Clarion Review

General

Michael, the Automaton
Benjamin Parker
Lulu
978-1-84799-978-8
One Star (out of Five)

"There is a satisfactory boniness about grammar which the flesh of sheer vocabulary requires before it can become a vertebrate and walk the earth." —*Anthony Burgess*

"Lulu recommends ordering a proof copy of your work and checking it carefully for errors before making it available to the public." —*Get Started on Lulu: A Tour of the Publishing Process*

A covenant should exist between an author and reader that an author will only offer their works for publication and to the reader for consumption after an arduous and meticulous but necessary draft and editing process. This should include grammar syntax punctuation spelling continuity typos and a well-trained objective editor that can explain to the writer that besides the above- mentioned mechanical errors what ills the piece and how to fix the problem.

Benjamin Parker's debut novel *Michael the Automaton* seems to be about a creature's adventures and exploits that span through time and the religious mythologies built around the creature. The novel begins in an ancient Mesopotamian- or ancient Egyptian-like culture ruled by twin. It ends in a modern European city that parallels today's London. There the population is on the verge of a civil war between religious and political parties called the Sarts and another unknown entity. Parker's entire novel may or may not take place on an alternate time line different dimension or even another planet. His writing makes the basics of setting difficult to discern.

Michael the Automaton suffers from the lack of proper editing and is a perfect example of the above Burgess quote. There is no questioning Parker's extensive vocabulary but his grammar syntax and mechanics are so lacking that the narrative is nearly impossible to follow. He tends to write in sentence fragments and has 'pet words' and 'pet phrases' like *immaculate* and *pedantic*. Some errors can be excused especially printing errors but after slogging through

an entire page of typos one can't help wonder about the writer's priorities and the lack of respect for the reader.

Parker does made some decent observations and descriptions. For example "Michael made a little joke and Billy closed his eyes tightly to give his smile more space." And the following "It was a horrible dank place. The ship clinging to the sea like baby scorpions to their mother."

In actuality this line is also a fragment and may have worked better as "It was a horrible dank place. The ship clung to the sea like baby scorpions cling to their mother."

Just when the *Automaton* appears to be making sense Parker expects the reader to understand the following "The discussions before had been small they were burdened with this huge thing. And the size made it familiar in its obscurities. To be refined to their contours. Before they were comfortable to become solvent without the denial of colonial impurities and absorption among the isn't. Was."

Parker should pull his work from Lulu's shelves and invest in a good editor to help him rehash his novel. Unfortunately *Michael the Automaton* does not meet Clarion's and ForeWord Magazine's editorial standards.