

POETRY

Escapism

Jim Adduci

BookSurge

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Four Stars (out of Five)

In 1989, forty-year-old Jim Adduci went to prison for three years. While his body remained confined, his mind and soul ran free. He captures these musings in *Escapism*, a collection of poetry, essays, and stories. The topics he explores include Christianity, redemption, childhood, and women. In his preface, Adduci writes, “My poems are written for the everyday person...There are no earth-shaking revelations contained here-in...I don’t have much of an education...” Adduci humbly downplays his talent, as readers will quickly discover. His work reveals the thoughts of a wise man who did his learning on the road of life, and who had the drive to continue his discoveries even as he was locked away.

Adduci humanizes prisoners by letting readers in on his hopes, dreams, and past. As the audience gets to know the author, it becomes harder to dismiss him as a mere criminal. He details both the hardships and the simple pleasures of being in jail. He waxes poetic about observing moonlit snowflakes from his window, watching bugs during his exercise period, and having enough light to write by. Such examples remind readers to be grateful for small blessings, and to make the best of a bad situation. As far as the trials of imprisonment, Adduci details the arbitrariness of prison guards and lack of light in cells. For an inmate like the author who was generally well-behaved during his incarceration, the denial of lights and the prison guards who made rules willy-nilly are alarming. The author’s anecdotes give readers the feelings of being right there next to him in his cell.

Although the author claims he lacks an education, he possesses an understanding of rhyme and meter that makes his poetry a joy to read. Contrary to his assertions, many nuggets of wisdom exist in this book. Despite a few punctuation mistakes, the author’s style is plain-spoken and lucid. It is disconcerting, therefore, that the author feels compelled to include a few writings from Thoreau, Hawthorne, and anonymous poets. The intrusion of these foreign voices temporarily jolts readers out of Adduci’s fascinating worldview. Further, these quotations from literary luminaries invite unwarranted comparisons to the author’s work. In general, though,

anyone who escapes into this book will come away awed by the author's talent and enlightened about prison life, as well as the little things that can change a man's outlook.

Jill Allen