Short Story

Marriage for John the Baptist

The young artist rubbed his hands together in eager dismay as he paced his open jail cell. The night air was extremely cold and the young man had already been confined in the open enclosure for several hours. He had been arrested two days previous by the king's men when he put in his appearance at the court to seek the presence of the princess. No explanation was given for his arrest but the king had ordered that the young man be brought to the courtyard enclosure that night to await a message from the palace.

The form and content of that message and the young man's fate is the topic of our discussion. To say that the episode is only a dream would not be true and yet not entirely false.

We should explain also why the fate of the young artist is of such extreme importance. During the course of his brief career, the artist had achieved great popularity throughout the kingdom. As a matter of fact, it was only because of his immense fame that he was allowed admittance into the king's court to seek the hand of the beautiful princess, Herodias. Publicity had it that the princess had taken to him and that the two were soon to be married.

There is also another reason why the young man's fate is of importance to us. From the moment at which the young man had been taken prisoner, the stars had ceased to shine above the kingdom. A rumor had it that the king's astronomers were at a loss to explain the sudden erratic behavior of the heavenly bodies. What is more, the moon seemed to be having a grand time, cavorting in the sky wherever he pleased with only the sun to chase him away. The people were greatly awed by these strange happenings and were more than curious to learn if these events were in some way influenced by the fate of the handsome artist.

As we have said previously, the king promised to send a message, explaining the young man's fate, at midnight. The prisoner had been brought to the courtyard enclosure at dusk to await the king's edict. He was obviously very anxious to learn why the king had suddenly become averse to his presence in the court.

The midnight hour arrived with the moon winking a casual eye at the palace dome as if to signal someone within. Soon after, a figure clothed in white emerged from the courtyard door. It was Herodias herself who appeared at the edge of the shadows; the king's daughter was weeping silently as she ran across the snow-covered ground. Her bare feet plodded under the playful moon as she presented herself to the handsome artist and bowed to the ground before him. A crown of thorns was seen perched awkwardly on the back of her head. The young man was greatly taken aback by his lover's sudden appearance and could not find words to explain his confusion. Perhaps it was just as well; the princess appeared to be in no condition to listen to his love.

A huge gray wolf lurked at the gate as beautiful Herodias endeavored to explain the young man's fate amidst great sobs of agitation. It seemed the king had deemed it necessary for the betterment of the kingdom that Herodias marry a far off prince. The ugly prince had agreed to the union only on the condition that all present lovers of the beautiful princess be devoured.

Poor Herodias was distraught to say the least. She pleaded with the handsome artist to flee with her to the land of her mother where they could hide safely. But the young man refused to listen to her urgent pleas. He resolved that he would die, if he must, for the betterment of the kingdom.

Seeing that all of her protestations were in vain, the weeping Herodias left her lover in his confinement. The wolf padded silently behind her while dancing girls appeared to guard the gate. The prisoner rubbed his hands together thoughtfully as he watched the girls perform.

Hearing a faint murmur and then a sharp word of command at his back, the victim turned to see a huge gray wolf leaping at him with bared teeth. The phantom slashed the man's throat with horrible quickness and then devoured the body slowly, piece by piece, leaving only the skull remaining.

One by one the stars reappeared to twinkle at Herodias' bedside before fading at the rise of dawn. The moon suddenly left his designated place and dodged behind a cloud to hide his face.

The young man's skull was delivered the next month atop the cake at the marriage feast of Herodias and the far off prince. The people of the kingdom wept for the young artist for three days and then slowly forgot him.

—Jerry Van Tol

FEEDBACK

This column is designed for Dordt student response to short stories, poetry, music, photography; in fact all literary entries. Contrary to what many people think, creative writers need praise and criticism, and need it bad. Will you help them out with your reactions? Just slip what you have under the Cannon office door (S.U.B. basement) and label FEEDBACK.

—to Him and his henchmen

ELEVEN P.M.
That thin coat of shellac
Was all I had.
If you'd just held off
On the barrage,
I'd have a hard finish by now.

And even your chipping
Would be toothpicks
On marble.
I could have shot you then.

But hey,
Thanks!

Ag Vander Wal

Soli Deo Gloria

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Crucifixion (Corpus Hyperculous) by Salvador Dalí, the surrealist painter featured in this issue's "Art Profile." These profiles are now a regular part of CANNON, introducing us to the work of one artist each month.

"a marriage"
ripe apple,
cob of corn,
one, alone each; to form
a growing life staple,
needs will glue and grapple,
for this they too are born
ripe apple.

Wally van de Kleut
On CANNON and Community
by Syd Hielema

Let’s make a deal between the two of us. That is, between us, the Cannon, and you, Dordt College. We’ll set the terms and you sign in agreement. We’ll make you an offer that you can’t refuse. Sound fair?

First, our half of the bargain. Once a month we’ll publish our paper. On one hand we’ll try to encourage students and faculty to share their creative abilities with the entire Dordt community. On the other hand, we will review and reflect upon various movements and forces that are shaping the arts in particular, but also the world in general, today. In addition, we plan to run an art profile, a regular column which will introduce us to one artist, briefly discussing his work and its significance. Add it all together and you will find that your Cannon will usually contain poems, short stories, reviews, a little art history and various miscellania. That’s our half of the deal.

Now your half. Its not much that we ask. Simply this: read what we write, and if you ever react strongly to something we say, let us know. If a certain article made you furious, write us a nasty letter. If you have questions, ask them. We need to know about the poem that you liked quite a bit, even though the third and fourth lines didn’t seem to make any sense.

You’ve heard of community? Basically, that’s what we’re asking for. Cannon is a Dordt publication, not a Cannon staff publication. We as writers need your comments as readers if we want to grow and improve. We hope that you as readers will come to see Cannon as a worthwhile part of your academic life. Isn’t that what community is all about?

SEPARETE CUPBOARDS
Separate cupboards
Self-imposed.

We cared. . .
Not enough
To pluck at tangles.

OR was it fear?
Eyes reflecting each other,
I squirm when you scuttle
Pill bugs
Fleeing the sun.

We’ve little conviction
That cupboards have doors.
Ag Vander Wal

WINTER TROIUMS
The sleds shoot down
The Oak Grove slope.
Away from town
The sleds shoot down,
As climbers clown
And fathers lope.

The skater’s skill
Rings praise to God.
Long hours distill
The skater’s skill,
And years of drill
Make us applaud:
The skater’s skill
Rings praise to God.

Skiing is great—
If you know how.
I’ll not debate
Skiing is great; Yet, unlute,
I nurse my ow.
Skiing is great—
If you know how.

—Merle Meeter

Fine Arts News
Film Workshop Planned

Instead of planning a Fine Arts week as we have had in the past, the Fine Arts committee is scheduling four weekends for workshops in the various arts this year. The first such weekend will be Oct. 11 and 12, focusing on film and photography.

The film workshop will be a six to seven hour affair under the direction of Mr. Carl Vandermeulen, English teacher at Unity Christian High school. The workshop will be divided into two parts; first, a study of film techniques through the observation of films; secondly, actual shooting of a film. Students interested in film-making should keep this date open and perhaps begin to think about how they can contribute in such a workshop. If anyone has an 8 mm camera which he would be willing to lend out for this workshop, please contact Cannon.

Dordt student Wally Ouwens will lead the photography workshop on Friday afternoon. Students are encouraged to bring along photos that they have taken. For further information watch for notices in the Diamond and on hallway posters.
A Time to Reflect

by Syd Hielemo


Bumperstickers are really in these days, and back home one will occasionally spot one which reads, “Listen man, there’s hope!” That’s all. I thought it was kind of strange. It obviously presupposes that a lot of people have lost hope, and it seems to try to offer comfort. Somehow this bumpersticker struck me as being rather hopeless itself, for it gave no indication of why there should be hope. One can compare these words to Evil Knievel standing on the canyon’s edge and repeating, “One of those poorer nations gets ahold of the atom bomb. That’s all. I thought it was kind of strange. It might not expect to see: the threat of war. The uniqueness of this book, however, does not lie in Heilbroner’s analysis of the problems that we must face. There are so many books in circulation about overpopulation and underproductivity that we are numb to the problem. Even a gas shortage is passed off as a corporation conspiracy. No, the uniqueness of Prospect is Heilbroner’s analysis of man’s (you and me) capability to solve these problems. To discuss this problem properly, Heilbroner must first answer the question, “What is man?” The characteristic of human nature on which he bases most of his insights is “the perplexing readiness, even eagerness, with which authority is accepted by the vast majority.” (p. 106) This human trait is supported by historical evidence. Two notorious examples are, of course, Hitler’s takeover of Germany and the Chinese veneration of Mao-Tse-Tung. Even in America, however, the swearing in of President Ford was heralded with headlines such as “The Healing Begins” (Time magazine). It seems that in these days of crisis the government is replacing, for many people, our Creator God as that highest authority in which we trust. Recognizing the crucial role that our elected leaders must play, Heilbroner goes on to analyze their ability to overcome the crisis. Listen: “Passage through the gauntlet ahead may be possible only under governments capable of rallying obedience far more effectively than would be possible in a democratic setting.” (p. 110) In a democracy, policies are determined by the “national interest”, and the national interest is what the people want. Heilbroner realizes that a drastic lowering of our standard of living is essential to our survival (“without the payment of a fearful price...there is no hope.” p. 136) and this cutback is not part of the “national interest”. Though he does assert that times of crisis demand strong arm rule, he does not dare go one step further and declare that only a dictatorship can save us. One can hardly blame him. Every child in this country has had democracy pounded into him. Sometimes I wonder as to how Christian this democratic way is. Why should the majority be right? We have already seen that the actual national interest does not promote the true national interest, or what this nation really needs. Does this mean that democracy is on its deathbed? Heilbroner gives us no conclusive answer. Because this question has important implications for our future, I would like to invite some response for publication in subsequent issues of Cannon.

This review, however, is about The Human Prospect, not democracy, and we are approaching the closing pages of the book. Heilbroner’s finale is somewhat disappointing, for he doesn’t dare to end with pessimism that is so predominant in the rest of the book. His closing sentence: “We do not know with certainty that humanity will survive, but it is a comfort to know that there exists within us the element of fortitude and will from which the image of Atlas (the Greek god who bore the world on his shoulders) springs.” (p. 144) This sentence brings to mind another phrase which we discussed earlier: “Listen, man, there’s hope!”

WHAT WILL LOWERING OUR LIVING STANDARDS MEAN?

Even so, this review wasn’t written to expose Heilbroner’s weaknesses, but rather to share his insights. “Is there hope for man?” is a fundamental question which obviously affects each one of us. In trying to answer it, we should probably try to ask (and answer) questions such as the following: How can we pay this “fearful price” of lowering our own standard of living? Taking the entire world to be a community, what is our responsibility to poorer nations? Is there hope for democracy? How are we to interpret the following passage from the Sermon on the Mount:

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing. (Matt. 6:25)

Does that mean that one who worries about the future of man is betraying a lack of faith? Is one who does not worry irresponsible?

In case you haven’t guessed by now, I have more questions than answers. All of us, however, can be certain of one thing: that no matter how concerned we are about the things to come, and no matter how hard living becomes, we needn’t worry. The ultimate question before us is not “Is there hope for man?” Rather, our prayer should be, “Lord, come again, and reveal your splendour to a world that vainly looks for hope in itself.” Until then, the struggle is ours.
It's a place and high up thoughts of God's perfection—blueing, greening, (quiet green), dazed on Sunday morning Flow into the liquid gold of after sun; and melt before the altar I just let my mind go, let my soul go, Church is more than just a building to me. Reaching for the thing that I want most. .. melting white as snow together; like the rainbow in the sky; cooling crimson, going scarlet, with my tears of anger, pain, and love. (like daisies in the hands of God). I see the colors jumbling, thickening, turning purplish, (royal purple), blueing, greening, (quiet green), cooling crimson, going scarlet, melting white as snow together; like the rainbow in the sky; and high up thoughts of God's perfection—reaching for the thing that I want most. ..

And that's the only way I know to face the pain, cuz it all belongs to Him. You have to reach out to win if you walk into the rain, and that's the only way I know to face the pain that only life can bring. Listen to the quiet of the church. Listen to the words I hear God speak: You are mine! You are mine! I sang the song of Calvary for you. And I still hear the love song tune echoing within you. I understand the way you feel—I felt it all so long before, the way you feel now standing here beneath my cross, in your home church, just listening to the peace I came to earth to bring. This is my love I give that you might live and love and live a life more abundantly. Can you believe it? In my anger, in my pain, in my sorrow, in the rain, in my joy and happiness,