




Book Review: *The Collected Works of Jim Morrison: Poetry, Journals, Transcripts, and Lyrics*

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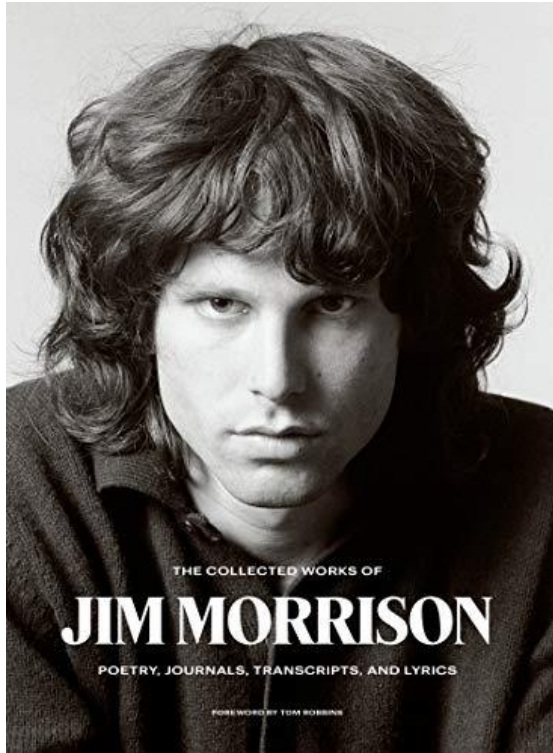
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About the Review

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Book Review: *The Collected Works of Jim Morrison: Poetry, Journals, Transcripts, and Lyrics*

2nd Edition, Harper Design, USA, 2022, pp.584, price- 50\$



Reviewed by

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A musical enigma or a poet? Jim Morrison seems to fit both quite easily. There are several biographies of Jim Morrison and his cult rock band, "Doors". But no other book offers a treat to Jim Morrison fans across the globe like *The Collected Works of Jim Morrison*. This anthology is the result of a collaboration between Harper Design (an imprint of Harper Collins publication) and the Jim Morrison Estate. An engaging combination of 160 photographs and Morrison's own comments on the work accompany the text throughout the book. These include fragments from his 28 secretly owned journals. This book is like an archive for all Jim Morrison lovers; it contains manuscripts, drafts, diaries, lyrics, poetry, and a script written by the legend in his own handwriting, which has never been printed previously. A striking fact about the book is that its cover is printed with the name "James Douglas Morrison," a name that Morrison preferred all his life when it came to publishing. The book, once opened, mesmerizes the readers with its stunning

582 color pages, drawing inspiration and retaining the originality of the rocker's notebook from his schooldays (spanning over 100 pages). Readers will be delighted by the random snippets of poetry and lyrics from his iconic rock band, "The Doors," the inclusion of which indeed makes it a collector's edition. That's not all. This anthology also comes as an audio book. The readers can dip themselves in the shamanic voice of the rocker through the legendary poetry recording by Morrison in West Los Angeles in 1970 (courtesy Village recorder studio). For the first time, a full collection of Morrison's work has been released, and it is exhaustive in the sense that it provides readers an insight into the artist's philosophy behind his creativity and allows them access to his thoughts and ideas." In his remarkable performance in 1969, the poet criticized his generation for their lack of creativity and determination and their entrapment in the fixed doctrines dictated by the social establishment. According to the poet, individuals of his generation were unable to create their own reality and were enslaved by its fixed frameworks. There are several explanations for the frustration and nasty attitude shown by the poet towards his generation. Few critics believe that the counter-culture movement celebrated "peace" as an ideology, which might have led to the anger of the poet. Morrison as a poet always celebrated the Dionysian energy (emblem of chaos and destruction) to create reality. There was an obvious clash of both ideologies. Morrison was charged with an allegation of indulging in indecency during the infamous Miami concert of 1969. This collection comes with an extract of his trial journal entries, written during his 1970 Miami trial. These extracts provide the readers a glimpse into the psyche of the rock star and his inner conflict during that trial. Morrison spent the last phase of his life in the City of Lights, i.e., Paris. His fans are curious about that phase of his life. This anthology is enriched by the inclusion of the Paris notebook (his last writings) in a readable format, which has never been released before. Morrison's love for film is not unknown. This anthology celebrates Morrison's passion for films in the form of releasing his treatment of the screenplay and script of the unreleased film "Hitchhiker." There are several colorful snaps of Jim Morrison's family and moments from his eccentric performance, which provide the readers with a surreal and cinematic experience in viewing Morrison's roots and career highlights. Morrison indeed lived a bohemian life, but his contribution to poetry and song-writing cannot be ignored. The seriousness and genius of his poetry cannot be undermined in the below instances. We shall discuss here six of our favorite Jim Morrison masterpieces (included in this book) among many to adhere to the word-limit.

Opening of the Trunk- Morrison gifts us with this metamorphic critical piece where he brings out the struggle of the soul towards its salvation. Salvation of the soul is not easy. It's like unlocking the lid of a locked box or trunk. The poet beautifully bridges spiritualism and literature in this poem.

"Let's re-create the world
The palace of conception is burning
Look. See it burn / Bask in the warm hot coals."

The poet urges his readers to work on their intrapersonal skills. The poet encourages his readers to explore their inner selves. A person who does not know his/her inner identity or what he/she wants in life is unable to connect to any form of life, be it other human beings or the environment at large. Like an unlocked trunk, when we unlock ourselves from 'Self-Ego', we open ourselves to the universe. The soul is eternal and it is not confined to the physical body, time and space. By

realizing "self"/true nature will lead us to connect with the oneness of the universe. This will lead us to unfetter the shackles of bondage and narrow confinement from the parochial cycle of life and death. The poet believed that personal freedom would only come with the rediscovering of the self. This self-realization would recreate the world in a new light, as the opening line of the poem states. Interestingly, the poet's message is similar to Vedantic philosophy, though Morrison perhaps never read Vedanta. Vedantic philosophy believes that the discovery of self is the toughest. After that discovery, nothing is left to be discovered.

If Only I- Revisiting innocence and childhood is the dream of every individual. Tired of the complexities of modern life, the poet longs for the simple joys of life accompanied by the sights and sounds of nature. The stanzas take us down memory lane and make us nostalgic.

"If only I could feel,
The sound of the sparrows & feel child hood pulling me back again,
If only I could feel me pulling back again &
Feel embraced by reality again I would die, gladly die"

Stoned Immaculate- Morrison tried to imbibe several notions of Christianity, the Bible and the Afterlife in his poetry. Combining all these elements, he tried to address practical moral issues of daily life. One such example is *Stoned Immaculate*:

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

The poet breaks the traditional concept of the afterlife as existing in Christian philosophy. It's not the mere confession of sins but good "Karma" that transforms death into an ultimate truth or reward. The poet urges his readers to face the uncertainties of life fearlessly, and that, in turn, would equip them to face death bravely. The concept of death is viewed by the poet as an "eternal reward". The philosophical concept here is striking. Accepting the uncertainties of life would automatically lead to the acceptance of the uncertainties of the afterlife. Through these verses, Morrison encourages his readers to live life to the fullest instead of living a mere existence in the shadow of fear.

The Hitchhiker- Famously titled "Riders on the Storm", experimenting with the fusion of conversational poetry and song. When converted into a song, it broke all records. This poem brings the reader face to face with his/her primal or fundamental instincts

"Riders on the Storm
Into this house we're born
Into this world we are thrown"

. The poet has a unique style of presenting the uncertainties of life in the first stanza. What he means to say is that we have no control over our fate while being born. Our birth is controlled by fate or is not in our hands to decide. The poet has consciously used personification to personify human existence, as if trying to tame a storm.

Awake- This poem highlights Morrison's tendency to choose ambiguity over traditional rhyme. Readers feel like they are experiencing a Post-Impressionist painting. The poem offers a striking surrealistic effect. The poem prioritizes the expression of desire.

"We laugh like soft mad children
Smug in the woolly cotton brains of infancy
The music and voices are all around us."

Power- Morrison highlights the simple act of trying to achieve something in his poem, "Power":

"I can make myself invisible or small
I can become gigantic and reach the farthest things
I can change the course of nature
I can place myself anywhere in space or time."

Going through these verses, the readers who had lost faith in life would rediscover their willpower. This poem celebrates the divinity of willpower. Lines from the poem empower readers with the belief that anything can be achieved in life at any point of time with the simple act of repeated trying in spite of failures. The philosophy of the above poem echoes the views of the legendary monk, Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda preached that one should keep on trying till he/she reaches the goal.

Morrison, as a poet, always believed that poetry preaches and delights by opening possibilities for individuals. To neutralize the demons of his unstable soul, he indulged in enigmatic and innovative poetic ventures. Prochnicky, Riordan, and Sugerman severely criticized Morrison's poetry, linking it to weed culture and pessimism. But these critics overlook the hidden message in Morrison's poem and unduly link his lifestyle to his poetry. As discussed in most of the poems, like "Stoned Immaculate," "If Only I," and "Power," readers would notice that when the poet spoke about empowerment, it had no connection with weed or drugs. Morrison has celebrated the infiniteness of human form (open and closed forms of existence) and the salvation of the soul and mind only through the wings of poetry or imagination. He preached his readers to indulge their imagination and realize their inner self, not to be dictated by a superficial reality that tries to influence the perceptions of people in terms of shaping their inner identity or self. But we need to keep in mind that Morrison believes in achieving the infiniteness of identity and reality only through imagination, by excluding it from the static framework of society and not by consuming drugs. Critics who don't take Morrison as a serious poet might rethink their stand after going through the unpublished poems and lyrics included in this anthology. This book is for every Jim Morrison fan and others who want to explore him from a 360-degree view and not just as a rock-star. This review is just a short trailer of the immense literary feast that this book offers. In short, the book is priceless in terms of literary value. And congratulations to all thinking of opening this Pandora's Box after reading this review. To conclude, we would like to bring to the reader's

attention a few lines from the epilogue of the book, enriched by the inclusion of Morrison's unpublished "As I Look Back," which is a poetic memoir of his life.

"As I look back
Over my life
I am struck by post cards Ruined snap shots
faded posters Of a time, I can't recall
Before the beach, & birth,
was the home for travelers juvenile pen
a barracks in limbo of souls sans desire
They instill desire, day by day
& night too

Parachute birth
1st moments as war
1st days of pain

Struggle toward
I told stories & led
Treasure hunts for children

I led bicycle packs
chasing girls home from
school & delighted in
spanking them

I rebelled against church
after phases of
fervor
I curried favor in school
& attacked the teachers

I was given a
desk in the corner

I was a fool
&
The smartest kid in Class"

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