



Velazquez's Cannabis And Other Poems

Yousuf Zaigham

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In Velazquez's Cannabis Yousuf Zaigham continues to invest his verbal pizzazz in the same global and glottal themes that gloriously bedeviled his previous three books of poems. On a queue, Elohim makes a cameo appearances as a hanger-on, as an avid seeker of photo-ops, as a nemesis, occasional shrink and confidant (Bethlehem Overtures, Imploding Boughs of Biographies). The spectre of the beloved haunts him still as achingly as before, he is as ever smitten and enthralled by her beguiling and almost insufferable beauty, his verses try to capture its hibiscus contours and cunning cadence (With Her Skin Radiant As Pagoda Blossoms, Violoncello Piccolo). His father's ghost never stops stalking and winching gambits with renewed terrors (The Kaddish), America keeps challenging and baiting his poetic machismo and tomcat cockiness (America, I Don't Care About Your Claue Afflictions, America, Dance With Me 'Til The Edge Of Night, Taste Of Guillotine and Smell Of Gulags) and yet he still wants to emblazon the thundering continent with the incendiary beacons of his tidal vim and exuberance. His poetic sensibility shuttles between the broom-and-the-pitchfork rough and tumble of life and the dazzling colonies of jellyfish and coral reefs, legions of mandarin fish and orchid-shaped mantis of arts. Zaigham strives to make his petulant peace with life's fierce and feverish, seedy and surly too-much-ness. He comes back to the theme of elevating and restoring poetry to its Corinthian grandeur and stature with evangelical zeal reminiscent of the times when poets were exalted as high wazirs, envied wizards, cherished seers and equally feared as menacing funnel clouds and gamely sought as Aphrodite's golden apple and were far more valuable than Andy Warhol's wig or Darth Vader's helmet (Velazquez's Cannabis, I Want Poetry To Vie With Song Of Solomon). He continues his wordsmith journey by decorating the walls of his poetic manor by the deft murals of Homer and Dante and by the mille fleur tapestries from the likes of Saul Bellow and Lorca because all that is poured out by Creation's sugar-shacking Purusha is entirely his to cuddle and convert into relics and totems, trills and tabernacles of art to regale the less fortunate and temperamentally under-gifted and under-served souls in flights of fancy and patrimony of deliriums. It seems he never thinks it will be parochial and below his pay grade to question and gadfly in his verses America's hegemonic elites about the massive incarceration rate of blacks harrowing as the Biblical floods and why our top lawmakers are willing to sell their consents' hymens to the highest bidders and why America has to be the richest and most unequal nation-state on earth. He wonders if it is not him then who else will carry the mantle of Bertrand Russell and Sartre, Brecht and George Orwell in a world where establishment poets are too happy to oblige as carnival curiosities, circus clowns and jokesters par excellence to please those perennial delinquents and Logos-phobes who could never countenance and bear Shakespeare or Shaw, Millville or Dostoevsky in their college sororities or on their deathbeds, who would rather cheer the newly discovered Dreadnoughtus, crested-nose Rhinorex or 4-winged dinosaur than befriend or eavesdrop on Sir John Falstaff or Prince Hamlet. Zaigham is not too shy to declare all is not sanguine in the kingdom of Denmark or state of Delaware but true art—uncompromising in its upbeat revels and unwilling to forswear its magic spells is seethingly there to save us from the ubiquitous violence of life and endless scandal of death.

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