A Conversation with Author Debra Dean

Debra Dean is the bestselling author of four critically acclaimed novels. Her most recent book is *Wives, And The War That Made Them One*. Her previous book, *Falling Woman*, was a New York Times Editors' Choice novel, a #1 Booksense Pick, a Booklist Top Ten Novel, and an American Library Association Best Mystery of the Year. It was long listed for the National Book Award and was nominated for the Warinson Fiction Prize and a Florida Book Award.

Debra Dean was born and raised in Seattle, Washington. The daughter of a builder and homemaker and artist, she was a vocationally inclined child, writing books as something that people still did. I think subconsciously I figured you needed three names or at the very least a Southern accent. When I was younger, I had never used the telephone, never written a letter. My parents didn't have a typewriter. I read Louisa May Alcott and Laura Ingalls Wilder, Jane Austen, and, when I was older, Virginia Woolf. I read *The Book of the Month* and The Romance Reader, which were the equivalent of *Goodreads*. I read everything I could get my hands on.

In 1990, she moved back to the northwest and got her MFA from the Northwest School of the Arts. She started teaching writing and acting. The Madonnas of Leningrad was begun as a short story, and when she realized that she might do. What I eventually came up with was writing, which in many ways was a comically ill-advised choice, given that the business is pretty dreadful. When I got my first union job, I didn’t have when I was younger.
Did Annabert and Marianne have one child each?

Yoors sold his work for around $15,000 in the 1950s, which was a lot of money in that era. Was he able to maintain that level of sales?

In my family, two brothers married two sisters in the 1890s, so it may not have seemed so unusual for Jan Yoors to be living with two "sisters," one of whom was his wife.

I remember when rug manufacturers started making rugs with designs by famous artists like Picasso.

Were you able to find any living artists that knew Jan Yoors in Greenwich Village?

Do you think you would have been friends with Jan Yoors?

Do you have a routine when you are working on a book?

What has been the role of serendipity in your career?

Are you indifferent whether your next project is fiction or non-fiction?

For me, the most unbelievable part of Jan Yoors' story is that his parents allowed him to run off with Gypsies for months at a time when he was a teenager.

Are there lessons in Jan Yoors' story for contemporary times?