

## People & Places: Hilary Mantel to receive Peggy V. Helmerich Distinguished Author Award

By James D. Watts Jr. *Tulsa World* Dec 2, 2018



Hilary Mantel

British novelist Hilary Mantel, whose novels about the intrigues in the court of King Henry VIII won Great Britain's top literary prize, will be in Tulsa on Friday and Saturday, Dec. 7-8, to receive the Peggy V. Helmerich Distinguished Author Award.

Mantel is the 34th writer to be honored with this prize, presented by the Tulsa Library Trust.

She will be presented with the engraved crystal book and the \$40,000 cash award at a black-tie gala at 6:30 p.m. Friday at Central Library, Fifth Street and Denver Avenue.

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Mantel will also take part in a free public event beginning at 10:30 a.m. Saturday at Central Library. She will talk about her work and will sign copies of her books, which will be available for purchase.

In 1985, Mantel published her first novel, "Every Day is Mother's Day," a dark comedy about a social worker trying to deal with an eccentric family.

She published a number of novels with contemporary settings, such as "Eight Months on Ghazza Street (1988)," about the clash between Islamic and Western cultures and based on the time Mantel lived in Saudi Arabia, and "Beyond Black (2005)," about a medium attempting to exorcise her own demons.

But Mantel's greatest success has been with her deeply researched and brilliantly evocative historical novels, beginning with her 1992 novel, "A Place of Greater Safety," about three pivotal figures of the French Revolution.

"Wolf Hall (2009)," her first about Thomas Cromwell and his rise to power as Henry VIII's most trusted adviser during one of the most volatile periods in British history, earned Mantel the prestigious Man Booker Award.

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The sequel, "Bring Up the Bodies," won the Man Booker in 2012, making Mantel the first woman and the first British writer to win the prize more than once.

Mantel is working on the final novel in the trilogy, "The Mirror and the Light," which should be published in late 2019.

In an interview published with the Tulsa World when Mantel was announced as this year's winner, Mantel said, "I didn't know it would be a trilogy. But when I got into the material, I saw what opportunities it offered and how much was unexplored — in history books, as well as in fiction. So the project flowered out from the middle.

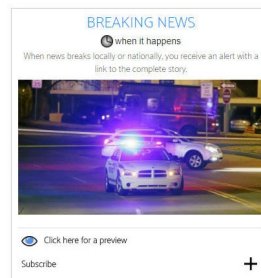
"I quickly saw that (Cromwell) was key to understanding the reign of Henry VIII," she said. "(Though) this was well-known to historians, Cromwell was an obscure character to the general public."

Still, Mantel said, she did not think the books would receive the sort of attention and following that they have, becoming best-sellers and inspiring a TV series and stage plays.

"It wasn't news to me that the Tudors are popular," Mantel said. "But I didn't think the public would take so enthusiastically to a complex, nuanced telling, which approached the material from an unfamiliar angle. The books are demanding of the reader — they need commitment and attention. I didn't want to sell my story short. So I wrote it the way I thought it needed to be written and was astonished and gratified that readers seemed to be waiting for it."

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