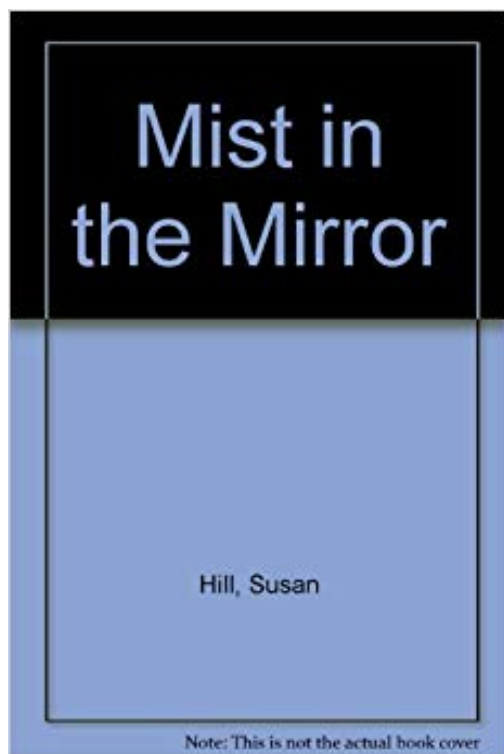


Mist in the Mirror *by* Susan Hill



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ISBN: 0708932207

ISBN13: 978-0708932209

Author: Susan Hill

Book title: Mist in the Mirror

Publisher: Ulverscroft Large Print Books Ltd; Large Print e. edition (January 1995)

Language: English

Category: Fantasy

Size PDF version: 1458 kb

Size ePUB version: 1944 kb

Size FB2 version: 1616 kb

Other formats: docx mobi doc txt

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Reviews of the *Mist in the Mirror* *by* Susan Hill

Diab

I love Susan Hill. Her writing is excellent. Her masterworks, **The Woman in Black** and **The Man in the Picture**, are magnificent. This work was the first I read by her that I found to be good but not great. I will cover the points separately and clearly.

In this book are some very vivid scenes, which gave me the impression that Ms. Hill envisioned these scenes prior to writing and strung them together the best she could, but the plot, such as it is, is weak.

Ms. Hill has two plotlines going at once:

1. Sir James Monmouth's obsession with deceased explorer Conrad Vane, which takes him around

the World in Vane's footsteps and to every place he can learn more information about Vane, against whom he is warned repeatedly by everyone who knows anything about Vane--in much the same way the locals in Crythin Gifford are cold to Arthur Kipps.

2. Sir James Monmouth's repeated sightings of an unwell boy he comes to believe is the ghost of an ancestor. Only the second one is strong enough to maintain this reader's interest.

In the mean time, Ms. Hill, who is the mistress of description of places, persons, and subjective narrator emotional states, lingers a little too long on descriptions of places, persons, and subjective narrator emotional states. The result was my saying, "This had better be going somewhere." The narrator, too, has the propensity of vacillating, which I suspect is just Ms. Hill's excuse to pad her manuscript. To wit:

"The evening's conversation had disturbed me profoundly and I wanted to retreat into the cocoon of my illness, and of being protected and sheltered here in this house, for I was afraid now of what I would face when I ventured out of it. The description of the countryside by Kittiscar had awakened memories, and perhaps if I had delved more thoroughly into them I might have teased them to the surface, but instead I turned away from them deliberately, for I knew the frustration of trying to bring them to my consciousness. They would swirl and drift about, I would half-glimpse them, only to lose them again, as I had lost my own reflection through the mist in the mirror at Alton."

This is right after his burning desire to do so, his insistence at supper of being told anything and everything possible regarding Kittiscar. As you see, nothing has happened in this paragraph, excepting his announcement that he is now afraid of what he had just spent pages desperate to find. This makes no sense, and it seems as if Ms. Hill is either stalling or enjoying the sight of her own prose a little too much. I cannot blame her for that; her prose is luxurious. But to the point, Madam, please.

Though the narrator does learn the connection between the two plotlines, the climax and resolution, it must be admitted painfully, are disappointments. The action consists of nothing more than some ghost sightings. At the end, apparently when Ms. Hill had grown as fatigued of this story as I had, the narrator reveals the entire history behind these sightings in one paragraph of exposition, rather than discover it along with the reader. After his investigation of these matters, he goes on with his life: "Eventually, under Sir Lionel's guidance, I took up the study of the Law, and that has been my satisfactory profession these past years." After a story filled with hints, innuendo, half-turns, and irrelevant vignettes, this book was a let-down.

The reader will no doubt ask him- or herself, "That's it?"

It was comforting to me to know that even the vaunted Ms. Hill was not perfect, and the book is definitely worth reading, for those vivid standout scenes if not the most gripping story. Even "bad" Susan Hill is better than the good of most other writers. But if you want her best, this is not it.

On the bright side, her descriptions of London are so vivid that I now feel not only that I could write of London with authority but that I could not possibly enjoy London as much as I do her descriptions of it.

Hinewen

While I didn't find the story truly scary it was a superb Victorian ghost story. I love old Gothic style tales and this one is extremely well written.

Makaitist

I love Susan Hill. Her ghost stories harken back to more civilized moment in literary history.

Phenade

Eerie. Susan Hill is a great author.

Cashoutmaster

I am a fan of Susan Hill, that said, this is a pretty good book. Not her best (the Woman in Black or the Man in the Picture) but still far superior to most of the tripe out there passing as fiction. This is the kind of creeping horror I love, the Shirley Jackson or ghost stories of Edith Wharton or Henry James kind. One of Edith Wharton's best is about a ghost you do not know you have seen until much later. I like the idea. I like the subtle, insidious kind of scare Susan Hill specializes in. If you, like me, are a Shirley Jackson fan, you will like this book.

Kabei

Loved Hill's writing until I got to the last two pages. Beyond disappointing. No resolution, no tying up of loose ends, nothing that made the rest of the book make sense. I feel like I wasted my money and time on this book. Would never bother reading another by this author.

Kagaramar

Interesting and delightful creepy story to read at night! If you like reading thoughtful and ghostly suspense, this author promises to deliver. It could be better tale but i think Susana Hill let several questions without answer, for example: what is the history of Conrand Vane and the boy? What Conrand Vane was curse?

The mist in the mirror has a good and terrific pasasteis but it does not have the same impact on the reader than Woman in Black.

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