

daDaist poMe: Compact Disc Rap  
(for Madison Morrison, Human Storyteller)

*The Gorp*

1

HOT BURRITOS!!!  
THE FLOCK, DINOSAUR SWAMPS  
WE GET REQUESTS, SWEET TEA  
NEW FLAMENCO, COCKEYED WORLD  
LAYERS OF TIME  
FEELS LIKE RAIN  
SHAKING THE TREE

GRATEFUL DAWG, TRANSCENDENTAL BLUES  
NIGHT IN TUNISIA  
I FEEL ALL RIGHT  
HOT TUNA!  
ENDLESS BOOGIE, BEYOND BOUNDARIES!

EARTHQUAKE WEATHER  
OVER THE EDGE AND BACK  
SEE THE LIGHT, KASHMIR  
BABYLON BY BUS  
TRENCHTOWN, HOUSES OF THE HOLY  
DOMINO, DANCE  
INSPIRATION ON THE INSIDE

JAGGED LITTLE PILL  
LIE TO ME  
MATRIARCH OF THE BLUES  
BORN UNDER A BAD SIGN  
MY FAVORITE HEADACHE  
CHERRY BLOSSOM  
RAINBOW RARITY  
MOONDANCE, AS IT ALL BEGAN  
APPALACHIA WALTZ  
TAPESTRY OF PHANTOM BLUES  
NOTHING PERSONAL . . .

MONK'S DREAM  
INNER MOUNTING FLAME  
AMERICAN GARAGE, MILK COW BLUES  
FEEL THE SOUND, SOLACE  
MUSIC FROM THE TOP OF THE WORLD  
GUITAR FORMS, LOST GOLD & SILVER  
VERVE YEARS, PINK MACHINE  
SAXOPHONE COLOSSOS  
LIVE FROM UNION CHAPEL

GIANT ROBOT  
YOU HAD IT COMING  
BLACKTOP BLUES VOCAL DYNAMITE

WHITE ALBUM  
LED ZEPPELIN  
PASSION, GRACE & FIRE  
EAST TO WEST: SUPERHARPS

2

LIVE IN JAPAN  
A STREET CALLED STRAIGHT

GATE SWINGS  
STANDING MY GROUND  
SWEET HOME BLUES  
MUSIC FROM BIG PINK  
THE BAND, STAGEFRIGHT  
RED ROAD ENSEMBLE, NATIVE AMERICANS

CAFÉ BOHEMIA  
DELTA BLUES JAM  
BLUE OYSTER CULT  
BROKE, BLACK & BLUE  
BUCKWHEAT ZYDECO SHOWDOWN!

FROM THE CRADLE  
THE DESERT LIFE  
HARD CANDY

ACROSS A WIRE  
UNPLUGGED & SEATED

DISRAELI GEARS  
LIVE RUST

GAMBLIN' WOMAN  
CHRISTMAS WITH YOU  
SHOULDA BEEN HOME!  
HEAVY PICKS  
THE HARDER THEY COME  
BOOGIE CHILLUN, REGGAE PULSE  
LOOKING FORWARD  
ARE YOU PASSIONATE?  
ROAD ROCK VI  
AMEN

THE MIRROR MAN SESSIONS  
WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS  
SAFE AS MILK, GIANT STEPS  
NAIMA, DESIRE, LOVE & THEFT  
SPECTRUM

RIGHT PLACE, WRONG TIME  
LOUD GUITARS, BIG SUSPICIONS  
THERE IS A TIME  
WATER BABIES, KIND OF BLUE  
FILLES DE KILIMANJARO  
BIRTH OF THE COOL  
TUTU BITCHES BREW  
IN A SILENT WAY  
DIRE STRAITS  
ROLL OF THE DICE  
GOOD BOYS . . . WHEN THEY'RE ASLEEP

7 May '04  
OOH BOP BA DA!

நிகழ்வுகள்: அன்றும் இன்றும்; மாரிசன் மோடிசனின் ஆன் மீகத் தேடுதலும்

இரா. சுவாமிநாதன்

விவலிய நூலின் பழைய ஏற்பாட்டில் கூறப்படும் வரலாற்றுச் சிறப்பு மிக்க சில நிகழ்வுகளைத் தற்கால நிகழ்வுகளுடன் இணைத்துப் பார்க்கும்படி இடையிடையே தனது சுற்றுப் பயண அனுபவங்களையும் கூறி முப்பரிமாணமும் சங்கமிக்கும்படி விவலிய விருந்து படைக்கிறார் ஒவ்வொரு நொடியும் (Every Second) எனப்படும் நவீன காப்பியத்தின் ஆசிரியர் மாரிசன் மோடிசன். ஒரு பாணை சோற்றுக்கு ஒரு சோறு பதம் என்ற தமிழ் மூதுரைக்கு ஏற்ப இக்காப்பியத்தின் இரண்டாம் அத்தியாயம் (ஒவ்வொரு,2) [Every,2] அமைகிறது. அக்காலத்தில் நடந்த மதச் சண்டைகள், எகிப்தில் இருந்து இஸ்ரேலியர்கள் ஒட்டுமொத்தமாக மோசஸ் தலைமையில் வெளியேறுதல் (விடுதலைப் பயணம் 13.51) [Ex 13.51] ஆகியவற்றை யொத்த இக்காலப் பிரச்சனைகளையும் ஒப்பிட்டுப் பார்க்கும் பணியை வாசகர்களுக்கே விட்டு விடுகிறார்.

உலகம் தழுவிய காப்பியமாகக் கருதப்படும் தனது ஒவ்வொரு நொடியும் என்ற நூலில் விவலிய கால நிகழ்வுகளைத் தடித்த எழுத்துக்களிலும், தற்கால நிகழ்வுகளை சாய்வு எழுத்துக்களிலும், தனது சுற்றுப் பயண அனுபவங்களை வழக்கமாக அனைவரும் கையாளும் எழுத்துக்களிலும் அச்சிட்டு இருப்பது சாதாரண வாசகர்கள் படித்து உள்வாங்கிக் கொள்ளப் பெரும் சவாலாக உள்ளது. ஒவ்வொரு பரிமாண விளக்கத்தையும் தனித்தனியே படித்துவிட்டு, பின்னர் அவற்றை ஒருங்கிணைத்துப் படிக்க வேண்டிய வேலை வாசகருடையது. காப்பியங்கள் மெத்தக் கற்றவர்களுக்காக; அவற்றின் கதைகள் பாமர மக்களுக்காக. மாரிசனின் காப்பியமும் மெத்தக் கற்றவர்களுக்காக; அதில் உள்ள கதையிடையிட்ட சிந்தனைப் பரல்கள் மனிதன் தன்னைப் புரிந்து கொள்ள.

மோசஸ்ஸின் பயணப் பாதையில் பயணித்த வாடிகன் தலைவரான போப் ஆண்டவரைப் போலவே ஆசிரியர் அவர்களும் தனது பயணத்தைத் துவக்கி இயேசு நாதர் பிறந்து வளர்ந்து, வாழ்ந்து சிலுவையில் அறையப் பட்ட இடங்களை யெல்லாம் (மத்தேயு 27.35)

[Mt 27.35] கண்கூடாகக் காண்கிறார். இந்த அத்தியாயத்தில் மற்றுமின்றி புத்தகத்தின் எந்தப் பகுதியிலும் விவலியக் காலத்தைச் சேர்ந்த நிகழ்வுகளைப் பற்றியோ அல்லது தற்கால நிகழ்வுகளைப் பற்றியோ தனது சொந்தக் கருத்தை எந்தக் கட்டத்திலும் கூறாமல் அவற்றை இணைக்கும் பாலமாகத் தனது பயண அனுபவங்களைக் கூறுவது இலக்கிய உலகிற்கு மிகவும் புதுமையான ஒன்றாகும்.

விவலியக் கால நிகழ்வுகளையும் தற்கால நிகழ்வுகளையும் மன உணர்வுகளுக்கே அப்பாற்பட்ட புறப் பொருள்களுக்கு முதன்மை நிலை கொடுக்கும் தன்மையில் விவரிக்கிறார். விவலியத்தில் கூறப்பட்டுள்ள 'எகிப்தில் இருந்து மோஸஸ் தலைமையில் இஸ்ரேலியர்களின் வெளியேற்றம்' (விடுதலைப் பயணம் 12.29) [Ex 12.29] மற்றும் 'பெருவெள்ளம்' (தொடக்க நூல் 6.5-9.17) [Gn 6.5-9.17] ஆகியவற்றைப் பற்றிய செய்திகளைப் பொருத்தமான இடங்களில் கோட்டுக் காட்டித் தற்கால நிகழ்வுகளுடன் இணைத்துப் புரிந்து கொள்ளும் கட்டாய நிலைக்கு வாசகர்களை ஆட்படுத்துகிறார். கில்கமெஷ் ஆல் வடிக்கப் பட்ட நினைவுச் சின்னங்களோடு (ஜொஷுவா 24.26.27), [Jos 24.26.27] 1948ல் நடந்த போரின் விளைவாக சேதப்படுத்தப் பட்டு காட்சிப்

பொருள்களாக இன்றும் நிற்கும் டிரக்குகள் ஆகியவற்றை பார்த்து ஒப்பிட்டு நோக்க நம்மைத் தூண்டுகிறார் ஆசிரியர். அவர் அடிக்கடி உயரத்தில் ஏறிச் செல்வது அவரது ஆன்மீக எழுச்சி மற்றும் தன்னுணர்வுத் தேடுதலைக் குறிப்பதாகவே தெரிகிறது.

இயேசுவின் பாதம் பட்ட புனித மண்ணில் (*மத்தேயு* 21.1) [*Mt 21.1*] இன்று மதக் கலவரம். இறைவனின் மைந்தருக்கே பகைவர் இருந்த போது, சாதாரண மனிதர்களுக்கு எதிராக சூழ்ச்சியும் பகைவரும் இருத்தல் வியக்கத்தக்க செய்தி அல்ல. அந்தப் புனித மண்ணில் உள்ள ஒரு உணவு விடுதியின் சுவர்களில் கூட பிரபல பாடகர் எல்விஸ்ஸைப் போற்றும் வகையில் படங்கள் (*மாரிசன்* 5) [*Morrison 5*]. புனிதர் தோன்றிய புண்ணிய மண்ணில் கூட கவர்ச்சிக்குத் தான் முதலிடம். அங்கு புனித யாத்திரை வந்த சுற்றுலாப் பயணிகள் அந்தப் பாடகரின் அருகில் நின்று புகைப்படம் எடுத்துக் கொள்ள விரும்புகிறார்கள். பொருளியம் மற்றும் சிற்றின்பங்களில் ஏற்படும் அளவுக்கு மீறிய ஈடுபாடு ஆன்மீகத்தைப் பின்னுக்குத் தள்ளி விடுகிறது. 'எல்விஸ் இன் ஆஃப் ஜெருசலேம்' விடுதியில் தான் பார்க்கும் காட்சியும் விவலியத்தில் குறிப்பிடப்படும் இஸ்டார் இளவரசி (*பிரிட்சார்ட் VIவது காண்டம் கில்கமெஷ் காப்பியம்*) [*Pritchard 93-95 VI Tablet of the Gilgamesh Epic*] கில்கமெஸ்ஸைத் தன் காதலனாயிருக்கும்படி வேண்டுவதும், (5) பெண்களின் பிறப்பு உறுப்புக்களில் அவனைக் கைவைக்கும்படி அவனிடம் கோருவதும் நல்ல ஒப்பீட்டுச் சான்றுகள் ஆகும்.

அம்மோன் நாட்டு மக்கள் ஜோர்டானுக்கு சண்டையிடச் சென்றார்கள். தற்காலத்தில் இஸ்ரேலியரும் பாலஸ்தீனர்களும் தீராப் பகையைப் போராய் நடத்திக் கொண்டு அப்பாவினரின் விலைமதிப்பற்ற உயிர்களை மாய்த்துக் கொண்டிருக்கின்றனர். ஆனால் போப் அவர்களோ பண்டைய விவிலிய அடையாளங்களை அடையாளம் கண்டு (*விடுதலைப் பயணம்* 3.16) [*Ex 3.16*] அவற்றைக் கொண்டு பாலஸ்தீனம், எகிப்து ஆகிய நாடுகளில் தற்போது நிலவும் பதற்ற நிலையைத் தணிக்க முயற்சிக்கிறார். பண்டைய இஸ்ரேலியர்கள் இறைவனை மறந்து பிற கடவுள்களை வணங்கியதை அறிந்து, இறைவன் கோபங் கொண்டு அவர்களை மன்னிக்க மறந்து கைவிட்டு விடுகிறார். ஆனால் இப்பூவுலகில் இறைவனின் பிரதிநிதியாக இருக்கும் போப் ஆண்டவர் மத்திய கிழக்கு நாடுகளில் நிலவும் மதப் பிணக்குகளுக்குத் தீர்வு காண இசுலாமிய, கிறித்துவ மற்றும் யூதர்களின் தலைவர்களைச் சந்திக்கிறார் (*மாரிசன்* 6) [*Morrison 6*]. இது மனிதம் இறைமைத் தன்மையை எய்த இயலும் என்ற அத்வைதக் கோட்பாட்டிற்கு உடன்பாடாய் இருப்பது போல் தெரிகிறது.

மத நல்லிணக்கப் பேச்சு வார்த்தைக்கு மூன்று மதங்களின் தலைவர்களையும் அழைக்கிறார் போப். அதே வேளையில் சுற்றுப் பயணத்தில் உள்ள ஆசிரியர் அவர் ஏறிச் செல்லும் மலைமீது வானுயர்ந்த கட்டிடங்களில் மூன்று கட்டிடங்கள் மட்டும் முற்றுப் பெறாத நிலையில் உள்ளன (6). அவை அந்த மூன்று மதங்களும் காலத்திற் கேற்ற மாற்றங்களையும் வளர்ச்சியையும் பெறவில்லை என்பதைக் குறிப்பிட்டுக் காட்டுவதைப் போல் தெரிகிறது. காலங்கள் மாறி மறுமலர்ச்சியின் விளைவாக அறிவு வளர்ச்சி பரவி அறிவியலில் உன்னத முன்னேற்றம் கண்ட போதும் மனிதன் மன்னிக்க முடியாத ஏழு பாவங்களிலில் [*Seven Deadly Sins*] (*மெக்கென்சி* 820) [*McKenzie 820*] இருந்து தன்னை விடுவித்துக் கொள்ள வில்லை என்பதையும் காட்டுகிறது. விவலியக் காலத்தில் மதம் சம்பந்தப் பட்ட மோதல்களில் எவ்வாறு மனிதர்கள் கொன்று குவிக்கப் பட்டார்களோ அத்தகைய நிலையே இன்றும் நிலவுகிறது.

பொருளாதார முன்னேற்றம் அறிவியல் வளர்ச்சி ஆகியவை மனிதனை உயர்த்த வில்லை. இவ்வுலக வாழ்க்கையைத் தழுவின இவ்வளர்ச்சிகள் ஆன்மீக வளர்ச்சியை வேகமாக வீழ்த்தி மனிதனைக் காட்டுமிராண்டிகளின் காலத்திற்கே அழைத்துச் செல்கின்றன. ஆசிரியரின் முப்பரிமாண விளக்கம் இதைத் தான் தெளிவாக்குவதாக உணர முடிகிறது. இஸ்ரேலுக்கும் அம்மோனுக்கும் அன்று நடந்த அதே பிரச்சனை (*நீதித் தலைவர்கள்* 11.4) [*Jgs 11.4*] தான் இன்று இஸ்ரேலுக்கும் பாலஸ்தீனத்திற்கும் இடையே உள்ள பூசலும். அன்றும் தூதுவர்கள் மூலம் தான் பிரச்சனைகளைத் தீர்க்க முயன்றார்கள். இன்று போப் முதலானவர்கள் அதே முயற்சியில் ஈடுபட்டிருக்கிறார்கள் என்ற உண்மை மறைமுகமாகக் கூறப்படுகிறது. பண்டைக் காலத்தில் இருந்த பழைமவாதிகளைப் போலவே இக்காலத்திலும் தீர்வுகளுக்கு முட்டுக் கட்டை போடும் மத வெறியர்கள் மற்றும் அரசியல் ஆதாயம் தேடும் சுயநலவாதிகள் உள்ளனர். போப் ஆண்டவர் இவர்களிடம் மேற்கொள்ளும் அணுகுமுறை வாசர்களுக்குத் தெளிவாகிறது. அம்மோனின் மக்களுக்கும் இறைவன நடுவராக இருக்கட்டும் என்று விவலிய நூலில் கூறப்பட்டுள்ள செய்தியைப் போப் ஆண்டவரின் முயற்சியோடு ஒப்பிட்டுப் பார்க்கும்படி செய்கிறார் ஆசிரியர் (*நீதித் தலைவர்கள்* 11.27) [*Jgs 11.27*].

பாமர மக்கள் அமைதியை விரும்புகிறார்கள் என்பதற்கு *புலம்பும் சுவர்* அருகே உள்ள கற்களின் மீது கைவத்து வழிபாட்டிற்குத் தயாராக நிற்கும் எளிய மக்களே சான்று (*மாரிசன் 8*) [*Morrison 8*]. இங்கு குறிப்பிடப்படும் அணையா விளக்குகள் (8) அமைதி மற்றும் எல்லா வளங்களையும் திரும்பப் பெற்று ஒளிமயமான எதிர்காலத்தைச் சமைக்கும் முயற்சிகளுக்கு அடையாளமாக உள்ளன.

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## (Un)VEILED

*FrL Osowski*

(Un)VEILED is an étude of Madison Morrison's *Every Second*, in which Greek texts are interlaced with contemporary texts.<sup>1</sup> The étude speculates about alternative interpretations of *Every Second* had the texts been juxtaposed: all the ancient texts followed by the all new ones—or vice-versa.

The étude is implemented as poésie concrète. Poésie concrète in the contemporary understanding was, arguably, triggered by Mallarmé's *Un coup de dé jamais n'abolira le hasard*.

A text can be interpreted in a linear manner to unveil what is usually called its meaning. The same text interpreted as poésie concrète unveils another, quite different, meaning. A text of mathematical equations, chemical symbols, characters of a foreign language, all which are unknown to you, can be similarly unveiled.

In his *Parmenides* Heidegger strives to unveil the veiled; this unveiling informs (Un)VEILED through Heidegger's words: "through the Roman reinterpretation of the Greek experience of the essence of man, logos, i.e., the word, became ratio. The essence of the word is thus banished from its ground and from its natural locus."<sup>2</sup>

(Un)VEILED simultaneously juxtaposes and interlaces "Odysseus" and "Ulysses," all the while applying modulation firstly via the eclectic world constructed by the bus driver's gathering hand,<sup>3</sup> and secondly, via words from Heidegger's *Parmenides* about the correlation among "Being, word, gathering, hand, and writing."<sup>4</sup>

The essence of a text is textuality. Textuality is an attribute of words; of a building; of the way you dress, behave, speak; the car you drive is an eloquent text—not being empowered to drive is even more eloquent; a cloudless sky is a text . . . Textuality is constructed as an imbricated set of symbols, behavioural norms, meanings . . . Textuality is implemented as language, imagery, forms of knowledge.<sup>5</sup>

Poésie concrète generates tension as it hovers through and slips across the multiple interlaced and interlacing, and simultaneously juxtaposed and juxtaposing interpretations of a text.

## References

1. Madison Morrison, *Every Second* (Alexandria: The Working Week Press, 2004)
2. Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trans. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992), §4 P69 [101-103], “Multiplicity of the oppositions”
3. Morrison 2004, 136 passim
4. Heidegger, 1992, 85
5. For further reading concerning textuality see FnL Osowski, *Transtextuel, Blanche* in *Postmodern Queer 22* (Lambeth St., Kensington 3031, Victoria, Australia)

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Stéphane Mallarmé. *Oeuvres complètes*. Paris: NRF Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1945.

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## Priddle's Homeric Lexicon

D. Ross Priddle

"a camouflaged trap containing wine-jars," "other *apeiron*," supersleeves, hospitality, the clientele entirely, Venus on the half-shell, mirrored surfaces, a blank exterior, concrete industrial structure, "abradorites," "esites," "mastic," "his *paeginia*," British Petroleum, cylinders of concrete, concrete blocks, *ksista*, graffito reading "graffiti," concrete apron, the flow of millennia, no room for the night, "equipollent," "*phuxi*," "origin of change," "*anivasmata*," a monstrous pudendum, "*richtan*," stone tits, *soumada*, *orgeat*, *raki*, local doughnut, a concrete cross, a transitional signature, the Battle of Salamis, *paideia*, *lapis*, "Yiota," a chartreuse Toyota, a random confluence of streets, "Fussmassagerbad," "Sol-Rajser," broken concrete, concrete gateway, a huge concrete block, Roman copies, *petasson*, *kyrikeion*, Kastro, Koan, "this evening the city will honor," heightened cosmetic effect, Aiaie, "the glebe burdening the plowshare," "*hoblakia*," a necking knob, "the culture and education of the Homeric," retinal consciousness, circle ever higher, orange tiles, "wine-blue water," "hecatombs," iconostasis, "the cultural history of Europe," revetments, "poetic details," honey-sweetened mead, "to travel is to conquer," a blank diary, a vacant lot paved in concrete, graffito-covered walls, "Queen of Paranoia," a bright red graffito, "Copy Net Xerox," "Tourist Police," International Communist Movement, "cried the horrified Eumaeus," and yet another identity, "philhellenism," Arete, modern schizophrenics, white snow drops, author (Telemakhos), "we recall," an orange freighter, "Gerenian," *tholos*, "*khalos khagathos*," "*cortesia*," the sea recolors itself a dark blue, redbud, "Treats all reality as transient phenomena," "shadow puppets of poetic fancy," "*Ejfaristo*," Odos, "Kastikon Megaron," "*psychagogia*," scribbled in spray paint: "Too drunk to fuck," the flags of seventeen nations, "poetic ecstasy," "divine madness," 26 cages for birds, "Photo Video," "Opera Omnia," Echephron, teenies, a graffito reading "Psychedelic," "*aristeia*," **Patra**, blue graffito, *Paideia*, the word repeats itself, "sigma-zeta-omega-iota-zeta," cognizant of the future, "Thank you again," says author, "for quoting these lines," "my knowledge remains fragmentary," sweet-ingestion, charged *nothing*, demotic text, the dimly legible word, "dead in foreign fields," "pencil-pined," Pentelic marble, "Chico Mendez," "Areopagus," the slave girls, Megabyxus, "The sun is lost," "the haft holes of twelve ax heads," "the groaning work," Corcyreans, "there was death in every form," "the Wingless Victory," "tonic in design," psychopomp, "mazes the eyes," "a great shapeless mass called Chaos," "three 100-handed giants," "great masses of material," a gold car, "the 100-handed giants," *katabasis*, "the Homeric epic," "is concentrated," Metis, "*phronesis*," "Club Paranoia," "Smoke Grass / It's Healthy," in orange: the peace sign, "the green fear," a real hat

## Two Greek Scholars on a Chios Bus-stop Bench

### *The Gorpf*

For the general reader poorly educated in time and space, undisciplined, pre-Alzheimered brainpan dysfunctional, *Every Second* is prescription for restorative scholarship, antidote to dark night of the black hole in one's grasp of the Western Epic Tradition. (Before tackling *Second,2*: reread Homer's *Odyssey* & a KEY to the pantheon of the Greek Gods; prepare for rough&heavy SLED-DING; hang on, it's a BUMPY RIDE!)

MM = transcultural mosaic, adam plank & johnny white ant

Where to begin? Open randomly, as, for example, at *Second,2*, p.70, with voyeur/listener committing espionage on 2 Greek scholars (one from Chios, one from USA/other points) conversing where the buffalo may still be found to RO-AM TO: lacking Orpheus to plunk his *magic* lyre, Buffalo Bob, the student, tunes his CD Walkman-player full blast, to Miles Davis' *Agartha* (Prelude, Parts I & II), the perfect accompaniment to this historical-referenced recapitulation of the ain'chint poems of Homer. With Miles' *Maiysha* comes an Interlude of comment to aid critical digression by reader/looker/listener/spy teleported across interstitial time and space, EVERY SECOND, so as to maintain charge/presence near a pair of Grecian Good Ol' Boyz, *Orpheus and Hermes*, sittin' on a bench, waitin' for a bus.

Cretans & Minoans, Secret Agents from ancient codebooks? The local homeboy Greek sez: "This knowledge, it's all a Big Secret." (*Second,2* could be the gold seam for intelligence/espionage.) Listen up, Dr. Dada & Generalismo Readerz . . . The "seat of Homer," HOMER'S CHAIR? Homie, what's up?!? "STONE OF THE TEACHER (Daskalopetra)!" Conversation ensues betwixt the 2 scholars. A sip o' tha grape may elucidate, emigrate, enhance, estimate, or eradicate the cobwebs from lapsed student/spy's brainpan.

O.'s voyage into inner space, plus the oracles at Delphi and Thebes. Connections? Wild conversation/dialogue: The Atlantis Myth! Plato's WORD! Kirke was off-route, somewhere in the Atlantic! (It's common knowledge that Blue Mountains of JAMAICA are the very tip-top peaks of Atlantis.) On this circuitous way to the Graeco-Roman wrasslin' matches, we pause for a seat in Homer's Chair? A bus-stop bench will substitute, TEACH (daDaskalopetra). "Help, I'm a Rock!" (See Frank Zappa, lyric poet.)

All for the General Reader: a dadaist voyeur disguised in ROMAN student toga on the way to a party (TOGA TOGA TOGA!): there's an ANIMAL in the HOUSE. Wait a SECOND,2, what's this about the Egyptians, contact from off-planet, serious extra-terrestrials from Sun Sirius, the Dog Star, or *Osiris*? Sirius = Osiris = Apollo. (GenX.Reader: you are required to have a BIG STACK of reference books.) ESCAPEMENT: (1) mechanism in typewriters that regulates horizontal movement of the carriage. (2) the notched wheel with



detaining catch to control the speed and regularity of balance wheel or clock pendulum, *EVERY DAMNED SECOND*. Time marches on. Enjoy yerself!

Highway billboard: A SURE CURE FOR ALZHEIMERS: READ MM & BUILD NEW NEURAL PATHWAYS TODAY!

To speak at greater length about *Every Second*: hyperspeed scholarship into hyperspace (transition to Sirius, Dog Star environs, in situ, on scene, Earl. Like some Scruggs-storied banjo-pickin' on the front porch, Storyteller, Player on the World's Stage. That gen.reader must be prepared to be IN THE MOMENT with MM, conversationally *wherever he is*, in any wild # of locales on the planet, GLOBETROTTER EVERY SECOND (Middle East, Greece, Southern Italy). The speed at which *Every Second* hauls yer gourd thru land-cosmicscapes astounding!

Particular and Universal present-day traveler-storytellers, O.&MM, heading to Chios, the FragRANT Island. We be gittin' the Big Picture *NOW*, atomic seconds . . . , e.seconds,2. Don't fergit the Homer and Chios connection, and the constant human presence on that fair isle *for millennia*. Root word: CHION = SNOW. Readerz: MM's descriptive prowess is EXTREME DETAIL annotated to COLOR WHEEL, split to INFINITY. Contemporary ON SCENE observations recounted, often on the fly, ON THE BUS (Ken Kesey) to VRONTADOS, along the sun-drenched Grecian island's coast, where Homer grew tall, or hitch-hiking, in general *every second* mode. Plus SHOPPING LIST of Contemporary Thought WORLDWIDE. Whew! Tea break, Perfesser?

Second,2. JETHRO TOO BLUE GRASS (present author's Amerindian tribal name). Shades of *ODOS KORAH*. I wuz talkin' with this Ol' Homie, *EL Stonoh*, about dat VERY STONE OF THE TEACHER, The Daskalopetra, the site where HOMER taught, STONE SEAT, slab Daska-oid, arm resting on the LYRE, hoping for soundmusical interlude (JAM) between pontifications. (Aspiration of rootsmen to Homeric heights, transcendence of one's own galloping ignorance.)

Anyhoo: the separation into 3 fonts is a great benefit for the *slow* reader. (Text can be read separately by three individuals, or simultaneously by one.) The interweave begins to fabric truth and beauty into a continuous, galactic time flow (bi-ped tribal evolution since the last Ice Age in *E. S.?*).

STONE OF HOMER, Man! The Greeks and Latins! You is about to embark on the *long voyage* of Ulysses to Satsuma (satori)!

Best regards from your off-planet reporter,

El Gorpfoh (aka The Outrider, Doktor of DAdA)

# Morrison's *Realization*: Hermes and the Modernist/Postmodernist Interface

Manjushree S. Kumar

## Abstract

*Realization* (1996) is part of Madison Morrison's vast and ongoing cosmological epic sequence. In it the author juxtaposes the moment-to-moment empirical perceptions of a narrative consciousness in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S.A. with short passages from the classic sacred texts of India—the Upanishads, the Dhammapada and the Bhagavad Gita. Here, by focusing on the temporal effects of this juxtaposition, I explore the ways in which *Realization* combines (interweaves, interplays) modernist and postmodernist techniques. The Indic intertexts, a kind of metaphysical and ethical discourse “spoken” from outside the immediate temporal context or present tense of the narrative proper, that is, from a position in the remote past which can equally be seen as the remote future, in various ways “put into play” the empirical narrative discourse—reinforcing but simultaneously undermining and calling it into question, laying bare its essential fleetingness, emptiness. Thus while the empirical narrative suggests, imitates, parodies certain high modernist forms, the decentering or destabilizing effect of the Indic intertexts suggests a postmodernist (self-) “distancing” at work on another level. The ironic force of these intertexts is, after all, fundamentally temporal: it distances the grounding (“self-present”) narrative from itself, and thereby forces us—to cite a Jamesonian description of post-modernism—to “see the present historically in an age which has forgotten how to think historically in the first place.”

## I

Among the seven stages of the **Sentence of the Gods**, Morrison's 26-book cosmological epic, one transcends the others in its ambition and ambiguity. For though SOL and LUNA, the first two stages of the epic, combine with one another in a synthesis known to the alchemist, HERMES, the epic's fourth stage, in effect partakes of all the other sequences, those that stand both above and below it. (“As above, so below,” in the alchemist's phrase.) Located, in the snake-like emblem that prefaces Morrison's books, at the middle of the **Sentence**, Hermes is attracted by Luna (the moon, his planet in astrological lore) who stands above him, as well as by Aphrodite who lies beneath him. (Hermes and Aphrodite, we recall, were married, and from their union issued the beautiful, volatile Hermaphroditus.) Ascending from the initial “S” of SEMREH, the order in which we encounter HERMES as we follow the forward course of the **Sentence**, is ARES; descending from the “H” of HERMES is HERA. Ares and Hermes, like Apollo (Sol) and Artemis (Luna), were children of Zeus, and so the four gods of the first four stages of Morrison's epic represent a family grouping. In it Hermes is special, for his mother was not Hera but Maia. Unlike Zeus, Hera and Hades, whose principal

realms were Heaven, Earth and Hell, Hermes is engaged with all three realms, communicating freely among them.

Swift of foot and wingèd, Hermes is the psychopomp, the conductor of human souls to Hades and back. In his capacity as messenger he conveys the will of the Olympian gods to men. The god of eloquence and learning, he is also an ithyphallic god who expresses a priapic sexuality, and yet he is frequently represented as epicene. In early Greek tradition he is a shepherd god. In later tradition he merges with Thoth, the Egyptian magus. He carries a magic wand, the caduceus, about which two snakes entwine. A traveler who shuttles from Heaven to Earth, from Earth to Hell, he is also constantly in motion on the horizontal plane, marking the byways of the ancient world of Greece with his phallic herms. Later assimilated into the Roman figure of Mercury, he modernizes himself to become the tutelary deity of the commercial traveler. Like Odysseus, his secular counterpart, Hermes represents the compulsive liar, the teller of tales, sprightly and devious. He is also a figure of authority, who shares with the author his ability to construct texts, and with the scholar or priest his ability to construe them. Like Thoth, his Egyptian predecessor, he is said to have invented writing, was known to be a thief, sometimes took the form of a bird, and embodied wisdom.

Since his hermetic wisdom was precisely “embodied,” it is most appropriate that Morrison, in the books of his HERMES sequence, has embodied the wisdom of the ages, East and West. Having culled the wisdom traditions of Homeric Greece, the Biblical Near East and Egypt, in his sequence he joins them to (or juxtaposes them against) the wisdom traditions of China, India and Southeast Asia. *Second*, the first book in HERMES, interweaves the text of the Iliad with the author’s first-hand experience of Istanbul. (The modern city is regarded as a displacement of Homer’s Troy, itself perhaps a retrospective displacement of ancient Carthage.) At the end of the Iliadic half of this *aggiornamento* of Homer, Morrison turns westward to retrace the route of Odysseus on his *nostos*—doubling the route of Aeneas, then of Vergil as the former continues on to Rome and the latter leaves Greece for his final return to Brindisi, thence (along the Via Appia Antica) to Naples and the grave that awaits him. *Every*, the second book in the sequence, is set in Israel (which Morrison also visited on his round-the-world tour). This book takes as its principal text the Old Testament and as its most exemplary figure, Moses. At the close of *Every*, which brings us forward in time from Old to New Testament, from Christ to the Christian diaspora, we travel from Israel to Jordan and on to Lebanon, from the world of the Jews and the Christians to the world of Islam. *Magic* (2000), the third book in HERMES, recounts the author’s life to the age of 28, sending us backward from his fourteenth year to his conception, forward from his fifteenth year to his entrance into the real world. Its embedded texts are taken from the

Egyptian Book of the Dead and a section of the Neoplatonic Corpus, the latter traditionally regarded as derived from Egyptian lore.

The second half of HERMES turns from occidental to oriental wisdom traditions. The “H” of HER, the eponymous book *Her* (forthcoming), refers us to the architecture and iconography of Siem Reap, where native and Indic traditions were merged in the great medieval Khmer civilization of Angkor. *Engendering* (1990, 2002), the “E” of HER, embodies the wisdom of Confucius and Lao-zi, inter-weaving the former’s Lun Yu, the latter’s Dao De Jing into the academic texture of an American university town. The “R” of HER, *Realization* (1996), returns us to the most ancient traditions of Asia, those of India: Morrison draws upon the philosophical wisdom of the Upanishads, the practical ethics found in a Pali text, the Way of Dharma or Dhammapada, and the spirituality of the Bhagavad Gita, itself a segment of the world’s longest epic, the Mahabharata or tale of great India.

The androgynous Hermes is reflected in the pairings that occur within HER, which includes a “HE” in English and an “ER” in German, both forms of the masculine pronoun. Thus Egypt and India stand at the center of this wisdom sequence, in the diptych *Magic Realization*, flanked on the one side by traditional Chinese philosophical texts, on the other by the sacred scriptures of the Bible. Reading the **Sentence** backwards from the “A” of APHRODITE, we encounter three trilogies: *All Regarding Exists*, *Her Engendering Realization*, *Magic Every Second*. Of the three “R”s that occur in the larger sequence—*Regarding*, *Realization* and *Revolution*—*Realization* is the central book. Unlike the *Regarding* of HERA and the *Revolution* of ARES, the *Realization* of HERMES is spiritual. Its three journeys represent three quests for a transcendental realization. From a contemporary viewpoint, *Realization* is multifold, ambiguous and ambitious on several levels, gathering into itself the tendencies of modernist and postmodernist ideologies and looking beyond them, through their synthesis, to a new goal. It is this aspect of the book to which I now wish to devote my analysis.

## II

*The door of the True is covered with a golden disk. Darkness. Open that, O Pushan. A wall of yellow light emerging on the left. That we may see the nature of the True. Blackness. Two solitary lights cast a dim glimmer on a pebble-floored transformer station. Darkness: the outlines of trees, visible against a faint general glow of smoky pink. O Pushan. Trees. Only seer. More trees. A four lane divided highway. Blackness. The train is beginning to slow down. Yama. It is slowing down further. Surya. It has slowed down to five miles an hour. Son of Prajapati. It has stopped altogether. Blackness. Spread thy rays and gather them. It has started up again. O Surya, the light which is thy fairest form, I see it. A double, ten-lane highway, sporadic light everywhere. A yellow maintenance truck, gleaming in the light. Warehouse backlots guarded by rows of light. A motel. I am what He is. “MOTEL.” The person in the sun. A “Tom’s” truck. Motel lights. A man eating dinner, seen through the window of his house. Breath to air, to the immortal. (13)*

Intrinsically persuasive, and with a will to dehistoricize, the text of *Realization* commences, here toward the end of a journey to Houston, by both denouncing and embracing the temporal and the spatial, the textual and the “extra”-textual (with implications of a “beyondness”), and, most essentially, the material and the meta-physical. It teems with possibilities of the infinite, which also, for obvious and pragmatic reasons, control its direction and harness its narrative. This brings into the picture the text and the temporal, the one impinging upon the other. Thus they grow in a symbiotic relationship but yield nonetheless the essence of an individual presence. The existence of history (or some form of precedence) gets negated, and one enters Lukačs’s strain of thought as he ponders a hero “without personal history” (Lodge 477). Indeed, the author’s presence in *Realization* appears to be without personal history. Instead the book seemingly develops through a narrative unencumbered with authorial intention, as though *Realization* were a self-perpetuating phenomenon. As in the passage quoted, the text seems to be controlled by other forces, by Pushan, by Surya, by Prajapati. These solar figures remind us that the “R” of *Realization* in **Sentence of the Gods** stands beneath SOL, the Sun.

In the reading of Morrison’s text that follows I attempt not only to examine issues pertaining to the temporal but also to address its ambivalently modernist/postmodernist stance. Its content and action fuse with a meticulously guarded temporality that moves in a consistently linear mode. The most conspicuous feature of the narrative lies in its use of separate, widely disparate contexts juxtaposed with one another. This juxtaposition is a rhetorical one; every line of the narrative describing the minutiae of action and event in an American locale alternates with a contextually meaningful excerpt from a religious or philosophical text drawn from Indic tradition. (In the passage above the text has been drawn from the Upanishads.) These have been scrupulously chosen, giving the entire narrative a dual yet homogeneous texture. I quote from a passage that occurs near the end of *Realization*, one in which the text itself seems to comment upon the fragmentation so characteristic of modernist art, its awareness of “separate existences apart,” as in the collage technique of the early Cubists and their contemporaries, the Dada poets. (In this instance the “intertext” is drawn from the Bhagavad Gita.) This fragmentary method extends to the representation of a “primary” reality, here expressed in terms of the American landscape. The author is traveling a road outside Amarillo, Texas in search of the site of a contemporary earthwork sculpture still under construction. He has stopped alongside the dirt road to rest, leaving his car door open against the heat.

1:30. “*This, then, is ‘true’ Knowledge.*” Ranch Road 1061. “*Learn thou its nature*”: Leaving Amarillo. “*To see one changeless Life in all the Lives.*” August 25. “*And in the Separate.*” Twin buttes. “*One Inseparable.*” Orange VW by side of road, buttes caught between door and windshield. “*This is imperfect knowledge*”: Puffy cloudlet (WSW); sky; sky through windshield. “*That which sees the separate existences apart.*” Single yellow bug smear. “*And.*” Vague clouds on

horizon. "Being separated." Vaguer still near butte. "Holds them real." Windy grass. Gust through car interior. Car approaching downroad, crispy tire crunch, red Chevy pickup. Cricket sound. "And this is False Knowledge": Yellow flowers still on car floor. "That which clings blindly, as 'were all." Wind burst; buffet; door closing on author's foot. "Seeking no Cause." Sun on boot, door shadow vacillating. "Deprived of light." Road in asphalt, gravel-embedded. "Narrow, dull." Orange center line. "Deadly, 'dark.'" Yellow-overpainted. Asphalt a part of landscape. (153-54)

It is important to note at this stage that, though the text may have its roots in modernism, it develops as the expression of a postmodernist exercise. What begins as a realist, impressionist, modernist scene of nature as art culminates as a postmodernist scene of art in nature, the "Floating Mesa" in question an earthwork constructed by an English sculptor in the American landscape.

Texas Ranch Road 1061, outskirts of Amarillo. "A Brahman's virtues, O Prince!" 1:40 pm "Are born of his nature": View of twin mesas: scrubby bush stuff, scaffolding barely visible. "Serenity." Door shadow broader facing west. "Self-mastery." Subtle fern-like leaves in dance. "Religion." Bird chirp. Eastern Mesa. "Purity." "CHEM TOI / PHONE 374 0651." "Patience." "Amarillo, Texas." Grasshopper chirp, mesquite, turquoise outhouse. "Uprightness." Plywood panels leaning against hillside. "Learning." Double sea-green welding cans, "FLOATING MESA," white trailer side (black letters). (154)

Unlike modernist work, with its deliberate isolation from the world in a realm of art, postmodernist work is inseparable from that world. It is born of nature itself, born of a patience that assimilates nature to the work of art, art to the work of nature.

Terry Eagleton embarks on an exposition of the postmodern by calling it "the cynical belated revenge wreaked by bourgeois culture upon its revolutionary antagonists, whose utopian desire for a fusion of art and social praxis is seized, distorted and jeeringly turned back upon them as dystopian reality" (Lodge 385). It has also come to be seen as an expression of the "contemporary crisis of culture" (Huysen 169). The temporal once again looms into view, as Eagleton explains that "Utopia" cannot belong to the future, since the latter, in the form of technology, exists here and now, "synchronous with the present."

"And to know the truth of things which be." Floating Mesa, 1:55 pm. Black four-door Cadillac, hood open. Wind, compressor sound. Tracks in red, sage-scumbled dust whipping up past trailer. Glint of light off welder's helmet. High compressor putter. Near ground rustish, middle ground in sage, irregular band of pesky scrub leading into distance. Far ground fading to blue horizontal confusion. Western edge, Floating Mesa. Hair shadow half on page, half on rock. Trailer box beneath knoll. Amarillo skyscraper visible to south. Notebook page flaps up. Single ladder leaning against scaffold. 2:00 pm. Mesa top. 2:15. Welder, quiver full of rods, grey-flecked beard. Electric line. Cricket buzz, compressor sound. (154)

The present in Morrison's *Realization* is a studied constant with no slipping into the past or ducking into the future. The nature of the present that is constantly under focus is far from any elitist formulations of the artistic. Instead it is heavy with the description and detailing of the commonplace, of what is most immediate in the physical environment. Consider these further examples, both from Part II of the text: "2:55 pm. Double blue glare-light, aimed at

entrance, Metropolitan Museum, single light in yellow-brown” (67), or: “Two Hispanic girls with identical hairdos passing downtown. A mother and her daughter walking uptown. Jewish man, orange-headed wife park cream-colored Ford in front of me” (54). This proven attention to quotidian details everywhere places the text of *Realization* in a postmodernist light.

Postmodernism then has come to embrace “mass culture,” the “repressed other of elitist modernist art” (Kershner 74). The opposition in terms of modernism/mass culture has proven to be unexpectedly resilient. One is led to conclude that neither can do without the other and that their “mutual exclusiveness” is really a sign of their “secret interdependence.” Mass culture yearns for the respect that serious culture has earned for itself and which appears to have eluded it. Jameson points to the postmodern fascination with the landscape of TV show and *Readers’ Digest* culture. “The commercial culture is ... incorporated directly into postmodern art” (Selden and Widdowson 186). Thus we find the absence of hierarchy, of any ranking of high and popular culture in a movement that features “the information explosion”: global TV, rock and pop fashion styles. John Barth, in his essay “The Literature of Replenishment,” remarks: “My ideal postmodernist author neither merely repudiates nor merely imitates either his 20<sup>th</sup> century modernist parents or his 19<sup>th</sup> century premodernist grandparents. He has the first half of the century under his belt, but not on his back” (qtd. in Kershner 74). It also becomes necessary to note that not every work of art that fails to conform to “canonized notions of quality” is “Kitsch,” and, as a matter of fact, weaving Kitsch into art can yield high or quality works.

Two extended treatments of high art, to be found in consecutive paragraphs of *Realization*, may be worth consideration. Both occur in the Houston section, in Part I of the text. The first describes the author’s experience of viewing works of early modernist art. He begins by noting the capitalist status of these works in an ambience of wealthy patronage and selects examples that include images of the reader:

John A. and Audrey Jones Beck Collection. Caillebotte garden. *And in it that small ether.* “There’s a Mary Cassatt down there that’s beautiful.” Bulbified tree receptacles. *Now what exists within that small ether.* Ill-formed man reading a letter. *That is to be sought.* Oriental woman (Thai? Burmese? Laotian?), large black glasses on end of her nose, contour of sole visible through black silk stockings. *To be understood.* Stops to examine Renoir “Liseuse.” *And if they should say to him.* Caillebotte entitled “The Artist’s Brother in His Garden.” *Now with regard to that city of Brahman.* 1878. *And the palace in it.* Glass catching light from skylight above, as do polished beige tassel loafers of middle-aged Hispanic viewer (Caracas? Sevilla? La Ciudad de Mexico?). His wife has joined him, wine-colored pants over tiny derrière, greige Hermès bag pendant from shoulder. *I.e., the small lotus of the heart.* As she views the Renoir (“Girl Reading” [pastel], 1890), her heavy-lidded, full-lipped face reflects in my direction off Caillebotte glass. *And the small ether.* Liseuse lovely; better from middle distance. *Within the heart.* Up steps black; split-pocket jeans, red leather jacket, untrimmed beard; checks Cassatt, studies Morisot. Caillebotte brother, Renoir girl continue to read. *What is there that deserves to be sought for?* Two black women take a seat, back to me, opposite end of bench. *What exists to be understood?* (22)

In a self-encapsulated, modernist way this three-voiced passage explores the museum's intercultural context, its variety of international visitors, its deliberately eclectic collection, its variously personal, neutral and objective works. All the while, of course, Morrison continues to interweave the high siren-sound of Upanishadic text, which opens a heavenly realm above the earthly realm of art, a subtext of social reality beneath the physical realm. The final sentence in normal font then introduces an explicitly urban drama, all the more sociological for its brevity and lack of stationing. Seated on the bench, the author overhears a poignant conversation between two black residents of Houston as they inadvertently describe a desperate situation.

"The *police* have him in custody." *Then he should say: "As large as this ether is."* "She stabbed several times on steps." *"So large is that ether within the heart."* Inaudible mumble. *"Heaven and earth are contained within it."* "See, he talk to ambulance, to ambulance man." *"Fire and air, sun and moon, lightning and stars."* "You jes' know he stolen it!" *"Whatever of him there is in this world."* "Yeah." *"Whatever of him is not."* Jongkind, Gullaumin, Boudin. "Wouldn't have been big enough to get it." *"All that is contained within it."* Three landscapes: Dutch, Parisian, imaginary. (22-23)

In the preceding quotation Morrison had noted someone carrying a Hermès bag, perhaps an indication that Hermes is secretly at work in the passage, pilfering the modernist view of art, hermetically sealing it, isolating it from society. In postmodernist ideology art must be viewed within a larger social context. The two figures of readers in the Renoir and Caillebotte paintings seem in the first quoted paragraph to suggest that one may remain isolated from social concern. In the second paragraph Hermes again makes an appearance, this time in the guise of a thief, perhaps spiriting off the modernist luxury. At any rate, an emphasis upon the art context now gives way to an emphasis upon the social context of crime and punishment.

Theorists of the postmodern usually dwell upon the grounding role in the postmodern aesthetic of chance or some arbitrary principle in the structuring of art. At times Morrison's art seems almost relentlessly devoted to randomness. Such theorists also imply that a work is postmodern if there is a reasonably radical "breaking of the frame," as when the author appears in the pages of his or her fiction. Morrison refers frequently to the presence of the author in the course of his descriptions. The postmodernist author may also break the frame in a multifariously ironic way, so that standing outside it becomes indistinguishable from standing within it. In a passage that both practices and parodies art criticism, MM, during his days in Houston, makes another outing, this time to view the Rothko chapel, whose walls are covered with icons of high modernism. He begins by situating them within another spiritual context, that of the temporal and non-temporal Brahman, the regnant principle of the universe. Again, the temporal and the spatial are both embraced and denounced in this theological strategy:



*There are two forms of Brahman, time and non-time. The Rothko Chapel. That which was before the existence of the sun is non-time and has no parts. That which had its beginning from the sun is time and has parts. Of that which has parts, the year is the form, and from the year all creatures are born; when produced by the year, they grow; they go again to rest in the year. Therefore the year is Prajapati, time, food, the Self, the nest of Brahman. (32)*

From theology Morrison moves to aesthetics, suggesting in his choice of motifs other Asiatic traditions. By the end of the second paragraph we have returned through postmodernist concerns to a modernist sense of Self.

The central panel of the northern triptych has a slightly off-center, slightly irregular square, defined in calligraphic strokes. The panel to the left is marked by a light, diagonal streak on the right-hand side of its upper third. The right panel is characterized by horizontal strokes and a central, illusionistic void. *Time ripens, dissolving all beings in the Great Self; but he who knows that which time itself is dissolved in, he knows the Veda. (32)*

In these passages religious text and aesthetic experience for the most part reinforce one another. Often in *Realization*, however, the most quotidian and physical of events, persons and actions are placed in deliberate contrast with statements of profound philosophical content. Thus played against the modernist conjunction of art and spirituality we find the postmodernist disjunction between contrasting realms of art and spirituality.

Stonington Boat Works, 1:45 pm, Stonington, Connecticut, November 15, 1979. To the end of the dock: author scares off gulls, they reluctant to move. *"For I have conquered all!"* Gulls hovering, strong incoming wind: veer, one settling on nearby pier. *"And I know all."* Sun bellowing straight at author, who holds down page against wind, hair aflutter in his face. *"In all conditions of life."* Blinding sun-glint off water, wave following wave. *"And am free from taint."* Chicly black-hulled, solitary dinghy, red water-line, white mast. *"Have left all."* Single feather on dock, stuck in gull excrement. *"And through the destruction of thirst am free."* Wind continues to blow, hard. (83)

Particulars of quotidian reality are interwoven with passages of the most ambiguous sorts of philosophical generalization. Morrison's practice, with its relentless juxtapositions, has often suggested to me the technique of the early seventeenth-century English Metaphysical Poets, since in both "heterogeneous ideas are . . . yoked together," sometimes even "violently" (Samuel Johnson). Accordingly, some conspicuous moments in the book the reader is shocked into an assimilation of the text. Sometimes one feels this shock in the confrontation of Upanishad (literally "Holy Text") with ordinary reality, sometimes in the relation of the Buddhist Dhammapada to the trivial. Here it is the words of Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita as he addresses Krishna, words that illustrate the *ironic* effect of juxtaposition. Nonetheless, on reflection, we often see that the contrasted worlds are somehow linked to one another:

*Arjuna.* Berkeley Rose Garden. *"Who is that Brahma?"* Berkeley, California. *"What that Soul of Souls (the Adhyatman)?"* Japanese tourist family commentating roses, 12:00 noon. Granma in white sweater, flowered skirt. July 12, 1980. Baby in mother's arms. *"What, thou Best of All!"* Aunt in blue sleeveless pantsuit, red long-sleeved sweater. *"Thy work, the Karma?"* "Century Two," "Spanish Sun," "Rose of Freedom." (126)

This sense of semblance in the face of difference may perhaps be attributed to the fact that both discourses have issued from a revolutionary stance, emerging as unorthodox, unconventional and entirely new forms of representation. Both are also religious in their goal. As Donne, Herbert or Crashaw lead us toward various Protestant and Catholic versions of God, so Krishna leads Arjuna to the Adyatman.

There is also in Morrison's text a detailed cataloguing (shades of epic and high modernism) that makes the narrative purpose more explicit. For instance:

Village shuttle return: yellow American Seating seats ("Grand Rapids MI"), grey-haired driver in bright orange jumpsuit. "*Existing for himself?*" Man in string tie, straw sunshade. "*Self-concentrated, serving self alone.*" I saw three middle-aged women talkin' and talkin' and I said, "Would you mind if I spoke my mind"? "*No part bath he in aught.*" "No," they said. "*Nothing achieved.*" (101)

Nothing may be achieved in art without devotion to the world of actuality. In Morrison, as in Whitman before him, the act of cataloguing often assumes a kind of religious intensity of devotion. In this the two poets are linked perhaps by their concern with Indic traditions of attention to the ordinary world. Appropriately the scene of observation in the following passage, as in much of Whitman, is New York City:

Red-bearded man in blue fedora, blue shirt, blue pants scratches his beard, looks tentatively at author. Beautiful, long-haired Hispanic girl in white pants, red parka, catches me as I study her; continues conversation with two older black women. Negroes, ethnic whites, Hispanics stream uptown. A black girl in a bright pink blazer. An Hispanic girl in a turquoise shirt, light purple jacket. Broadway/South Ferry bus heads south, revving, moaning, intoning brakes. Cars, a van, follow in its wake. People stream uptown, jaywalk across the street. Hispanic girl in elegantly-braided pigtail pauses by the right side of my car, as she and girlfriend wait for opening to cross. Lights in all the bigger buildings now, varied in intensity. (54-55)

Governed as the passage is by the larger context of *Realization II*, which incorporates the Buddhist Dhammapada, the descriptions suggest those of Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," where ordinary people at the day's end are returning home from work. Morrison continues his minute observation of the life of the multi-ethnic, democratic metropolis, dwelling with an equal affection upon all that meets his gaze.

Tailor in apron, yarmulka, emerges from K. Trimming/Buttons, accompanied by younger man, also in yarmulka. Street emptying; pedestrians thinning; several cars have left. Studious, suited Caucasian, glasses perched on nose, forces his 30-year-old frame uptown, tie loosened. Man returns to car with friend, finds ticket on windshield; remonstrates. Two green lights at cross street discernible, yellow/red of sign beyond. Black man with bottle in paper sack walks uptown. Artificial light strong on recto page of notebook, as author writes on verso. *Stop the stream valiantly, drive away the desires, O Brahmana!* Interior of car becoming cooler. *When you have understood the destruction of all that was made, then will you understand that which was not made.* (55)

A statement from the scriptures of philosophical or religious thought follows another that is purely and exclusively mundane. The distinctive aspect of this, however, is that such statements fuse into each other, resulting in a refinement, particularly of the physical. Elsewhere, in his description of Stonington, Connecticut, Morrison writes: “Blinding sun-glint off water, wave following wave. ‘*And am free from taint*’ ” (Note here the water washing off all taint). “Chicly black-hulled, solitary dinghy, red water-line, white mast. ‘*Have left all.*’ ” A fusion is also very marked in the following description of San Francisco: “Three-masted tour-boat docking, American flag in stiff breeze atop middle mast. ‘*No other Maker!*’ ” “Cable car #23 arrives: author boarding. ‘*All these hang on me*’ ” (122). We might here pause to witness the cross-cultural encounter. The text, couched in an American setting with its corresponding space and time structures, is almost perfectly at home with Morrison’s concomitant forages into Buddhist and Hindu scriptures. The two emerge, not as a hybrid species, but as an untiringly amalgamated quest for reconciliation.

Although a postmodernist construct, the text attends rather keenly to the order of chronological time: it represents a detailed recording of the month, day and precise hour. Not only does this provide a temporal setting, it also lends an added dimension to the context of individual passages. One may venture to suggest that *Realization* lives in an eternal present. It takes cognizance of the immediate and the physical, in passages that quite often either precede or follow the spiritual or philosophical intertexts. One notices the above conjunction in the following: “*It is the wise student who will find the Dhammapada. Ahead to Mollusks/Mankind. The path of perfection*” (57). The occasional author-presence in the narrative imparts authenticity to what is observed and recorded. This form of the stream-of-consciousness technique, specifically termed “interior monologue,” works toward an exact presentation of what is sharply conscious. It would be well to compare the use of this technique, characteristic of modernist writing, in two passages. The first is from *Realization I*:

9:36. “WAREHOUSE.” Pigpen on incline. Approaching Purcell. Quarter horses grazing the tundra; behind them a quarter-mile oval. *Though a man may wish to live a hundred years performing works, it will be thus with him.* 10:00 am *But not in any other way.* Paul’s Valley. *Work will not cling to a man.* Water tower: “PVA.” Station pale yellow. “Royal Theater.” (9)

The next is from Joyce’s *Ulysses*:

Pineapple rock, lemon platt, butterscotch. A sugar-sticky girl shoveling scoopfuls of creams for a Christian brother. Some school great. Bad for their tummies. Lozenge and comfit manufacturer to His Majesty the King. God. Save Our. Sitting on his throne, sucking red jujubes white. (124)

Such a handling of the narrative yields a perception of both the now and corporeal and the remote or beyond. The latter becomes divested of its remoteness for, as if in keeping with the title, “realization” is either at hand or at least not beyond one’s reach. In fact it might serve as a revelation that excerpts (in italics) from the religious texts form an unbroken, constant backdrop to the

author's ongoing observation of external events, of that which belongs to the purely physical world. Thus *Realization* as a text, from start to finish, may be seen as a single block of time, of unlabored, ceaseless, uninterrupted devotion—virtually a spiritual experience. Borrowing a metaphor from music, one is able to observe this single, ever-flowing stream of extra-mundane meditation as a supremely relevant refrain, to which the author returns consistently after experimenting in the octave. Thus *Realization* becomes synonymous with the undying cosmic note of the “Onkar,” the infinite “Parabrahm” of the Bhagavad Gita. The physicality of the locale and/or the universe becomes transported to the rarer regions. The entire postmodernist exercise attempts to articulate reality. In an erudite assessment J.N. Sharma, in his review of the book, refers to Morrison's experiment as a “spiritual travelogue” in search of a meaning for the cosmos.

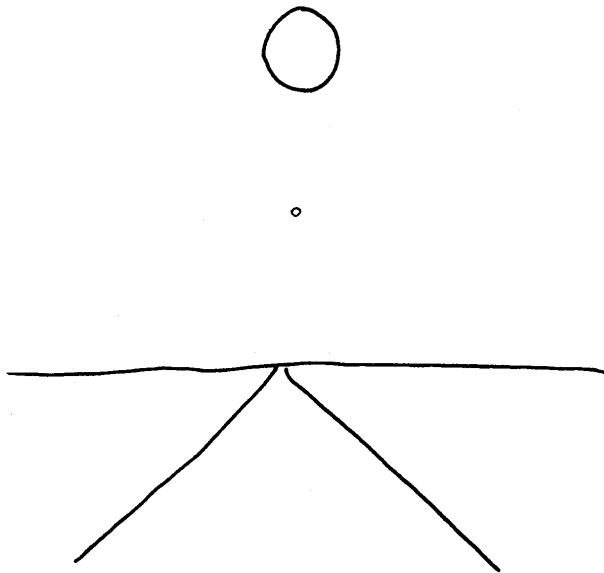
Presumably the author is seeking to find his bearings as he juxtaposes the local and American with the wise and true embodied in Oriental philosophical thought. A similar strain is heard in “*Arjuna: 'Yes, Thou art indeed Parabrahm!'*” Sermon, Ogden radio. “*The High Abode!*” “So God waits for you.” (136). Even more striking (in its abrupt move to self-reflexivity) is the following: “Truck on highway (inaudible). ‘*Of Arrogance, impatience.*’ Heat, wind-mollified, still intense. ‘*Anger, pride.*’ Hand, pen shadowing page. ‘*Freed from surroundings*’” (154).

### III

The emergence of something called “postmodernism” and the subsequent categorization of works of art as “postmodernist” has been consistently questioned and debated. Fredric Jameson refers to the “play of historical allusion and stylistic pastiche” (Lodge 375) as a prominent feature of postmodernism; he also defines this “movement” as the “attempt to think the present historically in an age which has forgotten how to think historically in the first place.” In 1971 Ihab Hassan established a “tradition” of the postmodern and moved to define the postmodernist aesthetic; he contrasted the modernist “dehumanisation of Art” with the postmodernist sense of the “dehumanisation of the planet and the end of Man.” While the modernist remains tragically heroic (Eliot's “Prufrock”), the postmodernist expresses exhaustion, bringing into focus the void (the tramps of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*). He rejects the traditional aesthetics of “Beauty” and “Uniqueness” for the entire corpus of the artistic and literary, which now blends the popular with “rituals of the masses,” rituals that are in effect “against interpretation,” in Susan Sontag's phrase. While Pieterse (1991) claims that “in the west developmentalism is being challenged by new social movements and, in theoretical terms, by postmodernism . . .” (Lowy 604), Jameson argues that the postmodern may be viewed as a “mere dialectical intensification of the old modernist impulse

towards innovation” (Lodge 378). Indeed Lyotard, in a trope of renewal that combines change with stasis, refers to contemporary postmodernism as a “promise of the return and the re-invention, the triumphant reappearance, of some new high modernism endowed with all its older power and with fresh life” (Lodge 379).

In the light of such postulates Morrison’s *Realization* might, then, be regarded as a highly consummate piece of modernist writing, however much it elsewhere appears postmodernist, moving through a mode of representation that defines the “principle in structuring art” as an “experimental formal principle” that is constantly reinventing itself. This state of apparent symbiosis is perhaps congruent with Theodor W. Adorno’s insight that modernism, and the return to it, are essentially a critique of modern mass culture. An extremely subjective version of the postmodernist attributes of *Realization* appears in the graphic representation of a scene at the end of Section II. As if in a vision that encapsulates the entire corpus of the text that precedes (and follows) it, the figure is impregnated with a sense of the consummation, fulfillment and transcendence that Section II predicts and Section III achieves. This figure, which follows the caption: “I-35, Emporia, Kansas, 6:00 pm, November 21,” is not an illustration but rather an integral part of the text:



The linear strokes seem to represent our mundane, quotidian life, the small circle in the center a connection with the higher, larger circle above it, the rarer region of the cosmos, the ultimate zone of truth and cosmic definition of all existence. Here the pattern of verbal intertextuality becomes graphic, and the interplay of physical and spiritual domains connotes the immediate concerns of the protagonist—that small circle in the center. More literally considered, the late fall scene returns us to Morrison's planetary scheme, for between Moon and Earth rides Venus (Aphrodite) in her early evening appearance as the Evening Star. Though Hermes is not literally present, he cannot, we feel, be far away, for the Evening Star is Aphrodite, his mythical consort. In the context of the constant voyage, Hermes is the traveler himself. But the graphic design here, indeed the whole motif of visual art in *Realization*, also reminds us that postmodern architecture serves as mode for the definitively postmodernist technique of "citation" of older forms or even of particular classic works. This is perhaps the most obvious sense, after all, in which Morrison's use of Oriental religious texts as intertexts, to provide a necessary extra dimension to his narrative, makes of him a postmodernist.

Altus turnoff, I-40, Sayre, Oklahoma, 4:00 pm, June 13, 1980. *Ranged thus for battle on the sacred plain.* Parked purple souped-up van. *Then, at the aged king's signal, blaring like to the lions roar, the trumpeter blew upon the great conch.* Black Goodyear racing tires. *And at the noise of it trumpet and drum, cymbal and gong, burst into sudden clamor.* Quality Inn sunburst (red on yellow). *Like the blast of a loosened tempest.* Red dust; orange VW; yellow-flower-bespeckled bank. *Then appeared a car of gold, white-steed-driven.* White sign, black letters: "Chinese American Food." *And upon it, Krishna the God.* Interstate System sign. *With Arjuna at his side.* (White on green.) *Krishna, his locks knotted, blowing upon the great conch, carved of the giant's bone.* White red-mud-bespattered service truck. *Arjuna blowing upon another, Indra's loud gift.* Yellow directional lines on motel asphalt. *Bhima the terrible, wolf-bellied Bhima, blowing upon the reed conch.* Ending, electric orange concrete parking stanchion. *Yudhisthira, Kunti's blameless son, winding his mighty shell.* (95)

Although we may wish to characterize this magnificent passage as either modernist or postmodernist, few writers, John Barth has pointed out, are any one thing at any given moment and *a fortiori* not in totality. "Joyce Carol Oates writes all over the aesthetic map," he observes. "My own novels seem to have both modernist and postmodernist attributes . . ." (Kershner 77). In MM's description of Sayre, Oklahoma, at the outset of *Realization III*, are blended the religious reverence for exotic cultures so characteristic of the modernists with many of the features of postmodernism that we have already noted: its self-effacement, its sense of randomness, its carefully guarded temporality.

And, speaking of temporality, *Realization* sets the trail ablaze with futuristic possibilities. Like Morrison's earlier works, it not only records the shock of a ruthless interplay of perceptions, thoughts and images, as it relentlessly constructs a consciousness of the present—it is also pregnant with elements of a foreseeable future. Indeed there is ample evidence of a subconscious effort here to seize at an infinity. Linda Hutcheon argues that postmodern culture does not "renounce historical representation altogether but [rather] questions its status"

(*PMLA* 983). Might we not say that Morrison in *Realization*, with his intense moment-to-moment narration, represents an empirically perceived present that is (always already) both a subjective past and, simultaneously, that heavier past of a larger cross-cultural “tradition”? But the weighty words of Indic texts speaking to us (quite arbitrarily, as it may seem) from “above” and from across centuries, also shake the foundations of a present conceived historically (Jameson) from the perspective of an indefinitely deferred future.

Whether or not Hermes recognizes himself amidst contemporary hermeneutical discussions, remains, I suppose, an open question. That he presides over Morrison’s uncanny conjunction of past, present and future is, however, clear. For this god of the road always has and always will be a time-traveler. In the figure of Wisdom he embraces the prewritten text, the written text and the text construed, all forms of eloquence. This is also his intercultural mode or function, for to travel from Heaven to Earth, from Earth to Hell and back again, bearing messages and “announcing” them (Heidegger calls Hermes the “announcing” god, hence *bermeneuein*) is also to be the translator of each realm to the others. Morrison’s inter-cultural, inter-temporal, inter-cosmic messenger is not only Egyptian (Thoth), Greek (Hermes) and Roman (Mercury), but Asian as well, for the gods of the **Sentence** are universally conceived. Accordingly, just as this fleet-footed god presides over Chinese and Southeast Asian configurations in the final two books of the HERMES sequence, so in *Realization* he assimilates himself to Indic tradition.

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# The Intertextuality of Body and Soul: A Realization toward Self-Realization

*D. Gnanasekaran*

Life on earth has increasingly become so complex and undependable that we humans can't help being sucked into the vortex of this complexity and quizzicality. We assert that we are the only animals that have the power of reason to guide us through our lives. However, the same reasoning often disables us not to look at life as it really is and cocoons us by many social, cultural and religious protective layers. Many individuals are in quest of a life of bliss free from human afflictions, and they long to achieve it, but most fail to rise to the occasion. The goal is iridescent like a rainbow, but how to reach it in one's worldly existence is the uphill task that every aspirant faces. Is it a spiritual journey, a negation of the ephemeral? Or is it a coordination of the physical and the spiritual that helps one rise above the mundane aspirations? We may find an answer to this in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. Life is to be lived meaningfully, and its purpose is to make the divine come down to earth.

Many events in our lives go by contraries. One has to experience the paradoxes of human existence, and joy and misery are bound to alternate in this process. Despite the odds, there is the quest in many individuals for something that is expected to give them lasting peace of mind and soul-stirring illumination. Madison Morrison is one such individual who lives as a down-to-earth human being and at the same time continues the search as the Arnoldian Scholar Gypsy along with similarly motivated individuals across the world, waiting for the divine spark. His experiences present a matrix of the familiar and the unfamiliar, and they reflect his state of mind caught in the mire of the usual human bindings and invited/uninvited encumbrances. A reader like me can see a spiritual quest in his writings. Fun, forthrightness, humor and irony lard the quest, and his writings are characterized by a kind of interior monologue, the manifestation of a debate on the essential difference between what is physically experienceable and what is spiritually experienceable.

Whether it is a poem or a travelogue or a record of his inner struggle, his writings often veer round to the question of discovering the ultimate Truth and meaning of human existence. Meetings and partings mark our life; impressions and thoughts crisscross the mind; and as a result conflicts and compulsions make ripples in the body as well as the soul. Rarely do these two, the body and the soul, agree, and when they agree, life is pleasant, smooth and purposeful. Morrison has undergone the tension between the two and made himself a medium of this tension. Consequently, his work is born out of the depths of his anguished heart. Things in day-to-day life make him go berserk initially, but all this momentary confusion ultimately boils down to composure and consum-

mates in a work of art. His writing represents a sort of interactive approach between the things that are haywire for the uninitiated, eluding cohesion. It is a difficult task indeed. Morrison's erudition and perspicacity, however, brush aside the hurdles with a masterly stroke, and there lies the fruit of his constant struggle to solve the internal conflict with a view to bringing the intangible close to the tangible.

One can see through the seeming absurdities in his work his implicit resolution to show life in its true colors. Beneath these superficial aberrations lies an affirmation to break open the perennial spring of godhead and divine bliss. As James Merrill has nicely put it, "Madison Morrison . . . must persist until as many of the world's 'appearances' as humanly possible, along with its multiple faiths and literary modes, have been called into play." *SOLUNA*, the collection of six books of poems that stand at the beginning of his sequence, says Merrill, constitutes "a binocular museum wherein "what we know is distanced, what we do not know is brought near, always with skill, erudition, and great good humor." These poetic works are not circumscribed by the bounds of time and space nor by the merits of apparent order. Instead they embody the numerous machinations of temporal and spatial vagaries that form the essence of normal life on earth. It is futile to look for perfect order or immaculate discipline, either physical or psychic, as we move up and down along the ever-rotating wheel of existence. This sense Morrison has precisely represented in his insightful work, accommodating all human contradictions and persevering in his efforts to locate amidst them the spot that is neither evanescent nor morbid.

Absolute Truth occupies the spot distanced far beyond ordinary human comprehension but appears as distinctly as possible before the willing soul in pursuit of it. That is the eye of all external storm, but ironically the eye is eloquent of inexhaustible quiet and divine effervescence. Here also is the seat of self-realization, and Morrison is unwittingly and effortlessly drawn toward the seat of divinity. A mellifluous humorous vein continuously runs through this excruciating exercise to make the arduous task enjoyable and exciting. The seed of his determination to undertake the quest seems to have been sown even in his early works, such as the poems of *Sleep*, the first volume in *SOLUNA*. It may be inferred from the conversation between Lisa Maryevna and her daughter Dunya in a prose poem that imitates the Russian novel:

"Mother, how is it we travel thus, always coming, always going, never getting anywhere?  
We have now been on the road two days and every stop has been the same. I am tired of  
this life, tired of *my* life at least, and yet there seems to be no end of it. What is one to do?"

("Old and New but Young and Old," *SOLUNA*, 39)

What is one to do?—that is the question. In other words, Morrison has offered us another version of Hamlet's "To be or not to be." Ordinary mortals land in such a desperate imbroglio and feel befuddled. The way is directionless, purposeless and meaningless. How to make our life journey purposeful and

meaningful? Start with introspection. Morrison initiates the process of introspection in his early writings, and this process is carried on in a more mature and innovative manner through his later works, which are often marked by an intertextual method according to which he interweaves traditional wisdom. The more one tries to tear open the curtain of *maya* that is characteristic of poor visibility and haziness, the more one gets perplexed and awestricken. Morrison feels the pinch of this enormous exercise; the intertextual mode is a true reflection of his sincere attempt to unite his self with the Great Self. Realization of what constitutes the usual life is the first step and for him a springboard from which to plunge into an ambience of clarity and achieve a demystification that can wipe off the *maya* mist and afford a peep into serenity and spirituality. Morrison's attempts at first glance appear a lark on the surface, and one would be merely beguiled, were he to stop there and leave it at that without penetrating the surface discerningly.

We, the people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century world, don't have even the low-level tolerance and minimum patience to ponder the questions adroitly raised by Morrison. We get a holistic view of life, and our analysis of human existence is enriched by his demonstrative inquiry. It is true that we don't have time to sit and stare in this fast-food world. Morrison too experiences such a predicament, and consequent on his inability to find instantaneous answers to the age-old doubts raised from time to time by great thinkers, saints, seers and sages he makes his own attempt, in his own fashion, at least to meditate on those issues as honestly as possible:

Life is a banquet aboard a creamy boat,  
Whose rooms are too big to be convincing.

("The Blinding of Homer," *SOLUNA*, 40)

His writings provide a forum wherein such queries are taken up for close scrutiny under the microscope of postmodernism and through the eyes of humor and irony. Maybe his first hand experience with both the Occidental and the Oriental has sharpened his technical skills. For the bi-dimensional philosophical outlook that he has gained over the years helps him to take a comparative view of life and arrive at the best of all the philosophies that he has felt and heard en route his academic global trotting. He looks at things with a clinical detachment. He operates on the body of life for its cancerous self-centeredness and cankerous religious bigotry. In *Sleep*, for example, he views the Madison Baptist Church as a place "where crime starts" ("Wearin' Purple Overalls," *SOLUNA*, 30). Elsewhere, he proposes a solution:

operation free  
the body disappears  
quick doctor  
smile

("10 Fingers," *SOLUNA*, 7)

Morrison confesses his failure to unravel the hitherto hidden mysteries of human existence. As perhaps the doctor himself, he presides over this operation with a disarming smile, not forgetting to continue his diagnosis in the next work that he proposes to embark upon. He is not deterred by successive misadventures in this direction but is persistently enamored by the mysterious aura surrounding earthly life. Among his later works, *Realization* and *Happening* are testimonials to vouch for his abiding faith in himself to see the light at the end of the tunnel. One can trace the roots of this perception in the following lines:

“So this is life in the clouds,” I said to myself. But a Voice murmured,  
 “Life on earth is a temporary disaster.  
 “He alone is the Truth, He alone is the Way.”

(*The Twentieth Century*, III, “In a Nagasaki Bathtub,” *SOLUNA*, 19)

In another context, he suggests a remedy for the “temporary disaster”: “Listen to the words and listen to yourself. Don’t worry about identities.” (*A Triptych of Anapochrypha*, “The Apocatastasis,” *SOLUNA*, 28)

Morrison’s works mark stages in the evolution of his divine-consciousness and form a continuity of theme envisaging a cosmological epic dimension. The idea of intertextuality, it occurs to me, was conceived way back in 1989 even in the very title of his collection of poems, *SOLUNA*, a union of the opposites, the solar and the lunar, the sun and the moon, day and night, the masculine and the feminine, the body and the soul, of which one is the complement to the other. This idea grew into a unique mode in his later works—a fresh trail-blazing, provokingly innovative.

The publication of *Realization* proclaims the onset of this new mode. As Morrison says, the book “incorporates as intertexts, Upanishad, Dhammapada and Bhagavad Gita.” *Realization* is a meeting plane on which the words of wisdom in the annals of ancient Indian philosophical systems and the faithful document of what Morrison saw, felt and thought in varied geographical locations intertwine and collaboratively project the realization of the immanent through the immediate. The world without and the world within cohere and produce a cumulative effect on the reader. The opening paragraph of the book is a succinct illustrative example:

The Lone Star. *All this*. Chicago, Oklahoma City, Houston. *Whatever moves on earth*. Twenty-two degrees, 9:10 am. *Is to be hidden*. Sky bright, vacuous. *In the Lord*. Norman, OK. *The Self*. The 908 arriving from Moore, signal bells ding-ding-ding. *When thou hast surrendered all this*. Two pick-up trucks. *Then thou mayest enjoy*. Pale brown, pale blue. *Do not covet the wealth of any man!* K-thump k-thump, k-thump k-thump.

(*Realization*, 9)

The picture that emerges from these lines is one of an individual, conscious of the past, the present and the future. The two streams, the ephemeral and the eternal run parallel to each other as evident from the technique employed by the writer of foregrounding the latter by the use of italics. Even when he is discharging his day-to-day obligations through the multifarious socio-cultural variables across the world of mores and ethos, Morrison inescapably feels the pressure from the undercurrent of his soul-stirrings to achieve the goal of self-realization. When he explicitly says in the opening paragraph of *Realization* that one has to surrender all that one has had as material possessions, fame or title so as to realize the god-head within, that is, self-realization on earth, Morrison is stating an important principle and egging himself on to brush past the four stages of human life as based on an oriental philosophy: the Brahmacharya (learning), the Gruhasthya (family), the Vanaprastha (detachment) and the Mukthi (self-surrender). It cannot be over-emphasized that Morrison is happily and magnificently obsessed with the ideal of seeking the Truth. As a long-time student of India, he moves from the known to the unknown through their correlative divinities. His works outline the pathway of his self-chosen mission and signal the progressive enlightenment that dispels the gloom of ignorance from the dark recesses of his consciousness. Every individual should strive for it on his/her own. No one else can take a bath for you as Nietzsche says. This existential truth Morrison has understood:

Canopic Gods & Anubis. *By one's self is the evil done.* Osiris (painted wood). *By one's self one suffers.* A scarab rolling the sun before him. Four-foot Hispanic guard; purple-suited blonde making demonstrative inquiry. Horus protecting a king. *By one's self evil is left undone.* Color photos of the Temple of Dendur (in situ). *By one's self is one purified.* A single white-capped figure strolling the banks of the Nile. "These views, taken in 1851 and 1885, show the conversion of the temple into a Christian church." *By themselves the pure and the impure stand and fall.* Black and white photos. *No one can purify another.* An Ankh.

(*Realization*, 68)

The message rings clear and stands out as white from black. However, in Morrison's work black and white are inevitably integrated so as to bring the contrast into focus. His intertextual mode does this precisely, and he is successful in driving the message home straight to the reader. By the way, the reader's presence is encouraged, and his interactive participation in the text with his own insightful and ebullient response is highly expected. Only with the reader does the text become alive (as Roland Barthes says in conjunction with Stanley Fish), and this principle shines through every page of *Realization*. At the end of the book, we see dark clouds thinly masking the horizon. But a strong wind appears, ready to lift the clouds and lead one to the point of certainty. There lives a Master in the hearts of men, and so we have to trust Him. The concluding lines of *Realization* symbolically suggest Morrison's preparedness for attaining the much-sought-after self-realization:

“*What thou dost shun.*” Mountains. “*Misled by fair illusions.*” Low clouds/haze. “*Thou would’st see against thy will.*” Horizon line holding cloudy/clear uncertainty in focus. “*There lives a Master.*” Wind gust to eastward. “*In the hearts of men.*” Answered by western wind reprise. “*Makeh his deeds by subtle pulling strings.*” Whistling through lines. “*And they then dance.*” Car in view. “*To the tune he wills.*” Driver’s seat vacant. “*So trust Him!*” Hand on car roof. “*And, by grace of him, attain.*” Car on road. “*So, but meditate!*” Road on clay. “*Then act.*” Clay on red rock.

(*Realization*, 155)

The eastern wind is answered by the western wind. The twine binds the East and the West as against the insipid, negative proclamation of Rudyard Kipling. In Morrison’s allegory the car is the body; the driver is the soul; and the destination is clear. What one requires is the grace of God and our trust in Him through action and meditation. Morrison’s mission is accomplished, and it is remarkably portrayed through apt and beautiful symbols.

*Happening*, the author’s monumental study of India, combines “cinematic registration, personal reminiscence, the interweaving of text with intertext, all to evoke ancient, medieval, colonial and present day India” (“About the book,” *Happening*). The author’s personal experience at Jodhpur is encompassed by his response to the Bhagavad Gita:

An “auto” stops briefly, filled with five women on their way to work [*Karma*]. “Arjuna continues by declaring that Krishna is God of Gods (*deva deva*).” Three seated in the 2-person seat, 2 crouched at their feet on floor of passenger compartment. “But his manifestation is not known by gods or by demons.” All happily engaged in straightforward conversation. “For he alone knows his self by his own self.”

(*Happening*, 105)

Thus Morrison’s realization of the time-bound happenings mingles with his realization of the timeless Truth and projects a unity of his multi-layered consciousness. The text within the text reminds one of the complex web of human consciousness, where myriad explorations take place. Surprisingly, however, all these inherent contradictions constitute a single personality, a unified whole, for Morrison achieves a unity or universality amidst plurality or particularity.

The author’s method of incorporating intertexts/hypertexts has recently brought into its fold his latest work, *Every Second*. In this, he uses a three dimensional vision—the past and the present converging at the author’s consciousness. The remote, the current and the personal are also distinctly foregrounded graphologically. Morrison’s conception of cosmopolitanism is carried on into *Every Second* to further the synthesis of the particular and the universal. The difference between them pales into insignificance when “we transcend nationality, race, gender and class” (Preface, *Every Second*). *Samsara* embodies *Nirvana* and vice versa. One is not extant without the other; the one is the foundation and the other the superstructure. They seem separate entities, but in essence they depend on each other. Morrison desires to move from “I” to “we” and

traces this instinctive but rarely expressed feeling of universality in Vergil, “our first self-conscious universalist.” Our modern author proves to be worthy of calling himself an ardent follower of Vergil and moves ahead towards the fulfillment of his goal—self-realization or *Nirvana*. History repeats itself. So do the Bible and those ancient epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey, as Morrison, in *Every Second*, brings them into tune with modern times. Age and stage change, but human roles remain unchanged, as do their concomitant conflicts. So the quest for inner harmony and the ultimate Truth is perennially enacted beneath the fleeting facade of an individual’s life. As one of the most formidable intellects of our time, Morrison has intensely felt the impact of the great invisible undercurrent and faithfully recorded his impressions in his works.

## Sign and Ritual in Morrison's *Engendering*

Frank W. Stevenson

**Sentence of the Gods**, MM's lifelong project, his life-text as (epic, human-cosmic) world-text, in its projected grammatical totality represents a single "sentence" uttered by the gods; the life force of the text is the ongoing construction of the sentence and also its carrying-out, for this is the singular book that Morrison, in effect, has "sentenced" himself to write. But while the seven stages of a single work (the **Sentence**) point then allegorically toward the sentence as projected or expanded totality, the quintessential sentence spoken by the gods is the one composed only of their own names—as if perhaps they, or the one god who encompasses and combines and speaks through them, were enunciating his/her/their various identities. For each name represents a separate book of the entire utterance: SOL, LUNA, ARES, HERMES, HERA APHRODITE, EL. And thus the **Sentence** becomes also a self-reflection and a self-repetition (as in prayer and mantra). Here a certain (seriously playful) postmodernist motif might suggest itself. One could think too of Nietzsche's *amor fati*: fate or sentence as joyous affirmation of human existence, as (divine) self-becoming or self-engendering through continual self-expressing or self-"announcing."

In the order of divine names (the divine words of the **Sentence**) we note that Hermes takes the central position: as divine messenger (Mercury) this god travels not just between the other gods but between worlds (underworld, human world, divine world), interpenetrating in both directions and thus completing the ontological or topocosmic hierarchy. In Morrison's nomocosmic map Hermes stands just "above" Aphrodite; though Hermaphrodite is their son, Hermes can also be seen as having (in his/her "middle position") androgynous qualities. The "E" of the book of *Engendering* is the first "E" (reading from left to right) of HERMES and stands just above, in the detailed design of this map, APHRODITE's "P": this "P," for *Possibly*, represents ("entitles" the book of) "possibility." Hermes-in-the-middle embodies on several levels openness (to the future, the nexus of possibilities). This is why he can be the divine messenger, herald, announcer.

To this hermetic function of announcing Heidegger traces *hermeneuein*, "to interpret"—hermeneutics or textual interpretation is closely tied to Heidegger's sense of truth as *aletheia*, "unconcealing," the revealing or announcing of the text's truth. But this truth can only be carried in words: as avatar of the Egyptian god Thoth, Hermes was also the inventor of writing, the art of written signs—along with other magical arts. The messenger god who travels between gods, even between human/divine worlds, also creates writing, is the god of writing: this suggests that Hermes (in one of his several manifestations) can be the author as well, the one who stands behind this whole mythic narrative of



gods, and who thus takes the middle place in that self-reflexive “sentence” of gods’ names. To see Hermes as the (hermetically concealed or “sealed”) author would be one way to explain why he would need to announce his messages not just directly through oracular speech but also somehow indirectly (as by the delay of concealment) through the written word (Word, Logos). If God as Author creates the world-text in the act of “speaking” it (*legein, logos*), the hermetic message of the messenger-god within this text then becomes (self-reflexively) the Logos, the Son as totality of its “writing.” That is, this phonologocentric creation is not (as Derrida points out) immediately self-present; rather it is inevitably (always already) deferred or delayed in the form of writing, as the magical (hermetic, self-concealing) power of writing.

The mythic Hermes of ancient Greek texts is, more than Apollo, associated with divination as well as prophecy. If prophecy depends upon the prophet’s own hearing of inner-divine voices and/or seeing of scenes from the future—Cassandra in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* sees scenes and hears voices—then divination is the reading of “natural signs” (bird flight in the sky, embers in a fire, markings on bones and inner organs of animals) by a diviner (Calchas in Homer, Tiresias in Homer and Sophocles). For Hermes with his *caducea* (intertwined snakes) was associated with Delphine, forerunner of Apollo at the site (cave) of the Delphic oracle: this Pythoness (snake-goddess) was tied to the inner earth through the power of the omphalos or earth-umbilical, attuned to the oracular earth-voice. But the hiddenness of an inner voice deep within the earth’s body suggests not self-present and audible speech but the (Derridean) deferral or delay of writing, of (written) signs which, while completely natural, empirical, within-the-world (like bird-flight and the guts of animals), nonetheless await our (readerly) interpretation or divination in order to “make sense.” Thus while Hermes “announces” his messages he also does not announce them; he leaves them strewn all around us as signs in/of our everyday world, signs that are invisible inasmuch as we take them for granted, but which become opaque, cryptic and mysterious when we take them literally, that is, as “signs”—and try to “read” them.

The (visual, written) signs that will permeate Morrison’s *Engendering* (1990) are quite literally present, indeed blinking at us from the book’s opening paragraph: “A yellow light at Classen; full moon over Eufaula; Elm to pick up Robin. . . . Corner, Elm and Boyd, flashing reds. . . . Stop at Sunshine. . . . Red letters, yellow ground: ‘FOOD [smiley face] BEER [smiley face] ETC.’” We get divinatory or premonitory signs balanced in an abstract pattern (“caution,” “stop,” “danger” over against the “smiley face”), warning signs and auspicious ones interplayed by their common colors (red and yellow, where yellow in the middle place also “grounds” the traffic signal); abstract (geometrical) mediation is also suggested by the “Elm . . . Corner, Elm and Boyd” (here juxtaposed with the “extreme” of “flashing reds”). But the (literal) signs seen (without, in one

sense, being completely “read”) by the speaker, subject, empirical perceiver (“seer”) driving in his car are interspersed with his actions, and/or his thoughts of what he must do, or is now doing: “to pick up Robin . . . stop at Sunshine.” We begin, Joyce-like, *in medias res*; we have “no author” but merely the empirical and fragmented moments of consciousness (perceptions and thoughts, themselves interspersed) of the “narrator.”

But if Joyce grounds his text in certain correlations with an epic (and mythic) narrative, Morrison’s opening scene here is cut, interspliced with lines from the opening of Confucius’ *Lun Yu* 論語 (*Analects*):

A yellow light at Classen; full moon over Eufaula; Elm to pick up Robin. *That friends.* Corner, Elm and Boyd, flashing reds. *Should come to one.* Stop at Sunshine. *From far away.* Red letters, yellow ground: “FOOD [smiley face] BEER [smiley face] ETC.” *Is this not, after all, delightful?* Down Main, yellows flashing, flashing reds at Classen. Red “McDonald’s,” yellow arches, American flag in dark. (1)

The “moral wisdom” of Confucius, that is, his teaching to his students or disciples—the whole *Lun Yu* is set in the form of teacher-student dialogue—interplays in various ways, including ironic ones, with the narrative action. The narrator is “picking up Robin,” and Confucius observes how pleasant it is to be visited by “friends from far away”—which seems (at least at first) more like a common sense and perhaps redundant observation than an utterance of profound wisdom. The further irony here lies in the distance (from the immediate reality) of this disembodied voice of an omniscient philosophical speaker or “author”—as if we were picking up a friend at the corner and heard a voice from the sky uttering these words as a kind of (seemingly irrelevant) comment on the “scene” being observed far below. Viewed in this light we might compare it to the Homeric juxtaposition of divine and human worlds: the gods look down ironically (and in a sense self-parodically) on the human action. But to have as intertext a discursive-philosophical text (discourse) gives a slightly different force to the transcendent level here—that is, to the transcendent/immanent duality—than we would get if the intertext were an epic-mythopoetic narrative. The latter situation might more easily yield parody, as in Homer, where the gods’ everyday life “parallels” that of the human heroes; the break between Morrison’s *in situ* narrative and classical Chinese philosophical discourse is “sharper”—although the discourse of both Confucius and Lao Tzu (whose *Tao Te Ch’ing* 道德經 serves as intertext for Part 2 of *Engendering*) in fact expresses “philosophical wisdom” often in mystical-paradoxical terms and thus is tied back, as sacred-religious discourse, in a certain sense to the (Western) mythopoetic tradition.

The central Confucian theme is the moralistic *hsüeh* 學 “learning.” In his opening scene—“picking up Robin”—Morrison has rearranged the order of the first two phrases of the *Lun Yu*, whose Book 1, Chapter 1 reads (Legge’s translation, 137): “The Master said, ‘Is it not pleasant to learn with a constant perseverance and application? Is it not delightful to have friends coming from

distant quarters? Is he not a man of complete virtue, who feels no discomposure though men may take no note of him?” The apparent discontinuity or arbitrary order of phrases within chapters (as well as chapters within books) of the *Lun Yu*, which fits well the “ordering” of Morrison’s narrative text here—the seeming randomness of spontaneously emerging perceptions and events—is thus reinforced by the author’s own rearrangement (in his citations) of the order of both chapters and books. In the second paragraph of *Engendering* we get the *Lun Yu*’s first phrase, which Morrison renders: “To learn at due times, to repeat what one has learnt, is that not after all a pleasure?” Again it is embedded within a context of immediately perceived signs:

Orange VW, open road, orange parking light on right (Robin driving). White beams on black asphalt. Yellow flashing traffic light, roadside markers black and white. Passing Franklin: broken yellow center line, roadside grass illuminated green. “Aladdin Carpet Cleaning,” “164<sup>th</sup> Street,” reflective white on green. Black cross, yellow diamond (intersection sign). “The latest thing in velvet painting”—Robin—is “laser reproductions.” Stop at red; blue shield; enter I-240. “That’s GM.” Yellow “Trucks Entering”; black trees massing (right); white of cars oncoming (left). Large “STOP”; corner station red and blue. “Kerr-McGee’s still holding on to their 127.9.” Robin slowing, turning right. “Everyone else is 115.” Veering into “Moore Industrial Catering Lot.” “CHOW MOBILE,” R’s camera set on hood. **To learn at due times.** “First thing in th’ mornin’.” **To repeat.** “Is start it up.” **What one has learnt.** “Cuz if it won’t start.” **Is that not after all.** “You’re in trouble.” **A pleasure?** “KEBC goin’ strong” (radio). (1)

Thus again the flux of sense impressions as abstract painting, with its pattern of raw geometrical shapes and colors, sometimes self-referential—“Black cross, yellow diamond (intersection sign)” —repeated with variation—“Yellow ‘Trucks Entering’; black trees massing”—with their divinatory or premonitory or obscured mystical associations. Certain ironic contrasts within the context of in situ narrative may already signal the East/West theme. For instance we have the (stylistically self-reflexive) contrast between traditional Chinese (“velvet painting”) and Western high-tech (“laser reproductions”) means of artistic representation. The “CHOW MOBILE” goes a step further by signaling the specific point of interplay between in situ text and intertext: “chow,” from Cantonese, is English slang for “food,” tied here to the “Industrial Catering Lot,” but the “MOBILE” ties it to “automobiles.” Thus finally we get the ironic juxtaposition with Confucius: the “repetition” of studying/learning contrasts with that of a car engine turning over “in th’ mornin’ . . . ’Cuz if it won’t start . . . You’re in trouble.”

The country bumpkin tone, with its suggestion of intellectual simplicity, reflects the crucial Confucian notion of learning as merely *mechanical* repetition: just as the engine dies when it fails to turn over, so our mind “dies” when it fails to enact the necessary repetition of (continuous) learning. If we “die,” we cannot *use* our mind/engine. “Simplicity,” after all, is the essence of wisdom for both Confucius and Lao Tzu, who share their radically pragmatic bent with Thoreau. Confucian learning is again being taken quite seriously. To translate the *hsi* 習 as “repetition” comes really closer to the original sense than Legge’s

“application.” Brooks (145) glosses it: “Here, learning is its own end . . . rote memorization and repetition: not ‘putting into practice’ but the musician’s ‘practice’ . . . [or] ‘rehearse’ . . .”; “To learn and in due time rehearse it,” he translates, giving us the negative sense of a mechanical “rote memorization” yet also, with “learning is its own end,” a positive Arnoldian sense of learning for its own sake, rather than for some practical “application.” (Thus the sort of “pragmatism” that we are talking about here might need to be qualified.) Legge himself comments: “*Hsi* is the rapid and frequent motion of the wings of a bird in flying, used for ‘to repeat,’ ‘to practice’” (138); the image of bird-flight suggests organic (living) rather than mechanical (dead) motion. And, in Confucius’ opening line, “*Hsüeh êrh shih hsi*” 學而時習 “Learn by time repeat,” we begin after all with *hsüeh*-learn (study) itself, on which Legge comments (137-138): “*Hsüeh* in the old commentators is explained by *sung* 誦 ‘to read chantingly,’ ‘to discuss.’ Chu Hsi interprets it by *hsiao* 效 ‘to imitate’ . . .” (Thus *hsiao-fa* 效法 is “follow the principle” or “imitate the law,” *kung-hsiao* 功效 is “function” or “efficacy.”) Here “read chantingly” (as in *nien ch’ing* 唸經 “reciting scriptures”) gives spiritual wings (spiritual efficacy) to a merely mechanical “imitation.” Of course, learning “by heart” and reciting aloud from memory was the technique (praxis) of presenting not just sacred-discursive texts (like the Bible) but also mythopoetic ones (like Homer’s epic poems).

But by contrast with the spoken-and-written repetition(s) of a “classic text” we have Morrison’s “realistic” in situ writing. This too is (like speech) a form of repetition—a repetition (in thought and then in spoken/written language) of one’s perceptions. And embedded within the realistic writing of the narrative is realistic writing as foregrounded theme. In a wider self-reflexive move enacted by his “plot,” and adding, with the juxtaposed intertext, to the rich interplay of meanings (including ironic and self-parodic ones), the main “speaker” of Morrison’s narrative is (like the author) a university teacher of English writing who emphasizes the technique of in situ writing—sitting under a tree or in a restaurant and spontaneously writing down what you experience, moment-to-moment. At one point in the first or Confucian part of *Engendering* the teacher is having a relaxed writing-cum-conversation session with his students in a restaurant, a setting or dynamic that imitates (as teacher-student conversation) that of the “original” *Lun Yu* and (as teacher-student writing) that of the *Lun Yu* as “text.” But—self-referentiality again—this Town Tavern (as dynamic and setting) is the topic here being written about:

*Said the Master.* “Dear Sheila, Once again I find myself in The Town Tavern.” *“How transcendent.”* Steam in blown wisps, brown coffee, over-head light reflections in it. Stacey in khakis, concerned look. *“Is the moral power.”* Stacey’s Allen in brown cap, khaki shirt over white tee shirt, a dozen pens/pencils in shirt pocket. *“Of the Middle Use!”* Sugar dispenser on yellow-glow deep-grained pine table. *“That it is but rarely found.”* Light off Allen’s glasses. *“Among the common people.”* He suspiciously eyeing author. *“Is a fact long admitted.”* . . . “What are you all writing up so fast in here?”—white-haired woman next to author talking to youth gaggle. . . . “You know what they’re doin’?”—Barbara. “They’re writin’ a paper about The Town Tavern.” “Upon entering I feel some strong positive force. It is almost as if I can feel the waves of intellectual energy that are being produced.” “Some people”—Stacey, by way of explanation to new arrivals—“need inspiration.” Patrick stylishly mopping countertop. . . . “most of my best papers are written right here. . . .” *Said Han Ch’iu:* Strong woodsman-hippie in jeans, plaid shirt, leaning with both hands on Stacey, waitress Mary’s table. *“It is not that your Way.”* Fly on Los Alamos Mary’s letter to Sheila, author brushing it aside. *“Does not commend itself.”* Vicki arrival, white soft smock, shaking out water from curly locks. *“But rather that it demands a power.”* Sky grey, rain stopped. *“That I do not possess.”* There’s not much to do”—Vicki. *Said the Master:* Patrick whistling, eye on Barbara filling glasses with crushed ice. Cook in corduroy tam behind Heinz gallon tomato can, plastic basket with jellies for toast. *“He whose strength gives out.”* Appearance of Laura, pen, money envelope in hand, ready to pay Kim. *“Collapses during the course of the journey (the Way).”* Paula talking; looking about; wondering at author/instructor’s observation. *“But you deliberately draw the line.”* Leans left-handed over notebook, glances back to gather information. (15-16)

However we interpret the intertextual juxtaposition here, we must feel the powerful “distance” (transcendence) of the interposed philosophical voice—whose seeming arbitrariness is in part a function of its temporal distance as (ancient) *written* text. We might then want to contrast the ordinary everydayness of the students’ conversation, and, by extension, of their description of The Town Tavern (the “scene” of their writing) as we project it—as well as of the author’s empirical descriptions of this scene (the actual Town Tavern)—with the written/spoken voice of the (true) “Master” here, that is, with the (true) Tao of knowing, thinking, acting, *writing*. If this is also a Tao of writing, then perhaps it is a power that the students are not yet in full possession of, and one that presumably the teacher wants to teach them—if it can be taught. (“Your Way . . . demands a power . . . that I do not possess.”) One might know and not be able to teach, but one might also not know. If the “transcendent power of the Middle Use” (*chung yung* 中庸 “moderation”) is “rarely found among common people,” then can we be certain that this ultimately *pragmatic* Tao is found among teachers, even among sages like Confucius? Must the teacher really be “wiser”—a better writer—than the student?

Brooks and Legge both appear to leave open the question of the relative degrees of wisdom/power of Confucius and Han Ch’iu in the above passage. Here is Brooks’ reading (34) of Confucius’ cryptic final response (“But you deliberately draw the line”): “The Master crisply retorts that, not having tried and failed, Ch’iu has no idea if his strength is sufficient; his *will* is weak . . . [But] [t]he obligation to use oneself up in pursuit of a goal . . . is typical of moral extremism; it will be mitigated by the concept of the moral middle.” (The latter,

he tells us, is found in 1:16: “The Master said, Shr goes too far, Shang does not go far enough. . . . To go too far is as bad as not to go far enough,” Brooks 73). Legge on the other hand reads Confucius, in his “drawing the line” response at 6:10, as encouraging Ch’iu (188): “‘Give over in the middle of the way,’ i.e. they go as long and as far as they can, and are pursuing when they stop.” (That is, they themselves decide when to quit and thus, in a sense, are still going . . . in thought or “will.”) The (Confucian and Morrisonian) emphasis on a Middle Way (Use)—“The transcendent moral power of the Middle Use”—may suggest that there is no “absolute” principle or power here that the highest sage himself might possess; this Middle Way is not a moral force of moderation but an on-going creative process whose meaning lies (as for Hegel and Whitman) in the process itself. Thus in the context of this writing class, on-going (in situ, experimental and spontaneous) “writing” becomes a praxis of self-discovery (or self-creation, self-engendering). There is, after all, no final and ultimately “correct” description (in speech or writing) of The Town Tavern or of the tables where they all sit or of a “plastic basket with jellies for toast”; there is rather an infinite number of possible descriptions/approximations, suggesting that the simplest and most “abstract” (in the painterly sense) description will be best. Life is more.

My turn to a more formally “philosophical” reflection on the Tao of Confucius is, I would suggest, implicit within and invited by Morrison’s text. It also opens the way for the move to Lao Tzu in Part 2 of *Engendering*—where we would assume the Taoist Tao to be something less obviously “pedagogical,” *if* we were reading Confucius “morally” and “pedagogically.” Lao Tzu after all says things that seem (on the surface at least) to directly controvert the *Lun Yu* in his *Tao Te Ching*: “Do *Hsieh* (study, learning), every day increase; do *Tao*, every day reduce”; “Once the Tao began to decline, *Te* appeared.” (*Te* is “virtue” but also “power” as in Waley’s translation, or something like Plato’s *arête*, “proper excellence.”) The Taoist intertext in the opening passage of Part 2 makes the (also Socratic) distinction between “fine-sounding” (or “literary”) language and (philosophically) “true” language:

**Truthful words are not fine-sounding.** “And you thought Christmas was over.” Sooner Fashion Mall. **Fine-sounding words, not truthful.** “Ring in the New Year with January’s In-Sidewalk Sale.” **The good man doesn’t argue.** “Something for the whole family.” **The man who argues isn’t good.** Baby World, Bed and Bath, Buckle and Knife. **Much learning means little wisdom.** (61)

The following interpolated lines from Lao Tzu—“Nor does the sage hoard. . . . Instead he lives for other people. . . . And thereby himself grows richer. . . . He gives to other people. . . . And thereby himself has greater abundance. . . .”—further develop the ironic interplay with the in situ narrative of Christmas shopping (is Christmas really “over?”), but also tie back to the Taoist theme of not arguing, not contending, simply “going with the flow.” This is again one sense in which “much learning means little wisdom”: learning means arguing

with “fine words” (or making “fine distinctions” on the smooth surface of the Taoist “uncarved block”); in Lao Tzu’s (as in Jesus’) teachings the “weak overcomes the strong” through spiritual development (or faith) rather than reason. But on a deeper reading of the *Lun Yu*—which has also been compared to Christian philosophy—we may consider the *hsüeh*-“learning” of the *jen* (仁 “humane”) person not as a purely rational, mechanical and thus “dead” repetition but as something organic and alive (beating birds’ wings); the “learning” rejected by Lao Tzu need not be equated with the “learning” of the *Lun Yu*.

All this bears upon the relationship between the two parts of *Engendering*, its second an extension and fuller working out of its first. Specifically the self-reflexive theme of text as (author’s own) in situ writing is further developed, with less focus now on the university students (Confucian pedagogical motif)—although more young children (including the author’s own) appear, perhaps suggesting the Taoist notion of remaining or becoming again a child—and greater focus on the self-conscious persona of the author himself (Taoist individual self-awareness motif):

“I’m interested”—third interrupter—“in knowing what you’re writing about.” “Oh, just a book about Norman [Oklahoma].” “Well, I could tell you a lot about Norman.” Yes, I’m sure you could.” Enormous purples; multi-colored beiges; magentas . . . (107) Water-tower-under author situation view (Lindsay/Classen). Ten pm cool-down. Rabbit through-grass-hop-across. Distant cheers. . . .” Author VW re-ascent, Lindsay-Classen right turn . . . . Headlights in rear-view mirror, dashboard red hazard (“blink-blink”) signal (“blink-blink”). Flashing yellow caution light. “Coors” pink neon window sign; blue “Budweiser” glow. . . . (110-111)

Here we are back (repetition with variation) to the opening passage and *locus* of Part 1—“Classen,” an axial route in the book’s “geography,” with its glowing lights and signs immediately perceived (by an invisible and anonymous “author,” whose presence now nonetheless more fully intrudes or penetrates into the text). The following passage on page 111 gives us an important sense of “giving birth” or “engendering,” one which at least partially intersects with Lao Tzu’s sense, and a fuller (authorial self-) reflection on creative writing:

Re-attention: Noble-Purcell declining traffic. **To give birth.** Up-creeping, onward-coming Normanward cars. **To nourish.** Simultaneous eastward ramp mount. **To give birth.** Down-ramp sedan appearance, taillight (author head turn) gradual disappearance. **Without taking possession.** “Thuck-a-thump” truck by-passage, one headlight visible (author’s perspective). “Exit” sign re-illumination. **Without appropriation.** Pass-by re-obscurance. **To be chief among men.** Yellow light on notebook page. **Without exercising authority.** Auto procession. **This is the Mystic Virtue.** Auto recession. **Horse-racing.** Author seated in grass, writing by headlight beam of parked, idling orange VW. **Hunting.** State Highway 9 westward-facing. **And Chasing.** Cop-car arrival concern. **Madden the minds of man.** Green sign, silver border (uneven illumination):

I-35	4
Chickasha	31

Car passage, exhaust-fume waftage, motion of roadside grass stalks. Into-car cop-car-concern exorcism. Red-pen steady manipulation. *Rare*. Chinese diary page. *Valuable goods*. Western frigate faintly-thereon-printed. *Keep their owners*. Full-sailed. *Awake at night*. In timeless time. *Thus the sage provides for the belly*. Written words. *And not for the eye*. Emerging in time. *Hence*. Surpassing frigate. *He rejects the one*. Words too in timeless time. *And accepts the other*. Diary nearing completion. (111-112)

Here we note once again the detached (“omniscient”) narrator’s tendency to note/record his perceptions with the greatest abstraction, reducing verbs to nouns (“Down-ramp sedan appearance, taillight gradual disappearance”)—a variation on the philosophical abstraction or pure universalizing objectivity of the sage’s discourse. We also note a certain “rhythmic” tendency in Morrison’s text, the tendency of narrative portions to shorten toward the end of a passage so that the number of intertextual “breaks” increases, creating a staccato-like effect, the rapid building-to-climax. The back-and-forth exchange here becomes overtly one of East-West interface: the “surpassing . . . Western frigate” is superimposed upon the “Chinese diary page,” as if perhaps the Chinese text was after all the “background” written upon by the Western (Orientalizing) author. The “background” of the Chinese intertext is then in a certain way associated with that other ever-present background of/in *Engendering*, the surface of (self-parodic) late capitalist “signs” (“Coors’ pink neon window sign”), emblems of a civilization fully absorbed in “pleasures of the eye” as well as, perhaps, those of the belly (for the way to the belly is through the eye)—a surface which includes also explicitly serious but ironic, socio-political but self-parodying signs (“SLOWDOWN SEEN IN STATE OIL-RELATED BUSINESS . . . WEATHER DOES SOME DAMAGE . . . HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDS IN DANGER?” [108]) and one in or on which the author’s own (atomic-empirical and thus “abstract”) thoughts and actions would seem to be embedded. That is, we can read the narrator’s own thoughts (his empirical stream of consciousness) as being played against both backgrounds, those of (abstracted) real world “signs” and of gnomic Chinese philosophical utterances. But while the latter are usually more obviously metaphysical and ethical than political, we note here the crude pragmatism of Lao Tzu’s “political” philosophy: the sage/ruler keeps the people content (“provides for the belly” rather than the “eye”) so they won’t think, or desire, too much. Ironically, then, in this passage, the overtly pragmatic political thinking of the sage plays against the author-speaker’s metaphysical-aesthetic reflection on literary art, on written words emerging both “in time” and “in timeless time,” as well as against his intermittent fear that a policeman will come and put an end to (his early-Joycean reverie on, epiphanic moment of) art and/or metaphysics.

Of course ultimately these thoughts, and these written words (whether merely “fine-sounding” like the words of advertisements or “truthful” in some ultimate metaphysical sense) are all themselves “signs” as well within the larger



text. That is, the abstract reflections of the Chinese sage (and perhaps more subtly even the narrator's own perceptions/reflections) begin to reveal themselves to be just as mundane, as spatio-temporally specific and as culturally, politically, socio-economically embedded as the "Coors" and "Budweiser," "I-35" and "Chickasha" signs. For Morrison's intertextual paralleling is also a trans-textual leveling: while "Coors," "I-35" and "Chickasha" may sound like the unknowable names or sounds of a foreign language (Chinese, Amerindian) and/or of a mystical incantation (possessed of divinatory power), why should we read those "written words" of the ancient sage any differently than we read "Coors" or "Budweiser" or (Confucian moral injunction) "No Parking"? In one striking passage we get Lao Tzu's gnomic sentences juxtaposed with graffiti on the walls (and indeed the signs) of a laundromat—the wider (already deflated) symbolism of this *locus* being perhaps something to do with (the possibility of) cleanliness, spiritual purification:

West Gray Automatic Laundry. "I hate laundry days"—overweight turquoise top, bra-apparatus showing; cerulean blue stretch pants, white gold-dusted slipperettes. "And I don't have any quarters." "I have some"—author. . . . Notice: . . . "Check Washers and Dryers for Oil or Pens. . . . We are not responsible." . . . Inked in: "Not even responsible for getting the damn things fixed." Felt-tip pen: "Sonia was here—call me—364-5284." . . . Letters on wall in red lipstick: "HEROIN." *Then the people of the world.* Aldry dryer bank, #9 open: *Are glad.* "Select heat." *To uphold him.* "Low, low, low!" in black magic marker. *Forever.* "Your [sic] not lost—graffito—if you don't care where you are." *Because he does not contend.* Another hand: "Loneliness is like death and taxes." *No one.* "Everyone suc-cumbs sooner or later." *In the world. Graffito: Can contend.* "This dryer has a hole in it." *Against him.* "And it eats people's clothes." . . . *Then.* \$1 Bill Changer. *And then only.* Illiterate scrawl: "This machine gives only one quater [sic]." *Emerges.* Yellow crayon: "padratannaloves." *The Grand Harmony.* "Open 24 hrs"—reading backwards through window. (75-76)

The transcendence of "Oriental wisdom," of Christ, the Buddha, Shiva (or Padratanna) and/or of the Chinese sage, is parodied and deflated through its inevitable embedment within the world; and yet its radical immanence, its being stretched among too many mindless details, its very "hiddenness" or indeed "disappearance" here within the world is also its strength. (Thus it is the animal's guts that ancient seers want to "read.") The transcendent power of immanence is, as Professor Morrison well knows, a theme especially of Asian philosophy/religion; the unique point of both Confucius and Lao Tzu is the emphasis on a this-worldly pragmatism that transcends rational thought, the "knack" of being human, living in harmony with the world (with the "background" in which one is already embedded) and enjoying life. Thus by reading Morrison's text on "another level"—or perhaps simply by taking its (postmodernist) playfulness more "seriously"—we will discover the theme, already implicit within the embedded and embedding texts of both Confucius and Lao Tzu, of Tao as that which is hidden, unknown or unknowable and therefore the source of great spiritual power and understanding:

“The selection of the Isa Upanishad . . . Is an example of Hindu beliefs . . . For becoming a complete person.” *When the Way ceased to prevail.* “It explains the blending of knowledge and.” *He was straight as an arrow.* “Not-knowledge.” *A gentleman indeed was Yu.* “To achieve your self.” *When the Way prevailed.* “The Self is your ruler.” *In his land.* “Your God.” *He served the State.* “Or what controls you.” *But when the Way ceased to prevail.* “The selections seemed to be related to Christianity.” *He knew how to hide it.* “And are somewhat of a ‘Hindu Ten Commandments.’” *In the folds of his dress.* (53)

After all, we can also read *Engendering*, whose purpose is to teach us Chinese philosophy by embedding it in the real world, by making it more interesting, more immediately “relevant.” Sometimes the phrases from the two Chinese sages seem to blaze out at us in a way they don’t when we read them in their normal, “unbroken” context—a technique which might owe something to that of Pound in the *Cantos*, with its startling juxtapositions, its use even of Chinese characters as well as of explicitly pedagogical intent. Thus we are getting here the “selections” from sacred-philosophical classics chosen for us by the author-teacher. This would be then a kind of mimesis of Confucius’ own “practice”—*hsüeh*-learning as the theme of his entire philosophy. And yet, paradoxically, the central “message” being taught might just be that the message itself is hidden within the dross (or dress) of material reality: we can only find it by not-finding, only know it by not knowing, teach it by not teaching (Lao Tzu’s *wu wei* 無爲 “inaction”). The way to teach writing might just be to let students sit in a restaurant and write down what they see, all that is going on around them, without thinking about it.

Said Confucius, speaking of the Way: “The common people . . . Can be made to follow it . . . They cannot . . . Be made to understand it . . .” (37); this leaves open the possibility that the *chün-tzu* 君子 “superior man” or sage follows and also understands but also the possibility that the sage (Fingarette’s reading of the *Lun Yu*) and even the common man (Taoism) understands by following, that is, that one only need follow the Tao, that understanding it need imply nothing more. When Ch’iu confesses to the Master that “your Way demands a power that I do not possess”—a power to understand or simply follow?—and the Master replies that “Giving up halfway, you yourself draw the line,” it can, as we have seen, mean (at least on Legge’s reading) that there is no “absolute” or “end-point” here, the only understanding is in the process of following, of working out, of *hsüeh*-practicing/repeating. To understand simply by following or doing—a view which we might want to set in some relation to Plato’s mystical claim that “To know the good is to do the good”—is a kind of radical pragmatism which has its analogue in interpretive theory: for the reader (of a text, e. g., Morrison’s), there is no “understanding” beyond simply the reading-through (practice, repetition, rehearsal) of it.

To view Confucius in this way—which makes him a close neighbor of Lao Tzu—is to take seriously the notion of *li* 禮 “propriety” or “ritual.” Ritual

behavior is the repetition of more-or-less arbitrary acts (bowing or shaking hands, saying “*Ni hao ma?*” or “How are you?”) to achieve social solidarity and harmony; the sacred dimension of such seemingly secular social rituals (emphasized by Fingarette) becomes clearer when we see them in relation to more obviously sacred ceremonies: (ancient) sacrifice and augury, marriages, funerals. *Lun Yu* 1.9: “Let there be a careful attention to perform the funeral rites to parents, and let them be followed when long gone with the ceremonies of sacrifice;—then the virtue of the people will resume its proper excellence” (Legge 141). And yet the “true meaning” of this ritualized society, this whole pre-set system, structure or text remains hidden, a mystery, as does the true meaning of the “great sacrifice” itself. *Lun Yu* 3.11: “Someone asked the meaning of the great sacrifice. The Master said, ‘I do not know. He who knew its meaning would find it as easy to govern the kingdom as to look at this’;—pointing to his palm” (Legge 158-159). This looks like a variation on Lao Tzu’s notion of *wu-wei*: the sage-king rules by doing (ordering) nothing for then “everything orders itself” (*Tao Te Ching* 3).

But only if the order of the whole (*tien-hsia* 天下 “heaven-under,” “the empire”) has been “pre-set” will everything order itself. Here “repetition” is relevant in another way: the customs, beliefs, festivals of a given society in effect are ways of “pre-setting the clock.” Thus in some contemporary cultures Christmas “automatically” produces a series of (seemingly arbitrary and repeated) ritual actions—setting evergreens in the living room, hanging stockings from the fireplace, giving gifts. In ancient China the king’s power or virtue was to keep heaven, earth and man in the proper alignment (“pre-setting”); one way of doing this was to pre-set the “locus” of things by (arbitrarily, it will seem) facing south. *Lun Yu* 6.1: “Yung might be made to face south.” (Yung is being praised, since “The Chinese ruler faced south,” Brooks 31). It is as if the king/emperor becomes himself the “center” that holds all else in its proper place/order, in its proper orbit around him, so that to rule he need do nothing more than “follow” this praxis (ritual), just as his people need do nothing more than “follow” (obey) him. *Lun Yu* 2.1: “He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn towards it” (Legge 145).

But then *hsüeh*-study/learning, though a mindless repetition, is nonetheless organic and alive (Legge’s *hsi*-“practice” as a “beating of a bird’s wings”), becomes the central ritual act of Confucianism: if everyone (at least the *chün-tzu*, “gentleman”) learns/knows by repeating/following (the texts that are read), we will have the “power” of community, commonality. *Engendering* can be read as a “ritual” or “ritualistic” pedagogical text in this sense—which also sets it in a certain relation to Homer’s poems, chanted or recited from memory (that is, read until “learned by rote” and then “read” again to the communal audience), to Buddhist sutras and other forms of sacred or magical “incantation.” The

gnomic phrases of Chinese sages, ritually enacted through repetition/chanting—and Legge, we recall, ties *hsieh* to *sung* which means “to read chantingly,” “to discuss”—so that they penetrate into the reader’s deep mind, are in themselves (and not only for westerners, though also, in an important sense, especially for westerners) virtually impossible to “understand.” Yet this is their very point: they are signs, hidden meanings, traces of the sacred and transcendent, and in this way (or Way) variations on the everyday signs of stores, laundromats and highways, the arbitrary “ritual” of traffic signals in which the author embeds them. “Variations” because we do after all think we understand beer or traffic signs/signals and “take them for granted”—they are all part of our pre-set culture and society, pointing back in a sense toward some central, hidden, unknown star that “orders” them or gives them meaning. The utterances of ancient Chinese sages, on the other hand, we may think we cannot understand—as (like Ch’iu) we “lack the power to understand”—and yet (without knowing it, by mere habit, like starting to move when the light turns green) we are already following them.

If signs are incomprehensible or mysterious in their obscurity, their being hidden, ritual actions are so in their arbitrariness: the Chinese emperor “sets the empire” by facing south; Japanese bow, whereas Americans shake hands. But this arbitrariness may extend beyond the level of mere social (culturally relative) convention to that of gods seen as blind forces of nature, to notions of one’s incomprehensible “fate.” If Morrison’s *Engendering* is embedded within the HERMES sequence and it within the more encompassing **Sentence of the Gods**, we might see this Sentence both as the central, underlying, all-pervasive “sign” which “speaks” (in remaining silent) and as the central ritual which “pre-sets” the whole or “sets it in motion” (by remaining motionless). Perhaps all the Morrisonian books or words or signs point back toward this encompassing Sentence that mysteriously speaks/is spoken, moves/is moved by them, itself something cryptic and hidden, invisible beneath or behind the forms of its own expression and activity. Myth itself in essence is a ritualistic enactment (and ritual the stuff of myth); on what might be a Nietzschean “reading” the radical immanence of that which most transcends is (like the Greek gods as blind forces of nature and fate) its own unsurpassed randomness and arbitrariness, an unconditioned contingency that we can “see” or “understand” only as a sign. The proto-scientific art of divination, after all—the “reading of cracks that appear on the inner surfaces of burned tortoise shells (Shang Dynasty China), of the patterns of bird flight in the sky (ancient Greece)—is an art of interpreting randomness and forming order out of chaos. For in this quintessential hermeneutic—the art of reading texts, of reading a world-text that is always already “cracked”—the interpreting is indeed arbitrary; that is, the reader has considerable power.

*In the usages of ritual.* Yale Industrial Service Chevy van on scene. *It is harmony that is prized.* . . . Heavy cumulus mass on humid horizon, single electric tower standing against it. . . . *The Way of the Former Kings from this received its beauty.* . . . NCR boxes piled six tall. *Matters both small and great depend upon it.* 2:48 pm, wall clock glass concentrating pink overhead fluorescent tubes into tiny bright dots. *If things go amiss, he who knows the harmony will be able to attune them.* Temperature fronting 104, home trip imminent. *But if harmony itself.* “First we have to wash the truck”—Robin. *Is not modulated by ritual.* “One more stop on the way.” *Things will go amiss.* Motel construction site. (9-10)

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“I was the guy what . . .”

*Robin Schultz*

I was the guy what drove Madison around on some of his early situational-description jaunts, mostly in his VW Bug, once on my snack truck route. We'd pull over on whatever street for two or three minutes, then drive around some more to the next time he'd stop us and write a while. I was always intrigued and still am how he'd decide where (what) to write about. One of those mysteries of poetry, I guess. I basically thought of these drives as friends out on a literary lark, but I did sense the larger venture behind it all—vaguely, and with some confusion. Looking back, I see that it was awe I was feeling for this “life-work” project of his, taking place, partly, in a regular, mainstream, Midwestern American city, where I lived.

Then came the chance for my little no-clout press to publish some of the work. Heady times those were, and I damn sure wanted to be in on publishing these quirky books, in case they ever came to something.

For one thing, that smart-bomb-hit-descriptions-of-person-place-and-thing ability. Colors. Always colors. And finding (knowing) right-on 24 words for “blouse,” say. And precisely individualized. It makes for a lot of hyphenated adjectives, this nuts and bolts writing. But at the same time I am also aware of MM's ability to manipulate the chosen scene, which casts some mediation on the feeling of objectivity inherent in *in situ* writing. He could be telling you just what he wants you to hear, i.e., extensions of his own being. Obviously, every writer does, to one extent or another. One always wonders if the manipulation increases the clarity and significance of a scene, or is the narrator merely unreliable? In this case, the integrity MM evinces through his work allays such fears. As a friend and associate too, he proffers his abilities without taking undue advantage. From the start, I was thankful to be in on such, even if it *didn't* come to something.

But now it has. The work, after 30 years of writing, two-thirds done. With depth, resonance, mythic or at least divine proportion and scale. And the text-intertwining brings an infinite, curious startlingness and multiplies the reader's available approaches to the text—more of the mysteries of poetry, yes? In toto, I feel MM's corpus is real nutrient for literary progression and our never-ending investigation about what language is and what language can do, available for serious international critics to explore.