

The New Criterion

Notebook

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I.M. Thomas M. Disch, 1940-2008

by [David Yezzi](#)

On the death of the author and poet.

Thomas M. Disch, the poet and award-winning science fiction writer, committed suicide on July 4; he was sixty-eight. I first heard his name in 1990, while misspending my youth as an actor in New York: Tom Disch was notorious. I showed up to a rehearsal at the now-defunct RAPP Arts Center on the Lower East Side (where I was cast in a forgettable bit of avant-gardism) the day that Tom made headlines for his play at the Center, *The Cardinal Detoxes*. The theater's landlord—the Roman Catholic Archdiocese, as it turned out—took exception to the play's savage skewering of the Church, and the Buildings Department attempted to chain the door.

Several years later, at *Parnassus: Poetry in Review*, I was introduced by a fellow editor, Ben Downing, to Tom's poem "At the Grave of Amy Clampitt" ("she is a monument/ At last among the multitude that she has visite ...

David Yezzi is the Executive Editor of The New Criterion.

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