Clarion Review

Poetry

Man-Corn in the Promised Land: Tales of Cannibalism and Other Extreme Folklore
Chariman Wow
Wolf-Wise Press
978-0-9640747-0-5
Four Stars (out of Five)

Quirky, unique, sometimes disturbing and often delightful, Chairman Wow has penned a book that is anything but formulaic.

The author known as Chairman Wow has published a bizarre, often delightful collection of poems and short stories with the curious title *Man-Corn in the Promised Land: Tales of Cannibalism & Other Extreme Folklore*.

There are a lot of predatory themes to be found in the book, but from the title, one might expect strictly genre-bound horror stories or global myths about humans consuming other humans. The reality is much more intriguing—the collection begins with a series of poems ranging from serious and affecting ("Lost in the Valley of Souls" and "Living Memory") to humorous ("And They Said I Ain't Romantic"). Soon we meet General Butt Naked in a short story and are regaled with tales of Daniel Boone and his daughter, among many other notable characters.

Chairman Wow's poems and stories are marked by an interest in history and historical figures like General George Patton, Catherine the Great, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln. But those figures are used in irreverent ways, with black humor and usually a hint of truth. The result is there's no telling what might be next—a story of a man kidnapped by Bigfoot, a poem inspired by an obscure historical event, or even a tale of zombies in search of living bodies, not to eat, but to fornicate with.

The writing is solid and entertaining throughout, with occasional misspellings, particularly in the second half of the book. The poetry conveys its ideas forcefully, sometimes drifting toward prose, but always impactful. Chairman Wow clearly embraces the sensational and the macabre, but usually with some larger purpose.

The appeal of *Man-Corn in the Promised Land* depends mostly on the reader's expectations. It is anything but formulaic—quirky, unique, sometimes disturbing. One creative example: the series of battles between former US presidents in the afterlife. George Washington and Abraham Lincoln go toe-to-toe while debating the legacies of their administrations, with Lincoln defending himself as Washington accuses him of becoming a model for leaders who declare war on their own people: "'The poetry in my speeches abides,' / Lincoln responded. 'The only thing / that never died / on me or went crazy / on me were words in books.'" There's whimsy and melancholy in equal measure in this poem, and others.

With a mixture of levity and seriousness, poetry and prose, *Man-Corn in the Promised Land* is difficult to categorize, but it may be just the thing for readers who like that kind of variety all in one volume.

Peter Dabbene