



# Apparition & Late Fictions

*Thomas Lynch*

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**Apparition & Late Fictions** Thomas Lynch

**Heart-rending stories of life and death: a debut fiction collection by the award-winning author of *The Undertaking*.**

A Methodist minister gone astray, a grieving trout bum gone fishing with his father's remains, an artist overwhelmed by incarnate beauty—these are just a few of the iconic yet utterly unique characters in Thomas Lynch's spirited collection. Set in Michigan's north woods, in Ohio's interior, on islands, in casinos, and in distant cities, these stories are linked by the gone and not forgotten: former spouses, dead parents, and missing children. In pursuit of love and its redemptions, these are pilgrims haunted by memory, dogged by desire, made radiant by romance and its denouements.

With the elegant prose of Frederick Busch and the Irish sensibility of William Trevor, Lynch masterfully creates a world where mirage and apparition are commonplace, where people searching for connection and old comforts find them both near at hand and oddly out of reach.

## Apparition & Late Fictions Details

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Author : Thomas Lynch

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# From Reader Review Apparition & Late Fictions for online ebook

## Gary Ganong says

This is a collection of short stories which are very well told. "Catch and Release" reminds me of "A River Runs Through It," the story of a pastor and his children, with a fondness for fishing. "Bloodsport" is of the genre of "No Country for Old Men." "Hunters Moon" is the tragic story of a successful casket salesman and his personal losses.. "Matinee de Septembre" chronicles the decline of a successful poet and professor who becomes overcome by obsession. "Apparition" recounts the business success of an associate pastor who becomes an acclaimed speaker but is unable to form sustained emotional attachments to women. Four of the five stories concern the inability of successful people to achieve happiness in their personal lives. Perhaps Lynch observed that people who pursued their careers with abandon neglect their personal lives.

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## Ploni Almoni says

A good writer. All of the stories are good. The novella, "Apparition", is terrific. Well, this paragraph is: "He had long since lost hope of a woman who could love him like a wife would and love his children like a mother. That mixture of passion and sacrifice seemed quite impossible to him now. Not because such women did not exist, but because he lacked what it was they wanted."

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## Nancy says

Nobody can deny the craftsmanship and lyric beauty of the writing, or the depth of themes explored--loss, grief, love in all its manifestations. I love Lynch's essays and poems unreservedly. As a fiction writer, however, he's uneven.

While Lynch is surefooted, deft and compelling when writing from the masculine perspective, the single story in this collection written from a woman's point of view was, frankly, mediocre. It's as if Lynch has trouble understanding women. They're either runaway wives, sweet young things married to geezers--or women who spend way too much time absorbed in their careers, wardrobes and self-indulgence. The most appealing woman in the book provides sex, then disappears.

The old saw "write about what you know" seems to apply, in spades to Thomas Lynch. When writing about the majesty and ordinariness of death, or constructing exquisite poems, he's unparalleled. Before he writes more short stories, he should read more female-authored fiction, however.

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## Rebecca says

This strong story collection draws on Lynch's career as an undertaker, during which he has often had to embalm and bury victims of violent crime. Don't miss "Matinée de Septembre," a clever reimagining of *Death in Venice* set during the financial crisis, and "Bloodsport," which links hunting and homicide in an

eerie tale that was chosen for *The Best American Mystery Stories 2001*. “Apparition” (the novella, though it would have been better at short story length), which tells of a Methodist pastor’s fall from grace and subsequent championing of divorce, reminded me of Richard Russo and Anne Tyler. And in “Catch and Release,” Danny, a trout bum, takes his preacher father’s ashes (in a Thermos) out on a fishing expedition and must decide where to scatter them. The story ends with one of the most striking lines I’ve ever encountered in fiction – but I won’t spoil the surprise.

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## Genesis says

### Only Willing To Catch

*Apparition & Late Fictions: A Novella and Stories* by Thomas Lynch. Published by W.W. Norton & Company, 2010.

Thomas Lynch’s collection of short stories in his book *Apparition and Late Fictions* are examples of Lynch’s continuous theme of life and death. Along with his knowledge of being a mortician comes the character development that can be found in a full length novel. Lynch creates a new world in each story with its own situations and sentiments and yet the reader can relate to the characters’ feelings towards the one they have lost.

Lynch’s use of sensory details also helps the reader envision the scenery throughout the pieces. Whether the piece takes place in a local river where a fisherman mourns the loss of his father or in an airplane where a middle aged woman remembers her late husband. Lynch is able to keep the reader’s interest by using language that is appropriate for each story and by using the setting as a way to bring together the whole aspect of how life and death relate to each other.

“The thermos bottle with his father’s ashes in it rested on the front seat of the drift boat” (Lynch 15). “Catch and Release” is a story detailing the history of its main character Danny. In the story, Danny has taken his father’s ashes to the river to go fishing. Whether the reader is aware of terminology used in fishing or not, it does not distract the reader that much from the use of rich language present throughout the piece. Lynch describes the river through Danny’s perception which makes it easy for the reader to understand his relationship with the river and his father: “He loved the snug hold of the river on his boat, the determination of its current, the certain direction, the quiet” (17). The way that Lynch personifies something that was never alive compared to the ashes of a man who was very much alive is something the reader can appreciate throughout the rest of the book, not just the story.

Lynch then continues his character development in the characters in the stories “Bloodsport” and “Hunter’s Moon”. The helplessness in the characters is what makes the stories believable, relatable, and interesting for the reader. One can feel sympathize for the father in “Hunter’s Moon”, Harold Keehn. Harold looks back at his life and thinks about the decisions he made early in his life and the relationship he had with his daughter. This situation is something that most people can relate to.

The continuous wit of Lynch’s writing style is what saves the pieces from being boring because these stories all deal with death and some readers may need a mental break. Lynch embeds his experiences with death in each story, giving the stories more personality. For example, in “Bloodsport” there is a mortician who takes care of a father and many years later a young girl with whom he knew briefly. The character of Martin is

more believable because of Lynch himself. Lynch seems to explore gothic, sentimental, and almost mathematical themes to each story. Overall, the book was easy to read and the language was rich.

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### **Lawyer says**

Thomas Lynch has been known for a long time as an eloquent essayist. His book, "The Undertaking" is a breathtaking look at life, death and loss. In it he movingly relates the obligation to the dead for the sake of the living. Lynch is a mortician, an unlikely occupation for a natural born author. He is not the stereotypical undertaker out to sell the bereaved his most expensive model casket during the time of their loss. He is a poet. And, he has written magnificently on being an Irish-American. Equally captivating are his short stories. Although "Bloodsport" was a 2001 mystery short story of the year several years back, I had not had the opportunity to read any of Lynch's fiction until he gathered his stories in this anthology. This is not a light-weight read. If you are looking for fluff you will not find it here. Lynch's characters do not lead easy lives. Things have a way of happening to them that they do not expect. And the things that happen are generally for the worse. It is how Lynch's characters respond to life's misfortunes that form the core of his stories. As all people, some respond better than others. The central theme in all of the stories is wanting to belong to someone or something. Isolation is a recurring situation Lynch's characters find make for a lonely life. Each of them might find themselves strolling along with J. Alfred Prufrock, wondering whether they should wear their trousers rolled and whether they dared to eat a peach. Lynch can write with a gentleness that lulls the reader into a denouement that lands a punch deep into the gut. It is safe to think that none of Lynch's characters had lives that turned out as they expected.

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### **Todd says**

This is good writing, simply put. I was stunned by the first story, Catch & Release, both by its concise language and the way Lynch was completely inside the mind of the protagonist. The novella, Apparition, is a revelation in and of itself. The way that the author takes on weighty issues such as adultery, consumerism, the realm of "self-improvement", and religiousness (rather than religion itself) through the eyes of the narrator is masterful. As a short story enthusiast I was very taken in by the muscular prose, which while being manly wasn't an exercise in machismo. Highly recommended to short story readers and also to women who like to occasionally read a "guy book".

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### **Karen says**

I enjoyed this book, thought the stories were well written. I live in Michigan, so all of the settings were familiar to me, which made the book that much more enjoyable.

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### **Lauryn says**

There are points and sections of writing that create some beautiful images and can be inspiring. However, I wasn't enthralled in most of the stories, hence taking 8 months to read through it.

His writing style, in this collection at least, is very male centric, even the one short written from the point of view of a woman is very sex focused in a way that doesn't really fit and it's easy to tell it was written by a man. At times, it can be uncomfortable to read and rather objectifying towards women, and sometimes I would wonder if certain passages were needed.

While he has some good moments, it's not a book I'd pick up to read again.

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### **Lawral says**

There are some truly beautiful moments in each story in *Apparition & Late Fictions*, the kind you want to copy out and carry around with you because they are so gorgeously written, even out of context, but the stories themselves didn't quite do it for me. Even though they're not related, they all kind of run together with the same setting, same sentiment, almost the same single narrator in each one brooding on their aloneness (not that this isn't warranted, this is a book that is all about the aftermath of death). This is still a relaxing a beautiful read, but the stories will be much more appreciated if they are spaced out and not read all at once.

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### **Patty says**

I think Lynch is an excellent author. His essays are remarkable - I didn't think that I would ever want to read a book by an undertaker, but Lynch convinced me to do so. So I was looking forward to these short stories.

They did not disappoint. The first story, "Catch and Release" moved so smoothly - like the river that the speaker is visiting. I had to catch my breath at the end. The other story that stuck with me was "Matinee de Septembre". The main character was mesmerizing. One review referred to Stendhal syndrome when speaking of this story. A new concept to me, but it does help to define the story in my mind.

I hope that Lynch writes more fiction, soon.

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### **Darin says**

Thomas Lynch, until now most famous for his award-winning *The Undertaking*, a study of the art of the funerary trade, tries his hand at fiction and mostly succeeds. Each of the four short stories and the novella in this collection deal with grief and loss, sometimes due to death, sometimes to the dissolution of a relationship.

"Catch and Release" focuses on a fishing guide grieving the death of his father who taught him how to fish on the same waters on which he now plies his trade. "Bloodsport" is told in flashback by an undertaker who cannot shake his memories of one client's life and death. Clearly the research Lynch did for *The Undertaking* informs this story most of all. "Hunter's Moon" tells the tale of a retired casket salesman who has buried two wives and had another leave him. He reminisces on his life, his marriages, his struggles with alcohol and his place in the world. "Matinee de Septembre" is the most page-turning among the stories, the story of a professor and poet who decides to vacation on Michigan's Mackinac Island shortly before the Fall semester begins at her university. While there she becomes entranced, perhaps obsessed, by a vision of beauty so overwhelming she risks everything in pursuit of it. The novella, "Apparition", mixes the pathos of the

breakup of a minister's marriage with the humorous advice and assistance of a Catholic priest. Moving back and forth in time, it investigates the origins of infidelity in the marriage and discovers that while saving grace might be available from sources less than divine, the price paid can result in the complete transformation of a man's spiritual life.

Well written, poetic and striking a tone that feels right, Lynch's first foray into fiction is recommended for fans of short fiction and stories of loss and grief.

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### **MattA says**

To expand on the sub-title, specifically four short-stories and a novella.

Overall, Lynch is a masterful writer. His prose is beautifully constructed. I found the first three short stories most engaging. That they focused on men from Michigan in mid-life probably had something to do with it. That's pretty much where I'm at in life as well. The fourth story I found to be a seed of a good idea, but literally left the heroine up a tree. The novella I found somewhat pointless. It was a story of a pastor who left the clergy after his wife left him and he serendipitously became a best-selling author. The story is told for the most part in first person flashback, after the narrator has achieved a great deal of worldly success as an author. I found parts of the novella to be promising: details of how the man deals with the literary life, the realities of being a small-town pastor, dealing with his wife's departure, his friendship with the local catholic priest. But the parts weren't stitched together that well.

So three pretty good short stories, one not-so-good short story and one not-so-good novella. Hence, three stars.

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### **Ellice says**

The first three stories in this collection were not for me--they all focus on life in the more rural areas of Michigan, with heavy emphasis on fishing, hunting, and so forth. It's not that they weren't good, but they just weren't something I would normally read, and they didn't break out of their Michigan-outdoorsy world to particularly catch my interest. However, the two last stories/novellas, "Matinee de Septembre" at 47 pages, and Apparition at 89 pages, appealed to me. They broke beyond outdoorsy genre fiction to literary pieces that were both interesting and moving.

Taken all together, this book makes sort of a strange kettle of fish, but there might be readers out there who would enjoy both parts equally.

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### **Tim Love says**

Death-haunted. The first story, "Catch and Release", is an ash-scattering piece with some fishing-with-dad nostalgia thrown in (they used to fish using "spoons"). One son mixes ashes with acrylics and paints portraits of the father. Another buried them next to the grave of the father's first wife. A daughter had some in a locket. The main character drops some into the river ("like a cloud of milt") and ends up mixing them with water and eating the paste with a spoon. Earlier, "He grinned at the prospect that 'just adding water' might

bring his father back". What did he learn from his father? -

"Love 'em and leave 'em' is what his father used to say, and it was true. No dinner of salmon or steelhead, and they'd had plenty, ever made him feel as full as the utter mastery involved with returning the captive to its freedom, the genuine pleasure of letting it go" (p.29)

In "Bloodsport" the main character's an embalmer. A man shot a fawn from the door of his trailer. Later he shot his departing from from the door as she was leaving him, shot her in the leg ("the way you do with any wild thing ... You hobble it first") then the chest.

"Hunter's Moon" is fine. The protagonist is a widower, a seller of caskets, a scatterer of ashes.

The last 2 stories involve writers. I wasn't convinced by the plot or characterisation of "Matinée de Septembre". The novella, "Apparition" felt long. I liked some of the more episodic passages but again, the plot and character development didn't impress me.

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