

Author Muriel Spark dies aged 88

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Novelist Dame Muriel Spark, who wrote the classic *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, has died in Tuscany where she had made her home.

The Scottish-born writer, who was 88, wrote more than 20 books, winning numerous literary awards.



Muriel Spark was educated in Edinburgh

As well as writing fiction, Dame Muriel also wrote critical studies of Emily Brontë and Mary Shelley.

Dr Gavin Wallace of the Scottish Arts Council called her death "an ineffably sad and deep loss to our literature".

The mayor of the Tuscan village of Civitella della Chiana confirmed the author died in hospital on Thursday. Her funeral was held on Saturday.

Dame Muriel was considered one of the liveliest literary talents in her more than 50 years of publishing.

Her first novel *The Comforters* was published in 1957, but it was

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie in 1962 that brought her to the attention of critics and fans.

Set in an Edinburgh girls' school, it centred on Miss Brodie and a group of adoring pupils to whom she taught her liberal views on sex and politics.

Honorary citizen

The book was turned into a much performed play and later a film starring Dame Maggie Smith, for which she won a best actress Oscar in 1969.

Dame Muriel moved to the US in the late 1960s for a brief period before moving to Italy where she continued to write poetry and novels.

Her last book, *The Finishing School*, became a best-seller when it was published in 2004.

In 2005 she was made an honorary citizen of the Tuscan village of Civitella della Chiana where she had lived for 30 years.

"She was a simple person, affectionate and considerate," Civitella mayor Massimiliano Dindalini said.

'Far-reaching influence'

Among her literary achievements was the TS Eliot prize in 1992 and the British Literature Prize in 1997.

The Scottish Arts Council created the Muriel Spark International Fellowship in 2004, with Canadian Margaret Atwood winning the inaugural prize.

Dr Gavin Wallace, who is head of literature at the council, said Dame Muriel's influence had been enormous.

"Her achievement and influence as Scotland's, if not the UK's, greatest novelist have been so vast and far-reaching that in an odd way she seemed to be an immutable part of the cultural landscape.

"I wrote to her only two weeks ago with the good news that we had secured the first Muriel Spark international literary fellowship, a new post to which she graciously gave her name."



Dame Muriel considered herself a European

Scottish Culture Minister Patricia Ferguson said: "Dame Muriel Spark was a great Scottish woman who brought pleasure to readers all over the world.

"She led a fascinating life, producing work over more than

half a century which has transcended generations and entertained millions.”

‘Unusual person’

The author was made a Dame in 1993 in recognition of her services to literature.

Christine Lloyd, who founded the Muriel Spark Society, recalled how fortunate the society felt when the author attended a luncheon in her honour at the Edinburgh Book Festival in 2004.



Dame Muriel wrote more than 20 novels

“It was just delightful. She was just a very unusual person, she really was. Bright, witty of course, and a marvellous conversationalist,” she said.

“She just loved company and fun and wanted to talk about anything and everything. The lunch lasted far longer than any of us dared hope it would.”

<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/4911878.stm>> (5 Feb 2007)