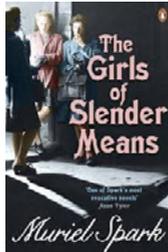
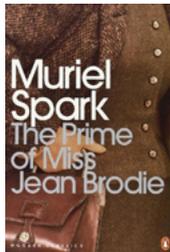


dauid higham

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MURIEL SPARK

Centenary celebration



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[Biography]



You have to live with the mystery. That's the answer in my books.

Born in 1918 in Edinburgh, Muriel Spark originally worked as a secretary and then a poet and literary journalist. She was completely unknown and impoverished until she started her career as a story writer and novelist. Then everything changed overnight.

A poet and novelist, she also wrote children's books, radio plays, a comedy *Doctors of Philosophy*, (first performed in London in 1962 and published 1963) and biographies of nineteenth-century literary figures, including Mary Shelley and Emily Brontë.

For her long career of literary achievement, which began in 1951, when she won a short-story competition in the *Observer*, Muriel Spark garnered international praise and many awards, which include the David Cohen Prize for Literature, the Ingersoll T.S. Eliot Award, the James Tait Black Memorial Prize, the Boccaccio Prize for European Literature, the Gold Pen Award, the first Enlightenment Award and the Italia Prize for dramatic radio.

From 1957, and the appearance of her first novel, *The Comforters*, she was warmly applauded by many famous writers of the day including Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene and W.H. Auden. Her novel *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* was made into a play on Broadway and the West End of London and then a famous film for which Maggie Smith won an Oscar. Muriel Spark was made a Dame in 1993 in recognition of her services to literature. She was twice short-listed for the Booker Prize, in 1969 for *The Public Image* and in 1981 for *Loitering with Intent*. She died on 15th April 2006, aged 88.

For more details on Muriel Spark's extraordinary life, please visit the website www.nls.uk/murielspark

[Celebrations]

A peer to Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene, Muriel Spark's centenary will be celebrated with a range of cultural and literary events including:

- BBC TV DOCUMENTARY
- New play adaptation of THE PRIME OF MISS JEAN BRODIE
- Performances at the South Bank Purcell Room by the Nash Ensemble of new musical compositions based on five Spark poems
- A major exhibition of Spark's work at the National Library of Scotland which holds her archive;
- An international academic conference at the University of Glasgow;
- New hardcover editions of all of the novels to be published by Birlinn with introductions by writers or critics including Ali Smith, William Boyd, Alexander McCall Smith, Candia McWilliam, James Wood, Andrew O'Hagan, Joseph Kanon, Zoe Strachan, Allan Massie, Kapka Kassabova, Dan Gunn and Richard Holloway.
- large scale public event presented by the Edinburgh International Book Festival.

[A Good Comb: The Sayings of Muriel Spark]

Celebrate the immortal Muriel Spark's hundredth birthday by imbibing a delicious glass of her bubbly wit.

A Good Comb, a small gift edition of Muriel Spark's brilliant asides, sayings, and aphorisms, is a book for sheer enjoyment. No writer offers such lively, pointed, puckish insights: "Neurotics are awfully quick to notice other people's mentalities." "It is impossible to persuade a man who does not disagree, but smiles." "The sacrifice of pleasure is of course itself a pleasure." "It is impossible to repent of love. The sin of love does not exist." "She wasn't a person to whom things happen."

Her scope is great and her striking insights are precise and unforgettable; her observations are wry, spiky and spot on – they make you laugh and nod in agreement, with a wicked smile on your face. This book will entertain you, it will even help you live your life. Drink in the pleasures of this little volume along with the benefits of taking up such advice as "Never make excuses but if you must, never make more than one it gives the appearance of insincerity." And "Beware of men bearing flowers."

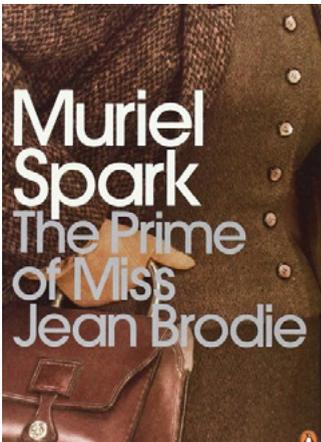


New Directions Publishing (March 2018)

[The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie]

Romantic, heroic, comic and tragic, unconventional schoolmistress Jean Brodie has become an iconic figure in post-war fiction. Her glamour, unconventional ideas and manipulative charm hold dangerous sway over her girls at the Marcia Blaine Academy – ‘the crème de la crème’ – who become the Brodie ‘set’, introduced to a privileged world of adult games that they will never forget.

Muriel Spark’s *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* was adapted into a successful stage play, and later a film directed by Ronald Neame and starring Maggie Smith.



Reviews:

‘Muriel Spark’s most celebrated novel... This ruthlessly and destructively romantic school ma’am is one of the giants of post-war fiction’ – *Independent*

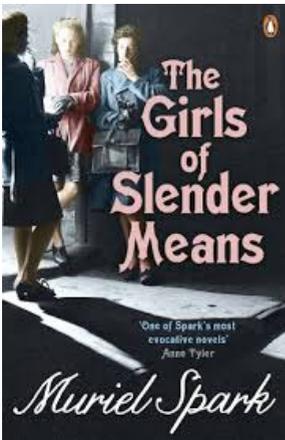
Penguin Modern Classics

Catalan (LaBreu); Chinese Simplified (Shanghai 99); Hungarian (L’Harmattan Kiado); Japanese (Hakusui-sha); Korean (Munhakdogne); Norwegian (Oktober); Portuguese (Ahab Edicoes); Spanish (Editorial Pre-Textos); Romanian (Vellant); Swedish (Modernista); Turkish (Siren Yayinlari).

[The Girls of Slender Means]

'Long ago in 1945 all the nice people in England were poor, allowing for exceptions'

In the May of Teck Club - a London hostel 'three times window shattered since 1940 but never directly hit' - the young lady residents do their best to act as if the war never happened. They practice elocution, and jostle one another over suitors and a single Schiaparelli gown. But behind the girls' giddy literary and amorous peregrinations they hide some tragically painful secrets and wounds.



Reviews:

'Reading the novel as a young woman was a random gift; rereading it today is to encounter the rarest of fiction and to appreciate the early and enduring genius of Muriel Spark' Carol Shields, *Guardian*

'This is an uncompromisingly well-crafted book: lean, ironic, funny, penetrating, unsettling and very, very beautiful. Welcome to the English language as operated by an expert.' – A L Kennedy

Penguin Modern Classics

[The Driver's Seat]

Lise has been driven to distraction by working in the same accountants' office for sixteen years. So she leaves everything behind her, transforms herself into a laughing, garishly-dressed temptress and flies abroad on the holiday of a lifetime. But her search for adventure, sex and new experiences takes on a far darker significance as she heads on a journey of self-destruction. Infinity and eternity attend Lise's last terrible day in an unnamed southern city, as she meets her fate.

A taut psychological thriller, *The Driver's Seat* was adapted into a 1974 film, *Identikit*, starring Elizabeth Taylor and was one of six novels to be nominated for the 'Lost Man Booker Prize of 1970' in 2010.



Reviews:

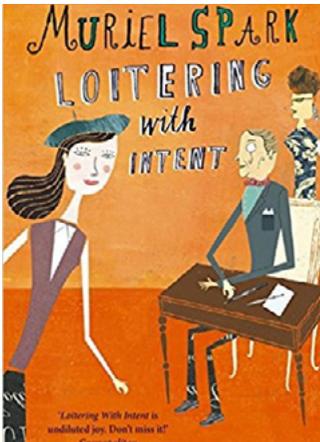
"Her spiny and treacherous masterpiece." – *New Yorker*

Penguin Modern Classics

[Loitering with Intent]

Art, reality and the strange ways the two imitate one another are at the core of the Booker Prize short-listed *Loitering with Intent*, first published in 1981.

Happily loitering about London, c. 1949, with the intent of gathering material for her writing, Fleur Talbot finds a job “on the grubby edge of the literary world” at the very peculiar Autobiographical Association whose members are a group of eccentric egomaniacs at work on their memoirs. When the association’s pompous director steals the manuscript of Fleur’s novel-in-progress, mayhem ensues when life begins to imitate fiction, with dangerous and darkly funny results...



Reviews:

'A delight from start to finish – funny, unexpected and compulsively readable ... immensely enjoyable' – Auberon Waugh, *Daily Mail*

'One of Muriel Spark's most accomplished moral fables' – A.S. Byatt, *Guardian*

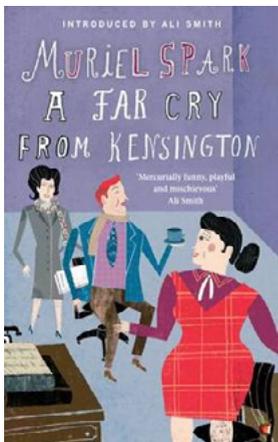
'I read this book in a delirium of delight... robust and full-bodied, a wise and mature work, and a brilliantly mischievous one' – *New York Times Book Review*

Virago Modern Classics(UK)

Current sales: US (New Directions); Japanese (Kawade Shobo Shinsha); Spanish in Argentina (La Bestia Equilatera); Turkish (Siren Yayinlari)

[A Far Cry from Kensington]

When Mrs Hawkins tells Hector Bartlett he is a 'pisseur de copie', that he 'urinates frightful prose', little does she realise the repercussions. Holding that 'no life can be carried on satisfactorily unless people are honest' Mrs Hawkins refuses to retract her judgement, and as a consequence, loses not one, but two much-sought-after jobs in publishing. Now, years older, successful, and happily a far cry from Kensington, she looks back over the dark days that followed, in which she was embroiled in a mystery involving anonymous letters, quack remedies, blackmail and suicide.



Reviews:

'The divine Spark is shining at her brightest . . . Pure delight' Claire Tomalin, *Independent*

'An outstanding novel . . . *A Far Cry from Kensington* has an effortless, translucent grasp of the spirit of the period' - *Observer*

'*Far Cry* is, among other things, a comedy that holds a tragedy as an egg-cup holds an egg' - *Philadelphia Enquirer*

ViragoModernClassics(UK)

Currentsales:US(NewDirections);Icelandic(Bokafelagio);SpanishinArgentina(La Bestia Equilatera)

[The Complete Short Stories]

From the cruel irony of 'A member of the Family' to the fateful echoes of 'The Go-Away Bird' and the unexpectedly sinister 'The Girl I Left Behind Me', in settings that range from South Africa to the West End of London, these dazzling stories feature hanging judges, fortune-tellers, shy girls, psychiatrists, dress designers, pen-sive ghosts, imaginary chauffeurs, and persistent guests, as Muriel Spark coolly probes the idiosyncrasies that lurk beneath the veneer of human respectability, displaying the acerbic wit and wisdom that are the hallmarks of her unique talent.

The Complete Short Stories is a collection to be loved and cherished, from one of the finest short-story writers of the 20th century.



Reviews:

"All (the stories) are hallmarked with those instantly identifiable Sparkian qualities; brevity, detachment and a sly, sinister wit" – *Literary Review*

"...completely, searingly original. There is nobody remotely like her" – *Independent*

"Hers is one of the most decisive and unmistakable voices in contemporary fiction – youthful, witty, sly, maternal, intimate and alive with opinion" – *New Yorker*

Canongate

Current sales: Bulgaria (Ciela); Romania (Vallent)

[Praise for Muriel Spark]

"I consider Muriel Spark to be the most gifted and innovative British novelist of her generation" – David Lodge, *The New York Times*

"Even when one is not entirely sure what Spark is saying, one always has the sense that she knows exactly what she means, and that she doesn't much mind if other people do not. The care with which she uses words is matched by a gloriously carefree attitude. It's all part of her sanity, her breezy authorial self-confidence; and because of this I think that reading a blast of her prose every morning is a far more restorative way to start a day than a shot of espresso" – *Daily Telegraph*

"My admiration for Spark's contribution to world literature knows no bounds. She was peerless, sparkling, inventive and intelligent – the crème de la crème" – Ian Rankin

"Muriel Spark's novels linger in the mind as brilliant shards, decisive as a smashed glass is decisive" – John Updike, *New Yorker*

"Spark is a natural, a paradigm of that rare sort of artist from whom work of the highest quality flows as elementally as current through a circuit: hook her to a pen and the juice purls out of her" – *The New Yorker*

"A wholly original presence in modern literature" – Andrew Motion

"A profoundly serious comic writer whose wit advances, never undermines or diminishes, her ideas" – *The New York Times Book Review*

"She has a receptive and wholly distinctive genius" – A N Wilson, *The Spectator*

[Bibliography]

Novels

- 1957 *The Comforters*
1958 *Robinson*
1959 *Memento Mori*
1960 *The Ballad of Peckham Rye,*
The Bachelors
1961 *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*
1963 *The Girls of Slender Means*
1965 *The Mandelbaum Gate*
1968 *The Public Image*
1970 *The Driver's Seat*
1971 *Not to Disturb*
1973 *The Hothouse by the East River*
1974 *The Abbess of Crewe*
1976 *The Takeover*
1979 *Territorial Rights*
1981 *Loitering with Intent*
1984 *The Only Problem*
1988 *A Far Cry from Kensington*
1990 *Symposium*
1996 *Reality and Dreams*

2000 *Aiding and Abetting*

2004 *The Finishing School*

Other Works

1950 *Tribute to Wordsworth* (edited by Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford)

1951 *Child of Light*(a study of Mary Shelley)

1952 *The Fanfarlo and Other Verse*

1952 *Selected Poems of Emily Brontë*

1953 *John Masefield* (biography)

1953 *Emily Brontë: her life and work* (by Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford)

1953 *My Best Mary* (a selection of letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, edited by Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford)

1954 *The Brontë letters*

1957 *Letters of John Henry Newman* (edited by Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford)

1958 *The Go-away Bird* (short stories)

1961 *Voices at Play* (short stories and plays)

1963 *Doctors of Philosophy* (play)

1967 *Collected Poems,*

Collected Stories

1982 *Bang-bang You're Dead* (short stories)

1982 *Going up to Sotheby's* (poems)

1992 *Curriculum Vitae* (autobiography)

2001 *Complete Short Stories*

2004 *All the Poems*

