

II

Commentaries

Dissolution and Flow in Morrison's SOLUNA

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"A consciousness disjunct / Being but this overblotted / Series / Of intermittences . . ."

(Pound, *Maunderley*)

"white diagonal lines / ravel without gathering . . ."

(Morrison, *Sleep*¹)

Madison Morrison has been working on a poetic project so vast in scope as to be, it may seem, difficult to "encompass" even through a combination of critical approaches. ("The compass / opens / black and white triangles / collapse into white spheres . . ."²) But what less could we expect from a literary life's work that aims at capturing or expressing "the divine"? SOLUNA (SOL/LUNA, Sun/Moon) represents the first two of seven stages, each a god's or goddess' name, of the cosmological epic **Sentence of the Gods**. The gods who utter and are uttered by the **Sentence** are SOL, LUNA, ARES, HERMES, HERA, APHRODITE, EL, all interconnected by initial or final letters: the final A of LUNA serves, for instance, as the initial A of ARES, the final S of ARES as the final S of HERMES. This crossword-puzzle "jointness" or "doubleness" of the key letters, one of which is the binding L of SOLUNA—echoed on another lexical-morphemic level³ by the **Sentence's** ultimate sequence, EL (He, It)—suggests differentiation as well as fusion. Sun and Moon must, after all, be distinct before they can combine in the rhythmic cosmic cycle (also that of waking and sleeping) "spelled out"⁴ by the words which utter/are uttered by the letters of their names: the first ten words of *this* sentence (corresponding to Sol, Luna, Ares) are "Sleep O Light U Need A Revolution Each Second."

Any attempt at interpreting SOLUNA must then naturally begin with the moon/sun/moon (sleep/waking/sleep) or sun/moon/sun (waking/sleep/waking) cycle or "revolution" which is repeated on various levels, with various tones or frequencies of reverberation, throughout the **Sentence**. This cyclic repetition of opposites implies both conjunction and disjunction. Becoming, change or flow has been taken, after all, ever since early Greek thought in the West and the Chinese *I Ching* in the East as an identity of opposites. Thus Heraclitus (at least on Hegel's much later reading in the *Science of Logic*) sees the Logos or "measure of change" as the identity of Being and Non-Being; Lao Tzu's Tao can be read in very much the same light (or same obscurity) as Heraclitus' Logos, for it has its earlier ground in the *I Ching* where heaven/earth, light/dark, male/female, *yang/yin* polarity becomes the cosmic life-flow. But Morrison's SOLUNA is the first stage of the **Sentence** and thus, we may assume, in some sense the stage that generates (or procreates) the following stages, or expresses within itself the subsequent divine names or

words. Therefore in the context of this initial stage (actually a double-stage) we must at the outset also consider the notion of “creation” itself.

Does sun generate moon, or moon generate sun, or are they not both, like Earth and Heaven at the opening of Hesiod’s Theogony, generated out of the yawning gap of Chaos?⁵ The figure “yawning gap” is not idly used here: the Greek *Xaos* is tied back to the Indo-European base *ghen*, “to gape,” whence Old Norse *ganla*, “howl” and “gum,” by extension “yawning gap” or “mouth.”⁶ Then we might more naturally think of Hesiod’s chaotic “background” of Earth/Sky as a primeval disorder or mixture, out of which Earth and Sky are “distinguished” or “ordered,” but Cornford among others takes Chaos as a Gap, as the paradoxically *pre-existing difference* between Earth/Sky. Similarly Lao Tzu’s Tao is both a *wu hun ch’eng*, “thing confusedly formed” (perhaps a Chaos) and the *t’ian di chih jian*, “Sky-Earth difference.”

The notion of change, flow or becoming as a cyclic repetition of Nothing/Being (dark/light, moon/sun, earth/sky) is already a notion of the difference between the opposed terms, and this might seem the most obvious starting point for a cosmogonically-grounded interpretation of SOLUNA. Indeed the above-quoted lines from near the beginning of *Sleep*, “The compass / opens / black and white triangles / collapse into white spheres . . . ,” lend themselves to just such a reading. Yet the movements of “opening” and “collapse” here might also be seen in terms of a chaotic or disordered background that subsequently self-orders into the opposed terms (sky/earth, white/black, light/dark, sun/moon). Chaos not as difference but as indeterminate background⁷ for a process of self-ordering or self-generation is also suggested by the opening line of *Sleep*, the first book of SOLUNA: “white diagonal lines / ravel without gathering . . .”

In the chaos theory of contemporary physics as explicated by Serres all “bodies” self-order through repetition (thus becoming temporally irreversible) out of random (and temporally reversible) flows of atoms, back into which they will again decay; all orders are thus temporary orders of disorder, just as disorders are temporary disorders of order, and the “direction” of flow (chaos to order or order to chaos) may be so hard to determine that the two directions are virtually indistinguishable. Furthermore, for Serres all sounds/languages/meanings are tuned in out of background noise like stations out of static on a radio and “decay” back again into this noise.⁸ The sound or meaning, which emerges from noise, is in effect also, at least at its highest degree of refinement (as in tuning), human logic or rationality; and yet in Serres’ view (see *The Parasite, Genesis*) hyper-rationality becomes nonsensical redundancy and thus begins to decay back into disorder. We thus have, in effect, three flows, the second two of which may be all but indistinguishable: the random flows of primordial or “dark” chaos, the flow from dark chaos to order through the

repetition of elements, and the flow from hyper-order (“blank” chaos in Serres) back to disorder.

The most obvious way of integrating these two views of flow—flow as the rhythmic cycle of sun/moon alternation (difference) and flow as a process of self-ordering out of disorder followed inevitably by the process of dissolution or decay back again into chaos—would of course be to take the rhythmically alternating “sun” and “moon” here as themselves representing or embodying order and disorder. This could as well be pictured as the Big Bang theory still dominant in astrophysics: the universe began with an explosion into ever-expanding entropic disorder, which at some point will be followed by contraction back into a single, highly-ordered source or “point.” Morrison’s SOLUNA can, I think, be read along the lines of such a model of cyclically repeating order-and-disorder.

Here I will first present an extended close reading of the initial three sequences of the first (“progenitor”) book of SOLUNA, *Sleep*, in which the logic of excluded (A or not-A) and/or included (A and not-A) *middles* will be foregrounded. I will then present a much more concise and generalized interpretation of SOLUNA’s middle and final books, *Light* and *A*, one that will bring into play the model of order-disorder repetition, now seen also in terms of the problem of included and excluded middles. For if sleep is the disorder that precedes the moment of self-ordering (rational consciousness, wide-awakeness, the light in “*Sleep O Light*”), it is also the disorder that follows this moment, and as such it is the middle between the two lights (a night between two days), which also precedes (as disorder) and generates the possibility of day/light/being; its counterpart is the wide-awakeness of sun and light, which similarly stands (as the blank chaos of hyper-order on the Serresian reading) between two darknesses, two states of Sleep. *Sleep* itself can then be read as a “middle” both excluded (the process of logical ordering which becomes indistinguishable from *Light*) and included (the “logical disorder” of the primal beginning which, as we shall see, is repeated with variation in SOLUNA’s sixth and final book, *A*).⁹

Sleep

*Sleep*¹⁰ opens with “10 FINGERS,”¹¹ which itself opens with these lines:

white diagonal lines / ravel without gathering / a shingled roof / flat grey cloud / fine
funicular / sides / saturated red / basin below / dawn / herringbone suit / mended jacket
/ back to the sleeper / an ax / hacking branches / out of the tree crotch / wine without
cheese

The “funicular” followed by the “sleeper” suggest that we (the speaker but also reader) may be on a train blasting forward: the view up-track takes the form of “white diagonal lines” that “ravel without gathering”; this suggests the train as spacecraft (see the final segment of *Space Odyssey* “Jupiter and Beyond the Infinite”), before we land abruptly, breathing loudly within our helmets, in a seventeenth century French drawing room. Beginning *in medias res*, in the midst of a life’s journey, is an epic motif of Homer’s *Odyssey* (“Sing in me, Muse . . . the story of . . . the wanderer, who . . . after he plundered . . . saw the townlands”), nicely echoed in Pound’s rendering of the aftermath of the Circe episode at the opening of *Canto* 1: “And then went down to the ship, / Set keel to breakers, forth on the godly sea, and / We set up mast and sail on that swart ship . . .” Such motion is further condensed and attenuated, away from narrative into pure stream-of-consciousness, into pure phenomenological experience by Williams at the opening of *Paterson* II.1 (“Sunday in the Park”): “Outside / outside myself / there is a world, / he rumbled, subject to my incursions— / a world / (to me) at rest, / which I approach / concretely.” It is still further condensed and attenuated by Morrison, whose own series of intermittences here lacks even a subject, just the onrushing form of space itself, “lines / ravel without gathering”¹²), motion condensed to its bare (objective) reality, visual space at time *t* (the moment). Abstract painting that freezes the moment; sculpted form. Lessing: painting catches the total body but only at a single moment, poetry catches only the partial body at each instant but moves through points of time. Morrison’s “sculptural forms” in *Yesterday* echo Pound in *Mauberley*, where he wants not a “prose kinema” but the “‘sculpture’ of rhyme.”

But Morrison’s “sculptural form” is after all (and not just in Pound’s derogatory sense) a “kinema,” a dynamic flow already decaying or “unraveling” into a series of still shots, that is, a force field of “diagonal lines” that “ravel without gathering / a shingled roof / flat grey cloud.” The Indo-European base of “shingle” is “(s)k(h)end,” “to split, whence scatter,” and in its second sense “shingle” means “large, coarse, waterworn gravel as found on a beach,” “an area, as a beach, covered with this.” “Ravel” as a noun means “loose thread” and so as a verb (just as “thread” becomes “to thread” and perhaps also “to unthread”) has a self-contradictory or self-deconstructing, aporistic sense: it means both “to make complicated or tangled, involve” and “to separate the parts, especially threads of, untwist, unweave, unravel” where the second meaning can suggest both “to make clear, disentangle” (as in scientific analysis) and “to become unwoven, fray” (as in chaotic decay).¹³ The “fine funicular / sides” reinforce such a reading: a “funicular train” is drawn by cables (“funicular” means “of, worked by or hanging from a cord or cable”; *funis* is “cord” or “rope,” “funicle” is “little cord or fiber, thread” (something very *fine*) and specifically a “funiculus” (“a small bundle of nerve fibers; a division of the

white matter of the central nervous system; *obsolete*: the umbilical or spermatic cord”¹⁴). The “sides” of the train-car itself are already decayed/decaying into “white lines,” into a kind of microcosmic or microscopic structure of elements; these “sides” are already “saturated” (completely filled because thoroughly penetrated, as with two liquids or substances that fully intermix, because each has dissolved into the other and so itself become neutralized.) Forms (figures) are here then always already in motion and always already displaced, or (like night/day, moon/sun) intermixed. But this displacement or intermixing, perceived all along by an absent subject, is also the displacement/intermixing of subject and object— “light / across the subject / light yellow an / occasional rose / light is bent by gravity / brains work in a similar way / experience / displaced into new forms . . .” (FINGER 3)—where it must create (at least at the atomic level) problems of (Heisenbergian) “uncertainty.”

We get “cables” again, and (space) vehicles (vehicles moving through space), and the problem of macro/microscopic perception at the opening of *Yesterday*, the second sequence of *Sleep*, cast in the context (“yesterday” as perhaps the 1950s, to say nothing of the total accumulated past) of satellite “spying”:

A mule satellite floats over Naples / hearing its own brays with rabbit ears. / Its radish blue, blue-black eyes are dotty. / Its stonily terrified reddish face / nibbles the tip top of Texas, bats at / the flat sear-face rabid inner head, / turning the motorized platform . . . / If eyes are large human eyes with lashes / (emphasis on woundability), / over Broadway oozily secreting / needlepoint mist . . . / the globular excrecences are men . . . / But, they deliquesce . . .

Here we have the macro/microcosmic/scopic point of view of a spy satellite encircling the earth, or of someone on top of the Empire State Building looking down at the pavement below. Or perhaps the perspective of an alien or non-human life form, a giant or miniscule insect: in FINGER 4 we get “a golden / slug dot dot / the fish on fire / antennae retract . . .” But who is spying on whom? Back to the subject-object dialectic: “Across / the street, someone is observing spies. / You give yourself away” (“PRESCRIPTION” in *A Warfilm is a Peacefilm*). “Deliquesce” (from *liquere*, “to be liquid”) returns us to the fine (biochemical) analysis of what someone’s (say a rabbit’s or insect’s) perception might actually look like: it means “to melt away (in the course of growth or decay);” “to branch into many fine divisions, as leaf veins;” “to become liquid by absorbing moisture from the air.” The first and second senses suggest our analysis of the opening lines of FINGER 1 (that finger pointing perhaps at moon or satellite) in terms of the (un)raveling of (life’s) funicular threads or shingles; the third suggests clouds in the sky but also reminds us of that other earth-circling, night-spying orb, pulled by the alternating (funicular) cables or (centripetal/fugal) forces of gravity, LUNA, who (especially in her feminine aspect) is associated with liquidity, the chaotic madness of the tides.

But this cosmic deliquescence (dissolution or intermixing) must be seen in the context of the “orogeny” that Morrison introduces into the later “ESSE” (“being” or “essence”) section of *Yesterday*:

This is the essence of California / by California . . . Orogenesis by God. It starts high / but levels into a form of notation / familiar in electric circuitry . . . / breaching black international water. / Nonetheless swarter fluids surround it, / (Anamnesis.) Under the shelf, eyes lit, / vinyl shrouds entomb perfect astronauts. . . . a missile hidden in the white wrinkles . . . / poofing at the people. There. / Diagonality, the water tank. (11)

“Orogenesis” is defined as the “formation of mountains through structural disturbances of the earth’s crust, especially by folding and faulting.” Thus we get a variation on the destruction-creation cycle or *aporia* of “dissolution” (creation as a synthesis in which two substances, sun and moon, man and wife become one); the earth’s surface covers (and belies, disguises, misrepresents) its own inner or underlying forces, its *essē*: the solar heat (blasted into molten lava) within earth’s core, the constant shifting of tectonic plates (“the plane / shifting / carries cargo” in FINGER 4), its own (un)raveling diagonal lines. Earth too is a spaceship, like the moon with its mountains and pock-marked craters; orogenesis is the earth (or the moon, the sun, the moon-sun) turning itself inward/outward; earth too (like the moon-satellite) “bats at / the flat sear-face rabid inner head,” just as in FINGER 4 the “touring car / turns inward / waves of universal matter / beat against a shelf . . .” Missiles may be hidden down in underground caves, in the “white wrinkles” of earth’s face, but this orogenesis, while “starting high” (the perception of height, the gasping experience of high altitude but also the “seriousness” of such a scientific process, or of God’s own Genesis), “levels into a form of notation / familiar in electric circuitry” (we might think of the horizontal zigzag symbol for a resistor): we come back to the (postmodernist) play of literary self-consciousness.¹⁵ So the “mule satellite . . . hearing its own brays with rabbit ears” casts the madness of high tech, of a cold war threatening the thermonuclear sort into a rather absurd or black humor context—self-destructive high-tech satellites are braying jackasses, clown-like figures—so “California / by California” and “Orogenesis by God” suggest postmodernist high-camp (“poofing at the people”), as in the jargon of fashion shows (the parading down the ramp of Venus or an eroticized Luna?): “Jeans for casual wear by Calvin Klein,” “The new look in evening gowns by Versace,” perhaps too “Windows 2000 by Microsoft” and “747 Bombers by Boeing.” And if LUNA is the (feminine) illusion of high fashion’s veiling, she can also be the play of deception, or folly, or the nonserious—Erasmus’ “Lady Folly,” or Nietzsche’s “Truth is a woman.”

But I want to return to the opening of FINGER 1, those “white diagonal lines” whose “raveling” makes merely (the fine chaos or *bricolage* of) a “shingled roof / flat grey cloud,” in order to pick up what may seem another “thread” although surely it is closely interwoven. These “lines” of space or substance which, like the *aporia* of (un)raveling or (dis)solution, “cut both ways,” as too on

the “herringbone suit” and in the arc of a swinging “ax” can also be lines of time (figuring orogenesis) and, more specifically (as its subjective “notation”) of memory. Is FINGER 1 perhaps autobiographical, giving us not just a memory-slice of the speaker at time t (wearing or seeing someone in a “mended jacket,” his “back to the sleeper,” that is, to the sleeping subject, but also a distant memory, childhood memory, something rather early in the train-trip of life? Perhaps our moment of awakening is like that of Proust’s speaker at the beginning of his search for *temps perdu*, a very gradual becoming-conscious, a “waxing” (like a new moon) out of darkness/nothingness? Or was this *Sleep*-speaker’s train-memory that of his father? Which takes us to the strikingly “Oedipal” (castration-complex) image of the ax “hacking branches / out of the tree crotch”: perhaps we may tie it to Freudian, pre-Oedipal or Oedipal stages as well as to Pound’s aesthetic (and also Oedipal in precisely Bloom’s sense) “Pact” with Whitman: “I come to you as a grown child / Who has had a pigheaded father; / . . . It was you that broke the new wood, / Now is a time for carving. / We have one sap and one root— / Let there be commerce between us.” But: “wine without cheese”? Christ-like transcendence without bodily immanence? FINGER 2 at any rate explicitly suggests fragments (as with the young Stephen at the opening of Joyce’s *Portrait*) of early childhood memories, thus reinforcing and further “clarifying”¹⁶ our sense that FINGER 1 may be autobiographical:

“I know you’ll make the decision” / nothing imperative / *l’embourgeoisement de la poésie* / x
 = y / a row of bricks / at the back fence / keyboard / alternating red and white / the
 “natural” world / child in his mother’s bed / a car passes up the hill / bedroom dormered
 / acceptance / baby carriage / infant in it / face and hand a unit . . .

Again the play of red against white, repeated with variation (as on a piano’s keys) from FINGER 1: a “natural” observation of the objective world reduced to the purely abstract pattern of our perception (abstract painting, Williams’ red wheelbarrow/white chickens); the interplay (in childhood perception) of fence/keyboard works well. We might contrast this with that “darker” vision of early childhood (and its memories) from the end of *Yesterday*: “. . . swarter fluids surround it, / (Anamnesis.¹⁷) Under the shelf, eyes lit, / vinyl shrouds entomb perfect astronauts. . . .” But what about the opening lines, ending with the equation “x = y”? Perhaps an authority figure, the would-be poet’s father (Stephen Daedalus again) telling him he has to be practical: in order to make a living, he cannot be a pure artist but (even as artist) must be bourgeois. Of course we could give this paternal advice a positive and indeed “moral” interpretation: the father is merely counseling moderation, “reasonableness” in the usual sense, the Aristotelian and Confucian “golden mean.” (For Aristotle “virtue is rational,” thus a form of “moderation”; each virtue is a “middle way” between two extremes, as courage between cowardice and foolhardiness; we think too of the Socratic *sophrosune*, self-knowledge and self-control, and the

Confucian *chung yung* or middle way.) While Morrison may be regarded as mildly ambivalent with regard to (Poundian) “Confucianism,” especially in his post-SOLUNA phase, in FINGER 8 he evokes in this context “a Chinaman’s back” (a Chinaman’s “return passage,” which here completes the circle): “military prudence / vanity / golden meanness / tit for tat.” This is clearly a “cut” at “golden meanness” (the term “meanness” already working both ways, an *aporia*-term) or at least, again by way of a purely abstract, logical framework (and correlatively an ironic tone), a subversion of its “sense.”

At any rate the immediate context of FINGER 2 already points us toward a “negative” reading. *L’embourgeoisement de la poésie* is obviously going to be the inevitable commercialization, prostitution of pure art. Just as Morrison’s “sculptural forms” plays off Pound in *Mauberry*—the “modern age” demands a “prose kinema,” not the “sculpture of rhyme”—so his “old Kentucky banks swollen through worn tires, / timeless plastic waters always flowing” (also in the “BESSIE” section of *Yesterday*) plays off Pound’s “All things are a flowing / Sage Heraclitus says; / But a tawdry cheapness / Shall outlast our days. / . . . We see to *kalon*¹⁸ / Decreed in the market place.” Does the speaker then mean with “x = y” that “pure art” inevitably devolves into “not art” (becomes “middle class,” through a process of *embourgeoisement*), but that it is ironically (for this demand is sent down from the greatest patriarchal heights) “nothing imperative,” as in “x becomes not-x”? Clearly in *Sleep* Morrison is concerned with this question of the “excluded middle”—Aristotle’s Principle of Identity (A = A) is also called the Principle of Non-Contradiction or Law of the Excluded Middle (not “A and not-A,” where “and” is the “middle term,” but only “A or not-A”)—and so he says in *A Warfilm is a Peacefilm* (“RALLY”): “You have squeezed until it hurts / but found nothing in the middle.” One reading here is surely this: “you” (the reader and/or speaker) cannot find the mystical truth of logic-transcending paradox, with its “middle term,” no matter how hard you “squeeze together” the two poles or horns of a dilemma (paradoxically, as then we would be trying to *squeeze out* any middles, not *find* them). This reading of the “equation” in FINGER 2—“Art is something bourgeois,” “Art cannot be (pure) art”—suggests a self-reflection on Morrison’s highly abstracted imagist style. If these “diagonal lines” embody a radically immanent objectivity, they simultaneously point toward transcendence: such radical immanence (the world seen microscopically) is already transcendent. Here then we jump beyond that “golden mean” (or “meanness”) of bourgeois reality, the compromise of the “practical” world, the world as conventionally perceived, to the “included middle” of paradox which points both ways, toward immanence (moon) and transcendence (sun).¹⁹

The “nothing in the middle” passage from *A Warfilm is a Peacefilm* (and we note this title’s own included middle, that is, logical contradiction), occurs in the third sequence of *Sleep* and therefore follows the “orogenesis” of *Yesterday*

and its hidden missiles, techno-war paranoia and clown-like absurdity: “We are concerned about your age, / for you’re an unextraordinary thirty-three. / Some say you’re not typical. Your demeanor says / otherwise. You have squeezed until it hurts / but found nothing in the middle.” Again we hear an authority figure’s (father figure’s) voice: perhaps a military officer or recruiter if not indeed the father himself telling the young soldier/anti-war activist, the young man or “son” that he is really quite ordinary (despite what others, perhaps his teachers, may think); the son is 33 and, the father chides him, does not know what he’s doing with his life. In any event the 33-year-old, though in the middle of his life, finds “nothing in the middle” of it. Carravetta takes this as the crucial point of the whole book: “SOLUNA is a search for ‘sense,’ he says, “at that fatidic *mezzo cammin* [middle of the way] . . . the narrator ponders what he is all about, juxtaposing the external image he is recognized by with what he feels is his inner perception or attitude. Wringing the knot further, he finds there is nothing there to rest his soul . . . on.”²⁰ But if it’s the chiding father, it could also be God-the-Father, for Christ-the-Son was 33 in the year of his crucifixion: if Christian theology regards the Son as the middle-term between God and man (between Father and Holy Ghost) then to “find nothing in the middle” could express a skeptical view of the Christian faith, one which combines the more mundane sense of “life’s emptiness”—I myself (the Son) do not exist, “I was / And I no more exist; / Here drifted / An hedonist” (*Mauberley*)—with the logical notion of “no middle” as “no paradox,” leaving us only the super-rational (Serresian) world of modern high-tech, a “hollow” world (“nothing in the middle”) devoid of divine meaning, of (the possibility of) mystical transcendence. But the 33-year-old “son” can also be a Christ-figure—here we might think of Jesus’ despair in the wilderness before his final period of preaching. Is the bourgeois father telling his son that he can never be a “pure artist,” that he is “ordinary” even though “some” (perhaps his disciples) “say you’re not typical” (with a play on “type” and “anti-type”)? If we read the poet-son as the Son of God unrecognized as such by all but his disciples²¹ then the irony cuts both ways, for now who is crazier, the blind Father or the Son with his delusions of grandeur, indeed his delusions of (an absolutely logic-transcending) “divinity”?

Carravetta’s *mezzo cammin* gives the “nothing in the middle” a Dantean interpretation, which fits our sense of *Sleep* as being (among other things) an “autobiographical” work; it also reinforces our earlier observation that *Sleep* begins *in medias res* as do the epics of Homer, Vergil and (with their increasingly open form) Pound and Williams. Dante begins his *Inferno* Canto 1: “When I had journeyed half of our life’s way (*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*), / I found myself within a shadowed forest (*selva oscura*), / for I had found the path that does not stray.” Whereas most commentators claim that Dante should be 35²² Carravetta apparently assumes him to be the Christological age of 33. The

following lines of “RALLY” support a Dantean reading (walking in the dark forest of his own sin and corruption, Dante encounters three symbolic beasts) but also a “Christian” one; I suspect Morrison is combining the two:

. . . walking down a country road, / talking quietly to your “believer,” / the pebbly underfoot is shaded . . . / . . . In your ear / motorcycles enter, more than you imagine. / . . . A fiat brings it to an end. / You wince, offering your crust in appeasement, but / there is no stopping. Another twosome / makes an entrance. . . / . . . two final figures / veer toward you on their vehicles. / Once in the shadow, they are courting in the sun. / They’ve dismounted and they apprehend you. There’s been / a “fire” in the “tank” . . . (13)

The “two figures” and “shadow”/“sun” suggest Dante’s narrative; “crust” and “fiat”—which plays on both the Italian car and the dictatorial (see the political “RALLY”) or divine “decree”—suggest the Bible. A “fiat” (from Latin *feri*, “to become,” “come into being,” thus “Let it be done”) is an absolute (and absolutely arbitrary) command: “You’ve broken the law!” (anti-war protester perhaps but also Christ before the crucifixion), “You’re under arrest!” (“they apprehend you”). Thus it may be God’s own fiat: “My Son must die,” “Isaac must be sacrificed,” “X must be (X or Y).”²³ One reading: the speaker here is Christ on the verge of the crucifixion (God’s order); the “two final figures” might then be the two thieves framing him on the cross. “Two final figures . . . Once in the shadow, they are courting in the sun”: we also think of the crucial (“final” or “ultimate”) archetypal game of SOLUNA, the interplayed or interwoven (though here in rather “sinister” fashion) figures of sun/moon, sun/shadow; “courting” could have the sense of “spatializing” (by verbalizing the noun “court”) as well as the more obvious verbal sense of “loving” or “desiring,” thus already “moving toward” (as in a vehicle) or “becoming.” Then on the metaphysical (as against political/revolutionary) plane, “‘fire’ in the ‘tank’” mixes, blends, dissolves fire/water, sun/moon archetypes. This fusion or dissolution calls us back to “There. / Diagonality, the water tank” at the end of *Yesterday*: taking “diagonality” as an indirectness, an obliqueness that inter-fuses the “perpendicular” opposites—that is, as the “included middle” of logical contradiction and paradox—we get a wider context for reading *Sleep*’s opening “white diagonal lines . . .”

But the “tank,” a container for such (dis)solution of opposites, could also be its “vehicle.” “Vehicle” is from Latin *vehere*, “to carry”; “way” is from the Indo-European base *wegh*, to go, whence again Latin *vehere*, to carry, ride, and the Greek *ochos*, “wagon.” “Veer” is from French *virer*, to turn around, related through Latin to “vibrate”; “trope” (“figure”) also of course means “turn.” Thus a “vehicle” is a means of carrying/expressing our thoughts/feelings (a “form” or again a “container”), but it may also be the “content,” the thoughts/feelings themselves “contained” or the “flow,” the force or motion of expression: the “poem” may be all three simultaneously. Then the above passage—“. . . two final figures / veer toward you on their vehicles. / . . . They’ve dismounted . . .”—arguably moves, through an intense linguistic and

literary self-consciousness, past its own rich network of allusions and beyond any literal or “serious” traditional interpretation, such as by metaphors or figures of speech, thereby also moving beyond (dismounting from) their own “vehicles” (the “final figures” here taken as authoritative interpretations). But we must still take seriously, despite their seemingly absurd nature, these “statements”—self-contradictory or paradoxical fiats perhaps, like God’s demand of Abraham that he kill his son.

In FINGER 3 at the opening of *Sleep* we get a sur-Poundian displacement (slight displacement of classical imagism): “light is bent by gravity / brains work in a similar way / experience / displaced into new forms . . .” Again the figure embodies a motion: a moving vehicle displaces a medium through which it moves. Thus in FINGER 4—the “fingers” suggest both the “intention” (pointing) of a meaning and its “displacement,” the signifier-signified split—we get the car:

A golden / slug dot dot / the fish on fire / antennae retract / the compass / opens /
black and white triangles / collapse into white spheres / the plane / shifting / carries cargo
/ through a Pacific mist / an early ’30s touring car / turns inward / waves of universal
matter / beat against a shelf . . .

The “early ’30s touring car” can of course be a 1930s car but also the speaker (“son”) in his early 30s, he who sees his in-between or “middle” life as meaningless because lacking a true middle (substance), thereby lacking perhaps the transcendence that he seeks. Thus in “turning inward” we assume that he is trying to reach just such a higher spiritual state. And yet where Emerson feels that the “currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God,” here the “waves of universal matter” merely “beat against a shelf.” We can take it as genuine and bitter disillusionment—the middle that would have allowed the transcendence of self-contradiction and paradox is repressed by these vainly “beating waves”—but also as parody (of earnest meditation techniques, more specifically of Emerson and perhaps Whitman). Here we are back inside the constraining enclosure of a vehicle, an old car, train car with its “shingled roof” and “funicular / sides,” variation on the high-tech satellite circling the earth and going mad in its self-enclosed infinite Kierkegaardian inwardness, “batting” (at) its own “inner head.” Yet the disillusionment (or dissolution) of the “excluded middle”—only logic and rationality, only imprisonment within a computerized, “flat sear-face rabid inner head,” which precludes spiritual transcendence through paradox—is played off against the equally bitter disillusionment of paradoxes when they are stupid, mindless, absurd, perhaps making you even more crazy: the son being told that “art cannot really be art” or in the last stanza of *A Warfilm is a Peacefilm* (“HOSTELRY”): “The hotel is a prison . . . / Before they all come in to look, / you read a plaque above the glass. / It says, ‘A Warfilm is a Peacefilm,’ / which makes you even madder.” Anti-war movements depend on “showing war,” and

their effect may be the opposite of the one desired: to encourage war. Or more simply it's that wise old adage: "to preserve the peace war is necessary." Here "A = not A" gets closer to the madness of Orwell's "double-think" in *1984*: closer to the brainwashing mantra, "war is peace."

But we have already suggested that these "vehicles" can carry multiple senses: a vehicle is a limiting container or "body" ("touring car") with its contents (mind, soul), but as the middle-term or "carrier" the vehicle is also the "way" (Tao, path) toward spiritual truth, transcending logic by the mediation of opposites. The vehicle displaces, when in motion, the very medium through which it moves—the air or water, the context of its meaning, a sort of larger vehicle. Vehicles may "carry weight" but they also "shift through mist": they not only shift or change form within the surrounding medium of mist (meaning), but their shifting may cause the mist to shift, as its shifting may cause theirs. And what if this is sun/fire dissolving within moon/water, and/or the reverse? Water would be on fire, fire would be drowned in water; "the fish on fire" suggests fish (perhaps carrying too the weight of a Christ figure) as a vehicle moving through water and burning within the water; but then paradoxically the water is also burning, perhaps its initial burning (seeing it the other way around, in a *Gestalt*-switch) set the fish on fire. Fish gliding through sea, sun ("golden / slug dot dot . . .," the ellipsis suggests open-ended motion) or satellite/moon orbiting the earth: ". . . antennae retract / the compass / opens / black and white triangles / collapse into white spheres. . . ." A repetition with (geometrical) variation on, or a fuller "reading" of, "white diagonal lines / ravel without gathering . . ." And Dante's vision of God: "As the geometer intently seeks / To square the circle, but he cannot reach, / Through thought on thought, the principle he needs. / So I searched that strange sight. . . .": the ultimate dissolution of logic, transcendence of the included middle. Or Dickinson (378): "I saw no Way—the Heavens were stitched— / I felt the Columns close— / The Earth reversed her hemi-spheres— / I touched the Universe."

Light and A

Having focused thus far on *Sleep*, let me now turn briefly to a consideration of *Light* (the fusing book of SOLUNA) and *A* (its final letter and book). This means stepping back for a moment and recalling the over-reaching interpretive model that I suggested at the outset, that of a cyclic repetition of disorder-order. The book of *Sleep* is crucially concerned with the raveling/unraveling of "lines" (squares, triangles, circles, geometrical forms), their flowing from dissolution through order to super-order and back again into dissolution; *Sleep*, that is, already rehearses for us the whole cyclic process of order-disorder-reordering. The very term "ravel" is an *aporia*-term that means both "gather

together” and “unravel” simultaneously, and thus might be said to embody in itself that “middle” which is here at stake. *Sleep* is the chaotic pre-order out of which SOLUNA and the rest of the **Sentence** will be generated, and as such it is the included middle of the paradox, of the mixture, of indeterminacy itself; but it is also potentially the excluded middle (A or not-A) of pure logical order itself, which becomes in the extreme form the blank chaos or redundancy of hyper-order. After all, as lines of poetry that “ravel” *Sleep* is already the process of self-ordering, “sound” that has emerged out of background noise and is already moving toward the nonsense of empty abstraction.

Yet it is *Light*, the book which fuses SOL and LUNA, that more truly embodies this (excluded) middle of pure abstract rationality. The middle “L” (repeated or “echoed” at the end of the **Sentence** by El, He, the Judaic God or Yhwh) of SOLUNA mediates between Sol and Luna, sun and moon but also, in a sense, between sun and sun; it is the middle between two lights; as the purest form of “light” (rationality, formal logic) it becomes a more concrete embodiment of the Serresian blank chaos, that is, the “hollowness” of purely rational thinking, the nonsense or “mere noise” of formal abstraction. *Light* opens:

1 If the globe eye is / irised, all colors of the rainbow pulled on / the pupil's pole, /
 you might think / night smokes or the spout / drains or the barrel ends / in the room. /
 Such / velleities. / In fact: /

2 I'm a / different person / . . . I'm homesick without your hand. / The day of the
 week is missing. (87)

“If the globe eye is / irised, all colors . . . / . . . pulled on / the pupil's pole” then we do indeed have the absolute blankness of “pure whiteness,” for white is the combination, the mixing of all colors; the “pupil's pole” suggests just such an extreme limit, at which we have moved beyond the possibility of rationality and have returned to disorder, the “smoking night” of chaos. The light is of course also *not* the light—“*Sleep O Light*”; between the light and light, between sun and sun, between the A and A (A = A) of formal Aristotelian logic there can be only the darkness of excessive brightness or blankness. “Velleities” are “the weakest kind of desire or volition,” “a mere wish that does not lead to the slightest action.” With “Such / velleities. / In fact: / . . .” one thinks again of Pound in *Maubertley*, who too is in effect no longer himself (“I'm a / different person”), is “missing” (his own middle, body, consciousness or self missing), “A consciousness disjunct / Being but this overblotted / Series / Of intermittences . . .”

Morrison's *Light*, stanza 20 begins: “I live in one room. / I live in two. / . . . I live on the second floor in a single room / I live on the third floor. . . / . . . I have just arrived. I know / by the etching on the wall / I've been sitting all night in the hall.” The sun-moon as Sleep of pre-existence, pre-consciousness is here the sun-moon of Light whose middle is truly emptied out, the darkened

sun which has “been sitting all night in the hall” awaiting its diurnal return. This waiting, this *suspension* is also a *velleity*, weak will or lack of will, as in stanza 25: “Now this / is bombardment: / . . . Or is it? / In the wide / spiral opening gravity pulls / their missiles back. / But I’m powerless too, / without the will / to kill.” Suspending the political (particularly anti-Vietnam War) meanings here, we could take this gravity that “pulls back” as the sense of a weakened (or non-existent) will power, a Light that (itself pulled back by gravitational force toward the very sun from which it radiated) is forced to wait, suspended in space.

But whereas *Sleep* combines several poetic forms or modes, some much more “prosaic,” *Light* is homogeneous. Its form is purely modernist-“abstract”: the rather short lines of varying length contain numerous breaks and discontinuities (“excluded middles”), yet here each stanza has exactly ten lines, and is thus in some sense perfectly “complete” within itself, as perhaps the L (the middle, the dark-light) that joins SOL and LUNA must be totally self-contained. This book is in one sense perhaps Morrison’s “empty cathedral” of *Light*, stanza 38: “The eternal cathedral / is a plotless stage. / Its empty nave masses / the pupils in its transepts. / . . . The eating / question teaches the / end of the story.” Of this play (drama), “Gaunt but conscient, / the father has observed / the final act. In a / hallway encounter he / wrinkles his brow at / the interpretation. / Preoccupied, he enters the room / without knocking, / a thick white handkerchief / held before his face” (stanza 40). Suspension again, moon-sun or sun-moon hanging in the middle, but here cast in the light of the ambiguity of meaning, the uncertainty of interpretation. The suspended light, held back by gravity, is also a self-reflexive light. “The / reflection reverses / grey to beige . . .” (stanza 90). “The fork / pokes at an / undiscovered source” (stanza 163). “The arch . . . / details of white, a / cathedral frame, the / other as the echo of / an echo, its subject, the / natural scene. A branch / goes out past the viewpoint” (stanza 200).

The last book, and letter, of SOLUNA is *A*; this is also the first letter of the following sequence and god, ARES—whom we might expect to be an embodiment, on some level, of chaos, randomness, dispersion, dissolution. The first sense of this *A* must indeed be that of the indefinite article itself inasmuch as SOLUNA and ARES (SOLUNARES) enunciate (“spell”) the phrase, “Sleep O Light U Need A Revolution Each Second . . .” Once we think of *A* as possessing all the open-ended indefiniteness and thus *freedom* of an indefinite article, which after all can “define” or point to *anything*—a book, a stone, a god, a common noun or proper name—it seems fitting that this book is in fact made up of a wide assortment of seemingly “found” texts (*textes trouvés, poèmes trouvés*), ostensibly “non-poetic” and “non-fictional” texts, such things as catalogues, advertisements and announcements, which the poet has encountered in the course of his everyday life in 1970s Oklahoma and faithfully “transcribed.” Or

perhaps the transcription is not absolutely “faithful” after all; perhaps the found texts have been rearranged or artistically transmuted. The reader’s uncertainty as to what degree these “texts” have been so modified (as clearly at least some of them have been) is a crucial part of the meaning of *A*, that is, its “indeterminacy” or “indefiniteness.” Thus we are often left in a sort of suspension, wondering to what degree these texts have been (re)formed, if only (as may be usually the case) through cutting, editing, “rearrangement” of what was already “there” rather than through the poet’s “addition.”

Thus in “TARGET”:

“The Sale” kisses / high prices goodbye / Chapter 1: “The Sale” Comes to Your House
 / . . . / Trike in bright red metal / Wading Pool in polyethylene with / Polynesian designs
 / . . . / Chapter 2: Indoor Cents Appeal / domestics / helpers / . . . / Chapter 4: / Every
 Body / Needs “The Sale” . . . (233-235)

Morrison claims that even the “Chapters” were already present in the sales catalogue, so this passage may serve as an example of what is often done so effectively in *A*: we may want to think these “Chapters” have been added, to make an originally mundane “commercial text” seem like a “literary text,” yet if this is our definition of the latter then the former was already “literary.” This points us toward the more general issue at stake here: why couldn’t a sales catalogue in fact be just as “literary” (or as “aesthetically well-formed”) as a “poem” or “novel”? What are the boundaries by which we discriminate? By breaking it down into these discontinuous, juxtaposed fragments, this in fact becomes a modern-abstract poem: why would the “Trike in bright red metal / Wading Pool in polyethylene with / Polynesian designs” be any less effective or “valuable” as poetry than comparable lines from Williams (“The Red Wheelbarrow” comes to mind), Pound or Morrison? Yet, with its chapter divisions suggesting a narrative form—perhaps this catalogue is an “epic” one—the condensed lyric is unexpectedly “expanded.”

And so in “ADS” it seems an actual “found text” has become a “modern poem” simply through the disruptions or discontinuities created by the line-breaks: “So. You’re very / 1973. / Helpless? Never. / Your man may be all / thumbs. But you’re not. / You can solder toys and / fix your own plumbing” (219). We are led to question our own aesthetic assumptions: *why* do we think such discontinuity makes what might have seemed mundane into “art”? In “NEWSWEEK” the ironic and self-parodic effects of the defamiliarization gained through “editing,” though always subtly present in these texts, are perhaps more obvious: “Kathy Rigby / competing in / Olympics / Detroit’s heroin / subculture / the President / in Shanghai / meeting with / Chou / en Lai / Secretariat / superhorse / the running / backs / world trade” (218).

“LEGAL QUESTIONS” is something else; here Morrison has listed a series of (quite literally) legal questions which either he has read and edited or which, perhaps, he has thought of: “If you found a / wallet on the street /

could you keep it? / . . . / Is a check in pencil valid? In tomato juice? / . . . / In a separation / who keeps the stereo? / . . . / How often can you / change your name?" (221) The question "Is a check in tomato juice valid?" makes perfect sense on the first or empirical level: if we wrote a personal check using tomato juice for ink, would the bank still accept it? The problem is that we can't easily picture any actual legal situation or "context" in which this question would arise, so we guess (but are not certain) that it is an author-generated question.

This notion of "context" may be crucial here. The "uncertain" textual status of all these pieces in *A* is really a matter of the wider context from which they have been "taken," in which they have been "found." This brings us back to that interpretive framework in which *A* would be read as a form of order-as-disorder and/or disorder-as-order whose widest "background" (widest context or frame) is somehow indeterminate, thus in effect "noise." Yet this is precisely the sense in which the indefinite article "a" is "noisy" (chaotically free, horizontally open-ended in meaning or reference): it refers to the most general case ("a" book can be "any" book). Thus like static on the radio it "means nothing," is nonsensical. In the same way, for Hegel in his *Logic* we must begin with the concept of absolute Being, which because it can mean Anything actually means Nothing; thus we synthesize Being and Nothing and arrive at Becoming (change, flow).

A also forces us, in effect, to ask this question: because of the very "factual" nature of these texts, their empirical grounding in immanent reality, do we come to know more about the actual time and space (place) of SOLUNA's author at the time he wrote its books, about his and thus SOLUNA's empirical "history," than in the very "personal" *Sleep* with its childhood memories and frequent allusions to the life experience of the speaker? Clearly we come to know his physical environment better in one very limited sense, while in many ways *A* is much more impersonal and "public": it deals with advertisements, announcements and newspapers. Although in *Light* the subject is "displaced" from itself we still have his or its (radically abstracted or "disjunct") subjectivity; the poet's or speaker's self is absolutely lacking in *A*, for what we see is simply what "he sees" in the most objective sense.

And yet because what he sees is the world of the media, public life, popular culture in which he is enmeshed, there *is* also a strange sense in which the impersonal speaker of these public texts is speaking to *you*, the reader. This very sort of deception is a factor in the power of advertising. Thus in the opening text of *A*, '73-'74, "COSMOPOLITAN":

Step Into My Parlor / Women Artists Today / How Sexually Mature Are You? / . . . /
Get Thin and Stay Thin! / . . . / Come to Me in Silence / The Inhibited Man / Long-
Distance Love Affair / . . . / Indecision / Thinking of a Used Car? / . . . How I Fight
Insomnia . . . [my emphases]

We assume that this material was taken directly from a contemporary issue of *Cosmopolitan* (the lady's fashion magazine). To get the very personal and indeed "erotic" effect of the "My," "Me," "Man" and "Love Affair" here, it would help to hear (as I have) this poem read, preferably in a woman's seductive voice. We are again forced to reflect: what should have been the most "impersonal" or "long-distance" sort of "love affair" (between reader and speaker) has, as ideally perhaps in all forms of advertising, become the most "personal." Analogous effects have always been captured by written letters and now are omnipresent on the internet, where the random "shotgun effect" of email and even chat room messages gets increasingly mixed with that of overt advertisements, not a few of them explicitly pornographic. We could read this sort of personalizing of the radically impersonal as, again, a function or meaning of the indefinite article "a."

Coming back to our interpretive model of cyclic order-and-disorder, we may more generally relate this *openness* of the "a" (or "an") to primordial disorder, chaos, out of which bodies, selves, worlds self-order and back into which they decay or dissolve. For if *Sleep* reaches its limit of hyper-order with the middle book *Light*, it returns in a certain fashion to (primordial or dark) disorder with the final book *A*. But the central point of chaos theory, made quite clear in Serres' reading of it, is again that every order is a potential disorder and vice versa. While then these reformed "found texts" (or perhaps "refound texts") may seem "disordered" (darkly chaotic) in certain ways—above all we are not certain if there is any unifying frame or (aesthetic) form for the whole book of *A*—they do nonetheless have another *kind* of coherence. And again, the special form of *A*'s poems (and thus of *A*) makes us question why we would think this any less "aesthetically proper" or "poetic" a form than that of canonical or academic "poetry."

Perhaps then the way in which what seems in one sense less formed also seems in another to be even more formed, or at least equally well-formed, can be interpreted via chaos theory: the highest level of form must inevitably decay back into disorder and formlessness, out of which it will again arise; the most "refined" poem is potentially, in a sense, a mere "found text," and may at any point decay into just such a text; furthermore, the disjunctive or disjointed abstraction of modernists like Pound, Williams and Morrison (in *Sleep* and *Light*) may be virtually indistinguishable from that of found texts once the latter are very slightly edited, broken into discontinuous fragments. Thus one might ask with much "modern" poetry (that is, "poetry since Mallarmé" as Foucault says)—for example with *Light*—whether there is any more apparent connection between the words and phrases of their "hyper-ordered" stanzas than the names/terms/phrases in an apparently "random" found text.

And therefore, as one would already have predicted, just as *Sleep* has elements of blank as well as dark chaos and *Light* has aspects of darkness as

well as blankness, *A* could not be taken as merely a “dark-chaotic” (purely random) text; it also demands to be read as blank hyper-order. But this may not be only the blank hyper-order just alluded to, that of modernist (fragmented, discontinuous, abstracted and thus “hyper-rational”) verse; it could also be—or is it finally the same thing?—the blank hyper-order of postmodern media (TV, magazines, advertising) with their hyper-efficient means and techniques of communication, of which Serres speaks in *The Parasite*. Whereas we may have to puzzle over the meaning of modern poems, what could be more rationally clear and *efficient*, as “communication to the reader,” than “Be cool! Be smart! Buy a Toyota Camry today!”? In the first place we *already know* that an ad is trying to convince us to buy something, whereas we may not have a clue as to the intended effect or meaning (if there is one) of a “poem.” This pure efficiency of communication, pure factuality becomes in effect the highest or purest form of “realism,” unmatched even by Homer or Hemingway. As Sergeant Joe Friday used to say in the 1950’s TV show “Dragnet”: “Just the facts, ma’am, nothing but the facts.”

J MADISON OR SARAH MORRISON

Mittie Parish \$3.75 / Safeway \$31.50 / Parking Violations (OKC) \$2.00 . . . / Star Pharmacy \$4.16 (SOLUNA 225)

PROGRAM

8:00 pm, Tuesday, January 13, 1976, Civic Center Music Hall / Ainslee Cox, Conducting / Marga Richter, Pianist Copland / Fanfare for the Common Man / *The National Anthem* Ives / The Unanswered Question / *Intermission* (278)

In one sense, then, *A* is a perfect example of what Serres has called the “information death” and “terminal equilibrium” of (blankly chaotic or non-sensical) hyper-order, that is, of the maximally efficient A-to-B communication that is unblocked by any form of “parasitic noise.” As Paulson suggests in *The Noise of Culture*, it is in fact precisely the works of art (and most obviously literary texts) that are “noisy,” and whose noise is necessary to regenerate or revitalize (reorder) a too-rational, too high-tech society; this is precisely why the (presumably) greatest forms of poetic or literary realism could or would not be as “purely realistic” as the above-quoted passages from *A*, they will inevitably be “noisier.” But of course, as with *Sleep* and *Light*, we really can only read *A* both ways simultaneously, as hyper-order and as noise, for chaos becomes hyper-order and hyper-order becomes chaos. Yet one tends to see *A* in the first place as a kind of repetition with variation of *Sleep*’s primordial chaos: the cycle repeats itself, returns upon itself.

Conclusion: SOLUNA and EL

FINGER 5, near the beginning of *Sleep*, includes the line: “‘T’ the capital of ‘the’ / a sentence / the last letters visible / the middle repressed . . .” Again, we begin from the excluded (or repressed) middle, the excluded “vehicle” (means or way): no golden mean (ethics), no paradox (logic), no meaningful middle-life . . . or perhaps too no middle to the whole Morrisonian **Sentence of the Gods**. For the mention here of “a sentence” makes us think of the **Sentence** itself, which begins with SOLUNA but ends with EL, “el” the Spanish for masculine “the” which can thus also suggest “he” or “He.” Moreover, the sound of EL is the same as the letter shared by SOL and LUNA, which “joins” them together. On the highest plane “El” is the Hebrew name (letter) for “Jehovah,” and so we might say that the last stage in Morrison’s extended project ends with God. But as this is a self-repeating cycle, it should also end with the sound with which it had opened. The real opening sound SOLUNA, the one that “reverberates,” is the L-sound, pointed back and ahead to by the final EL: Morrison intends that the **Sentence** be read both forwards and backwards, and so the word and letter at its conclusion points us back to its beginning. If we take *out* the middle of SOLUNA (the L, the EL, the “the”)—remove the medium or carrier through which the vehicle or figure of God, of transcendent meaning, emerges or manifests itself, dissolve away the very point of sun/moon interface which interfuses or dissolves sun/moon into one another—we arrive at the logical either/or, “Either A or not-A,” “either sun or moon.” If we leave *in* the middle (the “el” that now also occurs again at the *end* of the *Sentence*) we get the “both/and,” included middle, joining of paradox, wedlock of sun-moon interface.

According to the traditional correlation—which Morrison may well be subverting if not reversing—sun will be male transcendence (God, heaven, the other-worldly) and moon will be female immanence (immediate presence of the earthly, material world, this space, this time, the now-moment of our perception). Moving slightly away from our chaos-theory model to perhaps a more traditional interpretive model, then, sun-moon intermixing or “dissolution” will be the immanence-transcendence identity spoken of by many if not all mystical traditions, certainly by Taoism and Chan Buddhism. And then the “El”-God that joins the pair becomes just this point of intersection or interface. But we would need to bear in mind that, over against the “seriousness” of SOL’s (patriarchal) Truth, of the quest for (transcendent or absolute) truth, meaning and enlightenment, LUNA can represent another (and relatively non-serious) truth. This is Erasmus’ “Lady Folly” again, and/or Nietzsche’s “Truth is a woman,” and/or “Truth is the self-difference of truth,” the difference between dogmatic and relative truth, the man-woman difference or rather identity-and-difference of French feminism.) Thus in the Morrisonian poetics of SOL-

UNA's (sun-moon) identity-and-difference the "L" not just of "light" and "love" but also of Nietzschean and postmodernist "laughter"—irony, parody of serious poetic-metaphysical texts (even of Pound himself), above all self-parody—inevitably comes into play. Perhaps immanence-transcendence interface as "orogenesis": or, on earth's, mind's or text's surface, "what goes up must come down," since it has been from the start already undermined. The "El" is very "elevated" as phallogocentric "God," as the "elevated train" or "car" of (a deadly serious) transcendence—like the written shape of "L" itself it "starts high / but levels into a form of notation / familiar in electric circuitry. / An amp, detention camp, an ohm, a home."

I would like to conclude, as befits orbiting satellites and touring cars, with a brief cross-cultural (lunar-solar) glance at *Sleep's* *aporia*-term of "(dis)solution," the counterpart of "(un)raveling." In Chinese (*I Ching* and Taoist) metaphysics there is a notion of *chin* (盡)—"limit" as simultaneously "penetrating" or "filling to the limit" and "emptying out" or "exhausting" which I think may parallel "(dis)solution." *Chin*-limit seems to have a more dynamic sense than the Western "limit" as (nominal) "line" or "boundary" ("white diagonal lines" may be moving toward the dynamic sense), just as the negative *wu chin*, "no limit" or "unlimited" of classical texts can be interpreted as a dynamic "no filling (emptying/exhausting) to/of the limit." There is also in classical Chinese a *ying* (盈)²⁴—"filling"—sometimes it means "waxing" of the moon—which can also mean "overflowing" and thus, as temporal (future) projection, "emptying out" or "waning." A third *aporia*-term would be *chung* (中), "middle" (中) with the water radical on the left—was the middle included or excluded here?—which means both "flowing" and "empty" (in the sense of "flushed" or "washed out"). So in the *Lao Tzu* Chapter 4 we get the line, paradoxical on any reading: "Tao *chung*, use it but *pu ying*, no *ying*." The last two words are variously translated: "never need to fill it" and "never overflows." Thus: "Tao is empty, use it but never fill it," and/or "Tao always flows, use but never fill," and/or "Tao is empty, use it yet it never overflows," and/or "Tao always flows, use it yet it never overflows." But we must remember: *ying* is also the *waxing* of a new moon—blackness or nothingness, ". . . swarther fluids surround it, / (Anamnesis) . . ." ²⁵—into solidity and being, shape and figure, future and destiny.

Here we might think also of hexagram 29 in the *I Ching*: *k'an*, (坎), "water" or "pit," "abyss," which is *k'an* over *k'an*. The *k'an*-trigram or "middle son" has the solid *yang* ("male," "creative") line in the center with the broken *yin* ("female," "receptive") lines on both sides, and thus should be (on the face of things at least) less prone to "essential dissolution" than would be its counterpart *Li* (離), "fire" or "clinging," the "middle daughter," with the broken *yin* line in the center—"nothing in the middle" again—and solid *yang* lines on the outside. (The "lines / ravel without gathering . . .") The last two hexagrams of the *I* are

“water over fire” (“After Completion”) and, finally, “fire over water” (“Before Completion”). Eternal recurrence, *omega* to *alpha* and back to *omega*,²⁶ ending before it started.

K'an (hexagram 29) often has something to do with the moment of danger, as in “falling into a pit” and overcoming danger. And I am especially struck by the reading for “nine in the fifth place”: “The abyss is not filled to overflowing (*k'an pu ying*), / It is filled only to the brim (*ping*, ‘even,’ ‘level,’ ‘peaceful,’ ‘safe’).” A traditional comment on this line goes: “*k'an pu ying*, for the central line is not yet great.” Wilhelm ties this to another line: “Water flows on and nowhere piles up.”²⁷

Notes

1. These are the opening lines of *Sleep*, from the first section of a poem called “10 FINGERS” (subsequently referred to as FINGER 1, *et al.*). *Sleep* is itself the opening book of a sequence of six published as *SOLUNA: Collected Earlier Poems*, Sterling Publishers (P) Ltd., New Delhi, 1989. All subsequent quotations are from this edition. (*Sleep*, *O* and *Light* were first published by the *Working Week Press* in 1981, 1982 and 1983; they are reprinted, together with *U*, *Need* and *A*, in the 1989 Sterling edition.)
2. From FINGER 4 of *Sleep*. (See previous note.)
3. Here the “L” or “El” (Hebrew letter/name for Jehovah) marks the interface between SOL and LUNA. (See the discussion of “El” at the end of this article.)
4. Thinking too of “spell” in the sense of “magic spell” and of “period.” “Spell” is tied to the IE base (*s)pel*, “to speak loudly” (from which comes the Greek *apelein*, “to threaten, vow”) and hence magic formula or incantation, but also to OE *spelian*, “to substitute for, akin to *spala*, “a substitute”—as perhaps in rhythmic alternation. The sense of *apelein* as “vow” or “threat” suggests the possibility that writing this virtually impossible epic is the “life Sentence” the author has given himself.
5. More precisely, Hesiod’s Earth and Eros come directly out of Chaos, then Father Sky out of Mother Earth; Earth/Sky are then joined by Eros (perhaps the impregnating rain) and the gods are generated from this “union.”
6. Perhaps then even the Christian notion of Christ as Logos or Word of (spoken by) God is an hypostasis of the primitive and primordial “gaping mouth.”
7. Anaximander’s *apeiron*, out of which all existing things come to be and back into which they return, is “unlimited” or “indefinite.” This *apeiron* is for Cornford the hypostasis of Hesiod’s mythic personification of Chaos; for Heidegger (*Early Greek Thinking*) Anaximander’s fragment is the “oldest fragment of Western thinking.”
8. It is interesting to note, in light of this model, that the Biblical Tower of Babel story takes God as fragmenting mankind’s common or “universal” language into many discrete languages (so men could no longer communicate with each other, thus could not build their tower up to Heaven, transgressing into God’s proper domain), has as prototype a story in the much earlier Babylonian epic *Gilgamesh*. In the latter, which serves as model for both the Biblical Flood (God destroys the earth because mankind has become “evil”) and Babel, the gods can no longer stand the “noise” (“babel”) made by humans down on earth, which prevents them from sleeping, and so they destroy earth with a flood.
9. The first five books are mixed lyric and narrative verse forms, whereas the concluding (and, alphabet-wise, “re-commencing”) *A* is a series of poetic works that cast into verse various “found texts” drawn from the empirical world of 1970s U.S.A.). “Cataloguing” is an epic technique that, along with various forms of repetition, originates in *Gilgamesh*, the Bible, Homer and other early narrative poems; Morrison’s literalization of this technique seems both serious and parodic.
10. Again, “sleep” (appearing at the opening of SOL) can be correlated with both sun and moon. Morrison claims that SOL can have feminine connotations and LUNA masculine ones; Lévi-Strauss identified 26 variations on the masculine-feminine forms of Sun and Moon in primitive cultures: masculine-masculine, masculine-feminine, feminine-masculine, androgynous, and so on. The cover design of the Sterling edition also suggests such complexity. Thus clearly the poet means to break beyond rather than merely reverse stereotypical (patriarchal and phallogocentric) correlations.

11. Yet there are only nine fingers “present” in the text, only nine of them pointing at *this* moon: one of them *is* after all “missing,” perhaps already enlightened or “absorbed.” Morrison knows well the Chan Buddhist *koan* (puzzle): when the finger points at the moon we may be left with just the moon (enlightenment, for now the mind has disappeared or dissolved into the moon), or with just the finger (pointing, seeking mind). Lacan and Derrida come to mind when we speak of “just the finger” (mind, field of signifiers).

12. We think too of Mallarmé in “*Autre Eventail*”:

*Une fraîcheur de crépuscule
Te vient a chaque battement
Dont le coup prisonnier recule
L'horizon délicatement
Vertige! Voici que frisson
L'espace comme un grand baiser . . .*

13. The aporia or self-contradictory, self-deconstructing force of the term “ravel” is foregrounded by Dickinson in Poem 937. Here she gives us her own version of a “consciousness disjunct”:

I felt a Cleaving in my Mind—
As if my Brain had split—
I tired to match it—Seam by Seam—
But could not make them fit.

The thought behind, I strove to join
Unto the thought before—
But sequence raveled out of Sound
Like Balls—upon a Floor.

These “Balls” are generally taken as balls of yarn; while the speaker is given the traditionally feminine task of sewing, this “Seam” (or edge) can suggest “textual” (as well as mental) “margin.” For a Derridean reading, see Stevenson, “Raveled out of Sound,” National Taiwan Normal University’s *Studies in English Literature and Linguistics*.20 (June 1994): 145-164.

14. The “white lines” again; the umbilical (and funicular) cord could suggest the omphalos, tied to the earliest Greek conception of the Delphic oracle. This was “spoken” first by an earth-serpent goddess and only later by Hermes or Apollo: “Apollo, after killing Python (and presumably also his mate Delphyne), seizes the oracular shrine of Mother Earth at Delphi—for Hera was Mother Earth, or Delphyne in her prophetic aspect.” (See Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, London: Penguin, 1992, 80.) This omphalos-umbilical cord connection is played upon by Joyce at the beginning of *Ulysses*, chapter 3: “Ineluctable modality of the visible . . . thought through my eyes . . . Rhythm begins, you see. I hear. . . . Creation from nothing. What has she in the bag? A misbirth with a trailing navelcord . . . the cords of all link back, strandentwining cable of all flesh. That is why mystic monks. Will you be as gods? Gaze in your omphalos. Hello. Kinch here. Put me on to Edenville. Aleph, alpha: nought, nought, one.”

15. And perhaps too a parody of Emerson’s transcendentalist notion that “Nature is a symbolic language,” that we can read a (human) meaning into all nature’s “signs.”

16. Williams in “Spring and All”:

One by one objects are defined—
It quickens: clarity, outline of leaf . . .

17. Plato’s doctrine of “recollection” from the *Meno*—before birth (in a body) our souls have seen a divine vision of absolute ideas (“Good,” “Beauty”), of pure Logos (“A = A”), thus our inborn capacity to “think logically”—revised by Wordsworth in the “Intimations Ode”: if for Plato we forget the vision of Beauty at birth (but can be later “reminded” of it), for Wordsworth at birth we have the clearest memory of Beauty and then increasingly forget it as we grow older.

18. “Beauty” in Greek. (As in Plato’s ideal “Beauty” of the *Symposium* and *Phaedo*.)

19. Dickinson’s “Tell all the Truth but tell it slant— / Success in Circuit lies” raises a closely related issue: do we say that poetic (paradoxical) language, with its “included middle,” tells us the (absolute, unthinkable) truth indirectly (“circuitously,” “slant”)—since we are not being “logical” after all—or that, by overcoming (the impediment of) logic, it does so directly? I tend to think Dickinson (and Morrison) do the latter: sudden enlightenment means we get hit over the head by the Zen master’s stick. (“Slant” in another sense?)

20. Peter Carravetta in “Another Genesis of a Poetica Cosmographica,” 4-5.

21. In Dostoevsky’s “Grand Inquisitor” story Christ returns to earth but the Catholic inquisitors cannot

believe it is truly He, so He is put to death a second time.

22. *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces* 7.1 (Lawall, Mack et al, eds., New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 1999), whose translation (Allen Mandelbaum's) of the Comedy I have just used, gives two reasons for the 35 (1303 note): ". . . Dante was thirty-five in 1300, the fictional date of the poem. The biblical span of human life is seventy (see Psalms 90.10 and Isaiah 38.10)."

23. While "x = y" suggests the absolute power of the arbitrary yet absurd (paradoxical) command, e.g. "You must kill your son;" Derrida's understanding of the logocentric "violence of difference" implies that even the foundation of Logos (formal logic), "x = x," is arbitrary (based on some form of absolute authority as "origin") and thus ultimately absurd. This view has connections with Serres' chaos theory: the tautological redundancy ("x = x") of super-order (high-tech super-efficiency of late capitalism, "Microsoft, Inc.") commences to decay into disorder; Poe in Eureka ("God" as the "Principle of Absolute Irrelativity") also plays with this idea.

24. 盥 and 盈 share the min (皿)-cup radical on the bottom.

25. The darker fluids of anamnesis (recollection of eternity, see note 17) are also the amniotic fluids of the mother's womb, surrounding the embryo/new moon. (See note 14.) Chinese shih (始)-"origin" has woman on the left, embryo on the right.

26. Morrison thinks of *SOLUNA*'s concluding book *A* as a return-move to the beginning. The last word of *A* is the Spanish "europa" (ending in an "a")—and the poet regards the "w" of the opening word of *FINGER* 1, "white," as a Greek omega. Thus *SOLUNA* goes from omega to alpha and, in its cyclic repetition, if not also simultaneously, from alpha "back" to omega. ("Europa;" associated with the sea and moon, was a goddess raped by Zeus; one of their sons was Minos, ancient king of Crete. Graves, 770, speaks of Minos as being "? meinos osia, the moon's creature.")

27. *I Ching*, trans. R. Wilhelm/C.F. Baynes (Princeton UP, 1950), 534.

Quick Abstract Thoughts Upon Reading *O*

Mark Sonnenfeld

As a steady mist of colors and temperatures and nostalgia fix.
Another winter from the complete stranger paces. Was this room
(I am reading *O* in) too air-conditioned? The A-1 wheel effects
for whom a bad heart chamber is pumping wants to know about
“center” or spirits? while lasting meetings squared off clay words
inside the tent tag line even deep into the sherman furnitures?
It’s this is plainstory “underneath” poetry post knee-crack tissue
typed hedged 8th road out of a photo carnival to stem no accident a mile
ex-blackout rams/lifts geo-IDs to just work around mostly cloudy wearers
are not yup at the downtown store. For the people. For what should it
put the glass box? —anyone lake islands? —Louis Armstrong radio? —roll
back economics? Asking the driver ever since to lean out a distance
author has this all numbered in stops meeting society rhythm just sells to
cigarettes a distraught detective leftside to a cloud, rightside to amnesia,
dark cells, belowside IQ historic public wheel “got spare on their face”
begs for more so windy five days in the past month to the emotional
support fishing well. Hello umphie America back and forth. Hydroelectric
flux. Pulls viewers in one kind delight iron bomb thing. Yes.

The Darkness of *Light*

Ron Phelps

I

Madison Morrison's work has a characteristic hallucinatory nanoprecise brightness, a jubilant anti-nihilism not unworthy of Nietzsche, like an acrylic photorealist mural of a strip mall in Provo, Utah. Yet his masterpiece *Light* is serendipitously hampered by a mysterious greyness that emanates from the poem's profound duality: thriller and lullaby, for it is hectically active yet quietly and soothingly ruminative, matter-of-fact yet impossible, classically symmetrical yet chaotic as a Mandelbrot set, user-friendly yet taking us to the remote coldness of Uranus where nothing can live.

Of course lots of cool writers have this quality—Milton, Kafka—but in *Light* the poet has devised a technique that has enabled him to compress his suspect material into a previously unknown state, somewhat as tabletop physicists can now chill the gas clouds of certain elements to create the Bose-Einstein Condensate. The counter-intuitive properties that are manifested in this academic, expensive phenomenon will be my metaphor for the surprising pleasure the reader finds in a great and enigmatically consoling poem.

II

Light is as much a narrative poem as *The Ring and the Book* or the Homeric incest-tragedies of Robinson Jeffers, yet as with the author's travel writings there is the kind of subversive anti-narrative found in Robbe-Grillet, where narrative at its most intense, even stereotyped, sublimates into pure form, pure contemplation.

An attack on *drama*: the author has, admirably, admitted he dislikes Shakespeare, is bored by the Bard. He says he likes certain great nineteenth-century novels, but I don't believe it. His idea of great painting is the old Chinese landscape masters, where human figures shrink, as they say, into insignificance.

The **Sentence of the Gods** isn't anti-humanist, far from it, but man's rusty old comedy of love and politics, seen from the detachment of enlightenment, takes on a genial glow that is unnervingly uncanny: is the author really an australopithecine like the rest of us? The **Sentence** has apparently been written by God, for whom our tawdry dramas—our egomaniacal divorces, our quasi-meaningless Presidential election crises, our struggles to cough up the mortgage payment, our terror of death—are sweet farces, a video after the Chinese has been delivered.

It is this detachment combined with a naïve respect for the material that makes *Light* one of the great poems of the twentieth century: it is breezy,

effortless, *as if the writer can do no wrong*, a perfect formula for producing a pathetic amateurish goulash, or the *Duino Elegies*.

III

The poem consists of 216 stanzas, each stanza containing ten lines. It is a kind of journal, or even novella, of the poet's dreams. The endless "action" of the dream-narrative, a kind of violent epic, when confined in the rigorous prosodic format and the calm style of tale telling, produces a most peculiar omelet of adventure and serenity. The effect on the reader is tranquilizing, rather like those morbid murder mysteries set in the dreaminess of Oxford; *Light* is the perfect bedtime book, to be read as one nods off, listening to the winter wind about one's cottage. Arising from sleep, it conveys one to sleep.

The poem disdains to interpret the dream. It is instead a *trope* of the dream, struggling to produce an equivalent for the divine imagination that emanated from the dream in the first place. An expanse opens, admitting Newton, Kennedy, DiMaggio, Miller. The dream of a dream. As in our actual dreams, there is nothing but sex and violence. Yet there *is* no sex and violence. The word "violence" does occur in stanzas 82, 125, 186: the *word*, the referent, not the act. Violence here is an abstraction. Yet, as in Homer's *Iliad* there *is* plenty of violence, and it cannot be escaped.

IV

Protect your children with all your might:
But don't protect them from The Light.

(On seeing the film, *The Others*)

Light is a freakish amalgam, a cross between the summer's blockbuster action movies and Shostakovich's string quartets in winter:

You are the sort of
little girl who answers
without an answer.
You have an invitation
to the tea, but at
the tea you have
nothing to say,
your eyes twinkling with
a Christmas invitation.
"——," you say.

The last line is the best thing of its kind since Rimbaud's *Madame xxx installed a piano in the Alps*. The point is that the line is *orally unreadable*, and therefore the reader is forced back to the conventions of prose, a phase shift that shatters the boundary between poetry and prose (and predicts the transition to prose that occurs in the larger poetic epic with *Revolution*.) Or perhaps the dash means "nothing," since the poet says, "you have / nothing to say." Nonetheless, my point remains.

And who is this "you"? You? The poet? (But the poet is constantly represented by the narrative "I.") Is it the confusion of identity, of *meum* and *teum*, which we expect in dream? The little girl is a dream-character, like Alice, and it is she who is being addressed.

V

The poem, clearly, is *mad*. Yet it doesn't have the forced doctrinaire madness, say, of *The Waste Land* or of Alienation Rockers, or of the boring artlessness of Automatic Writing, or sterile experiments with syntax and typography, or the naïve primitivism of Outsider Art. A successful madness must truly usurp Reason, as in Rimbaud's *Illuminations* (which is written in false prose), it must be exquisitely formal and impeccable to achieve subversion, and poetry. The goal, as always, is to achieve poetry.

Madison Morrison is rightly edgy about the label "Surrealist," unhappy with such an historical cliché. He does not want to be pigeonholed. Or, we might say, there *is* no Surrealism. (André Breton, the dogmatist, was not far wrong when he said, "I am Surrealism.") For Morrison true Surrealism ends with Lautréamont, or Jarry, or Roussel. Or perhaps even earlier, with the clinical experimentation of *automatisme psychologique*, or with Freud's first recording of dreams. For him Surrealism as an esthetic is a schtick.

But as with Romanticism, there's a Surrealism that's stereotyped and a Surreal-ism that's always *becoming* adequate, that's fresh and new. In this sense we are all Romantics. We are all surrealists. *Light* cannot entirely escape the label, because the entire poem is based on the poet's dreams, and dream, along with psychological automatism, was one of Breton's two "methods." In his early phase Morrison is and is not a surrealist.

VI

The poet dreams, as always; it is, after all, her profession. But an unpleasant iron law torques the fantasy into reality, like psychoanalysis annihilating a pretty masturbation fantasy. There is no escape, there is no hiding, and hence the uncomfortable *quidditas*, the this-ness of *Light*. There is no moonlight in these

dreams, no Albert Pinkham Ryder diffusion, no serenity. Pierrot is not Lunaire. Instead this is *Sleep* awake: fully aware, nervous, without relaxation.

Yet this can't be right; the very greatness of *Light* in fact lies in its meditative tranquility. To read *Light* is to break through to what reading this poetry shit is all about: to become both sleepy *and* transcendently heightened, both goofy *and* enlightened. Therefore the dreams must be read. *Light* is not a joke. This is not rhetoric: the dreams are a *matter of fact*, a daily insanity, quotidian not queer. And yet they are not boring, as our dreams always are. How to explain this "dream poem."

For dreams are not poetry. Dreams are not real.

Except in *Light*.

VII

Like the author's violent disclaimer, that he is no surrealist (he *will* admit to being *surréaliste*, but only in Breton's most doctrinaire, programmatic sense), the poem itself is violent. As with the dreams that we all dream, *Light* is full of horrific violence. And, of course, sex. (The poem is full of examples.) And yet its prevailing mood is one of Olympian serenity, of the same quietly alert meditativeness that prevails throughout the **Sentence of the Gods** and is, in fact, its "message," if any. This is the opposite of psychoanalysis, which whips even the blandest dreams into a frenzied foam of lust, fear and murderous hatred. Freud once, sexually, in fact lewdly, interpreted a patient's simple dream about flowers until, as he smugly remarked, she didn't see the dream as so "pretty" any more. "But the dream *was* pretty," Wittgenstein protested.

VIII

Yet there is also a *triumph* over sex and violence: as, again, in the **Sentence** as a whole, the author achieves a transcendental triumph over the quotidian through the perverse strategy of embracing it. In *Light* his predilection for "objectivity" serves him especially well. Jung enslaves us to our dreams, but Madison Morrison, like Freud, liberates us from them.

A weakness, perhaps.

IX

Light is a "corner book," exquisitely poised, in the system, between SOL and LUNA, and as such stands between Sun and Moon, between Day and Night, between Reason and Fantasy.

Possibly this accounts for its magnificent dual nature, for its incomparable, dynamic, contradictory mishmash:

1. The somnolent, contemplative, dreamy atmosphere combined with a turbulent and frequently violent plot (the dream stories)
2. The soporific regularity of its stanza form combined with its crazy and jazzy *mise-en-scène*
3. The hieratic, dignified style combined with a goosy aleatoric reliance on the contingency of whatever the dream throws up

As in the radically central books comprising HERMES, the author seems safely and snugly ensconced (sleeping?) in the Middle, as if he can do no wrong.

X

Of all the author's flights *Light* obviously presents the greatest temptation to psychoanalytical interpretation, yet there is something unworthy, vulgar about deconstructing it in this way. As usual, MM evades classification (hence his marginalization by the literary establishment); his dream journal is not a dream journal at all and seems to be a simultaneous display of the Unconscious, the abstract and sublimating Superego, and, most important, the House on the Borderland of the preconscious, that nebulous place just before sleep where the inside of our skulls begins to fur over with "nonsense."

Unlike most of the bright and cheery *Sentence*, *Light*, like the universal unconscious it portrays and comments upon, is a sewer of violence, fear, sexuality and a constantly frustrated lust for power. Hence it is my favorite of the books, since in helpless opposition to the author I am a card-carrying Goth (a Goth being a person who thinks Darkness is Good). And yet, like the in situ digital video travel books, *Light*, too, is real; isn't a dream a phenomenological reality, a given even just like a *poème trouvé* in *A*?

So Morrison fans may find themselves surprised to be dipped, immersed, in a *film noir*, shown, as in a dark theatre, with scenes like these:

I meet a mustachioed man.
I push him in the air
off the railroad platform.

Without asylum they
emerge to be beaten
by truncheons of fortune
wearing blue uniforms.
.....
..... The
disobedient walk the
sidewalk in fear.

As a man
of fear and violence I
will only shoot to kill.
The armed assailant
takes many bullets,
before his death
is ascertained.

Madison Morrison the Murdering Monster, the Terrorist? The terrorized? More is revealed here, perhaps, than in the memoir *Magic*, or in the self-suppressed “divorce journals.” Yet *Light* is also, like a Tiffany lamp in a dark, quiet study at midnight colorfully flowing with the poet’s characteristic humor and with his infectious, almost Henry-Milleresque *joie de vivre*.

XI

The poem does what we do precious little of, and that badly, in our dreams: it *thinks*:

. . . Maybe “Gulliver?”
would be a good idea. We
need more music in
our lives, not elegance.
your world is not the
same as Europe.

Action and contemplation, laminated together into a solid varnished ply board of ten-line stanzas. One immediately wonders if the thoughts occurred to the poet *during* the dream or were a later accretion, an elaboration like the adjectives or like the poet’s mesmerized attempts to figure out what is going on in the half-coherent, half-menacing Magic Kingdom into which he has involuntarily been thrust. As in the travel books, he is a wandering vagabond.

The dreams, however, are no more a pretext than Keats’s hearing the song of the nightingale is a pretext. They are the subject itself. Like all dreams, they contain the whole of life. And death. *Light* is not embroidery.

Don Juan says that during dreams “the assemblage point” shifts from its normal location, and that one of the most difficult tasks of sorcery is to be aware of this without at the same time waking up. Dreaming While Awake. *Light* is sorcery, a cross between the therapeutic anamnesis of dream journals and the quite different teleological aims of poetry. It is a weird and original kind of anti-reverie, an inversion of reverie in which one is Awake While Dreaming, a kind of anti-Surrealism.

XII

We need more music in our lives. Absolutely: I force all my houseguests to sing something, anything. And only song will do; I have failed: *Light* has extreme relaxed somnolence combined with extreme restless action, extreme irrationality combined with extreme sobriety, prosaic matter-of-factness combined with visionary lyricism . . . A musicologist once said that the attempt to describe Beethoven's last quartets drives writers into "the intense inane," and that is where I end up. I can only stammer that just as the key to Beethoven's last music is that it is *fantastic*, the key to *Light*, contrariwise exactly, is that it is *intelligent*, a superb mind working at the top of its youthful game. Like some philosophies it seems to be a new form of thinking, and like all art it must be experienced.

XIII

Perhaps the ultimate source of the poem's incomparable dualism, or dialectical synthesis (as George jokes in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*) is the fact that *Light* is a "corner book" in the scheme of **Sentence of the Gods**, which means that its first letter, L, is the end of SOL and the beginning of LUNA, giving the book characteristics of both gods at once.

In Wallace Stevens' intricate symbol system this would mean a perfect merger of Reality and the Imagination. Mind-boggling, but this cosmic coitus describes precisely what *Light* is, and all its binaries are pendant, dendritically, to it. As with many scientific inventions or techniques, the author seems to have serendipitously stumbled upon a method.

XIV

And the author has wisely gathered SOL and LUNA into a single book with *Light* as its fulcrum. Dressed as it is in a decidedly French *haute couture*, and with its young man's spirit of reckless gaiety, scintillating with the effervescence of an expensive French champagne, SOLUNA is all of a piece and forms a kind of unbuttoned overture to the **Sentence of the Gods**, after which the epic seems to shift focus, increasingly concentrated as it is on the author's two grandiose aims of both incorporating all human civilization and also of producing a poetic alternative to his supreme enemy—and rival—the epic realist novel. Such a Quixotic project requires the ambition of Lucifer and the industry of Edison, and one hopes that its rigors won't keep Professor Morrison from dreaming on. We must dream on until the **Sentence** is commuted.

I know for a fact that the author—quite winningly, in my Ascetic Bohemian opinion—prefers to eat cheap canned food the way Steven Spielberg prefers to eat cheap fast food, but I rather miss his Brut-and-caviar phase.

XV

Do you know Wittgenstein's Last Thought? It is the last entry in the notebooks that became *On Certainty*, written just before his death.

I cannot seriously suppose that I am at this moment dreaming. Someone who, dreaming, says "I am dreaming," even if he speaks audibly in doing so, is no more right than if he said in his dream, "it is raining," while it was in fact raining. Even if his dream were actually connected with the noise of the rain.

A typically subtle and profound thought. Unfortunately, however, I disagree with it, "unfortunately," because my disagreement with it has perhaps been the source of my somewhat spectacular failure in life. But Madison Morrison gives me the courage of my convictions.

XVI

And only song will do:

If the globe eye is
irised, all colors of the
rainbow pulled on
the pupil's pole,
you might think
night smokes or the spout
drains or the barrel ends
in the room. Such
velleities.
In fact:

De Cederhouten Vleugels van Berouw

Marc de Hay

In zijn inleiding tot *MM: The Sentence Commuted* oppert Richard Beck het idee dat de alchemistische “conjunctio oppositorum,” de samenloop der tegenstellingen, het onderliggende thema zou kunnen zijn dat de zes delen van SOLUNA verbindt. De gedichten *U* en *Need* zijn daarin een apart paar. In aantal regels gelijk (elk duizend) maar in inhoud elkaars tegengestelden. In *U* is het de uiterlijke wereld die de gedachten ontoereikend doen schijnen, in *Need* de innerlijke wereld die de werkelijkheid laat verbleken. *U* en *Need* spiegelen elkaar, als twee ongelijk geslepen diamanten die elkaars spiegeling reflecteren. De “maximalisatie van dubbelzinnigheid” die Gio Ferri vindt in *Need* wordt door reflectie in *U* geneutraliseerd. De dubbelzinnigheid wordt onderdeel van een tegenstelling. Het onbegrijpelijke lijkt zich even met begrip te vullen, als Ying met Yang en omgekeerd.

De auteur heeft beide gedichten geschreven zonder van te voren de richting van het verhaal te bepalen, naar welk eind of doel het zou moeten leiden; er is geen vooropgezette “plot.” Hierin zien we een zekere overeenkomst met het leven zelf. Elke dag wordt er een gedeelte aan onze levensgeschiedenis toegevoegd, er is niet echt een plan in te ontdekken, een “plot” is er al helemaal niet (dat is alleen voor de geromantiseerde versies van mensenslevens). In onze dromen, slapend zowel als wakend, is het soms anders. Dan is er een begin en een eind, een doel, een “plot” zelfs (soms), die **Zin** schijnt te hebben, maken, geven. *U* en *Need* schijnen elkaar zin te geven. *U* op zich lijkt onaf, lijkt iets te missen, een “Zin.” *Need* schijnt die afwezigheid te benoemen als iets van vroeger. Tegelijk stelt het door die afwezigheid te duiden de vraag of er inderdaad sprake is van vooruitgang in het denken en doen van de moderne Westerse mens. Is het soms vooruitgang met een “gemis” (need)?

U en *Need* zijn twee gedichten van 1000 regels elk. *U* werd eerst geschreven en dat nam drie jaar in beslag (1971-1973; een regel per dag), en daarna *Need* volgens dezelfde methode (1973-1975; een regel per dag). Alleen voor het schrijven van de dagelijkse regel van *Need* bereidde de auteur zich voor door het lezen van een pagina in een 1000 pagina's tellende bloemlezing van Engelse poëzie. Dat is ook terug te zien in de vaak ouderwets aandoende grammatica van *Need*, die het klassiek heroïsche karakter van het gedicht mee bepaalt. De regels zelf zijn weefsels van woordkunst. De zinnen samen begoochelend. Er ontvouwt zich iets, dat tegelijk verhuuld blijft.

U handelt over de situatie waarin velen van ons zich bevinden. In *U* zijn de hoofdpersonen al door kindertijd, school en hoger onderwijs gegaan, door bloeiende korenvelden en vakantie in onbekende gebieden, terechtgekomen. Na

liefdesverklaringen, lust en verbrassing in een samenlevingsvorm beland, ze hebben een baan en hun woning ingericht. Ze hebben zelf inmiddels kinderen gekregen die zorgzaam door opvoeding en scholing tot videokijkers en chips eters zijn geworden. Het gezin Ruth (Bob en Jean, hun kinderen Jamie, Phyllis en Amanda) is de hoofdpersoon in *U*. We zien Jean het weekend voorbereiden: de zaterdag met boodschappen en in de middag visite van vrienden die blijven eten, er zal een wedstrijd op de TV zijn, biertjes voor de mannen en dan na de nacht (slapen) zondag, met in de ochtend naar de Kerk en in de middag een picknick met de kinderen. We horen Jean denken. Ze denkt onafgebroken na: over de situatie waarin ze zich bevindt, over de haken en ogen, valkuilen en mogelijke misverstanden die het weekend zal kunnen brengen en hoe die zo goed mogelijk te vermijden. Hoe vriendelijk te blijven. Hoe vriendelijkheid helpt. Ze probeert het allemaal te begrijpen, er “zin” in te ontdekken. Bob ook, op zijn manier; over zijn leven, zijn baan, de situatie thuis, hoe hij was, wie hij is en wat een rare onnozelaars de anderen zijn die hij maar niet begrijpen kan. De kinderen ook, voor zover ze bij machte zijn na te denken in de snelle stroom van hun hormonen en de opdringende voortdurend brandende lust tot “iets anders,” “iets nieuws.” Allen denken voortdurend. En onderwijl maken ze de bewegingen die het ritme van het vertrouwde leven aaneen rijgen. Ze doen, maar zijn er met hun hoofd niet bij. Er is geen moment waarop de personen zich kunnen losmaken van de voortdurende “gang van zaken.”

In *Need* is er nauwelijks nog sprake van een normale gang van zaken. De hoofdpersoon is hier Alexander, die in *U* nog figureert als de schurkachtige predikant die het vertrouwen dat Jean in hem stelt sluw misbruikt in een kortstondige relatie. Nu kan hij vliegen. Hij vliegt met een engel. Dat deze overspelige geestelijke uit *U* nu in *Need* de held is, is een ander voorbeeld van de dubbelzinnigheid die door beide gedichten waart. Morrison lijkt met *Need* de leemte die na het lezen van *U* blijft hangen aan te willen vullen met spiritualiteit. In *Need* (een sprookjesachtige, tomeloze, malle bizar archaische werveling van illusies) lijkt alles mogelijk. De fantasie als tegenhanger van de dagelijkse sleur. Maar het gaat hier niet zozeer om de droom als “escapisme.” Het gaat meer om acceptatie. De illusie is een realiteit. De droom is een gegeven. De realiteit (het rationele) houdt hier geen ontkenning van de droom in. En de illusie wordt niet als alleen zaligmakend voorgesteld. Er zitten tenslotte ook onaangename elementen in het (dag)dromen, net zoals er aangename elementen zitten in de dagelijkse sleur. *U* (*U*) hebt uw dromen nodig. Nodig hebben (*Need*), *U* (de Ander) nodig hebben. Ook dat aspect speelt mee, de ander,-droom en hoe die te bereiken. Door “de Ander(en)” te “bezielen,” hen te beladen met spirituele inhoud. De sluier van alledaagsheid van de werkelijkheid weghalen en het dagelijks leven daarmee zijn spirituele (historische, heroïsche) dimensies teruggeven. Houdt de droom levend (*Need*), maar ook; houdt de samenhang levend (*U*), het hele sociale en economische verband, hoe onbe-

grijpelijk, absurd, en nutteloos het soms ook lijkt: de organisatie van het dagelijks leven, eten koken, naar school, werken, telefoneren, uitnodigen, plannen, het samen leven. Het een kan niet zonder het ander.

Het woord waarmee *Need* begint is “Men” (Mannen); waarmee de schijn wordt gewekt dat *Need* een symbolisch gedicht over de aard van de Man zou zijn. Echter, en Morrison wijst hier nadrukkelijk op, als laatste woord van *Need* is “pen” weer een verwijzing naar het fictieve, “aan de pen ontsproten” karakter van *Need*. Toch hangt er een zweem van mannelijke identiteit over *Need*, vooral als het gedicht gelezen wordt na *U* en in betrekking daarmee wordt geïnterpreteerd. *U* krijgt door *Need* steeds meer vrouwelijke indentiteit. Het is verleidelijk deze etiketten op *U* en *Need* te plakken. Het illustreert de fundamentele magnetische spanning die tussen de twee 1000-regelige gedichten hangt. De spiegelende wisselwerking lijkt hier een duidelijk verschil tevoorschijn te brengen. Deze vervloeiende tegenstelling van identiteiten vormt beide werken tot een eenheid. Na deze opmerking ziet de essayist zichzelf, gereflecteerd in de duizenden facetten van *U* en *Need*. Illusie. Schijn. Luna in Soluna: maan-gedichten.

U en het daarna geschreven *Need* lijken Morrison's persoonlijke ervaring en acceptatie van het samenstelsel der tegenstellingen te markeren. De samenhang; het een niet zonder het ander, zien we daarna in bijna al zijn werken terug. De innerlijke wereld, de droom, lijkt in de werken na *Need* in de taal zelf gekropen te zijn. Het proza is poëzie geworden. De tegenstelling tussen dagelijks leven, de objectieve registratie van de realiteit (het *U* van 1971), en “droom” wordt nu verbeeld door het gebruik van “heilige teksten” uit het begin van de menselijke beschaving als “intertext” (de woorden van “de Ouden” worden vermengd met de verslagen van de werkelijkheid zoals Morrison die overal en nergens maakt tijdens zijn vele reizen over de Aarde).

Omdat beide voor het gehoor niet van elkaar te onderscheiden zijn is “U” in de Engelse populaire taal het geschreven equivalent van “You” (Jij, je). Als antwoord op een van mijn vragen (per email) wijst Morrison op het feit dat “U” (als “Jij”) óók refereert aan, of verwijst naar “de Ander.” “Dit is relevant, omdat het gedicht *Need* subjectief, droom-achtig is, terwijl *U* juist een erg objectief, ‘realistisch’ gedicht is,” aldus Morrison. In het Engels is “You” ook het Nederlandse “U.” “You” is zowel enkelvoud als meervoud, mannelijk en vrouwelijk.

Ook het Engelse “sentence” is voor tweërlei uitleg vatbaar. Het betekent zowel “Zin” als “vonnis (of oordeel).” Een uitvoerige analyse van deze dubbele betekenis is te vinden in Ron Phelps’ *The Sentence of Madison Morrison* waarin hij wijst op dit aspect van “sentence” als “straf,” d.i. het uitgesproken oordeel, het opgelegde vonnis. In dit geval dus de straf die de auteur krijgt opgelegd van de goden: het schrijven van een 26-delig episch werk. Door het meerduidige

karakter van zin in het Nederlands (het zinnige, er zin in hebben, de lust, de zinnen) heeft “Zin” als vertaling van “Sentence” mijn voorkeur. De zin als literaire volzin en de zin in de zin van geen onzin. De zin in de zin van de uit 26 woorden bestaande zin, het oordeel, het vonnis: “the **Sentence of the Gods.**” Een zin gevormd door het achter elkaar lezen van alle titels van de 26 delen van **de Sentence**. *U* en *Need* zijn in deze **Zin** het vierde en vijfde woord. *U* is dan ook (aldus Madison Morrison) als titel gekozen omdat hij geen ander woord (beginnende met een “U”) kon vinden dat in “de Zin” te passen viel. De “U,” als titel van één letter staat volgens hem ook mooi in balans met die andere titel van één letter (“O”) aan de andere kant van de “L” in SOLUNA.

De **Zin** is in het Engels een palindroom. De titels van de eerste zes werken zijn: (**S**) *Sleep* (*Slaap*); (**O**) *O* (*O*); (**L**) *Light* (*Licht*); (**U**) *U* (*U*); (**N**) *Need* (*Hebt Behoefte aan / Hebt Nodig / Mist Noodzakelijk*); (**A**) *A* (*Een*). **SOLUNA**: Slaap O Licht U Hebt Nodig Een. **SOL**, het eerste woord (Soleil / Zon) gaat over in het tweede woord **LUNA**. De laatste letter van Sol is tevens de eerste van Luna. U kunt dus lezen “Sol” (zon) *Una* (één) of *So* (zo, dus) *Luna* (Maan). Zon en Maan. Eén Zon, en ook: één maan. Eén “U” (Je, maar ook “You” in het meervoud: wij) in één licht (Light); je zal er maar zitten, wij; op aarde. Eén Aarde. Eén Zon, één maan, één mens (jij), één mensheid: wij. En die mist (Need)?

De drie boeken na de **SOLUNA** serie zijn: *Revolution* (Revolutie), *Each* (Elke of Iedere) en *Second* (Seconde of Tweede). Ze vormen met de “A” van SOLUNA als beginletter het woord **ARES**. Geen van deze boeken is ooit in het Nederlands vertaald. Eén probleem voor de vertaling is dus dat de titels gezamenlijk ook een lopende zin moeten vormen, zowel gelezen van begin tot eind als andersom. “Slaap O Licht U Mist Noodzakelijk Een Revolutie Iedere (*Elke*) Seconde (*Tweede*)”; het hangt van de “Zin” af hoe de titels uiteindelijk vertaald moeten gaan worden. Neem bijvoorbeeld *Need*. U (“Need”) Een Revolutie Iedere Seconde. “Mist” (als “gemis, ” een interpretatie van “Need”) heeft als groot voordeel dat het één woord is. En het is in dit geval een mooie dubbelzinnige voor het weertype met weinig zicht (*Mist, een verraderlijke zaak / Met Mist Minstens Dimlicht*) en het gemis, het gebrek aan, de behoefte aan, het nodig hebben. “U” mist een revolutie iedere seconde. Van achter naar voren gelezen is “iedere revolutie een mist,” en accentueert zo mede het dubbelzinnige en humoristisch karakter van “de Zin van de Goden,” Daarentegen zou “U” in Nederlandse vertaling gewoon U kunnen blijven. Van de armoede van Jij en Jou (*Loop niet zo te jijen en jouen!*) naar een eervol nederig beleefd “u” (met kleine letter: de mens; met hoofdletter: de Heer, de Here God). In “De Zin van de Goden” verwijst “U” dan heel toepasselijk zowel naar jou (en u en mij), als naar het bijbelse U, de Heer der heerscharen, de God in de Hemel, de God uit het christelijk geloof.

Maar met alleen een titel zijn we er nog niet. *The cedar wings of remorse* uit de eerste regel van *U*, vertaald als “De cederhouten vleugels van berouw” roept al net zoveel vragen op als de mist in de “Zin.” Heeft berouw vleugels? En als dat al zo mocht zijn waarom zijn die vleugels dan van cederhout?

—Amsterdam, januari-november 2004

The Opening Lines of *Need*: Traduzione e Commento

Gio Ferri

Men ever will be sad and poignant till
They find rejoicing reason to cuckoo,
But then will they remember, or forget,
The heavy-hearted transients they were?
Slender enough she was to make him die,
So shameless, witless, reckless, foolish, stupid;
Until at dawn he woke, all senses stolen
By the true well-spring underneath a thorn,
Only rose of a world far past his reach.
This, for once, he could understand—the truth,
Saving the dreamer from his senseless life,
Spent bounty of a man pursuing virtue.
Yet virtue's own reward was not enough.
The golden fluid, draining maple-syrup-
Like from his heart, sapped Alexander's spirit,
Till, buckling on his armor, he cried out:
"Heavenly Father, I confess a kiss,
Her lissome arms entwined about my head.
Her beauty, dignity and gentleness
Cupping my soul within her reverence."
Long lived he then, in feats of love and arms
Second to none, a paradigm of grace,
Until, again, the turning of the world
Brought sun to earth and darkness to the moon.
He woke to find her dead, oft in his thought.
End of a year, end of an age it seemed.
In that new light he lived for honor only,
Dwelt thus in virtue but had little joy.
Adam unparadised he thought himself.
Then, reconsidering once more his love,
He saw her flower in the April dew,
Whence, like a bell it chimed, "Noel, Noel,
Out of your sleep arise and out of hell."
"Ah, lady, sister, mother, grant thy kiss,"
He pled, hot tears a gleam in his bright eyes.
Whereat, with sternness, she did him rebuke:
"Thou silly sinner, dare not me denominate
With terms thy mental vacancy doth generate."
Filled with remorse he felt the deepest wounds
And sent himself abroad to earn her trust.

Gli uomini sempre saranno tristi e violenti fino
A quando non proveranno a cantare come il cuculo,
Ma allora ricorderanno, o dimenticheranno,
La loro grave transeunte natura?
Lei era abbastanza esile da farlo morire,
L'uomo spudorato, sciocco, sconsiderato, stolto, stupido;
Finché all'alba si destò, depredato di ogni senso
Dalla vera fonte al di sotto di una spina,
Rosa ultima di un mondo ben al di là della sua portata.
Questo, una volta tanto, egli riuscì a capire—la verità,
Salvando il sognatore dalla sua vita senza senso,
Generosità consumata di un uomo che persegue la virtù.
Ma già il premio della sua virtù non fu sufficiente.
La resina dorata, fuoriuscendo come succo d'acero
Dal suo cuore, logorò lo spirito di Alessandro.
Così che, allacciandosi l'armatura, egli gridò:
"Padre celeste, io rammento il suo bacio,
Così le braccia flessuose avvinghiarono il mio capo.
Così bellezza, dignità e dolcezza
Spinsero l'anima mia alla venerazione."
Visse allora lungamente fatti d'amore e d'arme,
Paradigma di grazia, secondo a nessuno.
Fino al giorno quando il nuovo mondo si volse,
Il sole venne alla terra e le tenebre alla luna.
La trovò morta al suo risveglio, incumbente al suo pensiero.
La fine di un anno sembrò la fine di un'epoca.
In quella nuova luce egli solo visse per l'onore,
Non lasciò la sua virtù, ma non ritrovò la sua gioia.
Si vide come Adamo cacciato dal Paradiso.
Poi, ripensando ancora una volta al suo amore,
Gli riapparve quel fiore nella rugiada d'aprile,
E una campana risuonò: "Noel, Noel,
Svegliati dal tuo sonno ed esci dall'inferno."
"Signora, sorella, madre, donami il tuo bacio."
Implorò, calde lacrime inumidirono di luce i suoi occhi.
Ma con durezza colei lo rimproverò:
"Sciocco peccatore, non osare chiamarmi
Con parole generate dalla tua vacuità mentale."
Il rimorso toccò le sue piaghe profonde:
Così uscì all'aperto per riconquistare la sua fiducia.

Poiché ho . . . incoscientemente accettato di tradurre (o “ri-creare,” per quanto possibile) un brano di *Need*, non farò altro che cercare di rendere conto della mia traslata lettura, almeno con riferimento a qualche verso esemplificativo se non esemplare. *Need*. Necessità. Indigenza. Necessità nell’indigenza dello spirito? O della vita *tout court*? *The heavy-hearted transients they were*? È grave, pesante, insopportabile la transeunte natura dell’uomo. . . . La narrazione poematica in *Need* è chiarissima nella sua fluente evoluzione (o, meglio, circonvoluzione interiore, di conseguenza tutta affidata alla allegoria), ma proprio in questa fluenza si scatena una serie di microambiguità “cosmografiche” (Carravetta) che sovrappongono soggetti, tempi, figure, spazi. E lasciano la storia narrata nel “limbo delle storie” (“limbo” anche in senso neurofisiologico). I richiami da Dante a Pound sono fin troppo facili: invenzione visionaria e linguistica, plurilinguismi, viaggio senza ritorno, scoperta perpetua di un “tutto” che minaccia sempre di rivelarsi un “nulla”: nel pericolo, nell’indigenza, nella paura, la necessità di una guida; il trionfo vicino tanto quanto appare vicina la catastrofe. Il sovrapporsi dei paesaggi dell’anima (preferirei dire “mente”) e il confondersi dei rapporti fra significanti e referenti, sono comunque la marca primaria di questo discorso poetico (c’è un vero e proprio “discorso,” cosmologico, etico, oracolare, non privo anche di più o meno conose ironie nella ripresa di stilemi classici, trovadorici e neoplatonici). La cui lettura conduce senza ambiguità, invece, al massimo dell’ambiguo. Il poema senza inizio né fine, interminabile: esprimendosi in una sorta di *Libro dei Libri*. *La Bibbia, i Veda, il Graal, le Odissee*, i passaggi e i trapassi, nei Limbi delle illusioni totalizzanti. Così, nel breve brano qui ricostruito nella nostra lingua—che difetta assai d’ambiguità anche foniche, rispetto all’inglese o, ancor di più, all’americano—possiamo “con-fonderci” entro le “ennesime” dimensioni spaziali: una natura caduca, floreale e *shameless*, sottile per astuzia e fragilità; un leggendario deserto violato da inaspettate città (nel viaggio di Alessandro); splendori scenografici terrestri e paradisiaci; sistemi solari in rivoluzione; luoghi di morte, di sonno, di sogno. Un’istantanea immagine, nella “con-fusione” dei soggetti, delle specie naturali, dei sessi, dei protagonisti di storie evocate e non narrate.

I primi due versi consistono in un’affermazione, ma subito con i due versi successivi si propone un interrogativo. L’uomo è un eroe o uno sciocco? Ruba la verità dai fiori e un fiore sarà la sua salvezza, o il suo rimprovero, il suo senso di colpa? La puntura di spina dell’ultima rosa. Ultima o sola? Il fiore è una donna? O il sesso della sua donna? O la purezza di una vergine? E chi è colui che *consumò [la sua] generosità. . . perseguendo la virtù*? L’eroe, il dannato, il Cristo? E quell’universo che si “rivolta” è il passaggio alla morte o alla vita? Nella “traduzione”—privi delle particolari qualità plastiche e sonore della lingua di origine—si è tentati di “spostare” alcuni significati da sensi certi a sensualità incerte. Si veda quel *golden fluid*, che si rappresenta in “resina,” fornendo alla

resina il valore di un succo dorato, luminescente, comunque boschivo, fortemente odoroso e acido, ancorché si tratti qui di un succo d'acero. Si veda *wounds*, letto come "piaghe" piuttosto che come "ferite": poichè le ferite sono contingenti e si rimarginano ma, forse, mai si attenuano le piaghe del rimorso. O le eterne piaghe del Cristo, archetipi di ogni eroismo. E ancora ci si domanda: la donna dell'amore è anche la donna del rimprovero? Una guida, o due guide? Quella terrestre e quella celeste? Quella "morta" (*her dead*: "Lo fear the dead!" del Pound di *No more?*) o "l'eterna" la cui voce è quella di una campana: che suona per la morte o per la resurrezione? E c'è ancora l'ambiguità temporale, esplicitamente espressa: *End of a year, end of an age it seemed*. Un anno, quale anno, e quanto lungo: l'anno della gloria o della caduta?

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Restez à l'intérieur des clôtures.

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Ne marchez pas sur la pelouse, l'herbe a du blues.

Livraison interdite après les heures d'ouverture.

Voir verso pour info.

Présentez-vous à l'accueil du nouveau bâtiment en construction.

Sauvez la nature du plan de mobilité

(oui/non/je n'ai pas la moindre idée).

Adorez la féminité absolue = Méprisez la féminité non absolue

Protégez votre santé par des mammothests.

Aménagez vos terrasses.

Décorez vos balcons dénudés.

Finissez les tiques et déclarez la guerre aux puces,

Excepté les riverains.

Nettoyez vos intestins, surtout après l'âge de 50 ans.

Rentrez ou restez à l'intérieur.

Fermez portes et fenêtres.

Ne vous précipitez pas sur le téléphone.

Écoutez la radio et la télévision.

Laissez les enfants à l'école.

Avalez vos comprimés d'iode.

Évacuez les zones gravement contaminées.

Mondialisez vos photos en duo, y compris l'index.

Respectez les tarifs des tarifs respectés.

Laissez un message sur la boîte vocale de mon GSM, qui est connecté à mon fax.

Attendez qu'un guichet se libère, inhalez et expirez!

Ce guichet de plaintes est fermé, uniquement sur rendez-vous.

Modification de trafic = Abattage de pigeons

Démolissez pour reconstruire.

Chantons ensemble: jouer au Lotto pour réaliser nos rêves est un rêve.

Interdiction de regarder dans le miroir (vous êtes trop moche!).

Laissez cette porte fermée. Elle coupera le feu.
Brisez cette glace et appuyez ici.
Faites contrôler cet appareil par un organisme agréé.
Interdiction de fumer, excepté les riverains.
La direction se réserve le droit d'entrée, même aux riverains.
Tournez à gauche, tournez à droite, tournez surtout en rond.

Ce parking privé est réservé à la Fédération Bruxelloise du Parti Socialiste

(avanti popolo, bandiera rossa . . .).
Suivez le guide, suivez le guide suprême,
Suivez les flèches (de Sainte Antoine).
Poussez cette porte (le bébé est presque arrivé!).
Tirez cette porte (le bébé n'est pas encore arrivé!).
Passage interdit au vestiaire obligatoire.
Lisez "Maigrir gourmand," excepté les riverains.

Informez-vous au Parlement (et bonne chance!).
Ne vous pressez pas rue de la presse silencieuse.
Buvez avec vos 5 sens rue de la Croix-de-Fer.
Sens interdit.
Investissez uniquement à sens unique.
Poussez sur le bouton rouge pour sortir de l'embarras.
Zone payante, excepté les riverains.
Cherchons serveuses pour ambiance de circulation locale.
Louez, achetez, vendez, offrez toujours un porte-clé.

Chantier interdit au public en souvenir de l'annexion du Congo.
Placez des serrures de haute sécurité à l'Institut National de Statistique.
S'adresser au n° 66 pour toute politique de sécurité et de prévention.
Stationnement uniquement pour les véhicules d'intervention rapide.
Voir au dos les plans de sauvetage.

Nettoyez vos taches au kilo.
Développez vos talents de photographe.
Nettoyez votre peau avec un lait tonique sans alcool.
Dégustez ici l'apéritif de Bordeaux, excepté les riverains.
Conditionnez l'air du temps conditionné.

Recommandez des établissements avec une autorisation de terrasse.
Emportez sandwiches, plats, pizzas et boissons fraîches.
Emportez autant le vent!

Transformez et rénovez vos façades.
Ne grimpez pas les échafaudages lors des manifestations de paix,
Excepté les riverains.

Veillez en tenir compte pour le futur.
Votez le plus con possible, votez quoi!
Mentionnez le code structure.
La raréfaction de l'argent, les taux d'intérêts élevés, nous mettent
Dans l'obligation de vous demander impérativement un règlement
rapide,
Excepté les riverains.
N'ouvrez jamais un courrier personnel et confidentiel,
Excepté les riverains.

Veillez laisser cet endroit propre.
Veillez ne plus déposer le papier toilette par terre ou sur la poubelle.
Remplacez-le quand il est vide et jetez le carton à la poubelle.
Tirez la chasse d'eau avant d'employer
La brosse pour nettoyer la cuvette du WC,
Afin de la maintenir propre,
Excepté les riverains.

(IL FAUT QUE VOUS)

Restez calme lors d'une évacuation.
Quittez le bâtiment, y compris les visiteurs, même ceux non enregistrés.
Emportez le strict nécessaire.
Fermez les portes et les fenêtres,
Avant de quitter le local de votre bureau. (Euh . . .)
Assurez-vous que vos voisins participent bien à l'évacuation,
Mais ne vous mettez pas en danger pour autant.
Quittez le bâtiment calmement par les escaliers principaux,
Ou par les issues de secours.
Rendez-vous au lieu de regroupement.
Signalez-vous auprès de la personne du recensement,
Excepté les riverains.

Renseignez-vous ici!
Visitez notre premier étage.
Demandez conseil à votre pharmacien, à votre médecin, à votre assureur,
À votre agresseur, à votre dromadaire.
Saisissez un regard de confort extraordinaire.

Faites sensation à l'école du soleil.
Soyons beaux, bêtes et méchants et poivrez les rouges.
Saisissez le plaisir et dégustez Marie-Thérèse.
N'arrêtez plus,
Pour que rien ne vous arrête.

Climatisez les règlements de travail.
Réduisez votre cellulite.
Retirez de l'argent, excepté les riverains.
Retouchez vos affaires.
Chien interdit, chat sauvage.
Interdiction au magasin de manger, boire et fumer, pisser, cracher,
Et
Vomir . . .
Défense de déposer des immondices près des églises.
Chantez ALLELUIA car le Christ est vivant,
Excepté les riverains.

Limitez vos soucis en cas de sinistre et appelez CATHY!
Fêtez vos mamans, vos papas, vos oncles et tantes,
Et n'oubliez pas votre patron.
Nicorettez-vous puisque chaque fumeur est différent.
Mariez Madame Beulemans, surtout les riverains.
Surveillez-vous les uns les autres ou l'amour en perte de vitesse .

PAY & GO, payez et allez-vous-en, payez et allez vous faire foutre.
Achetez, vendez, louez, achetez, endettez-vous, achetez, vendez.
Aidez la logique de la démocratie,
Qui n'est qu'un pauvre commerce,
À remettre.
N'obéissez plus aux dictats de la démocratie marchande,
Et faites la révolution,
Excepté les riverains.

20/05/04

18:54

Agence nEUROLAND™

[Contactez votre Agent nEUROLAND™ Agréé le plus proche]

Post Scriptum

Assez des raisons, non, ce ras de marée de ras le bol pour lire *Revolution*, ce livre, ou encore plus pour se rebeller en permanence. La révolution, monsieur ou madame ou mademoiselle, cela ne se lit pas, cela se fait ou cela ne se fait pas. Que faire indeed!

J'avais commencé une critique littéraire fondée du livre et mon ordinateur se cassait la tronche. Aaiaiaiaiaai, c'est certainement la CIA qui est derrière. Afin, ne pleurez pas ou pleurez car c'est votre droit!

Signe d'entamer une autre approche du livre qui pourtant est vraiment extra. Alors quickly this:

Le livre est une alternance de chapitres et d'histoires de différents personnages qui s'entrecroisent au cours de leurs petites histoires qui se mélangent et qui traversent 3 grands moments historiques: révolution française, révolution américaine et révolution chinoise.

Fresque merveilleuse, technique collage, écriture à 2 (Madison Morrison et Dan Boord, un de ses élèves, chacun signe pour certains chapitres).

Collage car la vie et les révolutions sont perçues comme un collage, notre perception du monde et des réalités révolutionnaires sont fragmentaires, donc d'office la technique d'écriture reflète la problématique du regard et de la vérité subjective, presque toujours déterminée par la culture dans laquelle on vit et par son propre parcours de vie et d'expérience.

La révolution pose plus de questions qu'elle est capable de résoudre. C'est un fait et cela s'applique aussi au livre de Boord & Morrison.

Si vous voulez découvrir le parcours des histoires des personnages, un conseil : lisez le livre, reconstruisez-le dans votre tête de la même façon que les 2 auteurs ont reconstruit le monde des 3 révolutions assez différentes à travers la vie d'hommes et de femmes qui se rencontrent au fil du temps trempé d'hasard, excepté celle des riverains.

Pour en finir avec mon histoire d'une lecture saccadée: j'ai lu ce livre avec beaucoup de plaisir dans des restaurants chinois à Bruxelles. Attiré par la couverture aux caractères chinois; le personnel débattait la signification du titre.

Révolution? Non, je crois que cela veut dire éternité, me disait une chinoise près de la place de Brouckère. Ben oui, la révolution est éternelle, quoi.

Révolution? Non, je crois que cela indique des signes religieux, comme ceux des sectes interdites en Chine populaire, me disait une cuisinière près de la place d'Espagne.

Ben oui, la révolution est une religion, quoi, excepté peut-être pour les riverains.

La révolution pour moi se résume le mieux par ces slogans de mai '68 : “il est interdit d'interdire” et “l'imagination au pouvoir.”

Eh les riverains, vous avez compris?!

Arrachez cette insigne infâme “défense d'afficher” car murs blancs = peuple sans paroles.

(Stencil art on a Brussels wall)

(En hommage à mai '68 après lecture du livre *Revolution* de Madison Morrison et Dan Boord).

Seeing: An Essay on *Each*

Alexandra Sattler

Wir wissen nicht, was er gesehen hat.

Aber ein Wort ist ein Wort (*mot juste*). Und man kann Reisen und Zufahren und dabei dösen, und fremde Umgebungen anschauen, Wolken zählen und was macht das aus und wohin gehen wir im Leben und wohin, wenn wir Wein getrunken haben und was mag der Unterschied zwischen allem und jedem und mehr sein.

Sehr weiße hoch am Himmel schwebende Möwen, trotz ihrer majestätischen Art zu fliegen einige unangenehme Laute von sich gebend und eine sich nicht sehr gewaltig erstreckende Steilküste, die an manchen Stellen von kleinen Stücken Sandstrand durchbrochen ist, der wiederum schwer zu erreichen ist und ein paar Wolken sind am Himmel, aber so klein, das sie keine Einwirkung auf die sanftwarme Strahlung der Sonne zu scheinen haben. Denn es ist Herbst und das Jahr neigt sich in einer von Jahreszeiten unberührten Gegend dem Ende zu und die Menschen dort lassen sich gleichsam von dieser Atmosphäre gefangennehmen, sie werden gleichgültiger, eher ruhiger durch das gleichmäßige Branden der Wellen an den Klippen. Sie gewinnen dadurch einigen Abstand zu ihrem bisherigen Leben, sie lassen sich leichter in Gedanken verwickeln, die für sie sonst ungewöhnlich, vielleicht sogar absonderlich wären und die Luft treibt sie vor sich her.

Und die transzendente Einheit der Apperzeption und das *verum-factum* Prinzip und was ist die Realität eines jeden Individuums und—so much left undone—die Realität jeder Tätigkeit. Und es gibt keine passionierte Unlust und die Ungeduldigen haben die größere momentane Intensität. Und was ist der Unterschied zwischen einer Suggestion und einer Parabel und die hohe Kunst (diese Künstler) des Implizierens und der Realsophismus und was die so für Zeug reden, die Philosophen. Und wenn man einem Nachdenken verfällt, kann man es ebenso gut wieder abschütteln und Mutmaßungen sind der Anfang zum Glück. Und daß jeder Mensch alles sieht (und deswegen muß man ja immer das ganze Programm durchziehen) und ob es Hybris sein kann, wenn man verlangt, ein Mensch soll sich entscheiden (wir erwarten Großes) zwischen Dingen (*they give you this, but you pay for that*), die ihm in aller Ernsthaftigkeit gleich wichtig sind und er dennoch jeder gerecht werden soll oder auch: will.

Und daß Geschichte manchmal eine Zusammenfassung ist, aber Schwund ist immer; daß manches gewiß bedeutungslos ist und dennoch Tragweite hat. Und Herr Sebald hat gesagt, daß man das Letzte, die Erinnerung nicht zerstören solle. Und es gibt Gedanken an Schlachtfelder oder an ganze Schlachtfelder von Gedanken. *I was wondering what to do, the closer they got, the more those feelings grew.* Und die Abgründe in Tiefen umwandeln. Und das Ziel (*I didn't even notice*). Und was tun wir hier (*with the one-way ticket to the*

land of truth). Und an wichtigsten, wie lange können wir and our feet noch aushalten. Und daß die tapferen Menschen selten sind und daß man nicht in der Denkweise eines jeden anderen Menschen als Hausherr agieren kann. Und hat er jedes gesehen.

Und die Annäherung beinhaltet alles, das Herangehen, das Erreichen, das schließlich darüber Hinausgeschossen sein, mit allen Unvollkommenheiten. Und Krieg. Und die Möglichkeit des divide. Et impera. They don't look like they are here to deliver the mail. Und Menschlein, bist auserkoren, das Bösartige dergestalt zu extemporieren in immerfort deinem Tun. But when the first shot hit the dark, I saw it coming. Raise my rifle to my eye und jetzt die alles entscheidende Frage, wer hört "never" und wer "there" I stopped to wonder why; then I saw black and my face splashed into the sky. Den größtmöglichen Lärm machen, zu dem man fähig ist, es muß sein, weil man sonst aufhört zu existieren, das ist die eine mögliche Rechtfertigung, und aus dem Vorhergehenden heraus, daß man nichts anderes tun kann, weil eine Wahl im Lärm untergeht. Der Lärm als eine der letzten Möglichkeiten und auch das ein in-der-Welt-sein, wie man so sagt. Unausgegrenzte Theorien I: Für wenn es notwendig ist, expeditionsgemäße affirmative Analyse der wissenschaftlich vorhandenen Zustände und Unschärfen, an Schwierigkeit und Brisanz nicht zu überbieten.

Wie dem auch sei.

Zeit. Und Raum für Notizen. Und Gedanken. Und jedes von allem spricht zu einem in einer noch zu lernenden Sprache und hat seine eigene Geschwindigkeit. Und wiewohl Stummheit ein Synonym sein kann für alles, das nicht alltäglich schnell verlautbart werden kann, in jeglichem alltäglichem Tun, und daß sich ein im Ausdrucke befindliches Wohlbefinden dieser stummen Kälte annähern müsse, als da es nicht von der Hand zu weisen sei, daß die warme Seele Schaden davontrüge, falls dies nicht geschähe, und gleichwohl sie unkaputtbar sei, muß sie doch, um die holden Ziele der Menschheit zu repräsentieren, sich frei erst machen von alltäglicher Stummheit.

Und Chaos eine Ansammlung von Vertrauen in ungeprüfte Möglichkeiten und in das die Möglichkeiten begleitende Handeln. Und daß das, was auch noch so kurz gehant worden, gerade ob dieser Kürze nicht verleugnet werden darf, und daß es insofern existent ist, weil es im Ungeschriebenen nicht unverloren ist—es zeigt sich als das, was fehlt, und ist wie alles (und jedes), im Kopf. Und was hat er gesehen. Geistvolles Wesen (to ti en einai (?) dear world), das du bist und mir durch den Aether in Erscheinung trittst, und nun, wo bin ich, außer halb verloren in meinen dir harrenden Gedanken, es ist alles zu wenig, siehst du das? You see? Laß mich ein noch aus.

Es erweist sich mitunter als haltbar, den Äußerungen dieser Art, besonders Fragen, den Vorzug der Beantwortung zu geben oder wenigstens den Versuch. (Und wer hat gesagt, daß man wenigstens den Mut zum Scheitern haben muß?)

Jedes zu verstehen hat nichts mit der eigenen Art von Behauptung zu tun. Man braucht sich nicht zu behaupten, denn Jedes zu verstehen bedeutet das Zulassenkönnen des sich Behaupten des Jeden. Und Jeden einer Sehnsucht näherbringen, ihn geradezu hintragen.

Und wenn das Universum eine Frage ist. Und was jede Antwort, die nie die ganze ist, darauf bedeutet.

And to all those unseen places . . .

Passim: *Each*, Galvagni, Hamburger, Kant, Nooteboom, Sebald, Vico & Neil Young

Magic

Jokie X Wilson

In *Magic* Madison Morrison treats us to several concomitant journeys, but without arriving at any goal, for the story his life, complete only in this account of his early years, pauses here at the age of 28, having first regressed from the age of fourteen to his conception and then resumed from the age of fifteen. Nor is there a need, we feel, for any teleological end or purpose. Instead, the reader is immediately entwined with the “author” (named as such in the text), with the identities of various divinities, mostly Egyptian, among whom Osiris, the god of rebirth is preeminent, and later Hermes Trismegistus, who is less a god than a figure of human wisdom. To say that the book does not climax or reach a definitive conclusion is not to suggest that it has no linear direction. First we are treated to time moving backwards, then to time moving forwards. As with **Sentence of the Gods** more generally we might say that *Magic* moves both forwards and backwards. The first part of the book from the point of its conclusion feels like a distant memory, a dream from which the adolescent author has awakened, one which nonetheless mysteriously continues to follow him until the “end” of the book.

Osiris appears all at once, out of nowhere, and seems to be the result of a chance meeting, inevitable yet somehow intended. How else explain that it was this god, rather than another, who involved himself with the conscience and consciousness, with the very identity of the author? Osiris serves to comment on MM’s life while at the same time seeming to live, as though vicariously, through him. Or is it MM who is living through the myth of Osiris? All at once we find our author walking with the gods, so to speak, in a state of grace, while they for their part reveal themselves to be quite human manifestations. Weren’t the gods to begin with men? So say some theologians. Osiris isn’t really much of a tutelary divinity, but he does appear to function as a part of the author’s process of realization as he records his progress through life.

Although there may be no envy in the company of heaven, nonetheless our “author” is very human indeed and very much earthbound, experiencing the same joys and sufferings as anyone else would. Are we all half-divine? Even with Osiris trotting along beside him, there are the many other humans with whom our author interacts. Yet Osiris’ frequent comments allow us to see that everyone involved is a part of the larger spiritual whole. I would hardly say that the book settles into a gray sediment, yet no one is judged, and no single moment is really viewed as more significant than any other. It is as if the entire story were a single note being played throughout, but one that evokes a complex story with a multifold texture and a variety of substance.

I am tempted to compare Madison Morrison's writing to that of William S. Burroughs, but there are significant differences. Whereas Burroughs' work is filled with the angst of drug addiction and withdrawal therefrom, Morrison's writing reflects a healthy body and well-nourished soul (although in *Each*, another book of his, he, or at least his narrator, admits to a certain affection for wine). While Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* was famous not just for its author's attempt to make use in writing of the collage techniques that visual artists have often used, that book was also famous for the fact that its final printed order was determined by the printer! By contrast, Morrison carefully interweaves among the primary text of his own life sacred texts, and with the intentional skill of a thoroughly disciplined artist, meanwhile allowing his words and those he borrows to interact with an affectionate liveliness. Whereas Burroughs' style involved hackneyed phrases, Morrison's work maintains a constant level of inventiveness, singing along, evolving and expanding, while never reaching any final destination. The book does not conclude with the phrase "The End" for a number of reasons.

I mentioned to Madison that I felt that his work had a synesthetic quality about it. This is not to say that he himself necessarily experiences synesthesia, but the quality of the writing suggests that this is what the persona is experiencing or the author is deliberately inventing for the reader to experience. Traditionally, synesthesia is more a matter of a person paradoxically *hearing color* or *seeing sound*. And this is not exactly what MM seems to be experiencing. Nonetheless his life from moment to moment appears to evoke for him connectivity with other parts of reality, with other worlds than those that he immediately experiences or recalls. Whereas many of us would simply regard our daily life events at face value and represent them accordingly, Morrison recognizes a series of realities meeting and traveling together so as to create a salience that involves objects, persons, and gods in a sort of cosmic circus. Not that everything is fun. The world is not entirely comic, even if our story should eventually end happily. However, both the good and the bad, the joys and the sufferings, the most seemingly insignificant individuals and the most profound deities combine here to create the intellectual structure, the social and spiritual fabric that make up the realities of which we are capable of being cognizant.

It might be easy to say that in, *Magic*, this is where it all began: Madison Morrison came into existence. But, if you read carefully, his conception, which gave him his current life, was merely a matter of him continuing a journey from points elsewhere. He is a visitor, a perpetual tourist, entertaining himself and us with his corporeal and spiritual observations. As he interweaves the strands of his narrative, the words of the gods with the words of man, MM reveals to us how our own realities are woven together from historical elements that had been unfolding long before we arrived on Earth and that will continue to unfold as we ourselves unfold within our native element, all the while contri-

buting to the substance of its architecture. Further, the named deities of our history are both great beings for emulation and helpers facilitating our realization that we all have a greatness within. Yet, as said deities are projections of our humanity, we need neither subject nor humble ourselves to them, nor arrogantly challenge them to the point of their extinction. Simultaneously we all—objects, persons, events and gods—are both the threads and the fabric of being.

5/12/2004

Madison Morrison & Guido Vermeulen

Twee wereld mailart kunstenaars op zoek naar inspiratie
van regionale goden

Ad Breedveld

Madison Morrison is een gepensioneerd professor wereldliteratuur, bekend uit het mailart-circuit, die woont en schrijft in Asia. Sinds 1981 is hij bezig met een serie van 26 boeken over **Sentence of the Gods (Oordeel van de Goden)**. Hij bezoekt daarvoor allerlei regio's van de wereld en mengt geraffineerd persoonlijke reissimplicaties met regionale scheppingsmythes. Dat maakt zijn teksten geconcentreerd en dubbelzinnig als poëzie. Onlangs verscheen *Every Second*, nummer 9 en 10 in de serie van 26, over Israel, Libanon, Griekenland en Italië. Het eerste deel volgt bijbelverhalen uit het Oude en Nieuwe Testament. Het tweede deel de Ilias en Odyssee van Homerus en de Aeneïs van Vergilius. Politieke, filosofische en culturele verhalen uit de antieke en de moderne wereld van Anatolië, Hellas en Italië worden met elkaar verweven. Het boek is uitgegeven met prachtige illustraties van Denis Mizzi bij The Working Week Press in Alexandria. Bij Sterling Publishers in New Delhi verscheen in 2001 *SCENES FROM THE PLANET: In, All Excelling, Or Divine*, waarin hij zoektochten beschrijft in Scandinavië (pastorale wijsheid), in Arizona (landschap), in Zuid-China (economische groei) en in Noord-Italië (de geest van Dante, Tasso en Ariosto). Binnenkort verschijnt MM: *The Sentence Commuted (Het Oordeel Verzacht)*, een bundel met 30 reacties op het levenswerk van MM in verschillende talen, en met illustraties van verschillende kunstenaars. Onder andere een prachtig essay van Marc de Hay uit Amsterdam getiteld "De Cederhouten Vleugels van Berouw." Inlichtingen over verkrijgbaarheid van delen van het totale epos en van het kritische commentaar: Madison Morrison, P. O. Box 22-106, Taipei, Taiwan.

Guido Vermeulen is een Belgische mailart-kunstenaar en dichter en uitgever van het *Friour Network Magazine*, gewijd aan mailart, vrede, visuele poëzie, liefde, licht, magie, stenen, slangen, schildpadden, renegaten en global networking. Het tijdschrift is ontstaan als reactie op de oorlogsdreiging tegen Irak aan het einde van 2002. *Friour* is het IJslandse woord voor vrede. Vermeulen ontving het verzoek van een Braziliaanse dichter die in Canada woont om mee te helpen aan de verwezenlijking van een internationaal kettinggedicht voor vrede en tegen oorlog dat alle continenten zou omvatten. Binnen enkele weken werd deze verzameling gedichten bijeen gebracht en gepubliceerd op diverse websites. Het vormde ook de publicatie van het eerste nummer van *Friour* dat meteen geconcipteerd werd als een netwerk-tijdschrift dat een brug wilde vormen tussen diverse netwerken: postkunst, poëzie, anti of anders

globalisme, kunst en vrede. Vermeulen stelde ook onmiddellijk het concept voor van een “shared zine”, namelijk een tijdschrift dat zou kunnen worden uitgegeven door diverse personen in verschillende landen rond bepaalde thema’s. Het onderwerp en de vorm zijn vrij. De enige vereisten zijn het netwerkaspect en de brug tussen diverse netwerken en de vredesinvalshoek. Deze benadering sloeg aan, vooral toen Vermeulen banden ontwikkelde met het TAP (Transcend Art and Peace Network, www.tapnet.info, de artistieke uitloper van het vredesstreven van prof. Galtung). Het tweede nummer bevatte bijdragen tot het project *Notebooks on 911*, dagboeken en kunstenaarsboeken rond de thematiek van 11 september. De weergave hoe kunstenaars gedurende 1 jaar dit trauma verwerkten was buitengewoon aangrijpend. Dit was eveneens een uitgave van Vermeulen. Het derde nummer werd uitgegeven door Marisa Antonaya, een Spaanse die in Thailand woont en werkt. Haar thema was *Finding Mythologies for a Lost Time* en ging over de problematiek van oorlog en vrede in oude mythes en de noodzaak tot verwoording en verbeelding van nieuwe mythes. Het vierde nummer ging over de problematiek van vluchtelingen, hoofdzakelijk in oorlogssituaties. In plaats van deze problemen te benaderen vanuit het eng-Westerse standpunt “we zitten vol” werd verkozen het woord te geven aan vluchtelingen in reële situaties naast de getuigenissen van enkele historische momenten. Dit nummer werd opnieuw gepubliceerd door Vermeulen en stimuleerde de deelname van een aantal Afrikaanse kunstenaars. De hedendaagse situatie werd naast de ervaring geplaatst van stemmen uit de Spaanse Burgeroorlog en de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Het gevolg hiervan is dat het vijfde nummer (in voorbereiding) zal worden uitgegeven door de Ugandese auteur Monica Arac de Nyeko, Haar thema is *Pijn en Hoop*. Ook de Kongolese schrijver en schilder Raïs Boneza (prominent aanwezig in *Friour 4*) zal aansluitend op Monica een nummer uitgeven. Ondertussen dienen zich al twee vredesactivisten uit Japan aan voor volgende nummers. *Friour* blijkt geslaagd als concept en als uitlaatklep voor gesmoorde stemmen. Ondertussen werd ook een website gebouwd, onderdeel van de TAP-site: www.friour.net. Voor meer informatie en eventuele medewerking neem contact op met Guido Vermeulen, Vincottestraat 81, 1030 Brussel, België, guido.vermeulen@easynet.be.