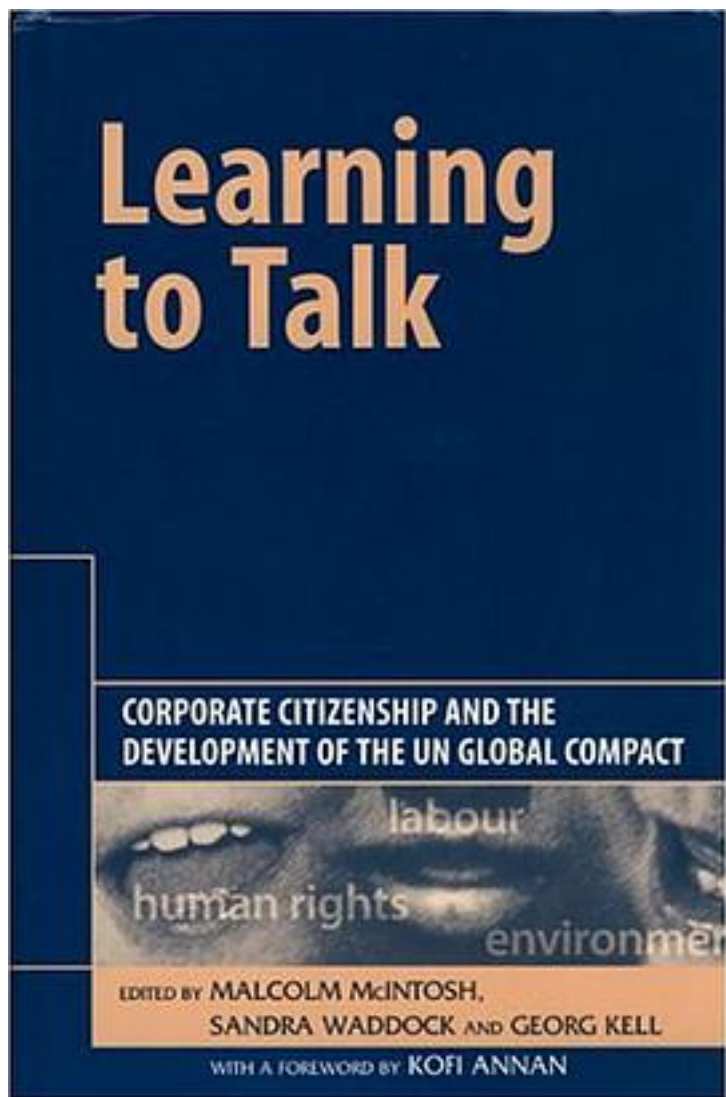


Learning to Talk



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出版者:Fourth Estate

出版时间:2003-7-7

装帧:Paperback

isbn:9780007166442

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.

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