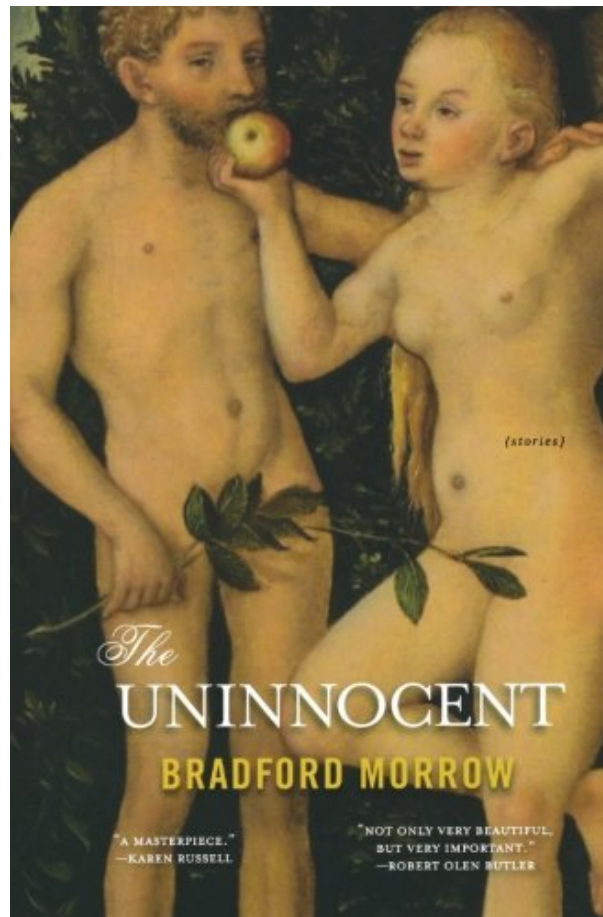
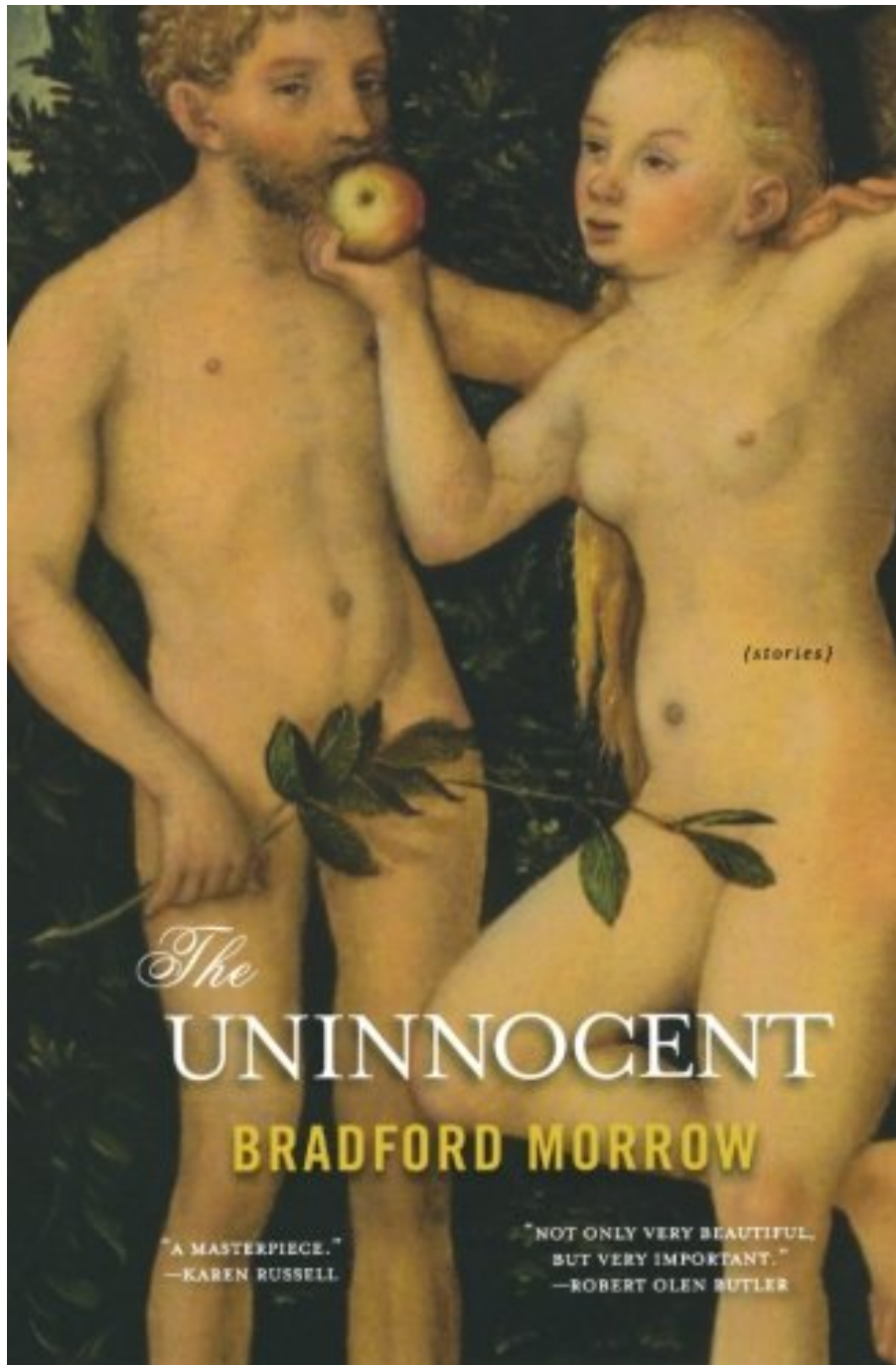


THE UNINNOCENT: STORIES BY BRADFORD MORROW



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From Publishers Weekly

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A teenage boy obsessively (and surreptitiously) photographs his older brother's girlfriend. An electrical worker who turns motivational speaker after he's blinded in an accident miraculously regains his sight and discovers that life was better when he couldn't see. A young wife prone to fugue states is at the center of a series of murders that involve her husband, her children, and her husband's lover. A teenage boy murders his grandmother's male friend, whom he believes to be a Martian landed on Earth as part of the invasion that captivated the country in Orson Welles's broadcast of *War of the Worlds*—and no trace of the body can be found. What links all these dark tales from Morrow (*The Diviner's Tale*) is that the main characters live in the shadowland where normalcy and mania and at times even depravity meet. VERDICT Hanging on the voices of their narrators—at once fascinating in their fixations and repelling in their twisted logic—and mixing elements of Southern gothic and noir, these powerful tales will linger in the reader's mind. — Lawrence Rungren, Merrimack Valley Lib. Consortium, North Andover, MA

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“Tsunami,” a woman overwhelmed by televised bloodshed and the violent deaths of people close to her warns, “This story doesn’t get any better, so if you want to stop here I certainly wouldn’t blame you.” And she isn’t kidding—this is one horrific tale. But we read on, mesmerized by Morrow’s matter-of-fact relentlessness, the surprise of his plot twists, the blossoming of insanity and terror. Betrayed husbands stoke “(Mis)laid,” a breathless tale of revenge, and “Amazing Grace,” a letter-perfect, old-fashioned tale in which a man blinded in an accident becomes a megasuccessful motivational speaker and a pawn. Pathological sibling relationships are a recurring catalyst for psychologically complex nightmare scenarios. Morrow evinces an eerie and seductive sureness in summoning the inexplicable and the unnerving in these shrewd and shivery tales of madness and mayhem. --Donna Seaman

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A New York Times Book Review Editors' Choice

Bradford Morrow's stories have garnered him awards such as the O. Henry and Pushcart Prizes and have given him a devoted following. Now gathered here for the first time is a collection of his most darkly comic, masterfully written tales.

A young man whose childhood hobby of collecting sea shells and birds' nests takes a sinister turn when he becomes obsessed with acquiring his brother's girlfriend, in "The Hoarder" (selected as one of the Best American Noir Stories of the Century). An archeologist summoned to attend his beloved sister's funeral is astonished to discover it is not she who has died, but someone much closer to him, in "Gardener of Heart." A blind motivational speaker has a crisis of faith when he suddenly regains his sight, only to discover life was better lived in the dark, in "Amazing Grace."

In all of these stories, readers will find themselves enthralled and captivated by one of the major voices in contemporary American fiction.

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Most helpful customer reviews

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

An enthralling collection

By Pickfordm

"The Uninnocent," the wonderful new book of short fiction from Bradford Morrow, manages to be at once luminous and dark. Each story takes a brave look at the underside of characters who often narrate their own tales. I agree with the reviewers on this page who read these stories slowly. Because of the macabre, noir nature of the material, its narrative richness, its descriptive powers, and the multitude of surprise endings, these are stories to be savored rather than hurried through in one or two sittings. Also, as Morrow subtly foreshadows many of the twists and turns early on, a rereading yields its own rewards, perhaps revealing clues missed the first time around.

It's hard to single out the best pieces in such a uniformly fine collection, but my current favorites are "Gardener of Heart" and "The Enigma of Grover's Mill." In the first, the funeral of a beloved twin sister brings an archaeologist back to the home town he long ago abandoned. Though their paths forked outwardly, he learns, their deep love for one another inexorably binds them. "The Enigma of Grover's Mill" contains a lot of death, an alien invasion, radio hoaxes and (maybe) murder. Simultaneously, it's a coming-of-age tale filled with nostalgia, mourning, the wonders of adolescence and love.

Also powerful is "The Hoarder," a creepy story which reminded me of John Fowles' masterfully chilling novel "The Collector." In "Ellie's Idea" a woman decides to wipe her moral slate clean, purifying herself and hopefully winning back her husband, by apologizing to everyone for every bad act she believes she's committed. This one snuck up on and eventually enfolded me; the character for whom I felt empathy at the

outset became the one from whose clutches I eventually wanted to escape. "Lush" intertwines romantic love and alcohol addiction so seductively it made me feel the narrator's addiction. Indeed, for the duration of the story I almost shared it.

All this gets to the heart of what I loved about "The Uninnocent." At a reading I attended, a fan asked Morrow how he managed to create an entire world in the space of a short story. After some thought, he ascribed it to the specificity of detail, which certainly fleshes out his works and gives them resonance. In addition, the specificity, the psychological depth, and the humanness of even the most monstrous of the characters pulled me into the stories and kept me there.

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

An absolutely delicious read

By pokeybear

I have never read anything by this author before and am so very glad this was my introduction to his work. Some of the very best writing I've come across in recent years, each story was brilliantly crafted, so beautifully and carefully written. I was incredibly impressed by how seamlessly the author slipped into such different voices so convincingly in each story. Reading this book was like attending a seminar in how to write the perfect short story. Some really hauntingly beautiful pieces in this collection, and of course, some wonderfully fractured ones as well! A fabulous read!

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Beautifully written tales themed with sins, madness, obsession and loss

By DoskoiPanda

Bradford Morrow's *The Uninnocent* is a collection of short stories, each with a theme of various sins, madness, obsessions and other transgressions, or loss. Beautifully written, the darkness in the stories gently takes root and flowers in subtly hideous and frightening ways - the soothing hiss of a serpent's voice - all the more effective because of the gentle language, while the melancholic notes of the more poignant tales draw upon memories of living, of joy and grief, to shape the tales. (Please note: when I describe these as hideous and frightening, I mean something more in line with Henry James' *Turn of the Screw*; psychological rather than thriller.)

This was not a quick read for me, the stories are beautifully and richly written, giving the kind of reading experience that you have to allow to sink in slowly. You could read this quickly, but end up with a sense of reading fatigue; your brain bloated with all the stories. So I'm not sure I would recommend this to a casual reader for beach or travel reading, but I would recommend it to people who enjoy the experiences of reading the literary equivalent of after-dinner dessert wine.

4.5 or 5 stars. If you've enjoyed Joyce Carol Oates' Southern Gothic stories, you'll probably enjoy these, though I'd relabel them as Northeastern Gothic, for, if there is such a thing, this would be it.

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