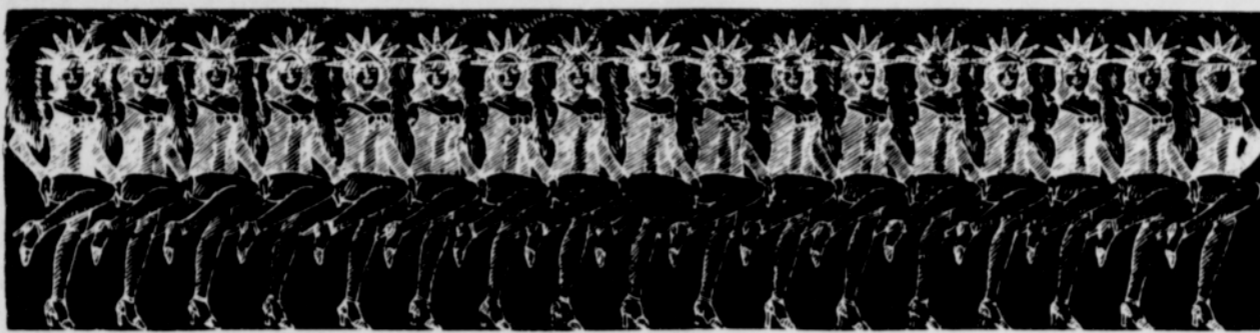


AMERICAN



GRAFFITTI

NOTES ON 'KRAPP'S LAST TAPE' AND 'THE RAILROAD WOMEN'

PERFORMED AT THE WHALE'S TALE IN NEWPORT, OREGON, DECEMBER 2, 1982

by Michael Marsh

Michael Marsh, Newport poet, writer, and an editor of The Gilmore Gazette, has made good his threat to write a review of the Kloochy Theater's production of two one-act plays, "Krapp's Last Tape" by Samuel Beckett, and "The Railroad Women" by Helen Ratcliffe. Helen Patti, founder of the theater group in Cannon Beach and producer of the plays, costarred with Isa Hessel and Annie Tracy in "Railroad Women," and Michael Paul McCusker was "Krapp." Pat Egan-Police was director. The production was on tour last week when it played in Newport at the Whale's Tale Restaurant, where Mr. Marsh wrote his review.

The Whale's Tale is crowded, almost too crowded for comfort, and at times like this I wish J. wouldn't carry her .357-magnum in her purse. It's too much of a piece and too bulky for any kind of inside work. Have to give the cops credit for adopting the .38 snub-nose way back when.

There's a raised area in one corner with furniture/props, and now Michael McCusker. McCusker begins messing around, fiddling, as if he was undecided when to begin. Eating a banana and throwing the peel on the floor, picking it up, fumbling with a desk, and on. He picks up a stenographer's notepad and fumbles with it as only a journalist without a pen will do.

McCusker as Krapp (or as McCusker) begins something of a disgruntled singular monologue, somewhat short: he fumbles again (fumbling with a reel-to-reel tape recorder, circa 1950s), and he and the audience begin to listen to a tape.

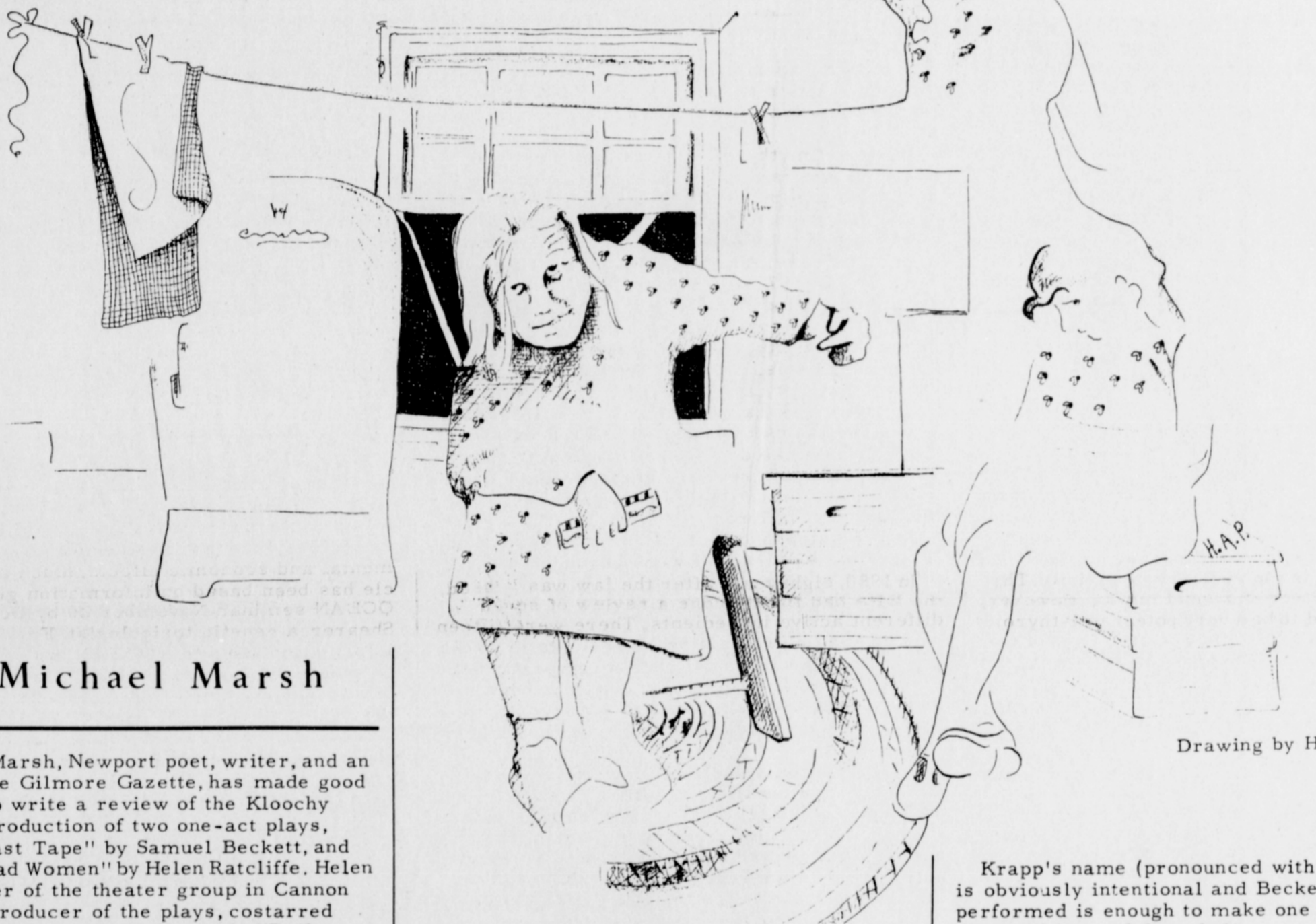
"Mother at rest at last," says McCusker's recorded voice. Beckett by way of Camus. "The black ball. . ." the tape continues and Beckett as unreasoning as he is, takes the set, except McCusker can't help ad-libbing ("Should have got a cassette."), not uncommon for writers masquerading as actors.

Krapp's name (pronounced with a short 'a') is obviously intentional and Beckett "live" performed is enough to make one regret a diseased liver. I don't believe anyone has bothered to accuse Beckett of being entertaining.

McCusker's role as an actor is more interesting than the character he plays, although he seems quite comfortable in the role of Krapp.

Krapp finishes and exits while I'm scribbling notes. I've missed the end. Having read Beckett I don't feel as if I've been denied much. A short break and rearrangement of scenery while I write in my notes such things as "Working on nothing important now" and "just deal with the time creeping along like cigar smoke across a tabletop", and I know I'm in trouble. "Railroad Women" is excellent and I wonder why women hate their daughters, is it so simple that they see themselves as twenty years younger? Incredibly funny lines (about a man with warts, salt and pepper shakers, etc.) are spoken with uncommon ease.

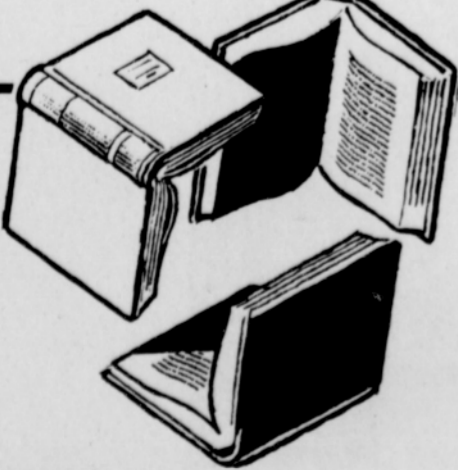
J. tells me later that she was entertained, had not expected to be, and that the players were surprisingly good. She tells me, say something good about those girls. — Girls! J. shows her age at the oddest times.



Drawing by Helen Patti



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