

Epic Rites Press

New Book Release

# LAUGHING AT FUNERALS

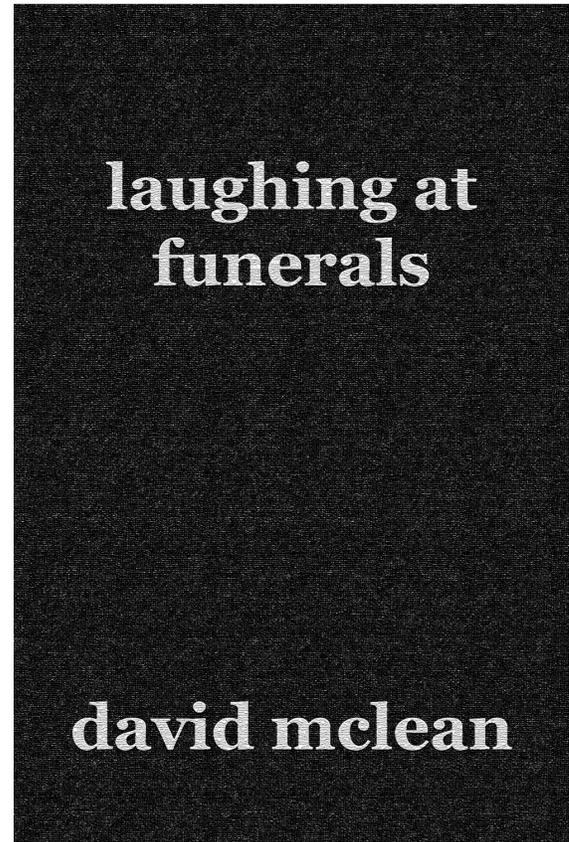
David McLean

Epic Rites Press proudly re-visits *Laughing At Funerals*, the third full-length poetry collection by David McLean.

When asked to introduce *Laughing At Funerals*, McLean writes "The problem with the introduction, as Derrida says of Hegel's, is that it comes before as a presentation to the work, but is composed after the work. An even more serious problem in this case is that the poems here are not written as a book, they were assembled after the fact by Wolfgang Carstens to convey a message that was, in some sense, mine.

Now I do not necessarily think that poems need contain a particular message. I have said elsewhere, in a poem, that poetry is also the rigor of words and theory relaxing, taking off their wig-hats and having a quiet wank. However it is also indubitably the case that Wolfgang has imposed an order on these so that they make a certain sense together, my task might then be to see what that sense is and whether I agree with it.

Generally one could say the point is that society is intent on fucking people up, starting with children because they are malleable on account of their stupidity. Life sucks on account of its radical finitude. There is no chance worth considering that there is a soul substance; there is no spirit, no psyche, just psychology. Life does not suck when it is a



question of the beast in us, instinct and need and hunger, intent on having what temporary and finite fun there is.

Heidegger said that obsession with death was not authentic *Sein-zum-Tode*. It was, instead, a romantic disorder. Though much here concerns death, this is because the modern age has achieved a staggering cowardice when it comes to death. I think the point needs making again and again. You are alive now, and when you die your consciousness ceases irrevocably. Don't fuck it up too much, have fun.

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D a v i d

M c L e a n

david mclean

laughing at  
funerals

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*the truth of spirit is breaking down  
and falling apart, a glimpse of  
what we are not, not a global soul  
lumbering like a ghost through us,  
all woven together in one Nazi*

*nothing, but a spirit living and yet  
enduring death, humanity slipping  
through our fingers like a dream  
just to win being when night falls  
like a hammer, and crushes us.*

Excerpt from *truth of spirit*.

We are “given” identities that impose themselves on us through names and statuses that force us to engage in certain behaviors and accept certain things. These things are usually in the interests of others. Memory is a handy thing to have, in many ways, but too much of it is confabulation and lies. People are taught, or teach themselves, to believe that they have been happy, shall be happy, deserve to be happy. But none of these things are necessary. Egoism and egotism are both a dreadful burden. The unspeakable subject should not fuck around and touch himself so much.

Bodhidharma was an atheist, and the point of any sort of enlightenment is not just to see that there is no after-life, no reincarnation, no immortality, but that there does not need to be. Like Nietzsche says, and what the point of the eternal return in his later philosophy seems to be, even if it is not physically feasible that all particles return to the same state, according to elementary mechanics, we should say “Yes” to this life again, however bad it is. The alternative is not being at all, and a positive quantity of something beats nothing at all. If you have to be a utilitarian bitch about it, then kill yourself if you don’t like it.

*bodhisattva vow*

*there is no Buddha, no nirvana,  
no eternity. all is a brown ring of  
dry shit stinking in no night*

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*and nothing to save. no man  
or woman or sin or anything.  
there is a hole to fall in and  
nirvana never. forever  
is not heaven*

Religion, nationalism, even political beliefs, they all lead to oppression and other stupidities. There are very few people you can trust, and I'm definitely not one of them. Dogs are better than people, and we should be more like dogs; live in the present, accept it for what it is, find an interest in the simple, in nature, in primitive bestial satisfactions.

This is why I seem to value night over day, dark over light, winter over summer. That's just when I like to be outdoors best, when the dogs are happiest. Running over ice on the lake here, messing around. It beats sitting in a church and learning socially acceptable forms of hatred and prejudice.

I might call the book *laughing at funerals*, but the funniest funeral is the one we only get to go to once, and we won't get to remember, our own funeral. For some reason I often write about dead children who lived a long time ago. I believe in nothing but I wish there were ghosts apart from the ghosts in the machine.

*we are ghosts with so little in us,  
a thin film of consciousness*

*presupposing cum and nothing  
to spatter on our straw and trash.*

*we are love and emptiness*

Excerpt from "*ghost on the highway*"

If the above is what Wolfgang assembled the book to point out, then he was right and I agree with him. If not, then read the book and see which of us you agree with.

– David McLean

"The thing that really strikes me about these mostly very short poems is the economy of language McLean employs. He gets it. He understands it. He knows that it doesn't take a very long knife to kill... just a sharp one."

– John Yamrus

"*Laughing At Funerals* provides us all with a text to read on the eve of the apocalypse. It is a series of frenzies meant to be performed against the frenzy. A rage before the serenity of nothing."

– Todd Moore

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# LAUGHING AT FUNERALS

David McLean

*Laughing at Funerals* is a perfect title for the new collection by David McLean. Like the brilliant author, it is irreverent, surreal, with a Fellini-esque sense of the absurd. Why not laugh at funerals? – there is no afterlife, we don't even know if we are in real life right now, or in some ungodly parallel universe – and does it matter, anyway?

McLean had me with the opening poem:

*first thing we do*

*first thing we do let's sit and do nothing  
and wait until we die,*

*drinking beers and watching sports,  
having opinions about indifferent things,*

*bored out of our minds –  
let's pretend that that's a life*

He continues, in his inimitable unsentimental, spare, manner to write of devils, suns, rats, and stars, fear, dread, flowers, and junkie landscapes, and, within the nihilism, somehow, there is passion, life, and a certain, measured feeling of hope, as exemplified in the final poem:

*tomorrow*

*tomorrow smells like murder  
but the sun is shining here  
and nothing is interested  
in the coming slaughter*

*so we sacrifice ourselves  
tonight, to life, but breathe  
a minute here, under the loveless  
sunlight*

It is the assurance, humor, and commitment to contradictory elements which makes this my favorite McLean book to date.

– Puma Perl

“McLean's work is short, sharp and addictive; his language not only slices through our lazy prejudices, but amputates them clean off.”

– Gillian Prew

“McLean's poems are sap and bullshit free.  
They should be carved on tombstones.”

– Misti Rainwater-Lites

*Laughing At Funerals*

David McLean

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