

## Memento Mori Muriel Spark

From Muriel Spark, the grande dame of literary satire, comes this swift, deliciously witty tale of writerly ambition that recalls her beloved *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. College Sunrise is a somewhat louche and vaguely disreputable finishing school located, for now, in Lausanne, Switzerland. Rowland Mahler and his wife, Nina, run the school as a way to support themselves while he works, somewhat falteringly, on his novel. Into Rowland's creative writing class comes seventeen-year-old Chris Wiley, a red-haired literary prodigy whose historical novel-in-progress, on Mary Queen of Scots, has already excited the interest of publishers. The inevitable result: keen envy, and a game of cat and mouse fraught with jealousy and attraction, both literary and sexual.

"A perfect book"—and basis for the Maggie Smith film—about a teacher who makes a lasting impression on her female students in the years before World War II (*Chicago Tribune*). "Give me a girl at an impressionable age, and she is mine for life!" So asserts Jean Brodie, a magnetic, dubious, and sometimes comic teacher at the conservative Marcia Blaine School for Girls in Edinburgh. Brodie selects six favorite pupils to mold—and she doesn't stop with just their intellectual lives. She has a plan for them all, including how they will live, whom they will love, and what sacrifices they will make to uphold her ideals. When the girls reach adulthood and begin to find their own destinies, Jean Brodie's indelible imprint is a gift to some, and a curse to others. *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is Spark's masterpiece, a novel that offers one of twentieth-century English literature's most iconic and complex characters—a woman at once admirable and sinister, benevolent and conniving. This ebook features an illustrated biography of Muriel Spark including rare photos and never-

before-seen documents from the author's archive at the National Library of Scotland.

In *Aiding and Abetting*, the doyenne of literary satire has written a wickedly amusing and subversive novel around the true-crime case of one of England's most notorious uppercrust scoundrels and the "aiders and abettors" who kept him on the loose. When Lord Lucan walks into psychiatrist Hildegard Wolf's Paris office, there is one problem: she already has a patient who says he's Lucan, the fugitive murderer who bludgeoned his children's nanny in a botched attempt to kill his wife. As Dr. Wolf sets about deciding which of her patients, if either, is the real Lucan, she finds herself in a fierce battle of wills and an exciting chase across Europe. For someone is deceiving someone, and it may be the good doctor, who, despite her unorthodox therapeutic method (she talks mainly about her own life), has a sinister past, too. Exhibiting Muriel Spark's boundless imagination and biting wit, *Aiding and Abetting* is a brisk, clever, and deliciously entertaining tale by one of Britain's greatest living novelists.

A wealthy academic's life shatters when his estranged wife becomes the suspected leader of a terrorist organization. Having led a successful, comfortable life, Harvey Gotham retires to the French countryside to pursue bookish obsessions—namely, a long monograph on the Book of Job, the biblical narrative of faith in the face of extraordinary suffering. But Gotham's intellectual interests soon bleed into his daily life when a series of misfortunes, from a destructive affair to his wife's involvement with an extremist group, threaten to destroy everything he holds dear. Hailed by the *New York Times* as "an extremely sophisticated account of the perils that surround our unsuspecting lives in the world today," *The Only Problem* balances Spark's unique blend of razor-sharp satire and moral introspection in one fast-paced,

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absorbing novel. This ebook features an illustrated biography of Muriel Spark including rare photos and never-before-seen documents from the author's archive at the National Library of Scotland.

"Long ago in 1945 all the nice people in England were poor, allowing for exceptions," begins *The Girls of Slender Means*, Dame Muriel Spark's tragic and rapier-witted portrait of a London ladies' hostel just emerging from the shadow of World War II. Like the May of Teck Club itself—"three times window shattered since 1940 but never directly hit"—its lady inhabitants do their best to act as if the world were back to normal: practicing elocution, and jostling over suitors and a single Schiaparelli gown. The novel's harrowing ending reveals that the girls' giddy literary and amorous peregrinations are hiding some tragically painful war wounds. Chosen by Anthony Burgess as one of the Best Modern Novels in the *Sunday Times* of London, *The Girls of Slender Means* is a taut and eerily perfect novel by an author *The New York Times* has called "one of this century's finest creators of comic-metaphysical entertainment."

Where does art start or reality end? 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. Mad egomaniacs writing their memoirs in advance — or poor fools ensnared by a blackmailer? When the association's pompous director steals Fleur's manuscript, fiction begins to appropriate life.

On a once burgeoning, highly cultured human colony laid waste by a plague, a handful of survivors struggles against a sexually seething artificial intelligence that has taken control of their minds. By the author of *Cybernetic Jungle*. Four brand new tales are now added to *New Directions'* original 1997 cloth edition of *Open to the Public*. This new

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and complete paperback edition now contains every one of her forty-one marvelous stories, catnip for all Spark fans. All the Stories of Muriel Spark spans Dame Muriel Spark's entire career to date and displays all her signature stealth, originality, beauty, elegance, wit, and shock value. No writer commands so exhilarating a styleplayful and rigorous, cheerful and venomous, hilariously acute and coolly supernatural. Ranging from South Africa to the West End, her dazzling stories feature hanging judges, fortune-tellers, shy girls, psychiatrists, dress designers, pensive ghosts, imaginary chauffeurs, and persistent guests. Regarding one story ("The Portobello Road"), Stephen Schiff said in *The New Yorker*: "Muriel Spark has written some of the best sentences in English. For instance: 'He looked as if he would murder me, and he did.' It's a nasty piece of work, that sentence."

When Barbara Vaughan's fiancé joins an archaeological excursion to the Dead Sea Scrolls, she takes the opportunity to explore the Holy Land. It is 1961, and the nation of Israel is still in its infancy. For Barbara, a half-Jewish Catholic convert, this is a journey of faith, and she ignores warnings not to cross the Mandelbaum Gate from Israel into Jordan. An adventure of espionage and abduction, from pilgrimage to flight, *The Mandelbaum Gate* is one of Spark's most compelling novels, and won the James Tait Memorial Prize. In 1992, Spark invited Martin Stannard to write her biography, offering interviews and full access to her papers. The result is this biography of the Scottish author.

Robert wants nothing more than to become a serious art historian. But his hopes for a staid academic life are put on hold when he's driven from London to Venice to escape one lover and seek out another: the enigmatic Bulgarian refugee Lina Pancev. In Venice, Robert encounters a grand carnival of lust, lies, blackmail, cocktail parties, and regicide. As he

chases Lina, his heart's desire, the city itself provides a priceless education in love, art, and beauty. Witty yet elegant, *Territorial Rights* is a celebration of human imperfection and complexity, with as many shifting identities, wardrobe changes, and sumptuous settings as a comic opera.

A group of aging friends realizes that age has not brought wisdom and that they must face death as best they can.

Poignant, hilarious, and spooky, *Memento Mori* addresses old age In late 1950s London, something uncanny besets a group of elderly friends: an insinuating voice on the telephone reminds each: Remember you must die. Their geriatric feathers are soon thoroughly ruffled, and many an old unsavory secret is dusted off.

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." "You look for one thing and you find another." "It calms you down, a good comb." Her scope is great and her striking insights are precise and unforgettable. 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."

"Brilliant . . . Here is the conflict of real ideas; of real personalities; here is a work of intellectual

imagination and great charity. The Poorhouse Fair is a work of art.”—The New York Times Book Review

The hero of John Updike’s first novel, published when the author was twenty-six, is ninety-four-year-old John Hook, a dying man who yet refuses to be dominated. His world is a poorhouse—a county home for the aged and infirm—overseen by Stephen Conner, a righteous young man who considers it his duty to know what is best for others. The action of the novel unfolds over a single summer’s day, the day of the poorhouse’s annual fair, a day of escalating tensions between Conner and the rebellious Hook. Its climax is a contest between progress and tradition, benevolence and pride, reason and faith. Praise for *The Poorhouse Fair* “A first novel of rare precision and real merit . . . a rich poorhouse indeed.”—Newsweek “Turning on a narrow plot of ground, it achieves the rarity of bounded, native truth, and comes forth as microcosm.”—Commonweal

When an heiress moves to a villa on Italy’s Lake Nemi, a houseguest plots to take it—and more—in this novel by a prizewinning master of dark comedy.

When American heiress Maggie Radcliffe relocates to enchanting Lake Nemi, just south of Rome, she is determined to live in tune with ancient pagan rhythms of art and nature. At her new home—one of three that she owns—she is constantly surrounded by a cast of quirky characters, and her latest guest is

old friend Hubert Mallindaine, an unrepentant grifter who claims to be a direct descendant of the goddess Diana, whose spirit is said to rest at Nemi. As soon as Mallindaine arrives, Radcliffe's vast material wealth begins to slip quietly out the door. Desperate to regain it, Radcliffe attempts to evict Mallindaine from her home, but a host of new problems threaten to destroy all that she has. From the PEN Award-winning author of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, *The Driver's Seat*, and other modern classics, *The Takeover* is a suspenseful, acidic comedy about the clash between the conventions of old wealth and the inevitable tide of modernity. It is a testament to the mind and work of "the most sharply original fictional imagination of our time" (*Sunday Times*). This ebook features an illustrated biography of Muriel Spark including rare photos and never-before-seen documents from the author's archive at the National Library of Scotland.

**Memento Mori**  
New Directions

Collects essays, reviews, and journal articles which analyze life, literature, faith, and other topics.

Never underestimate a librarian. Comfortably padded and in her middle years, Shona McMonagle may look bookish and harmless, but her education at the Marcia Blaine School for Girls has left her with a deadly expertise in everything from martial arts to quantum physics. It has also left her with a bone-deep loathing for *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*,

that scurrilous novel that spread scandalous untruths about the finest educational institution in Edinburgh. Her skills, her deceptively mild appearance, and her passionate loyalty make Shona the perfect recruit for a new and interesting project: Time-travel to Tzarist Russia, prevent a gross miscarriage of romance, and – in any spare time – see to it that only the right people get murdered. It's a big job, but no task is too daunting for a Head Girl from Miss Blaine's.

In this revealing and entertaining guide to how the Romans confronted their own mortality, Peter Jones shows us that all the problems associated with old age and death that so transfix us today were already dealt with by our ancient ancestors two thousand years ago. Romans inhabited a world where man, knowing nothing about hygiene let alone disease, had no defences against nature. Death was everywhere. Half of all Roman children were dead by the age of five. Only eight per cent of the population made it over sixty. One bizarre result was that half the population consisted of teenagers. From the elites' philosophical take on the brevity of life to the epitaphs left by butchers, bakers and buffoons, *Memento Mori* ('Remember you die') shows how the Romans faced up to this world and attempted to take the sting out of death.

Dame Muriel Spark delivers a delightfully alarming novel, full of high society and low cunning. One October evening five posh London couples gather

for a dinner party, enjoying "the pheasant (flambe in cognac as it is)" and waiting for the imminent arrival of the late-coming guest Hilda Damien, who has been unavoidably detained due to the fact that she is being murdered at this very moment... "Symposium" was applauded by "Time" magazine for the "sinister elegance" of Muriel Spark's "medium of light but lethal comedy." Mixed in are a Monet, a mad uncle, some unconventional nuns, and a burglary ring run by a rent-a-butler. Symposium stars a perfectly evil young woman (a classic sweet-faced hair-raising Sparkian horror) who has married rich Hilda's son by hook or by crook, hooking him at the fruit counter of Harrod's. There is also spiritual conversation--and the Bordeaux is superb. "The prevailing mood is urbane: the wine is poured, the talk continues, and all the time the ice on which the protagonists' world rests is being thinned from beneath, by boiling emotions and ugly motives....No living writer handles the tension between formality of expression and subversiveness of thought more elegantly." ("The Independent on Sunday").

A Scottish journalist offers rare insight into the life and mind of the renowned expat author in this "beguiling, fascinating memoir" (The Guardian, UK). In 1990, Alan Taylor traveled to Arezzo, Italy, to interview one of the greatest novelists of the 20th century. That interview evolved into a close friendship between Taylor and Muriel Spark that lasted until her death in 2006. In this intimate, anecdotal, admiring and indiscreet memoir, Taylor charts the course of Spark's life, revealing

her as she really was. Once, Spark commented sitting over a glass of chianti at the kitchen table, that she was upset that the academic whom she had appointed her official biographer did not appear to think that she had ever cracked a joke in her life. Here, Taylor sets the record straight about this and many other things. With sources ranging from notebooks kept from his first encounter with Muriel and the hundreds of letters they exchanged over the years, this is an invaluable portrait of one of Edinburgh's premiere novelists.

From the great British novelist Dame Margaret Drabble comes a vital and audacious tale about the many ways in which we confront aging and living in a time of geopolitical rupture. Francesca Stubbs has an extremely full life. A highly regarded expert on housing for the elderly who is herself getting on in age, she drives "restlessly round England," which is "her last love . . . She wants to see it all before she dies." Amid the professional conferences that dominate her schedule, she fits in visits to old friends, brings home cooked dinners to her ailing ex-husband, texts her son, who is grieving over the shocking death of his girlfriend, and drops in on her daughter, a quirky young woman who lives in a flood plain in the West Country. Fran cannot help but think of her mortality, but she is "not ready to settle yet, with a cat upon her knee." She still prizes her "frisson of autonomy," her belief in herself as a dynamic individual doing meaningful work in the world. *The Dark Flood Rises* moves between Fran's interconnected group of family and friends in England and a seemingly idyllic expat community in the Canary Islands. In both places, disaster looms. In Britain, the flood tides are rising, and in the Canaries, there is always the potential for a seismic event. As well, migrants are fleeing an increasingly war-torn Middle East. Though *The Dark Flood Rises* delivers the pleasures of a traditional novel, it is clearly situated in the precarious present. Margaret Drabble's latest

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enthalls, entertains, and asks existential questions in equal measure. Alas, there is undeniable truth in Fran's insight: "Old age, it's a fucking disaster!"

A slender satirical gem from the "master of malice and mayhem" (The New York Times) *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* is a wickedly farcical tale of an English factory town turned upside-down by a Scot who may or may not be in league with the Devil. Dougal Douglas is hired to do "human research" into the lives of the workers, Douglas stirs up mutiny and murder.

A delightful story of growing up, getting old, and every step in between, from the acclaimed author of *Man at the Helm* and *Love, Nina*. After succeeding in her quest to help her unconventional mother find a new "man at the helm," fifteen-year-old Lizzie Vogel simply wants to be a normal teenager. Just when it looks as if things have settled down, her mother goes and has another baby. On top of that, Lizzie's best friend has deserted her for the punk craze, which Lizzie finds too exhausting to commit to herself. But Lizzie soon gets more commitment than she bargained for when she takes a job as a junior nurse at Paradise Lodge, a ramshackle refuge for the elderly that has seen better days. It's no place for a teenager, much less one with as little experience emptying a bedpan as Lizzie. What begins as a way to avoid school and earn some spending money (for the finer things in life, like real coffee and beer shampoo) quickly turns into the education of a lifetime. Lizzie encounters a colorful cast of eccentric characters--including a nurse determined to turn one of the patients into a husband (and a retirement plan); an efficient but clueless nun trying to modernize the place; and Lizzie's unlikely first love--who become her surrogate family. When Paradise Lodge faces a crisis in the form of a rival nursing home with enough amenities to make even the comatose jealous, Lizzie must find a way to save her job

before she loses the only place she's ever felt she belongs. A hilarious and heartfelt coming-of-age tale, *Paradise Lodge* proves that it's never too early--or too late--to grow up. The eighth gripping novel in the bestselling *Medicus* series, in which Ruso and Tilla investigate the death of the wife of Ruso's friend in the sacred hot spring of *Aquae Sulis*. A scandal is threatening to engulf the popular spa town of *Aquae Sulis* (modern-day Bath). The wife of Ruso's best friend, Valens, has been found dead in the sacred hot spring, stabbed through the heart. Fearing the wrath of the goddess and the ruin of the tourist trade, the temple officials are keen to cover up what's happened. But the dead woman's father is demanding justice, and he's accusing Valens of murder. If Valens turns up to face trial, he will risk execution. If he doesn't, he'll lose his children. Ruso and Tilla do their best to help but it's difficult to get anyone--even Valens himself--to reveal what really happened. Could Ruso's friend really be guilty as charged?

In Muriel Spark's fantastic first novel, the only things that aren't ambiguous are her matchless originality and glittering wit. Caroline Rose is plagued by the tapping of typewriter keys and the strange, detached narration of her every thought and action. She has an unusual problem - she realises she is in a novel. Her fellow characters are also possibly deluded: Laurence, her former lover, finds diamonds in a loaf of bread - could his elderly grandmother really be a smuggler? And Baron Stock, her bookseller friend, believes he is on the trail of England's leading Satanist.

This is a satirical fantasy about ecclesiastical and other kinds of politics. The author has also written *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and *Girls of Slender Means*.

Here, in two handsome volumes, are ten celebrated novels by the author acclaimed as "the best English

novelist writing today" (Times Literary Supplement). Available singly and as a boxed set, *The Novels of Muriel Spark* is both a collector's item for Spark's loyal following and an ideal introduction for new readers. Volume 1 begins with Spark's best-selling *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), whose Scottish schoolmistress remains one of the most memorable characters in modern fiction, and follows it with *The Comforters*, her first novel (1957), *The Only Problem* (1984), *The Driver's Seat* (1970), and *Memento Mori* (1959), a comic and macabre study of old age. Volume 2 continues with *Loitering with Intent* (1981), a fascinating story of how art and life imitate each other; *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963), whose resourceful young heroines of war-ravaged London are of Spark's own generation; *The Abbess of Crewe* (1973), the tale of a Watergate-style power struggle ingeniously set in a convent. "Sleek and suggestive . . . [Reality and Dreams] is so smart and seductive that you fail to notice how completely you've accepted a world gone utterly awry." —Kirkus Reviews British film director Tom Richard won acclaim for his moments of pure creative inspiration. But when Richard is hospitalized after toppling from a crane during a shoot, he awakes not knowing what is real and what is not—and with no idea who to trust. Soon his wife, children, and friends are all undergoing crises of their own, from the breakup of a marriage to the loss

of a job. As Richard fights to regain his health and stay centered amid the swirling chaos of his personal life, he must also wrest control of his film—his most prized pursuit—from those who seek to take it away. Witty and engrossing, *Reality and Dreams* is a whiplash ride through the highs and lows of the creative process. This ebook features an illustrated biography of Muriel Spark including rare photos and never-before-seen documents from the author's archive at the National Library of Scotland.

Available at last are all the poems by one of the twentieth century's greatest British writers, Dame Muriel Spark: "a true literary artist, acerbic and exhilarating" (London Evening Standard). In the seventy-three poems collected here Muriel Spark works in open forms as well as villanelles, rondels, epigrams, and even the tour de force of a twenty-one page ballad. She also shows herself a master of unforgettable short poems. Before attaining fame as a novelist (*Memento Mori*, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*), Muriel Spark was already an acclaimed poet. The "power and control" of her poetry, as *Publishers Weekly* remarked, "is almost startling." With the vitality and wit typical of all her work, Dame Muriel has never stopped writing poems, which frequently appear in *The New Yorker*. As with all her creations, the poems show Spark to be "astonishingly talented and truly inimitable" (*The San Francisco Chronicle*).

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Muriel Spark's bracingly salty memoir is a no-holds-barred trip through an extraordinary writer's life.

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