

Serendipity and Craic

Alan Clegg

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Alan Clegg's religious poetry collection *Serendipity and Craic* concentrates on historical events, people's personalities, and drawing humor from everyday situations.

Narrating life in society, these poems concern large historical events like wars, as well as everyday topics like transportation, family concerns, and eating. In the course of the book, economies rise and fall, and religious institutions face challenges. The stories of comical people help to even these more looming experiences out.

In "The Artist's Touch," a man is troubled by his inability to represent God's creations, and questions the meaning of his work within the context of his faith:

*If I were an artist, with a steady hand,
I'd make my mark upon the page as if by magic wand...*

*I wonder Lord where did they come from; did you pass by?
...Is the stroke of my brush, good enough to depict?
the majesty of the great creation?*

And "A monkey on a rope" muses through the struggles of the Allied powers during World War II:

*The war to end all wars, what hope.
The world is in turmoil once more.
Hitler in Poland, Hitler in France,
And to march on the USSR.
The Japs join in, the Italians as well.
To conquer Britain they try,
But they are defeated most soundly,
On the beaches of France, and Normandy.*

The poems waver between being philosophical and entertaining. In "Choices," a narrator finds himself in a muddy rut that he can't escape from; when he comes across another's rut, which intersects with his own, he becomes overwhelmed and falls over. His fear and confusion are palpable. Such entries contrast with those like "Birthday Wish," a sweet, direct entry about the befuddlement of writing a birthday poem, which ends up succeeding because of a simple "I love you." And "The Lonely Joy" is subtle and profound, questioning God's judgement of a boy who grew up hungry and poor, and who was later convicted for criminal activities.

This short collection sifts through disparate topics to arrive at a worldview concerned with minute human affairs as

well as grand historical visions. Still, many of the poems' observations are narrated from outside perspectives, resulting in reserved sensibilities. Much of the imagery is familiar, and factual information often is shared without nuance. Further, in structure, many of the entries are jumbled. They employ close spacing and small fonts, and are accompanied by low resolution backdrops that serve to obscure their words. Notes about the entries' contexts and meanings are included, but these box the entries into single interpretations.

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ALEENA ORTIZ (January 6, 2022)

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