

Review by Margot Miller

The Night Blooming Cereus and Other Stories, by Harold O. Wilson. 164 pages. Lulu.com (2008). \$37.50. Harold Wilson's first book of stories reverberates with big themes—primordial loneliness, the unrelenting, living nature of choices, and the human longing to be known, to remain even after we are gone. "Cereus," the title novella, sets the tone and the scope of the collection. In this story, Wilson explores the redemptive power of memory and forgetting through the various viewpoints of those closely touched by Reverend Arlow Gitmore Moats. Reverend Moats, one of the author's several quirky characters, is recalled standing over his son's bed, "his black wet hair stringing down his face, his black coat hovering." He is, as Wilson ultimately describes him, just "a flawed and frightened man called to account by a couple of young girls." This story, with its evocative imagery embedded in a series of flashbacks, flash-forwards, and diary selections, has definite cinematographic possibilities.

The five remaining stories, "The Chosen," "Tea at Four," "Infidelity," "Caesar's Tomb," and "The Blood of the Lamb," are at once poignant and ironic, each with a twist at the end. Wilson's self-published book, with its wit and wisdom on the human condition, should hold its own well beyond our regional sphere.