Clarion Review

The Experience of Being Human: The Person
Michael Alan Paull
LLL Communications
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Three Stars (out of Five)

For author retired minister and poet Michael Alan Paull to be human is to accept oneself with all one's imperfections and become sensitive to the stirrings of desire in one's spirit that mark the urge to grow and discover oneself and the world in which one lives. The poems in the three volumes that make up the Experience of Being Human series were written over a period of time stretching from the 1970s through 2003. It was not the author's initial intention to publish them; they were for him companions through traumatic and troubling times: the end of his first marriage the accidental death of his eighteen-year-old son stressful times as the pastor of a church; and joyful times like finding new love and delighting in the presence of God.

Paull does not claim academic credentials as a poet nor does he adhere to structural or formal poetic styles rather he declares that the poems came to him "in completed form word for word with no corrections or alterations." Confessional in style they explore personal details of the writer's life and Paull invites readers to engage them while remaining open to the possibility of an encounter with their own spirit.

The final volume in the series *The Person* is an introspective musing on the poet's awareness of the human need to experience love both from others and toward oneself. Yet Paull notes the unpredictability of people and their emotions as in the poem "Change": "but have you tried to hold on to someone / who is spinning / They're too hot to hold / Their motion makes you dizzy." The poem ends with his realization that it is perhaps better this way since it fosters self-reliance trust and love for oneself.

Paull touches upon topics as simple yet profound as the need to know the difference between conditional and unconditional love ("Receiving the Gift of Love") and loneliness and the beauty of mature love ("Alone But Not Alone"). He expresses the amazing gift of love fully given and received that allows for the knowledge of the other as he/she is as in "You're Becoming Clearer." In this poem he reveals how he sees his wife a truth known by all who truly love: that "the closer you come / the brighter you become / …And [I] find the place where true

love begins.”

There are many ways to read and appreciate poetry; some read for excellence in craft delighting in verbal edifices built of revered forms and structures while others may read just for the pleasure of the movement of language through mind or mouth; other readers may find a poet whose emotional make-up is like their own and allow the words to provoke pleasure or pain almost without noting whether or not the poet possess a fully developed sense of the craft. This last type of reader may take the most pleasure in the works of Paull and join with him in wrestling with the questions inherent in their own human experience.