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Muriel Spark's Experimental Novels of the 1970s

Experimentální romány Muriel Sparkové v 70. letech

Master Thesis

by

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Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně, pouze s pomocí pramenů a literatury uvedených v bibliografii práce.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to analyze a specific period of the 1970s in Muriel Spark's writing career. The thesis opens with a brief summary of author's life that is essential for identification of aspects typical for her writing style and topics she usually deals with in her books. This summary consists of ambivalent nature of her characters, her own conversion to Catholicism, which is a crucial aspect not only of her life, but also of her characters. It also focuses on other autobiographical facts that appear in her works and are important components of her character's nature in many cases. These facts are, for instance, her interest in travelling, which is represented by various settings she uses in her works or Spark's teacher at primary school whose model was applied for a character of Miss Jean Brodie, and so forth. Literary genres as well as personalities of that time, her contemporaries and colleagues that were inspiring or on the other hand influential for Muriel Spark's writing style are also mentioned.

It is followed by an overview of previous stages of her work, which means the 1950s and the 1960s. Main characteristics of these stages as well as changes in her style, topics and attitudes are especially mentioned. The main body of this study composes of the period the 1970s. It examines all the books Muriel Spark wrote in this stage of her career. It consists of her writing style, topical bent and progress in her attitudes towards literature as well as changes that are connected with that. The analysis is accomplished from different points of view distinctive to certain schools of literary criticism, such as feminist theory, Jung or Freud school, formalism, archetypal approach and others too. The readings that represent various critical schools are achieved by chosen images that are, to certain extent, connected to particular critical view. It also offers opinions and attitudes of acknowledged critics of Muriel Spark's writings who are considered to be real specialists in this topic.

The last part of this thesis copes with following periods of Spark's career. It involves the 1980s and comes to an end of her career that is represented by her latest novels. The progress and changes in her writings are again mentioned so that they can be compared to her style and topics she marked in previous stages of her work.

This thesis is supposed to give a certain overview of Muriel Spark's progress and changes in her life as well as her opinions and attitudes towards her books in order to clearly show what kind of development and transformation she achieved and also underwent during her life not only as a writer of fiction but as well as a person. It also aims at demonstration her idiosyncrasy appearing in her books and therefore illustrate how unique and extraordinary Muriel Spark was as an author and human being too. This work is supposed to recall all the aspects that can be analyzed by critical approaches and mark the one school of literary criticism that is employed the most and could be generally used for analysis in some of Muriel Spark's books in the period of the 1970s.

2. The Basic Facts about Muriel Spark's Extraordinary Life

Muriel Sarah Camberg was born in Edinburgh in 1918. Her mother was English otherwise her father spoke quite a strong accent typical for the area of Edinburgh. He was of Jewish origin with Edinburgh education and with upbringing provided by his Scottish-Jewish parents.¹ Bryan Cheyette speaks about Spark's "hybrid background – part English, part Scottish, part Protestant, part Jewish."² Muriel Spark's personality was due to her chaotic and unbalanced identity very unstable and that is why it influenced her life as well as her later work significantly.

At the age of five little Muriel started to attend James Gillespie's High School for Girls. She spent twelve years there and this time is considered to be the most formative for her life and her later career as a writer.³ When Spark was eleven, she met Miss Kay, very influential figure in a life of Spark, who became an inspiration for a protagonist in one of her most famous works called *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961).⁴ Muriel left school at the age of seventeen and because of a bad financial situation of her family, she could not start studying at university immediately. Finally, she completed her study in English prose at the Herio-Watt College.⁵ Spark said about her further life, "But in order to write about life as I intended to do, I felt I had first to live."⁶ Young Muriel, who was already twenty-one, received her first job in the office of William Small & Sons and she was doing very well. Thanks to it she was able to buy gramophone records and books, especially Penguin paperbacks such as *Ariel* written by André Maurois, a book based upon the life of Mary Shelley, or books written by Ernest Hemingway, Agatha Christie, Mary Webb or even Thomas Hardy. In 1937 Spark got engaged to older Sydney Oswald Spark who planned to go to Zimbabwe, so she joined him and they got married there. Africa gave her very essential experience, she

¹ Muriel Spark, *Curriculum Vitae: Autobiography* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1993), 21.

² Bryan Cheyette, *Muriel Spark* (Devon: Northcote House Publishers Ltd, 2000), 10.

³ Spark *Curriculum Vitae* 50.

⁴ Spark *Curriculum Vitae* 56.

⁵ Spark *Curriculum Vitae* 102.

⁶ Spark *Curriculum Vitae* 103.

learned what it means to be responsible and how to cope with her life in general.⁷ Her husband's early mental disease made Spark think about her divorce and even arrival back to England, at that time already with her little son.

However, she kept her husband's surname in order to have the same one as her son, and later when she became a known author, this name came in handy for the reason that, according to Spark, her original surname Camberg was "comparatively flat" and "Spark seemed to have some ingredient of life and of fun."⁸ During a war time she was active against Facist Germany and after this conflict she became to be known as an author due to her works about Emily Brontë or Mary Shelley; she also cooperated with Derek Stanford, her good friend and literary partner,⁹ on critical edition of Brontë sisters and John Henry Newman. She also shortly led *Poetry Review*, a literary magazine. She was meanwhile publishing her short stories as well as her poetry.

Although she was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, she tended throughout her whole life to visit foreign countries. It almost seems that she was predominated to feel more comfortable abroad. She said following about her birthplace in connection to her exiledom:

Edinburgh is the place that I, a constitutional exile, am essentially exiled from. I spent the first 18 years of my life, during the Twenties and Thirties, there. It was Edinburgh that bred within me conditions of exiledom; and what have I been doing since then but moving from exile into exile? It has become a calling.¹⁰

During her life, Spark visited various countries, she also found a temporary or even permanent home in some of them. Generally speaking, she spent most of her life abroad. These places were so inspiring for her that she used some of them as settings of her novels. Muriel Spark lived, for instance, in Zimbabwe, India, Italy or France.

⁷ Spark *Curriculum Vitae* 108-17.

⁸ Spark *Curriculum Vitae* 131-32.

⁹ Spark *Curriculum Vitae* 185.

¹⁰ Muriel Spark, "Edinburgh-born," in *Critical Essays on Muriel Spark*, ed. Joseph Hynes (New York: G.K. Hall, 1992), 21.

She became famous in the 1960s and in order to escape her popularity and to work in peace, she decided to accept an offer of *New Yorker* magazine to move to America. In 1965 she moved to Rome, but she finally found her home in Tuscany, a beautiful region in Italy, where she died on 14 April 2006 at the age of eighty-eight.¹¹ Although she was never awarded, Mr MacDougal suggests that "she [Muriel Spark] is far and away our greatest living writer and should be our candidate for a Nobel Laureateship."¹² However MacDougal's study had been published in 2006, only two years before Muriel Spark passed away forever.

2.1. Spark as a Writer

Joseph Hynes says that Spark is "one of the wittiest and one of the most various writers."¹³ At the beginning of her career she feels a strong need to tribute to those she admired the most: William Wordsworth, Mary Shelley, Emily Brontë and John Masefield. As she started her career rather late, or later than any of her former colleagues, she felt reluctant to talk about herself as about a fiction writer.¹⁴ She was strongly influenced by British, Scottish as well as French literary tradition; the most read authors of hers were Scottish Max Beebohm, Newman or Marcel Proust. She also appreciated her fellow writers, especially Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, but Iris Murdoch too. Spark and Murdoch both dealt with a nature of evil and a topic of omniscience.¹⁵ They both share the fact that they cannot be identified with usual literary categories. Spark at that time tends to a use of realism as well as other writers. Ruth Whittaker says, "she was considered primarily a realist for her precise observation and witty transcription of current mores and behaviour."¹⁶ Realism deals with real things of life, it depicts a true nature of reality, but it does not judge or

¹¹ Ema Jelínková, *Ambivalence v románech Muriel Sparkové* (Olomouc: Periplum, 2006), 9.

¹² Carl MacDougal, *Writing Scotland: How Scotland's Writers Shaped the Nation* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2004), 219.

¹³ Joseph Hynes, *The Art of the Real: Muriel Spark's Novels* (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1988), 13.

¹⁴ Cheyette *Muriel Spark 2*.

¹⁵ Jelínková 12.

¹⁶ Ruth Whittaker, *The Faith and Fiction of Muriel Spark* (London and Basingtoke: Macmillan, 1982), 1.

provide any comments. And that is what Mrs Spark does in her books, she writes about real aspects of people's lives.

But they both (Spark and Murdoch) soon clearly and strongly deviated from realistic tendencies, Spark's writing is, for instance, typical for its unpredictable changes as well as fantastic features. Patricia Waugh says, "Spark's distance from realism also marks her resistance to sentimentalism as an adequate response to the mechanistic picture."¹⁷ These two women writers, protruding from a line, are not surprisingly called 'Angry Young Women,' which is Patricia Hodgart's expression in a review of Spark's first novel, called *No Angry Young Women?* She asks "Where are the angry young women, the female Jimmy Porters, the crazy mixed-up girls who should be brightening the literary scene?"¹⁸ She expected at least these two ladies to create the opposites to Jimmy Porter, a protagonist of John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* (1956). Women were also supposed to express their disagreement and also reflect their dissatisfaction with a progress of British society just after the Second World War, which did not eventually happen to the surprise of many critics.¹⁹

Mrs Spark is often connected to Barbara Pym and is compared to Angry Young Man or poets of the 1950s. But although both ladies dealt with war and its effects and even though they expressed certain protest in their works, they can be hardly referred to the fiction written by this group, according to Mr Herman.²⁰

Muriel Spark becomes a successfully recognized author after publishing of her first novel *The Comfronters* (1957). Mr Hodgkings says, "Decades ago, David Lodge figured Spark's achievement in terms of an original manipulation of omniscience, a manipulation, he argues, that is closely linked to Spark's Catholicism."²¹ Spark uses „laughter and shock and reflectiveness – [they] make sense together only when we see

¹⁷ Patricia Waugh, "Muriel Spark and the Metaphysics of Modernity: Art, Secularization, and Psychosis," in *Muriel Spark: Twenty-first Century Perspective*, ed. by David Herman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 78.

¹⁸ Patricia Hodgart, "No Angry Young Women?" *Manchester Guardian Weekly* (28 Feb 1957): 10.

¹⁹ Jelínková 11.

²⁰ Hope Howell Hodgkings, "Stylish Spinsters: Spark, Pym, and the Postwar Comedy of the Object," in *Muriel Spark: Twenty-first Century Perspective*, ed. by David Herman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 132.

²¹ Lewis MacLeod, "Matters of Care and Control: Surveillance, Omniscience, and Narrative Power in *The Abbess of Crewe* and *Loitering with Intent*," in *Muriel Spark: Twenty-first Century Perspective*, ed. by David Herman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 203.

what Spark takes to be real and how she makes use of both traditional and unique fictional methods in order to convey her sense of that reality."²² From these two citations it becomes clear that Spark is seen as the writer who is aware of manipulative possibility as the author and that she connects ostensibly inconsistent features. Martin McQuillan gave very fitting description of a style, which is typical for Muriel Spark, in his essential study of Spark's biography:

Spark's novels, from her early success as an 'experimental' novelist, to her highly stylized novellas in the sixties and seventies and her increasingly rare and increasingly satiric offerings, are untimely because they come before their 'proper' or 'natural' time. They are 'premature' in their experimentation with novelistic form. In her geographical location (writing in Italy and France), her nationality (Scottish), her gender, her race ('part-Jewish') and her creed (Roman Catholic), she is decidedly in a relation of otherness in the tradition of English literature.²³

Muriel Spark also tended to *nouveau roman* that is a part of French literary tradition. She was influenced by this genre, especially by writers such as Alain Robbe-Grillet.²⁴ This genre is defined as a 'redistribution of narrative possibilities' by Martin McQuillan. This literary form offers new ways to understand narratives and that is why Spark and others are very interested in this kind of literary form.²⁵ For instance *The Driver's Seat* or other works that are components of her so-called experimental era of the 1970s. It starts with *The Public Image* written in 1968. This experimental time full of very short novellas is strongly influenced by this genre.²⁶

Spark also showed herself to be an able satiric writer. It is impossible to read Spark's novels without understanding a satirist quality of her works. Jennifer Randisi even writes about Spark as about "a self-proclaimed satirist" and adds that her

²² Hynes 14.

²³ Martin McQuillan, "'Introduction: 'I Don't Know Anything about Freud': Muriel Spark Meets Contemporary Criticism," in *Theorizing Muriel Spark: Gender, Race, Deconstruction*, ed. Martin McQuillan (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002), 11.

²⁴ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 71.

²⁵ McQuillan 10.

²⁶ Jelínková 57.

conversion gave Spark "something to work on as a satirist."²⁷ She inclined to a tradition of classic satirists such as Jonathan Swift, Jane Austen and Alexander Pope.²⁸ Mrs Spark was very bright in expressing her satirical attitudes as well as irony. This will be clearly seen later in the thesis when, for instance her novella *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, is examined. Muriel Spark's satires, otherwise dependent on Catholicism, are not particularly moral. There is no centre of satire that would be moral and there are no satires that would be moral just partially either. "Satire is largely a matter of consistent point of view, and Muriel Spark's satiristic vision is contingent upon her theology" says Jennifer Randisi in her work on Muriel Spark.²⁹

In addition, characters of any books are subjects of manipulation, which is distinctive for fiction in general. In Spark's works, border line between characters, which are supposed to be inside and outside, is not clearly marked therefore sometimes it is very difficult to distinguish them. It appeared just in her first novel *The Comfronters*.³⁰

Muriel Spark is often seen as ambivalent author and it is not a result of coincidence. The works are very changeable, especially her writing style in different time periods. That is why these works cannot be judged by the same criteria. Because of this ambivalence and her later rejection of proclamations used in previous books, Spark is then perceived as very unpredictable and inconsistent author. Yet Spark characteristically very often uses oxymoronic expressions, which mean a connection of two opposite terms. She rarely uses chronological form of narration; she employs flashbacks as well as flashforwards and she completely interrupts the flow of the whole plot. This strategy serves as certain surprising device or device of completion of knowledge that is necessary for inclusive understanding. Sometimes readers know just from the beginning how the book is going to end, which might look strange, but it makes readers finish the book in order to realize why it ends like this or why it does not end differently.

²⁷ Jennifer Lynn Randisi, *On Her Way Rejoicing: The Fiction of Muriel Spark* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University and America Press, 1991), 6.

²⁸ Jelínková 13.

²⁹ Randisi 7.

³⁰ Randisi 16.

Muriel Spark's fiction has lots of forms; she frequently does not obviously express herself in the books, which causes that readers have to search for solution by themselves over and over again. Her progress in writing is very specific too. Novels, going one after another repeatedly, deal with the same topic or advance it somehow differently. Then throughout each decade, a change comes again – Spark transforms her attitudes towards content and its form or she even radically copes with the past. Her last phase meant comeback to her beginnings – after various experiments, she returned to methods and techniques that represent her initial prose.³¹ Brian Cheyette suggests that "Spark has a refined and winning literary style which deliberately masks her more discursive and extravagant intellectual ambitions."³² It is obvious here that although it might not be evident at first, Mrs Spark was the author full of wit who truly thought of her intentions and goals.

³¹ Jelínková 13-15.

³² Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 3.

3. Muriel Spark in the 1950s

The 1950s meant radical changes in a life and also in a career of Muriel Spark. First, she converted to Catholicism on 1 May 1954. Her identity was always rather complicated, so she decided to get rid of all the influences and join a new Church. This act influenced Spark essentially and thanks to it, she received new viewpoints and impulses for her writing, which can be visible in most of her novels. There were lots of discussions whether her conversion was so influential as some her critics argue about or not. In her manifesto *My Conversion* Muriel Spark suggests: „I think there is a connection between my writing and my conversion but I don't want to be too dogmatic about it.“³³ What she wanted to express was that she realizes that her conversion to Catholicism influenced her life and her works too, but there is no point to deal with it more than is necessary. In 1960 Mrs Spark wrote an essay called *How I Became a Novelist*, in which she said that after the time she converted, she "began to see life as a whole rather than as a series of disconnected happenings."³⁴ Her works are typically full of ambivalent characters and ambivalence in general.

Secondly, she published her first novel called *The Comfronters* (1957) and by this she officially initiated her career of a professional writer. She was already thirty-nine.³⁵ Her conversion is, by most critics, labelled as dual one because she also naturally left the world of poetry and entered the new one – the world of a novel. And this natural connection of her religion and her art led these critics to mark Spark as a Catholic writer.³⁶ Ruth Whittaker says that a complete Spark's fiction is "written from a Roman Catholic standpoint."³⁷ But there is the only problem with this kind of label – Spark herself strongly refused such classification. Yet such label indicates that Spark never had any troubles with her identity, so that her identity was always rather stable and fixed, which is not true and particularly about Muriel Spark at all.³⁸ Martin McQuillan mentions that if Spark is strictly considered to be the Catholic writer, how

³³ Muriel Spark, "My Conversion" *The Twentieth Century* (Autumn 1961) Henceforth as MC.

³⁴ Muriel Spark, "How I Became a Novelist." *John O'London's Weekly* (1 December 1960)

³⁵ Jelínková 8.

³⁶ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 6-7.

³⁷ Whittaker 37.

³⁸ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 10.

would then a Protestant writing look like? He compares conversion to a software upgrade.³⁹ He asks then, "What does it mean to be a 'Catholic writer'?" And he answers, "The term is an oxymoron. Writing is not a theological activity, it purposely undermines essential and stable meanings, which presuppose and seek a single and authoritative centre. Meaning is always plural, writing is always cut adrift from its source and origin."⁴⁰ He clearly expressed that he does not think it is possible to identify any author like this. At least such label is not very fitting when talking or writing especially about Muriel Spark.

Mr. Cheyette says that "Her first five novels could easily have been situated anywhere at just about any time, her earlier books take specific instances from her past and mythologize them."⁴¹

3.1. The Comfronters

Spark's first novel *The Comfronters* (1957) is described by Mrs Spark just from the beginning as purportedly experimental, as her research of fictional form.⁴² It is a novel about how to basically write one. Alan Bold suggests that it constitutes "an experimental exploration of the formal nature of fictional truth."⁴³ Muriel Spark herself said following about her very first novel, very ambitious one due to its form:

I didn't feel like a 'novelist' and before I could square it with my literary conscience to write a novel, I had to write a novel-writing process peculiar to myself, and moreover, perform this act within the very novel I proposed to write. I felt too, that the novel as an art form was essentially a variation of a poem.⁴⁴

An expression 'very ambitious due to its form' was used because this work basically writes about a protagonist who can hear various sounds, for instance a typewriter that writes down Caroline's ideas flowing throughout her mind. And it

³⁹ McQuillan 1.

⁴⁰ McQuillan 4.

⁴¹ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 53.

⁴² Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 21.

⁴³ Alan Bold, *Muriel Spark* (London: Methuen, 1986), 34.

⁴⁴ Spark *Curriculum Vitae* 206.

creates a novel within another one, which is supposed to be a novel *The Comforters* itself.

This novel is written in the contrast with English fiction typical for this decade. Kingsley Amis or John Waine, for instance, wrote in the tradition of modernism, other writers such as Alan Sillitoe or Stan Barstow tended to realism. But experimental novels were also being created by authors such as William Golding, Lawrence Durrell or Iris Murdoch. These authors and many others shared the same topics they were writing about. It included especially social frustration – clashes between classes of society, hierarchical authority and so forth.⁴⁵

Spark uses a method of mirroring in this novel. Her own conversion to Catholicism is mirrored here. It is employed as a central theme because one of protagonists, Caroline Rose, a recent convert to Catholicism, represents this method. The novel indicates a certain repulse in this convert, it must fight against more lurid aspects of Catholicism.⁴⁶

To add, the novel could be read as a 'detective story' because it includes investigation of smuggling, or even as a 'finite mystery' due to Caroline's unexplainable hallucinations of sounds, such as the typewriter or other various indefinable sounds.⁴⁷ The fact that Caroline lives in her own form of life takes us to another essential detail – the novel shares some aspects with *The Book of Job* that had an important meaning for Spark at that time. Title itself connotes *The Book of Job* that was a certain object of Spark's interest. It is known that Spark was working on a study based upon *The Book of Job*, but it never came on the scene. In 1955, the same year she initiated her work on *The Comfronters*, however, *The Mystery of Job's Suffering*, a short article, was issued in the *Church of England Newspaper*. Some certain points present in this article have much in common and are relevant to *The Comfronters*.⁴⁸ Mr Cheyette noticed that

⁴⁵ Jelínková 11-12.

⁴⁶ Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, *Vocation and Identity in the Fiction of Muriel Spark* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 135.

⁴⁷ Hynes 136-137.

⁴⁸ Peter Kemp, *Muriel Spark* (London: Elek Books Limited, 1974), 17.

after writing *The Comfronters*, Spark initiated to employ the art of fiction in order to twist her life-story into a 'narrative form'.⁴⁹

3.2. The 1950s Continued: Robinson, Memento Mori, The Ballad of Peckham Rye, The Bachelors

This period of Spark's output was followed by four more novels, *Robinson* (1958), *Memento Mori* (1959); *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* and *The Bachelors*, both written in 1960.

3.2.1. Robinson

The novel *Robinson* deals with relation between reality and fiction, ambivalence of personalities and, to a certain extent, with evil.⁵⁰ Spark used an extraordinary narrative technique here, for it is written in the first person, which is not common in her novels in general whatsoever. The narrator, January Marlow, is a Catholic convert as well as the protagonist of the previous novel, *The Comfronters*, and as well as the author Muriel Spark herself.

An interesting detail, as Ema Jelínková states, is the detail of inner conflict in personality of January and Robinson himself too. On one hand, there is Robinson who chose to be isolated so he escaped from reality. His complete name is Miles Mary Robinson, which indicates a female element of his character. And it is something he certainly tries to hide. Consequently here is a tension, or perhaps even a clash, of a male and a female component within one person. On the other hand, within a character of January, whose name points to Janus, a two-faced god who designates ambivalence by this, the opposing feelings and ideas appear as the effect of this reference.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 3.

Bryan Cheyette, "Writing Against Conversion: Muriel Spark the Gentile Jewess," in *Theorizing Muriel Spark: Gender, Race, Deconstruction*, ed. Martin McQuillan (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002), 98.

⁵⁰ Jelínková 22.

⁵¹ Jelínková 23.

3.2.2. Memento Mori

Memento Mori deals with a group of elderly people who have to face their last period of lives and of course, inevitable death itself. This inevitability is unpleasantly reminded throughout a telephone call when somebody repeats that he or she has to die. But as it is usually taken in consideration by anybody else, death is a strongly tabooed topic and one does not feel comfortable when talking about it, which is connected to the fact that most people are not able (or even do not want to) accept the reality of death. One realises it is all around, but rejects the truth that involves themselves too. But not everybody is shocked by this mortal message, some of pensioners' reactions are very impartial and even calm.

Each person who is seventy receives this call, nobody is familiar with the identity of this unknown intruder. But a detail that is worth paying attention is that description of mood hearable in voice and manner of caller's behaviour is perceived differently according to mental condition of the particular pensioner. In fact this message says completely nothing about the caller, but on the other hand reveals the status of each recipient, which is remarkable piece of information.⁵²

3.2.3. The Ballad of Peckham Rye

A title of *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* already suggests that a plot of this novel, for it is a ballad, it typically consists of a bloody, dark and a dramatic plot (murders or attempts to murder are present). David Herman calls this novel a "hybrid text in which Spark fuses (and also parodies) the 'English' tendency towards domestic realism and an indigenous 'Scottish' tradition of supernatural ballads."⁵³ Dougal Douglas represents a stereotype of a Scot that is to a certain extent a diabolic person as he is able to shift his shape and has a back deformation. Another feature is that he never crosses the water – it is according to Scottish ballad typology seen as a clear evidence of a dark power.⁵⁴ He embodies other characteristics defining him as a devilish person

⁵² Jelínková 28-29.

⁵³ David Herman, introduction to *Muriel Spark: Twenty-first Century Perspective*, by ed. David Herman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 7.

⁵⁴ Norman Page, *Muriel Spark* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), 29.

– Peckham Rye becomes rather chaotic place where tragic events happen and are undoubtedly associated with Dougal’s arrival. His presence, generally speaking, has a destructive effect on his surroundings. Dougal cannot stand illnesses of any kind and he is also highly manipulative person.⁵⁵ His ambivalent character is clearly preserved up to the end of the novel, he is on one hand devilish person, but he also feels a strong need to have a personal relationship. Yet when he is confronted to reveal his identity, his answer is not crystal clear at all, he expresses only what he is said to be.⁵⁶

3.2.4. The Bachelors

The doubleness is also one of topics in *The Bachelors*, a novel published in 1960 as well as the previous one, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*. It also employs “tension between demonic and daimonic possessions.”⁵⁷ Patrik Seton, a protagonist of this novel, can be seen from two different points of view. He is at the same time a dualist and spiritual medium, but he also tends to forgery. His real identity is not revealed immediately as it is for instance in Dougal’s case. Patrik’s identity becomes evident at the moment of confrontation with Ronald Bridges, a Catholic and graphologist.⁵⁸ Ronald literally bridges two spheres – natural and supernatural, godly and devilish. These two opposite characters confront each other when Ronald is supposed to mark Seton as innocent, which is believed thank to a letter Ronald is examining. But Patrik’s forgery is revealed instead due to his handwriting.

One interesting detail when comparing these two characters appear in this book. Both protagonists have epileptical “problems” – to be precise, Ronald as an epileptic person does not pretend anything, but Patric has no problems and he basically plays his role to be an epileptic person and due to this fact, he appears to public to be a medium. He also employs this “ability” to gain financial and also sexual

⁵⁵ Gerard Carruthers, “‘Fully to Savour Her Position’: Muriel Spark and Scottish Identity,” in *Muriel Spark: Twenty-first Century Perspective*, ed. David Herman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 28.

⁵⁶ Jelínková 33.

⁵⁷ Randisi 24.

⁵⁸ Jelínková 39.

benefits of his female victims.⁵⁹ Here it is visible how these protagonists differ from each other, how differently they act and behave.

4. The 1960s in Muriel Spark's Work

This time period meant certain changes for Muriel Spark. In this stage of her career, she created some of her most known works, such as *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) – its film adaptations have been very popular; or *The Public Image* (1968) for which she was shortlisted for Booker Prize. Other works written in this time period are *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963) and *The Mandelbaum Gate* (1965). Mr Hynes says that novels written after 1960 are no longer associated with comic features. He adds that "the later novels are more unsettling in that they both insist upon the two realms and project doubts of various degrees and kinds concerning the likelihood of comic merger – of integrated resolution."⁶⁰ Mr Cheyette adds that:

Her next three novels could only have been set in Edinburgh, London and Jerusalem in the 1930s, mid 1940s and early 1960 respectively. They are all related in some way to the history of fascism and the Second World War and its aftermath, these later works more thoroughly locate her life-story in time and place so as to explore as fiction many of her past selves and identities.⁶¹

4.1. The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie is probably most famous and most read book in Spark's output. It represents certain features she experienced as a child, for instance her teacher Miss Kay who served as a model for Jean Brodie. She again deals with conversion to Catholicism, this time within a protagonist Sandy Stranger; the author does not forget to cope with a war and its impact as well as Mussolini together with Fascism (Brodie admirably talks about marches and she sees fascism as a solution) and also the ideas of Calvinism.

⁵⁹ Hynes 39.

⁶⁰ Hynes 57.

⁶¹ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 53.

The character of Jean Brodie shows herself as a very manipulative (Joyce Emily, who was encouraged by Brodie, went to military area and died there), influential and formative personality, her godlike behaviour represents the tradition of Calvinism. Sandy said about her teacher, "She thinks she is Providence, thought Sandy, she thinks she is God of Calvin, she sees the beginning and the end." (PMJB 120) Brodie believed in predestination that is important in Calvinism, so that she was strongly convinced about her right of godlike behaviour. This can be observed in another example: when she asks who is the greatest of Italian painters, she does not agree with an answer Leonardo da Vinci and she says, "That is incorrect. The answer is Giotto, he is my favourite."⁶² Mr. Hynes says following about this matter, "Miss Brodie's regime, her model, her basis for distinguishing among and evaluating and compartmentalizing her six girls, is herself."⁶³

Brodie is supposed to form characters of her students including girls at Marcia Blaine School for Girls; she clearly realises her influence and impact on girls as she says, "Give me a girl at an impressionable age, and she is mine for life." (PMJB, 9) Brodie chose girls that are 'famous' for different things and they create so-called 'Brodie set' or 'crème de la crème,' which represents their uniqueness. Mr. Cheyette talks about them followingly, "Brodie is a bogus Christ-figure and the Brodie set caricature of the 'chosen'."⁶⁴ They were preferred because their parents would not interfere in Brodie's intentions either. Miss Brodie represents a female teacher in interwar years, so-called war-beareved spinster, which was common at that time as men were away in the war conflict and women gained their certain liberation.⁶⁵

Jean Brodie is after all betrayed by one of girls, she never gets to know whom it was. The only girl she is not suspicious about is Sandy, but Sandy is, in reality, the one who betrayed Brodie. Sandy realised how wrong Brodie is (that she basically betrayed not only her girls, but also the tradition of the school) and she just did the same to

⁶² Muriel Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), 11. Henceforth as PMJB.

⁶³ Hynes 69.

⁶⁴ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 56.

⁶⁵ Gerard Carruthers, "'Fully to Savour Her Position': Muriel Spark and Scottish Identity," in *Muriel Spark: Twenty-first Century Perspective*, ed. David Herman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 32.

Brodie herself. In reality, Sandy seems to be very similar to Brodie in this regard ('Sandy is Jean's mirror image' in Mr Hynes's words)⁶⁶ and that is why she preferred choosing her future behind the bars – as Craig Cairns expresses the idea that fantasy might be very dangerous in this case.⁶⁷ Readers get to know about Brodie's death and her betrayal just at the beginning as well as they know about Sandy being now a Catholic convert and Sister Helena of Transfiguration; they also learn that one girl of this set is already dead – everything thanks to flashbacks that stand for a proleptic character of the book.

Another detail of this book is Brodie standing between two men. There is Mr. Lloyd who loves Brodie and so does she, but he is married and having an affair with him would be under standards Brodie keeps. Then there is Mr. Lowther who has a sexual affair with Brodie. But in reality, Brodie is not able to have a relationship with either of them, she sends Rose instead because she can see intellect in her. But after all it is Sandy who sleeps with him. Mr. Lloyd paints portraits of girls but, in fact, all these pictures look like Brodie herself.

Sandy converts to Catholicism and becomes Sister Helena, which is the act of rejection of a Brodie's false godlike behaviour.⁶⁸ She also writes her famous book *The Transfiguration of Commonplace*. At the end of the book she is asked by a young reporter who was the most influential person in her school days. Sandy answered, "There was a Miss Jean Brodie in her prime." (PMJB 128) Mr Kemp comments on this final line of the novel:

With the novel in the background, the point is taken: Miss Brodie's influence is not an alternative to those the questioner suggests: it epitomizes all of them, the teacher being a pattern, her classroom a microcosm, by means of which conceptions such as Fascism or Calvinism are embodied, pushed into motion, scrutinized.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Hynes 76.

⁶⁷ Craig Cairns, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999), 202.

⁶⁸ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 57.

⁶⁹ Kemp *Muriel Spark* 82.

4.2. The Girls of Slender Means

The Girls of Slender Means, written in 1963, also employs proleptical character of narration such as the previous novel *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. This novel is set in London and deals with the time of starvation and suffering for it takes place in the reality of war in 1945. This historical truth full of austerity and fear is seen as the period when "Everyone carried a shopping bag in case they should be lucky enough to pass a shop that had a sudden stock of something off the rations."⁷⁰ This book was published in 1963, which means that this war is still in memories of people in the year of publication as Mrs Ema Jelínková pointedly notices.⁷¹ This detail is connected to the first sentence that says, "Long ago in 1945 all the nice people in England were poor, allowing for exceptions." (GSM 7) A hostel The May of Teck Club in London serves as a shelter for unmarried poor girls who try to enjoy their lives according to possibilities of that time. The novel copes with various characters, such as Nicholas who died as a martyr in Haiti, or Joanna who loves poetry and represents a highly moral and pure person as such. The opposite of Joanna is Selina whose perfect figure makes her life easier as well as her knowledge gained in the course of mental balance. This formula is repeated several times a day and Selina sees this as a kind of prayer that is highly important to her. During tragic situation when their hostel is burnt down, Selina shows herself as a cold and hypocritical person when she saves dress that is more important for her than to help to other girls who are not as 'lucky' to be slim as Selina to escape through very tiny window. On contrary it is Joanna who tries to help others so that her devotion causes her own death. Mrs Spark plays with ambiguous word 'slender' whose interpretation might be 'slim figure' as well as 'poor.' But it does not have to represent just financial situation, but also the aspect of moral values.⁷²

⁷⁰ Muriel Spark, *The Girls of Slender Means* (New York: New Directions Classic, 1998), 9. Henceforth as GSM.

⁷¹ Jelínková 48.

⁷² Jelínková 50-51.

According to Mrs. Jelínková this novel can be viewed as the initial signal of identity crisis that is more developed in a following novel and is characteristic especially for the 1970s in the output of Mrs. Spark.⁷³

4.3. The Mandelbaum Gate

The Mandelbaum Gate, a book written in 1965, is seen as the 'most successful' by Patricia Stubbs because it provides the highest mark of respect to the realistic tradition.⁷⁴ Warner Berthoff quoted very pointedly on the form and content of the novel:

Despite the larger, fuller design of *The Mandelbaum Gate*, we fall back once more onto the simplifying ground of stacked parable and trumped-up morality play where everything is preconceived and self-illustrating and the risky options of actual life are never really entered into. . . . At the center, instead of a graspable action of love, faith, participation in destiny, Muriel Spark gives us her sharp, definite, restrictive ideas about these things and about the effect their presence or absence has upon individual men and women."⁷⁵

The main protagonist is Barbara Vaughan who is half-Jewish, but her identity is much more complicated because her father is even Gentile. Barbara feels confused as she likes both sides of her family and to add, she recently converted to Catholicism because she saw it as a kind of solution. Her problematic identity represents autobiographical features of the author herself again and suggests that Mrs Spark still strongly tends to solve her own complex personality.

Barbara meets an archeologist Harry, but their relationship means a complication for Barbara's recent conversion because he is, at first, divorced and secondly, he is not Catholic at all, which is in a strong conflict with her faith. This clash leads Barbara to a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in order to deal with her mixed identity too.

⁷³ Jelínková 51.

⁷⁴ Patricia Stubbs, *Muriel Spark, Writers and Their Work Series* (London: Longman Higher Education, 1973), 26.

⁷⁵ Warner Berthoff, "Fortunes of the Novel: Muriel Spark and Iris Murdoch," *Massachusetts Review* 8 (1967): 313.

So the plot takes place in Jerusalem where the Mandelbaum Gate itself is a place that demonstrates the separation of the city into two parts as well as a connector, the idea of doubles remains here.⁷⁶ Barbara has to face consequences of her sudden pilgrimage in the form of quite serious illness and her recovery. Barbara's resolution comes after what a nacist Adolf Eichmann said, she realises that an absolute loyalty to institutions recreates people into evil personalities. This understanding leads Barbara to her decision to marry Harry whatever it causes.⁷⁷ In addition, she comes to a conclusion that none part of her mixed identity will be suppressed, so that she will accept it as a whole: "She. . . felt all of a piece, a Gentile Jewess, a private-judging Catholic, a shy adventuress."⁷⁸

Mr Cheyette says that "by the 1970s, however, Spark is able to accept her outrageous mythologizers as figures who embody a material world which itself cannot tell the difference between truth and artistry."⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Hynes 54.

⁷⁷ Jelínková 54.

⁷⁸ Muriel Spark, *The Mandelbaum Gate* (London: Macmillan, 1965), 155.

⁷⁹ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 85.

5. The Era of the 1970s: Experimental Epoch in the Output of Muriel Spark

The time period started already in 1968 when *The Public Image* was published for the first time. This novel initiates very crucial stage in Mrs. Spark's writing career as it is full of uniqueness, development and also change. It is strongly influenced by French literary tradition, especially the *nouveau roman* and Alain Robbe-Grillet, a modernist writer who is qualified as the one Mrs Spark admires the most. Ruth Whittaker enumerated methods typical for the *nouveau roman*, "These include reflexiveness, use of the present tense, minutely detailed description given in a neutral tone, and narrative discontinuity involving the sacrifice of suspense."⁸⁰ Such techniques Mrs Spark employed in her time of experiments. Mrs Jelínková says that the author's tendention to the experimental form does not mean a rejection of realism, but on contrary it means that realism is emphasized and even more intensified here.⁸¹ Brian Cheyette adds that "Spark is no longer interested in the consciousness of life-story of the individual nor in the virtues of historical reconstruction."⁸²

Mrs Spark wrote an essay called *The Desegregation of Art* in 1970 and it plays a key role in understanding and depicting her style she used in the 1970s. In her essential manifesto she states:

The art and literature of sentiment and emotion, however beautiful in itself, however striking in its depiction of actuality, has to go. It cheats us into a sense of involvement with life and society, but in reality it is a segregated activity. In its place I advocate the arts of satire and ridicule. And I see no other living art form in the future.⁸³

In an interview from the same year she says that she does not "believe in good and evil so much any more," on contrary she believes in "absurdity and intelligence."⁸⁴ In an

⁸⁰ Whittaker 8.

⁸¹ Jelínková 57.

⁸² Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 71.

⁸³ Muriel Spark, "Desegregation of Arts." *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Letters* 2nd ser. (1970), 24.

⁸⁴ Spark–Armstrong Interview, *Guardian*, 30 September 1970, 8.

interview led by Martin McQuillan Mrs Spark was asked about her manifesto and she agreed with her statement about achieving some change and she said, "Ridicule is the only respectable weapon we have. In a way, I think it's probably the most deadly." Mr McQuillan asked her "In that sense, is the novel there to effect social change? Do you think that's what novel can do?" She answered:

The novel can do it. I think it just depends on the time and the circumstances, if it does do it. I would hope that everything I write changes something, opens windows in people's minds, something. I do want to do *that*, to clarify.⁸⁵

It is clear here that Muriel Spark really wants her books to have an essential impact on her readers, on something at least, as she herself states. She might have seen this as something that would remain here, something that would form people of even her heritage left here for future generations.

Novels of experimental era are typically in opposition with previous quite transparent decades and they deal with inner conflict of identity crisis. Characters serve as a mediator between the author and readers because protagonists become the first readers of her novels and they play a key role in interpretation of Mrs Spark's books. In the middle of the 1970s its experimental character seems to disappear (just after publication of *The Hothouse by East River*). She comes back to her habitual ways of writing. Satirical *The Abbess of Crewe* where a political scandal Watergate is employed, then it is *The Takeover* that is strongly inspired by *The Golden Bough* written by James George Frazer, and *The Territorial Rights* that is a reflection and also parody on spy novels.⁸⁶ Mr Cheyette suggests that the 1970s is the period where "international messes" are employed as it culminates with *The Takeover* and *Territorial rights*.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Martin McQuillan, "'The Same Informed Air': An Interview with Muriel Spark," in *Theorizing Muriel Spark: Gender, Race, Deconstruction*, ed. Martin McQuillan (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002), 222.

⁸⁶ Jelínková 58-59.

⁸⁷ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 84.

5.1. The Public Image

”She is a twentieth-century Jane Eyre’... ’She is certainly a ”tiger in the tank”’...
’Though this movie was a poor vehicle for her talents Annabel did a remarkable job of
pulling it together.’”⁸⁸



This novel creates a satirical picture about the world of fame, mass media and film making. It employs retrospective way of narration. At the beginning we know about Annabel’s marriage with Frederick and that they are moving to a new flat in Rome with their baby-boy Carl. Narration continues in a present tense and has chronological character with certain details that are conveyed through flashforwards, such as a sleeping girl in Annabel’s flat, and readers immediately learn that she will wake up in the hospital next morning.

A young couple has to deal with increasing popularity of an actress Annabel. Their privacy is disturbed by journalists, fans and their personal troubles too. Frederick is jealous because his wife who lacks talent is becoming a successful actress whereas he failed with his attempt. Duality can be seen in Annabel and Frederick who try to create their public image that does not correspond with a reality of their lives. Annabel has to cope with a suicide of her husband and save her reputation and public image because of an existence of letters that are supposed to ruin Anabel’s career if they are discovered. This clever plan (arranged party, letters) is carefully prepared by Frederick because he was no longer able to stand Annabel’s success as well as living in a lie. This situation supports the opportunity of Spark’s favourite blackmailing that appears also in this novel.⁸⁹

Annabel’s public image is basically established by fantasies of others. She later on proves herself to be a neurotic and paranoid person as the result of her anxieties and her endeavour to save her face in public. She becomes an ‘empty shell’ (PI 125)

⁸⁸ Muriel Spark, *The Public Image* (London: Penguin books, 1970), 20. Henceforth as PI

⁸⁹ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 74.

without no more life inside. Mr Cheyette suggests that she remains vacuum that is to be filled again with a sense. According to him, the only article that truly makes sense are babies and children and this is the only thing, Mrs Spark is willing to tolerate.⁹⁰

But experienced Annabel keeps calm and the same night she organizes a briefing where she sadly expresses her personal tragedy with her baby on hands and even surrounded by her neighbours. She loses her face only by being nasty to a doctor's daughter when this girl reacts on Annabel's tears and an organized theatre like that: "The actresses can make themselves cry, they have to learn how to do it." (PI 66) Mrs Jelínková pointedly adds to the situation after Annabel's husband's that it is like Frederick having control over her even after his death.⁹¹

The character of Frederick is worth analyzing as he definitely had certain psychological troubles. His ego was hurt for he was financially supported by his wife, a female, who earned more money than him. To add, she was far more successful in a profession he also wanted to achieve. Yet he considered Annabel being stupid, he thought she was just lucky with her roles. It all increased his jealousy towards his own wife and his decision to ruin her public image completely. When evaluating Frederick's letters, Annabel says, "I wish to say there is no truth in what my husband accuses me of in those letters. He was insane." (PI 123) This mark will be followed by analysis of Annabel's character too because of her brainy and planned behaviour after suicide of her husband, and the use of a female version of her husband's name and surname.

5.1.1. Psychological Approach

Sigmund Freud, a founder of psychoanalysis, distinguished three main principles that are essential for the right personality shaping: Id, Ego and Super-Ego. Ego is explained as a device that tries to remove unpleasant stimulus by expressing any kind of disagreement, in children's behaviour it is especially screaming or crying.⁹² Frederick behaved according to this strategy in order to recreate reality he was not satisfied with: he wanted to change it so instead of screaming as a child he killed

⁹⁰ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 76.

⁹¹ Jelínková 63.

⁹² Sigmund Freud, „Formulace k dvěma principům psychického dění“, *O člověku a kultuře*, překl. Ludvík Hošek a Jiří Pechar (Praha: Odeon, 1990) 91.

himself and demonstrated his impact by organizing a clever plan to recreate this reality, which meant to ruin Annabel's public image in order to take his revenge by those sentimental letters and an arranged party. After all this, he wanted Annabel's public image to look fraudulent and he wanted himself to appear as a poor husband who had no other solution than death. In one of his letters, a letter to his Mum, he writes: "It is my only escape from an intolerable and abominable situation. Mamma, my wife is unfaithful to me, day and night." (PI 85)

To save her public image Annabel never admitted her husband committed suicide, which was a smart part of her plan. Annabel was asked, "Mrs Christopher, had you any idea your husband was going to do this?" Her answer is: "Do what? It was an accident, you know." (PI 69) She perhaps did not want to admit that something was wrong in their relationship, she did not want to lose her face and she could not accept the fact that she could be blamed for it. "I will never believe it was suicide," (PI 80) she says.

Although her plan worked for a hundred of per cent, there was one person who did not believe any of her words, the doctor's daughter. According to Annabel's inadequate and exaggerated reaction full of anger, it can be said, she desired to defend her intentions against intruder (the doctor's daughter). Here it is suitable to talk about Ego too. As Ego expression depends on reality, in this case this reality is girl's negative reaction Annabel has to face, her Ego with a self-preservation function initiates process that is able to repress the thing that does not correspond with a wish, which means Annabel's preserving of her public image. As the result there is Annabel's angry reaction: "Get out, you beast!" (PI 66)

In the end she revealed the truth of her public image although she was already saved. It was probably the act of her conscience that is a part of Super-Ego. Super-Ego is connected to the feeling of guilt and an aggressive behaviour that is direct against own self. It then suggests that Annabel did not desire to live in a lie and by this revealing she probably wanted to save not only herself but also her baby-boy Carl.

5.1.2. Feminist Approach

Problematic acceptance of diverse roles of Frederick and Annabel caused that Frederick in all probability felt failure in the basic role of his marriage. As a husband he is expected to support the family financially, but in fact Annabel is the one who earns money and supports family. In addition, despite a lack of talent Annabel develops her career as an actress and becomes very famous and popular among her fans. Although Frederick is successful with his film scripts, he fails in receiving the main part in a film according to his own script, which is not acceptable for him. He is beaten by a female, who is even his wife, otherwise he is convinced that she is stupid and just lucky.

A basic role of a male is ruined and it contributes to a fatal way of its solution (Frederick's death and revenge). Feminist criticism says:

Feminists do, however, find themselves confronting one universal – that, whatever power or status may be accorded to women in a given culture, they are still, in comparison to men, devaluated as 'the second sex'. Feminist scholars study diverse social constructions of femaleness and maleness in order to understand the universal phenomenon of male dominance.⁹³

Females are expected to fulfill a different role than males who are supposed to play a dominant role. So it is crystal clear now that Frederick could not stand his position in their relationship as it was him who, in reality, was considered 'the second sex'.

There is one more detail about their gender roles: just in the first chapter, on the first page, when readers are already familiar with the protagonist Annabel, it is followed by expression that Annabel Christopher is, in privacy, Mrs Frederick Christopher. It seems that by this Annabel wished to stress that she is a female, but she keeps her husband's first name Frederick as if she wanted to state that it is her who wears pants, which means she supports family financially and who holds dominance within the family.

⁹³ Gayle Greene and Coppélia Kahn, *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism* (London and New York: Methuen, Routledge, 1985), 2.

There were several feminist authors dealing with a unified self, such as Virginia Woolf or Gertrude Stein. "Their approach differed from that of a male mainstream. Instead of cracking the self in self-pitying pieces, they attempted to melt it into a female choral and collective voice."⁹⁴ For instance Woolf's books *Orlando*, where a unified self is presented within Orlando man who becomes a woman, or *A Room of One's Own*, in which it was said that, "It is fatal to be a man or a woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly."⁹⁵ In this case having a woman-manly personality of Annabel is still too much to deal with for Frederick who is made to solve his situation.

5.2. The Driver's Seat

"All those incredible colours together! she is saying.' 'Those incredible colours! She said they were perfectly natural. Natural! Here in the North, she said...'
Her voice stops as she sees Lise is looking and hearing."⁹⁶



This novella written in 1970 offers completely different universe than was employed in her earlier books. It is very tragic book that no longer deals with religion, but it still preserves some aspects typical for its author Muriel Spark. Mr Kemp suggests that this novel is a book where "the normal is reversed, the usual distorted: the world in which the female hunts the male, the victim her murderer, eagerly and leaving clues behind her as she does so."⁹⁷

A protagonist of this novel is Lise who prepares for her holiday abroad. Readers do not have any hints about her surroundings, family or friends, about her background; she is known just as Lise throughout the whole novel. As the result of this, her

⁹⁴ Greene and Kahn 115.

⁹⁵ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), 104.

⁹⁶ Muriel Spark, *The Driver's Seat* (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1970), 12.

PuHenceforth as DS.

⁹⁷ Kemp *Muriel Spark* 123.

extravagant behaviour during buying the clothes or arguing with people stays unexplained. Later it becomes clear that she wanted people around to remember her for a bad colour taste of her clothes or her arguing with people and so forth. "Dressed for the carnival!" (DS 69) This is the evaluation of one woman who meets Lise.

The character of narration is proleptic: as readers expect Lise to experience a nice holiday, maybe even a romance, they learn she will be found dead the following morning:⁹⁸

She will be found tomorrow morning dead from multiple stab-wounds, her wrists bound with a silk scarf and her ankles bound with a man's necktie, in the grounds of an empty villa, in a park of the foreign city to which she is travelling on the flight now boarding at Gate 14. (DS 25)

Readers are familiar with the end of the novel just at the beginning of the third chapter, which does not give them a chance to investigate or guess the end. Bran Nicol says that it is a detective story, but it is supposed to begin with a murder, not to end with it.⁹⁹ But it is, on the other hand, very brainy strategy because readers, of course, want to know what happened and why. And they are given information about her travelling, about two men on board, about Lise's secret plan to get killed by one of them she chooses. She is convinced that she will be able to recognize him as well as he will recognize her. She says, "The one I'm looking for will recognize me right away for the woman I am, have no fear of that." (DS 64-65) What readers never get to know is the reason why she decided to die, what led her to this conclusion. Jeremy Idle suggests that this novel is about "a quest for a self-definition."¹⁰⁰

A man who will kill her is already on board of the plane and he is somehow strangely afraid of Lise and that is why he exchanges his seat; he probably already knows that Lise appears to be a 'threat' for him as he is a dangerous sexual maniac just released. When asked why he changed his seat, he says: "I don't know. I must have

⁹⁸ Jelínková 65.

⁹⁹ Bran Nicol, "Reading Spark in the Age of Suspicion," in *Muriel Spark: Twenty-first Century Perspective*, ed. David Herman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 120.

¹⁰⁰ Jeremy Idle, "Muriel Spark's Uselessness," in *Theorizing Muriel Spark: Gender, Race, Deconstruction*, ed. Martin McQuillan (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002), 150-51.

sensed something.” (DS 28) Lise must have been very provocative for something that warned him. He is travelling to his aunt Lise will later meet in her hotel. She will be killed in a park, exactly in the place she marked on the map. Her murderer will be instructed by her how and where to lead the stabbing, the only thing she does not want is sex. Everything will happen according to her instructions, except for sex, this is the only thing, her murderer will not comply. ”I don’t want any sex,’ she shouts. ’You can have it afterwards.’” (DS 106)

Lise is a precise person, a perfectionist, who likes having everything in order. That might be a reason for her choosing books not according to her interest but according to a cover colour so that it fits to her home. ”Well, I looked there and I don’t find my shades. Aren’t these English books here?’ Lise says ’No. In any case they’re all very bright-coloured.’” (DS 22) As a perfectionist, she carefully plans every aspect of her last hours: she wants her behaviour to create as many troubles as possible, she hides her passport between seats in a taxi and she employs Interpol and mass media and investigation of her murder. Mrs Jelínková sees this behaviour as revenge to the world. The same author comes with another essential thought: Lise wants to conduct everything, her life, her plan, her death, but there is also the author of the book who is allowed to decide about things. As if Mrs Spark desired to show Lise she has no control over her murder, it was a sexual murder, Lise did not desire for at all.¹⁰¹ ”As the knife descends to her throat she screams, evidently perceiving how final is finality.” (DS 106-107) Nathalie Sarraute suggests that relationship between a reader and an author should be rooted in ”mutual suspicion”. She says:

”The writer denies his reader a ”familiar” position, that of the reader of traditional realism and instead reminds him or her of the constructed, artificial quality of the text.” A new type of narrator is employed, named ”an anonymous ’I,’ who is at once all and nothing, and who as often as not is but the reflection of the author himself, has usurped the role of the hero, occupying the place of honor.”¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Jelínková 66-69.

¹⁰² Nathalie Sarraute, ”The Age of Suspicion.” *The Age of Suspicion: Essays on the Novel*. Trans. Maria Jolas (New York: George Braziller, 1963), 56.

According to Jonathan Kemp this novel is supposed to be read as a ridiculous satire because "the novel does, after all, violently parody both the girl-seeks-boy holiday romance and the Whodunnit thriller."¹⁰³

5.2.1. Psychological Approach

Sigmund Freud states in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* that "the pleasure-principle seems directly to subserve the death-instincts."¹⁰⁴ But Judith Roof suggests that a drive within this novel is "neither Freud's 'death drive' nor the 'pleasure principle,' but a specifically narrative drive dependent upon knowledge of the story."¹⁰⁵

Mr Hynes writes about a doubleness of Lise because she appears to be "a classic schizophrenic unable on one hand to control her conviction that she must be on guard against those who would laugh at her or otherwise take advantage of her; on the other hand, she appears to be strongwilled and determined to take charge of her own plans – not at all about to be victimized by others."¹⁰⁶ Her divided mind probably leads her to the plan to end her life. Mr Kemp labels Lise as "psychotic." Her abnormality and protest are stressed by colours she is wearing. The novel opens when Lise is buying new clothes that is very lurid as "her lurid psychology: its discordancy is a natural match for her."¹⁰⁷

Bill, a man on board, is categorizing everything as Yin or Yang, which suggests a balance that is made of two complementary opposites: male and female, light and darkness, life and death or murderer and a victim. None of them can work properly if separated. As if Lise somehow knew that her life can be completed only by death, even that she knew nothing about Yin and Yang.

¹⁰³ Jonathan Kemp, "'Her Lips are Slightly Parted': The Ineffability of Erotic Sociality in Muriel Spark's *The Driver's Seat*," in *Muriel Spark: Twenty-first Century Perspective*, ed. David Herman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 184. Whodunnit as who done it.

¹⁰⁴ Sigmund Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." Trans. C.J.M. Hubback, ed. Ernest Jones. London: The International Psycho-analytical Press, 1922), 83.

¹⁰⁵ Judith Roof, "The Future Perfect's Perfect Future: Spark's and Duras's Narrative Drive," in *Theorizing Muriel Spark: Gender, Race, Deconstruction*, ed. Martin McQuillan (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002), 64.

¹⁰⁶ Hynes 81.

¹⁰⁷ Kemp *Muriel Spark* 124.

Mrs Roof suggests that Lise's excentric behaviour and her tendency to control everything is a result of "repressed sexuality, sado-masochism, and suicidal tendencies."¹⁰⁸

5.2.2. Aristotle

The novel contains very tragic features and "it raises standard classical questions associated with tragedy: most specifically, it asks, by means of its title, as well as through character and event. It raises again the old poser about the balance between choice and necessity."¹⁰⁹ In Aristotle's *Poetics* it is said that the aim of tragedies is catharsis that is achieved throughout sympathy and fear over drastic phenomenon, so-called *pathos*. The audience sympathizes thanks to empathy with these tragic consequences of characters and feels relief that it did not happen to them. It also forms and strengthens our internal order and teaches us to avoid such bad behaviour. This catharsis creates a storm of these feelings and it brings a balance after all. Catharsis does not appear if something bad happens to someone who is purely bad person, which is not, fortunately, the case here because Lise is not a bad person at all.¹¹⁰

Mr Hynes adds that despite being a tragic novel, it does not use traditional ingredients of tragedy. "We have no reason to suppose that Lise sees herself as Lear, Oedipus, or Job, or that she sees herself enmeshed in the tussle between freedom and compulsion."¹¹¹ On the other hand, he states that, for him "the clasically tragic situation arises either because God of gods will not explain why things occur as they do, and will not explain causal connections between themselves and us, or because humans cannot believe in anyone from whom they might at least ask for explanations or hints."¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Roof 51.

¹⁰⁹ Hynes 80.

¹¹⁰ Aristoteles, *Poetika*. Trans. Milan Mráz. (Praha: Svoboda, 1996), 69-84.

¹¹¹ Hynes 81.

¹¹² Hynes 83.

5.2.3. Feminist Approach

Lise represents one of classical spinsters that are presented in Spark's fiction quite often. On one hand, readers of this novella get to know nothing about Lise's privacy; on the other hand, it is highly probable that she has no private life, she is unmarried without a partner, with no background. To add, she tends to control everything and everyone in her life, including her later murderer. Lise is the one who wears pants for she becomes her destiny maker who decides about everything except for a sex before she is murdered.

As if she does not only want to be equal to men, she desires to be more, to be superior, which appears to be familiar to radical feminism that "envisages a new social order in which women will not be subordinated to men and feminity and femaleness will not be debased and devalued. In the short term, for radical feminists the only way in which women can assert their autonomy from men and recover their true and natural feminity is in separation from men and the patriarchal structures of society."¹¹³

¹¹³ Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practise & Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1987), 4.

5.3. Not to Disturb

”The wind is high tonight,’ Lister says. ’We might not hear the shots.’
He takes the pen and marks a sum on the envelope, followed by the date. He then opens wide the safe which is neatly stacked with various envelopes and boxes, some of metal, some of leather.”¹¹⁴



This novella written in 1971 is set in Geneva and tells the story of the owners of the Chateau, the Baron and the Baroness Klopstock, and their servants with the chief Lister preparing for a tragedy that is about to happen – death of both owners and Victor, their secretary and a lover of both at the same time. During one night these three are locked in the library and servants are supposed to disturb them under no circumstances. The next morning the bodies of these three are found dead, as expected, and servants look to be moved and rather shocked by this although they expected this all to happen. In the novel it is never revealed how it is possible that they knew before anything in reality happened. There is also a couple that is not welcomed in the house as masters are not to be disturbed, one of servants says: ”Forget them,’ says Mr Samuel. ’They are only extras.’” (ND 86) As the result these two die under the elms they are hiding in a storm, they basically had nothing to do there at all. Lister says: ”They don’t come into the story.” (ND 31)

Even before this tragical event, servants had already prepared for the situation after this tragedy although nothing has taken its place yet. Their memoirs are written, the story of this incident is already ready to be delivered to a journalist office. Lister, the author of it, is dangerously right about details of that violent event. These servants are ready to have a profit from this tragedy, marriage of a pregnant Heloise and the insane brother living in the attic is caused to happen in order to get heritage this way.

¹¹⁴ Muriel Spark, *Not to Disturb* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), 12. Henceforth as ND.

Determinism is again the main subject of this novella, it deals with inevitability of death as well as foreknowledge. It seems that everything is decided and agreed already before it occurs in reality, for instance "'Suppose the Baron wants his dinner?' 'Of course he expected his dinner,' Lister says. 'But as things turned out he didn't live to eat it. He'll be arriving soon.'" (ND 8-9) And that is why nobody and nothing can change it. Lister, a protagonist, has a dual character for he is the protagonist of the novel and the author of memoirs about their death at the same time. As if it is the reason why he is so sure about the incident and its consequences. Mr Hynes suggests this:

On the one hand the servants – like us in our recounting of plots of other events – observe past, present, future distinctions. But on the other hand the servants speak not only of temporal segmenting, foregone conclusions, and inevitable consequences, but also of tenselessness, all-nowness, eternity.¹¹⁵

Servants seem to play roles of Gods, but if they were gods they would probably know the exact time of the tragedy, which is not the case here. Lister says "'I place the event at about 3 a.m. so prepare to stay awake.'" But he also stressed intuition of Heloise who she says "'I would say 6 o'clock tomorrow morning. Right on the squeak of dawn,' says Heloise." 'You might well be right,' says Lister. 'Women in your condition are unusually intuitive.'" (ND 9)

Especially the clash between predestination and foreknowledge is present. Free will or a chance to choose are very strictly limited here as everything is done before it takes place authentically. Characters of this novel are to reveal "the eternal inevitability" as well as "the temporal determining of that same inevitability."¹¹⁶ When the Prince is coming to the house and is said about progressing meeting of the Baron, the Baroness and Victor, he reacts: "'He didn't seem to be expecting any trouble.' Lister answers, "'None of them did, your Excellency. They were not prepared for it. They have placed themselves, unfortunately, with the realm of predestination.'" (ND 37) As if they could not change what is going to happen.

¹¹⁵ Hynes 156.

¹¹⁶ Hynes 158-61.

Not to Disturb has many similar features with a gothic novel and Jacobean drama, such as an insane person howling in the attick, a tragedy happening during a stormy night, haunted house: "'They haunt the house,' says Lister, 'like insubstantial bodies, while still alive.'" (ND 23) or puzzling deaths in the library. Lister's moral and witty statements seem to reflect a comedy of manners that usually carries scandalic features.¹¹⁷ This kind of comedy was employed especially by Oscar Wilde and his *The Importance of Being Earnest* or Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*. There is also Lister's quotation of *The Duchess of Malfi* by John Webster: "'Their life,' says Lister, 'a general mist of error. Their death, a hideous storm of terror.'" (ND 5)

But soon it is clear that the author employed parody so as this illusion is rejected by Mrs Spark when it becomes obvious that the Chateau has been old just eleven years or that groaning of window shutters was arranged by servants themselves in order to hide possible noise from the library.¹¹⁸ "From the floor above comes the noise of a sharp clap, followed by another and another. 'It sounds like guns going off,' says Heloise. 'Well it isn't,' says Pablo. 'It's shutters. The wind must be rising again. I loosed those shutters really good, didn't I?'" (ND 53)

Mrs Spark herself spoke about *Not To Disturb* in an interview, she said that: "One of my motives is to provoke the reader; to startle as well as to please."¹¹⁹ Muriel Spark is just an excellent author that disturbs a peace, shocks her readers and surprises by something new any time she wants. Yet she is able to employ the ideas of deconstruction too.

5.3.1. References to The Golden Bough, Archetypal Criticism

The Golden Bough was written in 1890 by Scottish comparative anthropologist James George Frazer and it is considered to be one of the most influential works ever written. Frazer saw myth as a story that is able to explain creation and purpose of almost forgotten ritual of the king's death that is represented in various rituals of nations all over the world and which Mr Frazer analyzed for the purpose of writing this

¹¹⁷ Jelínková 71.

¹¹⁸ Jelínková 72.

¹¹⁹ Cited Kemp *Muriel Spark* 141.

book. This ritual is connected to rebirth that symbolically reflects the image of natural cycles of death and birth, growth and destruction as well as the season changes.¹²⁰

In *Not to Disturb* similar motif seems to appear: it does not refer to an individual person, it submits the couple that is replaced by another group of people. To be precise it is the Baron and the Baroness who are displaced by the group of their servants. They seem to be sacrificed in order to let their positions and heritage to others. The image of rebirth appears too because one group was replaced by another one who adopted the manner of their masters and became exactly same, which seems to represent the image of rebirth as Mrs Jelínková states.¹²¹ These suggestions lead us to another critical approach, which is Deconstruction.

Archetypal criticism deals with symbolical motifs within literature. In this novella there is a strong image of a stormy night and howling from the attick that are supposed to refer to some archetypal or universal purpose. Such a storm and noisy sounds can be viewed as the announcement of coming tragedy that is about to take place and to add, this storm and open windows have the only purpose that is to hide possible noise that could be heard from the library, the place of tragic event.

5.3.2. Deconstruction, Post-structuralism

The term post-structuralism echoes something that comes after structuralism, something that overcomes it to a certain extent. Deconstruction is closely related to post-structuralism and is usually represented by Jacques Derrida, a French philosopher. It is clear that deconstruction tends to deconstruct something.¹²² In this novel it is a group of downstairs (servants) that is ready to deconstruct a hierarchy within a Chateau. At first it is an opposition and then displacement or inversion itself. Servants in this novel go even further. Not only do they deconstruct their positions,

¹²⁰ Michal Peprník, *Směry literární interpretace XX. Století (texty, komentáře)*, (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 2004), 98.

¹²¹ Jelínková 72.

¹²² Peprník 157.

but they also rather get rid of their masters completely and displace them with mimic manners of these masters.¹²³

The image of determinism is also associated with deconstruction as it depends upon many aspects of our life, education, upbringing, mood etc. Lister stresses determinism of his masters many times in the book. He speaks about inevitability of their death and so forth.

5.3.3. Psychological Approach

The terms the Id and the Ego occur in this novella for they are mentioned by Lister in regards to a pregnant Heloise who wants to organize everything about a supper for the one in the attic.

'You better get some sleep after you've had your supper, my girl,' says Clovis. 'You've got a big night ahead. The reporters will be here in the morning if not before.'

'It might not take place till six-ish in the morning,' says Heloise. 'Once they start arguing it could drag on all night. I'm intuitive, as Mr Lister says, and –'

'Only as regards your condition,' says Lister. 'Normally, you are not a bit intuitive. You're thick, normally. It's merely that in your condition the Id tends to predominate over the Ego.' (ND 18)

Here it is clearly seen that Heloise wants to do something, it means she would like to satisfy her desire to deal with the dinner for Gustav. Instead of it she is recommended to go to bed otherwise she is evidently not tired and in addition she is even interrupted when she wanted to continue talking. As she desires to please her Id, her wish, she is said that her Id predominates over the Ego that would otherwise choose to go to bed and rest because of her pregnancy. Yet Heloise after all behaves as a child herself:

¹²³ Willy Maley, "Not to Deconstruct? Righting and Deference in *Not to Disturb*," in *Theorizing Muriel Spark: Gender, Race, Deconstruction*, ed. Martin McQuillan (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002), 171.

'I have to be humoured,' says Heloise, shutting her eyes. 'Why can't I have some grapes?'

'Give her some grapes,' says Pablo.

'Not before dinner,' says Clovis. (ND 18)

Heloise is made to agree and asks as a child for permission to have some grapes. And the answer sounds like talking to the child, it is obvious that fruit can be given to her only after she eats her dinner.

5.3.4. Aristotle

Although a tragic event appears in the novella, here it is probably impossible to employ Aristotle's *Poetics* such as in the previous book *The Driver's Seat* because in this book we have no hints about primarily bad nature of characters that die in the library either. Their love affair connected to jealousy and its tragic consequences cannot be considered as typical demonstration of their bad nature. And that is why the result of catharsis cannot be reached by the readers after all as well as any moral suggestion or advice.

5.4. The Hothouse by the East River

”Is it possible that she is smiling again, he thinks; could she be smiling to herself, retaining humorous reflections to herself? Is she sly and sophisticated, not mad after all? But isn’t possible, he thinks; she is like a child, the way she comes out with everything at this hour of the evening.”¹²⁴



This novella was published in 1973 for the first time. It narrates the story of Elsa Hazlett and her husband Paul in two different time periods, from which one is a reality, the time during the World War II, the second one is a fictitious story that could probably happen in case both protagonists did not die during a bomb attack in 1944. Mrs Spark herself told that this novel has ”something surrealistic, mysterious”¹²⁵ about that time. There are some other characters present in an unreal story such as their non-existing children, Pierre and Katerina, Poppy the Princess, Helmut Kiel and their psychiatrist. Elsa and Paul are war veterans whose cooperator Helmut was probably a double agent. Paul, who tends to control everything and everyone, suffers from not having knowledge of Kiel’s role. To add, he suspects him to have a love affair with his former fiancée Elsa. He feels this even after more than twenty years they have lived in New York. This situation initiates a series of unbelievable events.

Elsa is a patient of a hothouse where she is supposed to be cured. She likes spending her time in an overheated room with a window to the East River because she evidently loves the view out of window, the river. An extraordinary fact about Elsa is that her shadow falls into a wrong direction; it always falls towards the light and crosses especially Paul’s shadow. This fact, according to Mrs Jelínková, suggests that Mrs Spark was inspired by Dante Alighieri’s *The Divine Comedy* where Dante Alighieri’s

¹²⁴ Muriel Spark, *The Hothouse by the East River* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975), 6. Henceforth as HER.

¹²⁵ Spark *Curriculum Vitae* 159.

shadow indicated to other inhabitants of hell that there is a different creature that came to visit them. The hothouse where Elsa spends most of her time is supposed to be Hell itself after all. Another interesting detail is that Elsa's friend grows silk-worms and she loves them so much that in order to treat its eggs properly she heats them on her own breast. Once Paul is shocked by this kind of extravagancy as he sees how these worms come to life right on her breast. Mr Edgecombe says that she becomes "a rotting corpse while still alive."¹²⁶

Elsa thinks that she saw Kiel who was their cooperator in the war, which is impossible because he died in prison many years ago. But Elsa is convinced it must be him otherwise she is aware that he would look much older than this man in a shoeshop. That is why she repeatedly comes to this shop to have a look at him properly and she buys a new pair of shoes although she does not really need one. After this Paul is driven mad for he is not able to deal with the existence of Helmut and the fact that he writes messages for Elsa on soles of her bought shoes. All the family and also their psychiatrist are involved in searching for Kiel's identity. The result of all of it is psychological terror that is based upon perfect knowledge of closest relatives. As Alighieri has to come to the centre of hell itself and confront all the terror at first in order to leave Hell wholly, it is the same with Paul who has to undergo chaos, total despair and all the other things he is scared of the most, which is, in this case, relationship of Elsa and Helmut etc.¹²⁷

Paul finally undergoes a complete break-down that is closed by him calling Elsa back to her grave. At this moment the second time period comes to light – it is New York of the 1970s. Paul's wish to get to know Kiel's secret role is kept in a dead man's mind and creates this fictitious story.

5.4.1. Formalism

This school of literary criticism is based upon form itself. Formalist critics see texts as independent forms, which becomes the centre of their focus. They are not interested in autobiographies of authors, history etc at all.

¹²⁶ Edgecombe 86.

¹²⁷ Jelínková 74.

Certain motives used in the novella represent this school of criticism, for instance a motif of journey that is nicely employed here. A flowing river is frequently used to express some kind of progress, change or even expecting something. For instance in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* the river signifies a "journey from north to south, a journey of relative innocence to horrifying knowledge."¹²⁸ A young Huck undergoes this journey in order to find out what is more important for him, what is the right choice. This journey along the river and living on an island helps Huck understand which values are more significant for him. He does not choose standard moral and somehow artificial values he is taught by others. He chooses according to his own feeling, which is loyalty to a slave Jim who even becomes his friend. Huck loves freedom more than anything else, he does not desire to be civilized at all. In *The Hothouse by the East River*, the river plays an essential role too. Elsa looks at it all the time as if she is hypnotized by it over and over again. This river seems to signify the journey to achieve final knowledge that is going to be visible, knowledge that Paul and Elsa are already dead and everything that is a part of their fictional lives in New York is just wish or dream of Paul's obsessive mind. "'Paul,' she says, still gazing at the river, 'go and get us a drink.'" (HER 7) She does not even look at Paul when talking to him. A presence of east in the name of the river is connected to Elsa looking east side of the river, which, according to Mrs Jelínková, refers to tradition that atonement is supposed to come from east.¹²⁹

5.4.2. Archetypal Approach

This approach deals with archetypes as well as myths and their interpretation. For instance Plato considered Greek mythology to be a pure fiction.¹³⁰ The East river could also correspond to the rivers Styx and Lethe that are according to Greek mythology connected to the world or dead. The river Styx represents a border between areas of alive people and those who are already dead. The river Lethe seems to be more significant here as it causes forgetfulness if people drink its water. The

¹²⁸ Wilfred L. Guerin et al., *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature, Fifth edition* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 128.

¹²⁹ Jelínková 74.

¹³⁰ Peprník 98.

result is that they do not remember anything from their lives. So the East River could represent what Paul would like to forget: Elsa's love affair with Helmut and his unexplained role during war. Elsa might be aware of it and by looking east direction she might desire to receive attonement that should come from this direction along with tradition. To add, according to Mr Hynes Lethe "reinforce the novel's opening wish"¹³¹ that is "If it were only true that all's well that ends well, if only it were true." (HER 5)

5.4.3. Psychological Approach

Elsa is seen to be a schizophrenic person as she saw Helmut Kiel who is dead for many years now. "The schizophrenic has imposed her will. Her delusion, her figment, her nothing-there, has come to pass." (HER 15) She is considered to be mad because it is not possible that this man is Kiel not only because he died in prison many years ago but also because he would be much older than a guy in the shoeshop. Elsa talks about herself that "My psyche is like a skyscraper, stretching up and up, practically all glass and steel so that one can look out over everything, and one never bends." (HER 85) As if Elsa understands everything about what is reality and what fiction and she expresses it by calling her psyche a skyscraper that is very firm and cannot be overcome by any power. As if she states by this metaphor that she is superior to others by her knowledge.

On the other hand, Paul's neurotic obsession about Elsa is undoubted. Mr Edgecombe says that "Paul's neurotic projections are meant to be an apt commentary on an absurd world."¹³²

¹³¹ Hynes 92.

¹³² Edgecombe 87.

5.5. The Abbess of Crewe

”The Lady Abbess is robed in white, Winifrede in black.
The other black-habited sisters file into the chapel behind them,
and the Office of Vespers begins.”¹³³



The Abbess of Crewe was written in 1974 and no longer follows Spark's tendency to use proleptic narrative strategy. It basically focuses on a real scandalous event that fatally shook political environment of The United States of America in 1972. This novella satirically refers to so-called *Watergate scandal* that led to President Richard Nixon's impeachment and following resignation on his post. It employs same features such as blackmailing, bugging, tapes' editing including presence and importance of mass media. For the purpose of the same story Mrs Spark chose unusual but not less interesting surroundings of convent where a new Abbess is going to be voted after the death of the previous one, the Abbess Hildegarde.

The novella is focused especially on main characters, Alexandra and Felicity, who compete to become the next Abbess of Crew. Mrs Spark nicely described and differentiated characters of both protagonists and showed their different points of view not only on running of the content, but also moral values and their view on a progress and development of rules that are employed in the convent. In this book characters can be easily identified with the main protagonists of Watergate scandal. "In many respects and up to a clearly discernible point, Alexandra acts out the Nixon role, Walburga and Mildred play Ehrlichman and Haldeman, Winifrede does Dean, Sister Gertrude, the missionary sister, is Kissinger, and Felicity remotely apes McGovern."¹³⁴ Yet Mrs Spark also adds other interesting details that are connected to her own past, previous works and the issues that seem to be essential for her. For

¹³³ Muriel Spark, *The Abbess of Crewe* (London: Penguin Books, 1975), 9. Henceforth as AC.

¹³⁴ Hynes 109.

instance, she comes back to a religious setting and tends to express her moral values as well as satirical approach to these matters. Humorous sound of the book that is generally felt in the story cannot be forgotten.

Alexandra represents very strong personality that is determined to become the Abbess. She is intelligent and very tall so she is called a "tower of ivory." (AC 9) She believes in divine rights and that is why she does not doubt she was chosen to gain this privileged position within convent that is, according to her, certain and done by generations of her ancestors. She wears a white robe, which probably represents her suzerainty and a position of divine or god-like person. To make sure everything is going according to her wish, she has electronic devices installed in convent in order to hear every word and speech told by any of other nuns and to gain some compromising facts about Felicity, her rival. "'We observe silence, now, and meditate.' She looks at the tall poplars of the avenue where they walk, as if the trees are listening." (AC 7) "'The trees of course are bugged,' says the Abbess." "'Sister Winifrede,' she now says, 'whatever is spoken in the avenue of meditation goes on record.'" (AC 8) Even the avenue of poplars was used for placing this device because it is a frequent track within convent. In addition, Alexandra does not hesitate to delete some inappropriate passages on records (passages with English poetry and others) that could make troubles, which is reference to reality of Watergate scandal.

The second protagonist is very young Felicity who has absolutely different vision about rules in convent. Her character differentiates either. She is not as a strong and confident person as Alexandra herself. She believes in pure love and that is why she wants to recreate the running of convent completely, she wishes to employ innovative ideas. She initiates a love affair with a young Jesuit and denies the principles of nunnery entirely, she wants her relationship to become legitimate. "'Her destiny is a Jesuit,' says Mildred." (AC 31) Felicity's interest in love can be observed in the following quote:

"'Sometimes,' Felicity says, 'I think we should tend more towards the teachings of St Francis of Assisi, who understood total dispossession and love.'" "'Love,' says Felicity as they all take up their work again, 'and love-making are very

liberating experiences, very. If I were the Abbess of Crewe, we should have a love-Abbey. I would destroy that ungodly electronics laboratory and install a love-nest right in the heart of this Abbey, right in the heart of England.” (AC 40)

Felicity talks about love-nest that is absolutely dissimilar concept than Alexandra’s one. Yet it is completely unacceptable for a Catholic Church.

Both protagonists represent a different form of evil. Either of possibilities would be a right solution and decision. Nuns have to choose smaller evil and accept its conditions. Although Alexandra needs her nuns to vote for her, she does not think they are anyhow important for her. This fact can be demonstrated by feeding them with cats’ and dogs’ foods otherwise Alexandra and her followers enjoy expensive food and wine. Paradoxically enough, Alexandra brought “no dowry but her noble birth and shrewd spirit” (AC 34).

As the time of election is approaching, the tension between Alexandra and Felicity gradually raises. Both candidates have their own supporters among nuns and they both employ different strategies to win this election. Alexandra, on one hand, is sure about her divine right and has the advantage of installed electronic devices so she knows what is going on in the convent; Felicity, on the other hand, believes in her image of love-Abbey, speaks about St Francis and openly recalls her love affair with one of Jesuits. When Felicity’s thimble and her love letters are stolen, she initiates a scandal that interests journalists who feel the opportunity of a real affair between walls of convent for Felicity makes a list of improprieties happening in the convent. This situation becomes very dangerous because Felicity talks to paparazzi, which is seen by Alexandra as certain threat that her plan to control whole convent by electronics could be revealed. In addition, Alexandra’s cooperators are supposed to act without Alexandra.

”You know, Walburgha,’ Alexandra muses, ‘from this moment on, you may not report such things to me. Everything now is in your hands and those of Sister Mildred; you are together with Fathers Baudouin and Maximilian, and you are with the aid of Winifrede. I must remain in the region of unknowing. Proceed

but don't tell me. I refuse to be told, such knowledge would not become me; I am to be the Abbess of Crewe, not a programmed computer.'" (AC 62)

Here it is clearly seen that after initiating stealing of Felicity's thimble and letters in cooperation with two Jesuits who were paid for it; Alexandra is not supposed to know anything about it in case of suspicion she has something in common with it. After all Felicity leaves convent and settles in London with her Thomas the Jesuit. She initiates her public revealing of bad things happening in convent.

In the end Alexandra becomes the new Abbess of Crewe, but is still threatened by Felicity's public talking. The story ends when Alexandra is traveling to Rome to explain whole situation as she was asked. Rome is concerned with her inconsistent view about tradition and progress. She wants very old habits to be followed in convent on one hand, those are praying during the night, and on the other hand, she employs modern technology in a form of electronic devices. However, Alexandra is convinced about her divine rights and with help of modified records, she is ready to defend her position as well as conviction.

5.5.1. Formalism

Formalistic approach deals with a text as with an autonomous form. Yet it pushes author's biography to the background as it is not that important for formalist critics. Formalistic criticism as well as Aristotle sees a conflict as a moving moment of beauty, drama and poetry, which is essential in this novella. A basic conflict between two different points of view within two main protagonists is presented. This conflict means a certain activity, clash and it results into solution because only one will be followed and accepted.

Formalists tend to respect tradition. It is especially T.S. Eliot who thinks that tradition is not a sure thing. It cannot be handed down from one generation to another one, tradition is nothing completed, it still can be transformed and reorganized. If there is need to have tradition it is necessary to gain it by very hard work.¹³⁵ Alexandra follows tradition of rules that are accepted within convent, she follows tradition of

¹³⁵ Peprník 30-31.

divine rights that mean predestination for certain positions, in this case it is to become the Abbess of Crewe. But Alexandra is not connected to Eliot's vision of tradition because she did almost nothing to gain this tradition, she only took it and use it for her own benefit. Felicity then does not accept tradition at all as she wants to recreate convent into something that cannot be admitted. It means, on one hand, that she transforms and reorganizes this old Benedictine-Jesuit tradition, but on the other hand, she breaks all the rules and the new ones have nothing in common with original tradition.

5.5.2. Aristotle

In this novella reference to Aristotle can be found when Alexandra talks about drama around the Abbess and her convent. It is in a quote:

“Gertrude,’ says the Abbess, ‘Sister Gertrude has charmed all the kingdom with her dangerous exploits, while the Abbess of Crewe continues to perform her part in the drama of *The Abbess of Crewe*. The world is having fun and waiting for the catharsis. Is this my destiny?’ ‘It’s your calling,’ says Gertrude, philosophically.” (AC 24-25)

And all the observers await catharsis that is connected to the end of each drama, according to Aristotle. Drama here describes a situation within convent and its complications that need to be faced by Alexandra. Catharsis is able to show matters that are necessary to be avoided, that would warn against one's own bad behaviour. Mrs Spark also expresses that people are having fun when seeing it. They basically feel certain relief as this does not touch themselves. And that is what catharsis is all about.

5.5.3. Feminist and Psychoanalytical Approach

The Abbess Alexandra criticizes Felicity for having a sexual affair with Thomas Jesuit, but she herself felt something similar to the previous Abbess Hildegarde. When praying by Hildegarde's tomb, she cites Henry King's *The Exequy*:

Sleep on, my love, in thy cold bed
Never to be disquieted.

My last goodnight! Thou wilt not wake
Till I thy fate shall overtake:
Till age, or grief, or sickness must
Marry my body to that dust
It so much loves, and fill the room
My heart keeps empty in thy tomb. (AC 30)

Alexandra calls Hildegarde 'my love' and during whole novella she comes back many times to the previous Abbess, which implies that their relationship was probably more than only a friendship. Adrienne Rich deals with motherhood in general and writes, for instance, about mother love and argues that all the women are originally lesbian as they at first love a woman, their own mother, who they were brought up by.¹³⁶

Mr Hynes thinks that Alexandra is insane person as she is not able to live in reality, she tends to live out of reality, which can be, according to Hynes, described by her feeling to be exclusive, her obsessive clothes changings twice a day.¹³⁷ She denies reality, she wants to become an absolute ruler, she behaves god-like having this privilege as she believes in divine rights thanks to her origin.

5.5.4. American Myth and Archetypal Criticism

This school of critical approach, leading to so-called New Criticism, is connected to psychological and antropological theories of myth and archetype typically used in America. These critics try to interpret literature from larger context of spiritual culture and that is why their concepts are sometimes called cultural theories. The Abbess of Crewe, Alexandra, tells that: "'We are leaving the sphere of history and are about to enter that of mythology. Mythology is nothing more than history garbled; likewise history is mythology garbled and it is nothing more in all the history of man.'" (AC 87) Mr Cheyette expresses that:

Alexandra mythologizes herself, she brings together the disparate spheres of history and mythology, politics and art, the temporal and the spiritual. The

¹³⁶ Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood As Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton, 1977)

¹³⁷ Hynes 115-16.

novel is consequently full of juxtaposed realms such as liturgy and literature, theology and technology, and reads somewhat like a farcical prayer.”¹³⁸

Mr Hynes suggests that “Her [Alexandra] thinking of and treatment of history and mythology are perhaps the surest source of the trouble we may have in distinguishing between the rationally quick-witted and the possibly deranged Alexandra.”¹³⁹

Leslie Fiedler and Leo Marx are especially important for interpretation this novella. Mr Fiedler’s concept talks about treaty with devil that is understood as a symbolical connection of Ego and Id as the influence of Sigmund Freud.¹⁴⁰ In *The Abbess of Crewe* there are two evil visions within Alexandra and Felicity presented. Both visions are completely garbled, Alexandra’s tyranny and Felicity’s idea of love-nest within convent, as if only with help of devil they are going to succeed. Alexandra wins with her vision, but at the end of the story she has to face Rome and she is expected to explain scandal that troubles the whole Church. Connection of Ego and Id could represent certain desire that is supposed to be fulfilled with devil’s help (Id) and rational reconsideration of choice (Ego). Yet Alexandra repeats all the time “Sisters, be sober, be vigilant, for the Devil goes about as a raging lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (AC 15) As if she did not warn only against Felicity, her evil rival, but also against the second evil power – herself.

Mr Marx speaks about conflict between a machine and a garden or conflict of nature and civilization.¹⁴¹ Nature represents Alexandra and her natural concept of divine rights because she is, according to her belief, supposed to become the new Abbess; civilization and Felicity suggest something new and inovative that goes strongly against traditon. Such different concepts exclude each other completely, they stand in very strong opposition.

¹³⁸ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 90.

¹³⁹ Hynes 113.

¹⁴⁰ Peprník 135.

¹⁴¹ Peprník 135.

5.5.5. Archetypal Approach

Archetypal approach deals with mythological parallels that can be interpreted by a certain theory and by employing it a symbolical meaning can be found. This approach is usually connected to analytical psychology of C.G. Jung and to so-called Cambridge school where James G. Frazer is the main representative. There are three main interpretations of myths according to archetypal critics. First one says that myth is based upon reality and talks about events that happened in the past, but during years the true centre of a story was transformed into something totally different.¹⁴² Alexandra herself talks about mythology that is, according to her, history garbled and the other way round.

Second interpretation, for instance Platon, suggests that myths are just a pure fiction. The whole Greek mythology was considered to be a mirror of human foolishness.

The third interpretation sees myth as allegory or a symbolical story.¹⁴³ So-called Watergate scandal served as a model for this novella *The Abbess of Crewe*. The essence of the scandal, features that appeared in it, characters that were joined, were symbolically adopted and expressed within a story of the Abbess election set into convent surroundings. Those, who are not familiar with the scandal and its consequences, are probably not able to identify satirical meaning of this novella. However those, who heard of it, can easily and clearly recognize its meaning as well as its humorous and comic sense. Mr Edgecombe talks about "allegorical connections between the events of the Watergate affair and those of the Abbey of Crewe."¹⁴⁴ Muriel Spark herself said following in interview with Sara Frankel:

I thought the Watergate episode was very interesting, it was completely exaggerated. The Americans created a big national thing of it, and I thought, well, if they lived in Europe and knew about corruption – all governments are corrupt – they would realize that it was like a nun's quarrel over a thimble.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Peprník 97-98.

¹⁴³ Peprník 98.

¹⁴⁴ Edgecombe 91.

¹⁴⁵ Sara Frankel, "An Interview with Muriel Spark," *Partisan Review* 54 (1987): 444.

Mrs Spark seems to be very cynical about a situation in European governments, but very concisely predicted as it appears to be legitimately enough at the moment, though.

5.6. The Takeover

”Demons frequented these woods, protectors of the gods.
Nymphs and dryads inhabited the place. Have you seen the remains of Diana’s temple down there? It’s terribly overgrown and the excavations are all filled in, but there’s a great deal more to see than you think.”¹⁴⁶



This novel, *The Takeover*, was published in 1976 for the first time. Its title defines a central topic of one large part of the novel as the novel is set in Nemi, Italy, where Diana’s sanctuary stands. This sanctuary is supposed to have an emperor whose replacement by another one is always connected to a violent act. But ‘takeover’ as such does not correspond only with this particular issue, it breaks through the whole novel for the novel deals with for instance religious takeover, which means that Catholic religion is replaced by pagan one or territory takeover that is concerned with specific area and its ownership.

The novel’s plot narrates a story of Maggie Radcliffe who owns several villas in Nemi. In one of them Maggie’s old friend, Hubert Mallindaine, lives for free. For instance Pauline, Hubert’s secretary, thought they had had a love affair, but Hubert himself once said:

’I never touched a woman. I love women but I never went near one. It would break the spell. There’s a magic . . . women are magic. I can’t live without

¹⁴⁶ Muriel Spark, *The Takeover* (Bristol: Western Printing Services Ltd, 1976), 20. Henceforth as T.

women around me. Sex is far, far away out of the question in my mind where women are concerned.' (T 29)

This quote probably suggests that Hubert was in reality homosexual. One day he is asked to leave the house. Hubert feels offended and decides to do something against her decision.

'It is mine. I supervised the building of it for three years and two months; it was agony; getting things done in Italy is agony; then I moved in and a few months later Maggie cut off the funds she had promised in order to maintain it. I can sue.' (T 189)

Meanwhile he was selling original paintings that were components of house equipment and replaced it by perfect copies. It became his way to earn money for his living. In offence Hubert calls himself a descendent of goddess Diana to whom the sanctuary was devoted and was placed on a ground of the house in which Hubert lives. "'It's mine! I am the King of Nemi! It is my divine right! I am Hubert Mallindaine the descendant of the Emperor of Rome and the Benevolent-Malign Diana of the Woods. . .'" (T 60) Here he claims his position as well as Alexandra does in *The Abbess of Crewe* because she believes in divine rights too. With help of imperfect Italian law, his spiritual rights for villa and its ground and false documents about the house that prove non-existence of it, Hubert finally cannot be blamed for selling paintings and equipment because this house in reality does not exist at all. In addition, he claims himself a head of Dianna's cult and enormous basis for his religious group even with considerable support of Catholic Church is created. Hubert moves to Rome with all the money to start his coming career of a preacher. "'On the surface, yes, but underneath there's a large area of pagan remainder to be explored. And absorbed into Christianity. A very rich seam.'" (T 21-22) Hubert comments on religion of Italian people and expresses his confidence about influence of his new religious movement. Finally, Maggie takes justice into her own hands and gains her money back by Coco de Renault's kidnapping whose tricky dealings caused that Maggie lost her property completely. She regains her money in a form of ransom for him.

In this novel author's satirical view on religious institutions is transformed into cynical one. For instance as Mrs Jelínková claims, the author presents two priests not as pious personalities who have their faith in the centre of their interest and who have perfect knowledge of theology, but she presents them as hedonists who glorify good food and wine instead.¹⁴⁷ Mrs Spark also uses humorous expressions to state her critical point of view as in such utterance:

'The Jesuits always go two together, never alone,' said her friend. 'Like carabinieri,' said the other, 'because one can read and the other can write,' and her laughter crackled in the air like a fire in the grass until Pauline's frown quenched it. (T 216)

Certain bitterness can be even observed against the Jesuits in the novel: "'Priests,' said Pauline. 'They're terrorists. They hold you to ransom.'" (T 15) Mrs Jelínková does not hesitate to compare *The Takeover* to the end of civilization either. She suggests that such civilization where a primitive law of a powerful individual wins, it means that our civilization is already dead although thanks to developed technology is allowed to survive for some more time.¹⁴⁸ Mr Cheyette sees this novel as "chicks full of fakes and disguises of all kinds which Hubert is able to take complete advantage of."¹⁴⁹ The same author also reminds that *The Takeover* as well as *The Bachelors* has reference to the essay on Marcel Proust that was written by Muriel Spark:

Lacking a redemptive faith, Proust's attempt was to save himself through art. And in refreshing our vision from a writer like Proust, we are following the tradition whereby a great amount of the most fruitful thought of the Church is derived from the efforts of inspired pagans to save themselves.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Jelínková 83.

¹⁴⁸ Jelínková 85.

¹⁴⁹ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 93.

¹⁵⁰ Muriel Spark, "The Religion of an Agnostic: A Sacramental View of the World of Marcel Proust." *Church of England Newspaper*, (1953): 1. Henceforth as RA

5.6.1. Archetypal Approach: James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*

In this novel a few references to *The Golden Bough* of James Frazer can be found. The story itself relates to Frazer's work significantly as Hubert claims his right for the house and its grounds because of the existence of Diana's sanctuary who is said to be his ancestor. Frazer writes following:

Within the sanctuary at Nemi grew a certain tree of which no branch might be broken. Only a runaway slave was allowed to break off, if he could, one of its boughs. Success in the attempt entitled him to fight the priest in single combat, and if he slew him he reigned in his stead with the title of King of the Wood (*Rex Nemorensis*).¹⁵¹

According to Frazer, this tradition allowed those who dare try it to fight and if successful then to replace a current king. And it is the same with Hubert who claims himself to be a new ruler of the place who, in addition, has divine rights to do so as descendant of Diana herself. It is clearly seen that it is all connected to archetypes and mythology itself as King of the Woods is considered to be a mythological person.

5.6.2. Psychological Approach

Hubert presents himself as a clear egoist. He thinks that everyone should listen to him, no-one else in the world. "It infuriated him to think of the crowds of charismatics in St Peter's Square, thumbing their guitars, swinging and singing their frightful hymns while waiting for the Pope to come out on the balcony. Not far from Nemi was the Pope's summer residence in Castelgandolfo, and they should be here with me." (T 206-207) He definitely wanted himself to become loved by crowds. During his speech he feels as a fish in the water, he is happy to see that people are listening and taking his words for granted. "'And I say unto you,' crooned Hubert into the microphone, 'that Diana of Ephesus was brought to Nemi to become the great earth

¹⁵¹ James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (New York: Macmillan, 1922), 3.

mother. Great is Diana of Nemi!" (T 225) He desires to satisfy his Ego, he wants to know that he possesses power over others. His behaviour is the result of his Ego activity.

5.6.3. Feminist Approach

The last citation brings the analysis to feminism. Diana is marked as 'the great earth mother.' It suggests that a female (not male) is supposed to be superior, to have a power and control over everything. In addition, she is celebrated by a man, her descendant although he does it for his own success.

Diana was "a goddess of nature in general and of fertility in particular"¹⁵² who swore not to get married, which is a hint that leads to Spark's spinsterhood, a topic that is often employed when her female characters are considered.

¹⁵² Frazer 160-64.

5.7. Territorial Rights

”Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye, goodbye.’
It was as if the older man had said, ‘You bore me.
You can’t even leave in good style. You haven’t any slightest savvy
about partings. You’ve always bored me.
Goodbye very much. Goodbye.”¹⁵³



The book *Territorial Rights* is the last one that was written in a period of the 1970s, to be precise, it was in 1979. The author chose a spy novel as inspiration for this work with satirical elements that are employed here. Mr Stannard says that this novel is “a surreal compound of Muriel’s early and late style, a mosaic.”¹⁵⁴ The plot itself is full of action, turning points and surprising moments. The story is set in Venice, Italy. Anthea Leaver, a cheated woman, orders detective agency GESS to spy her husband who is supposed to meet his mistress in Venice. By chance their son Robert comes to Venice too in order to escape his boyfriend Mark Curran, who is very rich American art collector. Robert stays in the Pensione Sophia that is a property of two ageing sisters Eufemia and Katerina who do not care about themselves or their surroundings except for their rose flower-bed that is strictly divided into two parts in order to save their ‘territorial rights.’ Robert is looking for his old friend Lina Panceva, Bulgarian emigrant, who comes to Venice to find her father’s grave. Mr Cheyette says that “by the time of *Territorial Rights*, in fact, Spark was to implicitly show that conversion is no longer an adequate response to her Jewishness.”¹⁵⁵ In this book Lina’s anti-Semitism is criticized: after she realizes that she slept with a Jewish man, she jumps into the canal in order to get rid of potential infectivity by another race. Paradoxically Lina is made to take antibiotics not to be infected by risky waters of the canal.

¹⁵³ Muriel Spark, *Territorial Rights* (St Albans: Panther Books, 1980), 5.

¹⁵⁴ Martin Stannard, *Muriel Spark: The Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009), 430.

¹⁵⁵ Cheyette *Writing Against Conversion: Muriel Spark the Gentile Jewess* 110.

Meanwhile readers get to know that GESS agency does not aspire to help its clients but uses found information as a subject for blackmailing their clients. Curran and Violet de Winter are employees of this agency and former agents of World War II and also caused death of Lina's lost father. Robert finds his new life sense in an organized crime and starts blackmailing not only people around but also his own father with help of Italian mafia. He cruelly plays with Lina when he asks her for a dance in the garden exactly on the flower-bed that is a place of the last rest of her father, which she never finds out. These sisters, owners of the hotel, are children born out of wedlock of Winter's family and to add they both had a passionate affair with Victor de Winter so that they decided not to share him even after his death. They divided his dead body into two parts and buried it in this two-part flower-bed that is so strictly kept by territorial rights.

At the end, according to Mrs Jelínková, parody on happy ending follows because all the characters get exactly what they desired the most. For instance Robert and Lina reach as same reputation as Bonnie and Clyde and later join a terrorist organization that seems to fulfill their desires.¹⁵⁶ In addition, Robert is fascinated by violence, which results into his going to be trained in a terrorist organization.

5.7.1. Formalist Approach

Formalist school of criticism seems to be suitable to be applied to this novel. A presence of a river is repeated also in *Territorial Rights* as the plot is set in Venice throughout which Canal Grande flows. Mrs Jelínková compares the plot that is full of changings and turning points to Canal Grande that flows through Venice and from time to time changes its direction as well as the plot of this novel.¹⁵⁷

Robert, an Englishman, travels from Britain to Venice to find out what he is able to gain by joining Italian mafia. He realizes that such cooperation brings him certain advantages he can use for his own benefit. His finding is framed by the river that is a part of the place he is staying in. But his journey does not end yet. He goes on with his criminal career together with his partner Lina and they finally travel to Middle East to

¹⁵⁶ Jelínková 86.

¹⁵⁷ Jelínková 85.

find their fulfillment of their lives as they join the terrorist organization that seems to mean a new found sense of life at least for Robert. This journey, framed by Canal Grande, is connected to danger, personal decisions and awareness as well as Huck's journey along the Mississippi River in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

5.7.2. Feminist Approach

The two sisters, owners of the pensione, seem to be spinsters living together and looking after their flower-bed. In reality they took control over a man, a dead man whose body was divided into two parts in order to be fair with sharing. It is another example of females who rule a man even after his death.

Mr Cheyette suggests that all Muriel Spark's previous novels tend to mythologize themselves in order to cure their isolation from the world, which is not a case of *Territorial Rights*. It is also connected to the result of the past. In *The Hothouse by The East River* it is a presence of ghosts, in *The Abbess of Crewe* it is the importance of the Holy Spirit that is stressed by the Abbess herself.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 100.

6. Muriel Spark and the 1980s

In a period of the 1980s Muriel Spark tends to employ postmodernism as well as 'magical realist fiction' whereas both are used in the 1990s too.¹⁵⁹ It seems that otherwise other authors tend to postmodernism mostly, Muriel Spark, in reality, especially comes back to realism. Mrs Spark continues employing satirical views as well as doubleness or absurdity and scepticism. She no longer makes use of redemption theme so that it helps to avoid a sense of disorder. Mr Cheyette suggests that:

She [Muriel Spark] goes back to a sense of madness, singularity and unrestrained emotion which prevailed before she endeavoured to turn her life into an untroubled and impersonal narrative. From now on, she is able to fully embrace the originary histories of her unconverted self.¹⁶⁰

In following novels Mrs Spark comes back to her beginnings as a writer, she writes less about a social question as in the 1950s and she focuses more on her own self and her origin. This decade is connected to the discovery of her formation as an author of literature. She writes about topics and employs similar way of expression as she did at her beginnings.

The period of the 1980s includes three books. First of them is called *Loitering with Intent* written in 1981; second one is *The Only Problem* of 1984, and the last one is *A Far Cry From Kensington* that was created in 1988.

6.1. Loitering with Intent

It is impossible not to notice how comparable this novel is to Muriel Spark's very first novel called *The Comfronters*. Mrs Spark employs the same features that are presented in her first book such as a relation between fiction and reality. A method of mirroring is adapted here as in *The Comfronters*. Reality is mirrored in fiction as well as fiction is mirrored in reality. As Caroline in *The Comfronters* is working on her first novel that represents fiction itself, she is at the same time created and influenced by

¹⁵⁹ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 9.

¹⁶⁰ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 100.

her own work. It is same with Fleur, a protagonist of *Loitering with Intent*, for she is also writing her very first novel and at the same time she is caught by her own product.

Fleur Talbot, a young lady, works as a secretary for Sir Quentin Oliver in his company called The Autobiographical Association. The aim of his company is to produce memoirs of respected men that will be hidden for seventy years so that the authors would be saved until it is all published. Fleur as his secretary is supposed to revise it or even delete some boring passages if necessary so that these memoirs could turn to a successful publication. To surprise of Sir Oliver and all those important contemporaries, Fleur is very able and innovative in her corrections. She even creates a story of childhood of one man, who appreciates it very much and yet he starts thinking whether this story truly happened or not.

Even before starting to work for Sir Oliver, Fleur had worked on her very first novel *Warrender Chase*. "My novel was started before I met Sir Quentin Oliver."¹⁶¹ Later on Fleur realizes that a protagonist of her book seems to be alike Sir Oliver more and more. It appears that her book predicts and pictures Sir Oliver exactly as he in reality is even before Fleur has met him. Here it is clearly seen that Muriel Spark comes back to a predestination topic and an omniscience narrator. By this fact Fleur's book gives the impression that instead of being a fiction, it rather is an original reality. Yet lines of her novel already write about Sir Oliver's plan to control completely a group of these intellectuals. He employs intrigues and effect of Dexedrine, which causes that these men are no longer able to distinguish between reality and fiction. As a result Sir Oliver achieves an absolute control over them for they suffer from hallucinations, depression or other attacks of their influenced minds.

When Sir Oliver realizes the existence of Fleur's unfinished novel, he wants to destroy it in order to hide his evil plan. Although Fleur leaves her job she still desires to know what is going on in the group of intellectuals. She comprehends that the only way to find it out is to continue with writing her novel. "I said I would be able to explain when I had written a few more chapters of my novel *Warrender Chase*." (LI 43) After all Sir Oliver is jealous because of Fleur's position of a destiny maker and usurps her

¹⁶¹ Muriel Spark, *Loitering with Intent* (New York: Avon Books, 1990), 92. Henceforth as LI.

novel together with a part of Fleur's self how she understands her novel as Mrs Jelínková suggests.¹⁶² Fleur has to face reality as she in a position of omniscient narrator is not able to avoid a suicide of one of Sir Oliver's group. Sir Oliver says that it was "suicide while of unsound mind" (LI 101) although he has much in common with what happened.

Finally readers meet Fleur in a stage of her life when she is a successful writer, publishing her novels as well as *Warrender Chase*. Sir Oliver finds his death in a car accident and Fleur does not hesitate to mark him as "a pure evil." (LI 142)

Mr Cheyette says about the novel that it is "a fictional rewriting of Spark's personal history so as to bring together both her converted and unconverted selves."¹⁶³

6.2. The Only Problem

This novel again has a parallel to Muriel Spark's very first novel to a certain extent. In *The Comfronters* Mrs Spark initiated a dialogue about *The Book of Job* and she dealt with it throughout her whole writing career. As it was already written, her article *The Mystery of Job's Suffering* was an inspiration for *The Comfronters*. A source for *The Only Problem* was, according to Mrs Jelínková, Carl Gustav Jung's *Answer to Job*, on which she wrote a review that contains much that was later used for creation of *The Only Problem*.¹⁶⁴

Protagonist of the novel is Harvey Gotham, whose 'the only problem' that is worth talking about, is a paradox of a good God that is able to permit suffering. Harvey desires to write a book on *The Book of Job* so that he decides to live alone in France in the area that is close to a painting *Job Visited by His Wife* painted by George de la Tour that might help him with his monography. This topic is so important and so strong for him that it employs his mind and it is a part of all aspects of his life, even his personal correspondence for instance. Finally he leaves his wife who joins a terrorist organization, which causes an unintentional interest in Harvey's personality because

¹⁶² Jelínková 93.

¹⁶³ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 102.

¹⁶⁴ Jelínková 94.

Effie, his wife, works in the same area. Similarly to Job who had to suffer without authorization, also Harvey has to face various attacks of mass media and police investigation too. But Harvey wants to protect his privacy even more because he found a new partner for life. It is Effie's sister Ruth. However, Effie never leaves Harvey's mind completely as Harvey never signs divorce documents, he cannot get rid of his wife entirely and that is why his solutions are still only half-completed. Mr McQuillan says that "terrorism, for Spark, is an allegory of contrapuntality" and he suggests that "just as *The Abbess of Crewe* ridicules Watergate, by reducing it allegorically to a squabble over a nun's thimble, so *The Only Problem* ridicules the oppression of terrorism, and the disciplinary interventions it justifies, by comparing them to shop-lifting."¹⁶⁵ Harvey left his wife because she stole two chocolate bars in the shop.

Mrs Spark does not forget to use her favourite satirical details, here in a form of Harvey's Canadian aunt who comes to save her nephew. One interesting detail can be found in a character of Effie who never appears on stage. She is recalled many times throughout the book but always through other characters. At first, she looks like her sister Ruth, then it is Job's wife in la Tour's painting or a girl in the picture or even a dead terrorist that is shot during a police action. She seems to exist just thanks to other characters.¹⁶⁶

6.3. A Far Cry From Kensington

A Far Cry From Kensington was written in 1988 as the last book of Muriel Spark created in the 1980s. This novel was written at the author's age of seventy and suggests that matters she desired to deal with were closed entirely in the previous book.¹⁶⁷

This novel is very worth analysis for it contains facts connected to Mrs Spark's life experience. One of main characters is Hector Bartlett, who is working on his book and is seen by a protagonist Nancy Hawkins as a would-be writer who is just supported by his influential relatives. Muriel Spark's friend and cooperator Derek Stanford

¹⁶⁵ McQuillan 24-25.

¹⁶⁶ Jelínková 96.

¹⁶⁷ Jelínková 99.

inspired her for creating Hector Bartlett character.¹⁶⁸ Their disagreement in a professional sphere as well as in their partnership resulted into a monography *Muriel Spark: A Biographical and Critical Study* Derek Stanford wrote about his former partner in 1963. In her biography *Curriculum Vitae* Mrs Spark strongly disassociated herself from this book full of untrue suggestions and opinions. "Stanford resented my success as a novelist. He always made out that my narrative writing was a frivolous activity." She even warns students and scholars to use his materials and says "I hereby beg them, in their own interests, to check with me before using any Stanford material that they are unable themselves to substantiate."¹⁶⁹ In addition, a surname Bartlett is not a result of coincidence, on the other hand it was chosen on purpose.¹⁷⁰ Mrs Spark adopted it from a woman who sent her some lines with bribe money to be sure that her silly poetry would be published in *Poetry Review*.¹⁷¹

The use of similar images can be identified in the novel such as supernatural features and voodoo. Nancy tends to lose weight and it is a kind of serious matter for her. At the end of her story she becomes completely different person. It recalls comparable design used in *The Girls of Slender Means* where a slim figure was not only important for girls themselves, but it also represented crucial condition for life or death. But conflict between good and evil is not very visible here. It culminates in a final scene when Nancy meets Hector in a restaurant. Her positive answer on her partner's question whether she is done with a bill does not refer to this bill but her own past.¹⁷²

A Far Cry from Kensington is probably very much based upon Muriel Spark's life. Protagonist Nancy's stay in South Africa, for instance, recalls author's own time spent there. It is also a follower of *The Only Problem* because of a suicide of a Polish girl Wanda, which represents a consequence of her trauma from war.¹⁷³ In addition, the fact that Nancy suffers from inner anxiety could also be connected to Muriel Spark's need to cope with her own past. Mrs Randisi says following about the novel:

¹⁶⁸ Jelínková 102.

¹⁶⁹ Spark *Curriculum Vitae* 190-91.

¹⁷⁰ Jelínková 102.

¹⁷¹ Spark *Curriculum Vitae* 169-170.

¹⁷² Jelínková 102.

¹⁷³ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 114.

A Far Cry from Kensington, like Spark's other novels, is largely about the process of fiction-making. One could argue that it is the aim of many, if not most, novelists writing in the second half of the twentieth century. What separates Spark from this group, however, is the deliberateness with which she uses fiction as a satiric version of anagogical truth. If Scripture is revealed truth, then Spark's fiction is revealed deception.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Randisi 80.

7. The 1990s and Works Written after the Year of 2000

7.1. Symposium

Symposium, a novel of 1990, comes back to the tradition of Scottish ballads that are full of supernatural abilities such as the one to curse others. This theme recalls qualities of Dougal of *The Ballad of Peckam Rye*. Margaret is always connected to accidents that lead to death of people around her. Once it is a murder of her grandmother by an insane patient, then it is a scandal in the convent where a young nun is strangled and so forth. To add, there is the attempt to adopt Marxism ideology instead of Christianity within the convent, which is even "an exaggerated version of the Abbey of Crewe, jokingly called the Convent of Good Hope"¹⁷⁵ as Mr Cheyette suggests. But there is no touchable evidence that Margaret somehow contributes to these fatal catastrophes happening even if she is always very close. In one phase of the novel, Margaret gets angry because she is bored by just being connected to these accidents although she is innocent. So that she decides to use her supernatural ability for real evil purpose. But the moment Margaret was considered to be innocent comes at the same time as her becoming a real criminal.¹⁷⁶

7.2. Reality and Dreams

Spark's following book, written in 1996, deals with true reality and dreams together with a feeling of redundancy. Most of characters have to cope with a loss of their job, they have to handle a fact that they are not useful any longer. This novel is a satirical world where the characters are replaceable entities. Tom Richards, a protagonist, divides for himself his employees as well as his two daughters into two groups. One of them is a group of useful ones, the other is full of redundancy. It is the same with daughters, beautiful Cora is given into a contrast to her sister, ugly and always negative Marigold, according to Tom. It is suggested by Mrs Jelínková that this

¹⁷⁵ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 122-23.

¹⁷⁶ Jelínková 105.

novel mirrors a feeling of author's realization of own mortality which is even more apparent because of her, at that time, very high age.¹⁷⁷

It is said that by writing this novel that is the twentieth one on the list of the output, it seems that Muriel Spark completed the circle of her writings entirely.¹⁷⁸

7.3. Aiding and Abetting

In *Aiding and Abetting*, a novel written in 2000, Mrs Spark comes back to her favourite topics, which are belief in God, misuse and blackmail as well as her favourite duality. This time it is especially the idea of cheating as Beate Pappenheim predicts to be affected by Christ's wounds so-called stigmas as well as being a deeply pious person. She uses it for gaining money from those who feel sorry for her. This is after all discovered and used as purpose for blackmailing because Miss Pappenheim has changed her name, moved to France under a new name Dr Hildegard Wolf and has a successful career of psychologist who adopts a special method of treatment of her patients.

Another character Lord Lucan comes to Dr Wolf and pretends to be a real Lord Lucan who disappeared. There is one even stranger fact as Dr Wolf already has one patient named Lord Lucan. Here it can be clearly seen that Mrs Spark again adapted theme of duality not only within Lord Lucan character but also within Beate Pappenheim alias Dr Wolf. Mr Cheyette adds that "more than any other novel since the 1970s, Spark in this work goes back to first principles and restates her Catholic orthodoxy with regard to a 'sacramental vision of the world' (RA 1) which enables the 'facts of blood' in the novel to inhabit both the physical and spiritual domains."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Jelínková 105-107.

¹⁷⁸ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 125.

¹⁷⁹ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 128.

7.4. The Finishing School

The Finishing School as a title itself suggests, is the last novel written by Muriel Spark. It was in the year of 2004 when Mrs Spark was already an eighty-six-year old lady – very successful, experienced and respected one.

Her last book is especially about a relationship between a teacher and his student. This time is an ambitious and young student of creative writing Chris who is working on his novel and he provokes his teacher Rowland by his fresh and fearless attitude towards a novel writing. This jealousy almost leads Rowland to commit a crime but finally it comes to an opposite end. Both protagonists realize they need each other for their literary creativity, which results into their partnership and is followed by their successful literary career on both sides.

Although thematically Muriel Spark follows what was already created, her final novel does not contain the inner tension that was so typical for her previous works, so that readers do not believe in her apathy towards her characters.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ Jelínková 111.

8. CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to analyze one particular time period in very rich output of a novelist Muriel Spark, whose writing career went through several different decades with the beginning in the 1950s and its progress in the 1960s up to its end in the year of 2004 when her last book was published.

However this thesis opens with a brief overview of Muriel Spark's extraordinary lifestory that is strongly connected to her writing career due to her travelling experience or personal decision to convert to Catholicism, which also becomes one of the most significant topics of her books. General idea of her writing style that changed and underwent certain progress is mentioned as well as sources, personalities and various literary streams that influenced Mrs Spark considerably. This is followed by a concise overview of her beginnings in the 1950s and the 1960s.

The analysis of the 1970s started already in 1968 when *The Public Image* was published for this book is also considered to be a part of Mrs Spark's experimental time. This study continues chronologically with following books written in this period including a brief summary of the plot together with several details that were depicted. Then they were examined by various schools of literary criticism. The aim was to employ as many literary schools as possible, but soon it was understood that Muriel Spark had a strong tendension to depict and overspread very similar topics and motives that were employed in various books with slightly different frequency and power. Sometimes it becomes her central topic, in a different book it is employed just as an additional theme. It is probably the result of her writing development, progress and also her own experience during so many years of writing.

Mrs Spark has many critics who write their studies that are based upon her conversion to Catholicism, which influenced their opinions so strongly that they started to mark her as a Catholic writer. Some her critics disagree with this opinion and rather think that faith was very powerful matter of Spark's whole life together with her problematic origin and therefore she simply could not avoid employing it in her novels. The fact that not always the question of faith was the central topic of her books and

that it underwent certain development during her career, I would agree with those critics who consider her matter of faith as just unavoidable part of her personality. To add, Mrs Spark herself stated in her essay *My Conversion* that she does not think this matter needs any exaggerated attention. (MC 59)

There were lots of applied schools of literary criticism including formalism, deconstruction, feminism, psychological approach or even archetypal and mythological approach. But especially two of them were used the most frequently. It was mythological criticism and feminist criticism. Muriel Spark tends to mythologize her protagonists in most of her novels she created in the 1970s. Either Archetypal (mythological) or American Mythological criticism was previously used in the analysis in *Not to Disturb*, *The Hothouse by the East River*, *The Abbess of Crewe* as well as *The Takeover*. Mr Massie suggests that:

Mythology is another way of seeing, another way of rendering experience. Our contemporary distrust of mythology leads to a worship of fact, but we do not actually interpret facts objectively, though to deny them objectivity is to submit to the relativist fallacy. Mythology is a corrective.¹⁸¹

Mr Cheyette even calls Mrs Spark a "self-confessed mythologizer"¹⁸² and this fact is undoubtedly true, but I still think that Muriel Spark is mainly a feminist writer. The fact that a feminist approach was employed in *The Public Image*, *The Driver's Seat*, *The Abbess of Crewe*, *The Takeover* and *Territorial Rights* undeniably proves it together with additional details that are mentioned throughout the whole thesis, such as protagonists who are often independent spinsters able to rule their lives, they are powerful, smart, stubborn to achieve the aim and so forth. Yet Mr Cheyette names Spark's output of the 1970s as "feminist writing."¹⁸³

Carl MacDougall states in his study that "any list of Scottish writers will be male-dominated."¹⁸⁴ And it is definitely true. When learning about Scottish literature there are just a few names of female authors. There is a strong domination of men

¹⁸¹ Allan Massie, *Muriel Spark* (Edinburgh: The Ramsay Head Press, 1979), 93.

¹⁸² Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 108.

¹⁸³ Cheyette *Muriel Spark* 9.

¹⁸⁴ MacDougall 155.

besides when going back to the roots of Scottish literary tradition, it will be Walter Scott who must be mentioned as the greatest and the most celebrated Scottish author. But women writers cannot be forgotten, their names are truly well-known, such as for instance A.L. Kennedy, Liz Lochhead or Muriel Spark. Mr MacDougall continues and says:

The woman who is to my mind our finest novelist, Muriel Spark, has never been granted the status she deserves. Nor has Liz Lochhead's imagination, energy and range been fully acknowledged. Both writers have relentlessly altered our perception yet to a large degree have been taken for granted.¹⁸⁵

Muriel Spark might have felt responsibility and need to contribute to literary tradition as a woman writer, but it is just a sphere of pure speculation. In addition, probably each female feels that she has to and wants to succeed, to be equal to men or even overcome them in any kind of profession.

Muriel Spark never officially became Scots Makar, which would probably be the biggest appreciation from her nation, but her footsteps are followed for instance by Liz Lochhead who became Scots Makar in 2011 after the death of another great Scottish author Edwin Morgan. And I think that the fact that Scotland has nowadays a female Scots Makar is a great success not only for women writers, but for Scottish literary tradition in general.

At the end of the thesis I would like to state that I decided not to use *Muriel Spark: A Biographical and Critical Study* written by Derek Stanford as a source for this study as was originally assumed, because Muriel Spark strongly protested against this book to be based upon truth.

¹⁸⁵ MacDougall 176-77.

9. SHRNU TÍ

Cílem této diplomové práce byla analýza konkrétní dekády v bohaté tvorbě autorky Muriel Sparkové. Její kariéra spisovatelky, která tvoří několik dekad, má svůj počátek v padesátých a své pokračování v šedesátých letech, a to až do roku 2004, kdy byla vydána její poslední kniha.

Práci nicméně otevírá stručné shrnutí specifického života Muriel Sparkové, který je silně spojen s její kariérou kvůli častému cestování a osobním rozhodnutím v podobě konvertace ke katolicismu. Tento krok se také stal jedním z nejvýznamnějších témat jejích knih. Následuje obecný popis autorčina literárního stylu, který se změnil a podlehl určitému pokroku, a je zmíněn spolu s osobnostmi a různými literárními směry, které Sparkovou silně ovlivnily. Následuje stručný přehled jejích začátků let padesátých a šedesátých.

Analýza let sedmdesátých začíná již v roce 1968, kdy byla vydána kniha *The Public Image* a je tudíž považována za součást jejího experimentálního období. Tato studie pokračuje chronologicky dalšími knihami, které byly v této dekádě napsány, a obsahuje stručné shrnutí děje stejně jako důležité detaily, které jsou v knihách zobrazeny. Knihy sedmdesátých let byly potom zkoumány různými školami literární kritiky. Cílem bylo použít tolik přístupů, kolik jen bylo možné. Brzy ale bylo zřejmé, že Muriel Sparková inklinovala k aplikaci a rozšíření podobných témat a motivů, které byly použity v jejích románech avšak s různou intenzitou a důrazem. Někdy se tak stávaly hlavním tématem, v jiné knize potom jen tématem okrajovým. Tato skutečnost je pravděpodobně výsledkem jejího autorského vývoje, růstu a také vlastní zkušeností, která je spojena s mnoha roky psaní literatury.

Sparková má mnoho kritiků, kteří založili své studie na její konvertaci ke katolicismu, což ovlivnilo jejich názory tak silně, že ji začali označovat jako katolickou autorku. Někteří její kritikové nesouhlasí s tímto názorem a spíše si myslí, že víra byla natolik důležitou součástí jejího života, že spolu s problematickým původem se jednoduše ve své tvorbě tomuto tématu vyhnout nemohla. Její víra vždy nebyla hlavním tématem jejích knih, navíc prošlo určitým vývojem během její kariéry, proto

bych souhlasila s těmi kritiky, kteří považují otázku víry jednoduše za nevyhnutelnou součást její osobnosti. Navíc Sparková sama řekla v *Má přeměna*, že si nemyslí, že by toto téma potřebovalo přehnanou pozornost. (MC 59)

Hned několik škol literární kritiky bylo aplikováno, například formalismus, dekonstrukce, feminismus, psychologický přístup nebo dokonce archetypální a mytologický přístup. Zvláště dva přístupy byly nejvíce použity. Byl to mytologický přístup a feminismus. Muriel Sparková má tendenci mytologizovat své postavy ve většině svých knih sedmdesátých let. Buď archetypální (mytologický) anebo Americký mytologický přístup byly aplikovány v dílech *Nerušit, prosím*, *Skleník u East River*, *Abatyše z Crewe* a *Převrat*. Massie říká že:

Mytologie je jiný způsob, jak vidět a jak prokázat zkušenost. Naše současná nedůvěra k mytologii nás vede k uctívání faktů, ale my vlastně neinterpretujeme fakta objektivně. Ačkoliv popřít je objektivně znamená podrobit se omylu kontextu.

Cheyette dokonce nazval Sparkovou "přiznaným mytologem" a toto tvrzení je bezesporu pravdivé, ale i přesto si stále myslím, že Sparková je hlavně feministická autorka. Skutečnost, že feministický přístup byl použit v dílech jako *Mediální obraz*, *Místo za volantem*, *Abatyše z Crewe*, *Převrat* a *Územní práva*, to nepopíratelně dokazuje spolu s dodatečnými detaily, které jsou zmíněny v celé práci. Například se jedná o protagonistky, které jsou nezávislé svobodné ženy schopné řídit si své životy, jsou silné, chytré a tvrdohlavé, když chtějí dosáhnout nějakého cíle. Cheyette navíc nazývá sedmdesáté roky v tvorbě Muriel Sparkové jako "feministický rukopis."

Carl MacDougall ve své studii říká, že "v jakémkoliv seznamu skotských autorů dominují muži." A to je rozhodně pravdivé tvrzení. Když se učíme o skotské literatuře, setkáme se jen s několika ženskými jmeny. Je zde silná dominance mužů a navíc, když se podíváme zpět ke kořenům skotské literární tradice, nalezneme Waltera Scotta, který musí být zmíněn jako největší a nejoslavovanější ze skotských spisovatelů. Nemůžeme ale zapomenout na ženské autorky, jejich jména jsou velmi známá, tak například A.L. Kennedyová, Liz Lochhead a Muriel Sparková. MacDougal pokračuje a říká:

Žena, která je pro mě nejlepší spisovatelkou, je Muriel Sparková, která nikdy nezískala věhlas, který si zasloužila. Stejně to bylo s imaginací, energií a rozsahem Liz Lochhead, ani ty nikdy nebyly rozpoznány. Obě autorky vytrvale pozměňovaly naše vnímání a navíc byly do určité míry brány jako samozřejmost.

Muriel Sparková snad cítila zodpovědnost a potřebu přispět literární tradici jako žena, ale to nebylo nikdy prokázáno. Navíc asi každá žena cítí, že musí a chce uspět, být rovnocenná mužům anebo je dokonce překonat ať už v jakékoliv profesi.

Muriel Sparková nebyla nikdy oficiálně uznána za Skotskou básnířku, což by pro ni bylo pravděpodobně tím nejlepším uznáním, které by mohla získat od vlastního národa. Její kroky ale následuje například Liz Lochhead, která se stala Skotskou básnířkou v roce 2011 po smrti dalšího velkého skotského autora Edwina Morgana. Myslím si, že skutečnost, že Skotsko má nyní ženskou Skotskou básnířku, je obrovský úspěch nejen pro ženské autorky, ale pro skotskou literární tradici obecně.

Na konci této práce bych ráda zdůvodnila své rozhodnutí nepoužít knihu *Muriel Sparková: Bibliografická a kritická studie*, která byla napsána Derekem Stanfordem, jako zdroj pro svou práci, přestože tak bylo původně zamýšleno. Důvodem je to, že Muriel Sparková se velmi silně vymezila proti této publikaci, která podle ní není založena na pravdě.

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11. ANOTACE

Autor: Pavlína Lysáková

Název práce: Muriel Spark's Experimental Novels in the 1970s

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Ema Jelínková, PhD.

Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Počet znaků: 139 586

Počet příloh: 0

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Rok obhajoby: 2012

Abstrakt

Diplomová práce se zabývá experimentálními romány sedmdesátých let v literární tvorbě Skotské autorky Muriel Sparkové. Práce začíná stručným shrnutím autorčina života, který také podstatně ovlivnil její tvorbu, a jejího charakteristického stylu, který užívá ve svých románech. Osobnosti a literární žánry, které paní Sparkovou v její tvorbě podstatně ovlivnily, jsou také zmíněny. Práce pokračuje charakteristikou a výčtem témat, které byly typické pro léta padesátá a šedesátá. Dále následuje analýza experimentálních románů sedmdesátých let, na které jsou aplikovány strategie různých škol literární kritiky jako například formalismus, psychologický přístup, archetypální či mytologický. Poslední část práce se zaměřuje na následující dekády její tvorby a porovnává témata s předešlými zjištěními. Závěr práce se především zabývá literární školou, která byla v analýze nejčastěji aplikována, a celá diplomová práce je zakončena finálními poznatky.

Klíčová slova

Muriel Sparková, Skotsko, experimentální román, literární kritika, feminismus

12. RESUMÉ

Author: Pavlína Lysáková

Title of Thesis: Muriel Spark's Experimental Novels in the 1970s

Department: Department of English and American Studies

Supervisor: Mgr. Ema Jelínková, PhD.

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Abstract

The thesis deals with experimental novels of the 1970s in Scottish author Muriel Spark's literary output. It opens with a brief summary of the author's life that significantly influenced her career, and character of a writing strategy typical for her as a novelist. It also mentions personalities and literary genres that influenced Mrs Spark the most. It continues with characteristics of the 1950s and the 1960s together with its topics. The analysis of experimental novels of the 1970s based upon various schools of literary criticism, such as formalism, psychological approach, archetypal or mythological approaches, follows. The end of the thesis focuses on the following decades of her writing and compares topics with her previous findings. Summary marks one school of criticism that was employed most frequently in the analysis and is ended by concluding findings.

Key words

Muriel Spark, Scotland, experimental novel, literary criticism, feminism