

LEFT HAND BOOKS

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Left Hand Books is pleased to announce the release of **Laughing Blood: Selected Poems 1987-2003**, by David Colosi.

David Colosi credits Octavio Paz, who wrote, “I hear in my skull / the footsteps of my blood,” as the inspiration for the title of his first collection of poems. He heard something too but it sounded more like laughter. “I wasn’t sure if the laughing came from under my skull or from my belly, but both digested his line.” Drawing also from Mikhail Bakhtin who argued that laughter is ambivalent: while it is gay and triumphant, it is also mocking and deriding, Colosi claims, “I have no idea from which position my blood laughs.” In this collection, the open mouth and the swallowing mind produce from the belly and the brain both defecations and insights that fertilize and infect the social landscape. *Laughing Blood* either inspires in us laughter so hard that we cough blood or the recognition that our own blood runs laughing through our veins.

The collection opens in the voice of the poem personified in Reader, My Hero, which serves throughout as the book’s conscience, softly reminding the reader to be cautious with overzealous interpretation. The collection ends, by contrast, in the voice of a cantankerous unclassified bug (Kafka’s insect in *Metamorphosis* is likewise unnamed) insulting the arrogance of a human superiority complex. Such personification and perspective shifting occurs throughout the collection as various objects — a lemon, a parakeet, grammar, mathematics, a table — take on human qualities in comic animations of the inanimate.

As Borges noted, “we create our own precursors,” Colosi offers specific and obscure nods of respect, tribute, and criticism (in shibboleths buried in both form and content) to his. The more obvious are to Raymond Roussel, whose surrealistic imagery, style, and technique recur throughout many of the poems, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Jacques Derrida. While more deeply imbedded in the poems, reference to poetic-hybrid Pop culture icons David Bowie, Lou Reed and Gil Scott Heron pop into and out of view. On the other end of the spectrum, personal tributes shine the spotlight on some of Colosi’s contemporaries like Jimmy Raskin, Josh Galef and Michael Richards, begging the reader who finds their names unfamiliar to do the research and become familiar.

At times taking on political subject matter, and at other times highly personal or purely literary or theoretical, all of these poems have the common entrance point of language. Although the reader will easily recognize the marks left behind by September 11th, in a series of poems that struggle to find a voice after such a tragedy, or poems of a personal or “autobiographical” nature, they avoid falling into the trap of sentimentality that poetry traditionally staggers into. In fact, when the poems approach that precipice, like those dedicated, For Mothers, For Sisters, For Fathers, the disjuncture between the expectation the titles forecast and the poems’ content obscures, clouds, or otherwise makes inaccessible those sentiments in order to respect the privacy those relationships deserve.

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Drawings have been included and listed in the table of contents as poems themselves. Just as the written poems are drawings with words, so too are the drawings instances of writing visually. The narratives in them never begin and never end but always tell a story. In the same instant, they invite and resist narration. In all cases (even those which share the same title) the relationship between the drawn poems and the written poems is not illustrative. Both exist as unique poetic units, accomplishing different goals. When these two forms are combined, as they are in this book, they open the space of literature and of art to include both modes of language, multiplying the poetic effect.

The words and images within are found objects carrying histories in their pockets and on their backs. These poems are labored over, constructed, welded, tied, glued, Velcroed, snapped, or just propped next to one another. If one were to read them only for their semantic value, s/he would overlook the fabrications and mechanics of word making, line making and the art of poetry itself. Meaning lurks within the cracks: between title and poem, content and form, drawing and writing, and one word and the next. The reader will more likely find the essence of these poems where the ink is not. S/he will see them in black and white, but read them in color.

About the Author:

David Colosi was born in 1967 in Rochester, New York. He received his MFA from California Institute of the Arts in 1991. He has read, performed and collaborated at various venues, including *KGB Bar* and *Tonic* in New York City, *Highways* and *Beyond Baroque* in Los Angeles, and the *Proto Theater* in Tokyo. His writings have been included in *From Totems to Hip Hop: A Multicultural Anthology of Poetry Across the Americas, 1900-2002*, edited by Ishmael Reed; as well as the *Left-Hand Sideshow*, an anthology of writers from Left Hand Books. His drawings have been exhibited at Dorsch Gallery in Miami and Jeff Bailey Gallery in New York. He lives in Brooklyn, NY.

Laughing Blood

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About the Press:

Left Hand Books, a name inspired by a line in James Joyce's *Ulysses*: "*Beware the left-hand path of Shiva*," was founded in 1990 as an imprint of Woodbine Press. The next year it spun off onto a path of its own with Bryan McHugh as publisher and editor and Dick Higgins as unofficial advisor or, as he defined his role, "kibitzer." Left Hand Books models itself after Something Else Press, the legendary press founded by Dick Higgins in the early 1960s. Like Something Else Press, Left Hand Books produces books which blur the line between trade and artist books. The press began without an explicit program and remains a work in progress, an experiment — something that itself is being written like a symphony of the hit and miss.