once-only chord progression of bIII–IV(–I) (four measures per chord) which sounds at the highest pitch level of the song, stated *ff*, acting as a kind of retransition to the final verse statement (labeled A in Figure 5.3) while returning us to the freeway.<sup>47</sup>

The song's lyric is ambivalent and subject to multiple interpretations. Some of the more blatant readings I have already called out in the above discussion. Other views include, for example, that of Yasue Kuwahara, who perceived a religious element in the narration: “‘L.A. Woman’ is the most ominous challenge to God, for Morrison raises himself to the equal of God with one phrase, ‘Mr. Mojo Risin’,’ which refers to his resurrection.”<sup>48</sup> In that case, Morrison rises above the city's degeneracy and is presumably washed clean. If he were ever a part of its dark side from a rock music standpoint, he could now be forgiven. A different possibility for Mr. Mojo—which coincides with my sexual hypothesis—is produced by the savage reiteration of the line “Goin’ right in, right in” toward the end of the accelerando, and would suggest that Morrison is metaphorically penetrating and having sex with the city as a whole. This idea is bolstered by the fact that the accelerando section concludes with the song's towering climax.

“L.A. Woman” is Morrison's “remarkable celebration and indictment” of his adopted city, according to Crisafulli.<sup>49</sup> Much of the song's power comes from combining dark,

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<sup>47</sup> The song's entire harmonic vocabulary, then, consists of I, bIII, IV, and bVII.

<sup>48</sup> Yasue Kuwahara, “Apocalypse Now!: Jim Morrison's Vision of America,” in *The Doors Companion: Four Decades of Commentary*, ed. John M. Rocco (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 101–2.

<sup>49</sup> Crisafulli, *The Doors*, 130.

mournful symbolic subject matter, which can be read variously, with an ebullient musical accompaniment. The reality of Los Angeles's woeful, but tempting underbelly is portrayed along with its indefatigable energy and appeal. The Doors, since their first public exposure, were unquestionably associated with the city and with its psychedelic music scene. "L.A. Woman" is their anthem to the city.

### **"The Soft Parade"**

A quality of ignorance,  
self-deception may be  
necessary to the poet's  
survival.

—Jim Morrison, *Wilderness*

I have already discussed in general terms the Doors' fourth album, *The Soft Parade*, in Chapters 1 and 3. The album's overall elaborate tenor reaches its apex in its closing song and title track, "The Soft Parade," which is one of the most perplexing in the Doors' repertoire. The song is fascinating in large part because of its very juxtaposition of disparate, opaque lyrics and musical styles (hence the serial designations of Sections A through H in Figure 5.4).<sup>50</sup> The stylistic bricolage—in which pauses and *attacca* transitions also influence the large form's ebb and flow—matches the song's great thematic diversity. Paul Rothchild sheds some light on how this diversity came about: "Whenever we got stuck in the studio with a bridge section, I'd ask Jim to get out his notebooks of poetry, and we'd go through them and find a piece that fit rhythmically and conceptually. A lot of the fragments there were just bits of poetry we put together. ["The Soft Parade"] came out kind of interesting, I

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<sup>50</sup> Manzarek describes "The Soft Parade" as a "very unusual four-part suite." My view is that he refers to my Sections A through C as part 1, Section D as part 2, Section E as part 3, and Section F to the end as part 4. I make such inferences chiefly through the strong stylistic differences between these sections. See Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 301.

thought.”<sup>51</sup> “The Soft Parade” is, thus, a multisong in the truest sense, as musical response mirrors thematic morphing.

Figure 5.4: “The Soft Parade” formal and lyric design, *The Soft Parade* version

	<p><b>A</b> [C minor]</p>	<p>I am troubled Immeasurably By your eyes</p> <p>I am struck By the feather Of your soft Reply</p> <p>The sound of glass Speaks quick Disdain</p> <p>And conceals What your eyes fight To explain<sup>52</sup></p>
<p>0:41</p>	<p><b>B</b> [spoken, <i>a cappella</i>]</p>	<p>When I was back there in seminary school There was a person there Who put forth the proposition That you can petition the Lord with prayer Petition the lord with prayer Petition the lord with prayer</p> <p>[screamed] <i>You cannot petition the Lord with prayer</i></p>

<sup>51</sup> Fong-Torres, *The Doors*, 170.

<sup>52</sup> Section A is a stand-alone poem from Morrison’s notebooks. The lineation and capitalization are his, save for the word “of (your soft reply),” which is in lower case. Morrison, *Wilderness*, 61.

Figure 5.4, continued

1:17	<b>C</b> [A minor/ Dorian]	Can you give me sanctuary I must find a place to hide A place for me to hide Can you find me soft asylum I can't make it any more The man is at the door
2:13	<b>D</b> [G minor/ A-flat major]	Peppermint miniskirts, chocolate candy Champion sax and a girl named Sandy  There's only four ways to get unraveled One is to sleep and the other is travel [da da]  One is a bandit up in the hills One is to love your neighbor till His wife gets home
3:03	<b>E</b> [C major]	Catacombs, nursery bones Winter women growing stones Carrying babies to the river  Streets and shoes, avenues Leather riders selling news  The monk bought lunch
3:45	<b>F</b> [jam/ transition; E major]	Ha ha, he bought a little [spoken over new vamp] Yes, he did This is the best part of the trip This is the trip, the best part I really like [etc.] Yeah, I'm proud to be a part of this number

Figure 5.4, continued

4:40	<p><b>G</b> [E major]</p> <p>[jam, 8 mm.]</p>	<p>Successful hills are here to stay          Everything must be this way          Gentle street where people play          Welcome to the soft parade</p> <p>All our lives we sweat and save          Building for a shallow grave          Must be something else we say          Somehow to defend this place          Everything must be this way          Everything must be this way</p>
6:00		<p>The soft parade has now begun          Listen to the engines hum          People out to have some fun          Cobra on my left          Leopard on my right          Deer woman in a silk dress          Girls with beads around their necks          Kiss the hunter of the green vest          Who has wrestled before          With lions in the night</p>
6:43	<p><b>H</b></p>	<p>Outta sight          The lights are getting brighter          The radio is moaning          Calling to the dogs          There are still a few animals          Left out in the yard<sup>53</sup>          But it's getting harder          To describe          Sailors          To the underfed</p>

<sup>53</sup> These four lines are included in a published Morrison poem (untitled). See Morrison, *Wilderness*, 110.

Figure 5.4, continued

7:44	<b>H</b> (continued)	<p>Tropic corridor [intoned]  Tropic treasure  What got us this far  To this mild equator  We need someone or something new<sup>54</sup>  Something else to get us through [sung]</p> <p>Calling on the dogs  Calling on the dogs (But it's getting' harder)  Calling on the dogs  Calling in the dogs  Calling on the dogs  Calling on the dogs</p>
8:21		<p><b>You gotta meet me at the crossroads</b><sup>55</sup>  <i>Too late, baby, too late</i>  Still a few animals out in the yard  <b>Gotta meet me at the edge of town</b>  But it's getting harder  <i>Oh, we're going, we're going great</i>  <i>Having a good time</i>  Tropic corridor  Tropic treasure  <b>Outskirts of the city</b>  What got us this far  To this mild equator?  <i>Outta sight</i>  <i>You and I</i></p>

<sup>54</sup> The end of another Morrison poem called “Horse Latitudes” (which does not contain the lyrics to the song of the same name) reads: “Some people have a hard time / describing sailors to the / undernourished ... Tropic corridor / Tropic Treasure // What got us this far to this / mild equator // Now we need something & someone new / when all else fails / we can whip the horse’s eyes & make them cry & sleep.” See Morrison, *Wilderness*, 95.

<sup>55</sup> In the vamped concluding section of Figure 5.4, lyrics in boldface are heard in the right channel (which continue the “sung” style already in play), italics indicate speaking in the left channel, and normal font represents two additional voices in the center. The utterances nearly all overlap each other.

Figure 5.4, continued

	<p><b>H</b> (continued)</p>	<p><b>You'd better come alone</b> We need something new <i>Better bring your gun</i> Something else to get us through Better come alone And the evening sky <b>Just you and I</b> <i>Tropic corridor</i> <i>Tropic treasure</i> We're gonna have some fun</p>
<p>8:54</p>		<p>When all else fails We can whip the horses' eyes And make them sleep And cry<sup>56</sup></p>

One plausible explanation for the song was offered by Crisafulli: “The extended song—poem, ‘The Soft Parade,’ was named after Jim’s phrase for the varied, and often very odd, stream of humanity that flowed day and night along Sunset Boulevard. Instead of growing from a long, improvisational jam as the others had, the piece was very much a collection of separate parts and sections.”<sup>57</sup> Crisafulli appears to be correct about the soft parade itself, that is, the events in the middle of Section G. The beginning of a three-part Morrison poem in his first book reads: “The soft parade has now begun / on Sunset. / Cars come thundering down / the canyon. / Now is the time & the place. / The cars come rumbling.”<sup>58</sup> Further, in relating the events during a particular night in the studio, Manzarek stated that “Jim wanted to be part of the ‘soft parade’ on sunset; the stream of cars and young people. Young people

<sup>56</sup> See footnote 54.

<sup>57</sup> Crisafulli, *The Doors*, 88–89. John Densmore equates the song with the “peace movement” that was sweeping the United States. See Fong-Torres, *The Doors*, 170.

<sup>58</sup> Jim Morrison, *The Lords and the New Creatures*, (1969; repr., New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 130.

in their soft and luxurious raiment. He was in his element, the American West.”<sup>59</sup> But this hardly accounts for the preceding and subsequent parts of the song, which—in the spirit of a Doors multisong—may be variously interpreted, or may have no overt narrative gist (particularly if, as Rothchild recounted, fragments were culled from Morrison’s writings).

“The Soft Parade” has one of the most muted openings of a Doors song. Morrison timidly sings Section A, accompanied by two (or possibly three) violins playing *pianissimo* with tremolo in a high register.<sup>60</sup> C (natural) minor is used and gives the cadences the so-called modal dominant, which is a somber chord within its harmonic context. Section A in Figure 5.4 is taken from Morrison’s book *Wilderness*. As a self-standing poem it shows good craftsmanship in terms of sound: the consonants “bl” and “m” and “r” in “troubled immeasurably”; the assonances and rhymes in “by/eyes/reply”; the consonants “s,” “k,” and “d” in “The sound of glass / Speaks quick / Disdain”; and the assonances in “eyes fight.” (Eyes are mentioned twice, and the words “soft reply” are followed later in the song by “soft asylum” and “soft parade.”) This is a rare example of a Morrison poem being set to music exactly as published. The passage here seems to find the speaker at his most vulnerable and acts as an emotional baseline against which to measure the song ahead.

After a long pause, the anticlerical rage of Section B is ironically delivered (in free meter, *a cappella*) as though Morrison himself were a fire-and-brimstone preacher. He intones in a deep baritone and is awash in echo. The screaming of the final, heretical line is breathtaking in its bluntness. Another pause follows. Section C is quiet again and the vocal

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<sup>59</sup> Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 209.

<sup>60</sup> Section A was in fact included only on the 40th Anniversary Mix release, but not on the original 1969 release.

is accompanied solely by a harpsichord.<sup>61</sup> The music, in A minor/Dorian, is given special poignancy by a kind of double descending lament figure (see Example 5.5) in the vocal and in the harpsichord’s left hand. The bass line also uses F natural while the vocal insists on the Dorian 6th, or F sharp. Manzarek’s harpsichord style is another reminder of his classical training.

Example 5.5: “The Soft Parade” Section C (beginning)

The musical score for Example 5.5 is set in 4/4 time with a tempo of quarter note = 69. It consists of two systems. The first system features a vocal line in the bass clef and a harpsichord accompaniment in the treble and bass clefs. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "Can you give me sanc - tu - ar - y". The harpsichord part has a right hand with a descending melodic line and a left hand with a steady bass line of eighth notes. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "I must find a place to hide A place for me to hide" and shows the harpsichord accompaniment continuing with similar patterns.

After another pause the song is suddenly flung ahead by Section D, with its quick beat and slippery jazz harmonies (see Example 5.6). The key here shifts to an indefinite one. G minor immediately strikes the ear but, with the upward and downward half-step slips, it could only be a “key” because its chords fall on strong beats; nothing else defines it as a center. The cadences, however, are in A-flat major with added major sevenths and ninths.

<sup>61</sup> Manzarek begins with the mute stop on and removes it for the second verse. Other 1960s bands to use the harpsichord, with its associations of highbrow art music opulence and formality, include Love (with keyboardist Alban “Snoopy” Pfisterer on the album *Da Capo*), the Kinks (with Nicky Hopkins on *Face to Face* and *The Kinks Are the Village Preservation Society*), the Rolling Stones (*Out of Our Heads*), and most famously the Beatles (*Sgt. Pepper*).

When the vocal enters with its melody also in A-flat major, the two “keys” are conflated in a distinctively jazz harmonic language. Many of the vocal’s pitches also coincide with the accompaniment’s chords, but the clashing tones help to furnish quick harmonic crunches. An eight-measure guitar solo persists in the jazzy A-flat vein, but otherwise the two keys and their textural roles battle for supremacy.

Example 5.6: “The Soft Parade” Section D (beginning)

$\text{♩} = 126$

Vocal

Guitar

Organ

Bass

Kit

*Pep - per - mint*

Example 5.6, continued

min - i - skirts choc - o - late can - dy

The final line of Section D, “his wife gets home,” serves as both a winking conclusion to its stanza and as a pivot to the next section. Here the epic becomes truly weird and psychedelic, sounding like a macabre children’s song in C major. The entire section is constructed over an eight-fold, chaconne-like repetition of the passage shown in Example 5.7, all underneath the vocal. A pivot line is used again—“The monk bought lunch”—to set up, *attacca*, the next section.

Example 5.7: “The Soft Parade” Section E (beginning)

$\text{♩} = 120$  Swung eighths

Vocal

Harpsichord *p staccato* *Cat-a-combs*

Bass

Kit (swirled brush on snare drum)

In Section F, the heart of the song—the parade—is finally reached. A new, laid back groove is established, which lasts to the song’s end. We first hear it as a nearly minute-long transition and introduction to Section G. Conga drums join the instruments. Morrison’s spoken “best part of the trip” during the intro has an obvious double meaning, and his pride in being “part of this number” is an interesting divulgence (where he may be stepping out of the narrator’s character). At this point the vocal begins splitting into multiple voices that are located clearly in the left and right channels, and in the center.

Section G, the soft parade itself, is the most musically and thematically cohesive region of the song. There are, however, subtle harmonic intra-stanza differences in the beginning. All G stanzas begin with tonic except for the second one, which starts with the IV chord and uses an alternate progression. This gives it a different psychological profile in the four-part scheme; the listener is hearing an *ABAA* structure. Additionally, the first stanza begins very low in Morrison’s range, whereas “The soft parade has now begun” has him singing an octave higher and with far greater power.<sup>62</sup> The message of Section G is clear: the narrator is enjoying the colorful passersby while reflecting that life is an often-arduous march toward the grave. Animals also begin to appear. At first they stand in for members of the parade and add a trippy dimension. Most lines in Section G are in rhyme schemes, as well. The only line to be repeated—three times at that—is “Everything must be this way,” which may speak to the inevitability of life’s destiny as represented by the endless onward march of the parade’s masses.

Section H continues with the parade groove, but the thematic logic begins to break down again toward Morrison’s more dispersed poetic fancies. The abundant overdubbing of

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<sup>62</sup> A curious instrument enters playing the bass part in the left channel at this point, and might best be described as a basso profundo kazoo.

Morrison's voice(s) is a microcosm of Rothchild's obsession with intricacy and perfection in the recording of *The Soft Parade*. Ironically, the singer had wearied of the overdubbing process during previous studio album sessions, but obviously embraced it with gusto in this case. He likely heard it as the appropriate expressive device for the climax of a song with so many episodes and colors, while the fragmenting technique also mirrored the use of lyrical scraps.

This chapter's epic songs have until now used a single key center. But "The Soft Parade" demonstrates that long songs can easily facilitate the use of progressive tonality. In working with the meandering lyrical theme, the tonal centers here shift from C minor to A minor/Dorian, G minor/Ab major, C major, and lastly E major. The remote harmonic relations only add to the song's kaleidoscopic disposition, and their varying spatial proportions keep the listener off balance tonally. For example, the shift from C minor (in Section A) to A minor/Dorian (in Section C) is widely separated by the spoken-word passage of Section B. Yet the G minor/Ab major key of Section D plunges straight into the C major of Section E, producing a more disorienting effect.

The first five sections of "The Soft Parade" last 3:45 in total, whereas the soft parade and its trailing outro, starting with the introduction in Section F, last 5:55. Clearly the scales are tipped in favor of the latter, even though the song's earlier sections are memorable for their sundry content and styles, along with their sophisticated musical realization. For these reasons the sections are more than just a prelude to the final parade and its concluding disintegration. Keeping in mind my earlier questions regarding such multisongs, is any comprehensive message discernible in "The Soft Parade"? One possibility of this variegated assemblage could be a consideration of existence metamorphosing from misery to happiness

and then to a surreal, uncertain kind of party, the latter advanced by the paradox of the slightly ominous lyrics, yet still carnivalesque music. The narrator at first (Section A) is in turmoil while he addresses, presumably, a loved one. The mood is one of despondency in which his disquiet needs resolution. He rejects religion as a saving grace (Section B) and follows this with a pitiable plea for help (Section C). He then revisits youth (Section D) and a buoyant psychedelic interlude ensues (Section E). Finally, in referencing the jubilant parade, Morrison's autobiography makes an entrance and participates in the Sunset Boulevard festivities. Thereafter the lyrics return to random strands of thought that end the piece. The collage-like multiplicity of ideas brings the song to a peak of intensity but also a fugue state of mind that is, for a passage, bathed in joy.

The whole of "The Soft Parade" is psychedelic in the extreme, regardless of—or perhaps because of—how it was composed. Thematic scrutiny, therefore, remains an open endeavor. My own interpretation is one of several possibilities. Even if all-inclusive meaning is difficult (or impossible) to locate within the text, the song is exceptional for its musical value and vivid notional unpredictability. "The Soft Parade" spotlights the Doors' extempore method of construction as it inscrutably concludes their most eclectic album.

## “Celebration of the Lizard” (and “Not to Touch the Earth”)

Come on, now  
luring the Traveller  
Mighty Voyager  
Curious, into its dark womb  
The graves grinning  
—Jim Morrison, *Wilderness*

“Celebration of the Lizard” was the Doors’ magnum opus and their most impressive song construct, yet it was also a problematic project that never saw full fruition on a studio album during their career; the band did not have the time to develop and finesse it as they had done with their other epics. However, it still fulfills all of the characteristics of an epic song at its utmost. It constitutes the ultimate Doors dramatic spectacle and is the longest saga in the Doors’ oeuvre, clocking at anywhere from fifteen to over seventeen minutes, and this with very little of the usual open-ended soloing. Thus the song could conceivably have occupied one entire side of an LP and, in fact, was planned to do so.<sup>63</sup> The song is a phantasmagorical multi-part drama made of separate numbers strung together, rather than episodic shifts as part of a single larger flow, but the effect is the very same. The non-linear lyrics are resistant to a narrative interpretation, and are better considered as a dream or vision, thereby rendering the whole experience psychedelic or subconscious.

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<sup>63</sup> Fong-Torres, *The Doors*, 129. Few albums produced at this time featured a single song occupying an entire side, which confirms that the Doors presciently explored the larger potentialities of a record side’s twenty-plus minutes. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Love filled the B-side of *Da Capo* (1967) with the nineteen-minute jam called “Revelation.” In the UK, the Small Faces recorded a six-song suite named “Happiness Stan” for the B side of *Ogden’s Nut Gone Flake* (1968). As Albin Zak also discusses, some of the epic songs in the Doors’ wake do the same, including “Close to the Edge” (1972) by Yes, and “Tarkus” (1971) by Emerson, Lake & Palmer. Zak, “Rock and Roll Rhapsody,” 345. Additionally, Mark Spicer has analyzed in detail the mammoth seven-song cycle “Supper’s Ready” by Genesis (1972), which occupies the majority of side two of their *Foxtrot* album. Mark Spicer, “Large-Scale Strategy and Compositional Design in the Early Music of Genesis,” *Expression in Pop-Rock Music*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter Everett (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 313–44.

As Figure 5.5 shows, the “episodes” are now discretely numbered entities, though they unfold as a piece.<sup>64</sup> Transitions between tableaux have as much thematic interest and musical importance as the numbers themselves. I will confine myself in this analysis to more condensed readings of the seven tableaux, with the exception of the fifth, “Not To Touch the Earth,” which the Doors extracted (being satisfactorily polished) and included separately on *Waiting for the Sun*. Finally, the inclusion here of the full lyric is crucial to an understanding of the song.<sup>65</sup>

Morrison wrote a work named after the lizard (though snakes are the song’s reptile of choice) in an obvious play on one of his most conspicuous alter egos. He named himself “the Lizard King” at the end of “Not to Touch the Earth” and the moniker stayed with him. Manzarek tells of the public ramifications: “The press loved it. It was their new hook for him. Jim would now be known as ‘the Lizard King.’ There was ‘the King’—Elvis—and ‘the Lizard King’—Morrison. Easy, neat, a buzz phrase, a no-brainer. Hell, the people loved it, too.”<sup>66</sup> The lizard (often anthropomorphized) is mentioned in some of Morrison’s published poems, as well.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Danny Sugerman uses this same numbered format in his *The Doors: The Complete Lyrics* (New York: Delta, 1991), 172. Since the “song” “Celebration of the Lizard” contains within it seven “songs,” I will refer to the separate inner numbers as “tableaux” (borrowing from Mark Spicer, “Large-Scale Strategy and Compositional Design in the Early Music of Genesis”) to avoid confusion.

<sup>65</sup> Although “Celebration” was *not* included, as mentioned, on the originally released *Waiting for the Sun*—whose LP was packaged in the Doors’ first gatefold sleeve—the band took the unusual step of printing its entire lyric on the inner sleeve nonetheless. At the bottom of the album panel was the inscription “Lyrics to a Theater Composition by the Doors,” and Morrison was listed as author. Moreover, a full-color drawing of a lizard adorned the sleeve’s right panel. With no album music to match with the words, “lyrics” in this case more truthfully became “poetry,” further enhancing Morrison’s stature as a writer.

<sup>66</sup> Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 280.

<sup>67</sup> See for example Morrison, *The Lords and the New Creatures*, 99, 101–2.

As “Celebration” was being rehearsed for inclusion on *Waiting for the Sun*, shorter songs were already shaping the album. Rothchild maintained his high standards in the studio and the tableaux underwent numerous retakes. But “Celebration” was proving difficult to fashion. In his autobiography, Manzarek recalled, “It kept resisting us. Its time for the birthing process was not upon us. The lizard needed a longer gestation in its egg.”<sup>68</sup> Morrison shed light on the piece’s problematic nature in an interview: “It doesn’t work because it wasn’t created spontaneously. It was pieced together on different occasions out of already existing elements rather than having any generative core from which it grew. I still think there’s hope for it.”<sup>69</sup> Morrison also expressed his views within the context of the live version:

I like “The Celebration” [on the *Absolutely Live* album], though it’s not a great version of that piece. But I’m glad we went ahead and put it out, because I doubt if we would have ever put it on a record otherwise because it’s a couple of years old. We tried to do it at the time we were doing *Waiting for the Sun* and it just didn’t seem to make it in the studio, so we used one piece out of it, “Not to Touch the Earth.” If we hadn’t put it on a live album, we would have just shelved it forever. I’m glad that we did it even in the imperfect form in which it exists. It’s better than if we had never done it.<sup>70</sup>

James Riordan and Jerry Prochnicky use the live performances to suggest a different explanation of the work’s challenges:

What the Doors couldn’t do on *Waiting for the Sun* was accomplished via live performance. The sprawling theater piece is too disjointed to easily digest. Although it’s clear why Rothchild and the others felt the music was simply too diverse for the *Waiting for the Sun* album, the disruptive atmosphere of a live recording compensates

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<sup>68</sup> Manzarek, *Light My Fire*, 280.

<sup>69</sup> Jerry Hopkins, “The Rolling Stone Interview: Jim Morrison,” *Rolling Stone*, July 26, 1969, 16.

<sup>70</sup> Quoted in Jerry Hopkins, *The Lizard King: The Essential Jim Morrison* (New York: Fireside Books, 1992), 241.

somehow, resulting in a piece that makes up for its strangeness with moments of great imagination.<sup>71</sup>

It seems odd that a “disruptive [live] atmosphere” would be the key that enabled the Doors to carry out “Celebration” successfully, whereas this trippy, poetry-centered band had already released two epic songs on earlier studio albums. Certainly the full “Celebration” gave trouble because the band and especially Rothchild felt it was unwieldy, not fully formed, and possibly difficult for the listener. It was intended to be epic, but it was longer, more disparate, and it came into being in a wholly different way than “The End” or “When the Music’s Over,” songs with which the band had been familiar for over a year.

The timeline of the work’s evolution may explain a great deal. Rehearsals for *Waiting for the Sun* continued until the band was slated to record in January 1968.<sup>72</sup> At that time the Doors were still struggling with “Celebration” even as they scrambled (per Krieger’s observation of the burdensome “third album syndrome”) to write other tunes for the studio album. The live recordings of “Celebration,” however, all appear later. The song was captured in both the first and second shows at the Aquarius Theater in July 1969 (on the *Live at the Aquarius Theater* albums, released in 2004), in New York in January 1970 (on *the Live in New York* album, released in 2009), and in July 1970 for *Absolutely Live* (released as an LP later that year). There are more live versions but, to complicate matters, some of these are exact duplicates of other releases. For example, the version on *The Doors Box Set* (released October 1997) is the same as that on *Live in New York*, while the version on

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<sup>71</sup> James Riordan and Jerry Prochnicky, *Break on Through: The Life and Death of Jim Morrison* (New York: William Morrow, 1991), 387.

<sup>72</sup> Fong-Torres, *The Doors*, 126.

*Absolutely Live* was taken from the first Aquarius Theater show.<sup>73</sup> Further, a working recording made in the studio during the *Waiting for the Sun* rehearsals was released on the 2003 album *Legacy: Absolute Best*. This same studio version was then duplicated as a bonus track (subtitled “An Experiment/Work in Progress”) on the fortieth anniversary remastered re-release of *Waiting for the Sun* in 2007. I will use this last version for the present analysis. Its duration is 17:10.

This convoluted timeline demonstrates that the band was unable to generate a satisfactory version of their most bizarre work in time for the third album in 1968 and that they were only able to test the song at later dates in live shows. They needed to release the album to remain in the limelight, but the excessive laboring over “Celebration” was hampering that process. Thus the Doors’ earlier process of forging albums with often-performed songs was being reversed, and it clearly was not working. However, the various performances of the song captured in live concerts prove that the band knew it well as a complete entity and was confident performing it. Supporting this, there are only the slightest variations in lyrics and phrase structure between each of the versions. Nonetheless, in remarks to the crowd at the Felt Forum (on the *Live in New York* album), Morrison acknowledged that the band had not yet spent much time with the song: “We’ve got a special treat for you right now. This is a little *tour de force* that we’ve only done a couple times in front of strangers.” The Doors, with their hectic schedule as a touring band, were never able to revisit “Celebration” in the studio and record it to their liking.

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<sup>73</sup> Paul Rothchild commented on the difficulty of assembling material for *Absolutely Live*: “Originally we weren’t going to do a live album at all, but the space between albums got wide there and we had to put it out to sustain interest in their career. You wouldn’t believe what we had to do to make it. I couldn’t get complete takes of the songs, so I’d find myself suddenly cutting from Detroit to Philadelphia in mid-song. There must be 2,000 edits on that album.” There is no mistake, however, that the whole of “Celebration” was recorded at the Aquarius Theater. See Blair Jackson’s interview with Paul Rothchild, *BAM*, July 3, 1981, [http://archives.waiting-for-the-sun.net/Pages/Interviews/OtherInterviews/rothchild\\_bam.html](http://archives.waiting-for-the-sun.net/Pages/Interviews/OtherInterviews/rothchild_bam.html) (accessed September 27, 2011).

Morrison's prolific poetic recitations in "Celebration" have their roots in Beat readings, but he updated them to a psychedelic and at times emotionally frightening realm. If there were such a thing in rock as Expressionist poetry and reading, this would be it. The lyrics are abstruse, but richly descriptive and range wildly in their tone. Morrison alternately sings and speaks throughout, and the accompaniment ranges from hair-trigger responses to more conventional, sustained support, though the latter is often surreal and noise-based. "Celebration," in fact, features the most band-generated noise of any Doors' track. Poetry and music represent the Doors at their experimental edge. The narrative is linear only in the loosest possible sense, and the tenor is disorienting, bizarre, and often disturbing.<sup>74</sup>

Figure 5.5: "Celebration of the Lizard" lyric design, *Live at the Aquarius Theater: The First Performance* version

### **[1. Lions in the Street]**

Lions in the street and roaming  
Dogs in heat, rabid, foaming  
A beast caged in the heart of the city

The body of his mother rotting in the summer ground  
He fled the town  
Went down South and crossed the border  
Left the chaos and disorder  
Back there over his shoulder

One morning he awoke in a green hotel  
With a strange creature groaning beside him  
Sweat oozed from its shiny skin

Is everybody in?  
The ceremony is about to begin.

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<sup>74</sup> We know the names of Morrison's separate poems—and my own tableaux—and how they were formatted from Sugerma's *Complete Lyrics*. But the lyrics varied slightly from one concert to another; thus, those in Figure 5.5—save for "Not To Touch the Earth," which I drew from *Waiting for the Sun*—were transcribed from a single recording.

[Figure 5.5, continued]

## **[2. Wake Up]**

*Wake up!*

You can't remember where it was  
Had this dream stopped?

The snake was pale gold, glazed and shrunken  
We were afraid to touch it  
The sheets were hot dead prisons

And she was beside me, old she's know [*sic*], young  
Her dark red hair, the white soft skin

Now *run* to the mirror in the bathroom  
Look! She's coming in here  
I can't live through each slow century of her moving  
I let my cheek slide down the cool smooth tile  
Feel the good cold stinging blood  
The smooth hissing snakes of rain

## **[3. A Little Game]**

Once I had a little game  
I liked to crawl back in my brain  
I think you know the game I mean  
I mean the game called "Go insane"

Now you should try this little game  
Just close your eyes, forget your name  
Forget the world, forget the people  
And we'll erect a different steeple

This little game is fun to do  
Just close your eyes, no way to lose  
And I'm right here, I'm going too  
Release control, we're breaking through

[Figure 5.5, continued]

**[4. The Hill Dwellers]**

Way back deep into the brain  
Way back past the realm of pain  
Back where there's never any rain

And the rain falls gently on the town  
And over the heads of all of us

And in the labyrinth of streams beneath  
Quiet unearthly presence of  
Nervous hill dwellers in the gentle hills around  
Reptiles abounding  
Fossils, caves, cool air heights

Each house repeats a mold  
Windows rolled  
A beast car locked in against morning  
All now sleeping  
Rugs silent, mirrors vacant  
Dust blind under the beds of lawful couples  
Wound in sheets  
And daughters smug with semen  
Eyes in their nipples

*Wait!* There's been a slaughter here

Don't stop to speak or look around  
Your gloves and fan are on the ground

We're getting out of town  
We're going on the run  
And you're the one I want to come!

**[5. Not to Touch the Earth]** [*Waiting for the Sun* version]

Not to touch the earth, not to see the sun  
Nothing left to do but run, run, run  
Let's run, let's run

House upon the hill, moon is lying still  
Shadows of the trees witnessing the wild breeze  
Come on, baby, run with me  
Let's run

[Figure 5.5, continued]

Run with me, run with me, run with me  
Let's run

The mansion is warm at the top of the hill  
Rich are the rooms and the comforts there  
Red are the arms of luxuriant chairs  
And you won't know a thing till you get inside

Dead president's corpse in the driver's car  
The engine runs on glue and tar  
Come on along, not going very far  
To the east to meet the Czar

Run with me, run with me, run with me  
Let's run

Some outlaws live by the side of a lake  
The minister's daughter's in love with the snake  
Who lives in a well by the side of the road  
Wake up, girl! We're almost home, yeah

We should see the gates by morning  
We should be inside by evening

Sun, sun, sun  
Burn, burn, burn  
Soon, soon, soon  
Moon, moon, moon  
I will get you soon . . . soon . . . soon!

[spoken:]  
I am the Lizard King  
I can do anything

### **[6. Name of the Kingdom]**

We came down the rivers and highways  
We came down from forests and falls  
We came down from Carson and Springfield  
We came down from Phoenix enthralled

[Figure 5.5, continued]

And I can tell you the names of the kingdom  
I can tell you the things that you know  
Listening for a fistful of silence  
Climbing valleys into the shade

### **[7. The Palace of Exile]**

For seven years I dwelt in the loose palace of exile  
Playing strange games with the girls of the island  
Now I have come again to the land of the fair

Brothers and sisters of the pale forest  
Children of night  
Who among you will run with the hunt?

Now night arrives with her purple legion  
Retire now to your tents and to your dreams  
Tomorrow we enter the town of my birth  
I want to be ready

“Lions in the Street” acts as an introduction in the guise of an accompanied poetry reading, and is devoid of any meter or key. The band is seemingly warming up as Morrison speaks, with the guitar and kit noodling freely and the organ hinting occasionally at bVII<sup>5</sup>-I<sup>5</sup> chords in E. The eventual feeling of calm (“Is everybody in? / The ceremony is about to begin”) is utterly shattered by the next song.

“Wake Up!” begins with the eponymous command abruptly screamed and harshly distorted. (It was a favorite Morrison strategy during live shows.) This is the cue for the band to crash in with deep and very dissonant free-rhythm chords. There follows free instrumental improvisation while Morrison speaks the creepy, tactile lyrics. But tension is considerably ratcheted and reaches a climax at “run to the mirror,” with the female character experiencing some kind of personal horror, and the speaker relishing “the good cold stinging

blood.” The end of “Wake Up!” crescendos to sustained noise and disarray, which will contrast sharply with the next section.

“A Little Game” finally establishes a pulse and it pulls us into the main body of the work. In Verse 1, a slow, steady staccato note (C#) in the solo organ underlines Morrison’s repetitive melody—eerie in its sudden lack of expression—describing the game called “Go insane.”<sup>75</sup> Delivered now in the first person, this tableau might be an outgrowth (and result) of surviving or not the preceding surreality, but at the least it indicates a strong new direction and an urgency to get there.<sup>76</sup> Heard as a whole, the tableau is a single intensifying arc into madness. The Doors’ revered climactic form is again in evidence here, with Verses 2 and 3 rising higher in pitch while waxing atonal and weird, until the accompaniment has become utterly dissonant. Much of the song’s temperament is defined by the juxtaposition of musical derangement with Morrison’s delivery of the three tidy quatrains as a kind of anti-nursery rhyme. Finally, one essential question raised by “A Little Game” is whether or not the remainder of “Celebration” is indeed experienced through insanity.

“The Hill Dwellers” instills further rhythmic momentum with a new droning eighth-note riff in the bass keyboard, having the character of a classic pattern found perhaps in 1960s jazz or even a hip Hollywood score.<sup>77</sup> Now Morrison both sings (the stanzas “Way back deep into the brain” and “Each house repeats a mold”) and speaks. The transition to the

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<sup>75</sup> It is telling that “Go Insane” was one of the six songs included on the Doors’ demo tape in 1965 (and was self-standing at that time), as I mentioned in Chapter 1. By incorporating it, the band showed an honest resolve but no doubt scared away numerous potential record labels.

<sup>76</sup> The final words—“breaking through”—strongly suggest a thematic self-reference to “Break On Through (To the Other Side)” from the first album.

<sup>77</sup> The organ’s open fifth, E/B, leads to Morrison’s vocal melody, which strongly outlines the B minor blues scale. The odd result is a fifth-based bitonal clash that adds to the instability of the song. Whether or not Morrison’s choice of pitch level was deliberate or not is unclear, nor does it matter, as the desired expressive effect is achieved.

next tableau begins with “Wait!,” which suddenly halts the beat and introduces two new notions: the speaker now has a partner, and they are going to flee.

“Not to Touch the Earth” is the centerpiece of the saga. As noted, it was the only number from “Celebration” included on *Waiting for the Sun*, and this version will be used only for the present tableau. Since the album was panned by many for its blandness, there is irony in the fact that “Not to Touch the Earth” instantiates one of the most unhinged moments of the Doors’ entire output. One poetic impulse for the song lies in Sir James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*.<sup>78</sup> In a section called “Twixt Heaven and Earth,” Frazer wrote that “two rules—not to touch the earth and not to see the sun—are observed either separately or conjointly by girls at puberty in many parts of the world.”<sup>79</sup> He also stated that “sacred kings or human divinities,” among others, are limited by the same taboos:

The reason why divine personages may neither touch the ground nor see the sun, is, on the one hand, a fear lest their divinity might, at contact with earth or heaven, discharge itself with fatal violence on either; and, on the other an apprehension that the divine being, thus drained of his ethereal virtue, might thereby be incapacitated for the future performance of those magical functions, upon the proper discharge of which the safety of the people and even of the world is believed to hang.<sup>80</sup>

It would only be speculative to trace *The Golden Bough*’s influence through the whole of “Not to Touch the Earth,” but the source certainly served as a springboard for Morrison into madness, and it related well to the “primitive” elements that run throughout “Celebration.” The story itself is mad, psychedelic, and absurd, yet within it the primitivism coexists with mental states of the moment.

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<sup>78</sup> Crisafulli makes the link between these lyrics and *The Golden Bough*. See Crisafulli, *The Doors*, 63–64.

<sup>79</sup> James George Frazer, *The New Golden Bough*, ed. Theodor H. Gaster (1959; repr., New York: S.G. Phillips, 1972), 584.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 587.

The act of running, however, is the most insistent thematic reference in the tableau, and the speaker and his partner appear to be doing so more and more desperately as the experience evolves.<sup>81</sup> Multiple musical elements give the tableau its striking forward momentum: the running eighth-note motto, first stated in the bass, sounds nearly throughout (see Example 5.8); the kit consistently foregoes a backbeat in favor of insistent hammering on each beat; a single, drawn-out crescendo with *accelerando* presses the story's impetus teleologically toward its violent end; and upward key changes increase intensity along the way. We begin in D minor (stanzas one and two) with a first chorus in G minor, then proceed through E minor (stanzas three and four) with a chorus in A minor, and finally reach F minor for the remainder. The stark one-measure silence after the first chorus is doubled in length after the second one, effectively heightening listener expectation.

Example 5.8: "Not to Touch the Earth" motto



impressive realizations of the Doors' beloved climaxing form, and in a decidedly destructive guise.

Even as the cacophony of "Not to Touch the Earth" dissipates, Manzarek has already begun the next tableau, "Name of the Kingdom," which is an introverted waltz in D minor with a simple, repetitive vocal tune, and the theme is one of innocence after the previous terror. Notable features include the first intimation of community ("*We* came down"), the listing of real-life place names, and the sense that an arrival of some kind is imminent. The intensity of "Celebration" has dropped markedly and its peaceful denouement is being prepared. The final tableau, "The Palace of Exile," is a serene, straightforward recitation with only touches of percussion as an accompaniment. Thus the space of "Celebration" becomes immense and quiet; "The Palace of Exile" and the entire work end with the promise of sleep and a true returning to home.

Progressive tonality, as we have seen, is plainly evident in "Celebration," but it is given an added dimension through its entanglement with so much atonality. At the same time, it is mated with a good deal of free rhythm. Figure 5.6 shows the work's tonal plan, in which the entire suite shifts keys along with individual tableaux.

Figure 5.6: “Celebration of the Lizard” tonal plan, *Waiting for the Sun* remastered version, 2007

	“Lions in the Street”	atonal/E center	free rhythm, improvisatory
1:52	“Wake Up”	atonal	free rhythm, improvisatory
3:33	“A Little Game”	C# to atonality <sup>82</sup>	4/4 time
4:47	“The Hill Dwellers”	E + B (minor blues) bimodality	4/4 time
7:58	“Not to Touch the Earth”	D minor → E minor → F minor → atonality	4/4 time
14:36	“Name of the Kingdom”	D minor	3/4 time
16:40	“The Palace of Exile”	[recited, <i>a cappella</i> ]	[tacet]

“Celebration,” because of its ambition and unorthodoxy, is at one end of the Doors’ expressive spectrum, while the truncated single version of “Light My Fire,” because of its enormous popular appeal, is at the other. “Celebration,” in other words, provides an excellent opportunity to gauge the band’s vast stylistic range. As noted by Michael Hicks (in Chapter 3), there was great irony in “Light My Fire” becoming a huge hit: it blanketed the lucrative pop-market airwaves, exposing and attracting many listeners who might not otherwise have cared for the “psychedelic” Doors. Only the most passionate of the Doors’ fans, however, would have a taste for a colossus such as “Celebration.”

In terms of a multisong, “Celebration of the Lizard” may have a clearer journey than that of, say, “The Soft Parade.” Thematically, broadly writ, the song descends downward

<sup>82</sup> The C# that begins “A Little Game” here was especially subject to change from one live show to another. Along with this, Morrison often sang his vocal far off-key, in keeping with the tableau’s theme of madness.

and inward toward states of insanity, the primitive and the atavistic, the nightmarish, the recuperative, and then ascends to the god-like self-discovery of the speaker, when bliss is found. But the demands on the listener, even on die-hard Doors fans, are indeed formidable, and the song pushes hard against the stylistic boundaries of rock music. For those who were moved, however, by Morrison's poetic inclinations, "Celebration" was proof positive of his most sweeping vision as a songwriter.

### **"The End"**

Forty-five years after its inception, "The End" remains the Doors' thematic and musical manifesto. While "Light My Fire" may be their emblematic hit, "The End" represents the band at its darkest and is a far more metaphysical odyssey. Like the other epic songs in this chapter, it features their favored verse–open improvisation–verse form, a lugubrious tone, changeable structural terrain, parabolic theme and story telling, and instrumental virtuosity. The listener takes a riveting psychedelic journey through one of Morrison's most cryptic and multivalent narratives, but with "The End" the question that looms is: The end of what? The song was initially about the parting of two lovers. Morrison's own view of the work, however, was subject to change: "Every time I hear that song, it means something else to me. I really don't know what I was trying to say. It just started out as a simple good-bye song. Probably just a girl, but I see how it could be a good-bye to a kind of childhood. I really don't know. I think it's sufficiently complex and universal in its imagery that it could be almost anything you want it to be."<sup>83</sup> Yet he also had this to say: "'The End' is about three

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<sup>83</sup> Hopkins, "The Rolling Stone Interview: Jim Morrison," 16. Rothchild concurred: "'The End' was always a changing piece. Jim used it as an open canvas for his poetic bits and pieces and fragments and images and little couplets and things that he just wanted to say." Quoted in Paul Williams, *Outlaw Blues: A Book of Rock Music* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1969), 102.

things: sex, death, travel ... the theme is the same as in ‘Light My Fire,’ liberation from the cycle of birth-orgasm-death.”<sup>84</sup> Once again the allusion to a journey is seemingly melded with that of a drug trip.

Figure 5.7: “The End” formal and lyric design, *The Doors* version

	<b>Intro</b>	
0:53	<b>Verse</b>	This is the end, beautiful friend This is the end, my only friend The end of our elaborate plans The end of everything that stands The end, no safety or surprise The end I’ll never look into your eyes Again
1:42		Can you picture what will be So limitless and free Desperately in need of some stranger’s hand In a desperate land
2:12	Guitar solo, 16 mm.	
2:52	<b>Central Section</b> 27 mm.	Lost in a Roman wilderness of pain And all the children are insane All the children are insane Waiting for the summer rain
3:52	17 mm.	There’s danger on the edge of town Ride the King’s highway Weird scenes inside the gold mine Ride the highway West, baby

<sup>84</sup> Quoted in Riordan and Prochnicky, *Break on Through*, 131.

Figure 5.7, continued

4:29	21 mm.	<p>Ride the snake  Ride the snake  To the lake, the ancient lake, baby  The snake is long, seven miles  Ride the snake  He's old, and his skin is cold</p>
5:15	30 mm.	<p>The West is the best  The West is the best  Get here and we'll do the rest</p> <p>The blue bus is calling us  The blue bus is calling us  Driver, where you taking us?</p>
6:23	48 mm.	<p>[spoken]  The killer awoke before dawn  He put his boots on  He took a face from the                      ancient gallery  And he walked on down the hall</p> <p>He went into the room where his                      sister lived  And then he paid a visit to his brother  And then he walked on down the hall</p> <p>And he came to a door  And he looked inside  "Father?"  "Yes, son?"  "I want to kill you."  "Mother, I want to ... [scream]"</p>

Figure 5.7, continued

8:07	16 mm.	<p>Come on, baby, take a chance with us          Come on, baby, take a chance with us          Come on, baby, take a chance with us          And meet me at the back of the              blue bus          Doin' a blue rock          On a blue bus          Doin' a blue rock          Come on, yeah</p>
8:41	Instrumental <i>accelerando</i> , ca. 44 mm.	
9:53	Sustained ametric accompanimental noise, <i>ff</i>	<p>Kill          Kill          Kill          Kill          Kill          Kill</p>
10:12	Re-intro, <i>tempo primo</i>	
10:26	<b>Verse</b>	<p>This is the end, beautiful friend          This is the end, my only friend          The end</p> <p>It hurts to set you free          But you'll never follow me</p> <p>The end of laughter and soft lies          The end of nights we tried to die</p> <p>This is the end</p>

“The End” dated from the Doors’ early club gigs, and its musical character and theme mutated as the band experimented with it. As Ray Manzarek recounted, “‘The End’ was originally a short three minute love song but it became over eleven minutes long as we improvised on it at the London Fog on the Sunset Strip in March and April of 1966.”<sup>85</sup> The band knew the song intimately and performed it frequently on the road for the remainder of their career. Figure 5.6 shows the most recognized version of the lyric, that which closes their debut album (its timing is 11:41).<sup>86</sup> Emerging this early in their discography (and as the first of their epics), the song contributed significantly to the Doors nascent transgressive and rebellious ethos. As the Doors’ career flourished and the song proved its mesmerizing powers, Morrison regarded it more profoundly and wished the audience to immerse itself in the song’s experiential dimension and transcendent atmosphere. On certain live recordings the hushed opening is prolonged enough for the crowd noise to subside so that the band could perform the song as intended. The frequently improvised intro music might consist only of wind chimes, hardly an attention-getting device in a large hall full of stoned rock fans. At times, when silence did not arrive quickly enough, Morrison would vocally vent his frustrations on the crowd and urge them to settle down and tune in to the song’s materializing vibe. He clearly wished to convey the song’s mysticism and move well beyond the expected loud and declamatory rock song.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Quoted in *The Doors Box Set* booklet, 34.

<sup>86</sup> The lyric to “The End” also appears in Jim Morrison, *The American Night: The Lost Writings*, Vol. 2 (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 111–13.

<sup>87</sup> The famous “Hey, Mr. Light Man” incident occurred at the Hollywood Bowl show, where the stage lighting was too bright for Morrison’s taste as the band began “The End.” He implored the technicians several times to lower the lights, and had the audience agreeing.

Robby Krieger recounted, “‘The End’ was [Morrison’s] favorite song on acid.”<sup>88</sup> Indeed, LSD figures heavily into the history of the song, especially in its crucial incarnations at the Whisky and in the recording of the first album. One of the Doors’ most infamous moments occurred while they were still playing at the Whisky. On August 21, 1966, Morrison failed to show up for the first set of their usual gig. Manzarek and Densmore found him in his apartment under the influence of a huge quantity of the drug. They took him back to the club, where he put on a mediocre performance during the early part of the second set. But then the band came to “The End.” As noted, the song always had a fluid and unpredictable history, but nobody was prepared for the vulgarized Oedipal recitation that Morrison invented for the central section. At its climax, Morrison recited: “Father / Yes, son? / I want to kill you / Mother, I want to fuck you.” The last words were screamed. The Whisky’s owner, Elmer Valentine, fired the band in an apoplectic fit.<sup>89</sup>

LSD was also a factor when the song was recorded for the first album. According to his band mates, the better part of a day slated for studio work on “The End” was wasted because Morrison was too high to function. Only part of the song was recorded. But the next day he was clear-headed and, evidently, the session proved extraordinary.<sup>90</sup> Rothchild, in his extensive experience as a producer, was awestruck by the moment: “I have never been as moved in a recording studio as I was when that take went down. I was impressed by the fact that for one of the very first times in rock-and-roll history, sheer drama had taken place on tape. This to me is very important, and it’s also significant that Jim chose to use a purely

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<sup>88</sup> Fong-Torres, *The Doors*, 58.

<sup>89</sup> On the debut album, as can be seen from Figure 5.7, the climactic obscenity was replaced with an anguished shriek in order to avoid censorship.

<sup>90</sup> Rothchild reported that, in assembling the final studio version of the song, its first half was taken from the first session and spliced with the second half of the second day. Fong-Torres, *The Doors*, 71.

classical image, in modern dress, to do this.”<sup>91</sup> Audio engineer Bruce Botnick witnessed another facet of the experience:

In the middle of “The End,” they were really doing a very magical performance, the kind that you pray for, and that’s when Jim kind of went sideways and I didn’t know why. He went across to the Catholic church on Sunset, Blessed Sacrament. And he peaked on acid and he had some kind of revelation. We did two takes of “The End.” One of them is where the acid started peaking. He had these vespers and he started reading from it and tearing it up and got into “Kill the father, fuck the mother.” I figured it was part of the thing, because I had not heard the music before they recorded it.

In all of the literature on the creation of “The End,” little or nothing is mentioned about this religious component factoring into—or being jettisoned from—the song’s mythic tale loosely drawn from Morrison’s personal experiences.

When the debut album was released in January 1967, “The End” in particular captivated the press. Critic Richard Goldstein, writing in *New York Magazine*, was euphoric.

“The End” is eleven and one-half minutes of solid song. Its hints of sitar and tabla and its faint aroma of raga counterpoint are balanced by a sturdy blues foundation. Anyone who disputes the concept of rock literature had better listen long and hard to this song. This is Joycean pop with a stream-of-consciousness lyric in which images are strung together by association. “The End” builds to a realization of mood rather than a sequence of events. It is also the first pop song in my memory to deal directly with the Oedipus complex. “The End” begins with visions of collapsing peace and harmony, and ends with violent death.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Quoted in Williams, *Outlaw Blues*, 105.

<sup>92</sup> Richard Goldstein, “The Doors Wide Open,” as quoted in Sugeran, *The Doors: The Illustrated History*, 21. Goldstein is the critic who famously, and almost solely, issued a negative review of the Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper* album shortly after its release. See Richard Goldstein, “We Still Need the Beatles, but...,” *New York Times*, June 18, 1967, 104.

Morrison also was gaining fame as a poet. *Vogue* magazine enthused, “The Doors play at their best in ‘The End’ ... with words by Jim Morrison writing as if Edgar Allan Poe had blown back as a hippie.”<sup>93</sup>

The broad layout of “The End” has much in common with other epic forms examined in this chapter, most notably “When the Music’s Over,” “The Soft Parade,” and “Celebration of the Lizard”: disparate lyric themes are explored within a single number and either need to be reconciled or accepted as a flow of ideas that yield an idiosyncratic whole. In this context, “The End” meshes two basic but very divergent thematic components: the verses’ elegiac love and farewell song, and the trippy, roaming, and violent central section.

In Chapter 3, several songs demonstrated how the Doors often constructed their grooves in a terraced manner during intros. The opening of “The End” augments this technique with an opening that coalesces more slowly, organically, and mysteriously. There follows a single two-part verse (a modified and condensed version of which will be heard at the song’s very end). Between these pillars the substantial central section is enacted with a brief guitar solo and several stanzas of hallucinogenic and seemingly random visions which are either sung or recited by Morrison.

The intro materializes with a lone sitar-like guitar (using a dropped D tuning) that gradually fashions small, varied repeated figures around a D center.<sup>94</sup> The beat emerges with Densmore’s pedaling of a high-hat backbeat while executing a continuous tambourine roll; it hisses like a snake, a creature that will become a key metaphor in the song’s central section.

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<sup>93</sup> Kurt Von Meier, “Love, Mysticism, and the Hippies,” *Vogue*, November 1967, 85.

<sup>94</sup> Crisafulli reports that “Robby Krieger was interested in Eastern music and philosophy—he studied sitar and sarod at UCLA and at Ravi Shankar’s Kinnara School. This influenced the music he created on songs like ‘The End.’” See Crisafulli, *The Doors*, 37.

The bass voice enters soon after. The D Dorian mode undergirds “The End,” though the thirdless tonic chord drones for huge swaths of the song. Other than the intensifying stanza of “Come on, baby, take a chance with us,” which is thick with F-naturals, it is remarkable how studiously Manzarek and Krieger avoid the chord’s third; Morrison sings it only slightly more often. The prevalent open-fifth sound is concomitant with the song’s atmosphere and color: hollow, hovering, emotionally unresolved, and certainly psychedelic.<sup>95</sup> There is a slight twist on the Dorian mode, however, and it begins straightway in the intro. Here Krieger’s open fifths gradually incorporate teasing flashes of both F-natural and F# (see Examples 5.9a and 5.9b; as the arpeggio figure suggests, both C-natural and C# will be heard, as well). These two figures not only plant the song’s harmonic seeds but will also appear with enough frequency—especially the D–C#–D cell—to qualify as motives. Thus an unsettled tonal experience can easily result in “The End,” with the listener absorbed in copious D/A droning and, only in glimpses, both major and minor qualities.

Example 5.9a: “The End” opening guitar figure, *The Doors* version



Example 5.9b: “The End” guitar arpeggio



<sup>95</sup> The open fifths of “The End,” possessing less personality than major or minor triads, could easily induce Michael Hicks’ notion of depersonalization, as discussed in Chapter 3,

The verse parts pair together in substitution for a verse–chorus unit. The verse’s first part is to a good extent made psychedelic through clever phrase rhythm and halting breaks in the vocal’s flow (Example 5.10). “This is the end, beautiful friend” is allowed a conventional four measures, whereas its next statement is interrupted after three measures by a series of 3/2 and 2/2 alternations. This unusual metric cycling creates a trippy, floating sensation by avoiding a more regularizing duple meter or any graspable phrase rhythm. At the same time, it is combined with new double plagal harmonic movement underneath, where the thirdless tonic chords are juxtaposed with fully triadic bVII and IV chords. Harmony, for the first time in the song, is enriched and given rhythm.

Example 5.10: “The End” verse (part one) structure and lyrics

♩ = 50

Vocal

*This is the end*      *beau-ti-ful friend* —      *This is the end*      *my on-ly*

D: I5                      bVII                      I5                      I5                      bVII

*friend The end*      *of our e-lab-'rate plans The end*      *of ev-'ry-thing that stands The end,*

I5                      bVII      IV                      I5                      bVII      IV                      I5

*no safe-ty or sur-prise The end*      *I'll ne-ver look in-to your eyes*      *A-gain*

bVII      IV                      I5                      bVII                      I5

The verse’s second part (Example 5.11, starting with “Can you picture”), in envisioning what “the end” will bring, incrementally enhances formal intensity and forward motion through several subtle gestures. The bVII and IV chords are familiar from earlier

usage but now alternate with each other and are separated by the I<sup>5</sup> chord. Duple meter is unbroken (though the phrase grouping is four plus six measures). The vocal climbs higher while expressive melodic–harmonic divorce becomes more pronounced. Finally, the vocal breaks from its earlier 3/2–2/2 patterned contours to outline a freer melody which, in turn, supports the more hopeful text.

Example 5.11: “The End” verse (part two) structure and lyrics

The image shows two staves of music in bass clef, 2/2 time. The first staff contains the lyrics: "Can you pic-ture what will be So lim-it-less and free des-perate-ly in—". Below the staff are the chord symbols: D, bVII, I5, IV, I5, bVII. The second staff contains the lyrics: "need of a stran-ger's hand in a des-perateland". Below the staff are the chord symbols: I5, IV, I5, bVII, I5.

The central section, as with other epics discussed in this chapter, pulls the song into the irrational subconscious. The several successive stanzas, separated by pauses, now unfold in random durations (shown in Figure 5.6) to reflect the organically shifting nature of themes and to induce elasticity in the listener’s sense of time. Contributing to the song’s fluctuating landscape, some stanzas are followed by tranquil instrumental transitions while others are punctuated by small outbursts. The two climaxes—in the Oedipal tale and particularly at the accelerando’s noisy peak (“kill, kill”)—are both dark and disturbing, calling forth sex and death, while the scenarios before and after these are disorienting in their lack of thematic relationship or narrative quality. Moments that stand out include

insane children, a phallic snake, and a twice-mentioned bus (yet another facilitator of a journey).<sup>96</sup>

The Oedipal passage, however, is the song's *coup de théâtre*. True, it exists as just one in a psychedelic series of narrative stanzas and scenarios. Yet it is also self-contained. It has an intelligible story (the only example in the central section) and a clear teleological shape. When he updated the myth, Morrison made two salient changes, which possibly resonated with his own autobiography. The first is literary: he cast the protagonist as a killer, whereas Oedipus was a beloved king; and he introduced a sister and a brother, though in the myth Oedipus had no siblings. The latter could refer to his own two siblings, Anne (b. 1947) and Andrew (b. 1948). However, the killer is the focus of the passage. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Morrison spoke of a "killer on the road" (in "Riders on the Storm"), a character that appeared at the opposite end of the Doors' career. Morrison's killers are never depicted in the act of murder. Instead, the identity of the killer is simply a segment of these characters' more complex personae. In the worlds Morrison crafted they are orphic agents of darkness. The killer in "The End" is particularly vile because he premeditates the murder of the father. But while Morrison's own negative feelings toward his father are well known, the question regarding the song's mother is left open. One can surmise from the chanting of "kill, kill" that the murder has occurred, but does an unspoken encounter with the mother transpire as well? The listener is never told, though for some the answer would lie in the music's horror.

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<sup>96</sup> Melissa Goldsmith provides an explanation for the "blue bus": "The Big Blue Bus was ... frequented by many college students who needed to get to the UCLA campus from locations in Santa Monica and West Los Angeles. Other lines from 'The End' like 'ride the highway west, baby' and 'the West is the best' both precede 'the blue bus is calling us' and 'meet me at the back of the blue bus,' also satisfied the regional pride of Doors fans from Los Angeles." Melissa Goldsmith, "Criticism *Lighting His Fire*: Perspectives on Jim Morrison from the *Los Angeles Free Press*, *Down Beat*, and the *Miami Herald*" (M.A. thesis, Louisiana State University, 2007), 30.

The final verse (see Example 5.12), begins like the opening one yet morphs to provide slowing and closure through simplification of harmony (the near-exclusive use of tonic), the vocal's lengthening note values and pauses, and new, conclusive lyrics. After the first four measures, phrases and phrase rhythm are nearly impossible to codify, contributing to the sense of unraveling and cessation. The accompaniment plays at a whisper, and the song dies out with the very last word.

Example 5.12: “The End” concluding verse structure and lyrics

*This is the end*      *beau-ti-ful friend-*      *This is the end*      *my on-ly*  
 D: I5                      bVII                      I5                      I5                      bVII

*friend The end*      *It hurts to set you free-*      *But you'll ne-ver fol-low me-*  
 I5 (to the end)

*The end of laugh-ter and soft lies*      *The end of nights we tried to*

*die*                      *This is the end—*  
 rit.

I will conclude this analysis with a brief look at some of the changes made to “The End” in live performances. Each had a slightly different theatrical hue prompted by Morrison’s poetic whimsy of the moment. The vamping between sections, combined with Morrison’s lyrical forays, could swell the song to some twenty minutes in length. As has been amply established, modifications to songs during concerts were common for the other

band members, who embraced unforeseen twists and turns. In the performance recorded on *Live in Detroit*, for example, the lyrics were liberally altered, and in the central section the Oedipal drama was completely excised and replaced with other words. The band also launched midway into the “Wake Up!” tableau from “Celebration of the Lizard.” On *The Doors Box Set* recording (specifically, the *Live in New York* disc), Morrison began the song with a seven-fold chanting of “Bring out your dead!” New lyrics were again added while existing ones were substantially changed. Parts of the Oedipal section were sung rather than strictly spoken, and at the climax Morrison screamed “Woman, I want to fuck you all night long, mama,” thereby completing what the studio version could not deliver (though the sentiment was expressed graphically at other live shows). At the Felt Forum, “Bring out your dead!” was intoned no fewer than fourteen times before the song began in earnest, more lyrics were added, and the Oedipal climax was again graphically screamed. In the Doors’ Swedish radio performance (a widely circulated bootleg recording), several lyrics were omitted and the Oedipal section was performed partially *a cappella* (attesting again to the band’s flexibility). During some shows Morrison’s temperament became particularly nasty when he snarled at the father, “Hey you old fool, I wanna kill you.”

In the *Live at the Hollywood Bowl* performance, perhaps the most bizarre refashioning occurred when Morrison improvised with rambling storytelling. An excerpt: “Have you seen the accident outside? / Seven people took a ride / Six bachelors and their bride / Seven people took a ride / Don’t let me die in an automobile / I wanna lie in an open field / Want the snakes to suck my skin / Want the worms to be my friends / Want the birds to eat my eyes / As here I lie.” He then announced that he would recite for the audience an “Ode to a Grasshopper.” Morrison showed humor—making fun of himself, if anything—and

he worked the crowd with aplomb as they laughed and cheered. The mood, however, turned serious again for his recitation of the Oedipal passage. While Morrison's delivery varied widely, what linked all of these live performances from an instrumental perspective was the tremendous amount of ruminative vamping by the band between subsections.

Many Doors fans, including those familiar with the studio album's "The End," could not know of its original innocent love theme. They experienced, instead, the haunting and disturbing song—one that transformed love into desperation and drama—as it had evolved by 1967. Morrison himself stated that the song's meaning was protean, but in surveying the song's numerous inferences, I would include the obvious: that the song's persistent, dirge-like gloom, combined with the enactments of murder and incest, could also imply the end of life itself. The death in question can be literal or spiritual, however, for Morrison was fascinated by the life–death–rebirth cycle on multiple levels, including the signification of man's continually evolving states. "The End" readily falls into all three categories discussed in Chapter 4—the psychedelic, the psychosexual, and the morbid—while also being the culminating epic Doors song.

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The epic, or multisong, was an exceptional vehicle for the Doors, for it functioned as a platform for the theatrical performance that was intrinsic to their music. Other bands created epic songs, but they had different intentions and goals, and their long songs were not to a theatrical end. The Grateful Dead's psychedelic jams, for example, provided periods of spacey sound, which induced hypnotic dance and quasi-static state of mind. Conversely, the Doors' epic songs catalyzed the band members' performance and spurred interaction and dialogue with the audience. These songs' extended and shifting structures made space for

the types of improvisation and confrontation that the Doors considered to be a distinctive aspect of their performance (and music making)—practices inspired, in large part, by the Living Theatre, which, as we know from Chapter 1, was especially influential for Morrison. And this realization of the theatrical was key to the Doors' self-image.

## Epilogue

The 1960s counterculture eventually faded out, most contingently with the end of the Vietnam War and the loss of the movement's commercial cachet and viability. But many of its groundbreaking practices and beliefs lived on and have had tremendous influence. The counterculture's most controversial elements—including skepticism of government, the expansion of consciousness through drug use, the loosening of sexual mores, and the (to some) overindulgence of personal expression and freedom—have indeed split American society and politics to this day, and in seemingly insoluble ways. Psychedelic music, however, both in sound aesthetics and attitude, reverberates through the work of several succeeding and stylistically diverse bands. Rock music has also benefited from psychedelia's hybridization with alternate genres.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the best analogy is that of a patchwork: disparate bands and projects, as well as new and diverse generations of fans, have been stitched together by their common interest in the Doors' music. For the Doors legacy continued in multiple ways: the musical activities of the post-Morrison Doors; the band's exceptional, still growing record sales; and their influence on subsequent rock musicians who play in a panoply of styles.

Upon Morrison's death, the remaining Doors members were forced to decide whether to disband or to continue as a trio. According to Chuck Crisafulli, they had already considered the choice, knowing that Morrison was rethinking his future and leaning toward poetry and film as he went to Paris for psychic convalescence: "The notion of going on

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<sup>1</sup> The genre of Neo-psychedelia music grew out of UK post-punk in the early 1980s with bands such as the Cure, Echo & the Bunnymen, and Siouxi and the Banshees. Later psychedelic bands included Porno for Pyros, Blur, Kyuss, Spacemen 3, The Jesus and Mary Chain, My Bloody Valentine, and the Flaming Lips, to name just a few. Psychedelia's blockbuster group has to be Phish, performing for over twenty years and modeling themselves manifestly on the Grateful Dead. For that matter, some Grateful Dead members are still performing today, as is Roger Waters, formerly of Pink Floyd.

without Jim had already been discussed. No one was positive that Jim wanted to remain a member of the Doors after *L.A. Woman*, or how central his role would be if he did decide to record again with them.”<sup>2</sup> Continuing together after Morrison, both as Doors members-cum-representatives and as talented musicians in their own right, the trio produced two additional albums—*Other Voices* (released November 1971) and *Full Circle* (released August 1972)—and did three short concert tours.<sup>3</sup> The group was generally well received. Nonetheless, internal frictions increased, the loss of Morrison eventually became too haunting a factor, and the band’s identity grew awkwardly unclear. The Doors’ final live performance occurred, fittingly, at the Hollywood Bowl on September 10, 1972.

After the Doors disbanded, the 1970s saw a fracturing of pop and rock musical styles, many of them draped in the amiable and apolitical qualities of mainstream (or “soft”) rock. This reflected an abating interest in social problems (or at least their linkage with music) and a backlash against the perceived excesses of the 1960s. As a result, the Doors’ popularity momentarily waned, save for a devoted cult following.<sup>4</sup>

By the end of the decade, however, another Doors album took shape that would reunite them in the studio, likely for the last time. Robby Krieger remembered that Morrison had made recordings of his own unadorned, unaccompanied poetry recitations (one taping occurred in 1969, the other in 1970) and wondered if the trio might be able to construct an

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<sup>2</sup> Chuck Crisafulli, *The Doors: When The Music’s Over* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2000), 140.

<sup>3</sup> The double meaning of *Other Voices* acknowledges the fact that, for the first time on a major release by the Doors—with rare exceptions by Manzarek and Krieger—the other members sang all the lead vocals. *Other Voices*, Elektra Records EKS 75017, LP, 1971; and *Full Circle*, Elektra Records EKS 75038, LP, 1972.

<sup>4</sup> In 1974, for example, Ray Manzarek and Iggy Pop organized and performed in a “Jim Morrison Memorial Disappearance Party,” tellingly at the Whisky a Go-Go. They performed together again in 1975 at the Hollywood Palladium.

album around them.<sup>5</sup> The band edited down the tapes and set Morrison's words to music, guided by their own tastes and their long-time experience as collegial performers with the singer. The result was the album *An American Prayer*, released in November 1978, which used both existing Doors instrumental tracks from a decade earlier as well as new, original accompaniments inspired by Morrison's poetry and spoken presence.<sup>6</sup> The album reached no. 54 on the *Billboard* charts and became the only Doors recording to be nominated for a Grammy award. But the project elicited strong feelings, within and without the band's sphere, about who really owned the album's ideas and results. Would Morrison have approved of the final product? When he recorded the poems, after all, he had only nominal, if any, accompanimental ideas in mind, and they were not rock-oriented. How would Morrison have felt about the music composed in his absence, or about the pauses inserted by others into his recorded words?

Among those offended by the very concept of *An American Prayer* was producer Paul Rothchild, who unleashed a lengthy broadside in a 1981 *BAM* magazine interview.

Rothchild railed,

That album is a *rape* of Jim Morrison. I have a tape of Jim reading most of that poetry in the style and meter that he intended. Jim and I discussed poetry a great deal. I got him to listen to poets like Dylan Thomas reading his own works. Jim was always talking to me about the progress of words, their meter, their sequence, their flow. All Jim's poetry [on the album] has been cut into bits and spread across a long instrumental composition that is irrelevant. When he went into the studio to record [the

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<sup>5</sup> Morrison's poetry existed for the most part in his books and as lyrics. The tapes' mere existence owed much to the absence of an audience (only a handful of good friends were present), for he confessed in an interview that he became self-conscious reading his own words aloud: "I just can't read this stuff too well. Music gives me the kind of security I need, I guess. I certainly admire poets who can just stand up and read their poems. I wish that I could." Quoted in "Jim Morrison Tells All," *Rolling Stone*, June 14, 1969, 8.

<sup>6</sup> *An American Prayer*, Elektra 5E-502, LP, 1978. A remastered version with bonus tracks was released in 1995 as *An American Prayer*, Elektra 61812-2, CD.

poems], it was to get *away* from the Doors. I think *An American Prayer* is *rude*. It was the first commercial sell-out of Jim Morrison.<sup>7</sup>

These strong words did come from a professional who had had a falling out with the band, but Rothchild had a close relationship with Morrison and, being eight years his senior, understood him in a different light than did his band mates. Nevertheless, to my knowledge, the other Doors have expressed no regrets about the project. John Densmore, in fact, defended it in his autobiography by speaking to Morrison's "spirit" (as he often does in the book): "Ray, Robby, and I worked incredibly hard on the record, trying to make it a 'movie for the ears,' even though we knew that its concept wasn't commercial, and I'm very proud of it. I *know* you would love it. We were honoring your words rather than exploiting them."<sup>8</sup>

Other projects that kept the Doors in the public's awareness included Francis Ford Coppola's riveting use of their music in his cinematic masterpiece *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and the publication of *No One Here Gets Out Alive* (1980), the first full biography of Morrison, authored by rock journalist Jerry Hopkins and Danny Sugerman.<sup>9</sup> The book rose to the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list, and its publication sparked a surge in the band's record sales. A decade later, boosted by the release of Oliver Stone's 1991 biopic *The Doors*, the Hopkins-Sugerman book surprisingly reappeared in the *New York Times* list, this time reaching the second position. The Doors were briefly reunited in 1993 for their induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, at which they performed with Eddie Vedder (of Pearl Jam) as the vocalist. More recently, the Tom DiCillo documentary film *When*

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Blair Jackson, "BAM Interview with Paul Rothchild," July 3, 1981, *Waiting for the Sun: The Spirit of Jim Morrison*, [http://archives.waiting-forthe-sun.net/Pages/Interviews/OtherInterviews/rothchild\\_bam.html](http://archives.waiting-forthe-sun.net/Pages/Interviews/OtherInterviews/rothchild_bam.html) (accessed 10 June, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> John Densmore, *Riders on the Storm: My Life with Jim Morrison and The Doors* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1990), 282.

<sup>9</sup> Jerry Hopkins and Danny Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out Alive* (New York: Warner Books, 1980).

*You're Strange*—containing a treasure trove of previously unreleased footage—was released in 2009. After airing on PBS, the documentary earned an Emmy nomination, and its soundtrack garnered a Grammy nomination. Each of these developments has served to keep the Doors' image and music alive for aging devotees, while also introducing their music and mythos to younger musicians and listeners who are keen on exploring 1960s music and culture.

Stone's feature film deserves a brief comment, as it was the most infamous of post-1960s Doors developments in the arts. Although Stone—who was first captivated by the Doors' music as a young soldier in Vietnam—carried out extensive research and thorough negotiations with the remaining Doors as well as with the Morrison and Courson estates, the film was widely pilloried. Critics castigated its numerous factual errors, the sensationalized approach, Stone's directorial self-indulgence, and, most fraught, the overly negative portrayal of Morrison at the expense of his many positive traits. Manzarek was particularly vituperative about the film in his autobiography, writing, for example, about Stone's (mis)interpretation of Morrison's student film project at UCLA:

Oliver tried to re-create Jim's film based on what I told him. Of course, he went completely over the top. A grotesque exaggeration. And how he turned Jim into a disciple of Adolph Hitler, well ... perhaps someone ought to look into Mr. Stone's psyche; into what I perceive to be his latent anti-Semitism, and not-so-latent fascist tendencies. I like to think that little student movie is as revealing of Oliver's real problems as anything he's ever done. It's all there in capsule form. A wonderful reduction of psychotic leanings.<sup>10</sup>

One of the film's positive repercussions was that many different people were affronted by it and came to the Doors' defense. The band still had a strong, widespread, passionate fan base

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<sup>10</sup> Ray Manzarek, *Light My Fire: My Life with the Doors* (New York: Berkley Boulevard Books, 1999), 55–56. Other feature-length films that have used the Doors' music include *The Basketball Diaries* (1978), *Forrest Gump* (1994), and *Jarhead* (2005).

that supported the music and what it represented, and certainly the film gave more youthful listeners a music from the past worth investigating.

Further proof of the Doors' popularity with listeners over the past forty years lies in the ongoing success of record sales, whether original studio albums, repackaged albums and box sets, or new materials such as bonus tracks, alternative takes, and live concerts. The reissuing of previous material is, of course, a common tactic of record labels, but it is risked only when a market exists.<sup>11</sup> Not surprisingly, the Doors bootleg industry, especially in the Internet age, is enormous. But the legitimate numbers speak for themselves: Businessweek.com has reported that the Doors have sold nearly sixteen million records worldwide since 1991.<sup>12</sup> According to the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), the Doors have sold, to date, approximately thirty-two million albums in the United States, in all formats.<sup>13</sup> In 2000, the Doors formed their own company, Bright Midnight Records, and issued much of their previously unreleased material. Today the Doors' catalog is found on Rhino Records (a division of Warner Music Group). Additionally, the Doors have a thriving presence on the Internet, where one can find a plethora of blogs and fan forums that preserve memories (and perpetuate myths) about the band. Finally, there is that ultimate testament to a rock group's credibility, the tribute band. Doors tribute bands

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<sup>11</sup> To the chagrin of some fans, many of these album repackages contain previously released material. To the Doors' credit, however, several re-releases have been remixed to improve sound quality and re-situate instruments in the playback's auditory space.

<sup>12</sup> See Prashant Gopal and Diana Holden, "Artists with the Most Posthumous Album Sales: No. 20, Jim Morrison," Bloomberg Businessweek, [http://images.businessweek.com/ss/09/07/0721\\_posthumous\\_record\\_sales/20.htm](http://images.businessweek.com/ss/09/07/0721_posthumous_record_sales/20.htm) (accessed June 12, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> This figure can only be approximate, chiefly because of the complexities in how recorded music is distributed. The organization has also changed its criteria relating sales numbers to levels of certification (Gold, Platinum, and so forth) multiple times since 1958. See the RIAA Gold and Platinum Searchable Database, [http://www.riaa.com/goldandplatinumdata.php?content\\_selector=gold-platinum-searchable-database](http://www.riaa.com/goldandplatinumdata.php?content_selector=gold-platinum-searchable-database) (accessed June 29, 2012).

number far too many to list here, but the ensemble called the Soft Parade seems to hold the preeminent ranking.<sup>14</sup>

In the aftermath of Morrison's death, the remaining Doors members embarked upon numerous musical ventures together: Densmore and Krieger partnered for two years as the Butts Band, for example, and Manzarek and Krieger toured and recorded extensively as a duet, often with other backing instrumentalists. But in the last decade an unfortunate rift developed amongst the band members. Manzarek and Krieger formed the Doors of the 21st Century, with the addition of Ian Astbury (of the Cult) as the frontman and Stewart Copeland (formerly of the Police) as the drummer. Densmore, however, was excluded from the group.<sup>15</sup> In 2005, Densmore and the estates of Jim Morrison and Pamela Courson sued Manzarek and Krieger to discontinue any use of the Doors name. Densmore and the estates won the case, and the process created substantial animus between the former bandmates. Additionally, Densmore has vigorously resisted the commercial use of the Doors' music, torn from its original contexts and meanings, for what he considers crass exploitation and an abandonment of their founding artistic principles. His former band mates have very different views on the matter.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> I reach this conclusion after an exhaustive and amusing search of the Internet.

<sup>15</sup> According to *Rolling Stone* magazine, it was "reportedly" Densmore's own decision due to his increasing tinnitus. "Rolling Stone: Artists," *Rolling Stone.com*, <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/artists/the-doors/biography> (accessed June 3, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Whether reprisal was a motive for the suit or not (and the participation of the two estates mitigates the idea), Densmore's anti-commercial stance actually aligned with Morrison's and has its origins in a fierce dispute within the band during their career. In 1968, with Morrison in absentia, the three instrumentalists had agreed to allow Buick to feature "Light My Fire" in a television advertisement. The band would have been paid \$75,000 for the song's use, and even Elektra's president, Jac Holzman, approved the decision. When Morrison returned and learned of it, however, he became livid and felt deeply betrayed, demanding that the idea be scrapped. Densmore's respect for the Doors' name and music began with this incident, for in his book he says to Morrison's spirit that he was "touched that you cared enough about one of our creations to stand up for it not being bastardized." See *Riders on the Storm*, 202–3. Densmore's principles have only strengthened with time. He has since vetoed numerous offers from advertisers, including one for several million dollars from Apple

Densmore, Krieger, and Manzarek continue to perform and record individually to the present day. Manzarek has expanded his own artistry to include two novels,<sup>17</sup> film direction, and numerous collaborative projects involving both music and spoken word. More important, he has been an active music producer, most famously working with the Los Angeles punk band, X, and the English post-punk group Echo & the Bunnymen.<sup>18</sup> He also played keyboards with these groups (thereby widening his already eclectic musicality), while they, in turn, have performed cover versions of Doors songs. His most recent large-scale undertaking was the album *Translucent Blues* (2011), realized in collaboration with guitarist Roy Rogers.<sup>19</sup> Krieger has carried on by performing, for the most part, in his beloved jazz idiom. Having formed different bands over the years—most notably the Robby Krieger Band and the Robby Krieger Organization—he has issued a handful of albums and played with various other musicians, often transcending stylistic and generational boundaries. This includes working with his son, Waylon, also a guitarist. He tours steadily throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. Of the former Doors, Densmore moved the farthest away from rock music, though he remained in the performing arts. He trained in dance with Bess Snyder and Company and, shortly thereafter, turned to acting and playwriting. Among his work in the latter vein, Densmore authored a highly personal one-

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and, in 2004, a whopping \$15 million bid from Cadillac for the use of “Break On Through (To the Other Side).” For his part, Manzarek scoffs at Densmore’s obstructions, yet maintains an open invitation to rejoin together as a performing trio. See Geoff Boucher, “Ex-Door Lighting Their Ire,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 5, 2005, A1.

<sup>17</sup> Ray Manzarek, *The Poet in Exile: A Novel* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2002); and *Snake Moon* (San Francisco: Night Shade Books, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Manzarek approached X after seeing them perform at the Whisky in 1979 and offered to produce them. See Mark Spitz with Brendan Mullen, *We Got the Neutron Bomb: The Untold Story of L.A. Punk* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), 237–38. The book’s Prologue is entitled “The Boy Looked At Jimbo: a case is made to declare Jim Morrison of Los Angeles, California, the godfather of punk,” 1–5.

<sup>19</sup> Ray Manzarek and Roy Rogers, *Translucent Blues*, Blind Pig Records 485140, CD, 2011.

man stage work, *Skins*, which he performed in 1984 at La MaMa in New York City.<sup>20</sup> He has also worked as an actor in television and film, and kept his musical career alive as well by performing with the band Tribaljazz, which released their eponymous debut album in 2006.<sup>21</sup>

The Doors' titanic rock music legacy can be understood as the intermingling of two discrete strands. On the one hand, the influence of Morrison on rock-music frontmen for over four decades cannot be overstated. The singer opened the door to outrageous behavior onstage and off, linked sex overtly with rock music, and granted rock's lead singers a license to push performative standards and self-reinventions ever further. It is difficult to imagine, for example, the glowering, rebellious frontmen of the mid-1970s punk revolution without Morrison's precedent (though Morrison's stage persona went well beyond sheer anger). On the other hand, the Doors as ensemble musicians pushed existing rock boundaries. They established that "intellectual" musical sources could coexist with psychedelic rock music, drawing as they did upon stylistically diverse genres to create any accompanimental backdrop required for their songwriters' manifold texts. They set a successful precedent for band members to maintain their musical individuality—largely through extensive improvisation—while interacting with a dominating frontman.

Many rock fans and observers see Iggy Pop as Morrison's earliest performative heir, principally in his vividly theatrical and confrontational methods. Iggy took outrageous stage

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<sup>20</sup> *Skins* was largely panned in the press. One critic lamented, "Playing both himself and various women in his life, [Densmore] re-enacts courtships, betrayals, and domestic arguments, in fragments of shrill banal dialogue. For the piece's climactic fantasy, he lies prone on the stage and pretends to be swimming inside his mother. If *Skins* were a witty sending up of Freud, we could laugh, but its lurid psychoanalytic clichés are offered in dead earnest. And just in case we might have forgotten Mr. Densmore's musical roots, *Skins* offers vintage video footage of Jim Morrison in concert." Stephen Holden, "'Skins' Beat Drums of Love," *New York Times*, October 30, 1984.

<sup>21</sup> Tribaljazz, *Tribaljazz*, Hidden Beach Records 1, CD, 2006.

antics to a new level, including smearing his bare body with peanut butter, vomiting, and rolling in broken glass—not necessarily in that order. Iggy was in the audience at the Doors’ 1967 University of Michigan homecoming dance—one of those Doors concerts that ended disastrously—and his rock identity was forever changed by this experience:

That show was a big, big, big influence on me. It got confrontational. I found it really interesting. Part of me was like, “Wow, this is great. He’s really pissing people off and he’s lurching around making these guys angry.” People are rushing the stage and Morrison’s going “Fuck you, you blank blank blank.” The other half was that I thought, “If they’ve got a hit record out [the “Light My Fire” single] and they can get away with this, then I have no fucking excuse not to get out on stage with my band.” By the time they came to Detroit again and played the big arena, they were very polished, had a great sound, and the music was fabulous.<sup>22</sup>

Iggy was performing at the time with his band, the Stooges, and in 1968 he signed with Elektra Records, who was quite possibly seeking to reproduce the sudden success of the Doors.

The Doors’ influence can be measured through concomitant means. To reprise the patchwork metaphor, we know some musicians revered the Doors because they have stated as much in print or recorded interviews. In other cases, one can identify the bands that have been influenced by the Doors simply through a close resemblance in sound or style, or both, and in terms of concept and ethos (though many of these are assessments according to my own, admittedly, subjective judgment). In the broadest sense, rock bands unwittingly benefit from earlier musicians simply because musical styles and lyrical themes are passed down over time.

I have often referred in this paper to Ben Fong-Torres’s book (co-authored by the Doors, as a reminder to the reader) for a reliable account of the Doors, in particular through

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<sup>22</sup> Jeb Wright, “Irritatingly Interesting: An Interview with Iggy Pop,” *Classic Rock Revisited*, <http://www.classicrockrevisited.com/interviewIggyPop.htm> (accessed June 3, 2012).

their own words. In his forward to that book, Perry Farrell (of Jane's Addiction, and founder of the Lollapalooza festival) pays tribute through a colorful, surreal, and poetic essay. Tellingly, Farrell imbues the piece with Native American allegory and point of view. Morrison is honored allegorically.<sup>23</sup> Speaking from a different corner of the rock world, Henry Rollins (of Black Flag and the Rollins Band) praised the contributions of the Doors in his forward:

The Doors' music relegates so much other music to mere entertainment. Morrison was a dangerous mind. He was an intellectual and artistic anarchist. I can't think of any other band that would have enabled Morrison to reveal and realize all he did. When talking of the Doors, the sheer presence of Morrison makes us sometimes forget how brilliant Krieger, Densmore, and Manzarek were as players and songsmiths. Morrison needed a highly sympathetic sonic wilderness to wander in, and they were right there for him.<sup>24</sup>

Rollins, in turn, is an admirer of Nick Cave (of the Birthday Party and the Bad Seeds), who—as a theatrical and low-voiced frontman, a film actor, and a dark-themed lyricist and poet—echoes Morrison's achievements in analogous ways.

To follow another branch from the Rollins tree, Rollins Band guitarist Chris Haskett appreciates the Doors' pioneering textural transparency:

One of the most interesting things about their albums is how *good* they sound for their era. There is a clean, almost stark sharpness and immediacy to the clarity and separation of the instruments that was really quite striking at the time. This is partly due to the instrumentation (i.e., the ranges don't overlap enough to compete for sonic space) and also to arrangement (again, lots of clean single-note melodies, not big messy chords). Having the keyboard as the main instrument really takes the weight off the guitar.<sup>25</sup>

Paul Rothchild is clearly an unsung hero in Haskett's remarks.

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<sup>23</sup> Ben Fong-Torres and the Doors, *The Doors* (New York: Hyperion, 2006), x–xi.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.

<sup>25</sup> Haskett, email message to author, June 25, 2012.

For the final essay of Fong-Torres's book, author Steve Baltin has amassed a profusion of accolades for the Doors through interviews with musicians representing markedly divergent rock styles. There are admiring observations, to name just a few, from Dave Navarro (of Jane's Addiction and the Red Hot Chili Peppers), Joe Perry and Tom Hamilton (of Aerosmith), Frank Black (of the Pixies), Tom Morello (of Rage Against the Machine), George Clinton (of Parliament-Funkadelic), Axl Rose (of Guns N' Roses), Scott Weiland (of Stone Temple Pilots and Velvet Revolver), and Chester Bennington (of Linkin Park). Finally, Snoop Dogg, who has remixed a number of Doors' songs, also venerates the band—in particular, for their sincerity.<sup>26</sup>

It is a patchwork, indeed, to which I might add a few other musicians who were, in my opinion, swayed by the Doors. X had a musical sophistication and clean sound (possibly due to Manzarek's influence) that their fellow Los Angeles punk bands lacked (for example, the Germs, Black Flag, and the Circle Jerks). The Cramps, playing at the New York club CBGB in their early days, shared several things in common with the Doors: their psychedelic sensibility (uniquely melded with a rockabilly style), the absence of a bass player, and their performative-minded frontman Lux Interior, whose onstage writhing in leather pants recalled Morrison's stage presence. To name a few more musicians who carry, or carried, on the Doors legacy—from a range of genres, though primarily punk-based or New Wave—there are the Stranglers (especially their 1977 album *Rattus Norvegicus*); Echo & the Bunnymen (whose 1981 album *Heaven Up Here* evokes the Doors' songs "I Can't See Your Face in my Mind" and "Strange Days"); Joy Division (in particular, their now-deceased

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<sup>26</sup> Fong-Torres, *The Doors*, 240–44.

frontman, Ian Curtis<sup>27</sup>); Glenn Danzig (as a solo act and as the Misfits frontman—especially in their album *Static Age*, released in 1997 but recorded in 1978); Nirvana, with their unorthodox combinations of sounds and Kurt Cobain’s quasi-surrealist poetry—lyrics; Patti Smith (for whose music poetry is especially important); and, even, Blue Öyster Cult (with whom Smith worked).<sup>28</sup> Finally, despite his long-standing disparagement of the Doors, the rock critic Lester Bangs acknowledged Morrison as a “father of New Wave” in his 1981 essay “Jim Morrison: Bozo Dionysus a Decade Later.”<sup>29</sup>

I conclude this dissertation with the relatively recent political rumpus involving former Republican Florida Governor Charlie Crist, who, in December 2010, declared Morrison officially pardoned for his alleged criminal wrongdoings at the 1969 Miami concert.<sup>30</sup> (At the time of his death, Morrison’s appeal was still open.) Some observers rejected the action, as it validated Morrison’s “guilt” in the first place, when in fact there was none. Other more cynical fans wanted the singer’s criminal record to remain untouched, in perpetuity, as a fitting component of his mythos. Many others saw Crist as merely pulling a stunt out of political self-interest.

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<sup>27</sup> Curtis idolized the Doors, along with the Velvet Underground and the Stooges. See Simon Reynolds, *Rip It Up and Start Again: Postpunk 1978–1984* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 104, 112. A fine chronicle of the band, and of Curtis’s eccentric talent as lyricist and performer, appears in the *33 1/3 Series*. See Chris Ott, *Unknown Pleasures* (2004; reprint, London: Continuum, 2012).

<sup>28</sup> Anthony Kiedis, lead singer for the Red Hot Chili Peppers, could also be mentioned here, most saliently for his penning of the song “Under the Bridge” (from *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*, 1991). It is reminiscent of Jim Morrison’s homage to Los Angeles in “L.A. Woman,” though in a more melancholy vein: “Sometimes I feel like I don’t have a partner / Sometimes I feel like my only friend / Is the city I live in, the City of Angels / Lonely as I am, together we cry // I drive on her streets ‘cause she’s my companion / I walk through her hills ‘cause she knows who I am”, etc.

<sup>29</sup> Lester Bangs, *Mainlines, Blood Feasts, and Bad Taste: A Lester Bangs Reader*, ed. John Morthland (New York: Anchor Books, 2003), 214.

<sup>30</sup> Dave Izkoff, “Florida Governor Will Seek Pardon for Jim Morrison,” *New York Times*, November 16, 2010.

Although the 1960s counterculture exists today only in the history books and in the minds and lifestyles of those select few who still support and embrace the era—with its spiritual, political, and collective zeitgeist—many of its attributes made lasting cultural imprints. Those individuals who wish to decipher the story of that tempestuous decade can essentially do so by considering the representative microcosm of the Doors' career and contributions. As this dissertation has shown, the Doors occupied a singular, iconoclastic niche in the 1960s rock world with their mix of psychedelia, dark themes, performative experimentation, and musical originality—but have continued to fascinate subsequent generations of fans and influence fellow musicians in profound ways. Jim Morrison is still regarded as an enigmatic and groundbreaking rock figure, but he could not have gained this status without the other Doors members and the music they created.

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