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**Booking Passage**

Thomas Lynch

Vintage, £7.99

After his thematically tight first volume of essays, *The Undertaking* (1997), Lynch loosened up for *Bodies in Motion and at Rest* (2000), and now this poet's favoured prose form is even more literally essayistic in action. *Booking Passage*, while steering close to Lynch's established autobiographical mode, is a collection of "Fits and Starts", "Bits & Pieces" and "Odds & Ends", all of which make various essays at understanding the contemporary world through individual personal reflections. Lynch has made "thirty-some crossings in thirty-some years" between Michigan and his ancestral cottage in Clare, and the rituals of his returns form the core of free-handed pieces that emphasise by turn both cultures of the Irish-American axis. While as robustly stoical and funny as ever, Lynch deploys an elegiac mood that knows no fear of cultural pride. Safely at home in his wise ruminations on the domestic and in his idiosyncratic brand of hearth-fire memoir, the essay form in Lynch's hands has many adventures.

**John Kenny**