

Mortality by Christopher Hitchens.
Atlantic Books, 2012.

There is an almost unbearable poignancy to this collection, a most unlikely juxtaposition when one recalls Christopher Hitchens the contrarian in his pomp.

Preceded by a foreword by the editor of Vanity Fair, Graydon Carter, with whom Hitchens enjoyed a close relationship both professional and personal, and followed by an afterword by Hitchens' widow Carol Blue, the eight essays track Hitchens' life from the moment of his terminal diagnosis to the moment before his death. The ideas pour out in true Hitchens style, with passion, anger, irony, humour and enormous courage.

I could not say that this was a book that I 'enjoyed' reading, but Mortality is not the sort of book that a reader 'enjoys: I can, however, say with complete conviction that my life would be the poorer had I ducked the challenge that the book represents.

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