



**Hilary Mantel**

## **Dame Hilary Mary Mantel born Thompson (6 July 1952 – 22 September 2022)**

Hilary Mantel was a British writer whose work includes historical fiction, personal memoirs and short stories. Her first published novel, 'Every Day Is Mother's Day', was released in 1985. She went on to write 12 novels, two collections of short stories, a personal memoir, and numerous articles and opinion pieces.

Mantel won the Booker Prize twice: the first was for her 2009 novel 'Wolf Hall', a fictional account of Thomas Cromwell's rise to power in the court of Henry VIII, and the second was for its 2012 sequel 'Bring Up the Bodies'. The third instalment of the Cromwell trilogy, 'The Mirror and the Light', was longlisted for the same prize.



**Hilary Mary Thompson** was born on July 6, 1952 in Glossop, Derbyshire, the eldest of three children, with two younger brothers, and raised as a Roman Catholic in the Mill Village of Hadfield where she attended St Charles Roman Catholic Primary School.

Her parents, Margaret (née Foster) and Henry Thompson (a clerk), were both Catholics of Irish descent, born in England. When Mantel was seven, her mother's lover, Jack Mantel, moved in with the family. He shared a bedroom with her mother, while her father moved to another room. Four years later, when she was eleven, the family, except for her father, moved to Romiley, Cheshire, to escape the local gossip. She never saw her father again.

When the family relocated, Jack Mantel (1932–1995) became her unofficial stepfather, and she legally took his surname. She attended Harrytown Convent school in Romiley, Cheshire.

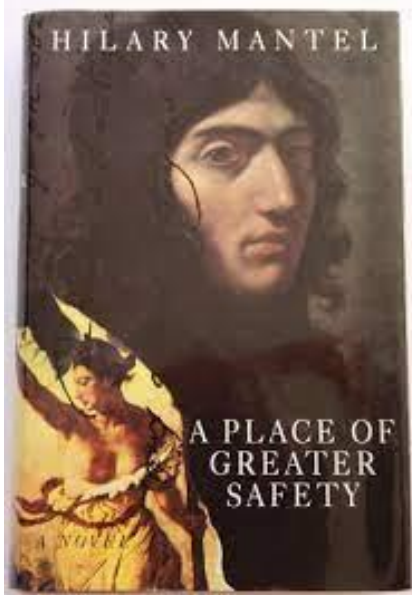


In 1970, she began studies at the London School of Economics to read law. She transferred to the University of Sheffield and graduated as a Bachelor of Jurisprudence in 1973. After university, **Mantel** worked in the social work department of a geriatric hospital and then as a sales assistant at Kendal's Department Store in Manchester.

In 1973 she married Gerald McEwen, a geologist. In 1974, she began writing a novel about the French Revolution, but was unable to find a publisher (it was eventually released as

'A Place of Greater Safety' in 1992). In 1977 **Mantel** moved to Botswana with her husband where they

lived for the next five years. Later, they spent four years in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. She later said that leaving Jeddah felt like 'the happiest day of [her] life'; she published memoirs of this period in the 'The Spectator', and the London Review of Books.

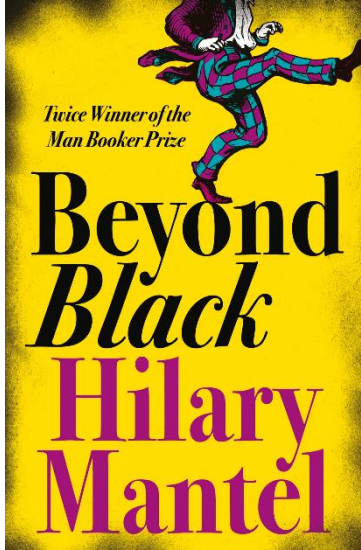
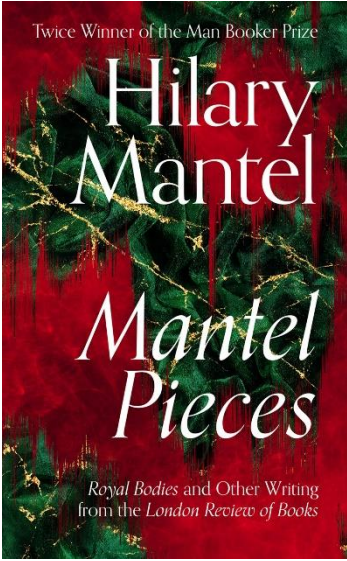
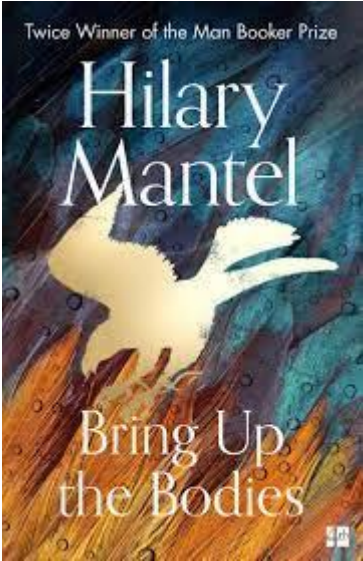
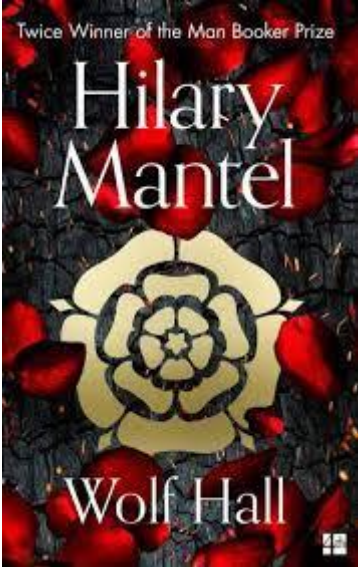


**Mantel** married Gerald McEwen in 1973. They divorced in 1981 but remarried in 1982. McEwen gave up geology to manage his wife's business. They lived in Budleigh Salterton, Devon.

During her twenties, **Mantel** had a debilitating and painful illness. She was initially diagnosed with a psychiatric illness, hospitalised, and treated with antipsychotic drugs, which reportedly produced psychotic symptoms. In consequence, **Mantel** refrained from seeking help from doctors for some years. Finally, in Botswana and desperate, she consulted a medical textbook and realised she was probably suffering from a severe form of endometriosis, a diagnosis confirmed by doctors in London. The condition and (at the time) necessary surgery – a surgical menopause at the age of 27 – left her unable to have children, and continued to disrupt her life. She later said ‘you've thought your way through questions of fertility and menopause and what it means to be without children because it all happened catastrophically’. This led Mantel to see the problematised woman's body as a theme in her writing. She later became patron of the Endometriosis SHE Trust.



Some of Hilary Mantel's books.



**Hilary Mantel** died on 22 September 2022, at a hospital in Exeter, from complications of a stroke that had occurred three days earlier. Reacting to her death, author **Douglas Stuart** quoted Mantel's agent Bill Hamilton, saying 'She saw and felt things us ordinary mortals missed, but when she perceived the need for confrontation she would fearlessly go into battle', **Bernardine Evaristo** called Mantel a 'massive talent', and **Nilanjana Roy** called Mantel 'tenacious, gifted, visionary'.

