



Brutal Imagination: Poems

By Cornelius Eady

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Brutal Imagination: Poems By Cornelius Eady

Brutal Imagination is the work of a poet at the peak of his considerable powers. Its two central sections--which could be called song cycles--confront the same subject: the black man in America.

The first, which carries the book's title, deals with the vision of the black man in white imagination. Narrated largely by the black kidnapper that Susan Smith invented to cover up the killing of her two sons, the cycle displays all of **Mr. Eady's** range: his deft wit, inventiveness, and skillfully targeted anger, and the way in which he combines the subtle with the charged, street idiom with elegant inversions, harsh images with the sweetly ordinary.

The second cycle, "Running Man," presents poems Mr. Eady drew on for his libretto for the music-drama of the same name, which was a 1999 Pulitzer Prize finalist. Here, the focus is the black family and the barriers of color, class, and caste that tear it apart. As the **Village Voice** said, "It is a hymn to all the sons this country has stolen from her African- American families."

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Brutal Imagination: Poems By Cornelius Eady Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Best known for outlining the nameless figures of old-time city life in a style that, like Charles Simic's, is at once realistic and abstract, Eady, in his seventh collection, boldly takes up the persona of the imaginary black criminal who Susan Smith invented to take the blame for the drowning of her children. "When called, I come," Eady writes. "My job is to get things done." Rather than launching a direct attack on racial injustice, Eady, in the series of poems that comprise the book's first part, makes this Frankenstein's monster into a secret sharer, bound to sit by the suspect's side and shed an invisible tear. "Why do wives and children seem to attract me?" he asks with chilling na?vet?. These poems resemble Ai's monologues of history and headline, an urgent tabloid origami that takes the lurid and the sensational and rediscovers in them the essentially tragic. In the book's second part, "The Running Man Poems," the hero is again a black criminal, one who starts out a bookish prodigy and somehow winds up conceiving of himself as an outlaw, one whose crimes are little more than spearing insects until, we are given to infer, he kills his lover with a razor and buries her in the pines. In both series, poems of secret perspective contemplate the flawed strength of men as imagined through the medium of women. Their brutal subjects and diction work extraordinarily well in opening strange, brutal hearts to the reader. (Jan. 15) Forecast: This book seems designed to reach beyond habitual readers of poetry, but Susan Smith may be too long out of the headlines to generate the kind of media interest needed for it to break out. More progressive high schools, however, might seize on it for generating discussions, despite a few four-letter words and the disturbing themes.

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From School Library Journal

Adult/High School-Eady's poetry is always approachable-often written in a voice almost like speech-so he's a good poet to recommend to YAs who fear that poetry is by definition opaque or elusive. In the title selection, resonant layers of psycho- and sociological complexity make up for linguistic simplicity. The sequence is a series of monologues "spoken" by the fictional black man who Susan Smith invented and charged with the alleged abduction of her children in 1994. The truth-that Smith herself had killed her sons-came out only after the law, media, and popular imagination pounced on the idea of a black perpetrator. Smith was not the first person to capitalize on society's fear of black men and its stereotyping of them as criminals; her crime was simply the most sensational. The disempowering effect of being repeatedly summoned up by whites ensures that this black man is akin to Uncle Ben, Buckwheat, Aunt Jemima, Uncle Tom, and especially Stepin Fetchit-all of whom weigh in with their own monologues in Eady's book. The protagonist examines Smith's accusation from all angles, most powerful and some startling-as when he mentions "one good thing:/If I am alive, then so, briefly, are they," a reference to Smith's children. Smart as a whip and just as stinging, *Brutal Imagination* is an important addition to any collection.

Emily Lloyd, Fairfax County Public Library, VA

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From Library Journal

Eady's new book consists of two song cycles. The title sequence involves the imaginary black man that Susan Smith created to cover up killing her two small sons. That ugly, sad lie has given birth to a narrator with wit, personality, and unexpected wisdom. Of course, he is a figment of a white woman's imagination, a black man of white invention, and yet his is a penetrating look at race in America: "I am not the hero of this piece./ I am only a stray thought, a solution." Elsewhere in the sequence, Eady evokes the ghosts of other white creations: Uncle Tom, Uncle Ben, Jemima, and Steppin Fetchit ("the low pitched anger/ Someone mistook for stupid"). Finally, the "Confession": "There have been days I've almost/ Spilled/ From her, nearly

taken a breath./ Yanked/ Myself clean." In the second sequence, the "Running Man Poems," a black family faces death and the obstacles of color, class, and caste that test them. This sequence was the basis of Eady's libretto for the musical drama of the same name, a 1999 Pulitzer finalist. With its good, thoughtful work, this volume steps forward to face challenges of its own, and it should be appreciated. DLouis McKee, Painted Bride Arts Ctr., Philadelphia
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Richard Valadez:

The book untitled Brutal Imagination: Poems is the book that recommended to you you just read. You can see the quality of the reserve content that will be shown to you. The language that creator use to explained their way of doing something is easily to understand. The author was did a lot of investigation when write the book, therefore the information that they share for your requirements is absolutely accurate. You also could possibly get the e-book of Brutal Imagination: Poems from the publisher to make you a lot more enjoy free time.

Lois Bottoms:

People live in this new time of lifestyle always try to and must have the extra time or they will get wide range of stress from both everyday life and work. So , when we ask do people have free time, we will say absolutely yes. People is human not really a robot. Then we ask again, what kind of activity are there when the spare time coming to anyone of course your answer may unlimited right. Then ever try this one, reading ebooks. It can be your alternative in spending your spare time, the particular book you have read is Brutal Imagination: Poems.

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