

One Day Even Trevi will Crumble: Stories

By Neale McDevitt

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Article by James Warne

Pulled quote: She was a little crazy too, liked being slapped around and treated like shit

Neale McDevitt's first collection of short stories, *One Day Even Trevi will Crumble*, is divided into two parts. The first, "The McVie Chronicles", looks at Notre-Dame-de-Grâce through the eyes of a single character. The second is a miscellany of other stories. Binding both parts of the book together is McDevitt's style. Eloquently written and well-crafted one would, however, expect these stories to be presented at a writer's workshop rather than published.

McDevitt's N.D.G. is not the gentrified edge of Westmount but rather a harder, working-class N.D.G. populated by characters seemingly left behind by the rest of society. Take for example, "Barry the Dog Boy whose mind-bending combination of Tourette's and multiple personality disorder has blessed him with the alarming ability to bark like fifteen species of dogs." Or Zeke, the former "shit-hot high-school baseball star" who became a plumber and proud father. McVie himself attempts to establish himself as another of these lost souls rooted in nothing but the place itself, looking for nothing more than a little company and comfort at the end of the day.

Less well drawn are sex and women. Take for example the character Kimmy in the story "Fragile birds", she is little more than an "ass" on which to write poetry. Or "Anger on the Outskirts of Arcadia" in the second part of the book. The woman in this story is never given a name, she is simply a woman that the narrator chose on a personals line. The story starts with, "She was fat. I mean really fat. With huge hanging tits and a monstrous, dimpled, bulbous arse. She was a little crazy too, liked being slapped around and treated like shit." Sex is also little more than a description of body parts and an occasional anecdotal listing of acts performed thrown in to make it all more interesting. McDevitt's writing is, undeniably, good but, it lacks when describing emotion or using metaphor.

The second half of the book, while in many ways more elegant than the first is less compelling. Perhaps it is the sense that none of these characters have any real depth to them. McDevitt certainly tries to give them depth with a much more sober tone. But even at their most comical, the male characters of the first half feel much more real than those of the second. The descriptions of places in the second half of the book may be more rich and eloquent but McDevitt's N.D.G. is neither of these things. Moreover, neighbourhoods are made up of the people in them rather than the buildings and parks. Perhaps, ultimately what makes the "McVie Chronicles" so entertaining is that we know these characters from the bar around the corner.