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**AN 'AMERICAN' POET?: NATION AND IDENTITY IN JAMES
DOUGLAS MORRISON'S *THE AMERICAN NIGHT* (1991).**

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“I am a forest, and a night of dark trees: but he who is not afraid of my darkness, will find banks full of roses under my cypresses.”

— FRIEDRICH NIETZCHE

ABSTRACT

The construction of national identities plays important roles on modern politics, societies and cultures. This research will further explore nation and identity regarding the social and cultural composition of the United States of America in the 1960s as it is viewed in James Douglas Morrison's book of poems *The American Night* (Vintage Books, 1991). In order to carry on this discussion, this research investigates James Douglas Morrison's, also known as Jim Morrison, life and career as poet, musician and lyricist from the rock band *The Doors*, during the 1960s, as well as the historical, political and social context of this turbulent decade in the U.S. This research is grounded on the works of scholars such as Benedict Anderson, Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha, whose studies on identity and national culture are cornerstones to Cultural Studies and Identity Studies. The first chapter presents a brief introduction to Morrison's legacy and to the theoretical framework of the research. The second chapter explores the historical background of the research, looking into the decades of the 1950s and 1960s and into how they shaped the country and influenced Morrison and his generation. The third chapter explores the poems selected from Morrison's *The American Night* (1991). The last chapter presents the results of this research, concluding that Morrison has created a critical

poetry that analyzes the politics of militarism and imperialism perpetuated historically by the U.S..

Keywords: Jim Morrison, Nation, Identity, National, Culture, United States.

RESUMO

A construção de identidades nacionais desempenha papel importante na política, sociedades e culturas modernas. Esta pesquisa explorará a nação e a identidade relacionada a composição social e cultural dos Estados Unidos da América na década de 1960 no livro de poemas de James Douglas Morrison, *The American Night* (Vintage Books, 1991). Para realizar efetivamente a exploração, esta pesquisa investigará James Douglas Morrison, também conhecido como Jim Morrison, sua vida e carreira como poeta, músico e letrista da banda de rock The Doors, na década de 1960. Explorar-se-á concomitantemente o contexto histórico, político e social Desta época turbulenta nos EUA. Além disso, a base teórica para orientar a exploração do trabalho de Morrison serão os estudiosos Benedict Anderson, Stuart Hall e Homi Bhabha, cujos estudos sobre identidade e cultura nacional são fundamentais para Estudos Culturais e Estudos de Identidade. O primeiro capítulo apresentará uma breve introdução ao legado de Morrison, seguido do exame dos antecedentes teóricos mencionados, e o próximo irá explorar profundamente a parte histórica da pesquisa, analisando as décadas de 1950 e 1960 e como eles definiram o país E influenciou Morrison e sua geração. O terceiro capítulo trará todos esses elementos, além disso, se unirá ao plano teórico, explorando os poemas selecionados na obra de Morrison, *The American Night* (1991). O último capítulo trará possíveis conclusões e as perspectivas de pesquisa de identidade e pesquisa do legado de Morrison.

Palavras-chave: Jim Morrison, Nação, Identidade, Nacional, Cultura, Estados Unidos.

RESUMO EXPANDIDO

A construção de identidades nacionais desempenha funções importantes na política, sociedades e culturas modernas. Cultura, identidade e nação também são conceitos importantíssimos para as discussões acadêmicas e políticas da contemporaneidade, em suas mais diversas dimensões. Abraçando essas discussões, esta pesquisa explorará profundamente os conceitos de nação e identidade com respeito à composição social e cultural dos Estados Unidos da América nos anos 60, através do livro de James Douglas Morrison, *The American Night* (Vintage Books, 1991). Para efetivar esta investigação, iremos explorar a vida e carreira de James Douglas Morrison, também conhecido como Jim Morrison, e sua atuação como poeta, músico e letrista da banda de rock *The Doors*, durante a década de 1960, tal como o contexto histórico, político e social desta década turbulenta nos EUA. Além disso, a base teórica para orientar a investigação do trabalho de Morrison serão os estudiosos Benedict Anderson, Stuart Hall e Homi Bhabha, cujos estudos sobre identidade e cultura nacional são fundamentos nos Estudos Culturais e Estudos de Identidade. O primeiro capítulo irá trazer uma breve introdução ao legado de Morrison, seguido pelo escrutínio dos teóricos anteriormente mencionados. O segundo capítulo irá explorar profundamente a parte histórica desta pesquisa, olhando para as décadas de 1950 e 1960 e como eles definiram o país e influenciaram Morrison e sua geração. O terceiro capítulo trará a combinação de todos esses elementos, juntamente com o contexto teórico, explorando os poemas selecionados no livro *The American Night* (1991). O último capítulo trará conclusões possíveis e as perspectivas de pesquisa de identidade e também de pesquisa no legado de Morrison.

OBJETIVOS

Esta pesquisa visa investigar a possibilidade da leitura da crítica à construção a identidade nacional na obra *The American Night* (1991), publicada postumamente, do poeta James Douglas Morrison. Para tal, esta pesquisa explorará os conceitos de identidade e nação e investigará como o poeta explorou esses conceitos em seus poemas, interpretando as peças poéticas de Morrison como alegorias sociais, de conteúdo crítico e politizado, que espelhavam a sociedade e o contexto dos Estados Unidos da América nos anos 60.

METODOLOGIA

Para a leitura e análise dos poemas de Morrison, a pesquisa usa os teóricos Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha e Benedict Anderson, que exploram questões de construção de identidade nacional, cultura nacional e a perspectiva histórica do surgimento do conceito de nação. Autores como David Huddart, Keally McBride e Helen Davis ajudarão na investigação dos autores centrais dessa dissertação, para melhor entendimento de seus conceitos durante a análise. Pesquisadores que se debruçaram no legado de Morrison, como Maximilliam F. Grascher, Steven Erkel e Rosangela Patriota, contribuirão para a construção de um panorama da obra artística multimodal de Morrison e sua relação enquanto ferramenta de expressão do contexto histórico vivido pelo poeta. Howard Zinn e Glenn Altschuller são alguns dos historiadores que contribuirão com a perspectiva do resgate temporal necessária para entender o contexto dos anos 1950 e 1960, décadas vividas pelo poeta. O biógrafo Stephen Davis

contribui com a perspectiva da trajetória pessoal de James Douglas Morrison, da qual elementos serão apropriados para investigação de sua obra poética. A conjunção de todos esses autores levará a construção da pesquisa enquanto uma investigação acadêmica da obra de James Douglas Morrison.

RESULTADOS

Após análise dos poemas concomitantemente a exploração da base teórica selecionada, conclui-se que a obra poética de Morrison pode ser interpretada como uma ferramenta de exploração da construção da identidade nacional dos Estados Unidos nos anos de 1960, debatendo assuntos politicamente pertinentes e socialmente relevantes a contemporaneidade do poeta, como a guerra do Vietnam e outras. Assim, entende-se que os poemas de Morrison criticam vários aspectos da identidade nacional dos EUA e estes também são um espelho histórico dos debates da década de 1960, preconizando muitas situações sociais que perduram até hoje no país de origem do poeta.

Palavras-chaves: Jim Morrison, identidade, nação, Estados Unidos da América, nacional, cultura.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: Making the nation, making identity, researching the construction of national identity in the United States during the 1960s

The main purpose of this research is to investigate elements related to the construction of American identity in James Douglas Morrison's poetry book *The American Night* (1991). This research is mainly focused on the narration of the nation and also on the construction of nations as imagined communities, based mainly on the bibliographical research and the theoretical investigation of scholars as, to name a few, Benedict Anderson, Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall. The theoretical research will be conjoined to the analysis of the social, cultural and historical context of the 1960s to verify how the poetry written by Morrison was concerned with the social features of his time and also to how it can be linked to a discussion about the construction of national identity. The 1960s were an important milestone in the Western history; it marked the changing and questioning of family values, the raise of the social struggles of marginalized groups, the political impacts of the Atomic bomb on Japan and the United States transformation, from an emerging rich country into a new empire of the postmodern world. This insurgent decade was also important when it comes to the cultural scenery of the American ¹society, as it bought to light the critical voices

¹ This research adopts the word "American" as a synonym for United States because it was the poet's lexical choice when referring to his own country and also due to the fact that it is a cultural habit in the United States to use it as a synonym for the United States. This choice helped in the process of writing.

of artists, who analyzed the mosaic of American culture, exploring even the issue of the construction of the United States as a country and the issues related to the ‘standard’² American identity. The poet I selected from the stream of cultural voices during this decade is Jim Morrison, who is widely known as the lead singer of *The Doors*, a famous rock band from the ‘60s. Morrison’s artistic legacy and militancy against authority abuse and anti-Vietnam war turned him into a cultural icon for his generation. But he was not only a rock star; Morrison has produced poetry since high school. The mass media on United States promoted a crusade against him, because of his political position and his polemic attitudes during his live performances. Morrison’s poetry has been a stage for his beliefs and also mirrored his criticism to his nation and his society. In behalf of that, this research will examine how the construction of national identity is portrayed in Jim Morrison's *The American Night* (1991). The specific objectives are: to seek out, in the *corpus*, how hegemonic values and relations of power are connected to the construction of national identity, searching for the possible evidences of tension between “the” (standard) American identity and its marginalized groups and to scrutinize how the poet deals with that within his poetry. Also, this research seeks to read through Morrison’s text his criticism on ‘American’ identity; searching within it if the

Despite of that, I am aware of the academic debate surrounding the use of the word and its possibilities to express a Pan-American vision.

² According to Klaus Fischer on *America on Black, White and Gray* (2006): “The McCarthy period, after all, had shown how one could mass-produce the standardized, 100-percent American: white, red-blooded, square, and patriotic. Even beauty, epitomized by the Miss America contests, was standardized in the ideal American beauty: white, middle class, svelte, and blond. Clairol hair products said it all: “if I have but one life to live, let me live it as a blond” because “blonds have more fun.” (...).” (Fischer 10)

poems challenge hegemonic values and a monovoiced reality and, finally, to analyze whether – and if so, how – Morrison brings a more pluralistic view of the US social and cultural contexts to the texts, trying to bring up the poet as a mediator, who is not speaking for someone else, but opening windows to “non-standardized” American realities in his poetry, as a political and cultural agent. Specifically, to develop the investigation of the construction of national identity I will focus on James Douglas Morrison’s *The American Night*, a book published in 1991 featuring a series of late 60s and early 70s poems written by the aforementioned poet. Some of the following chapters will also explore Morrison’s artistic legacy, how it relates to the historical context and the main issue of this research, whose focus is the construction of national identity.

When exploring the matter of national identity, I will not consider it an essentialized, hegemonic and stable concept; instead I will depart from approaching national identity as an on-going process, based on Stuart Hall’s concept of nations as social and historical constructions (developed particularly in *Modernity: An introduction to modern societies*, 1996) and taking into consideration that “national identities are not things we are born with, but are formed and transformed within and in relation to representation” (HALL, 1996, p. 612).

Considering the significance of a concept such as identity and how it has been theoretically and critically discussed by different scholars, this dissertation departs from an exploration of the concepts of identity and national identity, according to Anderson, Hall, Bhabha. This

introductory discussion on identity will allow me to further investigate the process of identity construction in the US in the two following chapters of this dissertation, where I present historical context and literature review on chapter II and the analytical part of this research on chapter III.

1.1. Nation and Identity:

Late modernity has given birth to the phenomena of what has been called “identity crisis”, which resulted from the confronting of the classical concepts of ‘subject’ and ‘identity’ and postmodern identitarian discussions about the subject in a globalized world. Stuart Hall (1992) in the seminal book *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, includes the chapter “Introduction: Identity in Question” (HALL, pgs. 274-314, 1996), where the scholar places the de-centering of the subject as something caused by the increasing of the globalization process on modern societies,³ mainly during the late 20th century, when people started to lose their “sense of self” (HALL, p. 597, 1996), which caused a fragmentation of the subject, previously considered a stable and unified entity. Hall argues that this idea of a stable and defined subject historically comes from the Illuminist philosophers who postulated on the (male) human subject as the center of the universe. For a long time, the concept of the male-centered (Caucasian) subject was the reference for debating identity on academic spaces. Then, after a long time,

³ Stuart Hall departs from Karl Marx and Fredierich Engels concepts of modern society: “All that is solid melt into the air” (Marx and Engels, 1973, page 70), which Hall reads as societies of “constant, rapid and permanent changes” (pg. 277 1992) in which the globalization process becomes a catalyst for the process, restructuring even the space-time definitions and decentering all previously “established concepts” (Hall 277 1992)

Feminism started to question and set in motion this ‘identity crisis’, confronting the concept of “mankind” (HALL, p. 612, 1996). He also names it as the ‘de-centering of the subject’ process. Hall also argues that this process of de-centering identity, this so-called ‘crisis’, allows us to revisit and to review the concept of national identity. In Hall’s approach national identities are neither natural nor eternal entities; instead, they are constructed in a process of narration of the nation, which are transmuted into imagined communities. It is possible to notice that Hall uses Anderson’s book⁴ *Imagined Communities – Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* from 1983, a cornerstone work which was groundbreaking in the field of identity studies during the early 80s, and keeps being important until nowadays, influencing the work of scholars, as for example Stuart Hall himself, Homi Bhabha and Eric Hobsbawm. The following paragraph shows how Stuart Hall was influenced by Benedict Anderson, in order to discuss national identities as representative discursive strategies, created purposely:

National cultures are composed not only of cultural institutions, but of symbols and representations. A national culture is a discourse - a way of constructing meanings which influences and organizes both our actions and our conceptions of ourselves (see chapter 6). National cultures construct identities by producing meanings about "the nation" with which we can identify, they are contained in the stories which are told about it, memories which connect its

⁴Hall refers to Anderson in the section “Narrating the nation: An Imagined Community” (Hall 292 1992)

present with its past, and images which are constructed of it. As Benedict Anderson (1983) has argued, national identity is an "imagined community" (HALL, 1992, p. 277)

Thereupon, Stuart Hall departs from Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined community" to argue against the essentiality (or the eternity) of nations and, instead, he chooses to position nations as constructed entities erected from material and cultural basis. Benedict Anderson explained the context that originated his work in his preface to the revised edition of the book (published by Verso in 2006). During the 1980s, the scholar was a specialist on Southern Asia and he affirmed that the explosion of the Indochina wars motivated him to investigate the roots of nationalism and its political implications (ANDERSON, 1983, p. xi). According to him, nations are not inherently natural to societies; instead they are socially and culturally constructed. Historically, Anderson placed the birth of modern western national ideology on Medieval Europe, through an increasing linguistic diversity caused by the growth of kingdoms. The popularity of the vernaculars languages slowly started to congregate their new speakers into new speaking and reading communities. Then, these vernaculars started to replace Latin on the formal communication and the advent of printing spread them throughout the European continent. These new printed manuscripts were important tools for the formation of imagined communities. The new born reading communities started, slowly, to place themselves to be part of a broader community. According to the scholar, this historical moment is the root of the concept of nation as we know it, since these new readers congregated under a cultural symbol,

the linguistic one, thus promoting a sense of belonging (ANDERSON, 1983, p. 26).

However, the process of giving full life to these imagined communities' embryos took some time. Anderson addressed the changing of this "proto-linguistic nationalism" into full nationalist ideologies, when these were incorporated into the political agenda of monarchies and empires, which the scholar baptized as 'official nationalisms' (ANDERSON, 1983 p. 86). He gave as example the Czarification of Russia under the Romanovs, especially on Alexander III's political project. Czar Alexander III chose the Russian language as the cornerstone of his nationalist enterprise to unify his empire. A perfect situation to illustrate the proportion of how the Russian nationalism was based on its language came in 1893, when the University of Dpart was closed based on the fact that the college used German during its lectures, instead of the official language (ANDERSON, 1983, p. 87). The process of generating national identities was firstly based on language and, later on, it aggregated other cultural features. It is important to envisage this historical path of the narration of nations to understand why these processes are based on materialistic and cultural relations of power and how, cyclically, these nationalisms were confronted by the social and historical conditions of certain marginalized groups led to social convulsions and even revolutions. A useful example is the project of "Russification," by Alexander III. This process of "Russification" was actually a violent imposition of Russian language and the 'official nationalism' by the Romanov over all the other non-Russian groups, as for example the imposition of Russian as official language of instruction

all over the Baltic provinces in the Romanov-Russian Empire in 1887, amongst other violent and compulsory acts practiced by the government against these groups. This enraged many of these non-Russian segments of the population which had fundamental participation in the Socialist Revolution in 1905:

Seton-Watson even goes so far as to venture that the Revolution of 1905 was ‘as much a revolution of non-Russians against Russification as it was a revolution of workers, peasants, and radical intellectuals against autocracy. The two revolts were of course connected: the social revolution was in fact most bitter in non-Russian regions, with Polish workers, Latvian peasants, and Georgian peasants as protagonists. (ANDERSON, 1983, p. 88)

The quote above presents us the impact and the strength of nationalist ideologies into the course of history. Considering the Russian Revolution also as an anti-nationalist movement gives us a dimension of how the violence imposed by nationalist politics can shape movements of resistance and also how marginalized groups affected by such politics manage to react to it.

Keally McBride in her book *Collective Dreams – Political Imagination & Community* (2005), highlights another important feature of Anderson’s contribution. McBride remarks how Anderson has pointed out the “material basis of cultural imagination” (MCBRIDE, 2005, p. 14). According to her, he defined how material practices are used to give to a certain group of people a sense of belonging and unity.

Anderson uses newspapers as examples of how national identity is constructed. According to her, the newspaper incorporates the ideology of a national, common displayer, projecting the idea of sharing a common event in national scale. This materializes an appeal of community, among readers (ANDERSON, 1983, p. 36). The newspapers are distributed inside the countries through a chosen common language and using references of a common historical past, defining famous national figures, using the political and cultural events that are, in thesis, shared amongst the people who read it hence perpetuating among the readers a sense of commonness and belonging, creating thus an imagined national community. McBride (2005, p. 24) also states that imagined communities have the power to interfere in the individual formation of a subject, since the subject makes itself through the contact between other people in her or his community and also through the contact with the national institutions and symbols. The author situates during the 1980s and the 1990s, the new wave of interest in studying the influence of imagined communities into the formation of individual identities, whereas she mentions that nowadays most scholars of identity studies agree that “individuals need communal membership to recognize and develop themselves as such” since the exclusion or inclusion of an individual into a community can define the subject’s psychological features, political position and social behavior (MCBRIDE, 2005). McBride’s statement can be understood as another social and cultural impact, as proposed by Anderson, of imagined communities. Although they can be seen as social and cultural clusters determined by power relationships, the nations as imagined communities are so effectively real that they have the power to shape our particular identities and to

determine our own ways to live our lives through the institutional mechanisms created by national states. This interference is also one of the focuses on James Douglas Morrison's poetry and this issue will also be addressed during the third chapter of this chapter.

Finally, to argue against the maleficent effects of patriotic nationalism when used as discourse about essence and homogeneity, Anderson (50, 1983) summarized the cultural root of modern nationalism and nations as imagined congregations throughout an analysis of the meaning of the national advent of the "Unknown Soldier":

No more arresting emblems of modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of the Unknown Soldiers. The public ceremonial reverence accorded these monuments precisely *because* they are either deliberately empty or no one knows who lies inside them, has no true precedents in earlier times. (...) Yet void as these tombs are of identifiable mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly national imaginings. (ANDERSON, 1983, p. 50)

Through the allegory of the Unknown Soldiers, Anderson points out to a really important feature for nations anywhere: common cultural symbols that unite the members of a nation through a feeling of communion and continuity. Anderson placed the nationalist ideology as a modern placebo for Western progress, evolution and secularity, since its

solidification in the 18th century. Further on this thesis, I will explore the union of Hall's and Laclau's idea of national identity as 'act(s) of power' and Anderson's view of nations as imagined communities moved by this imagined communion based on cultural symbols, as a way to better explore possible meanings and criticisms to the "American identity" in Morrison's poetry, as well as to explore the possible critics from the poet when it comes to the issue of the U.S. as a nation.

1.2 – Identification and Attachment – Individual Identity and the Making of the Nation:

If McBride acknowledges through Anderson's theory the interference of national imagined communities on the formation of the subject, Stuart Hall develops this discussion in the previously mentioned chapter on the book *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* (1996). In her book *Understanding Stuart Hall* (2004) Helen Davis places Stuart Hall as one of the most important public figures on the contemporary history of England, since Hall's path as a Jamaican scholar inside a European society made him question the standard British identity and the construction of England's national identity (DAVIS, 2004, p. 2). From Hall's questioning of 'Britishness', there was a whole new reinvention of identity studies and also the development of cultural studies, mainly addressing the marginalization of certain social groups and their cultural representation. Hall addresses these issues in the chapter "Deconstructing 'national culture': identity and difference", where he

affirms that the nation offers “both membership of the political nation-state and identification with the national culture: “to make culture and polity congruent”.” (HALL, 1996, p. 196). According to the scholar the main goal of building a unified national cultural identity with a common background past for a community is to set homogeneity and political stability. According to Hall, the nation “lends significance and importance to our humdrum existence, connecting our everyday lives with a national destiny that pre-existed us and will outlive us.” (HALL, 1996, p. 293). Hall suggests that nations are not only cultural and symbolic apparatuses, nevertheless, they are also a system strategically created to exercise power. But the construction of these identities inside representation in a social discourse is not only made upon unity, but mainly based on ‘otherness’; rather than any pre-existing essence. Hall establishes that national identity is rather marked by the trial of suppressing cultural differences to create a unified cultural discourse and otherness plays an important part on it because it determines what is national, what is ‘pure’, what belongs to the cultural discourse of the nation and what does not. Hall explores this issue of ‘otherness’ in his essay “Who needs identity?” (HALL, 2000). Here he mentions that the other fundamental piece to the creation of national identities is the “constitutive other”, since the creation of any identity would leave outside its margin the “excess, something more” (HALL, 2000, p. 5), which will contrast to an (apparent) “(...) unity, internal homogeneity.” (HALL, 2000, p. 5). So Hall concludes that the otherness is the marking boundary to national identities, since it will be the ‘something more’ left in the margins of the homogenous discourse, these others who “threaten (...) identity” and need to be expelled (HALL, 1992, p. 295).

Hall develops specifically in the essay “Who needs identity?” (2000), then, the issue of national identities and its making, which happened to be “an act of power” (LACLAU, 1990, p. 33 apud HALL, 1996, p. 6), whose impact and influence are based on the capacity of “marking difference and exclusion” (HALL, 2000, p. 4). As previously mentioned, Stuart Hall uses Anderson’s concept of nations as imagined communities in order to explain that the subjects also adhere to a national identity in a representative level. Subjects relate themselves to a series of symbolic and material practices and symbols. These are the constitutive basis of the nation. Those constructed national identities are embedded on “specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies.” (HALL, 2000, p. 4). As these “discursive formations and practices” change, national identities also change, which Hall called as the “process of becoming rather than being.” (HALL, 2000, p. 4). So, Hall established that an individual becomes part of a national imagined community and thus a national subject through choosing to attach to it, starting to be a part of this “system of cultural representation” (HALL, 1996, p. 612), deconstructing the idea of an innate nationalism. Furthermore, he also argues about the construction of national identities through the constant and divergent contact with the ‘excess’, so the national ‘other’ is as important to the formation of a nation as the ideological and material apparatus that gather communities together. These marginalized groups have a special force inside the making of a

nation, and they will be carefully discussed on the next section through Bhabha's theory.

Hall's approach is deeply important for my research since it addresses an unfinished national identity process, mainly focused on what is left outside, on the margins. Considering a canonical view of American national identity, the one which is heavily spread on cultural vehicles and historically enforced by the U.S.'s legal institutions, we can directly correlate the so called "internal homogeneity" to the White, Male and Protestant as a 'sacred trinity' that would constitute the full citizenship in the United States. As its "constitutive others" there are a wide range of groups whose discourses and practices were excluded and delegitimized during the making of the sense of a national identity within the United States, as for example, Native communities, Black people, women, Latin communities, Asian, to name a few. In the analytical chapter of this thesis, I will explore how Jim Morrison's poetical work addresses emergence of the discourse of these marginalized groups.

1.3 – Comprehending the 'constitutive other' – marginalized discourses on the narration of nations by Homi Bhabha

Homi Bhabha will be the scholar that will guide us in relation to how certain groups and their discourses are marginalized during the creation of nations and how they manage to somehow change it through the

conflict with a homogenous national identity. I have selected Homi Bhabha's work also due to his association with Stuart Hall, as they were fellow scholars and kept contact during a long time. Bhabha wrote an obituary about Stuart Hall's death where he highlighted how the Jamaican scholar was active in questioning the injustice and excess that affected other people due to 'Britishness'. Bhabha is a Mumbai-born scholar whose work was mainly focused on fighting back colonialism and discussing the cross-cultural contacts between different peoples in colonial dynamics, as David Huddard exposes in *Routledge's Reading: Homi Bhabha* (2004). Bhabha joined Hall in the renovation of identity studies field and also helped the Jamaican scholar to consolidate what became later known as the cultural studies field of research, also opposing their studies to the rightist government of Margaret Thatcher. Similarly to Stuart Hall's idea, Bhabha also questioned national identity. Both his concept of nation and the clashing of forces in contact are useful concepts to my research.

Bhabha aligns himself with Anderson's idea, when it comes to nations as culturally constructed. Bhabha (1994) stated:

The language of national belonging comes laden with atavistic apologues, which has led Benedict Anderson to ask: 'But why do nations celebrate their hoariness, not their astonishing youth? The nation's claim to modernity, as an autonomous or sovereign form of political rationality, is particularly questionable (...). (BHABHA, 1994, p. 211)

Bhabha's "DissemiNation: Time, Narratives and the Margins of Modern Nation." (1994) is dedicated to the analysis of nation as culturally constructed as narratives as well as to a discussion about the place of the marginalized groups and discourses within this narrative. Bhabha described modern nations as "temporal processes" (BHABHA, 1994, p. 212), which are, wrongly, translated by some historian and political critics as a timeless entity based on homogeneity. Bhabha's position is based on the dynamic nature of the process of creating nations since, according to him, a nation emerges as narration during the interplay of the "continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical and the recursive strategy of the performative" (BHABHA, 1994, p. 215). These performative forces are related to the groups that are somehow marginalized or historically harmed during the historical constructive processes of the nations. Those groups are not defenseless or historically deprived of their own resources to change history, and they usually come to clash with pedagogical forces and this causes the reshape of national identity in certain moments. The pedagogical forces are quite the opposite, they are privileged voices on the making of the nation and they are generally the ones responsible for establishing symbols and dominating the national material and cultural apparatus. It is the coexistence and the clash amongst these forces that gives birth to the nation. This will be explored, in more detail, during the next chapter of this research about the construction of 'American' identity. Also, the "continuist temporality" referred by Bhabha can be related to what Hall mentioned as an apparent "unity, internal homogeneity", since both are the homogenous constructed narration of national identity spread

through different discourses. The “recursive strategy of the performative” mentioned by Bhabha would be what Hall named as the “excess”, it would be the resources held by performative forces to interfere and change the “writing the nation” (BHABHA, 1994, p. 215).

Bhabha argued against the view of the people of any nation to be seen as ‘one’, since a unique national symbol could have different meanings according to the different social contexts, in the same nation. According to him, that is a performative display of the nation as a narration. Bhabha also defined that this narration is not horizontal and linear, but rather vertical and vibrant. Since different groups are in touch, the national narrative would happen during the clash of many discourses – “modern, colonial, postcolonial, ‘native’.” (BHABHA, 1994, p. 216); during this narration, the theoretician defined, some discourses are marginalized by powerful classes of society and their marginalization is legitimized and materialized by institutional and legal apparatus of certain nations. Bhabha exemplifies such discussions by referring to the way British court treats matters that are related to marginalized groups. According to him, these are always seen as ‘supplementary’ cases on the juridical scene, rather than central or urgent. Bhabha(1994, 215) interpreted this as a way to confirm the ‘secondariness’ of certain groups in the British context.

Then, Bhabha argues on “DissemiNation” for the performance of the nation still using the contact between the pedagogical and performative forces:

We then have a contested conceptual territory where the nation's people must be thought in double-time; the people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin in the past, the people are also the 'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principles of the people as contemporaneity: as that sign of the present through which national life is redeemed and iterated as a reproductive process. (BHABHA, 1994, p. 145)

Bhabha sees the nation's people standing in a 'double-time', in which they are both objects of the pedagogic forces and also subjects. Bhabha discusses the construction of modern nation questioning the discourse of historicism. This discourse believes that nations are based upon a foundational moment, an epochal resource to draw the basis of history and unity of nations and its peoples. Historicism disregards the everyday life and its role on the continuity of the narrative of nations. Bhabha discusses this gap between everyday time and epochal time, due to the fact that the people of a nation need this historical origin to attach to a national identity, but this historical origin does not relate to all the events that took place on the nation; it forgets specially the ones involving conflicts. Bhabha argues that the nation happens in double-time; an imagined historical past that is recreated in everyday life

through the nation's people. The national people are then both objects and actors on the narrative of the nation, they recreate the historical discourses (pedagogical forces), through learning about them on school and through other cultural apparatuses they are exposed to. The resourcefulness of Bhabha's idea is seeing that this double-time – everyday time versus epochal time – allows us to investigate the gap that the national discourse creates when it comes to diversity and conflict. It is through questioning historicism and epochal narratives about the nation on every day time that Bhabha gives a new way to interpret and to explore the other discourses and forces lying on the borders of the nation, generally forgotten by the pedagogical discourses.

In the next chapter, I will explore carefully and in detail the constitution and nature of the performative and pedagogical forces for Bhabha, specifically contextualizing them into the USA history to relate that to Morrison's work, which is the main scopus of this research.

1.4 – Researching on a New Voice of American Poetry; The Relevance of Studying Jim Morrison:

The relevance of studying Jim Morrison has many aspects; it lies in multidimensional questions, from the impact of researching about an almost unexplored American poet which was historically discarded mainly due to literary elitism; from the political and cultural influence of Morrison as a poet; and also from the development of the identity

studies field within Brazil and Latin America. I intend to contribute to the development of this field of studies within the *Programa de Pós-Graduação em Inglês* supported by the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. Inserting my research into a broader context, I want to connect the field of studies on Morrison work to the issue of identity. There are many works exploring Morrison's artistic legacy, but none of them is connected to the construction of national identity, as I am proposing here. Also, within the *Programa de Pós Graduação em Inglês*, there are many M.A theses. and PhD dissertations related to identity studies and poetry, but none of them have yet explored Morrison's work.

Morrison is an important cultural icon; whose work raises questions about identity, freedom, transcendental poetry, anti-militarism and other issues. Morrison was one of my earliest influences to motivate me in pursuing my own freedom; he was one of the greatest cornerstones on my construction as subject and researcher. Morrison's influence is also a political and cultural one, even in Latin America. One example of this is the play *Jim* by Walter Daguerre, which was recently staged in Álvaro de Carvalho Theater, Florianópolis. The play was first enacted in 2013 and it is starred by Eriberto Leão. *Jim* brings a lot of existential issues and political situations. The play is full of poetical interludes from Morrison's work and musical acts with *The Doors'* songs. Leão and Daguerre accomplish the goal of evoking Morrison's memory and questioning the audience about the meaning of their own existence as individuals and the significance they are making of it, everything read through Morrison's huge artistic legacy. After I watched the play, I was able to further reflect on the continuous impact of Morrison's work as a

way to discuss identity and to debate social and political issues. On a more personal level, the play was extremely important for me on the construction of my chapters, reminding myself of the importance of Morrison in my life.

Another example that brings back the impact of Morrison's work to a reading of contemporary issues is the photographer Richard Prince's exhibition called "An American Prayer". Prince is one important contemporary artist on photography field who used the title of Morrison's poem to illustrate a compendium of his photography about the United States. The "An American Prayer" exhibition occurred in 2009 and took place in Paris, in the library François-Mitterrand. The following summary of the exhibition, on its Official Press Release, exposes Prince and Morrison's relation:

"An American Prayer" is a poem by Jim Morrison, who would have traded rock stardom for recognition as a legitimate artistic figure in a heartbeat. Seven years after his death, "An American Prayer" was the name of a posthumous album of his poetry recorded to music by the remaining Doors. On March 29, "American Prayer" will be an exhibition at the *Bibliothèque nationale* de France of American literature and ephemera from the collection of American artist Richard Prince. Also on view will be artworks by Prince relating to books, an important source of both

inspiration and materials for artistic practice, including two never-before-seen examples of his famous “ Nurse ” paintings from his personal collection. (Guide of the Official Press Release, 2009)

The previous examples illustrate a bit how Morrison’s influence continues to be relevant and to keep intriguing artists worldwide and different audiences until nowadays. Because of this political value and of the unexplored dimensions of Morrison’s work to talk about social and historical issues related to identity, I believe my research will contribute to the growth of academic work on Morrison’s poetry. I also hope my research can help others scholars and readers to get interested and engaged with Morrison’s artistic legacy.

1.5. “There’s blood on the street” – about the following chapters:

After introducing the theoretical framework of this research and its corpus, in the second chapter (“The Soft Parade Has Now Begun”) I will explore the historical context and the review of literature surrounding Morrison’s work. The third chapter (“Welcome to the American Night”) is the one in which I analyze some of Morrison’s poems from the selected book; the analysis will correlate elements of the theoretical background presented in this introduction as well as from the historical context that will be discussed in the following chapter. The

last chapter (“The End”) will bring some of my conclusions and also some possible contributions of this research for the development of the field of identity studies and also the academic exploration on Morrison’s work.

CHAPTER II

THE SOFT PARADE HAS NOW BEGUN: HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND LITERATURE REVIEW

As the past chapter brought the national identity concepts that will guide this research, this chapter will investigate more specifically the historical background that informs a discussion on national identity in the United States' as well as the literature review on Morrison's works. Conducting a brief historical examination on the formation of the United States during its colonial years will help us to understand how an Anglo-Saxon identity came to be considered 'standard' and how other groups found different ways to express their voice and agency. A critical reading of this historical process will be guided through Homi Bhabha's theory on the struggle of discourse during the process of national identities. Also, it is important to focus on this colonial past to understand how it helped to shape, throughout time, national values and to set social, historic and cultural aspects of American identity, which were questioned during the 60s.

The 1960s are known as a stormy decade, it was a moment when the United States of America went through a series of rebellions from historically excluded groups, alongside with a youth that questioned the social and ideological values of American society. This youth attempted to create their own culture with its own features, which

was later known as the counterculture. These times of revolt allowed many different cultural voices and cultural agents to emerge, amongst them there is James Douglas Morrison, a poet and singer whose work is the focus of analysis in this thesis. Thus, considering the importance of the historical background of the 1960s to Morrison's poetics, this present chapter explores some specific social and political features of these years, which will help to shed light over Morrison's work and will be fundamental to understand the analysis of his work in the third chapter of this research.

2.1 – Making America: Discourses in struggle in the United States from a historical perspective

Homi Bhabha's approach to the nation and narration will enlighten us through the historical reading of the United States past to understand the different national forces that are in tension in what could be called the narrative of 'the American' identity throughout time. Bhabha departs from Anderson's concept of nation as imagined communities. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Anderson (1983; 1991) proposed that Western nations were "imagined communities" ideologically clustered together during certain historical advents and relying on geographical, cultural and others symbols to create a collective conscience, which would be a national identity. Bhabha took Anderson's ideas further. The seminal work "DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the margins of the nation" (1999) defined that there were different forces behind the

making of a national identity, generally in conflict through ideological discourses and material practices. As it was previously discussed, Bhabha defined different forces in which the cultural discourses inside a nation struggled; the pedagogical one and the performative one. The pedagogical one is the view of nations as united and homogenous communities sharing peacefully the same national symbols and agreeing to have a common national history, horizontal and linear, without contradictions inside it. Also, the pedagogical has to do with the insertion of a nation in 'epoch time' in the sense of continuity, and that the performative has to do with the actual experiences of different groups within the nation, which leads to paradox and tension (non homogeneous). The performative one is exactly the opposite; it is related to paradoxes inside nations, the location for all the discourses that do not fit in the pedagogical narration of the nation. Generally, those are marginalized discourses which suffered from material and cultural harm in the historical process of the nation. The performative concept created by Bhabha shows us that there is not a 'nation' and 'the national identity'; instead, there are 'nations' inside of the 'same nation' and 'identities' clustered inside a 'national identity'. Forces, the pedagogical and the performative are together, but not peacefully, instead they are contrasting and struggling. Another important concept that can be taken from Bhabha's theorization as a way to explore the historical roots of the United States is his concept of nations as forms of narrations (HUDDART, 2012, p. 74), also associated with Anderson's idea of imagined communities, since Bhabha defined that nations were created upon "(...) an apparatus of symbolic power, it produces a continual slippage of categories, like sexuality, class affiliation,

territorial paranoia, or ‘cultural difference’ in the act of writing the nation” (BHABHA, 1994, p. 140); this apparatus has a material and ideological meaning of power and control, and it also sets some of the dynamics between performative and pedagogical force, which is another very important part to be considered during this chapter.

We can perhaps establish a parallel between Bhabha’s discussion and Morrison’s lyrics to illustrate that conflict, of the performative versus the pedagogical inside the creation of the United States as a nation. As *The Doors* lyrics shows us:

Blood will be born in the birth of a nation

Blood is the rose of mysterious union

(MORRISON, 1970)

The verses are from a song called “Peace Frog”, which was released in the album *Morrison Hotel* (1970) based on two of Morrison’s poems, where the poet-singer continuously repeat and focus on the idea of blood throughout the streets of different cities in the United States and there are many different possible meanings attributed to the song. These lyrics will be specifically explored in the next chapter, but this part of the song helps us to revisit and explore the past of the United States to understand how pedagogical and political forces were in clash since the colonial

times in this part of North America. The verse 'Blood will be born in the birth of a nation' (MORRISON, 1970) is specifically important to the revisiting of this historical past, since it can be read as a metaphorical allusion to the colonial processes of struggles amongst different people which gave birth to the United States. The 'blood that will be born' can be an allusion to the genocide of native people during the Indian wars and also to the massacre and abuse of African American people during slavery, as it can be applied to many different slaughters in American history, most of them motivated for expansionist purposes from the dominant classes.

Those pedagogical forces, in the U.S. history are connected to the English settlement in North America and also to the Anglo-Saxon myth (HORSMAN, 1981, p. 26). This myth was culturally inherited and incorporated during the colonizing project by the settlers that came from Europe to America, alongside with the Puritan beliefs that gave them a religious sense to their enterprise in the 'New World', reinforced by the Enlightenment ideas of scientific progress. Why is this Anglo-Saxon past a myth? According to Horsman's argument (1981, p. 4), the Caucasian people are composed by different peoples from different ethnic origins and there is no way a 'common past' for white people can be traced. The Anglo-Saxon myth was actually based on the collected stories of many different German people that settled in England, based upon the registers of a Roman writer, Tacitus. This Roman historian stated that the German people lived in free and peaceful communities, bearing a deep passion for freedom and individuality and remaining 'pure', in other words, not allowing interracial marriage. According to

him, they lived in kingdoms based on freedom, prosperity and peace. This idea was adapted during the English reformation, by researchers hired by Henry VIII during the Sixteenth century to legitimize his rupture with the Catholic Church (HORSMAN, 1981, p. 12) and also to glorify by historical roots his new Church. After Henry VIII's death, this myth was reinforced for ideological purposes in different ways during British history. But it was particularly during the British settlements that the myth was used to reinforce the 'pureness' of Anglo-Saxon people over other peoples and throughout that legitimizing their rights to explore other peoples and to invade their territories:

(...) To Englishmen blacks were heathen, savage, and "beastly." Blacks were not simply regarded as debased because they were slaves: they were also enslaved because of what was regarded as their different and debased nature. There is considerable evidence that by the end of the colonial era the Enlightenment view of innate human equality was being challenged on a practical level in the American colonies. Whites, by the very laws they passed and the attitudes they assumed, placed blacks on a different human level.(...) While the presence of large numbers of blacks made Americans particularly receptive to arguments defending innate differences between races, the American Indian was of more direct relevance for the development of an ideology of American expansion. If the Americans were a providential people destined to regenerate the

other peoples of the world, then the American Indians became the first test. They occupied the land which Jefferson intended to transform into an empire for liberty.(HORSMAN, 1981, p. 113-116)

The Anglo-Saxon myth can be interpreted as an expression of a pedagogical force used to constitute an hegemonic public ideology during the colonial period. This myth was conjoined to Puritan beliefs, leading the colonizers to think about the U.S. as the new empire meant to reshape the world (HORSMAN, 1981, p. 85). However, the Anglo-Saxon American project found a dilemma in the contact with African people and Native peoples in North America. This contact can be read through Bhabha's optic as the moment of clash between pedagogical and performative forces, being the pedagogical forces represented through white and Puritan settlers and the performative ones mainly represented by Native and African American peoples, which have historically been under the trial of marginalization since the birth of the nation, but these peoples found their own way to perform their identities inside the dynamics of making the nation, which caused many different conflicts during American history. Going back to the possibilities of interpretation for part of the Morrison's lyrics (quoted above), under the light of historical terms and Bhabha's theory, the pedagogical (white and Christian) and performative (Native, African American, other non-white groups) forces struggle and coexisting generates the 'birth of the nation'. This clash of forces brings the birth of the nation through blood, so, the display between pedagogical and performative forces in colonial

America started the writing and construction of the United States as a nation.

However this clash between forces and the historical struggles happened all along the history of the United States, but due to the focus this research, the next section will present a discussion on how it unveiled specifically on the United States during the 1950s and the 1960s.

2.2 –Age of Conformity? Rock and Roll and the Shook Up 1950s.

The 1950s was a decade of anxiety, the age of paradox in the United States. At the same time, we had different and opposite views of the United States of America; the first one was a strongly omnipresent image of America as a “harmonious, homogenous, and prosperous land” (ALTSCHULER, 2003, p. 23), a country blessed at the end of the World War II through a social and economic boom of material richness, which reinforced the urbanization and industrialization of the country and also the expansion of suburb neighborhoods through the country. The ‘other’ America is a heterogeneous, multi-faceted country, with the political articulation of many social movements, as for example the Civil Rights movements, which started in 1954, and the first women’s right organization, as well as the environmental movement and also the anti-nuclear one. Population trends and migrations also contributed to the new configuration within the US; the immigrants coming from Latin

America, Asia and other countries brought a new multicultural dimension to the nation, alongside with the rural exodus of African American people, these latter moving mainly from the South to the North of the country (KIMMEL, 2009, p. 223). These human movements and geographical changes were cornerstones to modify popular culture, subsequently causing a clash between these different Americas, which produced many results in the process of changing the national identity. One of them was the creation of a new musical genre; Rock and Roll.

The birth and existence of Rock and Roll move along African American history, mainly related to the popularity of Rhythm and Blues (R&B) during the migration from South to North. R&B was a “distinctive musical genre” (ALTSCHULER, 2003, p. 24), marked by its intense melody. The music “embodied the fervor of gospel music, the throbbing vigor of boogie woogie, the jump beat of swing, and the gutsiness and sexuality of life in the black ghetto.” (SHAW, 1978, p. 12 apud ALTSCHULER, 2003, p. 24).

R&B was the embryo for Rock and Roll, and its popularity increased as the African American people started spreading throughout the country; consequently leading the radio stations and music industry to pay attention to the financial potency of R&B and its consumer public. Politically, this new musical niche also played an important role alongside the rise of the Black Civil Rights movements, getting more space to African American artists and professionals on American

society. As the radio stations and records gave more space to the Black musical genre, the white consumers started buying and enjoying it, mainly middle-class white teenagers (ALTSCHULER, 2003, p. 33). This white audience helped to promote some important Rhythm and Blues artist as for example, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, John Lee Hooker, Little Richard and others solo singers and musical groups of the genre. This musical genre was very peculiar and different from most of other musical expression in the United States, its rhythm was fast and dancing, sometimes pejoratively associated to the word 'wild' due to the White American prejudice towards Afro American culture. Its lyric varied according to the style of the different R&B artists, some were very sassy and sexual, other were more conservative and romantic, but generally most of the lyricists and musicians brought social and historical elements from the reality of Blacks who emigrated from South to North. Even though R&B was deeply related to the Afro American social issues, white audience started to adore it and also they started to go to R&B performance, even when some Black nightclubs tried to control or to forbid white spectators, fearing governmental punishment (ALTSCHULER, 2003, p. 33). This symbiosis between white youth and R&B worried White American families from middle-class, since most White mothers and fathers considered Black American culture to be 'dangerous'. This 'dangerousness' was mainly connected to how R&B was a symbol of subversion of traditional White American values for a part of the country's youth during the 50s. One example of such connection can be seen in Jack Kerouac's book *On the Road*;

“At lilac evening I walked with every muscle aching among the lights of 27th and Welton in the

Denver colored section, wishing I were Negro, feeling that the best the white world had offered was not enough ecstasy for me, not enough life, joy, kicks, darkness, music, not enough night.” (KEROUAC, 1957, p. 180).

The Beat Generation was another face of subversion of values, as its artists and members were questioning the prosperous view of a homogenous America, through their cultural production and also through their life style. They incorporated many African American and Latin members in the movement, as for example the *Chicano* beats, and also cultural elements from non-White American culture were heavily present in the works of the Beats. R&B, for example, was one of the main musical styles appreciated by the Beat community. This subculture and its praise to R&B was a precursor for the importance of Rock and Roll and the 60s countercultural movement. The Beats also helped to promote R&B amongst the youth and contributed to the rise of Rock and Roll.

The birth of Rock and Roll came from the alignment between a variety of elements – R&B, a white American audience, the popularity of the African American music in the Beat subculture. Its name was officially spread when Alan Freed named his show “The Rock and Roll Party”. “Rock and Roll” was an early African American slang for sex (ALTSCHULER, 2003, p. 38). The audience quickly incorporated the term to talk about the ‘new’ musical expression growing popular amongst white American teenagers, which raised a debate of Rock and

Roll being a whitewashed version for R&B (ALTSCHULER, 2003, p. 38). The first legend of mainstream white Rock and Roll, Elvis Presley may be a polemical example of that. Presley himself acknowledged in many different occasions (interviews, public appearances) the Afro American origins of Rock and Roll, but White American media and ideology tried to sell it as an original white creation in order to deny its Black ancestry. Tucker (2014) argues that this early dissociation of Rock and Roll from Rhythm and Blues was a strategy to marginalize other racial groups that did not fit in the homogenous Anglo-Saxon America that public ideology tried to spread. During that context of 'creation' of Rock and Roll; Elvis Aron Presley was the first rock legend supported by the mainstream media. Presley was a southern singer, and he always acknowledged the origins of Rock and Roll to R&B and the Afro American people:

“The colored folks been singing and playing it [rock 'n' roll] just like I'm doing now, man, for more years than I know,” he told the Charlotte Observer in 1956. “They played it like that in the shanties and in their juke joints and nobody paid it no mind until I goosed it up. I got it from them. Down in Tupelo, Mississippi, I used to hear Arthur Crudup bang his box the way I do now and I said that if I ever got to the place where I could feel all old Arthur felt, I'd be a music man like nobody ever saw.” (ALTSCHULER, 2003, p. 196)

Presley was inspired by the Black people in many other things beyond the music he played. His stage performances were very sexual and groundbreaking for American society during the 1950s, incorporating dancing influences from Afro American people as well. Elvis' beauty and *appeal* was quickly noticed by the media, which helped to build his image as a rock star. The Presley 'revolution' was based on his talent as a singer, his defiance of American puritan values through his beautiful and sexually intense appeal to the public and his polemic position on race issues toward attributing it back to Afro American people. Presley was the first mainstream media star of Rock and Roll and his legacy and legend helped to transform Rock and Roll from a simple musical trend to a 'cultural revolution' (ALTSCHULER, 2003, p. 96). Presley was an inspirational model for the forthcoming generation of Rock and Roll artists, including Jim Morrison himself.

Electing its first national star, Rock and Roll during the 1950s entered the American cultural reality as much more than a musical genre, it became a discourse vehicle in which American youth (mainly white and Afro American) could "examine and contest the meanings adults ascribed to family, sexuality, and race." (ALTSCHULER, 2003, p. 22). This was done not exactly only through the lyrics, but also through its ferocious dancing and the subversive hairstyle and clothes that became connected to it. Also, Rock and Roll shook up American identity by integrating somehow the contribution of Afro American communities to the mainstream/white America. Elvis himself helped – through his 'scandalous' performances – to bring sexuality to the mainstream media and general teenage audience. All of that helped

teenagers to find a place for themselves, beginning to shape a generational gap that would become the counterculture during the 1960s.

2.3 – A Roaring Decade: the Thunderous 1960s.

The 60s was the moment when some historically excluded social groups could also be more active actors in the nation's destiny, in a more clear way than during its past. They could also produce acts of power, there were important legal victories for them, as Zinn stated, exemplifying the legal victories conquered by the Feminist movement, for example:

In 1967, after lobbying by women's groups, President Johnson signed an executive order banning sex discrimination in federally connected employment, and in the years that followed, women's groups demanded that this be enforced. Over a thousand suits were initiated by NOW (National Organization for Women, formed in 1966), against the US corporations charging sex discrimination. (ZINN, 1980, p. 499)

The Civil Rights movement started at the end of the 50s and grew during the 60s under the Kennedy administration. The movement was also an important manifestation to change the United States, revealing important political Black leaders, as, for example, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. The Civil Rights movement also started a

communicational bound between the government and social movements, opening an interracial debate about common working classes causes in America; as for example, the woodworkers movement against wages in 1971 alongside with others interracial causes that united class workers throughout the United States. Fischer saw the Civil Rights movement as “a rolling stone that set in motion other national protests” (ZINN, 1980, p. 136), since it influenced the Feminist movement, the antiwar movement, the gay power and the counterculture movement.

The “series of explosive rebellions” (ZINN, 1980, p. 434) during the 60s can be understood in different ways, and one possibility of looking at these rebellions is through Bhabha’s discussion of “performative acts”. As he suggests the ‘constitutive others’ found a way to express themselves and to claim their roles within the United States of America. Those ‘performative acts’ focused on achieving legal rights and changing cultural patterns, as did, for example, the Feminist movement and the Black Civil Rights movement. Consequently, these performative acts have reshaped the narration of the United States as a nation, affecting American values and changing legal and cultural structures. It is also important to highlight the political, economic and historical conditions that allowed the emergence of this intense decade. According to Klaus Fischer (2006) some of these conditions were: “cultural contradictions (fault lines)” within the social structure of the United States, “the impact of the baby boom generation” marked by the ideological clash against their parents; “exceptional economic and demographic changes” caused by the postwar scenery and the arrival of immigrants attracted by the “American Dream”; “the rise of a teenage

subculture” materialized itself on the birth of the hippie movement and hippie communities around the US, alongside with a subversive cultural expression by the 60s youth; and the segregation of Black communities and “racial and ethnic conflicts at home and war abroad in Vietnam”, which gave birth to the Civil Rights movement and the movement against the Vietnam war (FISCHER, 2006. P. 18). The 60s were a moment when America could, finally, and through the extensive and intense action of its ‘constitutive others’, “redefine itself as a nation” (FISCHER, 2006, p. 20). Fischer’s and Zinn’s discussions on the changing 60s America can be easily understood as the moment when the performative acts generated by constitutive others congregated together to strongly influence and change the social structure these others were historically denied. What makes the United States during the 60s especially interesting is how these movements were interconnected, generating social convulsion from the physical to the cultural level of society. For example, in 1963, the bombing of a Black church in Birmingham (FISCHER, 2006, p. 118) proved to be a political retaliation against the fighting of the Black Civil Rights. It was a violent answer from the hegemonic monocultural forces that defended the supremacy of the Anglo-American myth. Culturally, Rock and Roll festivals during 1969, from New Orleans to Woodstock (FISCHER, 2006, p. 309), reinforced an intergenerational clash and an ideological changing in the members of American youth, who were no longer satisfied with the way the social structure was imposed on them. The next section will explore this countercultural scenery originated by the American youth.

2.4 – A Rock and Roll Poet for a Thunderous Decade: James Douglas Morrison and the 1960s' countercultural movement.

What is now known as the countercultural movement was strongly influenced by the protests and political manifestations led by a section of the young generation of the 60s. Due to its activism, the countercultural movement shaped the cultural and political scenery of the United States. The counterculture marked the apex of an intergenerational conflict between older and younger people in America. Unger and Unger (1998) established the counterculture as a kind of 'new bohemian' movement. According to them, the counterculture descended from the New Yorker mavericks from the post World War I and also from the European bohemians on the 19th century. The Beat Generation writers absorbed their influences during the 50s, becoming the progenitors for the countercultural movements of the following decade:

The music and the literature of the late 1950s and the early 1960s contained a number of works that offered fresh and candid perspectives of American society and of people's place in America and in the world at large. (BORNWELL, 2010, p. 5)

Bornwell brings as examples of these underground artists the works by the Beat Generation writers and the folk street artists, the best example of them being Bob Dylan. These 'UnAmerican' cultural expressions grew under the material prosperity of the 50s as a way to try to reach out

the critical sense of people towards the side effects of America's richness and power. Why these cultural expressions were considered UnAmerican? Because of their criticism to the nation, this led them to be considered ideologically close to communism (KENGOR, 2012). There were some artists during the 1950s and 1960s that were considered 'UnAmerican' and as a result they were followed by federal authorities and Jim Morrison himself as well as other famous rock singers at the time were strongly investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (GOLDSMITH, 2007, p. 5). The Beat Generation influenced the young generation of the following decade. The 60s intergenerational clash was, then, mainly influenced by this disruptive subculture of writers, musicians and artists from the end of the 50s and beginning of the 60s. Fischer (2006, p. 253) equated the impact of the counterculture to a political level, stronger than the New Left in the United States. The scholar also defined the movement as made by white, middle class and college students. Due to the movement's student root, the countercultural movement started by questioning traditional American institutions (government, family, business, army, and universities), but quickly expanded to attach itself to other social causes during the 60s, for example, the antiwar movement, the Civil Rights movement and also the feminist movement. This young generation of Americans was claiming their part on the (re)making of their nation, trying to disrupt the narration their ancestors had so firmly tried to establish as 'standard'. Some of the main expressions for the 60s counterculture were "vibrant rock 'n' roll music, psychedelic drugs, and alternative lifestyle" (FISCHER, 2006, p. 253).

There is a huge debate involving the ideological nature of the countercultural movement. Some scholars talk about ideological naivety and the lack of a proper political agenda for substantial social changes, while other authors defend its combative and political nature. Both groups agree on the social impact of the counterculture as a catalyst for change on national identity on the United States;

It is easy to find fault with the counterculture. It was naive, dogmatic, and self-deceived. But it was also vastly influential. Its outward symbols and cultural preferences; long hair, beards, acid rock, pot, sexual permissiveness, gentleness, short time horizon – diffused through to adults and to working-class youths who had not been originally susceptible to the hippie appeal. It gave rise, in turn, to movements that borrowed its sexual tolerance and its professed love of nature. Not only did it contribute to the gay liberation movement, it also left its mark on the new ecological movement of the 1970s. (UNGER AND UNGER, 1998, p. 123)

The countercultural movement spread the sexual revolution through the bohemian cultural spaces and the Hippies communes, where hippies shared sexual partners alike (BORNWELL, 2010, 44) defying the classic monogamist American perspective, strongly shaped by the Protestant ethics. The Hippies communes were also an interesting anti-

capitalist experience inside a strongly liberal society, since they shared their material possessions and also denied the concept of State authority by establishing their own few rules (49), some of these communal living spaces also congregated under the anti-War movement. The wide spread use of LSD and other drugs by the countercultural youth (hippies and non hippies) was also a way to defy the ‘mainstream’ American thought. Bornwell (2010, 44) has defined this youth movement as the trial to make their own alternative society, defying the traditional American values, opposing to the mainstream culture and despising the Anglo-American myth. Although it was a non-organized reaction from the youth against the values they were raised by their parents, there is definitely an important shift at this moment, where the American youth discovered they could share their questioning of American society. Although the young generation of the 60s could not be seen as a minority or disadvantaged group, they were embedded on a familiar politics based on tyranny and possession, strongly influenced by the Anglo-Saxon Myth and the Christian familiar values.

Another powerful example of the countercultural movement impact was the Free Speech movement, whose birth was in the University of California, at Berkley, in 1964. It happened due to an imposition from the college administration. The neuralgic point of the whole situation was that political debates were forbidden in the UCLA campus by a policy sat up in 1930s because of the communist fear. The policy was obeyed by the two previous generations, but not by the 60s youth.

Previous generations had reluctantly put up with codes of etiquette, civility, and restraints. The baby boomers were different. Many students of the 1960s regarded all restrictions to free speech and the freedom to express one's personal preferences as intolerable and smacking of fascism. Students felt stifled by too many rules, not least of which were those that went beyond academic control and aimed at overmanaging their personal lives. (FISCHER, 2006, p. 265)

As their own performative acts of resistance, student challenged the academic administration by keeping the political debates within the university, and even by aggressive fights against authorities inside the campus, some of the students were arrested. Their actions were stimulated by the rise of a new group of professors, a new generation of professionals whose origin was more ethnical and economical diverse than the old professors. These new professors started to teach all over the country and they supported their student's rebellions against authorities. These specific rebellious actions started to spread around the country, strengthening the countercultural scene, where many intellectuals and artists found ways to express their criticism to the state of things in the United States. One of them was James Douglas Morrison, a young poet who, coincidentally, graduated as a Cinema bachelor in the University of California, but became famous later as the lead singer of the rock band *The Doors*.

According to Stephen Davis (2004), the year of 1965 can be seen as the “Year Zero” (60) for the union between counterculture and rock and roll during this decade, when it comes to the connection between this musical genre and the youth’s movement of the 60s. 1965 was an extension of the power of rock and roll, when it was popularized to global audiences through the Rolling Stones, the Beatles and Bob Dylan. Davis also pointed out that this popularization was associated to the moment when there was also the rise of social tensions all over the United States;

In 1965 all the elements that made the decade were in place. The Americans began bombing North Vietnam in March, to national and worldwide outrage, engendering a political climate that gradually poisoned the nation. The pacifist civil rights movement was being transformed by its younger activists into a violent struggle for black power. Birth control pills paved the way for the sexual revolution, so-called “free love,” and abortion on demand. Marijuana and psychedelic drugs were subverting mainstream America from underground. Eastern religions—“the dharma moving west”—were seeping in via California and London. Assassinations, riot, and rebellion were in the air. The literary novel was behind the curve, and the movies were hopelessly lost, out like the fat kid at dodgeball. Music, fashion, and Pop Art carried the swing in that crucial year, which Jim Morrison later described

as “a great visitation of energy.” (DAVIS, 2004, p. 60)

Davis’ description of the intensity of the 60s gives us an idea of how this decade helped to (re)shape American identity and the nation itself. It was also a moment when rock and roll was reinforced and recycled by a new generation, for the babyboomers started to be an important audience for the cultural industry. Jim Morrison played a significant role at this moment, as a musical icon and a poet who registered the revolving times of his nation.

James Douglas Morrison was the ‘UnAmerican’ son of a traditionally middle class white military Protestant American family. Morrison began to write poetry in his early age, being heavily influenced by Beat poetry, French symbolists, German philosophy, Eastern religion and Black music (DAVIS, 2004, p. 17). These influences shaped the lyrics of *the Doors* and his personal poetry. Being a babyboomer, he followed his generation into its clash against its preceptors. Morrison’s dysfunctional relationship with his family and his opposition to the Anglo-American ideology influenced his poetical production. It also influenced his shocking performances on stage and his interviews to the press, later on resulting on a process against him in the Florida state, when he was arrested on the stage. This stage arresting and the whole Florida case also marked the apex of the tension on his relationship with his audience. Although being a cultural agent inside the counterculture movement, Morrison could critically analyze the problems within the

movement. He focused his criticism on the counterculture's lack of political and ideological basis. The next section will be dedicated to presenting some critical approaches to introduce Morrison's work as a way to overview of his complicated relationship with his generation.

2.5 – Review of Literature: Morrison's poetry in debate.

In the past two decades, academia has been rediscovering Morrison's artistic legacy. Some researchers focused their studies on his vast cultural expression, challenging the current view that his poetical work was "drug poetry" (ERKEL, 2011), an opinion that lasted for years after his death. Such ideas were mainly based on testimonies from those who lived near him and echoed by the devastating critical failure of the publication of his poetry book, *The Lords and the New Creatures* (1969). In spite of that, the recent scholarship enlightened us through new academic perspectives to the study of Morrison's poetical work, alongside with the publication of posthumous poems during the 90s. In these new approaches explored Jim Morrison's work under a variety of theoretical possibilities. In the Master Thesis titled "Vision and Desire: Jim Morrison's Mythography beyond the Death of God." (submitted to the Edith Cowan University, 2008), by Ellen Jessica Greenham, the author used the Oedipal myth and Nietzsche's "Three Metamorphoses" theory to study Morrison's poetry, focusing on the proposal that Morrison constructed through his life and career a holistic and religious view to question the demythologized society he lived in and through that achieve a higher condition of the Self, mainly based on Morrison's

appreciation of the Nietzschean philosophy. The scholar also focused on Morrison's Romantic influences, as William Blake and Arthur Rimbaud, drawing his life out of perspectives from Joseph Campbell and also associating Morrison to the myth of the Greek God Dionysius. It is pretty much the classical association made in academic studies when it comes to Morrison work, because he highlighted his influences through his works.

Another Master thesis by Melissa Ursula Dawn Goldsmith⁵ focused on the performer side of Morrison as lead singer of the Doors, as Goldsmith (2007). So far, both theses have gone to different directions; the first author explored Morrison's poetry from a philosophical perspective. The latter author analyzed the criticism toward Morrison's performance on stage, examining it in a metacritical perspective. Goldsmith scrutinized how Morrison's figure was constructed and explored by a different set of newspaper publications. The thesis also brings examples of how Morrison changed his persona to the audience according to the situation alongside with the bound between counterculture and material musical culture. Goldsmith's thesis brings another common feature on Morrison's academic criticism, which is focusing on his stage persona and analyzing his lyrics on *the Doors*. There are only a few academic researches done into Morrison's posthumous poetry, probably because they are less known and the literary criticism has put them aside.

⁵ *Criticism lighting his fire: Perspectives on Jim Morrison from the Los Angeles Free Press, Down Beat, and the Miami Herald* (submitted to the Louisiana State University, 2007).

The Master thesis submitted to the Federal University of Minas Gerais, *Jim Morrison: The articulation of the shaman-poet in the poetic tradition* (LIMA SANTOS, 1996) aimed to deal with Morrison's life and work through Plato's furor poeticus. It is also connected to the tradition of dealing with Morrison alongside his Romantic influence. The essay "The Visionary Tradition in Jim Morrison's "The Celebration of the Lizard" by Paul Sanchez (CSU Fresno, 2006) joined the debate on Morrison's legacy throughout connecting Morrison's poetry to the visionary tradition, but exploring it through Jung's psychological approach. Sanchez's work is different from the other works because he brings a posthumous poem and he also gets a more specific theoretical background when dealing with Jung. Sanchez explored Morrison as a poet aware of different states of mind; someone who brings the poem as an invitation to seek for psychological liberation. Although those researches and academic works helped to shed a new light on Morrison's poetical work, they were really focused on the traditional bound between Morrison, transcendentalism, Romanticism, mythography exploration and psychological approaches, basically focusing on Morrison's stage persona, *The Doors* and its lyrics. There remains a gap, a lack of exploring the dialogue between Morrison as a poet socially aware of the context in which he lived and how the content of his poetry expressed the social reality of identity changing in the United States during the 60s, also none of these works analyzed a complete collection of Morrison's posthumous poetry.

There are also two other critical pieces on Morrison's poetry which are relevant to this research: Steven Erkel, whose work on Morrison is titled *The Poet Behind The Doors: Jim Morrison's poetry*

and the 1960s countercultural movement (2011) and Rosangela Patriota (2005), “História, Performance, Poesia: Jim Morrison, o xamã da década de 60”. Erkel and Patriota are more aligned to the issue of national identity making in Morrison’s poetic production, which is my main goal on this thesis. Their works emphasize the political and ideological relevance of Morrison’s writing, which directly speaks to the analysis I will present of Morrison’s poetry. Starting with a brief summary of Erkel’s main concerns, the author explored the environment of the 1960s in American society under the light of Eastern religiosity and communal living, explaining how it spread through youth and how Morrison opposed to it in his work, although the poet and singer was somehow also inserted in the counterculture movement. Throughout Erkel’s chapter, the reader has access to a brief panoramic view of America’s instability during the ‘60s and the consecutive search for guidance in community living and Eastern beliefs, mainly by the youngsters who believed they could replace the mainstream society by a new form of organization based on total freedom. Erkel’s vision is closer to Fischer’s analysis of the babyboomer generation and its countercultural revolt I presented before. Both scholars stress the lack of a proper political and ideological praxis and social agendas to the youth movement beyond the communal living practice, which might have been one of the reasons for its ending.

According to Erkel, even though Jim Morrison was an icon to his generation, the poet was already able to see these failures in the youth dream and criticized it in his lyrics. For Erkel (2011, 46), Morrison’s influences were the source to the tension between him and his

generation. The author also proposes (34) that it was Friederich Nietzsche's ideas that may be the cause of this ideological fissure between Morrison and his generation, something that is clear due to the absence of *The Doors* during the Woodstock festival, an icon for the 60s counterculture and also Morrison's speech against his audience in a Miami show in 1969 (48). Erkel made it clear the tension between Morrison and his generation, but he also pointed out that Morrison believed in changing the social system as did the hippies. The main difference between them lay on their critical approaches: according to Morrison, changing the social system had to start with self-consciousness and freedom while the hippies intended to start a collective reformation. Erkel contributed greatly to Morrison's legacy and academic discussion by analyzing how the poet made a critical diagnosis of his generation's dreams in both his music and poetry. But Erkel did not acknowledge other social criticism inside Morrison's work, since the author focused his analysis in the tension between the poet and his generation. Also, the author did not focus on other social movements and aspects of the United States that Morrison registered in his poetry.

Patriota tried a more historically focused approach on her essay. Firstly, she presented the past and political scenery of the United States during the 1950s. She focused on the government politics that banished communist parties in the United States during the '50s, which reinforced the conservative parties and its ideologies. Then, Patriota approached the following decade, the 1960s, as culturally polyphonic and disturbing, in contrast with the previous one, when America was considered a safe and stable place. She placed Jim Morrison inside the

'60s as a defying voice against American system, being at the same time a poet and a shaman of rock and roll in the turbulent '60s. The scholar ended her article by saying that Morrison could be seen as a voice of resistance, always bringing the idea of individual and personal revolution to change the social environment altogether. Patriota also commented and analyzed some lyric songs by Morrison, and she compared and associated them to Morrison's influences, for example, Arthur Rimbaud, Antoine Artaud amongst others. Patriota's analysis is interesting for it provided us with a criticism on both the history and the socio-cultural panorama of the United States during the '50s and the '60s. Her critical approach comes close to one of the aims of this research that is analyzing national identity, although she neither entered in the field of identity itself nor used a specific scholar from this field. Patriota and Erkel diverged since her article brought Morrison as an icon and guide ("shaman") to his generation, as well as his rock band, while Erkel saw Morrison as an opposite force inside the counterculture movement of the '60s. I agree with Erkel's vision of Morrison's posture inside the 1960s, but the approach to the construction of history and its reflection in American society made by Patriota is an important part of this research.

By expanding these scholars' views, this research aims at focusing specifically on the issue of nation as an imagined community and the national identity as a construction based upon certain relations of power and interests of class. In the next chapter, I will correlate Morrison's poetry to the political nature of the counterculture. Also, I will focus on Morrison's manifest against the Vietnam War which he expressed in different occasions of his poetry and lyrics. Also I will

focus on Morrison's poetry as way to discuss national identity, registered through the poet's critical view. Naturally, those concepts will be explained and read in Morrison's poetry and lyrics in the chosen corpus, *The American Night* (1991), throughout the theoretical framework selected for this research.

CHAPTER III

“WELCOME TO THE AMERICAN NIGHT”

Welcome to the night

Welcome to the deep good

dark American Night

James Douglas Morrison

The two previous chapters introduced us to the theoretical framework and to the historical context of this research. Also, we briefly explored the background on Morrison’s artistic life and its relation to the context he lived in, the thunderous decade of the 1960s. This new chapter will bring the core of this research, as it will unveil the analysis of the poems selected from the book *The American Night* (1991), under the light of the chosen theoretical background. The first part of the chapter will enhance the perspective on Morrison’s poetry and artistic legacy through a more detailed exploration of the criticism on his poetical work and also through an engagement with some of his political manifestation as a 60s artist. The second part will correlate that to the previously explored theories, culminating in the analysis of the poems themselves.

3.1. Morrison and the Critics: An ‘American’ Poet?

Jim Morrison debuted in the American literary scene through the poetry book *The Lord and The New Creatures* (1970), published by the New York publisher Simon & Schuster, according to Stephen Davis (2004, p. 369), in *Jim Morrison: Life, Death, Legend* (2004). The critical reception in the literary community was almost none; Morrison himself foresaw that, as he told a friend that he would not be taken seriously as a poet because he was a rock star (DAVIS, 2004, p. 370). This polarity between the rock star and the poet kept influencing readers, academics and critics who analyzed Morrison’s poetry long after his death, for, apparently, the fact that Morrison was a cultural pop icon and a mass culture idol would forbid him to write ‘serious’ poetry. The pejorative tone of this criticism may be heavily influenced by the declarations of Dany Surgeman (1991), manager of *The Doors* and Morrison’s biographer, about Morrison’s poetry and its connection to drugs;

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

the milky seas and starless nights. (SURGEMAN, 1991, p. 10)

Surgeman was one of the most important biographical sources for contemporary academics who research on Morrison poetry, but he constantly relates Morrison's poetry to drugs, which resulted in a lot of misunderstandings. Some critics just decided to label it as "drug poetry" (ERKEL, 2011, p. 9) and ignored the poet's literary influences and the historical and cultural relevance of his poetry work as a "new American poetic voice at work" (Davis 369). They also ignored Morrison's strong critical thoughts shown through his poetical view, in which he intensely argued about the United States society and culture, something he has shown since the earliest *The Doors* performances; he also expressed his political view constantly in the band's song, which will be analyzed later on this chapter.

Understanding some aspects of Morrison's performance as *The Doors* lead singer, it is also possible to better analyze and comprehend his poems from *The American Night* (1991). One example is Morrison's strong anti-military position, expressed in some of his songs and poems. The iconic lyrics of "The Unknown Soldier", for example, made *The Doors* single into an emblematic anti-military song; it was written by Morrison, around 1967, during the Vietnam War. The recording of the song was released on *The Doors* album *Waiting for the Sun* (1968), and it is marked by its introduction full of screaming and war-like noises. Stephen Davis (11) defined "The Unknown Soldier" as "the Vietnam's era greatest antiwar song", and many of the music journals and

magazines agree with Davis's view. This song is a multidimensional masterpiece that could be analyzed under a range of possibilities, but it is its sonority, the musical composition, and the lyrics that strike anyone with its full strength. The war-like noises intertwined with *The Doors* strong musicality and Morrison's voice keep echoing and invoking the war fields in a direct and daring reference to the Vietnam War, which had dragged many young Americans to South Asia. Its lyrics just increase the sense of fatality and death related to the unknown soldiers, and Morrison's word contrast to the daily American ordinary life and the brutal reality of war all over the song. As Maximilliam F. Grascher (2015) puts it:

The Doors wanted to force the image news stations had only just begun to broadcast of the reality that was Southeast Asia in the face of the American public and those who controlled its mainstream ideas and principles. They were not just another rock and roll band that would create music for the sake of creating it; they took it upon themselves to convey realities that the American government refused to acknowledge. (GRASCHER, 2015, p. 30)

Grascher (2015) underlines an important and constant feature of *The Doors*: confronting authority. The members of the band were constantly defying protocols and causing controversies all over the country with their TV and live performances. Morrison was the focus of this subversion most of time. The poet and singer holds the title of being the

first rock star ever to be arrested on stage, in front of the audience, during the performance of “Back Door Man”, a famous blues song covered by *The Doors*. Morrison offended the police officers through calling them “little blue pigs”, in reference to a previous incident with the officers early on that day. The police’s answer was to invade the stage and arrest Morrison. The moment was recorded on video. Morrison was charged by inciting riot, indecency and public obscenity. He was the first rock singer to be arrested in a show.



Figure 1 - Morrison’s mugshot⁶

⁶ **Jim Morrison Online: Jim Morrison’s Arrests.** Accessed on April, 15, 2017. <http://www.jimmorrisononline.com/arrests/>



Figure 2 – Morrison and the New Haven incident⁷

Perhaps Morrison's subversion against authority on stage started as an isolated rage moment on New Haven, but, if so, that definitely grew into one of the most important marks of *The Doors'* lyrics, stage presentations and TV appearances, as well as of Morrison's own poetry. Stephen Davis (2004, p. 11-12) strongly associates Morrison's anti-authority and anti-military political positions to the poet's childhood, which was heavily marked by his father, Admiral George Stephen Morrison, who had a rigid behavior towards his children. Morrison's behavior as a public persona and also his work as a multidimensional artist have these strong marks of rebelling against authority, whether or not Davis's claim is true. These are features that will be important further on the analysis of his poetry. Maybe the 'subversion issue' and Morrison's public scandals, hugely covered by the United States' press, can also be related to the rejection of his poetry, by the U.S. literary

⁷ **Mild Equator – The Doors: Trails & Arrests.** Accessed on April, 15, 2017. <http://mildequator.com/otherhistory/newhaven.html>

critics and poetry readers, and even by *The Doors* fans themselves, who have ignored his poetical work for a long time after his death. Jennifer K. Dick (2012)⁸ argues that ‘radical’ poetry, the kind of poetry that, according to her, changes or questions an established vision, is often ignored. She argues about the debate on the visibility, or invisibility, of emergent radical poets and their difficulties to be published, sometimes because of their lack of *status quo* as writers and also due to the content of their writing (DICK, 2012, p.112). Morrison’s case can also be analyzed under Dick’s perspective. Although Morrison managed to be associated with a celebrated publishing house, Simon&Schuster, the lack of visibility and the negative criticism on his work express a lot about the reception of new radical poetical voices in the United States poetical scene. It was only towards the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s that Morrison’s poetry started to be acknowledged by readers and considered as a valuable piece of poetical expression, slowly being disassociated from the idea of junk poetry produced by an insuflated rock star. His first published book was reprinted, and its popularity was surprising; the book started to “sell thousands of copies every year, a very respectable number for a contemporary American poet” (DAVIS, 2004, p. 468). This new interest in Morrison’s poetry may be related to “*The Doors* mania” caused by the huge success of Francis Ford Coppola’s 1979 movie *Apocalypse Now*, which used the song “The End”, from the album *The Doors* (1967). Morrison’s poetry books kept being published after the movie; *Wilderness: The Lost Writings of Jim Morrison* came out in 1989 and *The American Night*, which was actually published twice, appeared in

1990 by the Wilderness Publications and in 1991 by the Vintage Books Editions (DAVIS, 2004, p. 469). The 1990s also brought the academic revisionism related to Morrison's writings. Critics who previously labeled him as a pretentious rock star for trying to engage in poetry writing were long forgotten and others prevailed, the ones who believed in the potential of Morrison's poetical expression to be a reliable social, historical and cultural literary resource to be analyzed:

(...) Jim Morrison was becoming recognized as a poet by academia. Wallace Fowlie, the distinguished biographer of Rimbaud, began teaching Jim's poetry at Duke University. Similar courses were offered at Yale, Stanford, and other schools. Fowlie later published a critical study, *Rimbaud and Jim Morrison: The Rebel As Poet*, which sought to legitimize Jim's insistent claim that he wasn't just some chump rock star. He had been a poet, too, one who had immolated himself in pursuit of some greater design that remained unknown to all others. (DAVIS, 2004, p. 469)

Wallace Fowlie opened the doors and the possibilities to other researchers, professors and scholars who, mainly since the 1990s, have been rediscovering and re-exploring Morrison's poetry throughout new reading possibilities. Some of these possibilities were previously explored in the past chapter and all of them are revalidating a contemporary poetical voice of the U.S. My analysis will integrate this large-scale context of criticism on Morrison's work through presenting a new perspective; the approach of Morrison's poetry as a tool to

understand the construction of national identity in the U.S., and also his criticism to his historical context and his confrontation to the U.S. politics and authorities. The main objective of this chapter is to analyze features related to the construction of a standard national identity in Morrison's poems and how the poet discusses the subject through his political and poetical perspective. The investigation about the creation of this national discourse will be associated with seeking out, in the corpus, how hegemonic values and relations of power are connected to the construction of national identity, searching for the possible evidences of tension between "the" American identity and its marginalized social realities. This discussion will also scrutinize how the poet deals with that within his poetry; also to read through Morrison's text his criticism regarding 'American' identity.

While discussing the construction of national identity, Stuart Hall's perspective about the construction of national identities is key element to understand Morrison's analytical approach to the social, political and cultural structures of his country. Both Bhabha and Hall rescue Anderson's theory on nations as imagined community. According to the scholar, on the book *Question of Cultural Identity* (1996)

"(...), in fact, national identities are not things we are born with, but are formed and transformed within and in relation to representation. (...) The formation of a national culture helped to create standards of universal literacy, generalized a single vernacular language as the dominant medium of communication throughout the nation,

created a homogeneous culture and maintained national cultural institutions; such as a national education system. In these and other ways, national culture became a key feature of industrialization and an engine of modernity.” (HALL, 1996, p. 612)

Hall proposes that the nation is narrated through “a set of stories, images, landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols and rituals” (HALL, 1996, p. 293). Due to that, the supposed ‘eternity’ of nations is not historically accurate, since the sense of nationality was constructed through many material and cultural apparatus.

National cultures are composed not only of cultural institutions, but of symbols and representations. A national culture is a discourse - a way of constructing meanings which influences and organizes both our actions and ourselves (...)
(HALL, 1996, P. 613)

These devices were intentionally created, according to the scholar, to narrate the nation. Hall defines there are five elements which reinforce the bound between the members of an imagined community. The first one is the narrative of the nation, which is constituted, according to Hall by “(...) the historical events, symbols, rituals, (...) sorrows, and triumphs and disasters which give meaning to the nation” (1996, p. 613). The second element is the focus on “origins, continuity, tradition, and timelessness. National identity is represented as primordial (...)”

(HALL, 1996, p. 613), this one element is constantly manipulated to create the “sacredness” of the nation. The third resource to narrate the nation is the “invention of tradition”, as cultural habits are manifested as symbols for the whole nation; generally, they are exclusive to a segment of the population. The fourth narrative source for the nation is the “foundational myth”, which establishes a common “birth” for the country and its community. For example, in the second chapter we have explored the Manifest Destiny doctrine that brought colonizers to the United States, this ideology also works as a foundational myth where the belief to be a chosen people drove the colonizers to ravish native people and their lands. The last element to narrate the nation, according to Hall, is the “pure/original people”. Specifically, the hegemonic national narrative of the United States replaced the native indigenous people for the Anglo-Saxon colonizers, which believed themselves to be selected by God to make the U.S. a land of freedom.

Morrison’s sight about the construction of the United States as a nation is profoundly inquisitive when it comes to what is believed to be “standard” on “American identity”. If Hall argues that national identities are “formed and transformed” during the process of creating a national identity – and, thus, performed through history – throughout representation, Morrison questions and opposes to this standard narration of the nation in many ways, some of them converge towards Hall’s ideas. A poem which is going to be analyzed in the first section, considered to be Morrison’s most acknowledged poetical piece “An American Prayer” brings a critical diagnosis of structures of the U.S. as a nation and the “formation of national culture” through the use of symbols, metaphors and an assertive opposition against the political

scenery he lived in. The poem is a fifteen pages-long poetical work, subdivided in five parts, each one of them independent amongst themselves and presenting different critical positions about the United States as viewed by Morrison. The detailed criticism from the poem will be explored in the following section, but despite its importance, “An American Prayer” is not the only poetical piece to be investigated. Morrison also wrote shorter poems like “The crossroads” and “The American Night”. These two shorter works bring Morrison’s skeptical view about some of the main aspects related to the structural features of the capitalist system when entangled to the cultural formation of the United States. In these poems he does not only criticize the system, but the poet also urges for resistance to it. These poems will be here analyzed together with the lyrics of the song from *Morrison Hotel*, “Peace Frog”. The song originally started as a poetical work from Morrison, but it turned into a song and released on the album, as it often happened with much of *The Doors* music. “Peace Frog” is particularly pungent on its lyrical construction, since Morrison associates violence and blood to the streets of the United States, referring to turbulent clashes caused by social movements during the 1960s. He also talks about the birth of nations and violence.

When we talk about violence and Morrison’s work, it is impossible not to talk about one of Morrison’s major political aspects of his work as singer, lyricist, movie director and poet; the anti-militarist and also anti-imperialist causes which recurrently surface in *The American Night* and all of *The Doors*’ albums. These issues will be particularly explored in a specific subsection about these topics comprehending a poem from *The American Night* and also the song

“The Unknown Soldier”, perhaps the most important anti-Vietnam War song during the 1960s. Using his poetry, Morrison positioned himself against the U.S. intervention and against the sacrifice of young soldiers and native people while he also pointed out the authorities’ responsibility over the cruel interference in Vietnam. Morrison criticized violence, militarism and imperialism as “national cultural system(s)” on the creation of the U.S.’s national identity. The last poem to be analyzed in this chapter is “L’america”, it functions as an exposition of paradoxes which constitute the United States of America, according to the poet’s view, and also an idiosyncratic overview of the “national cultural system(s)” Morrison opposed to and tried to problematize all over his work.

The next section will bring my analysis of “An American Prayer”, from *The American Night*, which is one of Morrison’s main works in poetry; after that, the analysis will be divided into thematic sections featuring shorter poems, as previously explained. The section 3.3 entitled “*The crossroads*”: *Symbolic Resistances to Homogenous National Discourse* will bring Morrison’s poetical ideas on resistance against the normative capitalist system that dominated the United States of America during the 1960s. The next section titled as “Wait until the war is over” explores Morrison’s engagement against the Vietnam War, a cause embraced by his generation that he actively fought through his artistic legacy. The last section focusing on the analysis of his poetry will bring Morrison’s perspective and criticism on the national construction of the cultural and social features of the United States.

3.2. “Do you know we are ruled by T.V.”: Reading “An American Prayer”

The editors of the book *The American Night* (1991) – Pearl Marie and Columbus Courson, Katherine and Frank Lisciandro – defined “An American Prayer” as one of Morrison’s major poems (206), which he wrote and recorded in 1970, but which was never fully published until 1991. It is a long poem, divided in five parts, which I chose to call movements – for they construct an active flow in the poem –, and these parts are developed through fifteen pages. The title of the poem already brings a twist for the conception of “prayer”, playing with the idea of sacredness, and also, perhaps, suggesting that the poet or the speaker of the poem is preaching something, or asking for help for the United States of America. This speaker is an unstable, fragmented poetical voice, which is constantly switching and changing its moods from one part of the poem to another part. This voice of “An American Prayer” brings us a poetical content full of strong symbolical imagery, carrying not only political allegories referring to Morrison’s contemporary context but also metaphorical constructions connected to French Symbolism and English romanticism. Even though the metaphors in the poem may be connected to these historical literary movements, the poem’s form is completely dissociated from any formal poetical structure; the poet chooses to work with free verse and different stanza patterns, from movement to movement throughout the poem.

The five parts bring this supplicant voice talking about the United States, and as the pray goes on, it unveils some unpleasant

characteristics of the country – for example, violence, class struggle, militarism, the mass media control over public opinion. There are many possible readings attributed to the poem, but the approach chosen on this research is related to “An American Prayer” as a strong critical panorama of the United States during the 1960s, bringing elements from the countercultural scene and the political context lived by Morrison and his generation. The poem may signify a poetical representation of the social and cultural turmoil lived in the 1960s, and also a way for Morrison to make a historical revision through poetic and critical view.

As we’ve seen in the previous chapter, the colonization of the US was permeated by the concept of progress connected with religion, mainly based on the concept of Manifest Destiny, in which colonizers believed to be chosen by god to control the new world. As we know, these colonizing forces suppressed or silenced the voices of native populations, their myths and gods. In Bhabha’s discussion about the performative and the pedagogical forces, he suggests that these forces are continuously in conflict, as national discourses are constructed. In this sense, the opening lines of Morrison’s poem reinstate a kind of spiritual mood (movement) that reminds the reader of what Bhabha calls the pedagogical and the performative since there seems to be a clash between different forces. The forces of progress contrast with symbols and myths from ancient peoples and places, which could be read as a reference to these native mythologies and societies from U.S. history. The poem introduces us to a series of existential questions from the poet to the reader and evolves to an invocation of a remote historical past;

Do you know the warm progress

under the stars?

Do you know we exist?

Have you forgotten the keys

to the Kingdom?

Have you been borne yet

& are you alive?

Let's reinvent the gods, all the myths

of the ages

Celebrate symbols from deep elder forests

[Have you forgotten the lessons

of the ancient war]

(MORRISON, 1991, p. 3)

The Master dissertation “The Poet Behind The Doors: Jim Morrison’s Poetry and the 1960s Countercultural Movement”, by Steven Erkel (2011), brings another possible interpretation for the opening part of the poem by Morrison: “Morrison uses the imagination not simply to promote the act of deconstructing an old world order – though that is, of course, part of it – but to create a new world order.” (2011, p. 33). According to the scholar, this beginning of the poem is an invitation from the poet to the readers to “an act of creation” (ERKEL, 2011, p. 33), whereas he proposes to challenge the current structures of the modern world and make a new one. Both readings are synchronically connected to the idea of the poet challenging and questioning the reality he lives in and asking for a new kind of society, whether we choose to interpret it as a historical recovery or as an invitation to recreate social structures.

In the fifth stanza, the historical recovery is more connected to a social criticism and also to the anti-militarist and anti-imperialist message heavily spread by Morrison:

Do you know we are being led to
 slaughters by placid admirals
 & that fat slow generals are getting
 obscene on young blood

(MORRISON, 1991, p. 3)

It is hard not to associate this stanza of Morrison's poem to the previously mentioned song by The Doors, "The Unknown Soldier". Although it is unknown when Morrison started to write "An American Prayer", one of its most famous versions goes back to 1970. However, the Coursons and the Lisciandros mention that Morrison read it aloud, in certain cultural meetings, way before this year (MORRISON, 1991, p. 206). The 'placid admirals' conducting to the 'slaughters' and the 'fat slow generals' getting 'obscene on young blood' can be understood as a direct reference to the U.S. governmental authorities which demanded young people to be in the army fighting in Vietnam. Something that was really important during the Vietnam War was the mass media role in gathering the acquiescence of public opinion to the imperialist interference in Southeast Asia. The next stanza shows this idea of the power of these media vehicles over the nation:

Do you know we are ruled by T.V.

The moon is a dry blood beast

Guerrilla bands are rolling numbers

in the next block of green vine

amassing for warfare on innocent herdsmen

who are just dying

(MORRISON, 1991, p. 4)

The initial sentence on the stanza is not a question; it is an affirmation, in which the poet seems to reinforce the idea of the mass media control in the United States – which had also been emphasized in the song “The Unknown Soldier”. Also, the poet constructs images of guerrilla and innocent people, just like the Vietnam soldiers who had almost no military training (“innocent herdsmen”), when compared to the U.S. army. The way the poem builds these images show the awareness of the poet when it comes to the mass media propaganda about the war and the political reality of the conflict on Vietnam. Through these verses the speaker brings the horror of the war and the slaughter of innocent men, from both the U.S. and the Vietnam, on war field. Also he shows how cruel it was for an overpowered political potency to interfere on another country’s politics.

The anti-Vietnam War was one of the main causes that assembled students and social movements together all over the world for a common cause. During the 1960s, the countercultural scene of the U.S. embraced the anti-Vietnam flag as well. The next stanzas of the poem bring us some existential and symbolic lines representing these social movements and, specially, the countercultural scene. The verses show their own way of waging resistance against the Vietnam War and the national imperialist and military international politics. Also, these parts of the poem are constructed through a series of poetical images evoking mortality and the idea of questioning the continuity of existence. The speaker plays with the idea of life and death as an endless

cycle. Then, the poetical voice changes its pace, intertwining the idea that could be connected to the countercultural movement in the U.S. during the 1960s;

We have assembled inside this ancient

& insane theatre

To propagate our lust for life

& flee the swarming wisdom

of the street

The barns are stormed

The windows kept

& only one of all the rest

To dance & save us

W/the divine mockery

of words

Music inflames temperament

The idea of gathering together inside a place of resistance, aiming to share and to spread a different message may be related to one dimension of the countercultural movement that was the youth rebellion, which revolted against the ideology supported by the government and the mass media. Part of the American middle class youth rebelled against the U.S. society through gathering on many different spaces, as for examples hippie communities, university *campi* and underground cultural spaces to produce their own expressions, mainly questioning the mainstream values of the U.S. society. Also the voices of the streets may be related not only to this youth, but also to many other marginalized voices on the U.S. system, which were not considered part of the official national narrative. The speaker of the poem seems to be addressing the power of expression of literature, music and arts as ways to wage resistance and question the capitalist system logic and the militarism ideology from the United States. When referring to the idea of a music which “inflames temperament”, the speaker may also be connecting the poem to many features of Rock and Roll and of *The Doors* history. The first Rock and Roll shows were considered dangerous events and required strong police reinforcement. Moreover, where many newspapers throughout the U.S. constantly decided to connect this musical style to the fighting amongst young people who went to the rock and roll concerts (ALTSCHULER, 2003, p. 38), as the scholar shows on his book *All Shook Up, How Rock ‘n’ Roll Changed America* (2003). The author exemplifies, one of the *New York Times* headlines announcing in the 1950s: “Rock ‘n’ Roll Fight Hospitalizes Youth” (April 15, 1957). Also during many of *The Doors* concerts, there were

cases of riots amongst the audiences and Morrison himself was accused of stimulating chaos.

Following, the next stanza confronts directly what many people believe to be a hegemonic identitarian narrative and also it could be showing some reasons for the countercultural movement;

Did you know freedom exists

in a school book

Did you know madmen are

running our prison

w/in a jail, w/in a gaol

w/in a white free protestant

Maelstrom

(MORRISON, 1991, p. 7)

The voice challenges the idea of the U. S. as a land of freedom, since the poet says it only exists “in a school book”. Morrison confronts the idea of freedom in the United States, thus destabilizing the national discourse, where liberty supposedly lies as an inherent component. This part of the poem specifically shows the speakers’ view about the United States. The poet believes the country to be a sophisticated Babel ruled by “white free protestant” maniacs. Addressing this maelstrom, Morrison clearly designates who rules America, who dominates over other groups and who exercises the real political and economic power

over the nation. Morrison problematizes a view of American identity which was also being questioned during the 60s through the feminist movement, the Civil Rights movements, LGBT folks as well as many other social groups. They questioned the power of this segment of people (white, free and protestant, usually male) and also its way of ruling the country (example: Anti-Vietnam War movement).

Being Morrison's longest and most dense poem, the analysis of 'An American Prayer' brings many possibilities of reading. I chose to see it as a poetical metaphor and recreation of what the United States meant for Morrison and his generation during the 1960s. It confronts what many believed to be the standard and hegemonic narration of the nation, recreating the urban and violent America where the students, Black people, women and other were constantly clashing with the government and where dangerous music that "inflames temperament" echoed out of streets. That was the United States where Morrison lived in and the one he portrayed in "An American Prayer", which is not a prayer of hope, but a canticle of despair.

3.3. "The crossroads": Symbolic Resistances to Homogenous National Discourse

As Stuart Hall argues that national identities "are formed and transformed within and in relation to representation" (Hall 612 1996), it is possible to suggest that, throughout his poetry, Morrison presents a critique to the ways U.S. national identity had been represented in the mainstream sectors of society as a homogenous narrative. In the poems

"Welcome to the American Night" and "The crossroads", as well as in the song lyrics "Peace Frog," one perceives that Morrison keeps using his symbolic style and strong imagery to address other features of the nation, and, moreover, to propose ways to resist or, at least, subvert it. This section brings Morrison's poems that approach specific views about the nation; "Welcome to the American Night" explores a decayed scenario full of "tamed dogs". "The crossroads" affirms the poet's skeptical view about his country; it also proposes a way to escape from that decadent U.S. society. "Peace Frog" seems to focus on a specific part of this decadence, the urban violence, as the speaker mentions the name of different cities across the country, all of them drowned in blood due to the brutality on the streets. Furthermore, Morrison relates the urban environment to chaos and decay, while he uses the images of forests and nature to represent pureness and the possibility of recreating the human subject and its civilization.

To the analysis of these poems and of the lyrics "Peace Frog," in particular, it becomes significant to revisit Morrison's earliest poetical and philosophical influences. According to Steven Erkel (2011, p. 10), William Blake was one of the most important thinkers who influenced Morrison and his work:

Most notably, Blake's poetry had an overwhelming impact on Morrison's understanding of the human form and its potential. In so doing, Blake's poetry inspired Morrison to categorize humanity into two parts: a state where people live within a system of order that produces how they perceive their identities and reality, what

I am calling “closed form,” and, in opposition to this state, Morrison posits that people have the capability to liberate themselves from this oppression to “open form”, a state in which people can live free from the confines of a fixed existence and begin to see the infinite in all things. (ERKEL, 2011, p. 10-11)

Erkel’s proposal is fundamental to understand the analysis of Morrison’s work in this section, but I also understand that the poet’s view was not only related to poetical dimensions. Morrison expanded Blake’s criticism to the “closed form” and applied it to the context of the 1960s. In doing so, the poet confronted a so-called homogenous national narrative and also questioned the social, material and cultural structures used to sustain this discourse, touching even issues related to the dynamics of capitalism inside the United States. The first poem “Welcome to the American Night” shows the dynamic of people oppressed by the capitalist system inside the United States and how the national discourse perpetuates structures to keep this social condition of oppression and conformity unchangeable:

Welcome to the American Night

where the dogs bite

to find the voice

the face the fate the fame

to be tamed

by The Night

in a quiet soft luxuriant

car

Hitchhikers line the Great Highway

(MORRISON, 1991, p. 27)

The speaker of the poem welcomes the reader to the American Night, which is crowded with dogs. These dogs can be read as representation of the average American worker and citizen, who is accepted as part of the standard narrative of the nation – generally male, white and protestant. These dogs are shaped or tamed by the Night. The Night can be a symbolic image for the capitalist system that controls and oppresses these dogs, alongside its values. The capitalist ethics of economic success became, through a historical process of formation of national identity, a strong part of the standard national narrative in the United States. Despite having to abdicate from their freedom, the dogs do not want to be truly liberated from this oppression. Instead, people want to be part of this pattern of success; they want to become part of the nation and succeed in the capitalist system. This desire to be accepted can be represented through the hitchhikers waiting on the “Great Highway”. The Night is perhaps the strongest metaphorical construction and it is associated with the part of humanity attached to the system and blinded to any possibility of changing.

The next poem to be analyzed offers an interesting contrast to 'Welcome to the American Night', for it is about the possibility of finding an alternative way of living, free from the oppression waged by the system and naturalized by the homogenous national narrative;

The crossroads

Meeting you at your parent's gate

We will tell you what to do

What you have to do

To survive

Leave the rotten towns

of your father

Leave the poisoned wells

& bloodstained streets

Enter now the sweet forest

(MORRISON, 1991, p. 64)

The crossroads created by Morrison on this poem can be the exit roads from the highway on the American Night. The poem starts through a voice calling someone (perhaps, the reader), telling her or him what this person has to do to survive. According to the speaker, this

survival will come through leaving the urban environment, associated in the poem to havoc, chaos and disorder. This association between urban space and chaos is common throughout Morrison's artistic legacy, from his poetry to his visual production. There are some hypotheses to explain why this connection happens in his works. During the 1960s, the streets were the main place of protest and confront between Black people, feminists, intellectual and students against the government and the police. The lyrics of "Peace Frog" exemplify this, since the speaker mentions many different cities whose streets are full of blood. The "sweet forest" lurks as an oasis, a promised land away from the urban maelstrom, perhaps due to its distance from the national urban conglomerates. The campestral environment is related on the poem to the possibility of recreating a different space, away from oppression and violence. The forest, then, means a new hope on the scenario of social convulsion on the United States during the 1960s.

The last poem to be analyzed in this section was turned into a song by *The Doors*. In the book *The American Night* (1991) it is called "There's blood in the streets" and it became a song called "Peace Frog" released in the album *Morrison Hotel* (1970). This poem perfectly shows the association Morrison often does between urban space and chaos, also shown in "The crossroads";

There's blood in the streets

& it's up to my ankles

Blood in the streets

& its up to my knee

Blood in the streets

of the town of Chicago

Blood on the rise

& its following me

Blood in the streets

runs a river of sadness

Blood in the streets

& its up to my thigh

The river runs red

down the legs of the city

The women are crying

red rivers of weeping

Blood in the streets

in the town of New Haven

Blood stains the roots

And the palms trees of Venice

Blood in my love

in the terrible summer

The Bloody red sun

of phantastic L.A.

Blood! Screams her brain

as they chop off her fingers

Blood will be born

In the birth of a Nation

Blood is the rose of mysterious

union.

(MORRISON, 1991, p. 110)

“Peace Frog” brings many different possibilities of interpretation. One possibility of reading the poem is that it represents a unique and powerful diagnosis of the creation of the United States as a country. Before getting into the discussion of the creation of the country and its national identity, it is important to explore the meaning of blood

throughout the verses. According to Maximilliam F. Grasher on his work “Strange Days: American Media Debates *The Doors*, 1966-1971” (2015):

The two hits off the album were “Roadhouse Blues” and “Peace Frog.”. (...) The latter, unlike any other track on the album, referenced the turmoil that occurred with the band and the general American public in the decade the country had just left behind. The upbeat tempo is aided with Morrison singing “blood in the streets in the town of Chicago, blood on the rise it’s following me...blood in the streets in the town of New Haven, blood stains the roofs and the palm trees of Venice...” The track was a representation of everything the sixties had been. Its happy tune combined with its violent lyrics represented the euphoric state psychedelic music created for its listeners as rebellion at the Democratic National Convention of 1968 and revolt on college campuses simultaneously occurred. (GRASCHER, 2015, p. 48-49)

The blood invading the streets as the speaker mention the names of different cities can be a representation of this social turmoil all over the United States. The 1960s was marked by the rise of the Black Civil Rights movement, as well as the risen of the attacks against black people and their communities. Students also occupied the streets to fight against the Vietnam War. The countercultural movement was growing as a

social and artistic expression against the oppression of the system. Rock and Roll became an artistic space to discuss politics and *The Doors* shows and performances turned out to be part of this debate too. Many times, Morrison himself confronted the police and stimulated the audience to do the same, resulting in conflict against the authorities:

After Jim Morrison's arrest in Miami and several months later Phoenix, and subsequent interview with Jerry Hopkins, it seemed that The Doors and the radical movements they embodied fully embraced a new strain of radicalism. A large portion of civil rights and anti-war activists realized the blood spilled on American streets in combatting police and government forces had exceeded the limit they were willing to sacrifice. The gap between leaders of peace movements and groups such as SDS and SNCC and musical acts like The Doors was now fully solidified. The fork in the road was permanent, and now the erotic politicians of the era would need to find a way to continue to inspire their audience and fellow radicals, or the movement they had carried over the past four years would collapse right in front of them. (GRASCHER, 2015, p. 45)

Grascher presents an interesting possibility of reading the verse. The blood on the streets following someone could be spilled from the social movements constantly attacked by the government. If that is the blood referred to in the poem, it is also related to the question of identity as proposed by Bhabha, since the government as an agent of oppression

could be read as a pedagogical force opposing itself to a performative force (the social movements fighting for their rights). Although there are plenty of possible meanings for this poem/song, it is significant to note how the poet opens up for us this direct relation between violence and the birth of nations, something that is reinforced through the mentioning of different names of cities all over the country. The South of United States was especially violent due to racist attacks against the Civil Right movements.

The speaker uses the lyrics to remember that the national identity and narrative of the United States was created through violence. The final verses mark it clearly, “Blood will be born/In the birth of a Nation”, since they explicit the violence produced in the creation of nations, opposing themselves to the idea of nations as a homogenous and pacific narratives. The last stanza “Blood is the rose/of mysterious union” also could be a reference to these processes of violence (sexual, social, cultural) that happen when a nation is born. It is also a poem/song where the voice speaks about gender violence, since the poem shows women crying blood and there is a woman being violently attacked, losing a part of her body, which could mean that women are more exposed and vulnerable to the violence on the streets on United States. Since the song was released on the beginning of the 1970s, it might also be connected to the feminist struggle, and many feminist groups denounced rape and violence against the female population on the United States. There are other interpretations, though, equally valid and as interesting for this song. They are also somehow connected to the many dimensions of debating the construction of the U.S. identity.

These three poems create a mosaic of how James Douglas Morrison resisted to the national narrative of the United States as a land of freedom and prosperity through showing, in his poetry, how decadent, dangerous and conformed the country was in some sense – as it was previously mentioned on the past chapter, there was the ‘mainstream’ United States, where the pedagogical forces controlled the national narrative, but there was also the turbulent, violent and changing version of the nation where the performative forces kept their historical resistance and fought to reconstruct the nation on its double-time. As we talk about violence and change, the next section will bring us the analysis of some poems and songs from Morrison which is related to anti-war message, strongly spread by *The Doors*.

3.4. “Wait until the war is over”: Morrison’s poetry, music and politics against Vietnam War.

Perhaps one of the most controversial moments of the U.S. history, the Vietnam War was also one of the most relevant issues in James Douglas Morrison’s life, music and poetry. It is necessary to understand Morrison’s personal life, while exploring and studying how the strong anti-military and anti-war messages are fundamental parts on his musical and poetry legacies.

Grascher (2015) offers us an interesting panorama of how Morrison’s life is connected to the Vietnam war, how the poet himself was in a privileged position inside the U.S. society and how he avoided going to Vietnam, but engaged in the anti-war and anti-government

militancy during his career. Morrison's father was an important member on the national Navy force. According to the scholar; "Admiral George (Stephen) Morrison [was], present at the incident in the Gulf of Tonkin in which the American government declared North Vietnamese forces had fired on a US fleet" (GRASCHER, 2015, p. 4); this incident provoked an increase in the number of troops sent to Vietnam by the U.S. government, under president Johnson's decision. Also, Grasher clarifies how Admiral Morrison's family was a privileged white middle-class family which allowed Jim Morrison and his siblings to enjoy a rich life and allowed the poet to avoid going to Vietnam later on: "Morrison spent time growing up in California, Texas, Virginia, and Florida, all areas in which whites were especially elevated above the large presence of minorities economically, and in turn by social class" (GRASCHER, 2015, p. 5). Due to Jim Morrison's artistic career, it is possible to suggest that the poet has never felt attracted to the idea of following his father's career. Moreover, such decision might have been influenced by domestic issues and the rigid discipline in his family. Arguing about Morrison's childhood is a very difficult thing to do due to him never having talked about it publicly and neither did his parents. Morrison's personal life influenced his view about the decay of U.S. society, from his childhood and family aspects to the global matter of international government policies and Vietnam War.

Stephen Davis (2006) affirms that Morrison ceased all the contact with his family after he left home. Also according to the author, Morrison's maternal grandfather tried to join the U.S. politics through "the great populist/progressive/socialist strain of American radicalism" (Davis 7 2006). Morrison's grandfather engaged in a radical political

party that opposed the traditional two-party scheme of U.S. elections. It is also known that Morrison lived with his maternal grandparents in the earliest part of his childhood, which might be an influence for his tendencies to threaten and defy traditional national authorities and structures. Altogether, Davis also stated that both Morrison's parents imposed a strong discipline, often filled by "lashes of guilt and shame added to the standard military dressing down" (Davis 12 2006). All these information about Morrison's past is extremely important to explore the band's and the poet's engagement against the war, which was deeper than a political tendency and expanded until the last poems written by Morrison before his death, in Paris, 1971. Davis directly relates Morrison's family and past to the anti-war message from his artistic legacy: "At home this battle-tested sea officer tended to bark orders at his children. Is it any wonder that ten years later his son created the Vietnam era's greatest antiwar song, "The Unknown Soldier"?" (DAVIS, 2006, p. 11).



Figure 3 – An ‘American’ Family? (Morrison’s parent and siblings, from left to right: Anne Morrison, Admiral George Stephen Morrison, Andy Morrison, Clara Morrison and Jim Morrison)⁹

The middle of the 1960s decade brought the U.S. government’s decision to send more troops to Vietnam. Most of them were composed by young people, a large part coming from marginalized groups in U.S. society, as for example, Latin-American or African-American youth, which could not afford avoiding enlistment. Some were barely teenagers. Also during these times, Morrison started to create a poetic composition which would turn into the song “Unknown Soldier”. The genesis of these lyrics is also a very important part for its analysis;

Jim Morrison was having trouble sleeping. He kept dreaming, he told his girlfriend Pamela, about napalm—the flaming jellied gasoline that Americans were dropping on Vietnamese villages. In the recurring dream, he couldn’t rub the stuff off as it burned through his flesh. The Vietnamese couldn’t either. Jim began drinking more, he said, to help him fall asleep at night.

In January 1967, the Vietnamese communists, noting the contradictions and dissent in the policies of their American enemy, began a

⁹ **Feelnumb.com: Photos Of Jim Morrison’s Younger Siblings: Anne And Andrew Morrison** - Accessed on April, 15, 2017.
<http://www.feelnumb.com/2012/09/09/photos-of-jim-morrison-younger-siblings-anne-and-andrew-morrison/>

counterescalation of their own. Viet Cong and North Vietnamese army units began probing American defenses in preparation for the major offensives that would happen later. America's intervention in the civil war in Vietnam was turning into a bloody slaughter, televised nightly. Napalm turned the jungle into wasteland. VC dead were displayed like trophies as they were dragged from their caves. Young marines torched reedthatched villages with their Zippo lighters. It was disgusting, grotesque, and very un-American. Jim Morrison numbly watched this brutality and violence unfold on the TV in his motel room, and then took notes. (DAVIS, 2006, p. 159-160)

According to Pamela Courson, Morrison's girlfriend, his note taking on the Vietnam War probably originated *The Doors'* song, "The Unknown Soldier" (DAVIS, 2006, p 161). This song is part of a strong feature inside Morrison's work to approach the anti-militarism and also anti-imperialism, as it was already exposed in "An American Prayer", where some references to Vietnam War could already be seen. Here, the poet also criticizes the role of mass media vehicles during the war coverage. According to Laura King (2013), on her dissertation *The Media and the Military in Vietnam and Afghanistan*, the Vietnam war created the phenomenon of the "living-room war", since as the government kept sending more and more troops to Vietnam, by the mid of the 60s, "war coverage became a predominant theme of the nightly network newscasts, beaming often-grisly combat scenes directly into some 50 million American homes" (KING, 2013, p. 12). According to

the researcher, American media started broadcasting the war in a positive tone, focusing on heroism and patriotism issues to cultivate public sympathy towards the conflict. But this tone changed by 1967, when media started broadcasting soldiers complaining about the way the commandants were driving the military conflict, it was also one year before *The Doors* released the song which became a hymn to the anti-war cause. This changing tone is directly related to the growth of anti-Vietnam war movement, mainly in the academic field (GRASCHER, 2015, p. 31). Morrison's anti-war propaganda, both in music and poetry, is also linked to his anti-authority militancy, which leads us to the aforementioned New Haven episode in 1967, regarding a *Doors* presentation. This episode defined how Morrison publicly dealt with questions of authority and government abuse, which was, to him, profoundly connected to the government exceeding power and aggressive policy of sending more and more young U.S. citizens to Vietnam and killing Vietcongs, since he was terrified by napalm. The poet's confronting against police abuse was also related to the expansion of the student movement; this was the youth that starred the anti-Vietnam War campaign all over the country;

(...) few months after The Doors played their first and last show on Ed Sullivan, they traveled to New Haven, Connecticut, to play in front of a sold-out crowd of teenagers and young adults. Many in the audience were Yale University students and members of SDS, who in the week prior to the show clashed with police officers after

they attempted to break up an anti-Vietnam War protest.

The Doors entered the major concert scene just as student militancy had begun to establish its foundation in the protest against Vietnam and for civil rights. Several months prior to the show, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Dr. Benjamin Spock, and Carl Oglesby conducted a news conference to establish Vietnam Summer, a protest movement designed to incorporate a broad range of constituents, from teenagers to college students to liberals to more seasoned leftists, into the peaceful antiwar movement. In reality, it opened the door for more radical aspects of anti-war activism. (GRASCHER, 2006, p. 21-22)

Also, since the show was “put on to raise money for a New Haven college scholarship fund” (GRASCHER, 2015, 22), the students stood for Jim Morrison during and after the show, since the singer was arrested alongside with three of *Life*’s magazine journalists, which was a violation of Morrison and the three professionals’ First Amendment Rights (GRASCHER, 2015, p. 23). Grasher argues that his first incident influenced the projection that the media made out of Morrison’s public figure. According to him, most of the U.S. journalists were older and politically opposed to Morrison’s behavior, and this episode was the beginning of the traditional U.S. media against Morrison and also the starting point to project *The Doors* as a dangerous band. *The Doors*, then, was classified as a subversive musical group, which produced “a connection between Jim Morrison, a public advocate of physical

confrontation against abusive police officers and corrupt government policies pertaining to the Vietnam War.” (GRASCHER, 2015 p. 24). In the following year, 1968, *The Doors* released a new album entitled *Waiting for the Sun*, succeeding the previous one, *Strange Days*. This new album brought to the public the new song, “The Unknown Soldier”, where the band presented to the public its anti-war song. The lyrics present us a crude and cruel depiction of wartimes:

Wait until the war is over

And we're both a little older

The unknown soldier

Breakfast where the news is read

Television children fed

Unborn living, living, dead

Bullet strikes the helmet's head

And it's all over

For the unknown soldier

It's all over

For the unknown soldier

Hut

Hut

Hut ho hee up

Hut

Hut

Hut ho hee up

Hut

Hut

Hut ho hee up

Comp'nee

Halt

Preeee-zent!

Arms!

Make a grave for the unknown soldier

Nestled in your hollow shoulder

The unknown soldier

Breakfast where the news is read

Television children fed

Bullet strikes the helmet's head

And, it's all over

The war is over

It's all over

The war is over

Well, all over, baby

All over, baby

Oh, over, yeah

All over, baby

Wooooo, hah-hah

All over

All over, baby

Oh, woa-yeah

All over

All over

(MORRISON, 1968)

Before analyzing the lyrics, it is important to scrutinize the musical composition of the song, from its beginning to its ending. In the song, *The Doors'* instruments are entangled to war-like noises, which transfer the listeners to the possible reality of the Vietnam fields, where both Vietcongs¹⁰ and the U.S. soldiers were being slaughtered. For Rock and Roll, a newborn genre at the time, it was an innovative and daring listening trick to appeal the audience and create some kind of consciousness of whatever could be happening in the other side of the world. Such characteristics differed from many of the bands and singers at the time. They tried to attract their audience through evading from 'serious' themes, as for example, *Jefferson Airplane*, *the Beach Boys* and other musical groups which kept their 'relaxed' Californian style to entertain the public opinion; *The Doors* took the opposite direction and literally tried to transfer its audience straight to the core of the Vietnamese bloodshed. Grascher endorses this idea, focusing on how the band wanted to highlight what most media and government wanted to deny;

The Doors wanted to force the image news stations had only just begun to broadcast of the reality that was Southeast Asia in the face of the American public and those who controlled its mainstream ideas and principles. They were not just another rock and roll band that would create music for the sake of creating it; they took it upon themselves to convey realities that the American

¹⁰ Viet Cong was the name of the rebel communist army that fought the United States during the Vietnam War. The word Vietcong became a synonym for the soldiers that fought on this communist Vietnamese army.

government refused to
 acknowledge.(GRASCHER, 2015, p. 30).

Focusing in this song's lyrics, it is significant to analyze the concept of 'unknown soldier'. On the introductory chapter, there was a brief exploration of the connection between the ideas of Unknown Soldier on Benedict Anderson's book: *Imagined Communities* (1983-1991). We need to rescue Anderson's ideas so we can better comprehend the political dimension of *The Doors* song. According to the scholar, the image of the Unknown Soldier(s) is the perfect illustration of the cultural basis of nation as imagined communities because they sustain the concept of continuity, they perpetuate the idea of sacrificing for the nation, thus, reinforcing the nation as a bigger than life and immemorial entity we should honor. He defines that the tombs of the Unknown Soldiers "[y]et void (...) of identifiable mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly *national* imaginings."(ANDERSON, 1991, p.9). Addressing the lack of forensic identification of the soldiers' remains *versus* making the tombs for the Unknown Soldiers, the scholar suggests that these bones are merely an allegoric symbol to represent the nation and to inspire the feeling of sacrifice for the nation. Also, according to him, the unrecognized subjectivities buried and honored with the tombs are merely a subterfuge to represent the infinite continuity of the nation in comparison to the mortality of individuals (ANDERSON, 1996, 9).

Congruous with Anderson's idea, the question of the missing bodies of soldiers and their identities is explored on the book *The Remains of War: Bodies, Politics, and the Search for American Soldiers*

Unaccounted For in Southeast Asia (2005) by Thomas M. Hawley. Hawley (2005) scrutinizes the idea of the missing and deceased bodies of the soldiers as a still emblematic and troubling situation for U.S. politics;

(...) the absent body stands as the most material indication of the defeat that occurred in Southeast Asia, an ever-present reminder of the catastrophe that continues to afflict the American body politic. (...) That the body of the Vietnam War unknown could not rest in peace until its identity as Michael Blassie [a missing soldier that disappeared on the Vietnam conflict] had been positively determined speaks to the intensity of the interpretive battles that have been waged over the meaning of missing and unidentified military bodies in the years since the end of the Vietnam War. (HAWLEY, 2005, p. 4)

Hawley's research reinforces Anderson's idea of the importance of the Unknown Soldier to the construction of national identity, since the battles to define the identities of "military bodies" is waged mainly by the family of missing soldiers, due to the lack of government interest to investigate their destinies. Keeping the bones unidentified and the unknown soldiers without personal identities reinforces the narrative of sacrifice for a bigger 'entity', the nation. Likewise, while these missing bodies represent a tormenting juridical and cultural absence for the soldier's families and their fight against the U. S. government, Hawley states how Anderson's theory on the symbolic value of Unknown

Soldier(s) is true. Still, many decades after the Vietnam War, these bodies' identities are still a scourge on the constructed U.S. national imagination. Both Anderson's and Hawley's discussions can be directly connected to *The Doors* lyrics, since Morrison challenges the meaning of the Unknown Soldier. He actually deconstructs the idea of the sacredness of the nation through the immolation of the Unknown Soldiers. While Anderson shows the idea of the Unknown Soldiers as metaphorical agents for the eternity and continuity of nations, Morrison individualizes these soldiers as suffering creatures on the battlefield. The song's lyrics suggest that the continuity of the nation, the national discourse, is constructed through the suffering and death of innocent subjects.

We could read the two first verses of the song as the speaker talking to the "Unknown Soldier". Also, they could be connected to Hawley's proposition about the unidentified bodies – the fallen soldiers, whose destiny is to remain unidentified decades after the Vietnam War. The second stanza of the song represents what King named as the "living-room war", as the children and the families are being fed by television, and even during breakfast, these U.S. children are being exposed to the bloody slaughter of Vietnam War. As it comes to national identity, here the speaker paints a multidimensional reality for the United States of America: The first one is safely protected at home, watching TV, having breakfast and reading the news, while another part of it is geographically deprived of whatever home they had and exposed to a huge brutality in Southeast Asian territory (mostly, as we have already discussed, the disfavored side of it, as Latino-Americans and African-American). Also the verse "Unborn living, living, dead" could

be a reference to the state that people ended after the napalm explosions all over Vietnam, when the orange agent burned the flesh of Vietnam people and let them in a state of extremely physical degradation. One of these impressive images is the following picture:



Figure 4 – Phan Thị Kim Phúc became known as “The Napalm girl”. The young Vietnamese child was spotted by photographer Nick Ut, with other children while running away from a Napalm attack.¹¹

In the final part of the song, the speaker declares the death of the Unknown Soldier, which was shot in the head on the battlefield. Despite being a metaphorical representation of war reality, there is some success in transmitting the despair of war, through the musical resources used all over the song – for example, warlike noises mixed with Morrison’s voice. Also, if the sixth stanza brings the reality of the breakfast at home connected to the soldier being shot to death in the

¹¹ Time.com: The Story Behind the 'Napalm Girl' Photo Censored by Facebook. Accessed on April 15, 2017. <http://time.com/4485344/napalm-girl-war-photo-facebook/>

battlefield, the poet uses the strategy of interconnecting the “two Americas” into one movement of the song, he mixes the domestic and safe part of the United States to the one who was suffering the horrors of war in Southeast Asia. After declaring that, one of the last parts of the music brings us the idea that the war is finally done. The speaker claims that “it is all over”, but not for everyone, only for the Unknown Soldier, which has been killed in the war field. Morrison’s Unknown Soldier dies on the battlefield, unidentified, a forgotten citizen away from his nation. Anderson’s Unknown Soldier, meanwhile, is nothing but a symbolic image constructing a broader national narrative. Both play a role for their nation, the Soldier on the song represents the literal sacrifice and the Soldier on the monumental grave is how the embodiment of this sacrifice is used to perpetuate the narrative of the nation. The continuity of the nation (represented through Anderson’s Soldier), then, is bigger than the national subject (represented through the Soldier on the lyrics). It can be also connected to Bhabha’s ideas of how national subjects are both actors and objects for the national narrative. National subjects can die on the battlefield and be used to reinforce a national identity, but they can also question the meaning of the Unknown Soldiers monumental graves, as Morrison did on the lyrics.

That final part of the song transmits the idea of despair and lack of hope that permeated the context of war. By the year the song was released, 1968, the media coverage and the public opinion were both starting to question the way in which the war was conducted by the U.S. government. Through the rise of the anti-Vietnam war movement, some people were even questioning the necessity of the war itself.

But Morrison's production against the Vietnam War is not limited to this song by *The Doors*. He produced poems against the imperialist ¹²conflict until his very last days, in 1971. The poet died without seeing the ending of the war. The following poem, published in *The American Night* (1991), Morrison seems interested in elaborating images that revisit the history of the US and its imperial and colonizing forces. Also, the speaker of the poem seems to be the nation itself, as if Morrison created what could be read as the voice of the United States, the nation itself, speaking on the poem. The verb "fuck", standing as a shocking slang to the reader of classic American poetry, seems to work for Morrison as a way to subtly imply the violence and the subjugation that the nation created throughout its history, regarding different contexts and different groups:

I fucked the dregs of the ruins

of an empire

I fucked the dust and the

¹² Since the U.S. interference on the Vietnam War was not related to a direct threat against the territory of the United States, I have used the word imperialist to associate the U.S. politics of war on Vietnam as caused by the ideological conflict of Cold War, power struggle and economic control on Asia.

horrible queen

I fucked the chick at the

Gates of the Maya

I fucked all your women

& treated the same

w/ respect of your warriors

returned from the

Kingdom

Fucked w/the Negroes

in cabs of the drivers

Fucked little infants of North

Indo-China

Branded w/Napalm & screaming

in pain

(MORRISON, 1991, p. 165)

This poem follows the typical style of Morrison's poetry, mixing elements of national past and metaphorical images, relating them to U.S.'s contemporary politics and society. When the poet mentions "the ruins of an empire", it can be related to Grascher's idea that Morrison believed American society was on the verge of an immense

crisis, which he continuously explored both in his music and poetry. The scholar believed Morrison's artistic legacy and the political context he emerged was a symptomatic alert of how "the fabrics of American society showed their first signs of decay." (Grascher 11 2015). This poem in particular could be read as a sharp critique to the imperialist (and strongly militarist) historical character of U.S.'s foreign policy, also addressing to European colonialism (I fucked the dregs of the ruins of an empire/I fucked the dust and the/horrible queen/I fucked the chick at the/Gates of the Maya). In this poem, Morrison criticizes the way marginalized groups are historically treated in the United States, when he addresses to Black people and women; "I fucked all your women/& treated the same/w/ respect of your warriors/returned from the/Kingdom/Fucked w/the Negroes/in cabs of the drivers."

As the poem continues, the poet seems to connect this violent treatment to the contemporary foreign policy on the United States, directly pointing to militarist questions related to the Vietnam War: "Fucked little infants of North/Indo-China/Branded w/Napalm & screaming/in pain". The poem ends with an idea that evokes the *Napalm Girl* picture (Figure 4). Morrison creates an idea, through the poem, of how violent and brutal the United States has historically constructed itself both on domestics and foreign policies. When highlighting the violence that has been historically used by dominant groups while constructing governments and making politics, Morrison gets into the heart of what is constructing a national identity, getting closer to what Bhabha defined as the conflict between pedagogical and performative forces. This poem in particular also addresses to the anti-military posture of Morrison. It is clear, from the analysis of "Unknown Soldier"

and “I fucked the dregs” that Morrison was not only against Vietnam War, but against all the brutality and imposition coming from imperialistic and authoritative practices. It is also clear that he associated that to the violence that permeated the history of the United States and the construction of its identity as a nation.

3.5. “L’america”: (De) constructing structures of a nation in poetry

Morrison also investigated other social and cultural features about the U. S. and the constitutive tissue of American identity. As we have seen in the previous chapter, in the 50’s and 60’s, much of what had been commonly understood as the ‘standard’ national identity on the United States, which was based on values of mostly white protestant and Anglophone individuals. This was challenged by different kinds of social groups interested in having their voices heard in the national narrative. Contemporary scholars such as Stuart Hall have demonstrated that national identities are created through “specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies.” (Hall 4 1996). The 1950s and 1960s lived the clash of forces, as the performative and pedagogical forces struggled and changed the U.S. national narrative. While the government, entertainment industry and mass media spread one discourse based on the White, Middle Class and Protestant standards (as the pedagogical forces), the social movements, like feminism, the Civil Rights movement and also the countercultural movement engaged on different civil actions, cultural manifestations and alternative ways of

living, trying to resist this hegemonic national narrative (as performative forces). Moreover, Morrison challenged a sense of homogenous national identity many times on his poetry, criticizing the supposedly superiority of the United States. Often, the poet did it through an ironical reconstitution of the U.S. national past and its turbulent present to deny the oppressive nature of a canonic hegemonic identity.

As previously mentioned in the beginning of the analytical chapter, Stuart Hall proposed that there were basic and common features used through national discourse and institutions to engage people on perpetuating the narrative of nation. Also, the scholar points the necessity of a “primordial” and original history for a nation, which generally suppresses conflict and focuses on the ‘essence’ of a nation and its people, generally bringing an original people or ‘pure’ race as the main national group. Furthermore, other strategy pointed by Hall is the ‘creation of tradition’, where some cultural habits, practices or rituals are instituted as naturally belonging to a nation and they become a symbol related to the representative performance a national standard identity, as for example, the “British” habit of drinking tea (HALL, 1992, p. 294). Hall proposed that one of these elements used to create the nation is the “foundational myth”. This myth establishes a mystical genesis for the nation and its subjects. On the case of the United States, the idea of Manifest Destiny represents a foundational myth. This ideology was used to allow the colonizers to ravish the land and attack its native peoples.

The following poem could be an example of how Morrison refers to the historical past of America. The poet questions the historical

narrative of the colonization of the United State. Even if there is no direct reference to the New World, we can read the poem as a subversion of the idea of the “Manifest Destiny” ideology and also connected to Stuart Hall’s theories of construction of national identities through historical narratives;

Ah, the rule was war, as friendship
 faltered. Families quarreled as usual,
 in their chambers. The race suffered.
 We traveled. We left home & beauty;
 Ah, into these ships, again, we hastened.
 The creation of power is slow-wasted.
 Borrowed fillings. Brace for the brine.
 Heaven kept, hour dated. Winds fermented
 madness & kept parlour rife & rancid.

Crews took leave of sour concubines
 & habits. The sea is no place for a lady.
 Lads larked & frolicked, pulvering waves
 They would seek into the deep. Ark! Ark!

Cathay or Venice. Worlds beyond.

Worlds after.

This story has no moral.

Trust not sleep or sorrow.

The fife-man croons the lull to wake

& Brings strong soldiers to a windy beach.

(MORRISON, 1991, p. 130)

The idea of “Manifest Destiny” propagated that the English settlers that sailed away from England were designated to find a ‘new promised land’ and build it out of beauty, peace and prosperity to “relive” the perfection of England’s mythical past. This new land came to be the United States. Since then, the idea of the ‘promised land’ is currently reemerging in the U. S. history, always trying to rescue its ideal Caucasian past. As an example; JFK’s government during the 1960s was known as ‘Camelot’. The idea of associating the legendary king Arthur to JFK was a smart twist of history given to us by Jackie Kennedy. The grieving first lady forged the idea in an interview to journalist Theodore White. Jackie Kennedy’s ‘Camelot’ is an example of how the national narrative recurs to historical reconstruction of idealized myths to perpetuate the continuity of the nation and its identity, connecting it to a legendary genesis:

In that interview Mrs. Kennedy pressed upon White the Camelot image that would prove so

influential in shaping the public memory of JFK and his administration. President Kennedy, she told the journalist, was especially fond of the music from the popular Broadway musical, Camelot, the lyrics of which were the work of Alan Jay Lerner, JFK's classmate at Harvard. The musical, which featured Richard Burton as Arthur, Julie Andrews as Guinevere, and Robert Goulet as Lancelot, had a successful run on Broadway from 1960 to 1963. According to Mrs. Kennedy, the couple enjoyed listening to a recording of the title song before going to bed at night. JFK was especially fond of the concluding couplet: "Don't ever let it be forgot, that once there was a spot, for one brief shining moment that was Camelot." President Kennedy, she said, was strongly attracted to the Camelot legend because he was an idealist who saw history as something made by heroes like King Arthur (a claim White knew to be untrue). "There will be great presidents again," she told White, "but there will never be another Camelot." In this way, and to her credit, Mrs. Kennedy sought to attach a morally uplifting message to one of the more ugly events in American history.¹³

¹³ *The Daily Beast*: How Jackie Kennedy Invented the Camelot Legend After JFK's Death - <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/11/12/how-jackie-kennedy-invented-the-camelot-legend-after-jfk-s-death.html> - Access in February, 3, 2017.

Jackie Kennedy manipulated her discourse during her interview to associate her deceased husband to the legendary lost king. Jackie Kennedy's action was an echo of how "Manifest Destiny" is still an important part of the U.S. imagination. Even in its contemporary politics, the United States still look for an Anglo-Saxon foundational myth to create its modern icons. Noam Chomsky in *Rethinking Camelot: JFK, the Vietnam War and U. S. Political Culture* (1993) proposes that the idea of Manifest Destiny was at the core of the public opinion which supported the Vietnam War. There were many Americans who believed that the U.S. should stop the savages in Vietnam. The mass media spread the idea that interfering in Vietnam politics was related to defending the U.S.'s national interest on Southeast Asia. Chomsky postulates that this imperialist ideology is related to the United States' cultural belief that they are the messianic race chosen to save us all. The scholar defines this belief as a result of the Manifest Destiny ideology. Morrison messes with the messianic narrative of the United States in the poem previously presented. As a skilled poet, he dismisses the idea of perfection and idealization; he shows what could be a more turbulent and unstable arrival of the settlers in the United States when families quarreled and the race suffered and the ships suffered through the sea.

This first verses already break the traditional idea of a harmonic and prosperous settling in the "New World". The poet builds an image of conflict both politically and domestically when focusing on quarrels inside the families. Morrison also breaks, then, the idea of a peaceful and superior colonizer's race, showing that they actually endured a lot of trouble and difficulty. This image of war and suffering also opposes

to the idea of a peaceful colonization process, with an idealized travelling through a soft sea. The poet brings in what could be a more realistic approach to the arrival of settlers in the United States. Also, he acknowledges as Stuart Hall also does, the relations of power during the process – “The creation of power is slow-wasted”. The poet also brings a psychological turbulent element to the trip through a hostile nature. This hostility from nature destroys the idea of an optimistic arrival for the ‘chosen’ settlers. The ending of the poem possibly closes the idea of demystifying what could be read as this moment of arrival. This poem opposes to the idea of a messianic journey to a promised land. It is detached from the traditional view of “Manifest Destiny”, commonly and often repeated in the U.S. history. By challenging the idea of a heroic past, the poem expresses a sour tone related to the arrival of the settlers. He questions the narrative of a hegemonic and idealistic national past.

The other poem to be analyzed in this section is “L’ America”. In this poem, Morrison plays with several paradoxes while exploring the composition of national identity in the United States:

L’ AMERICA

Acid dreams & Spanish Queens

L’ america (another?, lone?, voice)

Asthma child, the fumidor

Lamerica

Pearl Harbor – Shot off the road

Lamerica

Conceived in a beach Town

Lamerica

Relevance of beach or Lakes

Lamerica

Sinks, snakes, caves w/water

Florida

Homo/-sex/-uality

Lamerica

Religion & the Family

Lamerica

Plane crash in the Eastern Woods

Virginia

Bailing-out over rice-fields

Lamerica

Guerrilla band inside the town

Lamerica

Bitter tree of consciousness

Lamerica

A fast car in the night – the road

Lamerica

Progress of The Good Disease

Lamerica

(MORRISON, 1991, p. 141)

By using the constant repetition of the word “Lamerica”, Morrison creates a tessellation of the United States during the 60s. The poem brings us a narrative representation of many national elements, both coming from pedagogical and performative forces. Morrison recreates a national culture through poetical discourse by challenging the “American values”. One notes how the speaker in the poem entangles religion and family to homosexuality, or how gender questions (which were still taboo during the 60s, the same decade when the Sexual Revolution happened) are brought up in the poem. This paradoxical reality of a conservative and religious country coexisted with an innovative generation, since the youth desired to explore new sexual possibilities. “Lamerica” brings out the United States as the poet sees it; away from any standard national narrative, he shows the nation through diversity (religion and family altogether with homosexuality and urban violence, for example). The poem ends with a bitter, perhaps even sad prospect of “L’America”, a hungry-power and imperialist

country, like a car rushing into the wilderness of night, expanding bitterness on its way.

3.6. “Tales of the American Night”: Possible conclusions of the analysis

Maximilliam F. Grasher (2015, p. 5) significantly reminds us that James Douglas Morrison was a privileged white man who grew up in a wealthy family. Morrison has seen and lived the United States on its more comfortable position, the middle class one. In spite of that, by a twist of fate, he did not acknowledge or believed on the United States that his father and his family did (and other white families, as well). Morrison portrayed different views of the country, with (counter) realities and (counter) narratives. He became a political agitator (maybe rescuing the socialist roots of his grandfather). Morrison was on J. Edgar Hoover’s ¹⁴ list of people who were blacklisted by the government, for inciting violence and rebellion on the streets (GRASCHER, 2015, p. 25). Morrison produced with the ebony Rock and Roll legend of 60s, Jimmi Hendrix. He also paid tribute and homage to the Black fathers of the blues – B. B. King and Howlin’ Wolf, amongst others. He also expressed through his musical, poetical and visual legacies, a range of cultural diversity which demonstrates different prospect on the national identity on the United States. Some examples are his references to Native North-American culture (“Dawn’s Highway”), Islamic influence

¹⁴ J. Edgar Hoover was known as the first director of the Federal Bureal of Investigation (FBI), from 1935 to 1972.

(the sonority of “Spanish Caravan”) and also Latin-American influence (“I fucked the dregs”). Turning away from what one could mistake for cultural appropriation, a careful investigation of Morrison’s interviews, biographies, academic background and political acting as a public figure reveals a man who was extremely conscious of the subjects he was exploring. A man who paid great respect when attributing and honoring other cultural backgrounds – like Elvis Presley, Morrison acknowledged the origins of Rock and Roll as a musical genre coming from African American people, and *The Doors* performed a lot of covers from the first R&B singers, as for example, B. B. King and Howlin’ Wolf.

Morrison’s poetry may not be considered revolutionary since there were other Beat poets exploring similar themes since the 50s, as Allen Ginsberg, for example. But what makes it impressive is the extent of his poetry when it comes to touch audiences, the multidimensionality of his work (as lyricist, musician, poet and filmmaker) and the daring way in which he challenged both media and government. His challenging caused him to go in exile in Paris, where he died in 1971. This exile was due to a Miami show in 1969. Morrison was accused of indecency and exposure of his genitals to the public as well as of inciting chaos (something he had already done plenty of times before). The episode had legal repercussion and Morrison was judged by the state of Florida, who later considered him guilty. The media coverage of this episode caused *The Doors*’ downfall from success and destroyed Morrison professionally and psychologically – he drowned in alcohol abuse and drugs use after fleeing to France.

Figure 5 – Rolling Stone’s Original Coverage of Morrison’s public exposure¹⁵

The poet died less than two years after the episode. His last known work was “Paris Journals”, published in the book *The American Night* (1991), which contained his final verses about life, death, the persecution he suffered and the United States. Until his last days, Morrison wrote about the country where he had been born, he worried about it; he sustained his anti-military posture until his overdose death. He died without seeing the end of the Vietnam War. Morrison lived the 50s and 60s, he saw the early days of the 70s. He was always worried about the future of America, about its lust for power, criticized its expansionist features and opposed publicly to its governmental oppressive tools. Even though it has been more than forty years since his death, listening to his voice is still reasonable and necessary. The prognostic he did of the society he lived in, the country he had seen evolving and changing, all of that is still alive. The United States of America is currently going through other deep politic, economic and social crisis. Reexamining Morrison is a necessary action for these times.

James Douglas Morrison might not be the poet that the U. S. wants to celebrate, like Walt Whitman. But it is the poet that it needs.

¹⁵ **Jim Morrison’s Indecency Arrest: Rolling Stone’s Original Coverage - <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/jim-morrison-s-indecency-arrest-rolling-stone-s-original-coverage-20101210>** - access in February, 02, 2017.

CHAPTER IV

MY ONLY FRIEND, THE END: CONCLUSION

Exploring the construction of national identity through the history of United States of America is a multidimensional investigation. It is related to investigate the dynamics of power and the forces involved in materializing a homogenous discourse to an imagined community. It is also the fascinating exploration of how diversity struggles against homogeneity. While studying the formation of national ideology, the cultural apparatus is an extremely important tool to understand this process. Literature is one of the most valuable resources to investigate how different voices speak about the subject.

Literature and identity are deeply connected, since Literature can be a way to analyze and also to criticize the construction of national discourse. Specifically, poetry is a very prolific field of study to research about national identity in U.S. history. Walt Whitman is a good example of a poet which is deeply connected to the expression of (a constructed) U.S. national identity. While, many times, Whitman praised his nation passionately, we can also notice features of gender and class struggle on his poetry, mixed to his passionate belief in his country. Whitman is one example, amongst many other possibilities of how identity and poetry can be connected.

Literature brings the possibility of analysis related to its content, to its historical context and also to the authors themselves. Different voices mean different possibilities. While researching about the recent

historical context of the United States, the 1960s is a particularly intense decade, which influenced culture and changed the social values. Bringing James Douglas Morrison's poetry as a piece of investigation gives us an interesting opportunity to associate history and poetry to debate national identity in such a complex moment in contemporary U. S. history.

This research used Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha and Benedict Anderson to enlighten this connection and to clarify the meaning of 'identity' in recent academic studies. The three scholars are contemporary authors, whose works are considered cornerstones to the discussion of the new meaning of identities in post-modern world. The three were committed to investigate national identity due to the historical context they lived. Benedict Anderson proposed nations were 'imagined communities', while he engaged into the discussion of many Southern Asian conflicts, intending to explore the issue of post-colonial effects on these post-modern wars. Hall and Bhabha lived the Thatcherian times at England, when the first-minister Margaret Thatcher governed the country and adopted many xenophobic politics against marginalized social groups. Both Hall and Bhabha created theoretical works to investigate the national discourse used by the government to sustain its public politics. Also, the two latter scholars were engaged in the creation of the New Left during the 1980s. Connecting academic life to their political activism, Hall and Bhabha confronted homogeneity and opposed to marginalization of social 'minorities', standing for a multicultural and complex country.

These scholars and their works are very important to this research. They have broken the tradition of accepting national discourses as eternal and immutable, proposing a new kind of academic debate over the issue of national ideology. It is through their new theoretical approach that it was possible to investigate Morrison's poetry and to better verify his criticism over the construction of national discourse on his country.

Choosing the book *The American Night* (1991) was also a different approach when it comes to the recent tradition of studying Morrison's work on academic field. As it was reviewed on the second chapter, most of the academic work about Morrison is focused on *The Doors*, and when it comes to his poetry, most authors are concerned about the philosophical dimension of Morrison's poetical content. As their works are very important to understanding Morrison and his complex artistic legacy, there was the need to understand the important criticism made by the poet to national discourse. On the third chapter, we have seen the anti-militarism and anti-imperialist message throughout Morrison's lyrics and poetry. Even if it was discussed before, we needed a closer evaluation of the poet's contribution when it comes to the political context he lived at the time.

The poem "An American Prayer" brings an interesting view about the country. The poet mixes metaphors, symbolism and social criticism to construct a "litany" for the United States, in a long piece of poetry where Morrison talks about anti-militarism and anti-capitalism. Through that, he builds his critics to the national ideology of his country, based on the American progress. "Welcome to the American

Night” portrays a tamed society, controlled by its dreams of consumerism and its lack of engagement with life, embedded in the darkness of Night. Perhaps as an answer to that, “The crossroads” shows a poetical proposal of resistance to the capitalist system and the national lifestyle. Morrison claims for his readers to escape the rotten life of urban environment and create a new world in forests. Subsequently, he explores this violent urban environment in his poem, turned into lyrics, “Peace Frog”, where the poet explores how violence is evident on most of the city on the United States and also how it is associated with the creation of nations.

Morrison also explores how violence is related to imperialist politics of the United States towards the rest of the world. The poet opposed to the Vietnam War, exposing the brutal reality of war through the song “Unknown Soldier”, released on *The Doors’* album, *Morrison Hotel* (1970). The song tries to recreate the violent reality of war through musical resources, as the lyrics denounce the perspective of death and atrocity faced by many of the soldiers on the Asian war fields. Stephen Davis classified *The Doors’* musical hit as “the Vietnam’s era greatest antiwar song”, in “Jim Morrison: Life, Death, Legend” (2004). Since then, Morrison’s image was associated with the militancy against Vietnam War. A perfect example of that is Francis Ford Coppola’s *Armageddon Now* (1979). The movie director has chosen *The Doors’* song, “The End”, to be the soundtrack for some of the most important scenes about war. Coppola was also a classmate to Morrison on his bachelor degree course of Cinema at the University Of California (UCLA). Alongside with Morrison’s militancy against the war, perhaps their personal contact may have influenced Coppola’s choice.

The lyrics of “Unknown Soldier” are another good example of how Morrison’s criticism to the discourse of the nation is a strong element on his artistic legacy. While opening to *The Doors* audience the savagery of war, Morrison criticizes the politics of global interference by the United States. He also focuses on deconstructing the ideology of Unknown Soldiers, a strong and important part of national discourse. Unknown soldiers are not, for Morrison, part of the glorious eternity of nations. Instead, they are frightened subjects who were taken into the verge of a senseless war, dying for their country without actually choosing to make this sacrifice. Through that, Morrison is also deconstructing an old element – the Unknown Soldiers – which is a cornerstone to sustain the national ideology. It was not only in music that he criticized imperialism and militarism; he also used his poetry to do that. On the poem “I fucked the dregs” from *The American Night* (1991), he uses symbols and metaphors to impersonate an imperialist subject. This imperialist and violent voice of the poem destroys the world through violence. As the voice talks about hurting Southeast Asian children, we can connect this poem to Morrison’s attack against imperialist intervention of the government outside the United States. The poet also expands his criticism of national discourse to the cultural and historical apparatus used to create national discourses.

The poet portrays that criticism on his poems “As the rule was war” and “L’america”. The first one brings a possible reconstruction of national past, shown as difficult and violent, instead of idealized and utopist, as sustains the discourse of Manifest Destiny, embedded in national ideology. Morrison defies the dreamlike national past showing it as a turbulent part of history. The other poem brings a voice that keeps

repeating a single expression – “L’america” – mixed to many different (and even, opposed) words. This poem can be interpreted as a possible way of how the poet understands his country and its paradoxical construction, opposing different values and different forces, which coexist in “L’america”.

All these elements presented on Morrison’s poetry made possible to connect his poetical legacy to the debates about the construction of national identity and its discourse. Morrison’s poetry fits into the academic discussion about the construction of nations. According to the poet and the selected scholars this creation of nation is based upon violence, power and the imposition of a homogenous discourse. At the same time, the poetry allowed us to investigate how diversity fights against homogeneity to change national discourse and to open spaces for marginalized groups and their roles into the ongoing process of creating national identity. It is through this creation that these forces can evaluate and change ideas of the homogenous national identity.

This research was done in order to investigate how Morrison’s poetry is connected to this process of discussing and questioning national identity, how this creation was shown and criticized on the poetry’s work, alongside with the theoretical basis of Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha and Benedict Anderson. The crossing of their theoretical ideas, the historical context of the 1950s and 1960s alongside with Morrison’s poems allowed this research to evaluate the construction of national identity on the United States and to reevaluate the contribution of Morrison’ poetry as social criticisms. Furthermore, this research showed

that nations and their discourses are not eternal entities bigger than time and people. Nations are discursive creations, based on purposes and intentions. The fascinating part about national ideology and discourse is that it can be debated and changed. Poetry is an important space to do that and Morrison's poems proved themselves to be the proper space to do so.

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