

## Short Stories Delight For Reading Public

**BY RUTH MOOSE: Special to *The Winston-Salem Pilot***

Original Sin: The Seven Deadlies Come Home to Roost

Edited by Wanda Wade Mukherjee

The Paper Journey Press, 2005, \$16.95

"Original Sin, Fifty Stories" is such a wonderful idea I'm kicking myself because I didn't think of it first. A great focus and unifying theme plus terrific stories.

These stories are like potato chips; you can't read just one. You go on, nibbling and chewing, laughing and sighing. There's not a weak story in the batch and when it comes to picking favorites, I found I had too many to list. I can give you some appetizers though.

Arranged according to the Seven Deadly Sins, Anger is followed by Envy, Gluttony, Greed, Lust, Pride and Sloth, the 50 stories fall under their appropriate categories. Except all of them could qualify for Terrific and Classic, Fine, and Just Plain Fun to Read and Well Written.

You could start under Gluttony (I'm a glutton for words and books) with Kathryn Gurkin's "This Too, Too Solid Flesh" and two ladies at lunch. (Been there, done that. Too often for my own good.) "Azalea's dieting again. Last week at her annual physical her good cholesterol was down and her bad cholesterol was up..." And she was mad." (I bet her blood pressure's up too.) But read the rest of the story to find out where she gets her comeuppance. Do Snover's piece, "Styling," is a retelling of the Persephone myth in a fresh, new way. Do is a chef and it shows that she knows her French peas and ripe quinces.

Under Pride, "The Education of Paolo," by Penny Dyer, will make you weep. "You don't know what you want," she said to him. "It's like all them books you read day and night. Sooner or later you're going to outgrow them and want something better." But Paolo "graduated to the classics, where he got the hang of Cliff's Notes." (It's a love story and a lesson in life in just over four pages.) "The Tulips" by Sally Haxthow will ring bells reading between and behind recent newspaper accounts. Marvelous character-driven, tightly woven piece, written in hard to do second-person-point-of-view. Example, "The boy was your second born. He was forever the baby, your precious little one so you can't help but wonder if it is your fault that he should turn out this way." Later in the very short story, the main character laments the loss of her husband: "You are envious that Charles was able to leave this earth still feeling that pride, not having his accomplishment shattered by a boy's need to confess that which is best left unspoken."

Or take the "Envy of Whippoorwill Drive" by Sunny Sabella, in which a desperate housewife finds her foul play taped and played back to the tune of "She Gets Her Fondest Wish." Marvelous story.

This is the perfect book for your bedside table and before-sleep reading. Stories just short enough not to tuck into your stress and perfect to lead you quietly into the land of nod.

"Original Sin" has an excellent job of editing, and you're only left wondering how Mukherjee got all these great stories together and why these authors are not more widely published. They're that good.

Ruth Moose, a creative writing instructor at UNC Chapel Hill, is a longtime reviewer for The Pilot.