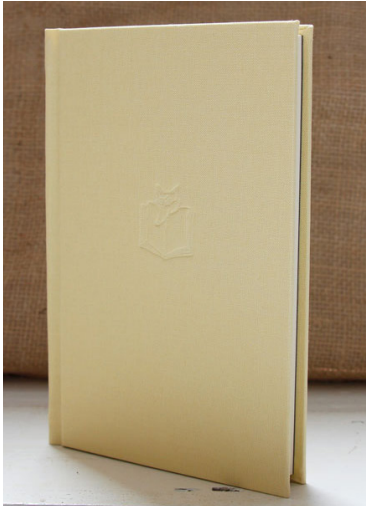


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SLIGHTLY FOXED EDITION NO. 37



Hilary Mantel *Giving up the Ghost*

Hilary Mantel has said that this powerful and haunting book came about by accident. She never intended to write a memoir, but the sale of a much-loved cottage in Norfolk prompted her to write about the death of her stepfather, and from there 'the whole story of my life began to unravel'. It is a story of 'wraiths and phantoms', a story not easy to forget.

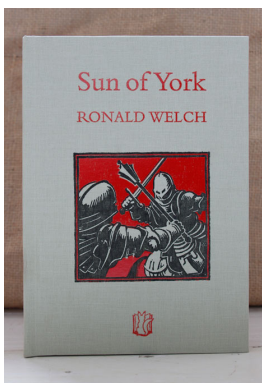
Mantel grew up in a working-class suburb of Manchester, a clever, imaginative little girl, alert to adult atmospheres and overheard, half-understood conversations, and to strange, inexplicable presences she sensed around her. Her Catholic primary school, with its casual brutality, was a rude awakening, and before she went to senior school life at home had become an emotional obstacle course too, after her gentle and rather scholarly father was supplanted by her tougher and less sympathetic stepfather Jack. By the time she became a law student in London Mantel had fallen in love with her future husband, and it was then that the gradual signs of a painful and long undiagnosed medical condition began to appear.

Perhaps the most powerful and shocking parts of the book are her unsparingly honest, unselfpitying and grimly amusing accounts of her dealings with the medical profession. One result was that she was unable ever to have a child. But the daughter she had dreamed of haunted her imagination, and this little ghost, who was to have been named Catriona, is one of those she lays to rest. Another result was that she started writing. The rest, as they say, is history. *Giving up the Ghost* is the story of a life full of challenges, but it is very far from being a misery memoir. It is a compulsively readable and ultimately optimistic account of what made Hilary Mantel the writer she is, full of courage, insight and wry humour. (£17.50 • 978-1-910898-00-0)

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