



5.31.15

JOHNNY MAHAFFEY SAYS:
"Prison Poetica; Life in Stand"

When many writers (of prose--and--verse)--especially the imprisoned--construct their works, it's common for a certain level of emotional withholding to manifest itself as evasive diction (i.e., word choice). Tiptoe; sometimes barely hinting at the deepest truth, where the story REALLY lies--deep down, hidden, not wanting to be stirred.

We know--as writers, and as humans--the work is not expected to be confessional: just honest. Here's an exercise I gave my students: "Write a poem (free of rules) that tells of something you consider one of (or the) worst things you've done--without directly SAYING what it is." This is my own result of that exercise:

THE VACATIONIST

Filled with knowing of bigger, better things--
I still go on: Me, Myself, and Irene.
Split within, every level of "sin,"
to be just a cookie-cutter plug-in.

Victim for each loose girl love-in,
leaving to play the world's smallest violin;
mere societal psychobiography
at play, within each private pornography.

My seed as autography,
with DNA in cryptography.
The whole town my playground,
where I'm known--local whorehound.

Each go-around
leaving another white-crowned,
not-SO-innocent armhole,
around me in hope of bankroll.

White, black, or Mongol--
I remember every freckle, every mole.
In exchange, on my neck their foothold,
in payment of their threshold

(oversold).

This end of mine, left stone-cold--
no excuse for me, this life foretold.
Stuck here, brushing up my Cantonese,
next to come, some Vietnamese

since I already mastered my Japanese--
all in place of my lost Elise.
Her love in the end, set-aside--
a shock from one once starry-eyed

now so dewy-blind; young pride
gone (replaced), an overstride to self-satisfied.
So few words only simplification,
all part of my so-called rehabilitation--

all of it like a Shrödinger equation
converted to Block Universe photointerpretation.
Now the self-made educationist,
but the secret isolationist--

the prison vacationist
laughing at societal assimilationists.
My prerogative
irritative

to those authoritative--
my opinions to them uncommunicative.
I the famed adulterator,

another excommunicator--
seeing their altruism as being narcissism,
my brain in full aneurysm:
filled with knowing of bigger, brighter things,

off to fly on Cosmic wings.

--J.E. Mahaffey

It seems to work. I think one of the interesting side-effects of writing
--and writing well--is that you can oftentimes discover something you didn't
know you remembered.

You exercise some inner demon, hate, bias, or simple idea; or, you birth
a newfound passion, love, hobby; move on past a hurt, forgive, forget.