The New Criterion

Poems September 2017

# Happy Birthday, Herod

*by* *Aaron Poochigian*

Like always, Herod's birthday is today,
and I can hear the tambourine
*brioso*. I can hear the oboe skirl.
Like always, Salome
is getting down to business, veil by veil.
Her eyes are green;
all other eyes, obscene
ravishers of a writhing girl,
are piercing what is see-through anyway.

Like always, without fail,
something repulsive has been done:
under the Dead Sea sun
another sort of flesh
(that corpse I mean, the headless one)
is summoning the blowflies—fresh
gratification for a mother's grudge.

Like always, who am I to judge?
Indifferent to whatever moral thing
a servant might be carrying
around the party on a tray,
I stand with stiff voyeurs
devouring those curves of hers,
worshipping the elastic,
the orgastic,
Salome.

Forgive me: Herod's birthday is today.

**Aaron Poochigian** is the author of the verse novel *Mr. Either/Or* (Etruscan Press) and the poetry collection *Manhattanite* (Able Muse Press).

This article originally appeared in The New Criterion, Volume 36 Number 1 , on page 30
Copyright © 2024 The New Criterion | www.newcriterion.com
https://newcriterion.com/issues/2017/9/happy-birthday-herod