

## Clarion Review

Poetry

### **The Looking Heart: Poetic Expressions from Within**

Marc Lacy

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Three Stars (out of Five)

*...so God please use me to try to  
take a stand against the atrocities of the soul*  
—from “My Daddy’s Records”

*The Looking Heart: Poetic Expressions From Within*, a convergence of spirit and emotion, is an ambitious effort of one hundred forty-nine poems. Marc Lacy’s literary mission is embedded in belief and fleshed out by a wealth of comparisons. His forms tend toward runs of couplets with short-wave rhyme schemes. The in-line rhymes can be ruthless, as in *and the shameth to his gameth is Joe’s the Namath who’s famous*. A handful are prose poem hybrids. The poet conceptualizes a palette of metaphorical stand-ins for his abstractly personified heart. The heart appears on nearly every page; its symbolic permutations are inexhaustible.

A chapter of odes holds steady interest. It includes tributes to twentieth century historical figures, like Malcom X, Princess Di, Tupac Shakur, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mohandas Gandhi. On the page facing a Jimi Hendrix ode, John Kennedy’s coverage begins with a surprising borrow: *Hey Joe, going somewhere with that power in your hand?* One of the seven chapters is identified as “flow” pieces intended for performance. In fact the majority of these poems show clear musicality which could be shaped and enhanced by a stylized oral delivery.

Two of the most genuine, dimensional poems were inspired by family members: and ode to a grandmother called “Marble Queen,” and a moment of transformative discovery entitled “My Daddy’s Records.” Lacy aims to share his personal belief that moral self-discipline and a spiritual focus aren’t only right, they’re crucial to happy, harmonious living. “Mirror Imagery” states the direct link between cause and effect: *we can throw and receive a punch in one swing*.

The pitfall of exploring emotion from so many angles is the probability that a few sorties will dissolve into sentimental syrup. Lacy does put thought into metaphor variance on his main

theme, but mixed in with insightful, uplifting verse are stanzas like this from “Heartsitter:”  
*Will you come be with my heart tonight? / For I’ve a function to partake // Could you keep it  
safe and sound? / For it’s fragile and just might break*

The poet works as an engineer in northern Alabama. He’s a former college basketball player who takes an active role in his home church, and several professional organizations. This is Marc Lacy’s first full-length collection. For positive message *The Looking Heart* is completely on target. Readers are encouraged to try these poems aloud for sound.