

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI

FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

**On Strings of Fiction:
Manipulation in the Novels of Muriel Spark**

Manipulace v románech Muriel Sparkové

Bachelor's thesis

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English Philology

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Olomouc 2015

I confirm that I wrote the submitted thesis myself and integrated corrections and suggestions of improvement of my supervising professor. I also confirm that the thesis includes a complete list of sources and literature cited.

In Olomouc

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor—Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D—for her support and faith in my abilities even as I faced the obstacles of the writer’s block. I thank her for providing me with the precious materials without which this thesis could not have been written, and for nurturing my passion for all things Scottish and literature alike.

I would also like to thank Corey Gibson, PhD, my SUISS tutor, and Professor Willy Maley of the University of Glasgow for offering tips and ideas on which to expand, and Professor PhDr. Michal Peprník, Dr., for his invaluable help with the literary theories beyond my comprehension. Lastly, I would like to thank my friend and classmate M.A. Julia Coşa for lending me an ear in my fruitless hours and correcting the mistakes my eyes could not see.

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Introduction

In *Loitering with Intent* (1981) the main character, novelist Fleur Talbot proclaims: ‘It is not to be supposed that the stamp and feeling of a novel can be conveyed by an intellectual summary.’¹ Nevertheless, by my academic circumstance, I am now forced to do so.

This thesis, called *On Strings of Fiction: Manipulation in the Novels of Muriel Spark*, as the title suggests, is concerned with discerning and identifying individual manipulative traits of Muriel Spark’s narrative and writing style from the reader’s perspective, as well as recognising and analysing the manipulative behaviour exhibited by the characters found across Spark’s fiction, concretely within the framework of several chosen novels: *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960), *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), *The Public Image* (1968), *The Driver’s Seat* (1970), *Not to Disturb* (1971), *The Abbess of Crewe* (1974), and *Symposium* (1990).

The thesis shall be divided into three sections, the first of which will introduce the authoress Muriel Spark with a brief biography. The next section of this thesis will deal with the narrative techniques employed by Spark to manipulate, prejudice or discombobulate the reader in order to achieve her desired conclusions or misconceptions, and shall discuss some of the individual traits of her style—particularly her usage of time and related literary tropes.

The following chapter shall concern itself with recognising and analysing manipulative behaviour among the characters themselves, setting forth several types of manipulators commonly encountered within Spark’s oeuvre—politician, accomplice, blackmailer, preacher and victim. Closer attention will be paid to the latter two—preacher and victim—with two characters of each manipulative type receiving an in depth analysis.

Finally, I shall summarise my findings in a comprehensive conclusion at the end of this thesis.

¹ Muriel Spark, *Loitering with Intent* (London: Virago, 2014), 114. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *Loitering*.

1 The Authoress

Before discussing the quirks of her writing, it is only proper to introduce the authoress herself, as it is often her own life story that inspires her writing; thus her works tend to be laden with intimate details she would not openly disclose even in her autobiography *Curriculum Vitae* (1992). Indeed, it has been speculated that the clinical sparseness of her autobiography is a result of her unwillingness to lay bare the precious material better utilised in her fiction.² In a letter to Harding Lemay, she explains her thinking: ‘There’s nothing I can tell the public about my life that can clarify my books, it’s rather the books that clarify my life.’³

Dame Muriel Spark was born as Muriel Sarah Camberg early in the morning of 1 February 1918, to Bernard Camberg, a Scottish Jew of Russian origin, and Sarah née Uezzell, a Sassenach of Presbyterian upbringing. She grew up in the Scottish capital of Edinburgh alongside her brother Philip. Both, but not at once, attended James Gillespie’s School where young Muriel had met her Jean Brodie—Christina Kay.⁴ Muriel married abruptly at the age of nineteen to ‘Meshugah’ Sydney Oswald Spark—a man she would aptly come to nickname S.O.S. for his instability of character and violent outbursts of mania,—and left with him for the then Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) (Stannard 2009, 43–4). The couple soon separated—for Muriel’s fear for her life—and achieved a divorce mere four years after the birth of their only son Robin, with Muriel finally escaping Africa in 1943 (Stannard 2009, 47–59). Mayhap her own ill experience of marriage, and subsequent failures at tying down her lovers, had been at the root of the ‘hilariously depressant marriages’ portrayed in her fiction,⁵ of which a scene from *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* can serve as an example:

² Ruth Whittaker, ‘Background,’ in *The Faith and Fiction of Muriel Spark* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1982), 18. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

³ Muriel Spark to Harding Lemay, August 12, 1963, quoted in Martin Stannard, ‘Time / Life,’ in *Muriel Spark: The Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009), 289.

⁴ Martin Stannard, *Muriel Spark: The Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009), 1–2, 24, 28. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

⁵ Penelope Gilliatt, ‘The Dashing Novellas of Muriel Spark,’ *Grand Street* 8, no. 4 (1989): 139, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25007277> (accessed February 17, 2015).

*'My wife, [...] it's like living a lie. We don't even speak to each other. Haven't spoken for nearly five years. One day, it was a Sunday, we were having lunch. I was talking away quite normally; you know, just talking away, And suddenly she said, "Quack, quack." [...] and her hand was opening and shutting like this—' [...] 'She said to me, my wife,' said Mr Druce, 'she said, "That's how you go quacking on." Well, from that day to this I've never opened my mouth to her.'*⁶

Perpetually plagued by the sense of not belonging, Spark changed many addresses throughout her life, settling neither in London or New York, but at last in Italy after periods of switching between both literary metropolises of the English-speaking world. Her native Edinburgh she found oppressive (Stannard 2009, 121), and her family and domestic duties a burden obstructing her way to literary success. Ultimately, Spark's relationship with her son has never crossed the threshold of chilly tolerance at best and tepid resentment at worst of times.

Although she thought of herself primarily as a poet and had contributed to poetry magazines for years on end—even held the seat of editorship at *Poetry Review* before being expelled in a campaign against her attempted innovation (Stannard 2009, 94)—her future ultimately lay in prose. Starved for recognition and resources to sustain her family and lifestyle (Stannard 2009, 136), she has written several biographies of great literates, such as Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, but her first major literary success was the first prize in the 1951 Christmas story competition for *The Observer* when her story 'The Seraph and the Zambesi' was chosen as the very best from among seven thousand other entries, thus truly marking the start of her fulltime literary career (Stannard 2009, 122–3). After a number of unfinished drafts of non-fiction, considerable streaks of poverty, haunting paranoia and a nervous breakdown, and finally a conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1954 (Stannard 2009, 150–1), that success was to be followed by her first full-length novel titled the *The Comforters* in 1957 and result in her elevation to the great triumvirate of modern Catholic writers alongside Evelyn

⁶ Muriel Spark, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 65–6. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *Ballad*.

Waugh and Graham Greene, who had praised and supported her—at times even financially—throughout her career (Stannard 2009, 161–2; 176–9).

At the heart of her conversion from agnosticism to devout Catholicism lies Cardinal John Henry Newman and his autobiographical volume *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864) in which he describes the process of his conversion to Roman Catholicism—this, by far, ranks as the most influential tome to Spark’s personal philosophy and fiction both, along with Benvenuto Cellini’s autobiography *La Vita* (1563) (Stannard 2009, 103), and the works of Frenchmen Marcel Proust and Alain Robbe-Grillet who inspired the experimental elements of her prose (Stannard 2009, 146–9; 317).

Though she claims her conversion to Catholicism to be a smooth transition towards the ideals she has already—unconsciously—believed in,⁷ and has helped her discover her own voice as a writer, there is something inherently discomfiting about some of her partially autobiographical convert characters, such as Sandy Stranger in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*:

*She clutched the bars of the grille as if she wanted to escape from the dim parlour beyond, for she was not composed like the other nuns who sat, when they received their rare visitors, well back in the darkness with folded hands.*⁸

Stannard explains this occurrence in his biography as her frustration towards the blind followers of faith (Stannard 2009, 158)—the very trait Miss Brodie stigmatises in the aforementioned book when she declares that ‘only people who [do] not want to think for themselves [become] Roman Catholics’ (*Prime* 85). Doubt, Spark feels, is a necessity of faith, listing the example of the doubting apostle St. Thomas; ‘There can be no definition without doubt’ she claims.⁹

⁷ Muriel Spark, *Curriculum Vitae: A Volume of Autobiography* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2009), 202. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *CV*.

⁸ Muriel Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 35. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *Prime*.

⁹ Muriel Spark to Derek Stanford, no date listed, quoted in Martin Stannard, ‘Conversion,’ in *Muriel Spark: The Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009), 159.

The conversion may have lent her a novelist's voice, but it has likewise led to loss. It inevitably deepened the chasm—both physical and theological—between herself and her son, already separated from her by the countless miles connecting London to Edinburgh, her need for employment and the proverbial writer's solitude—Stannard notes that 'Muriel was never happier than when alone, entering her creative dream.' (Stannard 2009, 345) Choosing Judaism of his father and grandfather for his philosophy, he led many a genealogical dispute over their Jewish origins with his mother in later years (Stannard 2009, 130; 460–4). Likewise, Derek Stanford, a poet, lover and confidante of Muriel's, grew increasingly put off by the demands of chastity of her newly found faith, reluctant to commit to her by the vows of marriage, which finally forced the couple to separate after series of break-ups and reconciliations. He later produced an unsolicited volume on her life and work—*Muriel Spark: A Biographical and Critical Study* (1963)—full of factual mistakes, and with an attempt to sell a collection of letters from Spark to a publisher, finalised their mutual antagonism (Stannard 2009, 287–8). His unfavourable reviews of her later work—particularly *The Driver's Seat* (Stannard 2009, 368)—can only be categorised as a reproachful pettiness of a fruitless hack—or, as Spark titled the ilk often caricaturised in her novels, '*pisseur de copie*' (Stannard 2009, 484)—surpassed by his ex-lover.

Dame Muriel was a woman of complicated and at times quarrelsome temperament who valued freedom and privacy above all else, detesting nothing more than blackmail, gossip and invasion of her personal matters—and it was for these false truths broadcasted against her will that she wrote *Curriculum Vitae*, to replace myth with proven facts (CV 11). In space of mere forty-seven years she gave life to twenty-two novels, a number of short-stories and poetry collections, as well as several volumes of non-fiction. For her literary accomplishments she was awarded the rank of Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in June 1993 (Stannard 2009, 508). She died in Tuscany on 13 April 2006, aged eighty-eight, leaving all her estates to her secretary, 'friend and collaborator' Penelope Jardine and nothing but evasion to her estranged son (Stannard 2009, 529–31). Her simple gravestone in Tuscany is inscribed—as per her preference—'Muriel Spark / [Poet]' with a quotation from one of her poems—'Canaan'—writ underneath (Stannard 2009, 533).

2 Manipulation as a Narrative Device

In her work titled *Ambivalence v románech Muriel Sparkové* (2006), Ema Jelínková expressed her view of Muriel Spark as an ‘enigma’¹⁰; her works of fiction—in accordance with the author’s disposition—naturally prove no less enigmatic to the reader’s eye. The noticeable compact form of her writings allows for the layering of details otherwise lost in the flaccid fiction of ponderous tomes stretched over infinite sheets of paper, while leaving little space to engage in verbal vanity; Edgecombe agrees that it has ‘an enriching rather than an impoverishing’¹¹ effect. It has also allowed for her creative potential to crystallise into immense productivity, with her having written twenty-two novels of varying theme and length in her relatively short time as an active novelist.

In her penchant for ambivalence, duality and the vague, Spark is often considered a spiritual successor of the likes of James Hogg and Robert Louis Stevenson, the authors of *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) respectively; as a result even their topics oft collide—consider, for example, the historic figure of Deacon William Brodie who inspired the tale of Dr. Jekyll and his alter-ego Mr. Hyde and just so conveniently happens to be an ancestor of Spark’s Jean Brodie of the novel *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*; or Dougal Douglas, the devilish fellow from *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* who recalls many characteristics of Hogg’s supposed devil incarnate—Gil-Martin. Correspondingly, Spark’s writings are deliberately littered with the elements of supernatural, which serve as a conscious homage to the traditional ballads of Scottish folklore that make Muriel so undeniably Scottish in her topic and expression in spite of her self-elected Italian exile.¹²

Prior to examining the individual manipulative tools of her style, I shall endeavour to discuss her style in more general terms. Bernard Harrison says of her

¹⁰ Ema Jelínková, ‘Paní Sparková, enigma,’ in *Ambivalence v románech Muriel Sparkové* (Olomouc: Periplum, 2006), 7. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

¹¹ Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, ‘Introduction,’ in *Vocation and Identity in the Fiction of Muriel Spark* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 2. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

¹² Petr Anténe, ‘Dědicové Jamese Hogga a Roberta Louise Stevensonova,’ in *Skotská próza v letech 1980–2009* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2010), 32–4.

novels: ‘They seem all surface, and a rather dry, sparsely furnished, though elegant and mannered surface at that.’¹³ But her fiction masks more depth than some give her credit for. According to Ruth Whittaker ‘[Spark] is not an anxious author, forever nudging the reader towards the right conclusion’, rather she ‘[relies] on presenting words and deeds to evoke the reader’s own evaluation of them’, further noting that ‘[i]f [the conclusion] is not arrived at, one feels that she would be neither despondent nor surprised.’ (Whittaker 1982, 149) Bernard Harrison in a comparative essay on Muriel Spark and Jane Austen describes her technique more thoroughly:

*The technique of a Muriel Spark novel [...] works by continual dislocation, by setting up a fabric of faults and cleavages from one side of which the events of the novel can be construed in one way, while from the other they fall irrevocably [...] into another pattern.*¹⁴

One of the most prominent components of Muriel Spark’s style is the neutral, detached tone of her narration, which allows her to alienate the reader from the characters and at same time weave in dry humour and parody that would be diminished by any sign of empathy. The authoress herself has alluded to this intent in one of her interviews: ‘I like drama. But not in my writing. I think it’s bad manners to inflict a lot of emotional involvement on the reader—much nicer to make them laugh [...]’.¹⁵ In her essay ‘The Desegregation of Art’, collected in the posthumously published book titled *The Golden Fleece* (2014), she calls for the cessation of sentimental art long past its worth, opining that ‘[r]idicule is the only honourable weapon [humanity] ha[s] left.’¹⁶ Her characters, likewise, seem bereft of any genuine emotion short of hysteria. Fleur Talbot, the heroine of

¹³ Bernard Harrison, ‘Muriel Spark and Jane Austen,’ in *The Modern English Novel: The Reader, the Writer, and the Work*, ed. Gabriel Josipovici, (London: Open Books Publishing, 1976), 225.

¹⁴ Bernard Harrison, ‘Muriel Spark and Jane Austen,’ in *The Modern English Novel: The Reader, the Writer and the Work*, ed. Gabriel Josipovici (London: Open Books, 1976), 238.

¹⁵ ‘Keeping It Short – Muriel Spark Talks about Her Books to Ian Gillam,’ *Listener*, September 24, 1970, 412, quoted in Martin Stannard, ‘Exposure,’ in *Muriel Spark: The Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009), 218.

¹⁶ Muriel Spark, ‘The Desegregation of Art,’ in *The Golden Fleece: Essays* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2014), 28–30. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

Loitering with Intent, a novel autobiographical especially in terms of fiction writer's opinions—provides an explanation of this particular quirk of Muriel Spark's style, echoing the statement above:

[...] I treated the story [...] with a light and heartless hand, as is my way when I have to give a perfectly serious account of things. [...] it seems to me a sort of hypocrisy for a writer to pretend to be undergoing tragic experiences when obviously one is sitting in relative comfort with a pen and paper or before a typewriter.
(*Loitering* 59)

Martin Stannard points out that surprisingly for a Catholic author, one of the key and 'more disturbing aspects of [her] [...] writing is its amorality. The barbarism of human behaviour intrigues her as the varieties of cancer might a surgeon.'¹⁷ (Stannard 2009, 70) Hers are the worlds in which manipulators, victimisers and human caricatures thrive: where the incarnation of the devil himself endorses absenteeism among the employees of the firm that has hired him to counter it in the first place, where a woman still counting on her fingers is allowed to educate the youth, where a deluded maniac identifying himself with a fictional character serves his fellows hallucinogenic Dexedrine until finally one of them commits a suicide, where a psychologically deranged woman seeks her own murder as the sole remaining exercise of control over her crumbling life, where a mythomaniac abbess defeats her rival with deception and monitoring equipment, and finally, where a canny butler succeeds his masters' property after having essentially arranged their murder. Concerned 'with the manipulation of words', she often wrote 'fictions about creating fictions' (Stannard 2009, 259; 169); concrete examples of this phenomena can be found in *Not to Disturb*, a tale 'which reflects not real life, but methods of fictionalising it' (Whittaker 1982, 94), or *Loitering with Intent* in which main heroine's novel *Warrender Chase* permeates the reality of her employer and colleagues at the Autobiographical Association and so becomes a twisted predestination of the Calvinist sort. Even the 'sickly-eyed',¹⁷ not exceptionally handsome heroine of *The Public Image* is transformed into the

¹⁷ Muriel Spark, *The Public Image* (London: Virago, 2014), 15. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *Image*.

‘fiery and [...] marvellous’ ‘Lady-Tiger’ (*Image* 15; 6) through the fictionalisation of the silver screen.

For all this, it is important to note that by all means Spark cannot be considered a reliable narrator, employing all the means of deceit to mislead the reader, making her work post-modernist in nature. Why, in one of her interviews she discloses her credo: ‘I have a strong sense that fiction is lies’¹⁸ that should not under any condition be presented as truth but ‘out of which a kind of truth emerges.’¹⁹ Even one of her characters mirrors this statement, claiming that the writing of fiction is ‘very like the practice of deception’.²⁰

The most prominent tools to waylay the reader lie with her usage of time. Drawing from such influences as Marcel Proust’s autobiographical *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–1927) (*CV* 199) and ‘the *nouveau roman*’ (Stannard 2009, 317), she does her utmost to dissect the convention of fiction-writing. Believing the chronological order or storytelling to be unnatural and forced—or, according to Lister of *Not to Disturb*, ‘vulgar’²¹—she differentiates between two concepts of time: the ‘human time’ and ‘God’s time’ (Stannard 2009, 316). As a deity substitute of her fiction, she makes use of the omnipresence of the latter: ‘using ghost narrators, revealing endings early to destroy conventional suspense, starting at the end or in the middle, fracturing the plausible surfaces of obsessive detail with sudden discontinuities.’ (Stannard 2009, 316) Under her guidance ‘[c]hronological time collapses into flashbacks which threaten the reality of the narrative present.’ (Stannard 2009, 46)

¹⁸ Colman McCarthy, ‘That Spark of Satire,’ *Washington Post*, May 4, 1979, F1, F10, quoted in Martin Stannard, ‘Goodbye, Goodbye, Goodbye, Goodbye,’ in *Muriel Spark: The Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009), 433.

¹⁹ Frank Kermode, ‘Muriel Spark’s House of Fiction,’ *Critical Essays on Muriel Spark*, ed. Joseph Hynes (New York: G.K. Hall, 1992), 30, quoted in Thomas F. Haddock, ‘Religion for “Really Intelligent People”’: The Rhetoric of Muriel Spark’s Reality and Dreams,’ *Religion & Literature* 40, no. 3 (2009): 54, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25746542> (accessed February 6, 2015).

²⁰ Muriel Spark, *Memento Mori* (London: Macmillan, 1959), 644, quoted in Martin Stannard, ‘Exposure’ in *Muriel Spark: The Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009), 207.

²¹ Muriel Spark, *Not to Disturb* (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), 49. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *Disturb*.

Incidentally, flashback, along with its future tense counterpart—the flash-forward, and to them closely related genre shift, are some of the stylistic techniques that I shall examine in the following sections of this chapter.

2.1 Flashback and Flash-forward

Flashback and flash-forward, or more accurately—analepsis and prolepsis—are narrative devices used to disrupt the current flow of time, utilised by Spark to redirect the reader’s attention ‘from the simple linear suspense to the more interesting speculations of “how?” and “why?”’ (Whittaker 1982, 131), often achieved by revealing the ending or the fate of a character. The first of her novels to employ this method to a larger extent is *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, with Ruth Whittaker counting a total of ‘fourteen [flashbacks] and fourteen flash-forwards’ altogether (Whittaker 1982, 131).

For the more elaborate definition of both terms, I shall use Chris Baldick’s *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, which explains that analepsis ‘enables a storyteller to fill in background information about characters and events’ by way of introducing ‘events of a story related [to it] at a point in the narrative after later story events have already been recounted’.²² Flash-forward is then the opposite approach, allowing us to gape into the future ‘as an interruption to the “present” time of the narration’.²³ Whittaker notes that ‘strangely, the technique of the flash-forward does not necessarily render the narrative more predictable; the surprises are there but of a different order.’ (Whittaker 1982, 132) Matthew Wickman further elaborates on the notion by listing an example from *The Driver’s Seat*: ‘the revelation of Lise’s impending death prompts the incorrect but logical conclusion that this will happen without her consent; Spark’s [...] “flash[-]forward” technique thus generates suspense, which only accentuates the surprise ending.’²⁴

²² Chris Baldick, s. v. ‘analepsis,’ in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 10.

²³ Chris Baldick, s. v. ‘prolepsis,’ in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 205.

²⁴ Matthew Wickman, ‘Muriel Spark, Modernism and Postmodernism,’ in *The Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 68.

In the *The Driver's Seat*, a whodunnit detective story turned inside out,²⁵ flash-forward functions as narrative interruptus, revealing crucial plot points and interspersing the ongoing present tense storyline with the future tense fluctuating between consequential damage of the main character's—Lise's—actions and the police interrogation of her hapless victims and witnesses, thus 'emphasis[ing] that [the] future is already determined' (Whittaker 1982, 130):

*They will reveal, bit by bit, that they know his record. [...] They will come and go in the little office, already beset by inquietude and fear, even before her identity is traced back to where she came from. They will try soft speaking, they will reason with him in their secret dismay [...]*²⁶

The two threads conjoin in the closing scene of the novel where the flash-forward storyline abandons its future tense for the present, at last arriving at their narrative rendezvous. The flashbacks in the novel, on the other hand, do little to enrich the future and the present of the narrative, but alert the reader to the disconcerting volatility of Lise's personality:

[...] when she looked up at him he showed courage and defiance in his rimless spectacles. Then she had begun to laugh hysterically. She finished laughing and started crying all in a flood, while a flurry at the other desks, the jerky backward movements of her fat superior, conveyed to her that she had done again what she had not done for five years. (Driver 9–10)

Symposium utilises both flashback and flash-forward as the key frames of its narrative, with each chapter's timeline alternating between past and the present, signified by differing verbal tenses, so weaving a web of narrative at which core lies the central plot point of the book—the dinner party of the book's title.

Primarily, the spatial fragmentation of these tropes provides background and

²⁵ Bran Nicol, 'Reading Spark in the Age of Suspicion' in *Muriel Spark: Twenty-First-Century Perspectives*, ed. David Herman (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010), 120–2. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

²⁶ Muriel Spark, *The Driver's Seat* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 105. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *Driver*.

personalities for the attendees which would otherwise be wanting. The characters and the success of their actions are restricted by this format, as Monterrey notes:

*There are [...] two main plots that converge. The [characters] [that] have been successful in the past, [...] when they try to perform their skills during the hours covered by the present tense of the narration (the dinner party), [...] fail completely.*²⁷

There is, however, still space enough for the more conventional usage of flash-forward, such as the narrative interruption of the pre-dinner party small talk about the guests attending²⁸: ‘But Hilda Damien will not come in after dinner. She is dying now, as they speak.’²⁹

Another of her novels—*The Ballad of Peckham Rye*—takes on the form of an extensive flashback, with its story told in retrospection.³⁰ The reader enters the London suburb of Peckham only after Dougal Douglas, the main protagonist and the unwelcome seeder of chaos in the drab middle-class community, has been chased off in a witch hunt-like scenario. Vaguely, we are introduced to the consequences of the devilish visitor’s presence by the repeated mantra of: ‘It wouldn’t have happened if Dougal Douglas hadn’t come here,’ (*Ballad* 7) sending the tale spinning forth from the moment of his admittance at Meadows, Meade & Grindley (*Ballad* 15).

A lesser brother of flash-forward is found in Spark’s habit of foreshadowing—a ‘method of [...] revealing a character’s destiny in a casual bracket’,³¹ blooming abundantly in the prose of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. The most sinister of

²⁷ Tomás Monterrey, ‘Old and New Elements in Muriel Spark’s Symposium,’ *Studies in Scottish Literature* 27, no. 1 (1992): 180, <http://scholarcommons.edu/ssl/vol27/iss1/15> (accessed February 8, 2015). Henceforth cited parenthetically.

²⁸ Matthew Wickman, ‘Muriel Spark, Modernism and Postmodernism,’ in *The Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 71.

²⁹ Muriel Spark, *Symposium* (London: Virago, 2006), 32. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *Symposium*.

³⁰ William Boyd, introduction to *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*, by Muriel Spark (London: Penguin Books, 1999), viii.

³¹ Mark Lawson, introduction to *Loitering with Intent*, by Muriel Spark (London: Virago, 2014), xi.

them acts as a harsh predestination of fate, describing an outcast member of the Brodie set, Mary Macgregor ‘who was [...] famous for being stupid and always to blame and who, at the age of twenty-three, lost her life in a hotel fire’ ‘[running] hither and thither till she died.’ (*Prime* 14; 28) A science experiment in the chemistry class alludes to her fate in full:

[...] great white magnesium flares shot out of the test-tubes and were caught in larger glass vessels which waited for the purpose. Mary Macgregor took fright and ran along a single lane between two benches, met with a white flame, and ran back to meet another brilliant tongue of fire. (Prime 76–7)

Echoing the nature and the panic of her death, this late foreshadowing mirrors the earlier flash-forward in which the event itself is described, making the former ever more prophetic:

Back and forth along the corridors ran Mary Macgregor, through the thickening smoke. She ran one way; then, turning, the other way; and at either end the blast furnace of the fire met her. (Prime 15)

This would be a tragic revelation were it not for the dehumanising grotesqueness of Mary herself and the intentionally suspenseless delivery, which causes the reader to give an involuntary shrug of shoulders at best, just as Spark—ever loathing the hollow sentimentalism in literature, carelessly ‘paring [her] fingernails’³² behind the curtain of fiction—intended. Whittaker has documented this phenomenon in her monograph on Spark: ‘Denied the expressions of shock, despair or authorial moralising that usually attend death in novels, the reader is forced to think instead of feel, to exercise a personal moral intelligence’ (Whittaker 1982, 13).

³² James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 181, quoted in Bran Nicol, ‘Reading Spark in the Age of Suspicion’ in *Muriel Spark: Twenty-First-Century Perspectives*, ed. David Herman (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010), 119.

The following segment shall not stray too far from the flash-forward, venturing into the territory of genre shift, at times inseparable from the prolepsis itself.

2.2 Genre Shift

In an introduction to *Symposium*, Ian Rankin notes the tendency of Spark's work to 'def[y] easy categorisation' while stressing the thrill of not knowing 'quite what you were going to get.'³³ This is ultimately tied to the reality that her colourful oeuvre stretching from 'detective story, gothic, murder mystery' to 'romance and adventure'³⁴ often did not hesitate from wandering across multiple genres within a single piece of writing, thus employing a literary device called genre shift. Tied to the usage of flash-forward, genre shift provides shock value beyond the convention of chronology. In no other work from Spark's pen is this device so widely applied as in *The Driver's Seat*, Spark's self-elected masterpiece and a '[violent] parody [of] both the girl-seeks-boy holiday romance and the Whodunnit thriller'³⁵, which paradoxically received only marginal attention from the readers. John Lanchester in his introduction to the Penguin Modern Classics edition of *The Driver's Seat* argues that it is for its habit of raising a plethora of questions to which no answer are ever received, leaving the reader hungering for a conclusion rather unsatisfied with the dubious motivations behind the outcome.³⁶ This narrative approach has been defined by Ruth Whittaker as the 'emphasis on deeds, [rather than] motives' (Whittaker 1982, 149).

At the beginning of *The Driver's Seat*, Spark makes use of all the available clichés of the romance genre in glaring abundance usually reserved for the cheap paperback novelettes of Harlequin production: a psychologically drained woman on a vacation in an exotic country, allegedly on a venture to find her *type*: 'The

³³ Ian Rankin, introduction to *Symposium*, by Muriel Spark (London: Virago, 2006), xi.

³⁴ Michael Gardiner and Willy Maley, 'Introduction,' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 1.

³⁵ 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 Perspectives*, ed. David Herman (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010), 184. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

³⁶ John Lanchester, introduction to *The Driver's Seat*, by Muriel Spark (London: Penguin Books, 2006) xii.

one I'm looking for will recognize me right away for the woman I am, have no fear of that,' (*Driver* 64–5) says Lise, later on channelling another layer of cliché when she discovers the one she has been searching for: 'As soon as I saw you this morning I knew that you were the one. You're my type.' (*Driver* 102)

What opens as a trivial romance with an eccentric spinster in the leading role is quickly reverted to a detective story by the use of the abrupt flash-forward in the opening of Chapter 3:

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. (Driver 25)

From here onwards, the reader's focus changes into the pursuit of would-be killer, finding many a willing suspect scattered throughout the narrative only to learn of their blamelessness.

Interferences of the espionage genre occur in flashes throughout the entire novel. With her intent still concealed for the narrative purposes, Lise behaviour appears suspiciously exhibitionist and secretive at once, as if to shake off the unwanted pursuers. Each character she encounters receives different—and often contradictory—details of her personal life, none of which can be safely regarded as the truth, making it harder to pinpoint her identity. Thus she is able to claim: '[w]hen you travel as much as I do you have to travel light,' (*Driver* 19–20) when earlier the possibility is explicitly repudiated by the exposition of Lise's work life at 'the accountants' office where she has worked continually, except for the months of illness, since she was eighteen' (*Driver* 9), without a single trace of vacation in sight. At another time she asserts:

I'm a widow [...] and an intellectual. I come from a family of intellectuals. My late husband was an intellectual. We had no children. He was killed in a motor accident. He was a bad driver anyway. [...] (Driver 77)

She in turns claims to be either searching for a boyfriend or have one already waiting on her in her flight's destination. Or buys gifts purportedly meant for her family, although it is implied that she is a spinster with no family to speak of. It is as if she seeks to draw attention as much as divert it—and in a sense she does. Her colourful clothing and accessories are meant to draw attention of a predator of any kind, so long as he is willing to fulfil her death wish and decodes the invitation of: 'prop[ping] up her paperback book against her bag, as it were so that its bright cover is addressed to whom it may concern' (*Driver* 54), reducing literature to a call sign.³⁷ Her spy-like behaviour is made explicit by the narrator in the following observation:

She seems to display it deliberately, as if she is one of those spies one reads about who effect recognition by pre-arranged signals and who verify their contact with another agent by holding a certain paper in a special way. (Driver 39)

Likewise, her antics with the passport bear a mention, portraying her like a compromised agent in need of a secret identity swap, when she leaves it behind, concealed in the taxi: "“This will keep it safe,” says Lise, stuffing her passport down the back of the seat, stuffing it down till it is out of sight.’ (*Driver* 52) Maley guesses that this twist was enabled by her experience of working under the psychological warfare and black propaganda expert Sefton Delmer during the Second World War (Maley 2013).

At last, after countless see-saw swings between romance and crime, the novel's genre is finalised as a psychological thriller—a label designated to it by the critics—by the act of Lise's self-sought murder.

³⁷ Willy Maley, 'Prime Suspect: In Pursuit of Muriel Spark,' (paper presented at the Scottish Universities' International Summer School in Edinburgh, United Kingdom, July 26, 2013). Henceforth cited parenthetically.

3 Manipulation as a Trait of Character

Oxford English Dictionary defines the verb *to manipulate* as ‘to manage, control, or influence in a subtle, devious, or underhand manner’³⁸; therefore to manipulate is to steer the facts, characters and events in the direction of one’s goal—as a novelist does lead towards the conclusion of the story,—to assume the place behind the metaphorical wheel as Lise attempts in *The Driver’s Seat*. As such, the theme of manipulation—or ‘plot and plotter’ (Whittaker 1982, 116)—are prevalent in all of Spark’s novels. While different in their goals and motivations, one key outcome they usually share is failure. With the rare exceptions—such as that of Lister in *Not to Disturb*—Spark always sees to it that the manipulator ultimately meets their downfall; as Whittaker states: ‘They hold and manipulate the strings, as it were, but almost invariably a sudden, unexpected action upsets the puppet-show.’ (Whittaker 1982, 116) In Spark’s novels, this is often achieved by divine intervention—substituted in her fiction by that of the ‘implied author’ (Monterrey 1992, 180)—as a punishment for their attempts at emulating the power of God (Whittaker 1982, 116). This recurring desire of her characters is openly admitted by the Hollywood director Tom Richards in the novel *Reality and Dreams* (1996): ‘Yes, I did feel like God up on that crane. It was wonderful to shout orders through the amplifier and like God watch the team down there group and regroup as bidden’³⁹, who is promptly punished by falling off the said crane; a reminder that the strings of fate—even fictional—may not be twisted.

In the introduction to the Penguin Modern Classics edition of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Candia McWilliam notes that Spark’s characters function ‘at once [as] individuals and archetypes,’⁴⁰ and above all—caricatures. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines archetype as ‘a [...] character-type that recurs in different times and places in myth, literature, folklore [...] so

³⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s. v. ‘manipulate, v.,’ accessed January 21, 2015, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/113524?redirectedFrom=manipulate>.

³⁹ Muriel Spark, *Reality and Dreams* (London: Constable, 1996), 14, quoted in Thomas F. Haddox, ‘Religion for “Really Intelligent People”: The Rhetoric of Muriel Spark’s *Reality and Dreams*,’ *Religion & Literature* 40, no. 3 (2009): 50, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25746542> (accessed February 6, 2015).

⁴⁰ Candia McWilliam, introduction to *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, by Muriel Spark (London: Penguin Books, 2000), viii.

frequently or prominently as to suggest [...] that it embodies some essential element of “universal” human experience’, or more broadly ‘stock characters’ such as ‘the femme fatale, the hero, and the magician.’⁴¹

For the use of this thesis, however, and to maintain simplicity, I would like to redefine the terminology of McWilliam’s statement as a character type—a term employed by Spark’s alter ego Fleur Talbot to describe striking characters in the novel *Loitering with Intent*. She thinks of her employer as ‘a type and consummation of Warrender Chase’, a character in Fleur’s eponymous novel (*Loitering* 42); his housekeeper, Beryl Tims, likewise classifies as a type—mockingly nicknamed ‘the English Rose’ for her lipstick shade of choice (*Loitering* 15), which Fleur comes to apply to characters in her fiction.

The notion of type rather than archetype also corresponds with E.M. Forster’s division of characters to flat and round argued for in the collection of his lectures—*Aspects of the Novel* (1927); consider the following:

*Flat characters [...] are sometimes called types, and sometimes caricatures. In their purest form, they are constructed round a single idea or quality: when there is more than one factor in them, we get the beginning of the curve towards the round.*⁴²

Though most of Spark’s characters fall decidedly into the flat category, Forster states that these characters benefit the narrative, noting, also, that they are not used nearly enough, particularly in the works of the Russian classics.⁴³

In this thesis, I would like to establish a number of types of manipulators commonly encountered within Spark’s narrative. The types in question shall be titled politician, accomplice and blackmailer, followed by the types called preacher and victim, which shall be discussed in a greater depth in their respective chapters. For that purpose a more specialist definition of manipulative behaviour

⁴¹ Chris Baldick, s. v. ‘archetype,’ in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 19. Italics in the original removed.

⁴² E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 67.

⁴³ E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 68–9.

must needs be provided. The American online database of legal terms describes psychological manipulation as ‘a type of social influence adopted to know about the psychological vulnerabilities of [the] opponent’⁴⁴ and lists some of the means and results of its application:

*Psychological manipulation changes the perception or [behaviour] of others through underhanded, deceptive, or even abusive tactics. Such methods are often considered as exploitative, abusive, devious, and deceptive. It is often used in an attempt to control the [behaviour] of others. It uses various forms of psychological abuse, brainwashing or bullying, emotional blackmail, to coerce others to do things which they naturally do not want to do.*⁴⁵

Having explained both the idea of type and the characteristics of manipulative behaviour, it is now possible to move onto the concrete examples of manipulators within Muriel Spark’s fiction.

Within the confines of the Crewe Abbey, dwells one of Spark’s remarkable manipulators—Alexandra, a candidate for the eponymous position in what functions as a ‘timeless parable about power and corruption’ (Whittaker 1982, 5), the novella titled *The Abbess of Crewe*. A vain politician of absolutist ambitions rather than a cleric or a pious dignitary, she lacks a single dab of Christian spirit, mistaking it instead for her aristocratic heritage. Like Jean Brodie, she appears ‘obsessed with imposing a myth about a fabulous past on a vulnerable present’⁴⁶—a myth Alexandra strives to impersonate.

Alexandra is not a politician only by the virtue of being an obvious counterpart to Richard Nixon, just like the incident at the Abbey is a parallel—and a parody—of the infamous Watergate affair, which caught the author’s eye for its ridiculously

⁴⁴ USLegal, Inc., ‘Psychological Manipulation Law & Legal Definition,’ USLegal, <http://definitions.uslegal.com/p/psychological-manipulation%20/> (accessed April 1, 2015).

⁴⁵ USLegal, Inc., ‘Psychological Manipulation Law & Legal Definition,’ USLegal, <http://definitions.uslegal.com/p/psychological-manipulation%20/> (accessed April 1, 2015).

⁴⁶ Benilde Montgomery, ‘Spark and Newman: Jean Brodie Reconsidered,’ *Twentieth Century Literature* 43, no. 1 (1997): 103, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/441865> (accessed December 4, 2014). Henceforth cited parenthetically.

disproportionate exaggeration by the media (Edgecombe 1990, 91). Alexandra's practices are thoroughly political in the precise strokes of drama she employs to remove a rival candidate for the position of abbess—Felicity, a living personification of her assigned name, who treats the Christian mantra of 'love thy neighbour'⁴⁷ more physically than her peers and periodically felicitates a young Jesuit monk Thomas in the ever-eavesdropping Abbey's orchard. For this purpose, Alexandra forms a clandestine network of advisors and has the entire Abbey and its surroundings bugged with surveillance systems conveniently manufactured in the Abbey itself. She further betrays her political consciousness by inquiring of her team: 'How strong is her following?'" to which her accomplice Walburga replies with the swiftness of a presidential candidate's office administrator: "'This morning polls put her at forty-two percent according to my intelligence reports.'"⁴⁸

Her methods, while emulating the omnipresence and omniscience of God (Edgecombe 1990, 90), are singularly aimed at gaining absolute control over the Abbey and its residents, forging an abomination of a regime from equal parts prayer and electronics instruction manual, with results akin to brainwashing. From the omnipresent surveillance lending the future Abbess her godlike insight and providing her with the evidence to be edited and manipulated to discredit her enemies—and incidentally herself; through the outdated doctrine of the Benedictine monks that impairs her charges' sleep patterns with one too many night-time masses, and curious technological advancements to keep Vatican's reforms at bay, to soft-spoken rhetoric gratifying to ear in sound but empty or disturbing in meaning described in the quotation below:

The bishops, who had left the Abbess with soothed feeling, had experienced, a few hours after leaving the Abbey, a curious sense of being unable to recall precisely what explanation Alexandra had given. (Abbess 104)

⁴⁷ 'The Third Book of Moses: Called Leviticus,' in *The King James Bible* (Project Gutenberg, 2011), http://www.gutenberg.org/files/10/10-h/10-h.htm#The_Third_Book_of_Moses_Called_Leviticus (accessed January 7, 2015).

⁴⁸ Muriel Spark, *The Abbess of Crewe* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 32. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *Abbess*.

Even the prescribed poverty of the Benedictine system is exploited to serve Alexandra choice meals while the rest of the congregation dine on nettles and discount cat food (Edgecombe 1990, 94–5)—for which politician is concerned with the needs of the people, especially those of offensively low, bourgeois birth. All are applied to achieve the ultimate goal—to inaugurate Alexandra into the metaphorical White House of this tale and render the true scenario indiscernible, allowing her to briefly stand triumphant over the Vatican, but with an inevitable downfall looming on the event horizon.

Another novel—*Not to Disturb*—introduces us to a cunning Lister with ambitions of nobility and an alarmingly incestuous adoration of his youthful aunt, worthy of no lesser status. Their many accomplices among the rest of the Château Klopstock staff and beyond, including one chance—and mayhap unconscious—manipulator, Prince Eugene who reveals the identity of ‘him in the attic’ to be the rightful if mentally incapacitated heir to the Klopstock estates (*Disturb* 47), thus causing a minor revision of Lister’s prophetic screenplay in the form of a hasty—and accordingly grotesque—wedding of a pregnant serving girl Heloise to the degenerate sexual maniac incapable of lawful consent, or indeed, a signature:

Lister places the pen in the giggler’s hand and, raising the paper and the hard book to a convenient level, moves the limp and helplessly amused hand over the space provided until the name is traced, Gustav A. Klopstock. (Disturb 103)

Lister, performing the same manipulative role as the aforementioned Abbess Alexandra, orchestrates and modifies entire accounts of the scenario that sees both his masters from the world of the living, and even records the tragedy in his memoirs with an unsettling accuracy prior to its coming to fruition, citing that ‘[t]o all intents and purposes, they’re already dead’ (*Disturb* 12). Meanwhile, his accomplice Clovis adapts the fateful night at the Klopstock Château for a motion picture script. The novel, coincidentally, with its Hemingway-esque austerity of description outside of action, and the abundance of dialogue, reads like a screenplay for a film or a theatre production. Lister himself oft displays the compulsive behaviour of an obsessive stage manager, especially when commanding his lackeys: “Here comes the crime squad. Group yourselves

apprehensively.” (*Disturb* 111), while his own emotive indifference verges on sociopathy.

Prince Eugene rightfully accuses, albeit with a tinge of admiration, Lister of looking and talking ‘like a Secretary of State’ (*Disturb* 44–5) for his subtle machinations and the stately diplomatic façade he bears himself with, although the observation is not intended as a compliment. As stated above, Lister, like most of Spark’s notable characters, also serves as a caricature; with the Klopstock staff powerless to resist his charm by the frame of the narrative, Lister is placed into the role of an *in loco* novelist controlling the plot and characters surrounding him. He, and indeed the entire novel, is a parody of the process of building the seemingly disconnected, chaotic happenstances into a structured narrative. Lister’s narrative control reaches as far as conveniently removing the two intruding characters that ‘don’t come into the story’ (*Disturb* 38) in an offhand manner—a subordinate sentence (Whittaker 1982, 119–21): ‘Meanwhile the lightning, which strikes the clump of elms so that the two friends huddled there are killed instantly without pain, zig-zags across the lawns, [...]’ (*Disturb* 109) and never mentions them again.

Lister is a unique character among Spark’s manipulators not only for the ultimate success of his manipulative efforts and the lack of punishment other manipulators inevitably meet, but also for the undue approval he receives from the authoress herself.⁴⁹ For his effortless manipulation of facts to his own profit, along with the matter-of-factness with which he calls for a ‘press conference in the pantry’ (*Disturb* 114), I categorise him as a politician along with Abbess Alexandra.

Though a tertiary character at best, Luke of *Symposium* is a notable example of yet another accomplice manipulator alongside previously mentioned Prince Eugene of *Not to Disturb*. Though young Luke—a student of history and a helper-servant to the Untzingers, later an assistant server at the eponymous dinner party—appears honest enough, if somewhat conspicuous with his expensive watch, which his employers believe he has attained ‘in return for sexual favours’

⁴⁹ Ema Jelínková, ‘The Concept of Evil in *Symposium* and *Not to Disturb*’ (paper presented at Searching for Culture: International Cultural Studies Conference in Olomouc, Czech Republic, October 16–17, 2014).

(*Symposium* 72), and a car beyond affordability of the student loan; his employer observes:

'The world is going mad,' said Ernst. 'He serves at table and flashes about with expensive clothes and Porsche, latest model.
(*Symposium* 132–3)

But one must keep in mind that '[i]n the novels of Muriel Spark servants are perfect plotters at trying to obtain easy money' (Monterrey 1992, 180), which is especially true of the previously discussed Lister, likewise a servant. Unlike him, however, Luke plays but a minor role of an informant, 'far enough away from any field of action not to feel any guilt' (*Symposium* 72), in the whole scenario—albeit a generously rewarded one—not the instigator of the criminal conspiracy itself. His function is to simply notify the robber gang of the absence—and occasionally the costly possessions—of wealthy patrons whose mansions are ripe for plunder. Garnet, the waiter who initiates Luke into this shady business, explains: 'We give the list and take the money. It could be done by word of mouth, no proof. [...] a list like the wedding today would be worth a lot.' (*Symposium* 71–2)

Like majority of Spark's manipulators, ill success awaits him in place of profit, for shortly after the last—and bungled—crime, he is captured for questioning by the police, presumably to be charged with procurement.

In a review of another of Spark's novels—*Robinson* (1958), John Davenport emphasises the idea that 'life is based on blackmail'.⁵⁰ Based on this principle, Ruth Whittaker identifies yet another type of manipulator within Spark's works with which I shall concern myself in this chapter—that of a blackmailer (Whittaker 1982, 97).

In *The Public Image* the reader is presented with Billy O'Reilly, a loathsome character tolerated only for his friendship with Frederick Christopher (*Image* 45), a one-time lover to his wife Annabel, who chiefly tags along with the

⁵⁰ John Davenport, 'Courage and Cowardice,' *Observer*, 29 June 1958, 17, quoted in Martin Stannard, 'Acquiring Lorgnettes' in *Muriel Spark: The Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009), 191.

Christophers only for sake of landing a well-paid job in the film industry, or—if nothing else—loan money.

Low on conscience, he does not shy from exploiting Annabel's trust for monetary reasons immediately after her husband's suicide—his repulsive exterior then comes to mirror his rotten core, as Whittaker notices: blackmailers are 'often made [...] physically disgusting' (Whittaker 1982, 97) in Spark's fiction.

Annabel's lawyer Tom Escon comments: 'I was glad to have a shower after being in a taxi with him [.]' (*Image* 151–2) whilst Annabel notes that 'the crude manner of his eating' and Billy's presence in general 'make [her] sick' (*Image* 49).

Mirroring the fate of most manipulators of Spark's fiction, his intentions are marred when Annabel refuses to indulge his greed, facing, instead, the unflattering rumours of her husband's making head on.

3.1 Manipulator as a Preacher

The role of a preacher is easily recognised within Spark's narrative. It is a person whose task consists of sharing information, albeit with a biased and self-serving and often judgemental undertone where a teacher should retain neutrality and impartialness. A teacher nurtures—not suppresses—individualism, allowing the pupils to follow a path of their own choosing—for better or worse—instead of enforcing blind imitation of one's chosen set of ideals (Jelínková 2006, 41) the way the church—or Jean Brodie does. 'She cultivates not independent spirits but slaves.' Stannard asserts (Stannard 2009, 31). One of the further occupations entrusted to the preacher is to act as a missionary—to convert the ignorant or the unbelieving to one's faith; such a task is rarely achieved without a great amount of coercion and glorification, that is—manipulation. The similarities between the aforementioned terms of employ can be discerned from their individual dictionary entries alone:

*preacher, n.: [...] a person who preaches or advocates a particular message, doctrine, practice, [...] [especially] in a self-righteous or overbearing manner; [...] a person who [...] imparts a lesson or commends an attitude.*⁵¹

*teacher, n.: [...] One who or that which teaches or instructs; [...] [especially] in a school.*⁵²

The characters of choice which shall be discussed in following chapters—Bill, the gourmet fanatic and a self-appointed messiah, and Miss Jean Brodie, a teacher with a 'Messianic complex' (Whittaker 1982, 106), contradictory in every angle of her teachings, and a soft spot for the aesthetic appeal of Italian radicalism—display the qualities of the preacher aplenty and neither claim devotion to any widely accepted religious cult; opting instead, in Bill's case, to dedicate himself to

⁵¹ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s. v. 'preacher, n.,' accessed December 19, 2014, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/149460?redirectedFrom=preacher>.

⁵² *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s. v. 'teacher, n.,' accessed December 19, 2014, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/198350?rskey=YaLjrY&result=1&isAdvanced=false>.

the growing cult of macrobiotic cuisine, or to establish a private kirk of herself and her prime in case of Miss Jean Brodie.

Despite her occupation as a religious matriarch, Abbess Alexandra of the book *The Abbess of Crewe*, with her convent's radical Benedictine abnegation combined with technological gobbledegook, does not fit the archetype of the preacher for she seeks only to control, not convert and seems to have allegations to no divinity besides the myth of herself. Likewise, the character of the Reverend briefly encountered in *Not to Disturb* does not qualify, if not for a lack of faith, out of his subtlety and lack of a true missionary conviction. A curious example of a preacher of an actual ecclesiastical ranking is the deputy Superior Sister Lorne of the Order of Good Hope from one of Spark's latest novels—*Symposium*. Hilariously enough, it is not the religious virtue or pious frugality she preaches but Marxism, proclaiming that:

'The march of Marxist philosophy and politics etcetera will not stop at the borders. Our young will pour into the Eastern European countries pleading asylum from the capitalist-consumer system. We will live to see the day.' (*Symposium* 87)

The like-minded socialist devotee Sister Marrow—with a foul mouth worthy of low-class construction worker at best,—accompanies her colleague's prophecies by decorating the convent walls with a merry fresco of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov arriving at the St. Petersburg train station with a mind touched by the scantily clad likeness of Karl Marx afloat upon a steam cloud (*Symposium* 86).

Since her conversion, religion has been one of the forward topics of Spark's fiction. But for all her Catholic devotion, it is Calvinism and the idea of predestination—so central to Scottish mentality—that is given the most prominence. Ranging from Alexandra who believes herself destined to become the Abbes, and Lister with his conviction that the death of his employers is inevitable, 'hav[ing] placed themselves [...] within the realm of predestination' (*Disturb* 45), to be finally personified in one of her most famous characters—the Miss Jean Brodie herself. Though all men are born sinners according to Calvin, Jean Brodie 'thinks she is Providence, [...] she thinks she is the God of

Calvin,⁵³ she sees the beginning and the end' (*Prime* 120), and takes it upon herself to administer such future predilections onto the students of her set along with the titbits of her personality—all in correspondence with her pseudo-Jesuit mantra: 'Give me a girl at an impressionable age and she is mine for life.' (*Prime* 9) Correspondingly, David Lodge's speculative reading of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* views the novel as a competitive skirmish between 'the Catholic God who allows free will and the Calvinist one who doesn't,'⁵⁴ with Jean Brodie's enforcement of nigh totalitarian discipleship visibly placing her in the latter category. But Jean Brodie does not only serve as the fictitious substitute of Calvin's divinity; according to Philip E. Ray, Miss Brodie functions as an embodiment of Edinburgh with its 'rigid' (*Prime* 58) theological attitudes—'Calvinism only as it exists in Edinburgh'⁵⁵—simultaneously:

[...] Miss Brodie looked beautiful and fragile, just as dark heavy Edinburgh itself could suddenly be changed into a floating city when the light was a special pearly white and fell upon one of the gracefully fashioned streets. (*Prime* 111)

Further evidence for Jean Brodie's role as a preacher can be discerned from Milan Babík's paper on 'Nazism as a Secular Religion', in which he presents Richard Steigmann-Gall's thesis of Nazism—a Germanised offshoot of fascism that Jean Brodie favours—as a religious cult of Protestant origin in contrast to the previous understanding of Nazism as an irreligious, anti-Christian institution which is often visibly contradicted by the rhetoric devices employed by the Nazi leaders. Steigmann-Gall exemplifies the claim in the following quotation: '[They] believed that they were defending good by waging war against evil, fighting for

⁵³ Petr Anténe, 'Dědicové Jamese Hogga a Roberta Louise Stevensonů,' in *Skotská próza v letech 1980–2009* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2010), 32.

⁵⁴ David Lodge, 'Time-Shift,' in *The Art of Fiction* (Hammondsworth: Penguin 1992) 72, quoted in Thomas F. Haddock, 'Religion for "Really Intelligent People": The Rhetoric of Muriel Spark's Reality and Dreams,' *Religion & Literature* 40, no. 3 (2009): 48, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25746542> (accessed February 6, 2015).

⁵⁵ Philip E. Ray, 'Jean Brodie and Edinburgh: Personality and Place in Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*,' *Studies in Scottish Literature* 13, no. 1 (1978): 24–5, <http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol13/iss1/5> (accessed February 8, 2015).

God against Devil, for German against Jew'⁵⁶ and 'comprehended their [...] movement in Christian terms, as a mission completing the work of the [Lutheran] Reformation in Germany' (Babík 2006, 375)—for what was Third Reich but an attempt at recreating the glory of the Holy Roman Empire of old.

In support of this proposition, Babík also notes the tendency of the Nazi leader Adolf Hitler to 'blasphemous[ly] [claim] to know God's will', if not proclaiming himself a surrogate divinity outright, and hailing Jesus Christ as the prototype Aryan; the Nazi Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels reportedly even 'contemplated turning NSDAP into a church' (Babík 2006, 382–3). The religiously sectarian representation and devotion of Nazism and its followers went so far as to spark an anxiety in the Vatican that 'the German faithful might consider Nazism an authentic Christian movement' (Babík 2006, 383). This presupposition of Nazism as a cult 'identical to Protestantism [...] formally [,] functionally [and] in content' (Babík 2006, 382), along with the Nazi hostility towards the Vatican as a representative of the Catholic Church also corresponds with Miss Brodie's Calvinist inclinations and the hostility towards Catholicism both—'Her disapproval of the Church of Rome was based on her assertions that it was a church of superstition, [...]' (*Prime* 85)—and therefore renders the position of Jean Brodie as a preacher secure and irrevocable. Nevertheless—a word internal to Muriel Spark's life and philosophy—she did not consider Miss Brodie a fascist, but rather an admirer of the cult of the 'strong man' (Stannard 2009, 3; 30). Not for nothing did Sylvia Plath say: 'Every woman adores a Fascist'⁵⁷ in 'Daddy', her most famous poem.

In comparison to the complexity of Miss Brodie's beliefs, Bill's preacherdom based on the spiritual relish of his chosen dietary habits and the vehemence of sharing the truth of macrobiotics appears very singular, if not any less ambitious in the missionary conduct, and thus shall be discussed in his individual chapter.

⁵⁶ Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conception of Christianity, 1919–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 261, quoted in Milan Babík, 'Nazism as a Secular Religion,' *History and Theory* 45, no. 3 (2006): 379, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3874131> (accessed February 9, 2015).

⁵⁷ Sylvia Plath, 'Daddy,' The Poetry Foundation, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/178960> (accessed April 5, 2015).

3.1.1 *Jean Brodie*

It seems hardly a coincidence that the word teacher would rhyme with preacher; in fact, the two words oft appear nigh synonymous—for what is education if not diligent preaching of what one believes to be the unshakable truth of life, however subjective in nature. Miss Brodie, while one such preacher, is also a heretic defying, by default, the standards and convention of the Marcia Blaine School for Girls where she preaches her fascist aestheticism all the while being ruthlessly pursued for her idiosyncratic teaching methods by the hounding inquisition in the form of the conformist schoolmistress Miss Mackay—a fact that does not seem to faze Jean Brodie in the slightest:

‘I am summoned to see the headmistress at morning break on Monday,’ said Miss Brodie. ‘I have no doubt Miss Mackay wishes to question my methods of instruction. It has happened before. It will happen again. Meanwhile, I follow my principles of education and give of my best in my prime. (Prime 36)

Indeed, Spark renders it impossible to talk of Jean Brodie without considering her sectarian doctrines. She forms a set—or if you will, a sect—of faithful girls for whom she devises arbitrary and superficial reputations to serve as prophecies defining each girl’s future—more specifically that of Rose Lesley whom Miss Brodie believes destined to become ‘a great lover, magnificently elevated above the ordinary run of lovers, [...], Venus incarnate’ (*Prime 38*) in spite of the girl’s ‘[having] no curiosity about sex at all’ (*Prime 55*). Her attempts at defining each waking moment of the girls along with Brodie’s reputation as an inconsistent bard of her supposed past hint at mannerisms of an ambitious storyteller not unlike Spark herself, if not a god outright. Moreover, she pronounces her set to be the future ‘crème de la crème’ (*Prime 8*) like a Sybil of old, the namesake of whom—actress Sibyl Thorndike, an inspiration behind George Bernard Shaw’s play *Saint Joan* (1923)—she admires so.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Judy Suh, ‘The Familiar Attractions of Fascism in Muriel Spark’s *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*,’ *Journal of Modern Literature* 30, no. 2 (2007): 96, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4619329> (accessed November 16, 2014). Henceforth cited parenthetically.

Sandy Stranger then rightfully compares Jean Brodie to the ‘God of Calvin’ (*Prime* 120) who is prone to instil such predestinations upon the believers—much as the characters are all predestined to meet their ends in the book itself. A document penned by one Paul Fredericq claims that ‘the Calvinists of all countries, who practise self-government in their religious faith, are not men to bow their heads under the [sceptre] of political tyrants’⁵⁹—unless they happen to be tyrants themselves, one might add. For what is Cromwell’s puritan Republic but a fresh dictatorship with a prudish twist, based on the self-purgative teachings of Calvin, though corrupted beyond belief by its heralds. Incidentally, the quote above directly corresponds with Brodie’s attitude towards school’s authority, accepting no leadership or truth except her own.

In accordance, Suh suggests that Jean Brodie views herself not as the subordinate the fascist system would demote her gender to, but a leader of Mussolini’s own calibre, citing David Lodge for the purpose: ‘Aspiring to be a charismatic leader herself, she naturally admires the successful dictators, Hitler, Mussolini and Franco’; Lodge also identifies the main appeals of fascism as a ‘combination of dedication, elitism, bravura style and heady rhetoric’.⁶⁰ Indeed, Jean Brodie appears incapable to perceive the fascism as anything beyond its aesthetic appeal—the starchy parades of black-clad soldiers and litter-less streets, and is the embodiment of all the aforementioned tropes herself—an ostentatious performer with refined manners and speech composed to directly appeal to the set’s rebellious prepubescent hearts. For all her focus on the pleasing package, she is incapable of discerning the darker truths lurking beneath the surface—violent oppression, the holocaust, concentration camps and the inherent anti-feminism to name a few—a failure in reasoning which then costs the life of Joyce Emily, Miss Brodie’s own student. In the words of Benilde Montgomery: ‘Because Brodie’s imagination never progresses beyond the aesthetic, she is incapable of considering

⁵⁹ Paul Fredericq, ‘Self-Government and Calvinism,’ *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society (1901–1930)* 5, no. 6 (1910): 271, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23323020> (accessed November 14, 2014).

⁶⁰ David Lodge, ‘The Uses and Abuses of Omniscience: Method and Meaning in Muriel Spark’s *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*,’ *Critical Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (1970): 247, quoted in Judy Suh, ‘The Familiar Attractions of Fascism in Muriel Spark’s *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*,’ *Journal of Modern Literature* 30, no. 2 (2007): 99, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4619329> (accessed November 16, 2014).

the moral in any form,' (Montgomery 1997, 102) a fact which is fully highlighted when Brodie offhandedly summarizes the flaws of her preferred regime into a mundane observation of 'Hitler *was* rather naughty,' (*Prime* 122). She questions not the side of her choosing but her students' capabilities. Judy Suh likewise points out that Brodie's fascist tendencies are most easily and innocently observed in her determination to govern the girls' lives, obvious to the point that even a pre-teenage student easily draws the comparison:

It occurred to Sandy [...] that the Brodie set was Miss Brodie's fascisti, not to the naked eye, marching along, but all knit together for her need and in another way, marching along. (Prime 31)

It is ironic, somewhat, that of all the possible ideologies to adhere to, Jean Brodie chooses the one that is in most contradiction to her personal values and yet so much in line with them at once. For all her proclamation of progress, Jean Brodie is enthralled by the idealism of past—the Pre-Raphaelite and Victorian models of femininity—and trapped within a web of old-fashioned virtues, setting apart such examples as Helen of Troy and the Lady of Shalott—passive heroines 'notable not for their autonomy but for their dramatic submission to a higher, seemingly pre-inscribed authority of fate' (Suh 2007, 96). 'We are Europeans.' (*Prime* 33), she boldly announces; though European by claim, she remains a thoroughly Scottish traditionalist at heart—spurning the thought of conversion to the doctrines of Roman Catholic Church that dominate her otherwise darling Italy, although they are the ones best suited for both her ideals and temper (*Prime* 85). It comes at no surprise that she would sympathise with the ideologically backward regime of Mussolini and the decidedly misogynist British Union of Fascists which instead of non-conformity enforces the domestic position of female gender through appealing to their sense of duty and self-sacrifice, ultimately demoting the women—recently liberated by the male labour of the Great War, the newfound driving force of the economy—into the position of glorified housemaids. As Suh notes in her essay on the attractions of fascism:

The [British Union of Fascists] [...] insisted on women's domestic [labour] as a national duty and the portal to state recognition as citizens. Like Miss Brodie, the BUF claimed to put into practice

a new form of female agency, even as the form of [labour] they endorsed for women recalled a sedimented patriarchal tradition.
(Suh 2007, 95)

And instead of authority she so desperately strives for, it is this second-rate role Jean Brodie incidentally ends up embodying near the conclusion of the story. Jean Brodie is, by her very nature, a manipulator manipulated beyond her personal recognition and integrity. Unable to tell alien teachings from her own, she succumbs to the domestic model laid out by the generations of patriarchy and endorsed by the regime she idolises. One wonders why would a woman so vocal in her call for empowerment choose to be bereft of it. At the end of all things, the reader witnesses Miss Brodie's visionary decline by embracing a position in—of all places—a man's kitchen. Rarely is such a menial task handled with such grandeur than when the previously non-conformist spinster just at the peak of her prime mysteriously develops an obsession with her current lover's—choir-master Gordon Lowther's—diet and serves him sizeable meals with such frantic vehemence that it leaves the man himself rather discombobulated. The glaring contradiction of beliefs does not escape the visiting members of the set—for dressing the ham is hardly the task befitting of a heroine Miss Brodie claims to be, as Sandy Stranger scornfully remarks (*Prime* 94). And although according to Fleur Talbot, contradictions are a sign of 'substantial character' (*Loitering* 27), it is this very moral inconsistency which first spurs Sandy Stranger's retaliation.

Yet to the girls, for the longest while, she is the virtue incarnated, as pure as Joan of Arc; Miss Brodie is perceived as a spinster elevated above the earthly matters and abundant in prime and fantasy where her sexual life is lacking—in fact, a figure altogether so fascinating that she sprouts a bout of student-penned fan-fiction titled 'The Mountain Eyrie' (*Prime* 18). Like her favoured Lady of Shalott, she is only capable of romance as a mediated experience, and can only delight in the thrill of an affair with her married Roman Catholic colleague—painter Teddy Lloyd—through the mirror of her youthful students' eyes, lest she exits her ivory tower and perishes. Thus she urges her student to engage in a clandestine love affair in her stead, all the while continuing to weave a web of her whimsical prophecies in the reclusive comfort of the personal mythos she had built.

She takes care to educate them on, according to Miss Mackay, ‘subjects irrelevant to the authorized curriculum,’ that is—matters suitable mostly for the occupation of a high-class wife, such as ‘the advantages to the skin of cleansing cream and witch-hazel over honest soap and water’ (*Prime* 5), as well as the importance of ‘cultivat[ing] an expression of composure’ (*Prime* 22). When it comes to painters, she favours her own opinion over the critically acclaimed craftsmanship of Leonardo Da Vinci and proclaims Giotto to be the greatest Italian painter on the accomplished grounds of being ‘[her] favourite’ (*Prime* 11). Yet it is not all vanity she teaches. She enlightens the girls on the subjects of society and religion alike and explains to them the moral and societal dilemma of unemployment, which helps her elicit an air of a sympathetic—and at first almost reasonable authority figure—and serves as her main argument in support of fascism.

Ironically, in the end, Jean Brodie happens to miscalculate her efforts, having only a miniscule impact on the lives of the majority of the set, essentially remaining but a sentimental memory to a few—notably Eunice Gardiner who insists on visiting Miss Brodie’s grave upon her next visit to Edinburgh (*Prime* 26–7); a killer to another, and an adversary to the most trusted of her companions, a self-nurtured Judas and a convert sister of the Catholic faith— Sandy Stranger, who joined the convent to seal her opposition of Brodie’s dubious philosophy. A minor victory can only be ascribed to her renounced lover Teddy Lloyd’s inability to paint any member of the set uninvaded by her likeness: ‘It was difficult to see how Teddy Lloyd had imposed the dark and Roman face of Miss Brodie on that of pale Rose, but he had done so.’ (*Prime* 101) Like her ancestor and namesake, Deacon William Brodie, she dies—humbled and far less cheerful than he—‘on a gibbet of her own devising’ (*Prime* 88), this one assuming human form, as noted by the authoress Candia McWilliam.⁶¹ Whittaker concludes that ‘Jean Brodie’s fate is engineered for her’, just as once tried to determine fates of others, by the one most indoctrinated by her teachings (Whittaker 1982, 108), Sandy herself reaches this conclusion when contemplating her youthful influences at the convent: ‘[...] there was a Miss Jean Brodie in her Prime.’ (*Prime* 35)

⁶¹ Candia McWilliam, introduction to *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, by Muriel Spark (London: Penguin Books, 2000): vi.

3.1.2 *Bill, the Macrobiotic*

A dish has ever been an integral part of religious rites whether as bread and ceremonial wine of the Christian ideology—a representation of ‘the body and blood of an incarnated God [intended to be] eaten and drunk’; or fasting—an act of physical, as well as spiritual, cleansing of one’s earthly vessel through culinary abstinence.⁶² It was one of the apprentices of Jesus Christ—the apostle Saint Luke who in his gospels first broke the basic god-approved dietary instructions unto the faithful:

22:19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

*22:20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.*⁶³

Margaret R. Miles, in her article on the relationship between food and religion, notes that it was the Christian ascetics who first became selective in their menu, suggesting that the religious treatment of one’s meal is a practice considerably older than the health-and-figure related eating manias of the current society. In their vain superstition that one might ingest a demon along with their dish, they grew wary in their appetite and ‘[confined] themselves to certain foods’ (Miles 1995, 550), writing detailed manuals on various foodstuffs and their effects on human organism. For them food was a ‘method and means of the spiritual and social agency they exercised’ (Miles 1995, 551).

This idea takes a new twist in Spark’s novel titled *The Driver’s Seat*, personified by the character of Bill, the fanatic macrobiotic whom Lise encounters on the plane. Immediately after she seats herself by his side, Bill introduces himself as an ‘Enlightenment Leader’ (*Driver* 33) and starts preaching his flaccid philosophy of

⁶² Margaret R. Miles, ‘Religion and Food: The Case of Eating Disorders,’ *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63, no. 3(1995): 549, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1465093> (accessed July 7, 2014). Henceforth cited parenthetically.

⁶³ ‘The Gospel According to Saint Luke,’ in *The King James Bible* (Project Gutenberg, 2011), http://www.gutenberg.org/files/10/10-h/10-h.htm#The_Gospel_According_to_Saint_Luke (accessed July 4, 2014).

consuming Yang food—rice, fish and goat cheese (*Driver* 34) and ‘very little liquid’ (*Driver* 37), with a side-dish of ‘one orgasm a day’ (*Driver* 38), beginning his sermon by the quotation from the Bible: ‘He who hath ears let him hear.’ (*Driver* 33), which he supplies with a subtle menace: ‘You’ll soon change your eating habits, [...] now that we’ve got to know each other.’ (*Driver* 33) Like a religious fundamentalist, Bill refuses Lise the freedom of choice when she dismisses his lifestyle as a ‘crank [diet]’ (*Driver* 36) and insists:

‘Now I can’t let that pass, Lise, [...] You don’t know what you’re talking about. The macrobiotic system is not just a diet, it’s a way of life.’ (*Driver* 36)

A later encounter reveals that more than a potential convert, Bill views Lise as little less than a trophy. She is his dessert, his chalice to wash down the altar-bread, a mere ingredient in the gustative sensation that reaches the reverent heights of the Book of Revelation, a combined distribution of physical and culinary sensation. With desperation unbecoming of a man, he pleads with Lise:

‘I haven’t had my daily orgasm. It’s an essential part of this particular variation of the diet, didn’t I tell you? Many other macrobiotic variations have it as an essential part. This is one of the main things the young Neapolitans must learn.’ (*Driver* 94)

And further insists that it ‘It has to be a girl.’ (*Driver* 92) How incredibly fitting that in a society, which worships their taste buds and stomach as a deity, the only invocation of god is twisted into an ejection of both scorn and ecstasy—to Freud’s delight.

The topic is briefly touched upon in another of Spark’s novellas—*The Abbess of Crewe*, where during the negotiations with potential converts, the freedom of sustenance surpasses the moral laws of Christianity:

‘The salvation of souls comes first,’ says Gertrude’s husky voice. ‘The cannibals are to be converted to the faith with dietary concessions and the excessive zeal of the vegetarian heretics suppressed.’ (*Abbess* 42)

The argument of the religious nature of Bill's convictions is further strengthened in a conversation held between Lise and Mrs Fiedke who has recently converted to the faith of Jehova's Witnesses: 'Do you believe in macrobiotics?' (*Driver* 61) The mere usage of the verb *to believe* implies that there is a deeper spiritual quality to the diet than simple detoxification. In his religious pursuit, Bill loses the entirety of his human characteristics and allows himself to be defined by his faith alone. This promotes Bill into a position of a dietary missionary, if not a prophet outright, albeit by self-proclamation.

We live in the times where food has become the modern day religion, with various dietary habits being the modern day sects and churches, replacing the old doctrines; the time where the number of pubs and restaurants tragically surpasses the number of places of worship. In Edinburgh alone, the birth place of the author, we find many a kirk turned pub. The character of Bill is a satirical reflection of this modern tendency. As a deeply religious Catholic convert, Spark appears to be sneering at the society poking at carrots and rice, treasuring the old values and parodying the new and as such, Bill's rhetorical crusade remains unsuccessful.

3.2 Manipulator as a Victim

‘He looked as if he would murder me and he did.’⁶⁴ says Needle, a character in Muriel Spark’s short story ‘The Portobello Road’; another short story—‘Bang-bang You’re Dead’—has a character named Sybil utter these words: ‘These men were all charming [...], until you got to know them.’⁶⁵ Those are just two of the many works from Spark’s pen exploring the topic of ‘female violation’, where the male-gendered aggressor replaces the romantic ideal of ‘strong, protective men’ (Stannard 2009, 217). The fascination with this theme arguably stems from Spark’s lifetime experiences. Undeniably, her marriage to Sydney Spark and the years she spent in seclusion of the African wilderness had been the well from which the predatory men of her fiction were drawn. Her husband was an abusive psychotic, her lovers Howard Sergeant and Derek Stanford conservative weaklings who could not bear the subordination of her shadow.

While still in Africa, she witnessed the death of her childhood acquaintance and lookalike Nita McEwen, killed in a murder-suicide by her own husband (Stannard 2009, 50); this event—the disturbing familiarity of the victim’s visage—alerted Muriel to the homicidal potential of her own husband, Sydney, and induced her to finally abandon him. The following is Spark’s own account of the situation recorded in *Curriculum Vitae*:

I thought of leaving my husband. He became a borderline case [...] He got more and more violent. [...] When Nita McEwen, a friend from school, was killed that night by her husband in the hotel where I was staying, I got seriously frightened. My husband had a small revolver, a ‘baby Browning’ [...] I hid it, and refused to hand it over when he demanded it. (CV 130)

⁶⁴ Muriel Spark, ‘The Portobello Road,’ in *Collected Stories I* (London: Macmillan, 1967; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), 29, quoted in Ruth Whittaker, ‘The Sparkian Distinction,’ in *The Faith and Fiction of Muriel Spark* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1982), 12.

⁶⁵ Muriel Spark, ‘Bang-bang You’re Dead’ *Collected Stories I* (London: Macmillan, 1967; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), 77, quoted in Ruth Whittaker, ‘Background,’ in *The Faith and Fiction of Muriel Spark* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1982), 21.

Psychological aftershocks of the event are explored further by Stannard in the biography: ‘Marriage had seriously damaged her trust.’ he says, ‘Men and sex [became] associated with violence and threat.’ (Stannard 2009, 78) This happens to be particularly prominent in *The Driver’s Seat*—a slight novel that seems inhabited by nobody but sex offenders and would-be rapists. Reviewed as ‘unnerving’ (Stannard 2009, 366), ‘hypnotic’ (Maley 2013), ‘ominous’⁶⁶ or ‘cruel [,] violent and dark’⁶⁷, even Spark herself acknowledged that ‘it’s frightening’, adding: ‘I frightened myself by writing it, [...] I had to go into hospital to finish it’⁶⁸. It is a novel of ‘extinction of identity in a vocation to death.’ (Edgecombe 1990, 149)

The Public Image is considerably more light-weight in comparison. It explores the relationship ‘between identity and fame’ (Stannard 2009, 350) and the obliteration of self through media. Death in this novel is a metaphorical concept, in the sense that ‘the media kill the viewed—by imprisoning them in the immobility of a representation’⁶⁹ imposed upon them by the image-making industry magnates.

Though the two novels are fundamentally different in topic and their approach to victimhood, certain similarities persist, as Stannard discerns: ‘Both investigate [...] the relationship between choice and destiny. Both act as metaphors for the relationship between artists and the world.’ (Stannard 2009, 365) At the same time, they function as an antithesis of one another as each heroine’s fate is defined by either choice or destiny. Though Lise’s journey into death begins by her choice, it is ultimately marred by destiny when her killer refuses to obey the commandments received. Annabel’s tale ends with a choice of her own—

⁶⁶ Elaine Showalter, ‘Rethinking the Seventies: Women Writers and Violence,’ *The Antioch Review* 39, no. 2 (1981): 162, <http://jstor.org/stable/4638424> (accessed April 3, 2015). Henceforth cited parenthetically.

⁶⁷ John Lanchester, introduction to *The Driver’s Seat*, by Muriel Spark (London: Penguin Books, 2006) xii.

⁶⁸ Muriel Spark, ‘Writers of Today—Muriel Spark,’ interview by Ian Gillham, BBC, 1970, quoted in David Herman, ‘Introduction,’ in *Muriel Spark: Twenty-First-Century Perspectives*, ed. David Herman (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010), 17.

⁶⁹ Fotini Apostolou, ‘Seduction, Simulacra and the Feminine: spectacles and images in Muriel Spark’s *The Public Image*,’ *Journal of Gender Studies* 9, no. 3 (2000): 283, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=6aebb939-2119-4f99-bcbe-617c9b9e6a8f%40sessionmgr4001&vid=2&hid=4208> (accessed March 8, 2015). Henceforth cited parenthetically.

renouncing the contrivances of her career for freedom of self, divested of artificiality her employers had sewn and her husband tore.

Victim, according to *Oxford English Dictionary*, has multiple definitions applicable in the context of Spark's fiction, where the previously discussed 'implied author' (Monterrey 1992, 180), or in Stannard's terms the 'ghost narrator' (Stannard 2009, 169)—is the highest manifestation of power within the narrative, the only one entitled to shaping fates. Correspondingly, one of the definitions aptly suggests that the purpose of victim matches that of a scapegoat: '[a] living creature killed and offered as a sacrifice to some deity or supernatural power'⁷⁰, another speaks of:

a. A person who is put to death or subjected to torture by another; one who suffers severely in body or property through cruel or oppressive treatment.

*b. One who is reduced or destined to suffer under some oppressive or destructive agency.*⁷¹

In all cases, there is a towering shadow of supremacy—that of a reader and the novelist, to whose dictatorship the characters are subjected. In one interview, Spark puts herself into the role of a curious predator jabbing at its prey: 'I love them all;' she said of her characters, '[...] like a cat loves a bird. You know cats love birds; they love to fondle them.'⁷²

But Spark's purpose is not to condone or empower 'the cult of victim', but to mock the sheer idea of violence and supremacy. In 'The Desegregation of Art', she expresses the desire for 'less impulsive generosity, a less indignant representation of social injustice, and [...] a more derisive undermining of what is

⁷⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s. v. 'victim, n.,' accessed April 4, 2015, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/223196?rskey=3eF95W&result=1&isAdvanced=false>.

⁷¹ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s. v. 'victim, n.,' accessed April 4, 2015, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/223196?rskey=3eF95W&result=1&isAdvanced=false>.

⁷² 'Evening With Muriel Spark' (TS notes by Morton Cohen of talk given at the City College of New York, no date listed), quoted in Martin Stannard, 'Sacramental,' in *Muriel Spark: The Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009), 129.

wrong’, arguing that the art of pity is past its use: ‘it isn’t achieving its end or illuminating our lives any more’ (Spark 2014, 29; 28). Instead, she calls for ridicule to assume the place of pity: ‘we should all be conditioned and educated to regard violence in any form as something to be ruthlessly mocked’ (Spark 2014, 28), supporting her sentiment by enlisting a practical example of recent history:

We have all seen [...] those documentaries of the 'thirties and of the second World War, where Hitler and his goose-stepping troops advance in their course of liberating, [...]; we have all seen the strutting and posturing of Mussolini. It looks like something out of comic opera to us. If the massed populations of those times and in those countries had been moved to break up into helpless laughter at the sight, those tyrants wouldn't have had a chance. (Spark 2014, 29)

For every ‘cult of the victim,’ she explains ‘there will be an obliging cult of twenty equivalent victimisers’ and all such art accomplishes is solidifying the roles of overdog and underdog, whilst dangerously romanticising the latter (Spark 2014, 28). ‘The cult of the victim is the cult of pathos, not tragedy’ (Spark 2014, 30), she concludes. This intention does not escape Showalter, who recognises that *The Driver’s Seat* ‘is weirdly comic, satiric, and clear in its macabre inversions of power and powerlessness.’ (Showalter 1981, 163)

Curiously all the victims to be analysed in this chapter are of female gender. That is, Showalter argues, because ‘women as a group are [...] conditioned to the victim’s role’ as a part of their upbringing, conditioned from the early age to ‘[increase] their sense of helplessness, vulnerability, and fear’ (Showalter 1981, 161). Yet Annabel Christopher shows that inherent timidity of femaleness can be conquered when she discards her previous passivity to defend herself from false allegations and blackmail. She, too, is one of the rare manipulators in Spark’s fiction to prevail, and rarer still to have the authoress’s own compassion.

In *Symposium* Brian Suzy claims that a robbery has left him feeling as if he had been raped after the culprits ‘pee’d all over’ his property (*Symposium* 4–5). His wife Helen, increasingly disillusioned with her husband so as to pray to

St. Uncumber to bereave her of the unwanted spouse (*Symposium* 6), utters the following in her outrage with his terminology: ‘He says he’s been raped, how would he know about rape? In fact in a funny psychological way he wants to be raped, they say we all do!’ (*Symposium* 73) The statement echoing the infamous excuse of violators becomes ominously true in another of Spark’s novels *The Driver’s Seat*, although related to an entirely different crime: ‘She told me to kill her and I killed her. She spoke in many languages but she was telling me to kill her all the time.’ (*Driver* 107) In this twisted universe where all men are sexual predators ready to assault despite protests and lack of interest in the act, Spark presents us with the most famous of victims encountered in her fiction—Lise—the woman who not only wishes to be killed, but makes sinister claims that all the murder victims actively look for it (*Driver* 104).

But there are other examples of victims in Spark’s oeuvre on which I shall not focus in as much depth like previous two.

A famous Canadian critic Northrop Frye designated the subordinate characters of the satire—Spark’s genre of choice—to be ‘the ogre and the witch,’⁷³ and although Margaret Murchie with her flaming red hair and odd ‘protruding teeth’ (*Symposium* 20), represents a nigh perfect example of the archetype once commonly subjected to degrading trials and publicly burnt at stakes, she cultivates honeycomb sweetness, with the goodwill philosophy of *Les Autres* (*Symposium* 23–4) constantly on her mind. Yet even so, a ‘sensation of oddness’ (*Symposium* 34) pervades those in her company; Hilda Damien, her mother-in-law asks of herself: ‘That goody-goody type of girl, how could she be real?’ (*Symposium* 39)

Perpetually victimised by the mythical power inherited from her half-mad, Jekyll & Hyde natured uncle Magnus, she is made suspect in many an arbitrary crime her gift of ‘the evil eye’ (*Symposium* 109) leaves in its wake—two of them occurring while she was but a schoolgirl. But what evidence is there that Margaret’s inexplicable ‘capacity for being near the scene of tragedy’ (*Symposium* 108) are not just the footprints of her obsessive uncle, and her merely a puppet in his charade? Monica Germanà allows that ‘[t]he [...] deaths [...] may be the

⁷³ Northrop Frye, ‘The Archetypes of Literature,’ *The Kenyon Review* 13, no. 1 (1951): 105, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4333216> (accessed March 21, 2015).

responsibility of Margaret's mad Uncle Magnus⁷⁴—of the four deaths laid at Margaret's feet for blame, one is committed by an inmate of the same psychiatry ward he resides in, the other murderee is strangled by a man's grip; it was Magnus's plan to marry Margaret off to an 'eligible [bachelor]' for financial security (*Symposium* 111), and his willingness to participate in a plot to slay Margaret's burdensome mother-in-law in itself is telling (*Symposium* 121).

Tried and mocked by destiny beyond her wits, Margaret makes a choice to wilfully perpetrate evil out of spite:

'I'm tired of being the passive carrier of disaster. [...] I almost think it's time for me to take my life and destiny in my own hands, and actively make disasters come about. [...]' (*Symposium* 110)

'All those suspicions have fallen on me, [...] I'm tired of being made to feel guilty for no reason. I would like to feel guilty for a real case of guilt.' (*Symposium* 122)

Evil, Margaret feels, is the only choice she has left 'because good has wilfully and maliciously eluded her in bonfires of mockery at all honourable intentions she might ever have.'⁷⁵ Once relocated to London, however—out of her uncle's reach—and with a mind set on wickedness, she fails to usurp her power and renders it unstable instead—if it had existed beyond Magnus's duplicity. She tarries in attracting a bridegroom and destiny interferes with the planned homicide of his mother that 'shouldn't have [happened] till Sunday' (*Symposium* 147).

Monterrey groups Margaret together with Annabel and Lise as neither of them 'manage[s] to complete her plans satisfactorily', calling them 'anti-heroine[s]' (Monterrey 1992, 180). Hers is the cruellest fate, however, for both Annabel and Lise are allowed a level of control—or an illusion of it, whereas Margaret is exploited till the end.

⁷⁴ Monica Germanà, 'Witches, Demon Lovers and Female Monsters,' in *Scottish Women's Gothic and Fantastic Writing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 78.

⁷⁵ Ema Jelínková, 'The Concept of Evil in *Symposium* and *Not to Disturb*' (paper presented at Searching for Culture: International Cultural Studies Conference in Olomouc, Czech Republic, October 16–17, 2014).

3.2.1 *Lise*

The fundamental question one must ask when beginning to analyse *Lise* is: what is she a victim of—a murder, or her own machinations? In a book that reads like a police report,⁷⁶ and—by virtue of flash-forward—begins and ends with a murder, Spark explores the level of complicity a victim might exhibit in a crime against herself; she takes the misogynist myth of the inviting victim⁷⁷ and makes it ring sinisterly true:

'A lot of women get killed in the park,' he says, leaning back; [...]
'Yes, of course. It's because they want to be.' (Driver 104)

In an essay arguing against the usage of word victim in favour of a more neutral term survivor, Anne McLeer exemplifies some of these myths: 'Wearing certain kinds of clothing, [...] certain movements and [behaviour] have been judged as [...] actions that precipitate the offense.' (McLeer 1998, 45) Such a victim may already be 'perceived by the offender to be performing the role of victim and is, therefore, an appropriate target.'⁷⁸ *Lise* employs these methods to her utmost, garbing herself in flamboyant attire of purposely staining cloth—having hysterically refused the stain-resistant—leaving behind her a collection of witnesses of her eccentricity; she embodies the myth of the inviting victim, a 'femme fatale' luring the reluctant Richard in for a kill and into his doom (Nicol 2010, 121).

In *Muriel Spark: Twenty-First-Century Perspectives* (2010), Patricia Waugh addresses the general importance of clothing in Spark's fiction, while noting that

⁷⁶ Martin McQuillan, 'Introduction,' in *Theorizing Muriel Spark: Gender, Race, Deconstruction*, ed. Martin McQuillan (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 3, quoted in Bran Nicol, 'Reading Spark in the Age of Suspicion,' in *Muriel Spark: Twenty-First-Century Perspectives*, ed. David Herman (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010) 127.

⁷⁷ Anne McLeer, 'Saving the Victim: Recuperating the Language of the Victim and Reassessing Global Feminism,' *Hypatia* 13, no. 1 (1998): 45, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810606> (accessed April 11, 2015).

⁷⁸ William E. Berg and Robert Johnson, 'Assessing the impact of victimization acquisition of the victim role among elderly and female victims,' in *Perspectives on victimology*, ed. William H. Parsonage (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1979), 61–2, quoted in Anne McLeer, 'Saving the Victim: Recuperating the Language of the Victim and Reassessing Global Feminism,' *Hypatia* 13, no. 1 (1998): 44, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810606> (accessed April 11, 2015).

in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* ‘clothing is used as a culturally fetishized commodity’.⁷⁹ In relation to Lise’s wardrobe, Stannard points out that for her purpose ‘she chooses an outfit suitable only for a harlequin’ (Stannard 2009, 366), drawing an apt comparison to the Commedia dell’Arte character type—a jester, social critic and lover in one, often dressed in garish diamond-patterned garb⁸⁰ akin to Lise’s:

A lemon-yellow top with a skirt patterned in bright V’s of orange, mauve and blue. [...] she is pulling off a hanger a summer coat with narrow stripes, red and white, with a white collar; very quickly she tries it on over the new dress. [...] ‘They go very well together,’ Lise says, [...] ‘Those colours of the dress and the coat are absolutely right for me. Very natural colours.’ (Driver 10–1)

Lanchester, while agreeing with Waugh’s assessment, also points out that ‘Lise’s terrible outfits are clues to her derangement’,⁸¹ serving as a mirror of her psychological state. Like her clothing, her behaviour displays erratic patterns of hysteria—the sudden outbursts of cry and laughter unrelated to any emotion she might bear; in her wake she weaves a thread of clashing lies a reader cannot be sure she is truly conscious of. She exhibits an unhealthy compulsion and indecisiveness regarding handling her possessions, touching them ‘as if to reassure herself that she exists’ (Waugh 2010, 67):

[...] she takes out a pink cotton dress, hangs it in the cupboard, then after hesitating for a few seconds she takes it off the hanger again, folds it carefully and lays it back in her case. (Driver 49)

Her demeanour borders on several psychologically defined disorders including schizophrenia and bipolarity, yet I shall withhold from attempting any final

⁷⁹ Patricia Waugh, ‘Muriel Spark and the Metaphysics of Modernity,’ in *Muriel Spark: Twenty-First-Century Perspectives*, ed. David Herman (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010) 85. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

⁸⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s. v. ‘harlequin, n.,’ accessed April 12, 2015, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/84248?rskey=I5HP7q&result=1&isAdvanced=false>.

⁸¹ John Lanchester, introduction to *The Driver’s Seat*, by Muriel Spark (London: Penguin Books, 2006) x.

diagnosis for such is not my expertise. The time she spent apart from her employment during ‘the months of illness’ (*Driver* 9), along with the five years gap between the last and current outbursts of hysterics (*Driver* 10) suggests a possible treatment had taken place—and so do the traces of hospitalisation, such as her close knowledge of the psychiatric ward interior:

‘Were the walls of the clinic pale green in all the rooms? Was there a great tough man in the dormitory at night, patrolling up and down every so often, just in case?’ (*Driver* 102)

Lise’s mental state also reflects the stylistics of Spark’s literary movement of choice—postmodernism, likened by Wickman to schizophrenia, particularly in her ambivalent multiplicity⁸² and concurrent fragmentation of character.⁸³

‘Experiencing herself as no more than a bodily container or machine that emits, from time to time, a combustive shower of laughter or tears’ (Waugh 2010, 73)—with her emotions clearly beyond her control, Lise sets out to seize her fate in one last desperate attempt at control—she wishes to die on her own terms, in the metaphorical driver’s seat; as Spark’s Catholicism prevents Lise from committing the suicide she craves, the narrative forces her to seek out someone to commit it for her (Whittaker 1982, 117) and select a sex offender with an unconscious desire to kill a woman for the task (Kemp 2010, 180). But what for? Even Spark refuses or cannot tell, relinquishing the ‘mental parentage’ (Jelínková 2006, 57) of her creation by way of proclaiming: ‘Who knows her thoughts? Who can tell?’ (*Driver* 50) The narrator in the novel performs the function of the camera lens recording the visuals and action rather than that of an omniscient guide possessing psychological insight (Kemp 2010, 174).

Dissatisfied with the evidence presented, I enter the grounds of speculation.

⁸² Matthew Wickman, ‘Muriel Spark, Modernism and Postmodernism,’ in *The Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 67.

⁸³ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 14, quoted in Matthew Wickman, ‘Muriel Spark, Modernism and Postmodernism,’ in *The Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 69.

Showalter views Lise's mediated suicide as 'a ritual that seems like a religious sacrifice' (Showalter 1981, 162), the message of which remains undisclosed to the reader. Jonathan Kemp examines the signifier of Lise's parted lips, interpreting the gesture as verbal rather than purely sensual: 'Her lips part, [...] but the thought is not given a voice, it slips away from speech. [...] She parts them, as if she is about to speak, but thinks better of it.' (Kemp 2010, 182–3) Thus, her motives and identity remain unspoken, censored from both narrator and the reader, and when she does speak, all that crosses the threshold of her lips are lies. Her knowledge of four languages—English, Danish, French and Italian, of which Danish is most likely her mother-tongue—reveals a desire to communicate that is never to come to fruition, and the need for attention accomplished in full posthumously.

For sixteen years Lise has been doing the droning work of an accountant, hunched over balance sheets and invoices, all emotion suppressed in a mechanical frown of her 'daily disapprovals' (*Driver* 9). During that time she has lost all 'sense of self' (Stannard 2009, 365)—she has no dreams that we know of, or identity. Even her apartment with its efficient, unhomey furnishings—according to Waugh 'sterile' (Waugh 2010, 68)—appears more a hotel room than a home; the pinewood lining speaks more as to the character of the designer than its inhabitant:

It is a one-room flat in an apartment house. [...] She has added very little to the room; very little is needed, for the furniture is all fixed, adaptable to various uses, and stackable. [...] Lise keeps her flat clean-lined and clear to return to after her work as if it were uninhabited. The swaying tall pines among the litter of cones on the forest floor have been subdued into silence and into obedient bulks. (Driver 13–5)

The last sentence of the quotation serves as a metaphor of Lise's voicelessness—she is like a log wrought into shape to match the society's vision. One of the most memorable of her proclamations is the following: "Too much self-control, which arises from fear and timidity, that's what's wrong with them. They're cowards, most of them." (*Driver* 71) This is most true of herself than anyone else—Waugh draws attention to containment experienced by Lise and makes it explicit by the comparison to a zipper bag, the contents of which she obsessively reorganises;

according to her Lise is just that: ‘a bag of organs, parts, and circuits’ (Waugh 2010, 66; 73)—she aims to break free of this cowardice in the most fatal way imaginable, by choosing ‘the freedom not to exist’ (Stannard 2009, 368).

But a mouth sewn shut might not be the only scar she bears. Her outburst over oil-smears staining her coat alludes to the dark possibilities of her childhood:

‘Look at my clothes,’ Lise says. ‘My new clothes. It’s best never to be born. I wish my mother and father had practiced birth-control. I wish that pill had been invented at the time. (Driver 76)

While an overreaction for sure, there can be little doubt that such a thought might possess a more sinister origin, concealed under the layer of unnecessary hysteria. The proclamation suggests that Lise might be a product of an unplanned pregnancy, mayhaps even an orphan. For this theory argues another factor: Lise appears oddly at peace with the accusation ‘that she was conceived in some ditch and born in another’ (*Driver 75*) where one would expect another bout of hysterics; instead the reader is presented with appeased:

Lise stands somewhat entranced; by her expression she seems almost consoled by this outbreak, whether because it relieves her own tensions after the panic or whether for some other reason. (Driver 76)

An interesting dynamic is to be found between Lise and the men she encounters throughout her journey—the occurrences during which her sexuality—or lack of thereof—is explored. Inverting ‘the girl-seeks-boy holiday romance’⁸⁴ trope, she repeatedly states that she has no interest in sex: ‘I don’t want sex with you. I’m not interested in sex. I’ve got other interests [...]’ (*Driver 80*), “‘Sex is no use to me, I assure you.’” (*Driver 94*) That is to say Lise has no sex drive to speak of; in its stead she nurtures her death drive, based on the Freudian premise that ‘the aim of all life is death’.⁸⁵ The males available to her mistake her advances for sexual

⁸⁴ David Herman, ‘Introduction,’ in *Muriel Spark: Twenty-First-Century Perspectives*, ed. David Herman (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010), 13.

⁸⁵ Sigmund Freud, ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’ in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. J. Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953–1974) 32–

(Stannard 2009, 366), confirming their predatory function. However, she repudiates Richard's presumption of being afraid of sex:

'It's all right at the time and it's all right before,' says Lise, 'but the problem is afterwards. That is, if you aren't just an animal. Most of the time afterwards is pretty sad.' (Driver 103)

Lise's asexuality seems to be rooted in anxiety, inflicted rather than inherent. It makes one wonder as to the precise nature of the affliction that caused the long term absence at the office—an event so traumatic as to spin her life and character so out of control and into the arms of death. A rape comes to mind. The theory accounts not only for her emotional instability and avoidance of intimacy, but also for the disregard she displays towards her own body. Instructing Richard, she treats the possible post-mortem violation casually, as if the body were an object to be used and not the temple women are taught to conceive of their bodies as: “I don't want any sex, [...] You can have it afterwards.’ (Driver 106)

But it is also entirely imaginable that it is simply not the men Lise is interested in sexually, though there is no applicable evidence beyond a name far too arbitrary to lack any meaning or sentimental value:

She [...] takes out another bag containing the black and white scarf. She folds this back and with her lipstick she traces on the outside of the bag in large capitals, 'Olga'. (Driver 85)

While the reader lacks insight into Lise's sexuality or personal history, a name writ in lipstick carries a certain aura of sensuality associated with lips—a primary tool of human intimacy. Would it be too bold to consider Lise a lesbian? Perhaps—but the possibility should not be refuted on the grounds of simple lack of evidence in a book inducing the reader to speculate.

Like other Spark manipulators attempting to intervene with the superior—novelist's—pattern, Lise falls short of her goals when the killer she chose for the task refuses to heed her instructions and rapes her in spite of her pleas: ‘All the

49, quoted in Marilyn Reizbaum, ‘The Stranger Spark,’ in *The Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 49.

same, he plunges into her, with the knife poised high.’ (*Driver* 106) Kemp summarises the plot twist: ‘After organizing her demise and planning it so precisely, in the final moment her will is thwarted and the sex she has resisted throughout the novel is forced on her.’ (Kemp 2010, 179) For her desire to enter the afterlife sinless, she is forced into a level of ‘dependency on [her killer] show[ing] that she is not the master of death’⁸⁶ but a lowly pawn completing a predefined pattern, despite her efforts at subverting it—the one last sardonic tug wringing the rug from under Lise’s feet on Spark’s part.

⁸⁶ Allan Pero, ““Look for One Thing and You Find Another”: The Voice and Deduction in Muriel Spark’s Memento Mori,’ in *Muriel Spark: Twenty-First-Century Perspectives*, ed. David Herman (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010), 199.

3.2.2 *Annabel Christopher*

The main protagonist of *The Public Image*, Annabel Christopher, is an actress of dramatic skills comparable to Tippi Hedren of Alfred Hitchcock's *Birds* (1963) and *Marnie* (1964), whose inability is falsely praised as subtlety of expression inherent to her English origin. From that piece of national cliché the public image of the passionate 'English Lady-Tiger' (*Image* 6) hidden beneath the composed surface is engineered. The novel is very much concerned with public perception and the methods of manipulating it, especially through mass media, creating living myths for their celebrities to embody (Apostolou 2000, 286). Edgecombe explains: 'Spark shows how journalists, even though they are meant to traffic in facts, are often [...] guilty of fanciful constructs [...]' (Edgecombe 1990, 98). Thus the pathetic mythos that 'the typical Englishman [...] had always really concealed a foundry of smouldering sex beneath all that expressionless reserve' (*Image* 31) intrinsic to the Christophers' image is able to catch on with the English themselves, while in reality, Annabel prefers her sex concealed under the veil of darkness and chemise: 'I don't like tiger-sex. I like to have my sexual life under the bedclothes, in the dark, on a Saturday night. With my nightdress on.' (*Image* 126)

When speaking of Annabel, it is also important to consider the characters surrounding her. In the novel, Annabel plays the victim to two separate entities operating simultaneously: the film industry with its paparazzo conclaves and the jealous ineptness of her husband Frederick who in many ways recalls Spark's own boyfriend Derek Stanford (Stannard 2009, 337). Unable to realise his own acting potential in Annabel's shadow—when in all actuality his role-picking integrity appears to serve mostly as an excuse for his laziness (*Image* 7)—and resentful of her success, he sets out to punish her in the most finite manner conceivable—by orchestrating a scandal from which her reputation would never recover—and incidentally, neither would he. Suffering from inferiority of living in his wife's shadow even as he attempts a breakthrough as a scriptwriter, he spawns the true masterpiece of his authorship: he implicates her in his suicide, leaving behind a set of letters and a prearranged party that would reduce her image to shambles.

Frederick is both successful and defied. What he does not count upon is that Annabel is a woman empowered, ‘aware of the image-making process’ (*Image* 29) every step of the way. Although he is of a habit to call her stupid, which she fails to perceive as an insult for the affectionate tone of his speech, it transpires that Annabel is perfectly aware of the fictionality of their public lives and her roles alike, whereas of Frederick the narrator discloses that ‘[he] hardly knew what was going on’ (*Image* 27). His training as a method actor induces him to ‘apply the techniques of fiction to real life’ (Whittaker 1982, 113) and criticise his wife’s skills as shallow pretending of what he believes she should feel ‘from the soul’ (*Image* 16); her own methods, which Frederick comes to think of as ‘a sort of cheat[ing]’ (*Image* 16), are comparably more simplistic and non-destructive to one’s psyche:

[...] her own instinctive method of acting consisted of playing herself in a series of poses for the camera, just as if she were getting her photograph taken for private purposes. She became skilled at this; she became extremely expert. Ten years later, [...] she was recognized as a very good actress on the strength of this skill alone. (Image 8)

Furthermore, Frederick and his blackmailer friend Billy feel that Annabel is posing even when performing the most menial of tasks—even simple reminiscing of posting letters (*Image* 12), unable to discern her true self from the cinematic impersonations of it; even her director seems to share this problem: “[...] It’s what I began to make of you that you’ve partly become.” (*Image* 39) From this the reader is able to discern that Frederick, in spite of his insinuations against Annabel, is the one ‘increasingly unable to separate fiction from reality’ (Whittaker 1982, 113); his perception is infected by the inability to exercise his vocation: ‘His role-playing [...] extends more deeply into his personality, since he has no professional capacity in which to exercise it.’ (Whittaker 1982, 112–3)

When confronted with the imminent scandal, Annabel—the ‘passive’ heroine who has, until the time of crisis, ‘allowed others to construct her image’ (Stannard 2009, 354) for her, viewing it as little more than innocent shifting of facts—wrings the reins of creative control from the languid grasp of the managers ready

to abandon her current image to fashion a new, wilder one,—determined to save the dignity of the Lady-Tiger: “[...] I’m not going to start any new public image. It’s the widowed Lady-Tiger or nothing.” (Image 125) Annabel, when pressed into an inescapable corner, and with wits sharpened by her profession (Image 12), proves to be knowledgeable—whether consciously or instinctually⁸⁷—in powerful symbolism and mass manipulation. Thus, she is able to ‘[turn] the game of appearances against those who first created it by dominating the images which others had fabricated for her and with which they had framed her’ (Apostolou 2000, 282) by becoming ‘the active producer of these images’ (Apostolou 2000, 291). Upon learning of her husband’s plot, she wastes no time organising a press conference in the middle of the night to spin the tale in her favour, displaying a greater talent for dramatic performance than in any of her films. The occasion on which she recreates the most prominent pose of the Christian society: ‘a Madonna with child, thus acting out the literal meaning of her second name[—]Christopher, bearer of Christ [...]’.⁸⁸

Countering Frederick’s post-mortem accusations of orgies in which she were to participate, she frames his death with an invented scenario so unlikely and ridiculous, yet completely in line with the Italian flair for the dramatic (Whittaker 1982, 111) at once: ““The women drove him crazy. They were all chasing him. In the end he got mixed up, totally confused, and went over the edge [...]’ (Image 117). However, her approaching triumph is hindered by the betrayal of the Irish snake of a man—her husband’s friend Billy O’Brien—who she warily thought of as ally, girding to sell her out at court.

At this point, Stannard notes, ‘[t]he moral problem she faces centres on the choice between career and dignity, between her public and private image.’ (Stannard 2009, 337) In either case, Annabel is destined to fall—even she instinctively knew the level of frailty of her image: ‘She did not expect this personal image to last long in the public mind, for she intended to play other parts than that of the

⁸⁷ Paddy Lyons, ‘Muriel Spark’s Break with Romanticism,’ in *The Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 91.

⁸⁸ Vassiliki Kolocotroni, ‘Poetic Perception in the Fiction of Muriel Spark,’ in *The Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 22. Emphasis in the original removed.

suppressed tiger,' (*Image* 29–30). But it is the conscious choice of surrendering her career in favour of motherhood that finally liberates her of enslavement by all pretence; in Edgecombe's words: 'The mere litotes of refusing any longer to live a lie [...] now does service as a decision to live the truth.' (Edgecombe 1990, 148)

Fotini Apostolou, however, seems not to believe that sentiment, expressing that: 'The woman, although seemingly distant from the masquerade, cannot totally separate herself from appearances. The ambiguous ending undermines the ultimate liberation from the seduction of the spectacle.' (Apostolou 2000, 295) According to him, Annabel exits one construct, only to enter another, likening her to Ovid's Narcissus gazing at himself in the Stygian pool (Apostolou 2000, 295).

You are a beautiful shell, like something washed up on the sea-shore, a collector's item, perfectly formed, a pearly shell[—]but empty, devoid of the life it once held. (Image 114)

From the emptiness that Frederick insinuated in his parting letter to Annabel, an ironic echo is created. Frederick's insult does not account for those creatures of the sea who shed their shells for growth; like them Annabel discards the outlived frame of her existence and ascends—a woman and a mother—like Botticelli's Venus emergent from the sea.⁸⁹ Through abnegation Annabel is cleansed and reborn, her old self vaporised:

Nobody had expected her newly-televised face to appear at the airport among the crowds of tourists; she had gone unnoticed by the customs men, the emigration men and the airport officials. (Image 155)

She slips the public and country unnoticed, heading to Greece—a goddess incarnate on her way to join her Grecian kin on Olympus.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Vassiliki Kolocotroni, 'Poetic Perception in the Fiction of Muriel Spark,' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 21.

⁹⁰ Vassiliki Kolocotroni, 'Poetic Perception in the Fiction of Muriel Spark,' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 21.

Conclusion

The bachelor thesis *On Strings of Fiction: Manipulation in the Novels of Muriel Spark* was, as the title alone suggests, concerned with manipulation, in part narratorial—using the means of literary tropes, and in part psychological—exercised among the characters within the narratives of Muriel Spark’s novels. The concrete literary tropes that I have described and then exemplified in chosen novels are analepsis and prolepsis—informally also called flashback and flash-forward; and genre shift—a trope most prominently featured in Spark’s novel titled *The Driver’s Seat*—responsible for the fluctuating genre identity of the book. In comparison, the methods of flashback and flash-forward are much more widespread in the items of Spark’s oeuvre and vary in usage and literary appeal they create. Often, they are designed for early reveals of crucial plot points and breaking the conventional suspense, shifting the reader’s attention to themes of greater interest than a mere end to the story.

In *The Driver’s Seat* both tropes are utilised to break reader’s immersion and false expectations, often through combining the flash-forward with genre shift. Spark does her utmost to sow the seed of romance throughout the first two chapters, only to rip the sprouting weeds out by the beginning of the third, thus shocking the reader into questioning the causes and motives rather than anticipation of the narrative’s end. *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* uses the tropes in much the same way—to broadcast details that would otherwise be arrived at near the ending.

Symposium takes a different approach to both flashback and flash-forward, creating a mosaic of images from past and present with a single focal point at the centre of all—the dinner party the reader is aware of from the start. *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*, on the other hand, is a tale told almost entirely through retrospection and thus can be said to have the form of an extensive flashback.

In the biographical part of the thesis, preceding the chapter on ‘Manipulation as a Narrative Device’, I have explored some of the milestones of Muriel Spark’s life, and explained how her personal experiences—such as her experience with men and religion—relate to her fiction both in the chapter and the chapters beyond.

In the rest of the thesis, I have discussed the phenomenon of psychological manipulation and some of its perpetrators across the narrative of several novels: *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, *The Public Image*, *The Driver's Seat*, *Not to Disturb*, *The Abbess of Crewe* and *Symposium*. I have provided a technical definition explaining the nature and methods of manipulation, which in layman's terms can be described as exploitation of psychological weaknesses of a person or people whose behaviour and action manipulator seeks to control, frequently through applying psychological pressure—for example violence, threats or other methods of intimidation and persuasion. In the framework of Muriel Spark's fiction psychological manipulation usually involves the manipulation of the plot. In the chapter 'Manipulation as a Trait of Character' I have listed several examples of commonly encountered types of manipulators in the aforementioned books: politician, accomplice, blackmailer, and the two categories that I analysed in closer detail—preacher and victim.

The central trait of a manipulator in Spark's fiction is that they are foredoomed to fail, for even in her fiction, Spark considers her Christian god to be the superior storyteller and views any attempt at controlling the fate of oneself or another as coup to usurp their divine power. From the characters of the aforementioned novels, Lister of *Not to Disturb* alone is allowed success to his schemes and the blessing of the author—as far as the reader's insight is concerned. Together with Alexandra of *The Abbess of Crewe*, I have categorised him as a politician, for the two characters share vigour and skill in manipulating their associates and the media, recording and retelling stories in their image.

Accomplices are considerably more passive, with their manipulative efforts restricted to nudging others into action with personal profit in mind. One such manipulator is Luke in the novel *Symposium*, a servant assistant and a robber gang informer, making considerable fortune by selling whereabouts and lists of valuable belongings of his wealthy employers. His comfortable world of expensive watches, latest model Porsches, post-studies travel and little to no conscience are ripped apart, as per Spark's virtue, when he is apprehended by the police, guilty of the very role he has been perpetrating—accomplice.

Lastly, I have given an example of a blackmailer, Billy O'Brien, a physically and psychologically repulsive man found in another of Spark's novels—*The Public Image*. Like accomplice—the role for which Billy partly qualifies—a blackmailer is only concerned with the gain, determined to achieve it at any cost. He, too, fails to accomplish his aims as the victim refuses to submit to intimidation and he is left to his own inadequacy and shame.

In the subchapter titled 'Manipulator as a Preacher', I explored and defined the general nature of preacherhood and the qualifications necessary for fulfilling this role in Muriel Spark's fiction. I have observed that the role of the preacher in Spark's writings is not necessarily linked to religious faith or Christianity, but usually with political or other ideological devotion beyond all bounds of reason and wit. In case of Miss Jean Brodie, it is the aesthetic ideal of fascism; for Bill—a secondary character from *The Driver's Seat*—it is the human appetite—for food and sex—and the savours of the macrobiotic diet that he holds in reverence.

Another example of a preacher that I have listed but not analysed in depth is Sister Lorne of *Symposium*, the missionary and prophetess calling for the rise of Marxism whose ecclesiastical ranking is mostly coincidental.

The main indication of their preacher-like characteristics is then not only the dedication to their cult of choice, but also their vigorous attempts at converting others to their faith. Jean Brodie conditions a group of girls barely able distinguish her sinister intents into following her suit and vision, masking it as an endorsement of individuality while enforcing the opposite. But in the end, her efforts at prolonging her myth fall to oblivion and betrayal, and Miss Brodie herself becomes nothing but a scarcely recalled, but fond memory of a controversial spinster in her prime. Bill, likewise, fails to recruit the main character—Lise—for his gustative cult and also misses his prescribed orgasm in the obsessive pursuit for her. In short: both his and Jean Brodie's missions are thwarted by acts of free will they seek to subdue.

In the subchapter on victim I have explored the concept of victimhood and the myth of the complicit, inviting victim spun sinisterly true in *The Driver's Seat* in which Lise, acting as someone who has watched one too many episodes of Crime Scene Investigation, dresses in the most conspicuous garb available for the sole

purpose of drawing attention of the killer. While only unconsciously inviting, Margaret Damien néé Murchie from *Symposium* also fits the definition, for her witch-like appearance demotes her to culprit of crimes most likely committed by her uncle Magnus and drives her to scheming crimes of her own.

I have also argued that Lise's victimhood is not restricted to her homicidal circumstance but rather the cause of her pursuits and speculated about the dark, uncontrollable events staining her past that would drive her to seize control of her death, at least. The theories included excessive work load, being born as an unwanted child and possible orphanhood, homosexuality and even rape.

While Annabel Christopher of *The Public Image* offers no visible excuse for attack, her fame and success is a considerable thorn in the side of her own husband who seeks to end her winning streak, accidentally unleashing Annabel's true dramatic talent. I have also noted several parallels of Annabel with other works of art.

What the aforementioned victims have in common is somewhat askew success—the scenarios happen but without corresponding fully to their intent. Lise, while successful in attracting her killer of choice and evasion of sex offered to her left and right, achieves death only after being raped by the very one she designated to liberate her of life's burden. Annabel manages to thwart Frederick's schemes, but is forced to sacrifice her career. Margaret's mother-in-law Hilda is indeed murdered as she had planned, but not by Margaret's own hand. Thus, the three victim-manipulators join the legions Spark's manipulative characters, the result of whose machinations, and the attempts to best the god's will, is failure.

Resumé

Bakalářská práce *Manipulace v románech Muriel Sparkové* se, jak již název napovídá, zabývá zčásti autorským ovlivňováním čtenáře pomocí literárních tropů: konkrétně použitím analepse a prolepse – také neodborně nazývané flashback a flash-forward – a genre shift, který lze do češtiny přeložit jako posun v žánru, jehož příkladem může být posun od romantických klišé ke krimi v románu *Místo za volantem*. Naproti tomu analepse a prolepse byly ve vybraných románech *Balada z předměstí*, *Nejlepší léta slečny Jean Brodieové*, *Mediální obraz*, *Místo za volantem* a *Večírek* aplikovány více zešíroka, kupříkladu v románu *Večírek* tvoří odlišné časové linie mozaiku, v jejímž středu leží právě onen večírek z názvu knihy a zároveň seznamuje čtenáře s povahami a minulostí postav. V *Místě za volantem* je prolepse využita v kombinaci s žánrovým posunem za účelem šokování čtenáře a úpravy jeho očekávání.

Druhá část práce se zaměřila na manipulátora jakožto literární postavu a na základě odborné definice psychologické manipulace analyzovala některé z postav v románech výše zmíněných a dvou dalších – *Abatyše z Crewe* a *Nerušit, prosím*. Laicky řečeno je psychologická manipulace jakýkoliv psychologický nátlak na osobu, obvykle za účelem dosažení vlastních cílů. V rámci díla Muriel Sparkové takováto manipulace obvykle zahrnuje manipulaci děje samotného. Některé z typů manipulátorů, které lze v díle Sparkové nalézt jsou politik, komplic, vyděrač, kazatel či oběť, z nichž poslední dva typy jsem detailně rozebrala v samostatných podkapitolách.

V podkapitole o kazateli jsem se zabývala charakteristikou kazatele, tak jak se objevuje v románech Sparkové – tudíž ne jako církevní hodnostář nýbrž jako osoba oddaná jakékoliv doktríně s horlivostí srovnatelnou s náboženským fanatismem a misionářským nutkáním konvertovat své okolí. Pro Billa, vedlejší postavu z *Místa za volantem*, je takovýmto náboženstvím makrobiotická dieta a předepsaný denní orgasmus, pro dalšího z analyzovaných kazatelů – slečnu Jean Brodieovou je to fašistické hnutí, které samo o sobě organizační strukturou připomíná sektu. Podobné politické zanícení projevuje i sestra Lorne – jediná z kazatelů zastávající církevní hodnost, ironicky hlásající pravdu a vzestup marxismu namísto křesťanských hodnot.

Podkapitola o manipulátorovi jakožto oběti se soustředila výhradně na ženy, které se po delším období submise snaží získat kontrolu nad svým osudem. Částečně se též zabývá misogynním mýtem o oběti jakožto provokatérce, která zločin aktivně vyhledává. Zrovna takovou roli v románu *Místo za volantem* zastává účetní Lise, jejíž motivací ke zprostředkované sebevraždě se čtenář může pouze domýšlet. Aby upoutala pozornost svého budoucího vraha, oblékne se Lise do těch nejnápadnějších šatů, jaké jsou v obchodech k mání a doplní je kabátkem, jehož barvy a vzor společně se šaty vytváří kombinaci, která slouží jako jedno ze svědectví o Lisině psychické vyšinutosti. Proč se Lise ze všech možných scénářů chce ujmout režie zrovna své smrti, zůstává čtenáři přístupno pouze v náznacích, ze kterých ani jedna možnost – ať už znásilnění, temné dětství či osiřelost, neléčitelná psychická porucha, homosexualita nebo pouhé přepracování – není vypravěčem potvrzena.

Ačkoliv Margaret Damienová, dříve Murchieová, v knize *Večírek* nepřitahuje zločin vědomě, kvůli jejímu nápadnému vzhledu na ni padá vinna za vraždy a záhadná zmizení spáchaná nejspíše jejím psychotickým strýčkem Magnusem, který její schopnost přitahovat neštěstí vydává za nadpřirozenou moc zlého pohledu. Naproti tomu herečka Annabel Christopherová v románu *Mediální obraz* nepřitahuje zločin na základě viditelných podmětů, nýbrž slávy, kterou si nevědomky antagonizuje svého manžela Fredericka, rovněž herce, kterému se přes veškerý jeho talent nedaří v branži prosadit.

Co tyto tři ženy – krom jejich role – pojí je polovičatý úspěch s nádechem ironie. Lise sice umírá, jak měla v plánu, ale ne dříve než je její tělo znesvěceno sexuálním maniakem, kterého si k provedení činu vybrala. Annabel se podaří odvrátit skandál připravený jejím manželem, náhradou za to je však Annabel nucena obětovat svou hereckou kariéru. Margaretina tchýně Hilda je zavražděna jak její snacha zamýšlí, avšak ne její vlastní rukou. Jejich částečný neúspěch slouží jako autorčin výsměch všem, kteří se snaží svými intriky ovlivnit osudy předem stanovené boží mocí a povýšit se tak na jeho úroveň. Ostatně neúspěchem končí osudy většiny manipulátorů z pera Sparkové: slečna Brodieová je zrazena jednou ze svých kultistek a přichází o zaměstnání, Bill promrhá celý den čekáním

na Lise a není tak schopen dosáhnout svého denního orgasmu a pomocný sluha Luke z románu *Večírtek* je pro svou činnost informátora zadržen policií.

Práce rovněž obsahuje stručný životopis autorky, kde jsou uvedeny hlavní milníky, které se podílely na utváření její identity jakožto ženy i autorky. Práce celková pak zmiňuje některé paralely mezi autorčinými životními zkušenostmi a osudy jejich postav, případně mezi postavami a skutečnými osobami z jejího života.

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Abbreviations Used

<i>Abbess</i>	<i>The Abbess of Crewe</i>
<i>Ballad</i>	<i>The Ballad of Peckham Rye</i>
<i>CV</i>	<i>Curriculum Vitae</i>
<i>Disturb</i>	<i>Not to Disturb</i>
<i>Driver</i>	<i>The Driver's Seat</i>
<i>Image</i>	<i>The Public Image</i>
<i>Loitering</i>	<i>Loitering with Intent</i>
<i>Prime</i>	<i>The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie</i>

Annotation

Author: Nikola Petrusová

Department: Department of English and American Studies

Title of thesis: On Strings of Fiction: Manipulation in the Novels of Muriel Spark

Supervisor: Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D.

Number of pages: 72

Year of presentation: 2015

Key words: Muriel Spark, manipulation, manipulator, Scottish literature, Calvinism, victimisation, ambivalence, dualism, type, character, preacher, victim, politician, accomplice, blackmailer, flashback, flash-forward, chronology, genre shift

Abstract: The thesis deals with the recurring theme of manipulation and manipulator in Muriel Spark's fiction across several chosen novels and novellas, namely: *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, *The Public Image*, *The Driver's Seat*, *Not to Disturb*, *The Abbess of Crewe* and *Symposium*. The thesis examines some of the stylistic choices undertaken by the author in order to manipulate the reader's expectations, and chiefly focuses on the usage of analepsis and prolepsis, more commonly called flashback and flash-forward. The thesis also deals with manipulator as a character type in Muriel Spark's oeuvre and establishes several types of manipulators often encountered in her works, names concrete examples from the aforementioned works and determines their rate of success. The thesis closely describes two types of manipulators—preacher and victim—each of which is represented by a detailed analysis of at least two characters corresponding to this typology. The thesis also contains a brief biography of the authoress and draws comparisons between the real events and persons of Spark's life and fiction.

Anotace

Jméno autora: Nikola Petrusová

Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Název práce: Manipulace v románech Muriel Sparkové

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D.

Počet stran: 72

Rok obhajoby: 2015

Klíčová slova: Muriel Sparková, manipulace, manipulátor, skotská literatura, kalvinismus, viktimizace, ambivalence, dualismus, typ, postava, charakter, kazatel, oběť, politik, komplic, vyděrač, flashback, flash-forward, chronologie, posun v žánru

Abstrakt: Bakalářská práce se zabývá motivem manipulace a manipulátora napříč několika romány z pera Muriel Sparkové, jmenovitě v knihách *Balada z předměstí*, *Nejlepší léta slečny Brodieové*, *Mediální obraz*, *Místo za volantem*, *Nerušit, prosím*; *Abatyše z Crewe* a *Večírek*. Práce vyjmenovává a analyzuje některé stylistické a narativní metody, které autorka využívá k manipulaci s pocity a očekáváními čtenáře a zejména se soustředí na využití takzvané analepse a prolepse – rovněž zvané populárními anglickými termíny flashback a flash-forward. Práce se dále věnuje manipulátorovi jakožto postavě v díle Sparkové a stanovuje některé typy manipulátorů, se kterými se lze v jejích románech často střetnout, zmiňuje některé konkrétní příklady z výše zmíněných děl a určuje míru jejich úspěchu. Práce podrobněji popisuje dva typy manipulátorů – kazatele a oběť – z nichž každý je zastoupen detailní analýzou nejméně dvou postav odpovídajícím této typologii. Práce rovněž obsahuje stručný životopis autorky a upozorňuje na některé podobnosti mezi skutečnými událostmi a osobami z autorčina života a jejími knihami.