NO AIR

POEMS
A SELF-PSYCHOANALYTICAL ESSAY
AND EXPERIMENTAL FICTION

BY
J.E. MAHAFFEY
NO AIR: POEMS, A SELF-PSYCHOANALYTICAL ESSAY, AND EXPERIMENTAL FICTION

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J.E. Mahaffey, is an artist/writer currently imprisoned, and living under dire circumstances—yet has found both the time, and resource, to write this collection of poetic—and narrative—works. The goal of this arrangement was to (attempt) to preserve all borderline aspects of a traumatized personality: to teach, warn, and guide any subsequent feet in danger of following.

For more on the author visit his blog:

http://betweenthebars.org/blogs/316/

Or, email him directly through the South Carolina Department of Corrections (computer kiosks are installed in all prison "dorms," for prisoners to send, and receive email), the site's current URL is:

connectnetwork.com
(search for: Johnny Mahaffey, SCDC # 323863)

The site—like all things state—is subject to change, again. So, a search engine tasking may be in need.

Or, an all-time favorite, the beloved snail-mail:

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* As years pass, a visit to the prison's website may also be in order:

doc.sc.gov

Just to verify author's location, and if he's still among the living. Prisoners are subject to move at any moment, and face death on an hour to hour basis. The author will respond to correspondence.
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READER DISCRETION IS ADVISED

SOME OF THE WORKS FOUND WITHIN THIS COLLECTION CONTAIN ADULT CONTENT (E.G., GRAPHIC EROTICA, VIOLENCE, ADULT DRAMA, ETC.), AND MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR YOUNGER READERS. OR, NARROW-MINDED ADULTS.
For Jennifer—a person in whose absence,  
        I find it hard to breathe.
We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric,  
but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry.  

--W.B. Yeats
# Table of Contents

**Introduction**

Poems

- Part 1
- Part 2
- Part 3

Experimental Fiction

- Part 4: And Then...

A Self-Psychoanalytical Essay

- Part 5: In the Presence of Enlightened Knowing

Comments and Endnotes

Acknowledgments

Author Bio
Every writer, by the way he uses the language, reveals something of his spirit, his habits, his capacities, his bias. This is inevitable as well as enjoyable....

—E.B. White and William Strunk
"The Elements of Style"

**Introduction**

Removal from social interaction can substantially shorten human lifespan, making the isolated, stagnant atmosphere of this current prison sentence upon me—quite literally—a threat to my every wake, and breath. With, "No Air," I exhale some of the stale air I have held these past several years: each word, a little piece of my self, respired. Each, conveyed not in just want, but need. A seven-year study of sixty-five hundred Brits, ages fifty-two and older, found:

... that those who were the most socially isolated were 26 percent more likely to die during the study period than were those who were the most engaged, regardless of whether they reported feeling lonely.


Biology is at play, isolation: raises blood pressure, stress-hormone levels, and even inflammation. Simple contact with others (e.g., a smile, a laugh, a handshake), is shown by research to lower such pressures, improving health. I'm thirty-five, not quite in my fifties yet, but
that doesn't make this solitude any less dangerous; on the contrary, it means I have that many more years to lose out on. Lonely years? Yes. But they're all I have, I'd like to live them if I can.

To make each one count constructively, I figured the best of what options I had would be to become a writer. The one thing that's just about ideal considering the situation. Not exactly a unique idea, I know; Garfield even had it *ironically* in his movie. Every prisoner, and his brother shares it: surrounding me with wannabe authors, and/or playwrights. Though, I've yet to meet a serious one. I take my own goals however, very seriously—as a writer, I can't exactly go sending editors, prose or (Act-less, scene-less) plays, in packets of 30 unlined, hand-scribbled pages, bound with string, bent up clips, glue and/or tape! I want something real, something publishable, that people would not only read, but want to read—something professional. Manuscript submissions in flawless format, that without a return address, would give no other indication (by presentation) they were from a prisoner.

I had to learn to write first, I still am—it's something I don't think any writer stops, evolving in craft. I read every classic I could get my hands on, finding quickly that I was drawn to the 17th and 18th century French, and Russian novels, and that I seemed to connect with American writers of the 1950s literary type, my writing is inspired by the honesty of their prose.

My first logical goal was to procure a diploma in creative writing (Stratford Career Institute, served this need via correspondence classes, and a supplement of "Poets & Writers," magazine rounded it off.); then, in a fluke of luck, I was given a blog by MIT, I've since worked to develop it into a platform; next, I joined the National Writers Assn., NWA; Next landing writing in literary journals (e.g., The Connecticut River Review, The Sun, etc.), I even landed work in an anthology done by the S.C. Board of Education, and some on the S.C. Department of Corrections' own site—all opening new doors for me. Soon, I'm sure, I'll find an agent/editor/publisher for my short story collection, "Nine Windows," perhaps even my 28 book literary-style series, in the paranormal genre....

My prison job keeps my prose in check: I work in the Education Department as a teacher's assistant—helping inmates get GEDs. I'm also
in the steps of founding the Correctional Writer's Initiative, CWI: a writer's class/workshop, for inmates that have a GED/high school diploma, and show an aptitude for writing. We'll be—if allowed—publishing an annual anthology of student works, "The Portable Prisoner."

My goal is to foster some of these wannabe authors, into actual writers of merit. Maybe even show them how to properly submit a work to editors, setting all that tape, and toothpaste aside. Many have a good idea, or a story to tell, they just need to know how to tell it.

Carl Jung said if there is a truth, it's a concert of many voices. My voice—just like those of my students—offers balance, without it, truth's concert is seriously out of tune. A sort of, aspersing monotony of authoritative broadcast exists in the absence of our voices. Writing however, is more than a mere calibrated truth, an empty page can be an unexplored world, a love, or simply, a welcoming friend. When you go to prison, you find out fast who your real family, and friends are; you find out who you are! Suffering has its ways of reshaping a person. Fyodor Dostoyevsky described this process expertly:

... moral deprivations are harder to bear than any physical torments. When the common man goes to prison he arrives among his own kind of society, perhaps even among a society that is more developed than the one he has left. He has, of course, lost a great deal: his country, his family, everything—but his environment remains the same. An educated man, subject by law to the same punishment as the commoner, often loses incomparably more. He must suppress in himself all his normal wants and habits; he must make the transition to an environment that is inadequate for him, he must learn to breathe in air that is not suited to him ... He is a fish that has been dragged out of the water and onto the sand ... And often the punishment that the law considers equal and apportions equally becomes ten times more painful for him.

—"The House of the Dead"

A fish on sand? Yeah, I'm that, but I can't help but notice after countless wiggles, how strong my fins are, like legs; and if I keep
myself calm, I can even breathe! Only my societal tail hinders me from standing upright, not even a product of growth, more a bureaucratic consummation—once I shed it, I'll be adapted, fully evolved into something else. A thing I had not been, but apparently had the potential for all along.

Each scratch I make in the sand, each sound, is a gasp for air.

It may very well be my biases, capacities, habits, and spirit, that all reveal themselves through my use of language. Perhaps even a raise in stress-hormone levels is discernible, but the real question is: Do you see me now, or am I truly (and utterly/ten fold) alone?

Johnny E. Mahaffey
June 15, 2014 (Fathers' Day)

Paul Valery Said, "A poem is never finished, only abandoned."
PART 1

[T]he wind makes dust because it intends to blow, taking away our footprints.

IN MY SHOES (CORRECTLY)

Each day, my steps repeat anew.  
Down the same walk, within my  
"assigned area," I dwell—  
stuck as I am, ID on left collar, always  
in a cell. Night after day; remembering  

each bird that flew, like all I knew.  
Each day, my steps repeat anew.  
In my shoes, I let things pass; I must  
laugh it all off, saving pieces of this  
broken heart of glass—each closer  
to the last,  
with so much time still to pass.  
Each day, my steps repeat anew.  
No choice for me, only remembrance  
of such glee. Life; exacting fee.  

In my shoes (correctly),  
only I can know—this  
place, they claim I've somehow sown.  
Each day, my steps repeat anew.  
Out between the bars, the hopes I knew  

have flew; but on occasion  
I see them out there,  
peeking in—searching for me  
to let me know, they've grew!  
Each day, my steps repeat anew.
35 and alive, just
not sure why? Another October 4—
All these years, ambling around still.
So many others in the ground.
So many others never to be found.
Why I? I say to the ground,
this odd path found.

My loving Jen now 34—we’re both so
old. In our day shared, thoughts of her bring
smiles back again.
Her so sweet, so bold, never
doing as others told.
My "Jen Journal" entries unread
without hold, but to me never cold.
"Happy Birthday!" a mere joke
to her, and to me. One others do not see.
Especially those that chose to flee.

35 and alive—what joy. What glee.
Life should
charge a fee.
But wait, there is
a fee.
The cost being life in which we see,
open eyes to a closed world,
blind and dumb to what we know.
Backwards glance all they sow.
Stale in life as nowhere they go.
My 35 alive, aware
within this dogmatic hive.
At my peace they gawk and stare.
My life in a cosmic know, as
separate from them I go.
Proud of the seeds I left to grow.
THE PENS OF WHEN

I.
To speak for those who have no voice;
   Poetry or prose, to express us through another.
For me—and those alike—there is no choice.
To speak for those who have no voice;
We write to raise our experience above the noise.
   Words for a grinder, in which most don't bother!
To speak for those who have no voice;
   Poetry or prose, to express us through another.

II.
Into those depths we've delved;
   But why take us/or any, at our word?
Perhaps it's the mirror to ourselves—
Into those depths we've delved,
Pondering the Inferno shelved.
   Walking alongside Dante's herd,
Into those depths we've delved;
   But why take us/or any, at our word?
SLAMMER SCRIBE

I sit,—this table, in the "day room," it's called: penning my novel, no matter how badly flawed. My legacy, my book of hope; then turn to this poem, for reasons unknown. I'm not a poet, just a man in pain— a pain running deep, leaving much from to gain.

This pen my only hope, a special pen, one I made; but for its detail ... you'll have to read another day, perhaps in my memoir, you'll find its way. Just know for now, that I hold it dear, for with it I write with evidence: of love once without fear a love lost but never far from near

I write, not so much entertain; but to vent from a life, oh so full of pain little hope, all around the same waiting to be found, or simply put in the ground. Yet, within this free versed heart, you'll find little regret, or shame. A heart once loved is a heart of fame.

I sit—this table, in the "day room, it's called: I write for no glory, only to vent my pain— perhaps others who read it, if any, feel the same. All of us, with mostly ourselves to blame. This life unfair, yet beautiful, no matter how badly flawed.
OPALESCENCE

The girl whose California charm
beamed out without fear of harm,
even to me, extending her arm.

Neither of us any kind of do-good,
it was like at first sight, we were just, "o-good!"
Six-times-a-day (or more), DNA blending just too good.

Our several years passed in a flash,
a single bash of an eye-lash,
all gone; to those who knew us like ash.

Lost with the grunge uprising,
years worth prizing
as a time of our generation's rising.

The fights we'd forget what was about,
each an unfortunate, youth-bout;
leaving us little option but out.

Never the trip abroad,
my workload so heavy and broad,
that even today, I'm stuck here on one road.
FIVE TIMES CHARMED

Cradling you in her arms,
full of mother milk, a little dribble on your lip
that I your daddy wipes away, all my guards you disarm
you, just nibbling mother's nipple-tip.
Made of love, despite the controversy:
despite Christian snobbery, you'll always have God's mercy.

I know, not just now but then, the potential of such charm—
somehow, deep inside, I knew—it was no dictatorship.
My time with your mother was at times stiff-arm,
our love, had its expiration date: making you such hardship.
A time I felt approached without a referee.

Too many pushing her against me, taking pleasure in our harm;
so many obstacles, my own stress under censorship
taking its toll on her like a firearm
under guise of friendly instructorship.

In the end for our things they all came in swarm,
like feral kittens rolled in catnip
they attacked without alarm.

Their moral so underarm,
legalized by a like-minded county judgeship.

Still, my love for each of you lives on unharmed.
MY LIFE AS AN UNKEMPT IRISH CASBAIRDNE

In detail syllable count,
I give my tale cordially,
to enable visibly:
My pre-chosen Death Valley?

I married so young, you'd of
thought for sure I was
always ho wild, light-o'-love,
a formulae lower-class:

One kid, two kid, five, and I
wasn't done; one wife, two. Why?
To now endure symmetry
of nuptial detoxify!

This life so cut-and-dry, sad
but true, duplicity of
all I knew, and a quick slip
of mental slope, now hereof.

To serve moratorium:
I betroth Death a poem,
a creak of tired breath, before
croaking transcendently home.
JENMARLA

I wish that I could write to you,
but I no longer know your address.
I understand, why you would go to new;
my life, my heart, it's all such a mess.
Women like you are special and few,
I could care less about the rest.
The one you love, better take good care of you,
my once fiance, that time from me slew.

But my heart can never forget,
such a wonderful time past—
the girl I'd met.
The knife in my heart that's left such a gash,
to lie in wait, for the ease of death.
How things come and go in such a flash.
Today is a birthday, not yours and mine,
but another love, I'd lost with time.

I don't think anything will ever ease this pain;
I write, read, draw, and keep busy.
But as each day passes it remains, just the same.
You thought I believed you to be a floozie?
I threw at you, so much blame....
I love you without question, you had no flaw.
I am sorry, for to you, I was such a burdensome name.
Owing me nothing, I'm just glad you came.
TERRESTRE

as I die
the last impressions
I will process
from this life
stolen
would be things
like my son Connor
following me with such love
great and hope
my baby Ellie
looking with those big
gorgeous eyes
Michaila and her natural
talent
such curiosity in those
knowing eyes
Shylynn as she was cut
and pulled from her mother
her not yet opened blues
on the other side of that
womb
Collin held by his mother
for all the world to see
with a fleeting glimpse
even of me
the one through the glass
as far away as the moon
seen that once
that they want our last
the smiles of those I love
I should've
could've
done them all
so much better
than mere words
line by line
letter by letter
Though my life
I can't imagine any better
FOLLY OF THE FATHER

My baby girls pulled me from the abyss,
their eyes, and hearts, wide open.
I was young.
My sons too, yearned for me.
My fatherhood to them a failure—
My worst of myself was deth: Days become weeks,
weeks to months, months to years,
years ... to ... a lifetime.
All passed. Time with no relevance,
my life outside of time.
Watching. Feeling.

Forever to see, to know, that which
is beyond reach. Beyond repair.
I was young, the abyss strong.
I was
Not yet myself.
If I Google myself
on the worldwide bookshelf,
I'll find I'm a "cold blooded killer,"
my "own worst enemy," on the top-shelf.
My whole predicament, dubbed the do-it-yourself
making of a best selling-list thriller.
My award a pair of bronze handcuffs for the mantelshelf,
initials engraved by a kangaroo judge himself,
signed a mere tax-claim filler.

Or, so it all says to this new Andersonviller,
doomed a wrongful sentence fullfiller.
No one ever thinks it will happen to themselve,
putting no weight to cries of any cell-dweller;
just another self-serving yeller.
Not your average mental delve;
not just some tale-teller!
Metamorphosized now into corruption smuggler—
their wayward way, I'm sworn to unshelve.
CONDITONED MEGASTAR

Who among us, can truly know
or tell, what field our seed will sow
this world full of misconception &
ways at following suggestion:
an incertitude in id, self-
familiar, yet widely nonself;
in a wanton-choice reservoir
paddling for any handlebar?

Opportunism the con moral,
this world full of Candy & Opal,
compelling those like we to go
to and fro their way, blow-by-blow;
each a fad prompted megastar,
slave to a conditioned radar:
frenzied consumption of any,
and all, things not at all brainy.

This orb, covered with (dark) dense Sky,
conceited American Pie,
trapped by old concepts so FUBAR,
freed with computer avatar:
transcendent, human overthrow,
the digital facade quid pro quo,
neearly all, guise intellection
in denial introspection.

In a wanton-choice reservoir,
paths mostly taken under par,
hoodwinked by the new rent-a-life,
with books aside: principled strife
runs amuck, with no, or little
to avoid Big Brother, Orwell;
just ignore that global airglow
this world full of bargained electable no-go.
NICLEBOYS BY THE DOZEN

My eyes are looking, locked in some biological monorhyme
as my earplugs work double-time;
Cover-band-boys are all to be found
year-round everywhere except belowground
where their noise could rebroadcast
as an undead sunfast.
A "photo" song for molesters to sing for
girls to whom they are not mentor—
my skin crawling at just the thought
of their sound so childishly besought.
Girls falling for the anthem of predator,
so naive, their story to sound that of folklore:
Pied Piper with a guitar,
driving the unmarked rent-a-car.
PART 2

We also know how cruel the truth often is, and we wonder whether delusion is not more consoling.

--Henri Poincare
(1854-1912)
BROKENGATE

There is so much left to
    go—
the furniture, the clothes, and
    the cats.
All our scared kittens, their mommy, and their
daddy: Arlow is spazzing out,
    they deep finding his hiding spots—
    his only refuge, the car they cannot move.
Daisy sits waiting, probably wondering too,
    about all these strange smelling humans
that I haven't yet made leave.
Could a bassett hound look any sadder,
    or, a neighbor any gladder?

Skyler is embarrassed, waddling around
    trying to help;
blending in as one of them.
How could I do this to her? The girl I love.
To us.
She'll never forgive, never forget.
The baby not even here yet and us,
    with nowhere to go.
She looks to me and smiles:
    It'll be okay, she says,
We'll go to her parents, stay together.
But inside—I know—she's forgetting my name.
For me, there is no more love—only blame,
    never again to be the same.
I just want to die, knowing she'll
cry. Such downfall and defame.

There is so much left to
    go—
her clothes snuck to the closet,
    her "spider" in the bathroom, even the sheets
still with our smell. All the dreams
    and their dreamers, off anew, sent to dwell.
Blue eyes cast in a green-eyed world,
    Shakespeare's, "great stage of fools,"
incarnate. Covetous of we, our love,
    the spider of growth within her: no hiding spot,
not for us, only she will be—
    so much stronger than me.
EYES WIDER OPEN

It's the in-between-time
that sucks.
This: SupersadtrueLOVEstory-life!

You even see it all coming
yet do nothing, blaming bad luck.
It's the in-between-time

we see Cupid's unstring
bow, from our vantage under Love's truck.
This: SupersadtrueLOVEstory-life!

Us, the one time Queen and King
cast out to run amok.
It's the in-between-time

with every girl a mere G-string
waiting for a pluck.
This: SupersadtrueLOVEstory-life!

Every guy her pet ding-a-ling
morally moonstruck:
it's the in-between-time.
This: SupersadtrueLOVEstory-life!
SEQUELS

My Sky went dark, the Sun
long gone. Most of the stars are out
—I have not one to wish upon.
Not after losing the most beautiful one.

A terror to wake, and find
it was all just a dream of some kind.

The twinkle gone from Sky eyes,
—at least forme, gone blind.
NUMB yet still young. My tortured
continuations of happiness past.

Oncogenicity! I scream.
Just one more, then another.

One; and not one of all.
That's all I task. I've paid my due.
Please Ma'am, may I have
a new Lenore? That one, was just a whore.

She became unworthy; choosing even, to lay
the King's cousin brother—and all who knew.
"HOME: THREE BEDROOM, two bath,
with nursery, LIKE NEW—UNUSED,
$119,000.00 or best offer.

MEN'S WEDDING BAND, silver,
LIKE NEW—UNUSED, size 8,
$100.00 or best offer. MUST GO

ROMANTIC CRUISE FOR TWO, tickets,
transferable/non-refundable, expire soon,
$500.00 for both, or best offer.
LUGGAGE INCLUDED!

DVD, DIRECTOR'S CUT: "THE NOTEBOOK,"
LIKE NEW, watched only once, FREE

WOMEN'S CLOTHING: PRE- and POST-NATAL,
prom dress, shoes, jeans, and more.
FREE if removed from yard ASAP.

WANTED: RUGER 9mm handgun,
any condition, price negotiable.
WILL TRADE.
MAYA

When I'm beaten down, that's when
the curtain moves: hallucinations of MEANING begin,
as reality bends.
Chromology spins off like dying winds;
rights and wrongs, blend in sin.

The Wizard, all this time and there he's been,
inside my pains, regardless of any "amen,"
or angels spitefully unkenned.
Trapped in some dizzy, Cassandra-esque tailspin.

I cannot sleep against such a wake, locked in.
Waiting now for full consciousness to drop in,
all I can do is playfully condescend,
a way of trying to contend
against this conformed playpen,
Trapped in some dizzy, Cassandra-esque tailspin.
I.
For once at least, we dreamed the same dream.
But now, we dream no more,
cast apart by your scheme
securing for you a place in homewrecker lore.
Still, I think fondly at times of you
wondering things as: if you still surreptitiously eat Peeps
by the marshmallowed pound to soothe;
their wrappers around you knee-deep! :)
Family/Homewrecker that you are
you're still, to my heart, one rare star—
had those legs stayed closed—we could've gotten so far.
Instead, I'm left to pick at this scar
along with all the others to suffer from your act
executed like some conformed female pact.

II.
"This wasn't what I wanted," you'd said,
cold, matter-of-fact.
Only after I'd caught him in your ... head,
even then, you claim I chose to overreact.
Perhaps it was, just something pushed
further?
Who knows why you even went and looked?
It would be biased of me to infer.
Besides, ignorance is my love's bliss—
it's not as if I could've expected complication
from such a predictable societal conformist
following the steps of this "great nation."
In the end, I'm glad our love was once the same
just too bad you never got my surname.
SKYPALL

Life Of her new found Sex, with Time
to Learn Of Vaginal meth in Ecstasy
devoid of Compunction And Nostalgia—
Bedazzled by Rapacious co-worker, to Engender And set forth his Kismet.
Any other interpretation Not of Yen,
How Easily Assimilated she for the Rabble—Together
Original sin it's said, her Female
drive they Insist To blame; So if true
Time will, Raise Unequivocal Shame, Tangible, and flamed.
SESTINA SKY

Even if it means transference to others,
a blame never yours, never ours.
Men and women alike, in all shapes,
sizes, and colors.
Your rebellion knows no bounds,
the quintessential millennial.

Three babies of your attempts to self-heal,
one princess, one you murdered, one perverse,
all—even our princess—results of your runarounds—
your list of failed avowals
documented by the trail of your collected underdrawers,
in memory of yours, such luscious moonscape ... 

the very one I could never escape,
something sexually surreal
with all logic in discolor.
From family car to city hearse,
exploits abound of your after-hours:
come one, come all, merry-go-round.

Each, a bane, your personal hellhound,
—all your woes remain undraped—
not one, or you, left unsour.
Juliet again miscast in a horrid ordeal,
thrown about, such unworthy voyageurs,
societally trained as comrade orgiers.

Word of the day, of month, year: divorce.
I knew this not, when we did your ultrasounds;
those days I was glad to say, "I'm hers."
Blind to my own life's rape,
ever such pain could anyone forefeel,
a life somewhat happy—now completely dour.

Your mother's dream, of womanpower,
her witchcraft work to stay outdoors—
her plans for you, a beau ideal.
You just wanted a stranger pound,
head thrown back with mouth agape,
not caring if it's a his or hers.

My thoughts of you without bounds—days once ours,
in the prime millennial. Your true colors
hidden in your shapes, kept away from all the others.
ITS NAME WAS "IT"

If you'd given it a name,
or, known the sex.
How could you have wiped your slate clean, act the same?
This little life, you snuffed out because your hate of latex!
The small INNOCENT soul that you murdered—
there's just no easier, kinder, way to reword.

Still, today, you pass the blame,
for your life so triple X,
and all the lives you set aflame.
In accordance to your Clique Codex:
it's not your fault when following the herd.

But his "IT" of yours without surname,
once inside you growing, anticipating life uncomplex.
No. You proclaim.
Tossing It away like a used Kleenex.

Do you even know, how the doctor chose to maim?
Does It have a grave, or down a drain in a toilet vortex?
I write this in no way to defame,

just trying to put things in proper frame.
Things aren't quite so simplex,

as what we want will always wax and wane.
What is it to be?
To suffer such fate,
being told
it's too late:
No forgiveness, no reset,

no clean slate.
What is it to be?
Idle hearts
without love,
and full of pain;

broken down
for another's gain.
What is it to be?
These
idle hearts

in
idle pain, all in wait,
expecting same.
What is it to be?
This wake of love's flee

where the
idle hearts,
stretch as far as one
can see, wondering—
what is it to be?
JAIME STREET

I took Skyler Avenue, to find my way;
but found it had too many twisted turns—
for an honest man to avoid such vices at play.
At a loss, with no words to say:
"indigné," I hear, as I'm forced to lay.

And just as I see salvation: Jaime Street,
that was always there, right under my nose.
Years upon years; it's how it always goes.
I take the street, in search of my home—
but it ends as a circle, not a road
at all. Such things, no one ever really knows.

Back where I started, except minus my car.
Looking down, to find, feet without shoes;
I wasn't to make it far.
But I take the step, as Jaime Street I parted,
leaving the misnamed cove, in search of road.
PART 3

Twinkle, twinkle, little wife!
How I wonder where you're at!
Up and about the world you fly,
Like a reaper in the sky.

--Epitaph of
Jame Spencer,
"Finding Susie"
by J.E. Mahaffey
THE MERETRICIOUS FACTION

Covering your past with a usual lie;
that you'd forgotten it all—the tri-faced mouthpart.
Pilled up, tied up, rotten heart,
spreadeagled, sweaty, and high.

"Growing up," your naive cry!
There's no dishonor in playing the slut,
but do a better job at cleaning that thing up:
the infection of yours, almost caused me to die.

Exposing yourself for all those in want,
all over the net you're still spread.
To think—for you—I'd opened my home's bed.
In exchange, this, my heart—you'd flaunt?

At you, I cannot HATE, or even stay mad.
I have no idea what my future will hold,
without you—or any—I must grow old.
That I met you, of that ... I am still glad.
INVISIBLE GIRL

Hatred of the "PUBLIC" school system,
choosing anonymity among the student body—
"The Crow," soundtrack your personal anthem,
and dressed oh-so-darkly.
For some, a little too Goth-schoolgirl
with your complexion of vampire astronaut.
Every guy, a potential sire bloodthirsty,
passed around, and then forgot.

Leaving behind a trail of poem—
every stanza in attestation to detachability,
a conformed refusal to succumb.
Some, a little silly;
and others are like, "really?"
In ode to your stretched out fleshpot,
the long lost, growing pink lily,
smelled once, and then forgot.

Invisible Girl, a creme
of George's Carmen. Plotting slyly,
with a buried face and full of cum
back-door, winking shyly.
Then flipped over with Lopez-legs held highly,
any Johnny-on-the-spot
will do just finely.
Been there, done that, and then forgot.

She can come across all ladylikely,
but bring penicillin, that thing's red-hot—
dreamed up not even in Eastwick, inexhaustively
passed around, and then forgot.
THE PITH

Just show me.
Is the color uniform, or does it
change at the creases? What about,
texture—rough, or smooth?
Does it have bumps? Any spots?
Is it ... gummy, or ... taut?
Is it, bruised or sore? If I opened it,
what's it like on the inside?
Don't just claim it smells good or tastes good.
Just show me.
Is it fishy? Faintly floral? Is it
moist or dry? Does the flavor have
layers to it
that linger upon your tongue?
Does all of it fit in the palm of a hand?
Just show me.
Is it fresh? How can I tell
if it's ripe? Can anyone see it?
Or just you and me?

What is that, tamarind?
No. Nevermind,
don't show me.
MARITAL HALITOSIS

In search of a kitten—
expecting something perhaps sweet
friendly and shy;
instead finding a creature more like
a duck-billed platypus.
That happened to think it was a wolverine,
with the appetite of a hippopotamus.
Even of the same texture.

But it WAS friendly. Had a website.
Social networking the red light:
Friend any; friend ALL!
Didn't matter if it was two, or three—
open invitation past the witching hour.
Many cum, few stay.
Just not a good play, not when a foot
has free rein. About such a thing,
what could there be nice to say?

I once found a kitten
that was really a sex crone. Even bought it
a collar, so it could have someone finally
that called it their own, even, gave it
a home. A banded finger, put the past outside.
I even gave the pantied platypus a kiss;
the "strategic" outfit, made it hard to miss.
But that one kiss, I don't reminisce,
not after the resulting trip to the ER! Ick.
My freaking throat SWOLLEN SHUT—missing then
the court trip the next day, the one
that this future, it could've saved.
But who's to blame, as you've said
it was just a lot of "growing up."

I once ran from a kitten,
that did nothing but grow.
There wasn't a yarn ball, it didn't know.
AN OPEN WINDOW

Making LOVE to you in the middle of the day.
How you liked that I called it "LOVE,"
not your usual, evening shove:
entry to your twenty-seven page, sexual resume.
I really thought you'd choose to stay,
what we had, was maybe true love.
Even with that loose-fit catcher's glove,
that gave a son to this Hemingway.
At least I have great thoughts that dwell,
those muffled moans you couldn't stifle--
J-O-H-N-N-Y!
To tide me in my prison cell,
forever as your fingers piddle
one drawn-out word can name your fiddle: J-O-H-N-N-Y!
TWO FERAL SOULS

We went for love that June afternoon,  
within a building that would take my life, and stood  
inside, the marriage vows boomed  
with trust, and love; the place we said we would  
be forever the way we then stood, each as ourselves,  
how time would not destroy us through its miles.  
I told your mother not to worry: In my heart you dwelt.  
We talked of a future with a love to break all dials!  
Kissing in the sunlit courtyard where my daughter played,  
but no photo survives of us or my/once-our little girl.  
The friend you brought that day  
lost the film on another cocaine twirl.  
Yet despite all this unforgotten bliss  
it's you of all, in this world I miss.
ONCE TOO CLOSE

All the way and there you are
living your life while I sit FUBAR,
but I sense your guilt from afar—
me, your turned in, dirty rent-a-car.

My Ford powered heart ran like some stolen Jaguar,
all the way, and there you are
just another American-avatar,
code input your only repertoire.

Once too close, and now so far
away, trying to forget my driver's side scar.
All the way, and there you are:
but you just wait for my coming memoire.

I'm not junked, only morphed into a modified streetcar,
all parts accounted, on par, in this garaged turbocar,
except one damned chime, screaming: DOOR AJAR! DOOR AJAR!
All the way ... and there you are.
DRAMA-QUEEN

Take away your hidden misery
your rescue would be your own undo, to see
what's actually left that makes you . . . you.
Besides the melodrama, of yourself there's few;
the queen of me, upon your throne of misery.

*

Shattered words from and to
a darkened heart, though mine quite more than you.
Planet Drama,
a super-Earth with you its momma,
not so much a place, but more a not-how-to.

*

My regrets few,
mostly, involving you: considering how you flew.
Now the forever divorcee,
the official princess rejectee—
though look around, you find you're far from few.
COURTROOM KABUKI

Various indecency
call it what you will;
but "swinger" is not the same as bisexuality.
And wasn't your courtroom show, a little overkill?
I mean, seriously, any more propagandistic--
you'd never recognize you in Knoxville.
Your act so, narcissistic:
pain that calls in weight upon our soul,
all made to look so, existentialistic.
What I'd give for a space-time wormhole,
a path from this Purgatory
you helped send me, conviction in error, held on loophole.
I've found it revelatory,
though cannot follow you so morphological,
how simple: a life gyratory.
Completely blind to the cosmological,
at "3 A.M." you should take notice of stars;
there's something psychological
in that you preferred to ride strangers, in my scented old cars.
I read a Jack London book, "Selected Short Stories." In "An Odyssey of the North" there was a sentence that brought memories, memories and thoughts of you. It said: "I sat silent, and marveled at the strangeness of woman."

From the character of an Indian that had his wife stolen, on their very wedding night. He loved, as I loved. He followed the thief around the world as years past them by. Until finally, his day of justice—as he watched the thief of love die.

Freedom for his love, who then laughed in his face, and chose death with a thief. He then "sat silent, and marveled at the strangeness of woman."

Just as I sat silent, that day—marveling at the strangeness of you. My love. My woman.

Laughter in my face; hearts that once vibrated the same beautiful string, suddenly threaded apart. Mine—wound to forgot. Your's—that which never sought.
PERTE

Blue October,
    chosen day—in place once gray.
Love and lust,
    misplaced trust.

Pink dress,
    of a daughter lost.
Promises made—
    remembered not.

Yellow haze,
    love induced.
Vows of devotion—
    love infused.

Cherished; never manipulated
    cheated—or used.
Blue October,
    forever the month unused.
IN FORBIDDEN DEFENSE OF HOME

What heinous offense from chasing a fugitive;  
my right to catch the robbers with no time yet to forgive,  
my daughter in their clutching tow—  
right from wrong, neither of them, or law, to know.  
Prose and Verse, will not bring her back  
as futile as the knowledge and moral "Solicitors" lack:  
so here I sit in jail, a bird of legal paraody  
what the "judge" seen—certainly never common sense, or me.

Doomed that day in memory as virtual relive,  
their immoral folly, never to outlive.  
A decrepit defense team against a newbie gung ho,  
all of them past due at the business end of a backhoe.  
Along with that midget cop that looked like some pedophiliac,  
his IQ like that of some silverback.  
It can all happen to anybody,  
a case as mine, Kangarooed up, completely shoddy.

It's what I get for kicking the beehive,  
but who was I to unsow  
what was held in place by every fake amnesiac  
who chose my life to disemboby.
A FLASH OF LIFE

Only a shell will tell
heaven or hell,
as I chamber this round.
The barrel will burn bright,
the trigger laughing loudly
and its metal hot and strong as it takes my life.

As then-wife said, "nobody cares" of my plight,
those blinded of the meth the Sky knew him to sell
living in the ghetto oh so proudly
up until "God's call," the day he fell!
The shell can save me from their idiocy in one light,
in my search for ground.

No one to take notice of its sound—
a choice to forfeit right-to-life
like a married man who chooses to fight
for another man's wife, such carousel
of choice, to kiss-and-tell
a choice extremely stupid and deadly:

all for love's unforgiving medley.
She soon, yet another found
replacing each so fast, fare-thee-well.
Terminating babies, claiming once pro-life,
now to join us in the Christian's hell.
It's only what's morally right.

No end to the cycle in sight,
this game all businesslikel
only sadness to foretell
for every heart spellbound,
pains without limit of height.
Love, born from some random hotel,

without crack to such an emotional hardshell.
No princess; no knight.
Each sunset, another slutty delight—
justifying anything homicidely
born from such a deceptive go-round.
This brass shell, my personal Nobel

to ring out screaming loudly
of my hell in this life ended bright in one
round,
my story one time must tell.
FIRST TIME IN PRISON

I wake up in a cell. I am on the top of the three-stacked bunk. My cell-sharers and the dwellers of other cells are speaking Ghetto there. Am I in Hell? I wonder. All of the others take note of me and plot in hope of gain. I've never been to prison before, is not something I say—it emanates through my humanity. They plot harder. When I look around I see they are crawling within the shadows, their eyes big and wanting, their stomachs as empty as their hearts and minds. Their mother's jewelry, TV, toaster, even food-stamps ... all gone, smoked up in pipes of crack or meth, or shot through needles to feed the phantom bugs of itch. Tobacco, is their new crack. Homo: their new norm, with Christianity their cover. I want to laugh, but shouldn't.

Society has done this.

The government, created to serve, to protect: has caused it. These surroundings they wish to hide, without drums, they beat on walls, desks, and anything in reach—even one another. Mixing in droning, mind-numbing, unrhymed monologues of broken promises and delusive dreams. Lamborghiniis, Ferrarisis (not for love of machine, but want of flash). ONE-HUNDRED INCH rims to roll them, massive yachts to keep afloat on the ocean(s) they have never seen, gold teeth to eat the food they cannot name, yellow "kicks" to jump and jump and jump—such dreams, such ambition, yet, they need to bum a cup of my coffee, or, at least try. "Gotsta be a axin'," they claim. Each a music star not yet charted; a writer, that don't write; a scholar that's never read anything of value; an artist, that doesn't draw, only traces, copies, or does "tattoos"; a businessman, that sucks at basic arithmetic! Unable to even add the money of their dreams, "but that be o-k." they say, because so-and-so makes such-and-such, and so-and-so makes such-and-such. Vicarious justifications of lives misled, wasted. Brotherhood, without trust, bleeding and sucking each other dry as they plot to steal the next, or any, man's things. Only uniform dividing staff from prisoner, within each like the other in this, Dostoysky's House of the Dead.

But buried here, in this Dorm of the Dead, is one unlike another. I have to save myself, I am my only best friend, myself my only non-enemy; I can save no one else, wouldn't want to if I could, not of what I first see. Most are where they should be, in here, not out in the world around my kids and other people like me.
THE NUMBER

The number of our life is chosen,
each grave marked the same—
no date, no distinction ...
leaving, as if they'd never came.
All that's left is

the number.
The number of our life is chosen,
given in place of names,
those among us new, still thinking
it's a game.

It's the true, who at times hold their head
in shame, knowing, it's no simple game.
The number of our life is chosen,
stamped on all we have, and crammed
into the green bag, our life is said to have sown.

The number,
tagged on the old Army duffel, that we drag
from "dorm" to dorm, for everyone it is the same:
the number of our life is chosen,
and we're tossed into the storm.

It becomes who we are told to be:
the number,
our permanent societal scar.
All dreams, all ambition, frozen, when
the number of our life is chosen.
A HORDE OF HOARDERS

all too busy being boarded

thousands of them fancy
any shiny item looking
like it's dancing
round and round the items go

all too busy being boarded
on the American merry-go-round

any one without old lady
left to devise a new way
shady
just one chance in the place

all too busy being boarded
on the American merry-go-round
hoarding hoarding hoarding

guy in secondhand sneakers
tries to clean them nicely
dips his index in the paint
does it over like the others

all too busy being boarded
on the American merry-go-round
hoarding hoarding hoarding
there's just nothing better to be found.
NO SPY

Daily now, on his bunk he lie
  In vacant or in depressive mood,
Obvious he can no longer spy
  His cock, and curse his love of food.
Eating candy like a childish fool,
Until the point he could not reach his tool.

Down the hatch, food and candy plays
  Sugar rush, on top of coffee
Every day, dreams full of fish filets
  Of all the cellmates, why me?
To live a life, a fifty-year-old boy
How could such a thing, lead to joy?

My cellmate now, one year long—
  Not once do I think,
He's seen his own dong.
  Eating everything, but the sink.
A locker acts like a vending machine.
Full of everything, even cookies with cream.

Mouth smacking like a horse.
  So loud you wanna scream!
Biting down with such desperate force,
  Growing bigger each day it does seem.
No one minds, or even really cares.
But to eat like that, I'd never dare.
HUMPTY HIPPIE

Humpty Hippie sat on a great wall.
Humpty Hippie had a great fall.
All the court's lawyers,
    and all the court's books,
    tried to put Humpty Hippie whole again.
In the biggest court of all the lands,
    one great judge asked:
    "How of guilt must to us you plea?"
Humpty Hippie leaned on in,
    saying:
    "Your great honor—not at all."

Back to his cell, he was taken
    immediately.
The whole thing one great big hell.
Humpty Hippie sat on a metal toilet.
Humpty Hippie needed a great dump.
He strained and he strained,
    but all he got was
    one big clump.
The water churned when he heard it thump.
Stress induced from a Dusty Bob pump.

Humpty Hippie missed his call,
    a lawyer select, before his fall.
Now outside a cell he must watch
    a great big wall.
To move its way much worse than a fall.
A guard at post with few words
    but, "nay." Or:
    "Move this way? Not at all."
THE ONE ABOUT THE PREACHER

They tell me the one about the theology student that took a free class. The same one that used to think he was a witch, some Pagan descendant persecuted by the Christians. The punchline of the story being: *If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.* The other mock-students gave him coffee, cakes, and chicken—to buy his immortal soul. The more they buy; apparently the more their's is worth. But all I can think about is the bigger picture; the one outside a single book, outside a single worldview like their's that's debunked, and outdated—an actual view that includes a thing called a universe, FULL of various spheres called PLANETS ... many planets, too many to fathom; and inside which we are not the center. No "eye" on us, and what we call here, being really nowhere at all. And why PRAY for an end to it all, so some guy can return? Does blowing up the world to save it really make any sense, to anyone? They tell me the one about the Wiccan the Christians bought: I tell them the one about the Higgs boson and the LHC outside Geneva, Switzerland. They tell me the one about the child-molestor/"sex offender" that's now a saved soul to join the spirits of all those murdered children in heaven, and they get to eat at God's table and play tag, you're it; I tell them the one about a scientist named Watson, and his discovery with deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), and the human genome project that proves evolution as FACT, and no longer just theory. They tell me the one about God's plague that killed/purged the world; I tell them of scientific discoveries—germs, viruses, CD4+T cells and the mutated versions of CCR5 that thanks to that "plague" give one percent of people an evolved immunity to HIV! They tell me, "We don't believe the scientist." I tell them, "Want proof of science? Turn on a light!"
DEVOIR

I sit upon my bunk with eyes and heart of blue, not sure, not really knowing what to do. I work, every hour, of every day. This moment even, I do not and never—play. Work and my devotion to, these words of mine—these words, these thoughts, from me to you. The study of yet, another day. Siri Hustvedt (pronounced "HOOST-vet") her mutual friend, "The Shaking Woman," and her determination; the rise of English professor Joyce Thomas, to overcome a freshman rape; from that "melodramatic and unmemorable" work made first, to be found not so easily unremembered—the drawn gun to fuel her forever pen; Benjamin Percy, works with Aaron Gwyn to spill blood with, "The Art of Writing Violence"; while Mike Stilkey paints his books; and Coldplay blasts my ears. My place may not be the city of Erice—no wall or winding cobblestone, just fence upon fence. No Mediterranea Sea or Sicilian countryside, only brick and grass—very little grass. It is the vision of Dante, with the heart of Kafka.

Still, I dream...

In a moment I go to France, for Zola to teach me of Nana—and then I'm off again with Dostoyevsky. Anything to escape this Pergatorio, even if that means flying over another Cuckoo's Nest. Forever enslaved to eidetic memory, but never time. As I sit here in disheriteson of my father's family, on this metal bunk of mine, alone, I write of love—forever found, lost, and intertwined.
A BALLADE OF JEN

A word from whom brightens any day
her time for me, set-aside.
My Jen of when I never lay,
now too late within this concrete spermicide—
cut from such beauty; blonde-haired and blue-eyed,
so far from me, out of eyeshot.
I try to give a dignified:
"Forget me not."

Trapped as I am under this non-manslay,
an unconstitutional redneck override
of an illegal jury sway.
Though, there is an upside,
perhaps one day I'll get a judge that's dignified.
Not another prosecutorial robot,
that tries for others to decide—
believe them not.

Jen unlike so many MIA,
my love for her bona fide—
despite her occasional move astray.
Every thought of her, a new essay, open-eyed;
every image, a new Monet, certified;
eyevery chance, worth risk, for our Camelot.
The law is clear, without my case properly tried:
Sentence me not!

Jen to be by me bedside,
my little sexpot,
that moans to me from astride:
"Forget me not."
BONER

We wake together every morning
you throb and throb,
you'd bang everything—even Mary Magdalene.

How is it you can produce from me blob after blob,
hours on end as hard as a rock;
showing the very beat of my every heartthrob—

standing in salute like some plucked peacock.
Endurance of a young demigod,
this product of psychological gridlock,

my greased up, tan hot-rod.
Every girl an empty jar,
for this curious octopod.

Real life, or virtual avatar—
doesn't matter, for you, all moral: _au revoir_.

SEVENTY-SEVEN TO ZERO-NINE

Our whole life's long
each death impone;

yours went first, so well-known:
Hollywood princess—to forever enthrone.

If only I had your genome,
I'd make you my own!

My blonde honeycomb,
as a private stay-at-home

never to give on loan—
no Nick, Dick, or Jerome.

You'd learn saxophone: me your handblown
testosterone megaphone.

Brittany? Ms. Murphy? I'll call you Joan,
to rhyme with sounds you'll make on our arc, Earth-thrown.

Lady Gaga to play our Poker Face, stepping-stone
home beneath us, covetous, to call on videophone:

we'll see each day, the pass of Yellowstone,
avove California, in our private fire-free zone.

Dead in a tub, caught in monotone,
your Girl Interrupted—seeds unsown.

Your sanctuary; your own little Rome,
like a spotless, porcelain catacomb.

Never mine to bemoan;
unless, I get my hands on that genome!
LOST FOREST OF VENUS

I asked a woman for directions to the forest for as far back as I can remember. We get thrown into this world from one forest, just to spend the rest of our life in search of another. The one neverending forest. The forest that mirrors my very soul. At sixteen I was given my first ticket for a bus ride to the forest; but the forest was bare, no tree, or single shrub. The barest that can be for as far as I could see. Like some love-basted linoleum glistening in the sun after a morning mop, as smooth as the highway where my trip begun—my innocence undone in that one ill-fated hit-and-run. The forest of my youth's ingest, for so long now repressed ... unprofessed.
FACILITATION OF THE WAY

I.
When I shove myself into her mouth,
the form of her name escapes me.

She is now a female caricature-stretch-out,
no longer a Diane, a Lourie-Anne or Buffy.

She's quite simply, she;
but who she is, is beyond the reach of me.

I perpetuate the exploitation,
hers and mine, the great "Don Juan!"

Figuratively, and for now quite literally
we are entwined not without fee.

Neither of us are perfect,
both lacking in self-respect.

I have little choice but to remove her sundress
in hopes our emptiness will coalesce.

II.
I've learned not to compare her spout
to others; she never offered warranty.
Probably those years she lezzed-out,
but to me she is not interrogee;
nor do I have time for any retrainee,
making up for days long gone.
I'm sure she'd not complain or disagree,
acknowledgment would shatter the masks we put on.

Each of us a vice's detainee,
with thirsts inside to resurrect,
set forth on sexual grand prix:
our moment for brief interconnect,
with souls both at recess--
allowing the hunger to repossess.

III.
This wordless tradition, passed from the mouths
and bodies of her mothers.
ALL their assets worn out,
pushing to the next a forbidden fruit.
IN their ways she's unconsciously devout,
and seemingly grateful my blood swells to her throat.
She my flesh-covered LSD,
the source of both malady and all my fantasy.
In my mind, her barefoot marathon
wobbling about all knock-knee,
wanting what might be wrong--
until I spy the tail-end of a bloody, sticky tampon.
This I always forget to foresee,
a rainy day for another would-be, lubed-up grand prix.
REFUGE

Jainee smiled at her
hint, it says,
Goddess Eostre
criing
and the
wannabes without
Potter-porn
simply conformed; to not
A Goddess, not a 'witch.'
that's a horse of a different color.
'white hare?'
to be offended
The white hare,
smiling.
I
in pain, holding her chest
Jainee rubbed
The nurse, who'd been standing
It'll be o-kay sweetie,
the pain—and
I've been doing since I got here
She began to scream.
DAY 9
strong
matching stamps upon their souls.
MILLGATE

I often think of Millgate:
the road that was for so long our home.
A home of two lost loves, and I was a dad.
A home, where, for a short time all was content,
except for the hypocrite neighbors: "Christians,"
that were not Christian.
And the co-workers of my job: more "Christians,"
that were not Christian.
Church to "save" their soul, with booze
to ease their guilt—and calm their turbulent heart.
Calming their fear of the cosmic abyssal endgame.

I often think of Millgate:
a fortress from their directives,
a peaceful solitude without their pryful Zoloft eyes;
inoculation from their sickness—
their demande de renseignements.
Jealousy rampant, with defamation their vice.
Loose lips with wagging tongues, self-reflective
of their defeatist will.

I often think of Millgate:
my counterproductive years with the saliva
covered home.
A MAN OF LETTERS (AND MORE)

Apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master.
—Hemingway

Lively for learning penmanship control and trend of prose (as literary nose), to know the places those volumes-in-progress (dupe) enwombs; reading of past, exhumes existential tay, hit-or-miss. A paining reminisce, that in many ways can hairpin decisions as all-in/all-out.

Apprentices devout will craft, however: stout. Yet, made "cookie-cutter" Band-Aid, if not with underlaid calculation, and follow-through. In this craft of can-do, master between-the-line creeper, is a rare sale splasher. "Join such rank only without crutch, without muss, or so much as one retouch!" Really? None? Each sentence a hard-won, fresh breath, in the face of our death....
TO MY EX-LOVING LIFE

I remember you those years back,
ambitions you once had,
that energy, pent up
—accessibly sad.

Aspiring for greatness,
pulled back by pretense,
those around you—dissemblers for sad.
You we them

of held trap with falsity,
down for attainment—
we you,
the glue that held us to be

that wanting enchantment achieved.
fire of spirit
to bind we,
to a moment of eternity.

Hot breath of life, so
impromptu for self, in
a time frozen
eerie in spite.

A rakish unrivaled:
you're me, many years now past.
PERPLEXITY

Someone very close
(the closest of all)
once told me:

    Love, is the most beautiful thing
    in the world,
    never give up on it.

I wanted to agree;
if only, I'd been free....

It was just not meant to be,
is what we're taught to believe.
But why is it to each of us,
it's all about me, me,
me? It's not until the end,
that we finally can see.
POSTAGE

Got up in desire this morning
for voices new; or voices old
a letter (or two)
to push away pain, oscillating
of failed soul, to state sold

The bringer of mail came
"door" to "door"
"person" to "person"
results always the same
for each so poor

Waiting here,
days go by
until the last—of few—arrives,
each life tried by fear:
an outcast spirit, left to lonely fly

Endearment to forlorn,
once no one left that tries,
and all hope dies;
none left but scorn
with each letter, through vindictive eyes

A letter (or two)
"person" to "person"
just holding on,
until the last—of few—arrives,
and all hope dies
WHAT IF?

What if you knew you'd be my last?
Would it be different?

Would it be better unasked?
What if you knew you'd be my last?

We'd love anew, recast?
Would you turn, walk away, self-content?

What if you knew you'd be my last?
Would it be different?
PART 4

Carpe diem quam minimum credula postero
"Seize the day and place no trust in tomorrow"
AND THEN it all started—or ended—when Westlow High's history guru Mr. Galloway asked Alice to meet him after class, she knew to expect trouble, so it was no surprise that, upon arrival, something wasn't quite right—every window had its shade down, and closed. Not exactly unusual for most buildings in Gothenburg, or the "Burg," as they all called it; but the school was usually not all shut up, nervous and sanatorium-like with something to hide.

Maybe it was the heat, she thought, it was hot, and the closed shades certainly helped. But it wasn't the heat; her moment of expected surrender had arrived, and it would be in everyone's best interest no to resist.

AND THEN her suspicions were justified when Galloway looked to her, she knew that look. She seen it every time her mom's Scottish terrier locked his two beady eyes, fixated, on the neighbor pug's third. It was a sickness of Nature, a biological thirst, an epidemic with her its cure. Or, at least, that's how the infected wish to make people think.
AND THEN when Galloway spoke, all she heard was the panting of a heated, eye-ball ing little Scottish terrier, trapped in a man's body.

AND THEN after a ten-minute perditional stretch of time, subjected to Galloway's usual empty and irrelevant chatter, with sly comments of her drug use scattered within, he did it: the little deviant terrier rubbed his wagging lipstick against her under the ruse of "dropped" papers from his desk. Her thin-skinned Aeropostale cargos offering practically no blockage to his trespass. Her stomach souring at the thought of what possible fantasy he'd gratified with his little probing.

AND THEN after she'd told him she needed to be on her way, he really did look like her mom's terrier—the day he'd felt the pinch of the vet's blue-ball shears.

AND THEN when she made the parking lot, there was Autumn in Alice's car, as usual, alone with figments of her love-deprived mind. "That was quick," Autumn announced, smirking with knowledge of the after-class stay. Alice just looked at her, giving her the usual change-the-subject—or-I-kick-you-in-the-ovaries stare she was told she did so well she must've been born with it. Autumn knew the deal: don't comply; don't ride!

AND THEN on the way to Autumn's trailer, all the way in the far reaches of Travel-land Park (the Burg's biggest trailer gathering in the state since the fall of Anderson)—her car was forced to grind undercarriage with the huge concrete speed-bump any self-respecting car loathed to straddle. The one Autumn adeptly called: Galloway's lap.

Alice could almost see it—why a girl might lose hope, or even, flip a crazy switch like Jaimee Spencer, who now resided within the old sanatorium ... safe from the voices, and the "Vamps," she claimed to be lurking within the Burg's shadows, and even its Fog.
Especially the Fog.

Autumn was no Jainee, but still Alice had worry, the girl had it rough, to say the least: A mother that ran her father off while she and Alice were both still toddling around. Her mother, the great self-proclaimed "swinger," of Travel-land Park. Autumn's childhood trips to out-of-town sitters while another of her siblings-to-be got scraped out of her mother's rancid womb; each from a different so-called "paramour," and of a different make. Her mother's boyfriend/girlfriend cycle running faster than Autumn's Tampax could sneeze.

"I'm doin' it for my little girl," her mother would claim, "I date so much because I wanta find 'r a daddy."

Mother inadvertently training daughter.

Daughter following mom's headboard notches, searching for dad.

AND THEN Alice watched while Autumn disappeared with a wave, a smile, and a trail of cigarette smog.

AND THEN Alice is at Connor Collin's Pizzeria waiting for fresh Shirley Bread, diet aside, when she noticed Tomika Mason slip her big brown, jean-eating buns into the walk-in cooler in quest for some much needed supply, garlic butter perhaps. Tomika, Alice mused, probably never really slopped into (or out of) anything, unnoticed in her life. Though, the weight didn't really seem to fit her frame.

AND THEN suddenly Alice remembers that Tomika hadn't always been quite so robust, in fact, not until after she had taken one of the special "advanced" classes of Galloway's, two years prior.

That was when Tomika seemed to suddenly balloon out.

It was also the time she conformed to the Burg's Goth-Wiccan-Vamp culture, joining the very coven that had cast out Jainee Spencer.

Tomika's not-so-bemused silent look, answered Alice's suspicions. Confessions were all over town, visible to those that looked, buried in the shallow graves of people's projected-public-selves. Just how many? Alice figured she probably didn't really want to know, and even decided to backpedal her assumptions slightly, and keep it friendly,
unassuming attitude to the girl miscast—not to mark her, or put her in an exposed place. The last thing Alice needed was some curse cast upon her.

AND THEN curiosity sends Alice to see what she considered to be an elephant that dreamed of being a mouse (A lot of mice have the dream of being an elephant, it's the Capitalist's way, but, few, if any, elephants wish openly to be mice, and those that did usually found themselves without pack or herd.).

The dreamer—Alicia "Andy" Moss—lived in Earl's Glenn, a high end subdivision in, and around, Donehue Gold Course, the abode of Westlow envy. Entering the gate, with its "top secret" code of an ingenious 1-2-3-4, Alice wondered if by any chance that Andy had ever stayed, after.

AND THEN when Alice was kindly told to leave, she had a better understanding of just how much loose dirt covered the town.

AND THEN as she thought of the Burg's occult (e.g., black magick; superstitions; ancient curses; evil spirits in the Fog), unearthly, inhuman things said to exist, maybe to give credence or blame—but there was nothing preternatural about Westlow High, or its little terrier, only his sick mind haunted the halls.

AND THEN over the next few months: there was polyamorous Judy; there was Amber; there was the sapphicly-confused Monica and Sera; there was Caitlin; there was even the exchange student Majena Hernandez from Andes in Cuba, whose family moved abruptly to Southern California a short time after her turn with Westlow's little after-hours terrier.

AND THEN there was, out of his apparent fear of the large, and enraged relatives of the Hernandezas, a time of abstemiousness and solitude; though Alice and the others still eyes the sniffing little mongrel suspiciously, knowingly—taking meticulous note. He still
dared to frequent student locales, strutting, looking for a spot to mark anew—his own—one leg ready to raise at a panty's notice.

Going to Timberpond?

Avoid the house with the dilapidated "vintage" Firebird, the one with the oddly tinted windows, and "Carrie" vanity tag. His home an embuscade of spun web, in wait of amenable teens for his venomous thirst. No words given; only gloom—silent foreboding gloom—as he wait in reliance of the Westlow High moral standard to serve him once again. Weekend party-pad with his pot and kegs, galore.

Thirst for thirst; tit for tat.
Said the spider to the baby fly.
All leverage for his overtures.

AND THEN the familiar titillating tug, a new potential exploit presenting herself in the form of a new introvert student—her submission portently imminent. The pheremones of puberty abloom too strong for his unnatural celibacy.

AND THEN the most painfully imagined looks of exhortation.

AND THEN as months past, well into the second semester; the existential quantifier finally presented itself in the form of a slowly swelling Westlow High tummy—the Belly of Shame. Not a sole pupil judged the toll of Rachel Waters waddling her way down halls.

AND THEN there was the funeral ... the surprise that was not all that surprising—tragic—sad—but not a total shocker, as Michael and Jessie Waters cut the Dollar-General-nylon-rope suspending their baby girl's ripened, premaritally-preeclamptic body.

AND THEN the inquiry of police detectives, a procedural courtesy, not much more: "suicidal tendency apparent." The basic go-to psychosocial expectation—girl moves to town, girl meets boy, girl dispatches unwanted pregnancy.

They'd seen it before, and would again.
AND THEN Galloway begins to preen his old forgotten THC-induced smile, all forebearance lost. A slave, succumbing to his sickness.

AND THEN Patricia Wilderbea goes missing. Posters are hung about, TV and radio coverage incites public eye, but in all the wrong directions. A mother's boyfriend/paramour/fiancé-with-wife is questioned with the usual molester expectations, alleged—then exonerated by erectile dysfunction; lack of evidence; and police stupidity driving rumors rampant via the societal steroid known as: THE GOTHENBURG INDEPENDENT newspaper.

AND THEN at Mullways (the restaurant at the end of the Burg's boundary) a loquacious couple reading an article catches the eye of a burger-eating Alice. The heading on their small device's screen both discernible and jaw dropping: CHILD MOLESTER TEACHER FIGHTING EXTRADITION AND CHARGES!

She immediately checked her phone's browser. It seemed, by journalistic enlightenment that Galloway had been arrested in Key Largo with a new young "paramour" (seeing the word of topic for her last psychology essay, Alice cringed at its use—paramour—the go-to word made fashionable by the local Solicitor in place of mistress, skank, cheater, whore, and all around easy lay, in an attempt to somehow entitle the "other woman/man" with, what, honor? His new replacement wife however was no paramour at all, a mere child of fifteen; and the Solicitor refers to her through news as Galloway's paramour—as if the word was some legally accepted blanket term for objects of sexual indecency.).

Florida authorities, unlike South Carolina, made an arrest of the Russian fingered teacher, intending to make another example. Thus, forcing the Burg's "authorities" to search the Galloway home in Timberpond subdivision, finding its basement to have a hidden child-porn cache, and the old "classic" car to contain an array of video cameras behind its dark windows, pointing at neighboring yards and windows, in wait of potentials.
AND THEN indiscretion after indiscretion slowly exposed itself as each young victim grew a tongue that Galloway had not come to fully know or expect, each adding to the Pile of Extent to show the saddled gratifications of Galloway's quests.

The Solicitor's soap opera dominates the news.
Westlow Classes go on.

AND THEN Galloway's class has a new teacher, this time female. Photos of Rachel Waters and Patricia Wilderbea cover school halls, roadside billboards, and still, classes go on.

AND THEN Alice's procrastinatory habits have her behind on studies. She turns to the net for inspiration—they're no closer to finding Patricia Wilderbea, but more importantly, and horrific, Galloway was out on bond, he had then violated that bond, and a man-perv-hunt ensued.

AND THEN Alice can't escape the face of Galloway, his old becheostered mug everywhere she turned. She found him at the Burg's library—as usual—and at the stores, the mall, EVERYWHERE. She even found him in a gas station ladies room by the highway: his image pasted up on the mirror with his beady-little-eyes making it hard for her to pee.

AND THEN a cop with a face like a Chester white pig came to the school, snorting as a guest during Sexual Education Awareness (Galloway's Roman hands being the overriding topic.).
Galloway takes over the school news, and guys even change doing the "doggie" to doing the "Galloway Gallop." Girls are not amused.

AND THEN the child-friend of Galloway recovered upon his Florida arrest is found to posses a ring once gifted from Eric Wilderbea, to his now-believed-to-be-dead daughter.

AND THEN with more months gone, and with Fall upon the Burg,
Fog and tornadic warning sirens corrosively filled the airways. Another Westlow year well past started, as old postings fade, billboards get vandalized, and Capitalism once again reclaims.

The Burg turns its head in prep of Fall Fog, and Fateful fortune befalls Alice: she finds Galloway, one town away, in the old ruins of Anderson, teaching an adult education class. There's a fuzzy molester's style goatee, and lots of equally fuzzed hair in a girl-style ponytail, but Alice knows it's him.

She'd never mistake the odd peculiarities of his mannerisms. They'd seemed to her even more apparent in his fall, unsure of himself, unbalanced with a sick failure, consumed by not guilt, but shame.

Shame that he'd been caught; not of what he'd done.
Exposed, unemployable as a teacher.
Unwanted as a human.

AND THEN Galloway pulls to the side of an empty highway of the Burg's outskirts, right where he'd been instructed ... excited for an upcoming fix, inappropriately planned by his Lolita-dreamgirl.

AND THEN when he casts his gaze upon Alice's golden locks: she sported a complete outfit of pedophilic-cosplay befitting to her name; a blue and white dress, with child's pinafore, and a small stuffed white bunny in tow for good measure.

AND THEN as he rounded to help her in, he knelt to playfully examine a comically large clock hung upon one of her American Apparel knee-socks, he was met with sudden pain and hot pressure in his head, followed with wetness and dizzy confusion.

Or, at least, this is what Alice figured as she tossed the bloody hammer-hiding bunny on the ground beside him.

AND THEN as the dirt from Alice's shovel covered all but his golden showered face, she paused, the spade's shaft firmly in hand, and her thoughts adrift. She thought of when he'd fictitiously dropped
his papers. He'd taken what he wanted without asking, insulting her intelligence, assuming she'd comply. Well, that was fine with her, she assumed he'd like to be covered up before the predicted tornado hit.

Thankfully she had less work to do with Donehue Gold Course's fairways being expanded, meaning construction of more signature yellow—golden—bricked cartways, or whatever they called them. New construction trails led her winding behind a clubhouse where gold bricks were stacked in wait of the prepped path ahead of them. It was brilliant, workers would continue their brickwork atop of hers. No golfer would ever dream of the secret beneath the Wizard's feet. The secret she had drug across the putting green (she knew a few golf terms, there were signs), using a Club Car shaped like a pink Cadillac.

She'd considered the pond, even one of the sand traps, but the irony of a yellow-bricked road was too much to resist. Not to mention convenient, the dirt already loose, and the storm out to wash away trace evidence—it was brilliant. Galloway's SUV by the highway would be discovered of course, but not many, if anyone would care. Most she knew would give her a metal!

**AND THEN** movement to the right of her peripheral vision caused her heart to feel as if it had literally stopped. All of the Burg's superstitions were taking a toll on her—it was just a dog, it had to be.

**AND THEN** she wasn't alone: a somehow sanatorium-less Jainee Spencer stood watching, smiling, like some horrid specter.
PART 5

... how alien, alas, are the streets of the city of grief.

—Rainer Maria Rilke
"The Tenth Elegy"
(1923)
The first thing I had to decide in this book's initial infancy, was to whom, if anyone, I wrote: Did I write for myself? My children? The masses? Or something, cynical?

Most of us could care less of what others think, or, at least, that's what we tell ourselves—especially as Americans. The truth, however, is that image—now dubbed "branding"—is EVERYTHING to our society. (Just check out any recent episode of *7th Heaven*, or *Big Brother*.) This sudden burst of immorality and narcissism isn't new, it is the product of decades spent tearing down structure, in dystopian fear, all in the name of freedom and free will; or so we think, and are led to believe.

Human behavior is a funny, elusive thing, at times—we can claim individuality—but with a psychodynamic perspective, we see biological contradictions to "free will." Within, lying existential, and humanistic turmoil, that not even the neo-Freudians can essay away: An eclectic approach, most likely being the wisest, and only choice.

I don't pretend to understand others, it is only my own actions to which I can stake claim at comprehension, and even then—with very little clarity. It's said that our actions, are the mirror in which our true selves reflect, but is it merely what we do that truly defines us? Or is there much more to it than that? One option for me to research this, was to peruse my unconscious planes by allowing an uninhibited venue of expression, writing. But to fully exercise those inner tumults, they'd need full reign upon my pages—as you've now seen in this collection, which is the true self—psychoanalytical essay, in whole.
Whether or not I have a "disorder," remains to be seen. Either way, the process has been very therapeutic, illuminating, and transforming. In my study of psychology, I have realized that on numerous occasions in my life, I have exhibited all the symptoms of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), a massive depressive episode, moments of suicidal tendency, and even Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD). There isn't any hope of help for me, especially treatment, not now, not here. But if I ever get out of prison:

There has been a substantial progression in the treatment of psychological disorders over time. Importantly, this has included a growing appreciation of the afflicted individual and attention to individual well-being, rather than simply treating people with mental disorders as cursed, or deserving of punishment, casting out, or seclusion.¹

Reading this, "attention to individual well-being," however, is far from seeing it in practice. Much of South Carolina authority still practices the punitive approach: Ignoring mental issues, or mitigating circumstance—handing out punishments equally to drug addict, crazy, commoner, and scholar alike. No mercy, understanding, and in most cases, such as mine, no actual investigation. This antiquated approach—from the Middle Ages—has its roots in religion, not morality. Many South Carolina cops, "solicitors," and judges, still openly believe that evil spirits or demons drive people to crime; and that "discipline or destruction [of the offender, is] in order to protect the rest of the community."¹ Luckily for society, change can be seen on the horizon, as science & morality infiltrate closed doors of government, exposing shifty ethics.

There was jury tampering in my trial, the judge refused the motion for mistrial, and both he, and the lower courts of S.C., have attempted to belittle the effect the tampering had on jurors. This all is, of course to simply avoid spending money on a Constitutionally adherent trial, in which they fear losing—because the truth they've hidden will come out, embarrassing the officers and attorneys. Greed, and corruption run the show—but maybe this S.C. Supreme Court will correct the case without Federal intervention, and make an example of the county and
its blatant incompetence. (My cruel and unusual sentence of life, without
parole, is even a joke—with a number of 999 years that some imbecile
came up with as paying religious homage to their beloved 666! Something
belonging more in 1814, than 2014....)

I have an IQ not accurately gauged by standard tests, I've taken
tests putting me in the 160s, and some north of 180—wherin "abnormal
behavior," is actually the norm. My peculiar point of view (an ability
to see things in ways 99 percent of those surrounding me, do not), has
always caused me problems. Especially growing up in an uberreligious
community set on converting, or condemning. My thoughts even differing
from those of many in my own family—especially on my biological father's
side, who measure integrity in Sunday church visits—my mind an outcast
in a world of split seas, and an omnipotent eye! My only refuge the
digitized pixels of Mario; my moral compass found within secondhand
pages of Marvel, and reruns of Batman pirated from the local cable com-
pany; and my love, found in boyish dreams of girls I could never have.

I was ostracized for believing Earth was not the only planet of
its kind, for believing evolution, physics, and that Michael Jackson
was a fucking pedo. It wasn't until my study of serious science, and
literature, that I found I was not alone, that I was not crazy, that
there are others like me in the world who see through the veil. Whether
by psychic determinism, unconscious motivations, childhood experiences,
societal conditioning, or a combination of all—we exist. To much dismay
of the blind sheep, like those that put me here, we exist. My psycho-
analytical approach, via poetry and prose, is to reveal unconscious
thoughts, emotions, and motives that influenced my life; a method in
which seems to have paid off. Exposing latent content by numerous
Freudian slips (A verbal, but in this case—written—mistake, a mental
burp; that is thought to express an unconscious emotion, belief, or
thought.). It's good to see that today, more planets potentially like
Earth are out in every direction, as far as the eye can see; that the
genome research proves evolution; physics continues to gain foot; and
of course everyone knows the skeletons found in Jackson's closet weren't
very tall. How is it the joke goes? He died of food poisoning—because
the autopsy discovered he'd consumed a six-year-old wiener.... Time,
doesn't really heal wounds, it just ... numbs them; but time does give
truth time to unravel bindings that may be hindering it. Like life; truth finds a way.

I'm not angry, nor do I hate or blame—I'm simply trying to understand, and move on to better things. Though, readers of this collection should keep in mind that "anger," like all other human emotion (e.g., love, fear, sadness, anxiety, happiness, etc.) has reason, and without it, we are imbalanced.

And what I mean by that, is that our balance turns in upon itself, in not just an unbalance, but a self-consumption. Anger, is needed:

Biologically, when people are aroused to some degree of anger and let off steam, their heart rate, blood pressure, and testosterone level all increase. That might suggest that anger freaks us out and harms us. But in fact, levels of the stress hormone cortisol drop, suggesting that anger helps people calm down and get ready to address a problem—not run from it.2

The go-to prognosis is usually, "anger management" issues, but without anger: Where would we be? Docile puppets of Big Brother? Would our ancestors had survived without anger? You ask, "What of those with anger in access?" Yoda put it best: "Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering." This suffering is apparent—I think—in every line of this collection. The answer being, that anger in access causes us to punish ourselves more than any outside entity ever could, even that omnipotent eye. Here's another poem of mine, as prime example of such imbalanced suffering, entitled "No Third in Sight":

Life is so screwy and wild
I've loved and hurt so many.
Been hurt—by those defiled.

I try to marry the pizza girl
a/k/a "that chick,"
rebel princess, bi, angel, Goth unfurl.

But she doesn't really want me.
She said yes,
but took it back; before turning to flee.

I didn't mean what I said,
all those mean things.
I was hurt—confused. Alone in my head.

She's better off I'm sure.
I've been married already,
who would want to take divorce, insured?

Still, it's a nice dream:
The thought of being loved,
no matter how briefly, or painfully mean.

Like the idiot Romeo; trusting and esteemed.
Self-destroyed life
the girl gone: leaving Romeo to bleed.

The poems say so much more, by saying so much less. It's something I find in good poetry, and hold a high respect for those who can create immense messages in such constrained confines.

If prison has done anything—it has awoke me!
Suffering shaped me.

... a man who was good-natured and unassuming was immediately subjected to humiliation.³

If I ever do make it out of this place, the me that will be, will not be the me that was—that old me is dead. Both the good parts and the bad, because who I am now is someone I may have had the potential to be; but would not have ever become because of my societal blindness. I was content to work a mediocre middle-class job as a General Manager to various restaurants ... now that wouldn't be good enough for me. I'll forever now need, something of strong intellectual substance, my creation of CWI would most likely stem into my new life free, and I
would continue it from the outside world. I'd create the pizzeria I've always wanted: Connor Collin's Pizza (or Pizzeria). I know, I'd still teach, I enjoy teaching—seeing students I helped get their GED is a great feeling.

I can only imagine the things I could accomplish now.

Johnny E. Mahaffey
June 19, 2014

References


So we keep asking, over and over,
Until a handful of earth
Stops our mouths—
But is that an answer?

---Heinrich Heine,
"Lazarus" (1854)
Comments and Endnotes

P. 13, In My Shoes (Correctly): Won a contest by the S.C. Department of Education, and was published in their 2014 anthology.

P. 15, The Pens of When: (01.09.14) Troilset.

P. 17, Opalescence: (07.13.14) A pruned poem.

P. 18, Five Times Charmed: (02.22.11) Deminitive poetry.

P. 20, Jenmarla: (03.22.11) Octava rima.

P. 21, Terrestrial: (06.01.14) The title means, Earthy.

P. 23, Undead Tax-shelved: (02.29.14) Lai.

P. 24, Conditioned Megastar: I call this style a, "Yin Yang Enjambement."

P. 25, Nicleboys by the Dozen: (01.13.11) Sonnet, Misspelling is intentional.

P. 27, Brokengate: Used in my play, "The Spider's Requiem."

P. 28, Eyes Wider Open: (01.17.11) Villanelle.

P. 29, Sequels: (12.02.10)

P. 30, Life Classifieds #323863: (Made sometime in 2010)

P. 31, Maya: (02.27.14) Rondeau.

P. 32, Elise: (08.24.10) Modern sonnet sequence.

P. 33, Skyfall: (07.07.09) Modified mnemonic poem, with message in CAPS: "LOST LOVE CAN BEAK ANY HEART OF ITS TRUST"

P. 35, It's Name Was "It": (02.20.11) Deminitive poetry.

P. 36, Idle Heads: (01.17.11)

P. 37, Jaime Street: (08.09.11)

P. 39, The Meretricious Faction: (01.17.11)
P. 40, Invisible Girl: Ballade. In tribute to Carmen Lopez (Masiela Lusha). Though, only in title; content is ... of another.
P. 41, The Pith: (04.26.13)
P. 42, Marital Halitosis: (01.22.11)
P. 44, Two Feral Souls: (03.25.12)
P. 45, Once Too Close: (06.08.08) Quatern.
P. 46, Drama–Queen: (07.13.10) Limerick.
P. 47, Courtroom Kabuki: Terza rima, with interlocked tercets.
P. 48, My Unga: (12.06.10)
P. 49, Perte: (07.13.11)
P. 51, A Flash of Life: A suicidal–modified sestina. 
P. 52, Fist Time In Prison: (Sometime in 2009) 
P. 54, A Horde of Hoarders: Based loosely on Roger McGough’s, "Hoarding." 
P. 58, Devoir: (07.13.11)
P. 59, A Ballade of Jen: (05.16.14) Ballade. 
P. 60, Boner: (12.08.10) Terza rima sonnet.
P. 61, Seventy–Seven to Zero–Nine: (12.21.09) Ghazal.
P. 62, Lost Forest of Venus: '80s style bush, a lost art! 
P. 63, Facilitation of the Way: A modern sonnet sequence. 
P. 64, Refuge: (12.25.13) Found poem from my story, "Susie In Extremis." 
P. 65, Millgate: (08.10.11)
P. 67, To My Ex–Loving Life: Pantoum. 
P. 68, Perplexity: (04.30.09)
P. 69, Postage: (04.30.09) I call this a, "Domestic Quad-cam," poem.
Acknowledgments

I should first thank the ignorance and corruption, that permeated prosecutorial ranks of the county that tasked itself with the initial "handling" of my case; if they'd been people of integrity, this collection would not be.

To each "ex," as well, too many to name: From each, a lesson, and gift of inspiration via our failures. Love is said to be, "An alliance of friendship and animalism." (Charles Colton) I'm not sure of the former, but to the latter, I can certainly attest!

I thank my kids that continue to give me purpose, and my family; especially my dad, Jeff, whose belief and support has helped to build the foundation in which my writing career stands.

My friends, for remembering me....

To MIT, and the Between the Bars team: for their kind understanding, and humane treatment of prisoners as fellow humans. To the staff of Poets & Writers magazine (pw.org), for issues that submerge me so deeply in the poetic (writing) world. To all the editors who treat me as a writer; and each of the literary journals out there for continually creating venues for knowledge that would be otherwise lost to us (e.g., The Sun, The Connecticut River Review, etc.).

To those within the South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC), who choose to act honorably, rather than vindictively. To the wardens and staff, who have supported my literary endeavors, and the creation of The Correctional Writer's Initiative (CWI).

To Brother: The SX4000 typewriter? Nice.
J.E. MAHAFFEY

Johnny E. Mahaffey, is an American citizen currently held prisoner in South Carolina, since August of 2006, as he humbly awaits a fair and impartial trial.

A father of two sons & three daughters.
Divorced.

He holds a diploma in creative writing, graduated valedictorian, and works in Education: teaching GED/high school. He is the founder of The Correctional Writer's Initiative (CWI)—a creative writing class/workshop for gifted prisoners, launched in the hopes of helping decrease recidivistic tendencies in students, by offering a positive route of self-expression.

More on the author can be found on his MIT hosted blog, that is created legally via the United States Post Office, and a scanner at MIT used to post his manually typed works:

http://betweenthebars.org/blogs/316/

A comment/blurb page has been created—dated August 16, 2014—for the readers of "No Air," and you are urged by the author’s family to visit the page, to give opinion, no matter how many years have passed since publication.