
Ars Poetica, or Why I Love Jesus

{Michael Madonick}

Having heard, on the Friday night of Passover, that her grandson, Chris, got an acting job performing Jesus on the Eternal Word Television Network, my mother asks, “Why couldn’t he have gotten a decent job? Does he have to play that son-of-a-bitch from Bethlehem?”

It’s not the lilies
of the field, nor
the water walking
escapades, the miracles
countless and un-
conditional, nor
that soft-speak
manner of an
Aramaic NPR
announcer – in fact,
all that bullroar
makes me
ill. Nor is it
the humble start –
the barn, the
poverty, the god-damn
star so contrived
as to suggest, heaven-
forbid, Spielberg. Nor
the dim wise men
bearing their witless
gifts. Nor the torture

he endures, or his mother's
faithfulness. Nor the
wardrobe, however chic,
and Wisemulleresque.
Or the death he never
got right, coming
back and coming
back, or the complicated
call to Mary Magdalene –
though that, I must admit
compels me. It's something
else. Something *MY*
mother, deep behind
her Jewish fence, might
see to like. It's the young
Christ in the temple
scene, going postal
on the money-
lenders, saying in jive,
perhaps, *Git yo mofo*
asses out my Fatha's
house, take yo biz
to the curb where it
belong, hit the road
you honky gold bugs, yo
coin, yo bling-bling too.
And when they do not

listen, when they sit
there like this
is their set
and language is
nothing and the kid
is from outer space, he
leaves to lock and
load his cat-o-nine
tails, a fucking bull
whip with shards and
comes back flailing
the thing, a dust-
storm of granite, John
Cusack on speed, and
they run like Hell is snapping
all about their ears,
the whole time hearing,
*Git yo mofo asses from my
Father's crib, a house of word
is a house of meaning, git
yo asses from this house.*
That's what that son-
of-a-bitch from
Bethlehem did and he did it
the way his Father
did. Brought David
to the Philistines, Moses

to the Pharaoh, plague,
pestilence, death to the first-
born. Not Christ-like, not
the pansy on the mount,
but God-like. There's just
so much a god can take.
*Git out my Father's
house. His house is word
and word is meaning.*
And when he comes
back, if he comes
back, he'll come back
swinging at all our
temples, at all our
sets where word means
nothing, swinging his
cattails saying, *THIS is
the house of word, THIS
is a house of meaning*, and
being what
he always was, so
poorly dressed, so
BADLY Jewish,
so looking for a little
trouble.

That's why I love Jesus.