



Late Stories

Stephen Dixon

Trnsfr Books (Sep 13, 2016)

Softcover \$16.95 (250pp)

978-1-940430-87-4

Stephen Dixon's work is deeply impactful, one tale blending into the next, building on elements from previous stories.

Stephen Dixon explores the world of a writer confronting the lingering impact of his wife's death, in the collection *Late Stories*.

From the first story of this collection, "Wife in Reverse," the prose is masterful. In a page and a half, the history of Philip Seidel's relationship with his wife, Abigail, is traced backward from her death, in short, declarative sentences and brief quotations, ending with the words "That woman's going to be my wife." After this, the text falls into Seidel's inner world, as he considers his health, his sociability, his children, and his career in the fading light of his wife's memory.

Dixon delivers Seidel's thoughts in a style that blends stream of consciousness with a meandering syntax earmarking a man who has grown older and more reclusive, but is still observant about his environment. In "Talk," for example, Seidel reflects on his lack of human contact and imagines running into someone he knows in the food market:

Hi, hello, how are you? And so on. Maybe with someone whose hand he shakes, back or shoulder he pats, cheek, if it's a woman, he kisses.

This effective technique allows Dixon to probe the problems of age and bereavement with a sense of humor, and without straying too far from the emotional center of the book. Toward the end, the stories take on a sense of greater desperation, as Seidel explores the fantasy and reality of his relationship with an ex-student, and heartrendingly plays a game "what if?" concerning his relationship with Abigail.

The stories in *Late Stories*, though they can be read individually and were originally published by a variety of literary magazines, seem more like a novel in final form. One blends into the next, building on elements from previous stories. Stephen Dixon's work is deeply impactful.

PETER DABBENE (Fall 2016)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.