

J.T.

J.T.
she's got
a mouth
like a
Chicago
cabbie and
a .357
magnum that
can put
a hole
through a
Cadillac
engine block
or
with one
shot cut
a mugger
in two
sending both
pieces to
that great
central park
in the sky.

TWO SUICIDES

And one
didn't work.
And she had
to go home.
And explain
to her mother
how it was
all a mistake.
And she didn't want
to talk about it.
And would never
do it again.

She's been
married
4 times,
worked as
a fry cook
a dinner cook,
and among
other things,
a janitor.
And she
drives her
Jap import
like it has
18 wheels.

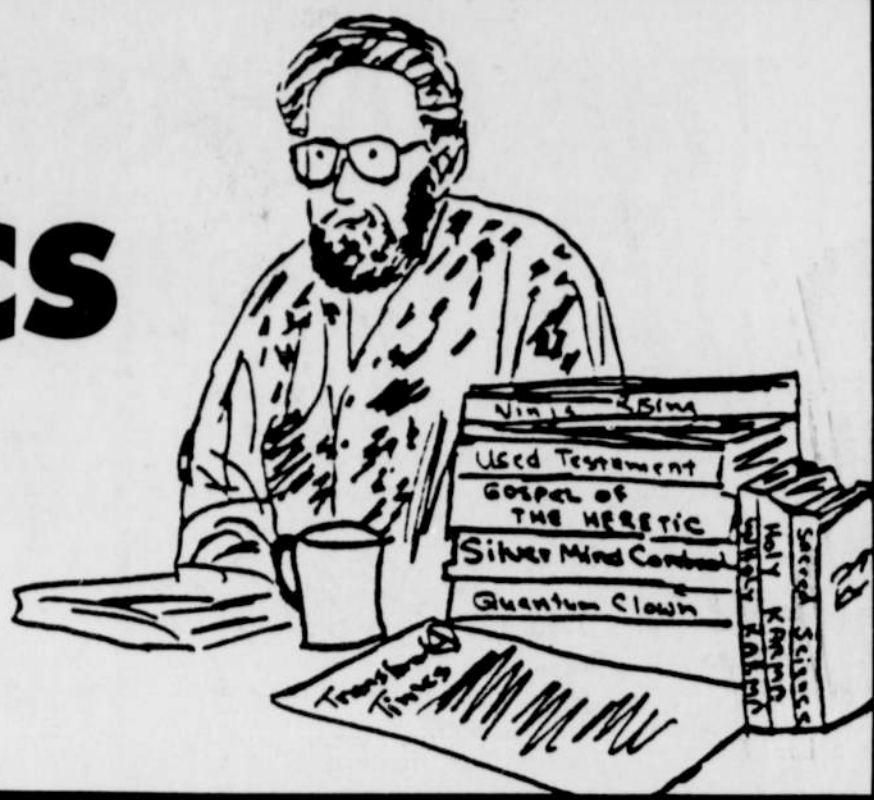
One night
at Pasta Don's
over a
glass of
dry red
wine, she
told me
with the
biggest smile
in the world,
"It's all
just like
cleaning toilets
for a living,
the only
difference
is you
don't get
paid by
the hour."

There are
mornings when
I wake up
feeling like
that forgotten
cup of coffee
left over night
beside the
typewriter,
cold
black
evil
nasty
enough to gag
an exorcist.
A soaked
cigarette butt
somewhere under
the surface,
you don't know
it's there
until the
first swallow.

~from 'GILMORE HOTEL'

THE HERETICS PAGE

by Michael Marsh



COLUMN LOGO, TRANSFORMATION TIMES (1991)

SARDONICUS RISING

Michael Marsh, poet and literary warlord, has been dead ten years May 2001, a full decade that has crossed into a new century/millennium in which he is absent.

He was a large and shambling bear of a man with a bearded moon face. He wore black-rimmed glasses and was seldom dressed in anything but frisco jeans, a blue or gray workshirt, and a black knit watchcap over his long unkempt hair. In cold weather he put on an old oversized tweed coat of the type associated with Portland's Burnside district. His opinion of life was bleak but his humor was rich. He claimed his astrological sign was Sardonicus, with Phallus rising, and that he was born in Sado, Mass. He was rude to children, landlords and officials of any form. Childhood friends say he was an alcoholic from his first drink. He was also a pulp junky; a pretty good if generally bleak poet and a fair writer of prose. He was at his best as a critic of esoteric literature, which he contributed to equally esoteric publications as *Transformation Times* (he was "staff heretic"), *Lincoln Letters*, his own literary magazine *Axis* and the *North Coast Times Eagle*. He published books of his poetry, which included *Sand* and *Translations from the Gibberish*. He was one of a group of madly inspired writers and artists in Newport who created their own homemade comic strips, the *Gilmore Gazette* & *Bayfront Funnies*.

He laughed at me often. His large face beamed at me like an amused moon whenever he was able to deconstruct my latest pretensions. I used to laugh with him for entire days, and for at least four years I was with him a part of every day, most often in bars. We drank red wine, cheap burgundies or chiantis, rarely a pinot or cabernet. "Red Death!" he called it. He gave up alcohol when his liver failed. He survived a dozen more years, though he was in great pain for months. He was regarded as a medical miracle and did whatever his doctors instructed. Ironically the Red Death finally killed him. His large floppy heart fibrillated and his ruined liver was unable to metabolize medicines that might have saved him.

I expected we would be friends in old age. A foolish thought. I should know better than to expect long life for anyone. But I wished for him to be alive at my own end. I wanted him to send me off to nowhere with a wise-crack. One of his oldest friends said his business with us remains unfinished, that he is still somewhere. I continue to feel his presence. He leaps into my brain, growls something outrageous and lumbers off like a happy bear.

The selections of his work on these pages are not necessarily his best or what he might have chosen. He would probably be amused at my choice.

~MICHAEL McCUSKER

BECKETT/NOBEL

It happened when I was drunk
and living in a part of town
where the only writer
whose name was a household word
was Louis L'Amour
and waiting was something everyone did.
Because there wasn't much
else to do but drink and
watch television, listen
to the wife next door
yell at her old man
and wonder if any of the kids
would ever really have so much
as a chance in hell.

Beckett, Malone, Malloy, even Godot
could have been names
in an out-of-town phone book
and the Nobel prize
carried about as much weight
as a campaign promise.

They should give the next one
to Andy Warhol,
even though he's dead.
They have already proven
that it doesn't mean
anything
anyway.

IT MEDITATES YOU

Three books and advertisements this month.
An advertisement?

Yes, an advertisement. This ad was/is so entertaining,
it deserves some comment.

In the June 1989 issue of OMNI magazine on page 126,
in big, bold, black type running across the top of the page, it
reads: "28 Minutes To A Supercharged Brain." Then down the
left side, "Astounding new sound technology zaps stress while
unleashing your creative powers," and further, "Even more
amazing is how it turns fat people thin and office clerks into
mental millionaires."

Astounding and amazing, to say the least. This product
promises just about everything in the world for \$49 plus another
4 bucks for postage and handling.

Now similar ads may have appeared in magazines such
as Fate and New Age Journal and probably have even reached
into publications like Popular Mechanics, so what seems so
special about this product?

It's not the product, it's the ad.

Somewhere on the page, there is a little computer-like
graphic illustrating brainwaves. The explanation is standard.
Delta waves occur during sleep, *Theta* waves during deep
meditation or just prior to sleep, *Alpha* is described by the
advertiser as "catnapping" and *Beta* is "your daily rock & roll."

We are told that "Meditation causes certain changes
in the brain, which leads to heightened mental awareness,
improved IQ., memory creativity and perceptual ability." And

of course "the problem with traditional meditation is that it takes
15-20 years of concentrated effort to derive these benefits."
Whether the 15 to 20 years is an exaggeration or not is beside
the point because in the next paragraph we are told without a
doubt that, "The Brain Supercharger (tm) soundtrack delivers you
there instantly."

The process is simple. You drop the tape into your local
teenager's 'Walkman' and listen passively for 28 minutes and "It
meditates you."

Yes, you read that correctly, and just to make everyone
got it right, it did say:

"It meditates you."

Instant enlightenment should be the next step and that's
all right, the Heretic is an advocate of instant enlightenment. But
skepticism is a solid habit and refuses to budge even with the
wonders of High Tech jumping off the page.

Of course, it is possible that this product/tape will put the
listener into Theta and the accompanying subliminals will work
and the consumer will lose that extra 20 pounds, quit smoking
and erase stress from his/her life. Unfortunately, at the time of
this writing the Heretic does not have the \$53 to tune into either
Ultra-Weight Control or Ultra-Success Conditioning. But this
neither discourages or lessens the appreciation he has for the
kind of Madison Ave. advertising that creates such memorable
lines as: It Meditates You.

~TRANSFORMATION TIMES
(Sept. 1989)

MICHAEL MARSH, POET

The poem ended,
you lie in your grave
grey with exhaustion.
As in life, unkempt,
wrinkled as your brow
retaining wonder.

~BILL BERTIN



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THE TIGER IS DRUNK TONIGHT

:two fragments for Arthur Honeyman
poet, spastic, etc.

Spittle & carnage
Red Death in your beard.
The confined, coughing laughter
and always unnatural movement.
The jagged arm, clawing hand
pointing at all-in random.

Note, in guilt, their eyes seek
even mirrors for relief.
The world is not safe
from the moon-bitten fool.