

Learning to Talk: Short Stories

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In the wake of Hilary Mantel's captivating memoir, 'Giving Up the Ghost', this collection of loosely autobiographical stories locates the transforming moments of a haunted childhood. This sharp, funny collection of stories drawn from life begins in the 1950s in an insular northern village 'scoured by bitter winds and rough gossip tongues.' For the child narrator, the only way to survive is to get up, get on, get out. In 'King Billy is a Gentleman', the child must come to terms with the loss of a father and the puzzle of a fading Irish heritage. 'Curved Is the Line of Beauty' is a story of friendship, faith and a near-disaster in a scrap-yard. The title story sees our narrator ironing out her northern vowels with the help of an ex-actress with one lung and a Manchester accent. In 'Third Floor Rising', she watches, dazzled, as her mother carves out a stylish new identity. With a deceptively light touch, Mantel locates the transforming moments of a haunted childhood.

Hilary Mantel is the author of thirteen books , including A PLACE OF GREATER SAFETY, BEYOND BLACK, and the memoir GIVING UP THE GHOST. Her two most recent novels, WOLF HALL and its sequel BRING UP THE BODIES have both been awarded The Man Booker Prize - an unprecedented achievement.'Mercilessly funny' Daily Telegraph 'Mantel writes with wit, compassion and great elegance.' Independent on Sunday On 'Giving Up the Ghost': 'Like Lorna Sage's BAD BLOOD, GIVING UP THE GHOST is a story of childhood that is also a piece of history. Hilary Mantel's self-portrait is a masterpiece of wit, but it conjures up a time and a place and an epoch of female experience with razor-edged sobriety. That past, so thoroughly vanished, is made to live again here - disclosed, cannily and heartbreakingly, as once it too yielded up its author's mind.' Rachel Cusk 'What a remarkable writer she is. She is piercingly, even laceratingly observant, and every remembered detail has the sharpness of a good photograph. And yet for all its brilliance of detail and its black comedy the memoir is heavy with atmosphere. It's a very startling and daring memoir; the more I read it the more unsettling it becomes.' Helen Dunmore 'I was riveted. It's raw, it's distressing and it's full of piercing insights into a novelist's mind.' Margaret Forster

Other Books

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