

MURIEL SPARK Novelist

Dame Muriel Spark was born in Edinburgh in 1918. On leaving school, she studied précis writing at Heriot Watt College while teaching in a private school, later finding employment as a personal secretary.

In 1937, she went to Southern Rhodesia to marry, returning to England in 1944 after her divorce. She then entered the Political Intelligence department of the British Foreign Office and worked on various forms of subtle propaganda.

Her first interest was in poetry, and after World War II she became General Secretary of the Poetry Society and Editor of *Poetry Review*. Her own *Collected Poems 1* was published in 1967. In 1951 she won a short story competition run by *The Observer* and from then on also wrote fiction. Her first novel, *The Comforters*, was published in 1957.

She published many novels, most notably *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), which was made into a film starring Maggie Smith. Two other novels, *The Driver's Seat* (1970) and *The Abbess of Crewe* (1974), were also made into films, starring Elizabeth Taylor and Glenda Jackson respectively, and three into series for TV, one of which was *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963), a novel about being young and poor in wartime London. *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960) was adapted for radio as a musical, winning the 1962 Prix Italia, and *Memento Mori*, as well as being made into a TV series and adapted for the stage, was broadcast by the BBC. Her play, *Doctors of Philosophy*, written in 1962, was staged in London at the Arts Theatre, and in Scandinavia, where it was produced by Ingmar Bergman.

Some of Dame Muriel Spark's novels focus on unusual crimes and turns of fate, most notably *Territorial Rights* (1979), about a crime of passion; *The Hothouse by the East River* (1973); and *Not to Disturb* (1971), set on the shores of Lake Geneva. Satire was also an important part of her work. *The Abbess of Crewe* (1974), for example, is a send up of the Nixon-Watergate scandal.

She studied the lives and works of Mary Shelley, the Brontë sisters and John Masefield. Her earliest book, *Child of Light* (1951), was a critical biography of Mary Shelley, written to celebrate the centenary of her death. This was followed by biographies of Emily Brontë and John Masefield, and in 1993, *The Essence of the Brontës* was published, an anthology of her writings on the family.

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Her own autobiography, *Curriculum Vitae*, was published in 1992 and her novel, *Aiding and Abetting*, was published in 2000. Also a writer of children's books and many short stories, *The Complete Short Stories* was published in 2001. Her last novel was *The Finishing School* (2004).

Dame Muriel Spark travelled widely, and lived in Italy until her death. She received several honorary degrees, some in Oxford and London, and many in Scotland, and was elected a Companion of Literature by the Royal Society of Literature and an Honorary Member of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. She was also an Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. She was made a Dame of the British Empire in 1993.

Dame Muriel Spark died on 15 April 2006.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- The Finishing School** Viking, 2004
- All The Poems of Muriel Spark** New Directions, 2004
- Ghost Stories** New Directions, 2003
- The Complete Short Stories** Viking, 2001
- Aiding and Abetting** Viking, 2000
- A Hundred and Eleven Years Without A Chauffeur** Colophon Press, 2000
- Open to the Public** (stories) New Directions, 1997
- Omnibus IV** Constable, 1997
- Reality and Dreams** Constable, 1996
- Omnibus III** Constable, 1996
- Harper and Wilton** Colophon Press, 1996
- The Portobello Road** Penguin, 1995
- The Collected Stories of Muriel Spark** Penguin, 1994
- Omnibus II** Constable, 1994
- The French Window and the Small Telephone** (juvenile) Colophon, 1993
- The Essence of the Brontës** Peter Owen, 1993
- Omnibus I** Constable, 1993
- Curriculum Vitae** (autobiography) Constable, 1992
- Symposium** Constable, 1990
- A Far Cry from Kensington** Constable, 1988
- Mary Shelley** (revision of *The Child of Light*) E. P. Dutton, 1987
- The Stories of Muriel Spark** E. P. Dutton, 1985
- The Only Problem** Bodley Head, 1984
- Going up to Sotheby's and Other Poems** Granada, 1982
- Bang Bang You're Dead and Other Stories** Granada, 1982
- Loitering with Intent** Bodley Head, 1981

Territorial Rights Macmillan, 1979
The Takeover Macmillan, 1976
The Abbess of Crewe Macmillan, 1974
The Hothouse by the East River Macmillan, 1973
Not to Disturb Macmillan, 1971
The Driver's Seat Macmillan, 1970
The Very Fine Clock (juvenile) Macmillan, 1968
The Public Image Macmillan, 1968
Collected Stories I Macmillan, 1967
Collected Poems I Macmillan, 1967
The Mandelbaum Gate Macmillan, 1965
The Girls of Slender Means Macmillan, 1963
Doctors of Philosophy (play) Macmillan, 1962
The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie Macmillan, 1961
The Ballad of Peckham Rye Penguin, 1960
The Bachelors Macmillan, 1960
Memento Mori Macmillan, 1959
The Go-Away Bird Macmillan, 1958
Robinson Macmillan, 1958
The Comforters Macmillan, 1957
John Masefield Peter Nevill Ltd, 1953
Emily Brontë: Her Life and Work Peter Owen, 1953
Child of Light: A Reassessment of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley Tower Bridge Publications, 1951

PRIZES AND AWARDS

2005 **WH Smith Literary Award** (shortlist) *The Finishing School*
 2005 **Man Booker International Prize** (shortlist)
 2004 **Saltire Society Scottish Book of the Year Award** (shortlist) *All the Poems of Muriel Spark*
 2002 **Boccaccio Prize for European Literature (Italy)**
 2001 **Campion Award (USA)**
 1998 **PEN International Gold Pen Award**
 1996 **Scottish Arts Council Book Award** *Reality and Dreams*
 1993 **DBE**
 1992 **Ingersoll Foundation T. S. Eliot Award (USA)**
 1991 **Sunday Times Award for Literary Excellence**
 1987 **Saltire Society Scottish Book of the Year Award** *The Stories of Muriel Spark*
 1987 **Prix du Meilleur Recueil de Nouvelles Etrangères (France)** *Pan! Pan! tu es Morte*
 1966 **James Tait Black Memorial Prize (for fiction)** *The Mandelbaum Gate*
 1962 **Prix Italia (Italy)** *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*
 1951 **Observer Short Story Prize** ('The Seraph and the Zambesi')