

The End of the Class War

Catherine Brady

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Within the first few paragraphs of each of the author's short stories, a character will emerge that makes the reader either yearn for the tale to be longer or smile in recognition of a friend, family member or even one's self. Such strong reactions would be familiar to Brady's characters, Irish American women who contend with aging parents, demanding jobs, selfish husbands and plenty of Catholic guilt. The heroines she creates struggle through common situations and predictable plot twists, but the sheer energy of their strengths and beliefs keep the work from ever becoming mundane.

Although she focuses specifically on Irish American women, Brady peoples her story with a range of types within that restriction. One character, a teenager, draws a bracelet of thorns around her wrist in black ink with a boy's name woven into the decoration. In another story, a boyfriend-less woman confidently strides into a sperm clinic, suspicious of how many donors list "medical student" as their occupation. One particularly beautiful story is simply a description of one family's home movies, where "little girls in their belling coats look like origami shapes, light enough to be blown across the blurry backdrop of snow."

In each story, Brady tailors her writing style somewhat to fit the characters, as if the strength of each fictional woman was too much for even the author to ignore. By turns gritty and eloquent, the writing adroitly describes proud and articulate women who deserve to be noticed, much like Brady herself.

ELIZABETH MILLARD (July / August 1999)

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