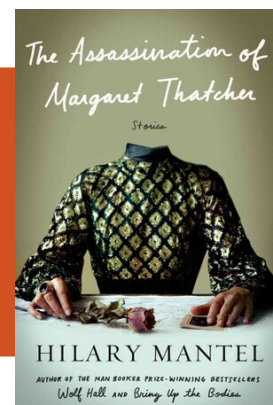




The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher and Other Stories

Hilary Mantel



Author Background

Dame Hilary Mantel is well known for her bleak comedy and socially probing novels set in a range of contemporary and historical contexts. She has studied at the London School of Economics and the University of Sheffield, after which she worked as a social worker and then as a store assistant.

After moving to Botswana with her husband, she was driven to write by the cultural isolation she experienced in Africa and the inactivity imposed on her by a chronic medical condition. In 1983 she and her husband moved to Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, where she completed her first novel *Every Day is Mother's Day*, before eventually moving back to England.

She is the two-time winner of the Man Booker Prize for her best-selling novels, *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*. In 2006 she was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire and in 2014 she was appointed a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

Book Summary

The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher is a collection of ten short stories published in 2014, nine of which have previously been published at various intervals since 1993. Despite the 21 years that pass between the publication of the oldest and most recent stories, they are tied together, primarily, through being told from a vantage point years after the events recounted took place.

The collection includes stories of dislocation and family fractures, infidelities and sinister deaths. Mantel writes acutely about marriage, class, family and sex.

The title story springs from a fantasy that Mantel confessed in an interview: in 1983 she looked out of the window of her Windsor flat and saw the Prime Minister, whom she hated, walking unguarded in the hospital gardens next door. What if she had had a gun?

Discussion Questions

- ❖ Do you have a favourite story in the collection?
- ❖ What main ideas or themes thread through these stories?
- ❖ Mantel's narrators are not comfortable companions. Can you connect with a character you dislike? How does Mantel help you achieve that connection?
- ❖ Collections of short stories don't always succeed as unified works. How does Mantel achieve a sense of wholeness in this book?
- ❖ How does this collection of stories compare to other works by the author?
- ❖ In September 2014, in an interview published in *The Guardian*, Mantel confessed to fantasising about the murder of Margaret Thatcher and fictionalised it in a short story. In the interview she expanded on her hatred for the former British Prime Minister. Allies of Thatcher called for a police investigation. Were Mantel's fantasies a crime, in bad taste or an imaginative reaction to troubled times?
- ❖ Have you ever fantasised about perpetrating a crime?
- ❖ Apart from the obvious, can you identify some autobiographical elements in the book?

References

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