

BIOGRAPHY OF DOROTHY SPEAK

DOROTHY SPEAK grew up in the small southern Ontario town of Woodstock, the fifth of seven children in a Catholic family. Both of her parents grew up on farms, her father in Saskatchewan and her mother in Huron County, Ontario. She received her undergraduate degree in English and Art History from McMaster University, and her M.A. in Canadian Studies from Carleton University. She has taught art history and creative writing and has worked as a museum curator, freelance editor and journalist. Ottawa has been her home for most of her adult life. She has two daughters.

Speak has worked with such writers as W.P. Kinsella, W.O. Mitchell, Alistair MacLeod, Jack Hodgins, Graeme Gibson and Guy Vanderhaeghe. She has attended the Banff School of Fine Arts and has also been a resident at one of its Leighton Studios.

Though Speak studied English at university, she did not encounter Canadian writers until her Masters degree in 1974. It was then, upon reading Alice Munro, that she decided to become a writer. Munro's work was a big influence on Speak and the principle reason she focused on the short story in her early development.

Other influences at that time were the stories of Mavis Gallant and Elizabeth Spencer. Other short story writers whom she continues to admire are: Ann Beattie, Andre Dubus (senior), Annie Proulx, Edna O'Brien, Jane Gardam, Muriel Spark, Lorrie Moore and Ellen Gilchrist. Speak's work has been compared to that of Alice Munro, Margaret Laurence, Carol Shields, Jayne Anne Phillips and other luminaries.

Her first collection, *The Counsel of the Moon*, deals primarily with the relationship between daughters and mothers. This first work of fiction was called "a stellar debut." (*Edmonton Journal*)

Object of Your Love, Speak's second collection, garnered similar accolades: "Strong, memorable stories that add scarred, exhausted flesh and blood to the "sad statistics of the heart." Alice Munro would surely approve." (*Kirkus Reviews*). This collection of nine stories deals primarily with marriage, adultery and divorce.

Speak's novel, *The Wife Tree*, presents Morgan Hazzard at 73, reflecting on her life and facing the illness of her husband, a stroke victim. This volume of interleaved events and letters firmly cemented Speak's reputation for unflinching portrayals of loss, betrayal and rebirth. "*The Wife Tree* is a powerful novel, well worth reading for Speak's ability to slice through to the ugliness in the human heart." *Victoria Times Colonist*

Speak is available for appearances at book clubs in the Ottawa region, and at book festivals, fundraisers and other cultural events. For thirty years, Speak has lived in Ottawa, where she enjoys the outdoors, tennis, hiking, skiing, skating and jogging.