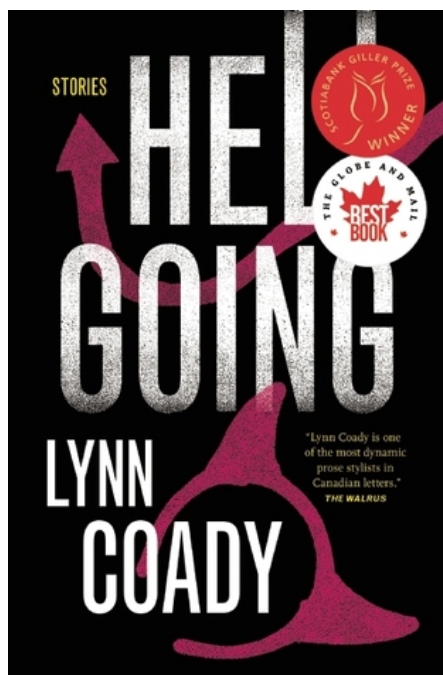




Hellgoing

Lynn Coady

Download now

Read Online ➔

Hellgoing

Lynn Coady

Hellgoing Lynn Coady

Winner of the 2013 Scotiabank Giller Prize.

Shortlisted for the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize. Selected as an Amazon.ca Best Book and for The Globe's Top 10 Books of 2013.

With astonishing range and depth, Scotiabank Giller Prize winner Lynn Coady gives us nine unforgettable new stories, each one of them grabbing our attention from the first line and resonating long after the last.

A young nun charged with talking an anorexic out of her religious fanaticism toys with the thin distance between practicality and blasphemy. A strange bond between a teacher and a schoolgirl takes on ever deeper, and stranger, shapes as the years progress. A bride-to-be with a penchant for nocturnal bondage can't seem to stop bashing herself up in the light of day.

Equally adept at capturing the foibles and obsessions of men and of women, compassionate in her humour yet never missing an opportunity to make her characters squirm, fascinated as much by faithlessness as by faith, Lynn Coady is quite possibly the writer who best captures what it is to be human at this particular moment in our history.

Hellgoing Details

Date : Published 2013 by Astoria

ISBN : 9781770893085

Author : Lynn Coady

Format : Paperback 223 pages

Genre : Short Stories, Cultural, Canada, Fiction

 [Download Hellgoing ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Hellgoing ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Hellgoing Lynn Coady

From Reader Review Hellgoing for online ebook

Corinne Wasilewski says

This is not the Lynn Coady I'd come to expect. This Lynn Coady did not boldly walk that fine line between tragedy and comedy. She did not lay bare the souls of her characters in a way that makes the reader root for them or even love them. No, this Lynn Coady is dead serious. She writes stories about mostly women (many middle-aged) in various stages of despair. There is an alcoholic, a woman whose mother has recently died, a woman whose father is seriously ill, an ambivalent nun, a writer whose losing her faith in the power of words, and a woman whose lover abruptly walks away 10 years into their relationship. There is little to no fight in these women. What we have is resignation, fear, helplessness and boredom. They are a defeated cast. I much preferred the "old" Lynn Coady. She was a lot more fun to be around and she never lost hope.

Marika says

Arghhh I wanted to like this book more than I did. I was expecting so much more.

The boiling rage and anger in all of the short stories is very well described, it truly jumps from the page and grabs you by the throat in a powerful way. But here's the problem: the rage builds-up to nothing. It boils and boils and boils.... And then: nothing. The reader is kind of left empty-handed, wondering what to do with all this frustration. Reading this book was more often annoying than pleasant. Annoying because I felt like every time I started a new story, it would be as pointless as the last one. I would finish it, wonder why this was even told, and move one.

That's how these stories felt. Almost all of them. "Take this, eat that" and "Mr. Hope" however were fascinating and had fantastic endings that really did leave me with the feeling that I had gotten a glimpse into these characters lives in a truly magical way.

"Take this, eat that" is about a nun who makes rounds in the local hospital, helping patients with their morale. She is asked to help an anorexic girl who is a religious fanatic, starving herself to be empty of food and filled with His Holiness. When the doctors are at their wit's end, they turn to the nun, thinking she'll understand this fanaticism and be able to "talk sense" into the patient. But the nun isn't a fanatic and relates in no way to this girl. The way the doctors and the social worker all look at religion as something that has no nuance is quite interesting, and just reminds us that sometimes, even two people of the same faith can't relate to each other.

Mr. Hope tells the tale of a girl who basically isn't allowed to grow up. It's a reflexion on the fact that girls become women sometimes quicker than they would wish to, and that society just doesn't accept that rapid evolution kindly. Mr. Hope is a Vice-Principal in a school who clearly harbors a good deal of self-loathing and who feels rejected by women. He wonders out loud about what love is, and seems quite lonely. He finds a kindred soul, a pure soul, in "Greta", a little schoolgirl who is smart and kind. But as soon as she grows up and becomes a pregnant teen, her purity and value is gone in the eyes of Mr Hope. She's become a woman, the kind that have hurt him, and he feels like she's betrayed him. Quite a powerful story.

All in all, I give the book 2 stars. But those two stories are a 3 1/2-4 stars for sure.

Shawn Bird says

I don't like books that make me feel stupid.

This book makes me feel stupid. It makes me feel like I must be missing something. Not only are the protagonists unsympathetic, but there are no clear conflicts, no resolutions, nothing that suggests a POINT to reading them.

Yes, they're very interesting character studies.

Yes, they show a slice of life.

But why shine the light on these sad vignettes, if not to bring some awareness, some consideration, some analysis?

It's like pointing at a disabled person in public and once everyone is looking, shaking the head and muttering, "Isn't that sad?" There's no dignity.

Bit by bit the characters are revealed, left naked, hanging in public to be stared at, with no redemption in sight.

It's depressing, and every story is the same tone. Damaged people in dark situations. No hope. No value.

Hellgoing indeed.

I don't understand why the critics are raving about this stuff. Why would anyone like this anguish? Masochists? Sadists?

I don't like it.

Barbara Sibbald says

I don't mind an ambiguous ending. I mean I think readers should do some of the imaginary lifting. However, many of the stories in this award-winning collection left me scratching my head. "Wireless" for example. And "Clear Skies." Maybe I'm out of the short-story reading habit, but then again I never have this problem with Munro's stories.

In contrast, the title story has a poignant and resonant ending.

Otherwise, this is an enjoyable read with more than little humour.

A couple of stories, including "Dogs in clothes," provide an insiders view of publishing -- and by and large it ain't pretty. Pretenders to the throne prance about uttering words of wisdom that everyone pretends to comprehend.

"Take this and eat it" is likewise highly entertaining, if only for its nun without empathy main character.

My Favourite? The concluding "Mr Hope." Brilliant.

Carolyn says

This was a short book (about 120 pages), a collection of short stories which won this year's Giller Prize. Was this the best Canadian fiction book this year? I can only conclude I am missing something that the jury saw, as I would have preferred many others on their long list. The stories were believable but the characters fell flat, and the stories had no resolution that I could see. Not my kind of book.

Kiley says

Wow, what did I think. I thought things started slow. Then I started getting into it, and then a story whacked me over the head with how good it was ("An Otherworld"), then I relaxed into full-on Coady love. She is among the best I've ever read when it comes to writing uncomfortableness: there is a barely restrainable laugh-out-loudness about her scenes and characters' thoughts as deadpan as they are. There's lots of pain in here, but *such* a refusal to wallow in it. I saw Coady read this fall so I hear her voice in my head in every story, and it is an addictive voice. Dry as burnt paper and sardonic as all hell, yet quietly, hugely compassionate. "An Otherworld" and "Body Condom" were my faves. Tens, not even fives, for these.

Meghan says

This book was compulsively readable, an instant cure for the literary drudgery of plodding through "The Orenda" last week. I finished "Hellgoing" in a matter of hours, with all my faculties and my sense of humour still intact.

My favourite stories in the collection were "Mr. Hope" and "Clear Skies", ones that I look forward to returning to in the future, as I think they'll only become better experiences on subsequent readings.

THE TORONTO QUARTERLY says

Hi, Everyone! My final interview for 2013 is with this year's Scotiabank Giller Prize winner Lynn Coady as we discuss her winning short story collection, Hellgoing (House of Anansi, 2013). Read it now on my TTQ Blog. <http://thetorontoquarterly.blogspot.c...>

Steven Langdon says

Russell Smith has called short stories "an intricate, puzzling and hugely rewarding art form" -- and this dazzling book from Lynn Coady proves his point. The judges for Canada's Giller Prize for fiction have

chosen it for the 2013 list of finalists, so many readers will come to share the author's widely diverse characters and their memorably unusual worlds of experience.

Coady opens a window to an unsettled and changing set of contemporary lives, where gender relations are in flux, people are seeing themselves in new ways as their age shifts and perceptions are being confronted by experience. From Kim who decides it is time to choose to fall in love with her younger fellow musician Hart in "Body Condom," to Samantha in "Dogs in Clothes" who somehow must balance a parent's heart operation, a lover's emotional assaults and a client's grating demands, the result is rich insight into the complexity of modern life.

There is no formula in these stories. Some are short, giving a vignette of changing perceptions (as with the title piece, "Hellgoing," that sees a sister and brother shifting their views of each other.) Some have more narrative, like "Body Condom." Most have main female characters, but there are also male points of view (as in "The Natural Elements. ") What is common to all the stories, though, is a freshness of perspective and a blunt lucidity of expression that make this book live.

I enjoyed this book -- though as Russell Smith would warn, the very diversity of the stories left me puzzled. It certainly deserves its Giller nomination. With four first rate novels nominated, however, I would look to one of them as the overall winner.

Carole says

I find myself very frustrated trying to rate this book.

Lynn Coady is a terrific writer. Her sentences are beautiful to read. If that is sufficient to win the Giller Prize, then I will concede to that.

However, I found it very irritating to be dropped into the middle of each story with virtually no background information about the characters and the situation and no resolution of the conflict at the end. I guess I am just too old-fashioned in that I like a story to have a beginning, a middle and an end. I do not mind when an author expects me to do some of the work - that is just fine - but I need more clues to get the job done than Coady seems willing to give.

I found "Mr. Hope" to be particularly frustrating. (view spoiler)

So I will give "Hellgoing" 3 stars because of the writing quality but I really feel quite grumpy about it.

Louise says

I can't say that I'm a fan of short stories that make me say "What???" when I reach the end, which is exactly what most of these stories did. Too much is left unsaid to satisfy my curiosity.

Andrew says

Here is what he's doing. He's inhaling, and then letting the smoke pour out as he sings. It cascades from his

face and swirls heavenward, enveloping them both as he extends the cigarette to his wife. A more honest gesture, now, a gesture like the nurses when they feed her, only loving.

And then of course he takes a look around, a guilty boy. As he has probably been doing intermittently throughout this performance.

And if they think I am going to stand here denouncing this and that, they are not smart. If they think I'm going to slap my palm against the light switch and start hollering for doctors and nurses and the pope, they don't have to concern themselves. If they suppose I could possibly bother with any such nonsense, let them turn around and get on with what they're doing. Let them do as they please, the whole bunch of them. Eat and smoke and starve and stand on your head as far as I'm concerned. Live and die and do what you want all over the place. I won't be the one to say a word.

Lynn Coady's sixth book, coming only two years after her impressive, Giller-shortlisted novel *The Antagonist*, is a collection of nine caustic short stories detailing an assortment of broken, isolated characters—mostly women—undone by obsessions, miscommunications, and bottled-up resentment.

In "Wireless," a self-styled alcohol aficionado works to find ways to justify her obsession to a maybe-more-than-a-one-night-stand who shares her addiction, but is seemingly less comfortable admitting to his weaknesses. The emotionally exhausted assistant of a writer on a media blitz in "Dogs in Clothes" is further worn down by frequent notifications from her brother regarding their father's seemingly unsuccessful open-heart surgery. A pushover of a landlord in "The Natural Elements" dotes in a fatherly way over a tenant—a woman abandoned in an unfamiliar environment by her professor husband.

Intense psychological unrest is prevalent in most of the stories in this collection. In "Take This and Eat it," a nun attempts to get through to an anorexic girl who is starving herself for God, treading a fine high wire between respecting the girl's rights to religious freedom and watching, waiting to be convinced her religion is merely a mask for deeper emotional issues. The bride-to-be at the heart of "An Otherworld" has a lust for bondage and an obvious desire to self-punish as if undeserving of happiness or stability. A young woman travels with her boyfriend in "Body Condom" to visit with his father, who, in his drug-addled past, abused and abandoned his family; while the boyfriend's personality is very much head-in-the-clouds—more likely as a survival mechanism than naivety—his girlfriend's bitterness bubbles to the surface—bitterness not only about being in love, but about being in love with him. And in "Mr. Hope," a peculiar friendship blooms over several years between a student and her principal as he tests her to be better than she is, better than the subpar selection of students he's tired of seeing in school day in and day out.

The two strongest stories in this collection are the titular "Hellgoing" and "Clear Skies." In the former, a brother and sister come to understand one another as adults, united against emotional parental abuse while also being forced to acknowledge that elements of their parents will always be with them, inside. In the latter, meanwhile, a writer goes to a retreat to discuss her work with her peers... who really aren't her peers because of how she sees them, as inauthentic approximations of various writers' stereotypes.

There's an overarching frustrated, atheistic tone to the stories in *Hellgoing*—a rejection of the existence of a plan or purpose for any one of us beyond that which we make for ourselves. Collectively, these are lost protagonists who, despite their surface connections and careers, seem more often to skirt the edges of introversion and isolationism. While this harder edge is welcome, the abrasiveness is like flotsam floating to the surface; Coady's stories are conceptually cutting, as are her characters, but it's all show—there's little to any of them beyond anger and discontentment outwardly cast.

Though there are no quote-unquote bad stories in *Hellgoing*, neither is there any one in particular that stands

out in my memory. Coady's moment-to-moment writing is as good as ever, but unlike the pained and instantly captivating diamond in the rough at the heart of her previous novel, the characters in Hellgoing feel like basic ideas and emotions tied loosely together, and not realized people.

Shirley Schwartz says

This book was totally unexpected. It won the prestigious Giller Prize this year and even though I'm not a real fan of short stories, I expected it to be enjoyable. It was not; at least not to me. I found this book of nine short stories difficult to get through. I only read seven of the nine, but I didn't really understand much about the stories. Some were totally confusing like the story of the nun who made hospital visits and discovered a 14 year old girl with severe anorexia. The nun thinks she is reaching this girl and she thinks she'll get her to eat, but it doesn't work. The girls keeps coming back. We never find out what happens to the girl. Frustrating. And what about the story about the new bride who engages in sado-masochistic activities with her husband in the basement jungle that he has created? Bizarre. The other five stories that I read were equally as frustrating. I'm sorry Giller judges. You have made a mistake this time. I like stories with a beginning, and end, a plot to link them and characters that I can relate to and understand.

Barbara says

"Blessed are the cracked, for they shall let in the light."

-- Groucho Marx

An alcoholic writer with commitment issues, a nun sickened by the sight of an anorexic teen and a middle-aged woman manipulated by her young lover.

They aren't your typical heroes, but you will find yourself rooting for them in "Hellgoing."

The Giller Prize-winning short story collection boasts a smorgasbord of emotionally-stunted characters caught in periods of transition in their lives.

While each of the nine stories stands on its own, author Lynn Coady does a masterful job of tying them together through common themes of escapism, forgiveness, and sometimes, even redemption.

Coady's strength is -- and has always been, for longtime fans -- her ability to transfix readers quickly. Her precise writing always packs a punch emotionally, drawing in readers with the depth of her characters. Even if you, as a reader, can't relate to a specific situation, you can always appreciate the emotional richness of the characters at hand.

In "Hellgoing," Coady has highlighted the true beauty of the fallen, the broken and the weakened, often cast as 'losers' in the real world. She has cut through the fiction of perfection in our world to expose how we are all struggling in one form or another.

Heather says

This is the first book I have read, in which the short stories don't have any endings. You're reading along, following the plot (although there are ambiguous monuments, along the way) and suddenly it ends! There aren't conclusions. Therefore I would think I missed something, re-trace my steps and then realize....nope there isn't anything-more written...

Karen says

I've been a Lynn Coady fan for ages. I need to reread some of her earlier works--they have a distinct voice, a darkness, and a bitterness that I really liked. These stories are all well written, but only a few grabbed me in remotely the same way.

Dina Desveaux says

I read the first two stories in one go. At the end of the title story of Coady's Giller prize winning collection, *Hellgoing*, I noticed the walls felt like they were closing in. My space began feeling less spacious, hovering towards claustrophobic.

The strength in Coady's stories resides in impeccably constructed sentences, in characters we secretly fear will resonate with hidden aspects of ourselves, and in the brilliant interweaving of present despair with reimagined perceptions of those past events, those moments of stolen innocence, that haunt us through life.

Coady's characters—a cast of mostly broken women, what another reviewer aptly called a cast of despair—are dogged by regrets, resentments and obsessions. Several of these bitter inner conflicts reminded me of waking nightmares that gather flesh, albeit thin and yes, restrained flesh. Incapable of escaping the past, these women marinate (Coady's word) in their despair. And we watch them—submerged—surrendering to acid vernaculars.

When I finished reading my favourite story in the collection, *Take This and Eat It*, I felt the walls pressing in closer.

[4.4 stars]

Friederike Knabe says

Lynn Coady's new story collection, *Hellgoing*, brings together nine self-contained stories that take a realistic and thought provoking look at a wide range of human relationships in today's world. Reading them we are pushed or pulled into something like a voyeur role, observing in close-up fragments of ongoing or evolving relationships between an array of distinct characters, be they in couples, with family or friends, or crossing paths in professional or casual encounters. Some of the stories can take you on a bit of a rough ride; they rarely are smooth, easy or the content just pleasant. While they might leave us with a sense of unease they also stimulate us to consider more deeply the underlying questions and issues that the author raises. Are they a reflection of contemporary reality or, at minimum, of certain aspects of it? Very likely. Among the quotes on the book's back cover, one (by the National Post) reads: "...There is a searing honesty here about

humankind's inability or unwillingness, to make an effort at connection, but the author's own humanity rescues her vision from descending into despair or nihilism." I couldn't have stated my reaction any better. If you look for romantic love or happiness, you will not easily find it in any of these stories.

One story from the collection has remained etched in my mind more than any of the others, titled, Mr. Hope. It is written from the perspective of a young female teacher, who, upon returning to her first school, is reliving intense childhood memories, among them her first encounters with her teacher, Mr. Hope. Lynn Coady exquisitely captures the feelings of a young girl, her anxieties but also her independent spirit. Interweaving the vividly reimagined child's perception with that of the hindsight of the adult looking back, the author tells a story that not only conveys narrative tension and inner drama, she convincingly brings out the girl's emotional confusion and conflicts in a way that will, in some way or another, sound familiar to most readers.

Among the other stories, some characters stand out for me more than others, such as a nun in a hospital who applies her counselling to get an anorexic girl with a religious obsession to take "some food". The title story tackles another important and well-known subject: deep and lasting family strains going back decades that the female protagonist cannot shake off. However, a "reunion" demands a different response so many years later.

While all stories are written from the distance of a third person narrator, they do often cut through the surface of the characters' 'normalcy' and expose what lies underneath. Coady's stories focus more on the women's mental state of mind than that of their male counterparts. There is, for example, the young bride who has discovered that "twenty-something" sex is no longer adequate (or never was) and her new partner is a willing if somewhat reluctant participant in the new experiments. Coady pinpoints many of the ambitions and anxieties that younger women experience, whether in private or professional life. She is an astute observer of people and scenarios and her depiction of her central characters is not without a sense of humour or irony.

Canadian Lynn Coady, is with *HELLGOING* the recent winner of the Scotiabank Giller Prize 2013 and a finalist for the Writers Trust Fiction Prize.

Krista says

I closed the final page of this collection of short stories (a slim volume, doesn't take long to power through them) thinking that this was a curious choice to win the Giller Prize -- at first blush this wasn't my favourite Canadian book of the year; this wasn't even my favourite Canadian book of short stories of the year. This passage that I flagged early on persisted in sticking out in my mind:

Jane flops herself off Ned like a seal, grunting also like a seal. That's what she feels like at such times. All torso, no limbs. A long, tapering creature, new and primordial, like something pooped out of something else.

If that isn't the strangest sex scene I've ever read, I don't know what is. My mind kept returning to, "Why 'pooped'?" What a bizarre choice of word, especially in a capital "L" *Literary* work -- and this brain worm wouldn't let me go. And the more it gnawed at me the more I wondered if that wasn't rather the point: So much of what happens in *Hellgoing* is off-kilter like that -- characters' actions were baffling and upsetting to me, they seemed baffling and upsetting to the *characters*, and the more I thought about it the more I thought, "Well, isn't that just like real life?"

In many of the stories (Wireless, Dogs In Clothes, Take This And Eat It, Clear Skies, The Natural Elements), the main characters appear to be doing fine, just going about their daily routines, but small complications (memories or new events) are subtly added until, in the final paragraphs, these characters are trapped, cornered, and lashing out, fighting back (if only in their own minds) against something the people around them don't recognise. As these stories ended, I was repeatedly taken aback -- where did that come from? It was frustrating at the time, but like I said, these stories linger, and now I'm left considering that twenty pages isn't really that long to get to know somebody -- maybe twenty *years* isn't that long to get to know somebody. *Hellgoing* features friends and colleagues and siblings and parents and spouses who have no clue what's going through the minds of the people that they think they know -- and isn't that just like real life?

I was most especially affected by the final story, Mr. Hope. It reminded me so much of my own childhood and relationships I had with elementary school teachers, it felt so *truthful*, that I wondered how closely it might have been based on Lynn Coady's own childhood. Considering that a character in Clear Skies suggests that there is little difference, in the end, between memoir and fiction, this parenthetical aside in Mr. Hope struck me as significant:

(I always seem to be telling stories about chain-link fences, it occurs to me now. Maybe they're a thing belonging to the implicit troublemakers of this world; children and prisoners trying to get out; would-be criminals trying to get in.)

I could be reading too much into that, but coming as it did near the end of the collection, it felt like a note from the author instead of simply from the character, and it made me consider how so many of her characters felt fenced in; separated from the people around them. The book, and this story, ends on the line: *There was a fence, and someone was against it*. And isn't that just like real life?

The more I've thought about *Hellgoing*, and I can't *stop* thinking about it, the more stars it's earned, and in the end, somehow, it's *because* Coady used "pooped" in a sex scene, not despite it.

Elle says

Oh, how I wanted to love these stories. I had very much enjoyed Coady's previous work *The Antagonist*, and with the knowledge that this recently won the Giller, I expected more. Sadly, I was left disappointed.

Short stories need to walk a fine line between giving the reader enough information to understand the characters and the story without taking up too much time. In reading these stories, it felt as though there were huge swathes - gaping holes - in which pertinent information was missing. The stories themselves all had the odd characteristic of bashing you over the head with their point while simultaneously being overly coy and vague in their endings.

Overall, I found it an entirely forgettable book, each story forgotten as soon as the next one was begun. I can't help but wonder if this book won the Giller either A) to balance out the lack of acknowledgment for *The Antagonist* (Coady's better work) or b) to support the notion, in the wake of Munro's Nobel win, that the short story is "back".