

i, Johnny Mahaffey



I really am enjoying this new Buffy-the-Vampire-esque-pop-nihilistic-horror "iZombie"--and not just because of Liv--though that is reason enough.... I'm sure this show will be around for several seasons.

It's something that H.P. Lovecraft would enjoy--despite his early virulent racial purism that held back his career--it would speak to his fervent theories of human futility and cosmic indifference. He himself wrote in "A Confession of Unfaith," that: "By my thirteenth birthday I was thoroughly impressed with man's impermanence and insignificance." That, I must admit, I too felt at an early age. I think it's a side-effect of scientific comprehension: those lucky enough to understand things like physics, also understand Cosmic vastness, and thus the smallness of our part in it. And when you have a show that portrays no meaning, even in death, with tales about dark happenings among the public's daily comings and goings, unseen because no one's really looking; and those that are, embrace denial--it tells a little of our current culture. Right now, we fear not only death (in need of more to life than our daily bread), but certain types of death; like that of a disease that riddles our body unrecognizable, attacking the very things that make up our humanity. Think, "World War Z," and how--in that--the world reacted, how the true colors of our authoritative upper tiers showed, jumping quickly into planes and helicopters, ship bound ... leaving the women and children behind. Oh, sure, we need leaders to survive--but not ALL of them, they can draw a line somewhere. When a ship sinks, the rats are the first to save themselves--no self-respecting Captain would be caught in the first life-boat!

(It's odd. My typewriter--as I can now see--did a double-stacked "S" on the end of "happenings." It was NOT intentional, I don't think my Brother SX-4000 even has that capability. What happened was my correction ribbon got hung up and caused it, from what I can tell. Some, omen, perhaps ... is what many would say. And even myself, being of a Cosmic-vast mindset must admit, of all the symbols, that one on a paragraph about H.P. Lovecraft is a little eerie. There I was humanizing him, and wham, Cthulhu calls!)

In my Correctional Writer's Initiative, CWI, class: my creative writing have a long reading list I've compiled of various MFA curricula, with the usual Vonnegut, Orwell, etc. But also with Lovecraft, and others, even some Japanese novelist in translation to give some *comme il faut* etiquette to their own personal prose style. If I can expose them to all the masters, maybe a little of each will rub off on them. Who knows? And since Lovecraft inspired so much of our current horror genre, his work cannot be denied.

Many of my students like the stuff--leaning that everything they're trying to accomplish, has already really been done, at some point, in some way, by some writer, at some time--all they have to do, is take note. Learn what was done, and apply that to what they themselves wish to do. Like an artist learning to paint: first, he (or she) must learn to see; second, the techniques, and rules; third, once the rules can be adhered to, she (or he) after emulating the masters, must forget everything they've learned so that they can begin to discover themselves. It's the same for writers, emulate, assimilate, rip it all up, and then appropriate anew.

One student, was perusing my new copy of *New Ohio Review*, NOR, #17: and right now my class is just finishing up their session on poetry, so they now have a strong grasp on poetic form, and he sees a poem that made him slam down the journal in frustration. We all laughed, because we knew why he did it. The guys now realize that literary success is not outside of their reach--they're recognizing formats within what they're reading, and realizing that they too, could have written that. And for them to consider how much money is out there to be made by writers, it frustrates some of them, because it's all so simple. Learn the work; do the work. That's what I tell them.

For us, it's not always easy--really, it's never easy; not with our circumstance and all. We have to deal with depression looming at all times, ready to pounce. For me, it was (in March) the passing of an ex's birthday, burned indelibly into my brain, with me regretting that I'm unable to throw her a party; then it was (in the beginning of April) the passing of my youngest son's birthday, can't throw him a party either.... Can't even get that final draft of the novel I'm writing in his (and his mother's) honor, into a draft that I'm satisfied with, at least not yet. It just keeps evolving in complexity, getting better and better.

I work through it; just like the others.

We all have things important to us ... the writing is our distraction, our way of coping. Like Liv, we find ourselves in a whole new world we never knew existed. Each with a personal mandate to ensure that our "impermanence" and "insignificance" does not go unnoticed! And we're not alone in these thoughts--even the South Carolina upper-tier leaders seem to now, finally, be on the rehabilitation bandwagon. Things are changing. I think it's on May 15th or so, that a large gathering is to occur at the State capitol concerning changes that are on the horizon. Things like getting rid of the death penalty, reducing mass incarceration as a business model, and actually going back to rehabilitation in lieu of simple detention. Look at the recent issue with the cop that just committed a cold-blooded murder, and would've gotten away with it too if it had not been for a concerned citizen that filmed the crime, complete with the cop planting evidence by the body, and his partner covering for him. This was, a North Charleston cop, I believe? It's common all over South Carolina; but it's changing, fast. This new world, as dangerous as it is, can be construed as being the precipice of a new era. If the change occurs in a logical, scientific, and psychologically coherent way: South Carolina could be in for a great future. One free from corruption, and one on par with the educational standards of other states! A society changed for the better. A permanent, and significant step forward.

But first and foremost, all those authoritative egos must be deflated, and brought back down to earth. Like Lovecraft, South Carolina's virulent racial (and religious) purism, is holding things back. Let science and truth govern; and watch what happens. I don't need to eat brain to see it.