lescenti, giovani e familiari per non dimenticare riferimenti alla vita culturale del tempo dal mondo letterario, dell'arte, di teatro e della vita popolare. Ci aiuta quindi a trasmettere meglio la vastissima eredità culturale italiana.

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Carole David. *Unholy Stories*. Translated by Nora Alleyn. Toronto: Guernica Editions Inc., 2005. Pp. 79. ISBN 1-55071-201-2 \$15 \$13 US

With *Unholy Stories* Carole David has unearthed a series of characters in this collection of short stories who demand the reader's attention from the very first lines of each of their tales. They refuse to compromise themselves to render their stories more palatable. They bare the darkest, most intimate and uncomfortable details about their lives, and instead of being repulsed, the reader is drawn further into the world(s) they inhabit.

Geographically and temporally, these are worlds with which we are very familiar. The twelve short stories in this collection (with the exception of "Female") take place in an urban or suburban setting, depicting the daily and often mundane tasks of everyday life. This is sometimes coupled with a depiction of a very clichéd time in an individual's life, as does the first story, "Monster", which opens with a description of an outing to the Dollar Store where we find our protagonist shopping for her boyfriend on Valentine's Day. These settings are meant to be unremarkable, in order that the characters stand-out even more brilliantly against the familiar backdrops. Once the characters have garnered our attention, they do not keep it for themselves. Although they are quite capable of drawing a self-portrait, it is through their observations of another that this portrait becomes three-dimensional, as the author expertly and economically creates a rapport between protagonist and reader that rivals any created in a novel at least ten times its length. In "Monster" the other is the young disabled woman in the restaurant being kindly attended to by her companion, and in "Female" it is the rural neighbour whose wife has left him "for a nice guy in the city" (61).

This "other" sometimes becomes the main protagonist as the first-person narrator consciously chooses to keep the focus on the former. This occurs not only in "If Only" where we are told of the troubling resemblance between the narrator's drug-addicted younger brother and their father, but also in "Grotto" where the eccentric Italian neighbour Mrs. Ritti is slowly but methodically being evicted from her home by her own family. In both of these stories the respective narrators are not casual bystanders, but rather members (at some level) of the protagonist's lives who appear to have distanced themselves long enough to be able to recount the story.

The true omniscient narrator (who does not seem to be implicated in the narratives) appears only in those stories where the accounts of children or adolescents are described. The first to surface in the collection is "M", in which we find Nat, the obsessive-compulsive teenager whose life is told to us via the rituals she has cre-

ated for herself. David anticipates that when confronted with a child-protagonist, her reader might be prejudiced by their age and fail to see that even children are capable of possessing a flawed and unique personality (a trademark of the author's adult protagonists), which cannot be simply attributed to an adolescent fixation. In an effort to prevent this prejudice, David presents an explicit warning to the reader: "I could tell you her [Nat's] story, insist on those times when she gets along fine with her mother, I could point out her bad points too, but it would be unfair and only confirm our preconceived ideas about adolescence" (15-16).

This uniqueness of character is fully appreciated in one of the most compelling narratives, namely "An Unholy Story". The manifestations of Corinne Gilbert's religious fervour, (self-mutilation, anorexia and eventual drug use), force the reader to speculate on the type of adult this protagonist will become. In the final narrative of this collection, we are given a glimpse, in the sad and disturbing tale of Ariane, Corinne Gilbert's daughter in the story of the same name. Told by her companion, we learn that not only is Ariane a junkie, but that she most likely followed in her mother's footsteps.

The biological connection between these two stories is certainly unique in this collection, the intimacy between them, however, is not. Undoubtedly the fundamental theme of the bond between mother and child (where the child is often a daughter) which permeates the collection however, cannot be overlooked, it is not only on this basis that these characters are inextricably linked. They all appear to be navigating the same troubled world, carrying with them the wounds of their past trying to stumble forward into their future. What Carole David has also allowed them to carry, is the reader's undivided attention. As each story ends, we are effortlessly guided to the next by the unseen hand of the author. While each story can be considered a compelling, autonomous narrative, as a whole, the plurality of the voices resonates at the same frequency creating a cohesive unit which does not fail to impress.

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F. G. Paci. *Hard Edge: A Novel*. Toronto: Guernica Editions, 2005. Pp. 186. ISBN 1-55071-212-8. \$ 15 \$13 USA.

This is the eleventh novel by Frank Paci, yet he remains the invisible writer. His first novel, *The Italians*, was a best-seller in 1978-79 while his *Black Madonna* was one of the first feminist novels to deal with ethnic minority women and it is still studied in university and college courses. He has a series of realist novels set in Toronto, but nobody in that city has heard of him. Even writing under the name, F.G. Paci, has helped to maintain his anonymity. Is this the shyness of the immigrant boy who feels awkward in the new country and has a sense of difference that will never allow him to fit into the new society? Or is it the negative capability of the artist who thinks of his vocation with religious austerity? Mark Trecroci, the main character in his latest novel, *Hard Edge*, explores some of these questions in