



Lyrics of Love

Elvin Primm

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The brief erotic poetry collection Lyrics of Love tests the bounds of what's sexy.

The piquing and provocative entries of Elvin Blake Primm's trim poetry collection *Lyrics of Love* test the bounds of propriety.

This collection is far from coy about its intentions; indeed, "erotica" appears in its opening line, once again before the first entry concludes, and multiple other times throughout the book. Its rhyming entries adopt the tone of naughty limericks as they skip through subjects like sexual play and kinks. It drops words like "penetrate," "orgasms," and "ejaculate" without qualms, assuming a sex-positive posture throughout. This sex-positivity leads to instances of potential oversharing, too, as with a poem whose third line boasts that a person is "Deep throating me in and out until I am exploding."

But some of the book's references are too vague: two poems are devoted to a "licking stick," whose uses are detailed ad nauseam, but which itself remains an amorphous object until a late revelation—one that also seems at odds with its previous uses. Further, the fact that some entries focus on single characters in their sexual explorations leads to a sense of voyeurism that is uncomfortable rather than stimulating, given that little else is known of these individuals; people are reduced to a handful of their sexual acts.

Even though the book is short, its near singular focus makes it wearying. A few entries are about love only, rather than sex; their imagery, though, is too familiar to be moving. Elsewhere, romantic alienation and loss are also momentary themes, but these, too, are handled in unsurprising terms; the overtly sexual poems are the book's most numerous and memorable. The collection's arrangement, which buries more musing poems between its lustful entries, reinforces this thematic domination.

The collection's techniques are an additional undoing: while its end rhymes and skipping tones enhance its playfulness, the variations between its line lengths, and its tendency to break from its established rhyme schemes at unexpected moments, make it feel untidy. And some of its end rhymes are too forced: there are instances of jumbled syntax, and one poem makes the abrupt declaration "...this poem is done" to achieve its end rhyme. The book also indulges in ellipses that lead to treacherous revelations and awkward pauses; engages in unnecessary capitalization; and misplaces some punctuation marks, while it uses others incorrectly.

Further, there are unnecessary spaces between the lines that serve to stretch out the short collection, all at the expense of visual cohesion. And the text breaks up compound words and contains the incorrect versions of other words, like "whip" for "whipped." Throughout, the similes and metaphors are either crude to excess, as with the comparisons of a penis to an anaconda and a pole, and the line "wet mound of goodness and cream"; banal, as with "make my fire burn for you," curled toes, and a reference to a bleeding heart; or diverge too far from their origin subjects to reach their goals. A reference to "stained sheets," rather than representing satisfaction and affection, is off-putting. In the end, the collection seems most representative of an intimate exercise between partners, rather than a

work for public consumption.

Thick with innuendo, the brief erotic poetry collection *Lyrics of Love* tests the bounds of what's sexy.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (December 29, 2021)

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