Transfiguring betrayal : reading Muriel Spark's postmodernism

Lok, Joshua Cheng Huai

2019

Lok, J. C. H. (2019). Transfiguring betrayal : reading Muriel Spark's postmodernism.
Master's thesis, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

<https://hdl.handle.net/10356/105515>

<https://doi.org/10.32657/10220/47857>

**NANYANG
TECHNOLOGICAL
UNIVERSITY**

**TRANSFIGURING BETRAYAL:
READING MURIEL SPARK'S POSTMODERNISM**

LOK CHENG HUAI JOSHUA

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

2018

**TRANSFIGURING BETRAYAL:
READING MURIEL SPARK'S POSTMODERNISM**

LOK CHENG HUAI JOSHUA

School of Humanities

A THESIS submitted to the NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
2018

Statement of Originality

I certify that all work submitted for this thesis is my original work. I declare that no other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement. Except where it is clearly stated that I have used some of this material elsewhere, this work has not been presented by me for assessment in any other institution or University. I certify that the data collected for this project are authentic and the investigations were conducted in accordance with the ethics policies and integrity standards of Nanyang Technological University and that the research data are presented honestly and without prejudice.

February 11, 2019

.....

.....
Lok Cheng Huai Joshua

Supervisor Declaration Statement

I have reviewed the content of this thesis and to the best of my knowledge, it does not contain plagiarised materials. The presentation style is also consistent with what is expected of the degree awarded. To the best of my knowledge, the research and writing are those of the candidate except as acknowledged in the Author Attribution Statement. I confirm that the investigations were conducted in accordance with the ethics policies and integrity standards of Nanyang Technological University and that the research data are presented honestly and without prejudice.

February 11, 2019

.....

.....

Asst. Prof. Wernmei Yong Ade

Authorship Attribution Statement

This thesis contains material from 0 paper(s) published in the following peer-reviewed journal(s) where I was the first and/or corresponding author.

February 11, 2019

.....

.....
Lok Cheng Huai Joshua

*Our love approaches the last episode
of pitiless flight;
the young albino animal reaching
his soft neck
to the friendly year
fears no more the hot herd-breath
behind him.*

*So wise beyond his age, this
white yearling shall not grow
rotten and rheumy, dull
as to wit, dyspeptic
as to heart,
who has lain fugitive
from the black and bellowing others,
and suffered the enchantment of stars
too bright.*

—Muriel Spark, “The Anniversary.”
Uncollected,
first published in *Variegation. Free Verse Quarterly* 3, 4 (Autumn, 1948).

That which is completed is never the product of individual, solitary cleverness. It is in large part the potent, availing constellation of love and kindness and forbearance from those around one. And so to the following persons I attempt to articulate a profound but not fully expressible complex of gratitude and delight and love:

TO MY PARENTS

Who never wavered—surely against their better judgement at times—in their belief that I know what I’m doing. For not pretending to know more than they do. For not subjecting me to crowd-favoured, crowded modes of being. And for having been there always.

TO PROFESSOR NEIL MURPHY

Who was instrumental in shaping my interests and my academic endeavours. For being so generous with his time all these years—reading the slightly alarming amount of things I send his way and talking me through even the more peculiar of my queries.

TO PROFESSOR SHIRLEY CHEW

Who indulged not just my academic interests but my little impertinences, and through all that renewed in me an eagerness to be better and inspired in me newfound interests and facilities.

TO DEAR DR YONG WERN MEI

Whose unstinting support and guidance and confidence saw me through all the processes of this project from the earliest days of enthusiastic but vague and unformulated ideas. For helping me through the years in ways you are perhaps unaware of and in ways I’m perhaps unable to quantify. For fancy London dinners and for letting me make you “*work for your salary*.” For making my reading and thinking and writing better and sharper and just a little bit like yours.

AND TO JIAMS

For a luminescence that does not go away. For the hindquarters. For this life we share that remains rather happily beyond words, though some words do well up—glasses, drinkable cats and *hai*. For never having declared yourself ‘best’ but being that and so much more.

Abstract	iv
-----------------------	-----------

Introduction

<i>Placing Muriel Spark in a Postmodern World</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>The Postmodern Potential of Betrayal</i>	<i>14</i>

Chapter I

ART AND REALITY IN <i>THE PRIME OF MISS JEAN BRODIE</i>	22
<i>'A Trifle Out of Place': The Artistic Vision of Miss Jean Brodie</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Domination and Control: The Dangers of an Uncontrolled Artistry</i>	<i>36</i>

Chapter II

CAUSALITY AND CHRONOLOGY IN THE BETRAYAL OF MISS JEAN BRODIE	52
<i>The Loss of Sparkling Style: Sandy's Betrayal of Miss Jean Brodie</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Of the Most Economical Methods: Betrayal as Art Form</i>	<i>66</i>
<i>A Postmodern Turn: The Artful Implications of Betrayal</i>	<i>73</i>
<i>'Creativity Means Casualties': Matters of Violence and of Being Stuck</i>	<i>81</i>

Conclusion

EXTRAPOLATING FROM MURIEL SPARK'S ART OF BETRAYAL	88
<i>Memento Mori (1959)</i>	<i>91</i>
<i>The Finishing School (2004)</i>	<i>101</i>
<i>Afterword</i>	<i>107</i>

Works Cited	109-14
--------------------------	---------------

Transfiguring Betrayal: Reading Muriel Spark's Postmodernism

This dissertation approaches Muriel Spark's postmodernism from the presentation of betrayal in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961). Since betrayal consists in threading the intertwined nature of art and reality, it exposes reality to be intractably multiple and endlessly rewritable. Reality exists as potential for transfiguration and, through betrayal, is ever on the cusp of actualising into other artful possibilities. Betrayal is thus as an art form with postmodern edge.

Chapter I first establishes how there are no clear distinctions between reality and art. Reality is, in fact, a matter of art. It focuses on how Jean Brodie's artistry achieves a modernist reappraisal of reality but also attains to a manner of postmodern incredulity. Although Jean Brodie's artistry takes on disquieting proportions when she extends it to dominate and control, a nascent postmodern impulse is at play. Chapter I also lays out how Spark's use of prolepsis distorts the narrative of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and lays the ground for a fundamental reevaluation of Sandy's betrayal of Jean Brodie.

Thereafter, Chapter II takes on Spark's own notion that causality is not chronology and scrutinises the deep ambiguities generated by prolepsis as concerns Sandy's betrayal of Jean Brodie. In contradistinction to critical consensus, Chapter II posits Sandy's betrayal to be the last in a series of moves steeped in an artistic vision and an economy of artistic method she learns from Jean Brodie. It contends that instead of turning against and away from Jean Brodie, Sandy advances and refines her artistic vision to the very limits of human possibility. By more carefully tracing betrayal as art, Chapter II finds that Sandy's betrayal carries the postmodern potential in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* as it dramatises the bidirectional and reversible dynamics between a modernist epistemological dominant and a postmodernist ontological dominant.

Finally, this dissertation concludes by extrapolating from Muriel Spark's art of betrayal in reading *Memento Mori* (1959) and *The Finishing School* (2004). It charts a discernible postmodern thrust as explored in Chapters I and II against a broader context of Spark's works. For reading Muriel Spark's postmodernism through betrayal factors as a point of departure for a longer study that promises a fruitful reassessment of her oeuvre.

I would like to see in all forms of arts and letters, ranging from the most sophisticated and high achievements to the placards that students carry about the street, a less impulsive generosity, a less indignant representation of social injustice, and a more deliberate cunning, a more derisive undermining of what is wrong. I would like to see less emotion and more intelligence in these efforts to impress our minds and hearts.

Muriel Spark. "The Desegregation of Art."

No one acquainted with her fiction can ignore its persistent suggestion that there are as many kinds of truths as there are observers in a world where evil and stupidity are ubiquitous. A structural irony thus develops between what can be known through observation and documentation and what is true: reality.

Martin Stannard. *Muriel Spark: The Biography*.

PLACING MURIEL SPARK IN A POSTMODERN WORLD

Muriel Spark is postmodernist. So she says in an interview with Martin McQuillan in 2002. Asked if she considers herself a modernist writer, Spark responds: "Maybe Postmodernist; I don't know about Modernist. I think so, probably. They say postmodernist, mostly, whatever that means." She explains: "Well I think that means that there is another

dimension which is a bit creepy, supernatural ... not supernatural but not necessarily consequential. I always think that causality is not chronology. I go on that; one thing doesn't necessarily lead to another inevitable thing, although it does lead to something else in actual fact" (216). Spark's definition of 'postmodernist' is, by Patricia Waugh's measure, "almost certainly disingenuous" but it does raise an intriguing prospect for an inquiry into her place in literary history in relation to postmodernism ("Muriel Spark and the Metaphysics of Modernity" 82).

Of the few things that critics agree on is the difficulty of placing Spark within recognisable literary trends. Joseph Hynes mentions, in his Introduction to *Critical Essays on Muriel Spark* that despite "her comparative popularity and rising reputation, Muriel Spark has often been misunderstood and, in my opinion, misevaluated" (5). What Hynes alludes to are the appropriations of Spark's fiction for political purposes, most commonly the feminist, the Scottish nationalist, and even the Roman Catholic. This difficulty arises in part from Spark's own views of her works in relation to politics, as she clarifies in an interview with Martin McQuillan, where she identifies as 'postmodernist': "You can't be non-political, not unless you are really empty-headed ... I think you can't get out of politics, you can't get away from philosophy or religion so easily. It comes into everything, everyday life. It's the air we breathe" (221-2). All these with this very important qualification: "I don't write political novels" (222). To attempt to read Muriel Spark expressly from and in service to political positions is to miss the point of her fiction. This is not to say that her works are devoid of political implication. It is merely that political implications are *implications* and, though in Spark's acknowledgement they be part of everything and unavoidable, should not be taken as presupposed. Martin McQuillan goes so far as to assert in "Muriel Spark Meets Contemporary Criticism" that

a “writer can only be political because she is in the first instance fictional” because “fiction depends upon the promise of its own fictionality; it can be no more than fiction and is only allowed to say what it says because it is fiction” (21). He is right, in that politics emerges when her works are approached as fiction and political implications morph with every reading.

While debates over politics in fiction are not new, the emphasis here is less on how Spark can be political but more on how her fiction functions as art that elucidates, among other things, political concerns. And the difficulty of placing Spark within recognisable trends becomes more pronounced when considering her place in literary history. David Herman finds, in *Muriel Spark: Twenty-First Century Perspectives*, that

Her fiction embraces (or rather extends and radicalises) the modernist emphasis on technique while also projecting complex social worlds ... characters are impinged on by powerful historical and political forces, their psychologies and interactions shaped by entrenched educational and religious institutions, ideologies of gender, and more or less dominant assumptions about the possibilities and limitations of human agency. (2)

Herman stops short of declaring Spark a modernist writer. Nevertheless, he associates her with a modernist emphasis on artistic technique and illustrates how her characters engage with historical, political and social issues against the bounds of human agency. Alan Bold emphasises a different aspect of Spark’s fiction. To him, “Modernist prose, as initiated by Flaubert and Joyce, uses language not as a crude means to a predictable narrative end but as a ritual defining a religion of art” (30). He thinks that “Spark subscribes to the aesthetic religion of modernism, uses her verbal material ritualistically to create an atmosphere in

which events do not occur according to a conventional sequence logic but appear to satisfy the author's imaginative needs. She produces a sacramental aura" (30). In this elevated description of Spark's writing, Bold's point is that her works exude and embrace a modernist style.

In "The Desegregation of Art," Muriel Spark's address to the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters in 1970, she outlines what critics have called her artistic manifesto. "The Desegregation of Art" is a landmark in Spark's career because it is a companion piece to all her novels, even the ones published before 1970, which can be read as extended explorations of the impulses therein expressed. Before speaking about the value of the literary arts, though, Spark says this: "I'm sure you all remember the silly old saying 'The pen is mightier than the sword.' Perhaps when swords were the weapons in current use, there was some point in that proverb. Anyway, in our time, the least of our problems is swords" ("The Desegregation of Art" 80). A bizarre opening for a defence of the currency and use of literature. However, it exemplifies her overall point: "the only effective art of our particular time is the satirical, the harsh and witty, the ironic and derisive" (81). For "[r]idicule is the only honourable weapon we have left," and "we should all be conditioned and educated to regard violence in any form as something to be ruthlessly mocked" (80). Spark advocates, in short, "the arts of satire and of ridicule. And [she] see[s] no living art form for the future" (80). What Spark says here appears to be consistent with "the modernist radicalism in art," as Frank Kermode calls it in *The Sense of an Ending*, which includes but is not limited to "the breaking down of pseudo-traditions, the making new on a true understanding of the nature of the elements of art" (110-1). Spark's reference to the "silly old saying 'The pen is mightier than the sword'" demonstrates this ("The Desegregation of Art" 80). In breaking down the presumed logic

behind comparing pens and swords, she rejects the piece of purported wisdom and rethinks conventions in what David Herman and Alan Bold broadly classify as a modernist inclination.

Yet, equally many critics find Muriel Spark to be postmodernist in some measure. In *Muriel Spark: The Biography*, Martin Stannard calls “The Desegregation of Art” “a brave speech ... a decade ahead of its time, pure postmodernism” (370). Given that “The Desegregation of Art” ultimately articulates her goal for literature to be a desegregated art form, because literature “infiltrates and should fertilise our minds [and] is not a special department set aside for entertainment and delight of the sophisticated minority,” Spark dissolves the typically modernist distinctions between what counts as art and what does not (78). Furthermore, her advocating of the arts of ridicule and satire resonates with Jean-François Lyotard’s famous phrase in *The Postmodern Condition*, “I define *postmodern* as incredulity to metanarratives” (xxiv). She is, in her critical review of the comparison between pens and swords, incredulous to conventional sayings that has passed for wisdom. Ridicule and satire are not postmodernism, or even bywords for postmodernism but, because Spark’s vision of literature being a desegregated art form is achieved by ridicule and satire, a postmodern impulse is at work. Apart from “The Desegregation of Art,” John Lanchester writes in his introduction to Spark’s *The Driver’s Seat*, published also in 1970, that she could

be as easily seen as a sort of proto Post-Modernist, a writer with a sharp and lasting interest in the arbitrariness of fictional conventions; a writer whose eager adoption of fictional conventions of the novel have always

been accompanied by a wish to toy with, subvert, parody and undermine them. (vi)

These are fairly conventional traits that return to Linda Hutcheon's conception of postmodernism in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*: it is "a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges" (3); it "raises questions about (or renders problematic) the common-sensical and the 'natural.' But it never offers answers that are anything but provisional and contextually determined (and limited)" (xi). But to name Spark a postmodernist is to oversimplify matters, the same way naming her modernist does, because Spark escapes clear categorisation at every turn and to categorise her is, if anything, reductive. Which is why, Marina Mackay puts forward in "Muriel Spark and the Meaning of Treason,"

a novelist like Spark is scarcely a realist, but to align her unproblematically with the emergent postmodernism of the nouveau roman would mean underplaying the capacious sociability, the meticulous curiosity about the specificities of mid-century manners that distinguishes her so clearly from continental counterparts. (507)

Beyond that, from Matthew Wickman's perspective in his essay "Spark, Modernism and Postmodernism," Spark's

hybrid background—part English, part Scottish, part Protestant, part Jewish—makes her a diasporic writer with a fluid sense of self. This bespeaks postmodernism. And yet, her influences—T. S. Eliot and Marcel Proust, to say nothing of Cardinal Newman, gothic fiction, the Celtic

Twilight or the Scottish Border ballads—are hardly postmodern in any conventional sense. (64)

One thing stands clear in all this: Spark strikes a crucial ambivalence between modernist and postmodernist, seeming at once both and neither. Matthew Wickman is right in summarising thus:

The question of Spark's place in literary history grows more vexed when we consider the reputedly 'postmodern' era in which she wrote. Our difficulty arises not only from asking whether Spark's work corresponds with features of postmodern fiction, but also from uncertainties about what postmodernism is. (63)

It is precisely from this ambivalence and the uncertainties about postmodernism that this dissertation reads Spark's fiction, taking up the correspondence between her work and features of postmodernist fiction in an attempt to trace one variation of Muriel Spark's postmodernism.

As concerns postmodernism, what Steven Connor writes of in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism* provides a useful general perspective. To him,

postmodernism [has] slowly but inexorably ceased to be a condition of things in the world, whether the world of art, culture, economics, politics, religion, or war, and became a philosophical disposition, an all-too-easily recognisable (and increasingly dismissible) style of thought and talk. By [the 1990s], 'postmodernism' has entered the popular lexicon to signify and loose, sometimes dangerously loose, relativism. (5)

Not only does postmodernism signify a loose relativism in popular discourse, postmodernism—or the postmodern, the postmodernist—itself becomes increasingly more loosely defined; practically everything is postmodern. Aside from this general trend, Connor charts a development of postmodernism in four different stages, the first of which “extends through the 1970s and the early part of the 1980s,” where the “hypothesis of postmodernism was under development on a number of different fronts” (1-2). He identifies how in “1970, the talk would all have been of postmodernist literature” since (12), he explains in a later chapter, “literature can certainly claim to be one of the most important laboratories of postmodernism [as] ideas of postmodernism tended in these formative decades to be framed by reference to literary works” (62). If literature gave shape and form to a nascent postmodernism which, by 1970, becomes an identifiable phase in a striking if, still to this day, amorphous cultural phenomenon, then literary works published in the decade preceding 1970 is fertile ground for exploration.

From the publication of her first novel *The Comforters* in 1957, which is widely recognised as a postmodern novel, Muriel Spark’s early literary career coincides with the formative years of postmodernism, especially as concerns the entanglements between modernist and postmodernist fiction. Incidentally, “The Desegregation of Art,” which Martin Stannard calls “pure postmodernism,” was also given in 1970. Despite the recurrence of 1970 in the many references so far, postmodernism is not an age or an era with clear temporal demarcations. It is more fruitful, as Patricia Waugh sees it, to regard postmodernism

firstly as a mood or style of thought which privileges aesthetic commentary over those of logic and method; secondly as an aesthetic

practice with an accompanying body of commentary upon it; and thirdly as a concept designating a cultural epoch which has facilitated the rise to prominence of such theoretical and aesthetic styles and which may or may not constitute a radical break with previous structures of modernity.

(Practising Postmodernism/Reading Modernism 6-7)

Waugh's conception here is a useful basis for examining postmodern impulses, moods or styles of thought expressed in literature leading up to postmodernism seeping into everything. It is not for nothing that what Waugh points to as a postmodern "mood or style which privileges aesthetic commentary over those of logic and method" (6) here echoes Alan Bold's reading of Spark as "subscrib[ing] to the aesthetic religion of modernism" and uses her material not "according to a conventional sequence logic but appear to satisfy the author's imaginative needs" (30). Because Spark's postmodernism straddles the ambiguities between the modernist and the postmodernist.

Though Patricia Waugh provides a broad framework for such a return to the literary text, it is more directed theoretical works, like Brian McHale's *Postmodernist Fiction*, that provides more specific points of approach. To begin with, there is no cleanly unproblematic use of the term 'postmodern' or 'postmodernist.' Aside from the fact that "there is no postmodernism 'out there' in the world any more than there ever was a Renaissance or a romanticism 'out there,'" since these are but "literary-historical fictions, discursive artefacts, constructed either by contemporary readers and writers or retrospectively by literary historians," a chief contention surrounding the postmodern or postmodernist is its very prefix: 'post' (4). It is unlikely that anyone would take with no question the stance that McHale refers to: "if modern means 'pertaining to the present,'

then ‘post-modern’ can only mean ‘pertaining to the future,’ and in that case what could postmodernist fiction be except fiction that has not yet been written?” (4). McHale’s purpose here is to contextualise postmodernism against this, as that which “follows *from* modernism, in some sense, more than it follows *after* modernism”; it is an emphasis of “historical and logical consequence rather than sheer temporal posteriority” (4-5). This means that the difference between modernism and postmodernism “is not merely a chronological division but an organised system—a poetics, in fact,” and postmodernism “signifies a poetics which is the successor of, or possibly a reaction against, the poetics of early twentieth-century modernism” (5).

For McHale, the shift from modernist fiction to postmodernist fiction is marked by the “shift of dominant from problems of knowing to problems of modes of being—from an epistemological dominant to an ontological one” (11-2). Through a series of questions,¹ McHale establishes these traits in modernist and postmodernist fiction that brings him to this point:

There is a kind of inner logic or inner dynamics ... governing the change of dominant from modernist to postmodernist fiction. Intractable epistemological uncertainty becomes at a certain point ontological plurality or instability: push epistemological questions far enough and they

¹ Brian McHale theorises thus: “the dominant of modernist fiction is *epistemological*. That is, modernist fiction deploys strategies which engage and foreground questions such as those mentioned by Dick Higgins in my epigraph: ‘How can I interpret this world of which I am a part? And what am I in it?’ Other typical modernist questions might be added: What is there to be known? Who knows it? How do they know it, and with what degree of certainty?; How is knowledge transmitted from one knower to another, and with what degree of reliability?’ How does the object of knowledge change as it passes from knower to knower?; What are the limits of the knowable? And so on” (10).

On the other hand, “the dominant of postmodernist fiction is *ontological*. That is, postmodernist fiction deploys strategies which engage and foreground questions like the ones Dick Higgins calls ‘post-cognitive’: ‘Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?’ Other typical postmodernist questions bear either on the ontology of the literary text itself or on the ontology of the world which it projects, for instance: What is a world?; What kinds of worlds are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ?; What happens when different kinds of worlds are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?; What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects?; How is a projected world structure? And so on” (12).

‘tip over’ into ontological questions. By the same token, push ontological questions far enough and they tip over into epistemological questions—the sequence is not linear and unidirectional, but bidirectional and reversible. (13)

What is striking here is less of what McHale characterises as the shift of dominant between modernist and postmodernist fiction than his point about the sequence of this very shift not being “linear and unidirectional, but bidirectional and reversible” (13). This suggests that in a loose temporal sense postmodernism may follow from modernism, the many indeterminacies notwithstanding, and so postmodernist ontological concerns will follow from modernist epistemological concerns, but said postmodernist ontological concerns can and do lead into modernist epistemological concerns. If postmodernism is a certain mood or style of thought, or “a poetics which is the successor of, or possibly a reaction against, the poetics of early twentieth-century modernism,” probing the mutually informing interactions between modernist epistemological concerns and postmodernist ontological concerns promises a rewarding study (5); even more so when applied to a writer as slippery as Spark.

It is useful to specify, at this point, that this dissertation is not arguing for a discrete shape of postmodernism as a cultural phenomenon in general that Muriel Spark somehow fits into or belongs to or can be judged against. Nor does it declare Spark a postmodern writer, whatever that designation might mean. Instead, it reads from Spark’s fiction certain postmodern inclinations and postmodern narrative elements and is especially interested in rediscovering her earlier work along the criterion Brian McHale outlines for a productive approach to postmodernism. This would be one that “produces

new insights, new or richer connections, coherence of a different degree or kind, ultimately *more discourse*, in the form of follow-up research, new interpretations, criticisms and refines of the construct itself, counter-proposals, refutations, polemics” (7). This therefore underlines the endeavour to discover Spark’s postmodernism in individual terms, as opposed to situating her as conforming to some general, preconceived model. In some ways, this harks back to Lyotard’s vision of the postmodern artist or writer:

A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgement, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. (81)

Without taking the perennial ambivalence of Spark’s place in literary history as a cue to decide on the matter, this dissertation takes it as motive to examine the manifold ways her works represent and search for postmodern rules and categories.

Muriel Spark presents an intriguing case for such a study because, besides her playful regard of herself as postmodernist, her literary career (1957-2004) spans what is roughly the postmodern era. A number of Spark’s novels have been widely identified as postmodern, from her first novel *The Comforters* (1957), to *The Driver’s Seat* (1970) and *The Hothouse by the East River* (1973) which Brian McHale mentions in *Postmodernist Fiction*, and the pair of novels Ali Smith dubs “sister volume[s]” (vi), *Loitering with Intent* (1981) and *A Far Cry From Kensington* (1988), and *Reality and Dreams* (1996). In spite of that, critical opinions on Spark’s association with postmodernism tend to be cursory

because they are often couched under other theoretical discussions of her work, or simply referenced to bolster more generic discussions of postmodernism. These identifications are rarely fully substantiated. Dedicated studies of Muriel Spark's postmodernism do exist, like Chikako Sawada's *Muriel Spark's Postmodernism*, but even then, she focuses largely on Spark's "later novels" that deal with contemporary "issues more explicitly in relation to postmodern phenomena" (23).

As such, this dissertation undertakes primarily to read Muriel Spark's postmodernism as it takes shape in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961). Her most famous and most enduring title, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is most referred to in literary criticism surrounding Spark; it is also the work which much criticism is compared to, based on and constructed against. Opportunities for new readings constantly arise because *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* amounts to what is in Candia McWilliam's opinion "not impasto or excrescence but an infinite unpackability" (vi). Furthermore, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is of particular interest in relation to the foregoing approach to postmodernist poetics in fiction because it occupies a liminal place on different counts. *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* was published in 1961, at a time when, in Steven Connor's view, "a shift in the arts and culture ... from a distinctively modernist phase to a distinctively—or indistinctly—postmodernist phase" was palpable (2). Yet it remained "a genuine puzzle for anyone trying to get a secure fix on the term 'postmodern'" since Connor locates the accumulation of postmodernist impulses to take clearer shape only around 1970 (2). While never expressly positioned as postmodernist fiction, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* makes manifest McHale's proposition that the flow between modernist and postmodernist poetics "is not linear and unidirectional, but bidirectional and reversible" (13). This aspect remains for the most part unexplored and serves as an avenue

to engage with and meaningfully problematise her association with postmodernism. For, as Waugh says, “if theory is in some sense always conceptualisation after the event (as much as a mode of prediction), it may be interesting to return to the literary text as an ‘event’ and to see how the ‘postmodern’ has always, perhaps, inhabited the ‘modern’” (7).

THE POSTMODERN POTENTIAL OF BETRAYAL

Between Jean Brodie’s artistic inclinations, from her tastes in poetry and Italian painters to her creative lies, and the girls’ experience and experimentations with what they learn from her, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is marked by an unmistakeable impulse to regard the world artistically. The distinctions between reality and art become increasingly blurred, achieving in so many ways the title of Sandy’s psychological treatise, “The Transfiguration of the Commonplace,” because artistry transfigures quotidian and empirical reality. From Jean Brodie’s perspective, interpreting the world through an emphasis of its artistic nature is superior to any other. This approximates to a modernist manner which, in its emphasis on new ways of seeing, confronts the challenges of knowing the world and gives meaning to existence, which can be traced back to Nietzsche’s famous dictum from *The Birth of Tragedy* that “it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified” (5.32).

Sandy’s profound fascination with Jean Brodie’s “method of making patterns with facts” leads to her quickly appropriating her teacher’s artistic ways of dealing with the world (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 72). Developing from an imaginative streak she

always had, Sandy's narrative follows a succession of renewed ways of seeing and knowing. But this imaginative, creative streak has, from her earliest years, been one that overflows from what Brian McHale calls the epistemological into the ontological, or from "problems of knowing to modes of being" (11-2). If Sandy sought to embellish her reality by imagining fictional characters—Alan Breck from *Kidnapped*, among others—as her friends, it implies that she accepts reality to be distinct from imagination, since she is merely entertaining herself. This is not the case, however, because Sandy integrates these imagined characters seamlessly into her reality: she lives with them, converses with them, gets bored of them and even involves them in her interactions with the other girls of the Brodie set. Sandy's reality is not simply embellished or augmented by artistry; it is determined by it. In a way, Sandy is portrayed in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* along Steven Connor's interpretation of McHale's point about how the postmodernist ontological concerns are an "intensification of" modernist epistemological concerns:

To move from epistemology to ontology, from world-witnessing to world-making and world-navigation, is to recognise that the problems of knowing are both intensified and transformed when the very acts of seeing and understanding are themselves taken to generate new worlds or states of being. (66)

Sandy's creative world-witnessing generates for her new worlds and states of being because a plurality of realities come into being from her imaginations. It is not a matter of distinguishing these realities against the lived reality Sandy shares with the girls and Jean Brodie, nor a matter of deciding between the modernist and postmodernist, but a matter of traversing them and exploring how each one leads into the other. Since for "Spark the

artist and thinker on humanity,” Gerard Carruthers feels, “the actualities of physical location ... are not in themselves the really important things. Rather, for Spark the relationship between things, how they are configured, constitutes the realm of importance and possibility” (490-1).

On such a basis, this dissertation pushes the inquiry of Spark’s postmodernism into a perennial thematic fascination of Muriel Spark’s: betrayal. At its core, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is about Sandy’s betrayal of Jean Brodie. Ostensibly about “putting a stop to Miss Brodie,” as Sandy tells Miss Mackay, her betrayal is, in many ways, the culmination her own artistry where her knowing and seeing generate new states of being (125). What Gabriella Turnaturi says in *Betrays: The Unpredictability of Human Relations* relates betrayal more specifically with artistry and its ambiguous place between modernist and postmodernist concerns, and contextualises its meanings for this dissertation:

For the betrayer—for all betrayers, and not just spies—the world that surrounds us loses its obviousness and appears as simply one of many possible versions of reality and truth. In a certain sense, the person who betrays and is aware of his own duality—of the disconnect between what is and what appears to be—enjoys the epistemological privilege of glimpsing possible worlds and probing behind and beyond appearances. He becomes aware of realities more complex than apparent reality, which is in itself complex and multiple. The epiphany of the possible can make the game of betrayal positively voluptuous. (34)

Betrayal reshapes the real, apparent world; its obviousness dissipates and its nature as but a version among infinite variations of possible worlds becomes evident. The dual position allowed for by betrayal is an artistic seeing or reading because it enjoys that “epistemological privilege of glimpsing possible worlds” existing “between what is and what appears to be” (34). A postmodern attitude is at play here, significant not only because Turnaturi seems to be employing Brian McHale’s terms, but also that betrayal enacts what theory can only conceptualise: it dramatises the epistemological overflowing into the ontological.

Consequently, it is the position of this dissertation that betrayal transfigures reality. In the face of betrayal, reality exists as potential for transfiguration; reality is ever on the cusp of actualising into other artful possibilities. Transfiguration exceeds mere religious uplifting and elevates the meanings of betrayal as art through the reconfiguration of the relationships and presentations and representations within given realities. It is clear that even from her early years, Sandy most ably weaves in and out of these “many possible versions of reality and truth” (Turnaturi 34). Bound up in a string of artistic moves, Sandy’s betrayal of Jean Brodie is thus also a manner of transfiguration. Betrayal discovers “the hidden possibilities in all things” (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 80). Yet, reading into the transfigurative potential of betrayal is not to be lost to the merely theoretically interesting. For, as Marina Mackay points out, “what creative-fiction making and political treachery have in common in Spark’s novels is their shared scepticism about orthodoxy, their resistance to consensual and monolithic understandings of what constitutes the real” (520). Sandy’s betrayal is an artistic, and therefore epistemological, response crafted on her reading of or critical engagement with her context. In this sense, betrayal accomplishes the “arts of satire and of ridicule” Spark advocates in “The Desegregation of Art,” where a

more “deliberate cunning, a more derisive undermining of what is wrong” holds sway, where there is “more intelligence in these efforts to impress our minds and hearts” (80). Minds come decidedly before hearts, and betrayal as ridicule exudes a sardonic, satirical distance that intelligently undermines what is wrong. And precisely because there is recognition of things being wrong and motivation to dissent, betrayal as artistry carries political implications.

More broadly, it also makes evident Linda Hutcheon’s view of postmodernism as “a problematising force in our culture today: it raises questions about (or renders problematic) the common-sensical and the ‘natural,’” in turn offering only provisional and contextually determined alternatives (ix). Everything can be betrayed and should be held betrayable, since there are always provisional and contextually determined alternatives to be had with a questioning, problematising and resisting of the hegemony of one’s prevailing context. Patricia Waugh feels similarly because, to her, part of Spark’s “pedagogic intent was to show how the reading and writing of fiction might provide important lessons in how best to resist reduction and containment (“Muriel Spark and the Metaphysics of Modernity” 63). There is always more behind and beyond apparent reality and every current reality should be regarded incredulously. Betrayal also brings to bear the ironic and parodic, techniques commonly associated with postmodernism, because it paradoxically incorporates and challenges objects of its ridicule. To betray is to ridicule, and so neither Jean Brodie nor Sandy, or anyone for that matter, should be taken as the moral of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. They are at different moments the better or more attractive alternative but these are merely possibilities in exploration of rules and categories set against constantly changing contexts. A fuller apprehension of this significance comes, by Thomas F. Haddox’s measure, “more easily and is more rewarding

for those gifted enough to see its complexity without falling into a conformist moralism—which is to say, those with an aesthetic and intellectual disposition” (47). Betrayal allows one to see more clearly that reality is a matter of art: “the richer one’s imaginative capacity, the ‘truer’ one’s perceptions and beliefs should be” (54).

As such, Chapter I focuses on how Jean Brodie’s artistic vision shapes the girls, especially Sandy, from their earliest years and how her radicalism confronts Miss Mackay’s hegemony in Marcia Blaine’s School, effectively extending a modernist regard of the world into a resistance akin to postmodern incredulity. In its second section, Chapter I surveys how Jean Brodie’s artistic impulses take on disquieting proportions when she extends it to dominate and control, and her “breaking down of pseudo-traditions, the making new on a true understanding of the nature of the elements of art ... involves the creation of fiction which may be dangerous in the dispositions they breed towards the world” (Kermode 111). However, it departs from the critical consensus surrounding Jean Brodie’s alleged fascism, especially in the case of Mary Macgregor, because that very consensus developed out of an instinct for simple, coherent moralities at the expense of careful appreciation of the complexities of the novel. Chapter I lays out how Spark’s use of prolepsis complicates the narrative of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and gestures at a fundamental reevaluation of Sandy’s betrayal of Jean Brodie. There is, in the end, no final mystery resolved in the novel, no morally satisfactory conclusion, no poetic justice to be found.

Chapter II takes on Spark’s own notion that “causality is not chronology ... one thing doesn’t necessarily lead to another inevitable thing, although it does lead to something else in actual fact” (216). By more sharply scrutinising how Spark’s prolepsis in

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie generate deep ambiguities surrounding Sandy's betrayal, Chapter II posits Sandy's betrayal to be artistry in the first instance, situating it as the last in a series of moves steeped in an artistic vision and an economy of artistic method she learns from Jean Brodie. By disentangling causality from chronology, Chapter II finds a "something else in actual fact" that Sandy's betrayal means along Spark's view of the postmodern as involving "another dimension which is a bit creepy, supernatural ... not supernatural but not necessarily consequential" (216). This reveals that the political implications and postmodern potential of betrayal in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* are inflected and fulfilled by a fuller recognition of art as subject matter, effected by Spark's use of prolepsis. Spark's postmodernism manifests not only as social and political creativity but, through betrayal, foregrounds how the intertwined nature of reality and art opens up into the ontological exploration of the possible worlds.

This study of betrayal also elucidates the ways Spark stylishly distinguishes reality, addressing also what David Herman raises: "the question foregrounded by the calculus—or alchemy—that regulates such aesthetic transformations of the actual; at issue is what methods of transformation might make art a more integral part of everyday life, even as it maintains a necessary critical stance toward the sphere of the everyday" (5). On this, Frank Kermode notes: "Exquisitely formed, they give pleasure by their very existence, by the way they illuminate with their plots the plot of the world, the writer matching her own presumption of providential powers with a truth beyond them" (109). This dissertation will, in its concluding chapter, trace betrayal in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* to further implications for reading Muriel Spark's postmodernism. It applies the postmodern nuances of betrayal to two other titles, namely *Memento Mori* (1959) and *The Finishing School* (2004). These are meaningful representations of Muriel Spark's five-

decade long career of twenty-two novels: *Memento Mori* was published even earlier than *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and *The Finishing School* was the last novel she wrote. It extracts implications from the betrayals presented in these novels and explores how, as Matthew Wickman puts it, “Spark’s fiction does not function as yet another exhibit of postmodernism as much as act allegorically as a kind of metanarrative helping to explain the conundrums of a literary history which culminates in postmodernism as an unsatisfying narrative climax” (64). In any case, reading Muriel Spark’s postmodernism through betrayal promises for a transfigurative study of her oeuvre. And with A. L. Kennedy’s expressive description, this Introduction turns towards Chapter I:

The world according to Muriel Spark is a startling place, constructed with intelligence, relish and extraordinary precision. She displays its curiosities before us with a prosecutor’s skill: its subtle and more desperate energies, its failures and blooms of strange life. Its disinterested natural laws can frighten and damage, may even incinerate not particularly harmful young women ... She leads us through a savagely well-observed landscape within which no interesting thought is closed and no motivation goes unexamined, as humanity’s greeds, lusts, fears, cruelties and petty competitions tangle around us, choke each other, triumph, breed, exalt and die. (ix)

CHAPTER I

ART AND REALITY IN *THE PRIME OF MISS JEAN BRODIE*

Sandy was fascinated by this method of making patterns with facts, and was divided between her admiration for the technique and the pressing need to prove Miss Brodie guilty of misconduct.

Muriel Spark. *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*.

What are scenarios? ... They are an art-form ... based on facts. A good scenario is a garble. A bad one is a bungle. They need not be plausible, only hypnotic, like all good art.

Muriel Spark. *The Abbess of Crewe*.

So the policewoman said to me, ‘You saw something nasty?’ And I said ‘yes.’ Then she asked me what the man was like, and ...’

But this was the same story all over again. Sandy wanted new details about the policewoman, she looked for clues. Jenny had pronounced the word ‘nasty’ as ‘nesty,’ which was unusual for Jenny.

‘Did she say “nasty” or “nesty”?’ said Sandy on this fourth telling.

‘Nesty.’

This gave rise to an extremely nasty feeling in Sandy and it put her off the idea of sex for months. All the more as she disapproved of the pronunciation of the word, it made her flesh creep, and she plagued Jenny to change her mind and agree that the policewoman had pronounced it properly.

‘A lot of people say nesty,’ said Jenny.

‘I know, but I don’t like them. They’re neither one thing nor another.’

It bothered Sandy a great deal, and she had to invent a new speaking-image for the policewoman.

Another thing that troubled her was that Jenny did not know the policewoman’s name, or even whether she was addressed as ‘constable,’ or merely ‘miss.’ Sandy decided to call her Sergeant Anne Grey. Sandy was Anne Grey’s right-hand woman in the Force, and they were dedicated to eliminate sex from Edinburgh and environs. (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 68)

That which is ‘nasty’ in Jenny’s recount of her conversation with the policewoman was her encounter with a “man joyfully exposing himself beside the Water of Leith” (66). While the episode is a minor one, its import consists in Sandy’s insistence on how ‘nasty’ is—should be—pronounced, which illuminates how Spark’s fiction is tied to impulses to artistically modulate lived reality, impulses that undergird *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. The fourth time Sandy hears “the same story all over again” does not stop her from

wanting “new details” (68). When this new detail, ‘nasty’ pronounced ‘nesty,’ emerges as one that Sandy disapproves, she coerces Jenny into changing her mind and to agree “that the policewoman had pronounced it properly” (68). Proper is a matter of creatively revised memory. Sandy proceeds to “invent a new speaking image for the policewoman” and, furnishing her with name and appropriate address, incorporates Sergeant Anne Grey into her reality. Sandy herself becomes quite matter-of-factly Anne Grey’s “right-hand woman in the Force” (68). Within one page, this relationship blossoms and “Sergeant Anne pressed Sandy’s hand in gratitude; and they looked into each other’s eyes, their mutual understanding too deep for words” (69). Sergeant Anne Grey is but one of a string of Sandy’s imaginary friends. She has had conversations with Alan Breck from *Kidnapped* just so “it was not necessary to talk to Mary” (28), and taken up with “Mr Rochester, with whom she ... sat in the garden” (58). Sandy was also “a married lady having an argument with her husband” and (30-1), as Anna Pavlova proclaims her, “the only truly dedicated dancer” and “an artist who will carry on the torch” (63). There are no distinctions between art and reality. Reality is imagination.

Named and unnamed characters sprout up from Sandy’s fantasies to embellish her schoolgirl reality: this is postmodern practice. To call a set of apparently innocuous childish imaginations a postmodern practice is not to overstate its significance to *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* or Muriel Spark’s oeuvre. For it highlights how reality is but a version, a narrative, among others and no one is more valid than others. Yet it is only as a phrase, like the preceding sentence, that such a conceptualisation of reality is coherent. Sandy’s fantasies here bespeak her own artistic proclivities, which are nurtured if not inspired by Jean Brodie’s artistic methods. Sandy’s infliction on Jenny, having “plagued Jenny to change her mind and agree that the policewoman had pronounced” ‘nasty’

correctly, is a lesson learnt from Jean Brodie (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 68). Jean Brodie's methods are profoundly enchanting and these enchantments the girls never outgrow, but her artistic impulses are as reckless and menacing as they are dazzling. As such, Chapter I examines Spark's interrogation of the complex relationship between art and reality, paying close attention to how Jean Brodie's artistic impulses can be read as postmodern resistance of totalising institutional hegemony, though they give rise to unsavoury ramifications in the form of domination and control.

Catalysed by the growing nastiness that follows Jean Brodie's artistry, Sandy's evolving regard for Jean Brodie culminates in her betrayal of her teacher. For she grows to realise what Marina Mackay puts succinctly: "creativity means casualties" (513). This manifests itself in her almost fanatical control and manipulation of her girls, in the systematic bullying of Mary Macgregor and in indirectly causing Joyce Emily Hammond's death after having encouraged the ten-year-old girl to join the Fascisti in Spain. This last inconvenience eventually causes Jean Brodie's early retirement. Although Sandy declares this the basis for betraying Jean Brodie, "putting a stop to Miss Brodie" as she says to Miss Mackay, the deeply suggestive ambiguities surrounding her motivations and presumed punishment for this betrayal warrant deliberate reconsideration (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 125). This chapter emphasises how *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is crafted around Sandy's observations of the subtleties of Jean Brodie's artistry and reevaluates, in contradistinction to critical consensus, the purported dangers of Jean Brodie's artistry which led to Sandy's betrayal. Sandy's betrayal is not an uncomplicated rejection of Jean Brodie because when she looks back twenty-five years later, she recognised that "Miss Brodie's defective sense of self-criticism was not without its enlarging and beneficent effects," though "by which time she had already betrayed Miss

Brodie and Miss Brodie was laid in her grave” (86). By tracing this, Chapter I lays the groundwork for a comprehensive rethinking of the meanings of betrayal to the core of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. It charts how Jean Brodie’s artistry corresponds to a broadly modernist stance of finding new ways to view the world though it “involves the creation of fiction which may be dangerous in the dispositions they breed towards the world” (Kermode 111). It foregrounds Spark’s use of prolepsis and the complexion it casts on the narrative as whole because form, in this case, modulates content meaningfully, if not unexpectedly. Though only sometimes referred to as “a postmodern narrative strategy,” as David Lodge asserts but does not substantiate further than it “calling attention to the artificial construction of the text” in his reading of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* in his *The Art of Fiction*, Spark wields prolepsis to postmodern effect (77). This will be taken up fully in Chapter II. For the conclusion to the novel is not simple, straightforward closure but significant recapitulations of sometimes contradictory poetic resonances and nuances that attend the very last line: “Sandy said: ‘There was a Miss Jean Brodie in her prime’” (128).

‘A TRIFLE OUT OF PLACE’: THE ARTISTIC VISION OF MISS JEAN BRODIE

Jean Brodie’s hearty admiration for fascist dictators like Mussolini and Franco conveys a severely skewed perspective on world affairs of the day. Her remark to Sandy after having “returned from Germany and Austria which were now magnificently organised” is as disturbing as it appears flirty: “Hitler *was* rather naughty” (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 122). This may seem trifling to modern readers but that remark, slipped into a novel

published in 1961, inhabits a proximity to the Second World War and the post-war discoveries of Holocaust atrocities that would have made it shocking, rather than only slightly bizarre. In light of this historical context, Jean Brodie's prowess in gathering information and manipulation, elitism and regulation of cultural tastes, and displays of bravura are tellingly troublesome. It is for this reason that *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is often read as a detailed account of the faults of Miss Jean Brodie. In spite of that, Jean Brodie is only a trifle out of place. For

It is not to be supposed that Miss Brodie was unique at this point of her prime; or that (such things are relative) she was in any way off her head. She was alone, merely, in that she taught in a school like Marcia Blaine's. There were legions of her kind during the nineteen-thirties, women from the age of thirty and upward, who crowded their war-bereaved spinsterhood with voyages of discovery into new ideas and energetic practices of social welfare, education or religion. The progressive spinsters of Edinburgh did not teach in schools, especially in schools of traditional character like Marcia Blaine's School for Girls. (42)

That she is "a trifle out of place" comes down to how the "traditional character" of Marcia Blaine's contrasts too sharply with her progressive ideas (42). These descriptions are slightly justificatory and condoning of the fascist association, but they present a qualification of Jean Brodie's fascism that some interpretations neglect. Neither Jean Brodie nor the fascists were an insane minority; they were mainstream, insane or not. She belongs to a faction of society born from the socio-political matrices of a "war-bereaved spinsterhood," and beyond the "legions of her kind in the nineteen-thirties" in Edinburgh

were legions more all across Europe, armed and belligerent (42). And while it was ostensibly for Jean Brodie's fascist tendencies that Sandy betrays her, costing her her teaching career, those meanings are neither monolithic nor single. They cannot simply be judged pernicious on account of Jean Brodie's questionable manoeuvres which approximate fascism, because what kind of fascist she is—if indeed she should count as one—and the impact of her particular fascism must be individually contextualised and substantiated. After all, as Sandy knew albeit sometimes “with a shock,” “there were other people's Edinburghs quite different from hers, and with which she held only the names of districts and streets and monuments in common. Similarly, there were other people's nineteen-thirties” (33). The connections between Jean Brodie and the horrors of fascism are perhaps indubitable because they are typical of many readings but their meanings are not therefore the same. David Lodge's tactful description in “The Uses and Abuses of Omniscience” provides a useful basis for a detailed study of the aesthetic vision of Miss Jean Brodie: “Miss Brodie is a Romantic by taste and temperament, and exemplifies the defects of the uncontrolled romantic sensibility” (164).

Enunciated throughout the novel in aphorisms, Jean Brodie's artistic tastes and temperament are manifest. She informs the girls in no uncertain terms that “Art is greater than science. Art comes first, and then science ... Art and religion first; then philosophy; lastly science. That is the order of the great subjects of life, that's their order of importance” (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 25). The girls learn this lesson well. It is for this reason that Sandy and Jenny become fascinated with the science room in the Senior School, taking it in turns to spill ink on themselves so as to sneak a visit on the pretext of getting their blouses cleaned. It thrills Sandy to be “surrounded by three lanes of long benches set out with jars half-full of coloured crystals and powders and liquids, ochre and

bronze and metal grey and cobalt blue, glass vessels of curious shapes, bulbous, or with pipe-like stems” (24). This is, through Sandy’s eyes, what Jean Brodie means by art coming before science, though it is more of viewing a scientific set-up artistically than proving the superiority of art over science. Emphasis is placed on the sensual aspects of what is categorically perceived, on the colours and textures and contours, and not merely the empirical properties of the material, which by their strangeness and unfamiliarity become more sensual. The artistic vision, or imagination, is engaged.

Exploring the workings of the artistic vision in *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*, Owen Barfield decides that imagination “is recognisable as aesthetic, when it produces pleasure merely by its proper activity” (41). Barfield’s interest lies in the way literary language functions and how poetic diction arouses an artistic reaction through the reading process, where “appreciation of poetry involves a ‘felt change of consciousness’” (52). This applies to Sandy’s fascination with the science room and the colourful possibilities it represents. Such a creation transmits to readers through the text the exciting allure—that felt change of consciousness—Sandy feels emanating from the science room. And “‘creation,’ as an aesthetic term,” is to Barfield “not some fantastic ‘creation out of nothing,’ but the bringing farther into consciousness of something which already exists as unconscious life” (112). It is, in other words, to put an artistic focus on things. This artistic vision, or way of seeing, that the girls inherit from Jean Brodie stays with them for life. For the “commonplace has been transfigured: Sandy’s life, like the reader’s, has been enriched by the charismatic personality of Jean Brodie, who, for all her faults, has poetic panache” (Bold 71).

Later, when the girls graduate into Senior School, their experiences with the new curriculum approximates Sandy's fascination with the science room: "Their days were now filled with unfamiliar shapes and sounds which were magically dissociated from ordinary life, the great circles and triangles of geometry, the hieroglyphics of Greek on the page and the curious hisses and spits some of the Greek sounds made from the teacher's lips—'psst ... pssooch'" (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 75-6). Again, the sensual bursts forth from their new subjects: the shapes, the sounds. Although the girls were "on the whole still dazzled by their new subjects" in the early days, the thrills do not last forever. It becomes slowly effaced by the empirical, utilitarian value attached to these subjects. Their experiences were "never the same in later years when the languages of physics and chemistry, algebra and geometry had lost their elemental strangeness and formed each an individual department of life with its own accustomed boredom, and become hard work" (82). A yawning sense of loss hangs over these lines for the "elemental strangeness" and moments of wonder at new subjects and new things; the lively rhythm of the phrase "physics and chemistry, algebra and geometry" accentuates this loss following the "accustomed boredom" of feelings waning into discrete departments in life (82). Quotidian reality is desolate and only artistic activity can resist that. Jean Brodie is right: "Art is greater than science. Art comes first, and then science ... Art and religion first; then philosophy; lastly science. That is the order of the great subjects of life, that's their order of importance" (25).

To regard the world from such an angle is clearly attractive, making for robust resistance against the unquestioning and certainly unimaginative instinct to cling on to established modes of meaning. Or, in the case of Jean Brodie's teaching, established methods of Marcia Blaine's. For the girls that formed Brodie set are "immediately

recognisable as Miss Brodie's pupils" precisely because they were "vastly informed on a lot of subjects irrelevant to the authorised curriculum, as the headmistress said, and useless to the school as a school" (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 5). Jean Brodie sets herself and her girls against phrases like "the school as a school," whose circular, inane logic indicates the accustomed boredom of long use and mindless repetition, significant only of forgotten meaning. She achieves what Frank Kermode calls "the modernist radicalism in art" by "breaking down of pseudo-traditions, the making new on a true understanding of the nature of the elements of art" (110-1). Though in many ways admirable, a troubling undercurrent drives this artistic spirit: its easy charms begin with easy lies. A closer look at a lesson with Jean Brodie reveals the potential dangers of her artistic vision.

As Jean Brodie begins her lesson under the elm tree on "one of the last autumn days," she informs the girls thus: "If anyone comes along ... in the course of the following lesson, remember that it is the hour for English grammar. Meantime I will tell you a little of my life when I was younger than I am now, though six years older than the man himself" (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 12). That it is the "hour for English grammar" has nothing to do with the course of "the following lesson" she intends to teach (12). Jean Brodie is not obliged to sanctioned timetables and plans; those apply only to other people. Her story of her lost love is as poetic as it is touching: "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness ... He fell like an autumn leaf" (12). Miss Mackay intrudes upon this class at the height of the romance when some of the girls were in tears and, responding to her queries, Jean Brodie explains: "They are moved by a story I have been telling them. We are having a history lesson" (13). By any account, her explanation is not untrue, since it is indeed a history lesson in Jean Brodie's love life. This is never made clear, but it is unlikely that Jean Brodie's calling it a history lesson was a mistake, having forgotten her

own announcement just moments before that it is the hour for “English grammar” (12). Two interpretations are possible: firstly, Jean Brodie’s answer to Miss Mackay is an outright lie and so any answer would suffice, the specifics of which are immaterial; secondly, and more intriguingly, Jean Brodie’s calling it a “history lesson” was a conscious choice that flaunts her creative manipulation of ambiguities, deftly counterpoising Miss Mackay’s expectation for objective truth with her own fiction-laced version (13).

The relationship between truth and lies is, especially when considered through the nebulous place of creativity, a vexed one. From an aestheticist viewpoint, like Jean Brodie’s, this is no matter for concern. As Oscar Wilde puts forward in “The Decay of Lying”: “It is style that makes us believe in a thing—nothing but style” (14). Jean Brodie’s story of her felled fiancé, astutely embellished by autumnal images, is so stylish and so believable that the girls’ emotions are stirred. The effect of her intuitive response to Miss Mackay is similarly, if not more stylishly, believable: “‘We are having a history lesson,’ said Miss Brodie, catching a falling leaf neatly in her hand as she spoke” (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 13). Jean Brodie works every element of this lesson—planned and incidental—into an overall narrative inspired by the leaves of late autumn falling all around them. To be in her presence is to be dazzled by an unremitting virtuosity of style. This accords with Wilde’s view that “Art creates an incomparable and unique effect, and, having done so, passes on to other things” (38). What the girls see and hear at Miss Brodie’s knee they internalise and what they learn feeds into their own artistic leanings. Sandy’s excursions into the science room and the girls’ unique though impermanent appreciation for their new subjects at Senior School are the fruits of such artistic perceptions honed at an early age: the girls were ten years old at this lesson under the elm tree.

What Marina Mackay points out holds true: “Miss Brodie turns her girls into artists by showing them that the world in which they live is intractably multiple and endlessly rewritable” and “what the treacherous Sandy learns from the treacherous Miss Brodie is that it is possible to reshape the world according to her own needs and desires” (513). To regard the reality and truth of any situation as endlessly rewritable is to take a postmodern turn, specifically one that is inextricable from a modernist inclination to make new on understanding elements of art more truly. Or, to take Patricia Waugh’s explanation in *Practising Postmodernism/Reading Modernism*, what is “valid in one context or ‘just’ or ‘true’ may not be so in another: the universal gives way to the local, to a recognition of situatedness or of a radically fictional sense of truth” (33). But this recognition is not an end in itself. For “as a strategy for dismantling oppressive hegemonies, such narrative perspectivism is highly effective” (53). Jean Brodie’s interactions with Miss Mackay proves this. Miss Mackay, headmistress of Marcia Blaine’s and bastion of institutional principles and received wisdoms, dogmatically insists on cultural banalities like “the school as a school” (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 5). Jean Brodie tells her class as they looked at “a large poster pinned with drawing-pins on the opposite wall within the room,” with a man’s face and the words ‘Safety First’ emblazoned underneath, “Miss Mackay retains him on the wall because she believes in the slogan ‘Safety First.’ But Safety does not come first. Goodness, Truth and Beauty come first. Follow me” (10). Even if they are not necessarily party to her dismantling of Miss Mackay’s hegemony, Jean Brodie’s rejoinders to school’s stifling norms captivate the girls deeply. It is also not surprising that Jean Brodie despises Miss Mackay and her regime of binding the school to such unmoving meaninglessness: that safety message is framed in a static poster statically pinned to the wall.

Yet Jean Brodie remains at Marcia Blaine's, refusing the repeated suggestions that she "apply for one of the progressive schools" where her methods would be better fitted: "I shall not apply for a post at a crank school. I shall remain at this education factory. There needs must be a leaven in the lump" (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 9). Jean Brodie's presence at Marcia Blaine's continually interrogates the notion of consensus represented by Miss Mackay's slogans and, since postmodernism according to Waugh "pursues the possibility of seeing the aesthetic as an impulse which can disrupt from within," she creatively and pointedly leavens the lump (*Practising Postmodernism/Reading Modernism* 74). If Jean Brodie's narrative perspectivism is understood as postmodern, then it is also bound up in some of the contradictions that characterise postmodernism as a cultural epoch. To Linda Hutcheon, "the 'Post-Position' signals its contradictory dependence on and independence from that which temporally preceded it and which literally made it possible" (17). Jean Brodie's declaration underlines this contradiction: she regards her methods as superior to Marcia Blaine's but she regards as a crank school one where her methods are mainstream; she disdains Marcia Blaine's as an education factory but disregards her dependence on it for providing the contrast against which she emerges superior. Clearly, the reverse also applies: the leaven needs must have a lump. Jean Brodie's disposition represents, like Hutcheon's reading of postmodernism as "a fundamentally contradictory enterprise" (23), "a reevaluation of and a dialogue with the past in light of the present" (18). Jean Brodie's creativity exposes the stale institutional principles—and principal—of Marcia Blaine's, and her subversive thrust lies in her parody of received wisdom.

Jean Brodie counters "the slogan 'Safety First'" with her own: "Safety does not come first. Goodness, Truth and Beauty come first" (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 10).

In retaining the declarative style of the facile sayings to which she offers alternatives, Jean Brodie posits her versions as more meaningful: she joins her rhetorical force with an implied superiority in revising sayings universally accepted as wise. Moreover, Jean Brodie's aphorisms are imaginatively interwoven with an array of poetic references, conveying her spontaneous artistry as with the falling autumn leaves under the elm tree. In one single flourish in a slightly earlier class, Jean Brodie makes Sandy read from Lord Tennyson's "The Lady of Shallott"² and concludes her lesson with a verse from the Proverbs in the Bible: "'Where there is no vision,' Miss Brodie had assured them, 'the people perish'" (7). This bolsters her own authority with the weight of those poetic resonances she respects and, sometimes, cites without reference, as in the Proverbs verse and John Keats's "To Autumn" whence "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" originates (12). Coloured by a profoundly artistic vision, Jean Brodie transfigures the everyday into consummate performances. Moreover, her overall effect on the girls is furthered by their realisation "of an odds between Miss Brodie and the rest of the teaching staff. Indeed, to some of them, it was the first time they had realised it was possible for people glued together in grown-up authority to differ at all" (10). By Jean Brodie's design and by happy coincidence, the girls' being around their teacher gives them not only the sheer joy of watching their realities quickly gaining artful complexity, but also intimations that their world is intractably multiple and endlessly rewritable.

Jean Brodie's lessons can be read as lessons in renewing their regard for the world and are useful not just for the artistic pleasures, as in the many instances raised above. Her lessons are useful also because the girls grow to understand that everything is endlessly

² "She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot." (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 7)

rewritable not just in a frivolous sense, but that everything is better with questioning and scrutiny. As Peter Robert Brown asserts, “we can say that the ultimate satiric targets of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* are human institutions,” which Jean Brodie has, so far, very effectively disassembled (246). It is useful to reiterate, however, that this dissertation is concerned with reading Muriel Spark’s postmodernism which, in this instance, manifests in her characterisation of Jean Brodie seemingly parodying received knowledge. It does not argue for Jean Brodie bringing to bear conscious, postmodern choices in her behaviour because what is read as parody here is not Jean Brodie’s aim. Her efforts come closer to a modernist radicalism in art though in her parody she levels incredulity at institutional systems. She does not realise that her subversive edge hinge on parody. For this lack of awareness signals at Jean Brodie’s desire to dominate and control, a desire that distends her aesthetic vision into a dangerous recklessness and, harking back to David Lodge’s description cited at the start of this section, “exemplifies the defects of the uncontrolled romantic sensibility” (164).

DOMINATION AND CONTROL: THE DANGERS OF AN UNCONTROLLED ARTISTRY

Jean Brodie regards the status quo incredulously; her artistic impulses thrive on contingent meanings and are aimed at reappraising given realities; her being oppositional paradoxically depends on that which she opposes. All these produce a postmodern effect. If in its “evaluations of the aesthetic as a shaping power in the world” postmodernism might be viewed in Waugh’s characterisation “as the culmination of a way of seeing with its roots in Romanticism ... it may be seen to carry beneficial insights as well as dangerous

tendencies” (*Practising Postmodernism/Reading Modernism* 73). Jean Brodie’s artistic vision, which passes onto the girls, are as beneficial as they are insightful but this section shifts into a closer examination of the easy dangers following from that.

Though steeped in a modernist sensibility, Jean Brodie’s presence in Marcia Blaine’s enacts time and again Linda Hutcheon’s explication of postmodernism: “Provisionality and heterogeneity contaminate any neat attempts at unifying coherence,” and so “there are no natural hierarchies; there are only those we construct” (12-3). As such, “postmodernist critique must acknowledge its own position as an ideological one” by calling attention “to what is being contested and what is being offered as a critical response to that, and to do so in a self-aware way that admits its own provisionality” (13). Curiously, Linda Hutcheon’s study of postmodernism implies but never makes explicit one very major point, and even the lines cited here carry that implication: as a mood or an attitude, postmodernism precipitates processes of self-conscious questioning that cannot end. Or, to put it differently, postmodernism’s coming to the fore foregrounds how little narratives, as opposed to metanarratives, should be regarded as valid, but it does not therefore mean that all narratives big and small are automatically valid. They are only valid within a larger context of a “kind of self-implicating questioning that should allow postmodern theorising to challenge narratives that do presume to ‘master’ status, without necessarily assuming that status for itself” (13). To misconceive this as a search for discrete alternatives whose discovery brings to completion the endeavour—to have found answers to the questions—is to miss its import: it merely swaps out old metanarratives for new ones; it continues to perpetuate the violence inherent in metanarratives, old or new.

It is on this that Jean Brodie falters. For instead of a self-implicating questioning, Jean Brodie arrogates herself to the very position she challenges prior. Having shown how existing systems of meaning have no authority, she provides specific alternatives to what she subverts and hers is the last word: “Safety does not come first. Goodness, Truth and Beauty come first. Follow me” (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 10). The injunction to “Follow me” at the end of reimagining that trite saying gestures beyond its immediate instruction to the girls to follow her out of the empty classroom (10). It suggests that Jean Brodie sees herself as dispensing transcendent timeless meaning that is to be followed. In their singular, capitalised form, Jean Brodie’s “Goodness, Truth and Beauty” signal at metanarratives. She demonstrates this reasoning again on the facing page:

‘Who is the greatest Italian painter?’

‘Leonardo da Vinci, Miss Brodie.’

‘That is incorrect. The answer is Giotto, he is my favourite.’ (11)

Jean Brodie elevates her subjective preference as a standard of truth against which other things must be judged correct and incorrect. Though artistically refined, how Jean Brodie handles Miss Mackay’s intrusion into their class under the elm tree also betrays her desire to dominate and control.

As Miss Mackay leaves the class under the elm tree, Jean Brodie tells the girls: “It is well, when in difficulties, to say never a word, neither black nor white. Speech is silver but silence is golden” (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 13). Wise words, as ever. But Miss Brodie does not practice what she teaches. Her advice stands diametrically opposed to how she actually deals with Miss Mackay’s intrusion since difficulties are demonstrably overcome by words that are, if in effect only, starkly black and white; by speech, not

silence. Jean Brodie means her advice to apply only to other people, according to an unambiguous hierarchy from which she discharges authority. It is ironic that what was potent resistance to the unquestioning acceptance of existing structures of meaning reconfigures itself into a new but essentially identical structure of meaning requiring unquestioning acceptance. And this is ironic not in the intentional, postmodern sense: Jean Brodie is blind to the ironies of her own behaviour. Thus she led her girls, and “it had been well known that the Brodie set had no team spirit and did not care which house won the shield. They were not allowed to care. Their disregard had now become an institution, to be respected like the house system itself” (111-2). Jean Brodie represents the failure of postmodern impulses, if one inclines to judge in terms of failures and successes. Her subversive edge fizzles out into petty vendettas she holds against Miss Mackay and the house system and the school, and she institutes herself as the new absolute standard.

Besides, Jean Brodie’s desire for domination and control accentuates the already discomfiting fascist associations. In her essay, “The Familiar Attractions of Fascism in Muriel Spark’s ‘The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie,’” Judy Suh determines that “one of fascism’s violations was its attempt to usurp human unpredictability in the quest to narrate beginnings and ends” (100-1). While Jean Brodie appears to restore an element of unpredictability by dismantling the stuffy principles that seek to bind her, she ultimately enforces merely different principles. She extends this into her attempts to prescribe the course of the girls’ lives, though these attempts never amounted to much. For no clairvoyance or premeditation has any real effect on the ineluctable unpredictabilities of human lives and choices. Sandy reflects: “She thinks she is Providence ... she thinks she is the God of Calvin, she sees the beginning and the end” (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*

120). It suffices to say, here, that Sandy implies that Jean Brodie is not. And does not. But this remark rings with striking significance when this study transitions into a reconsideration of Sandy's betrayal of Jean Brodie in the next chapter.

So Monica Douglas, "famous mostly for mathematics" was (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 6), as the novel informs readers towards the end, "destined for science" (118); Eunice Gardiner, "small, neat, and famous for her spritely gymnastics and glamorous swimming" (6), was "to do modern languages, although she changed her mind a year later and became a nurse" (118); Sandy Stranger, "merely notorious for her small, almost non-existent eyes ... was famous for her vowel sounds which, long ago in the long past, in the Junior school, had enraptured Miss Brodie" (7). Eventually, when Jean Brodie learns a few weeks before she died "that Sandy had gone to a convent, she said: 'What a waste. That is not the sort of dedication I meant. Do you think she has done this to annoy me?'" (63). The circumstantial evidence influencing Jean Brodie's choices for what the girls are—should be—famous for do not mask the reality that it is her executive decision. But unpredictability persists regardless of Jean Brodie's intentions or the affront she feels at Sandy's choices. Although eventually immaterial and largely innocuous, Jean Brodie's predictions and numerous manoeuvres to dictate the beginnings and ends of the girls' lives take on a frightening aspect with Mary Macgregor and Joyce Emily Hammond.

Like the other girls, Mary Macgregor is introduced for something she was famous for: "the last member of the set, whose fame rested on her being a silent lump, a nobody whom everybody could blame" (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 8). Like the other girls, her future is also narrated near the end of the novel: "Mary had gone on to be a shorthand typist" (118). Across *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, the narration gives way to prolepsis as

with the instances where the girls' futures are revealed. David Lodge decides in his essay "The Uses and Abuses of Omniscience" that Muriel Spark employs to great effect "a technique that can only be described as the 'flash-forward'": "We are not, as readers, situated in the adult lives of the Brodie set, looking back with mixed emotions on their schooldays; rather we are situated with them *in* their schooldays, but able to look forward occasionally, as they cannot, at what is to happen to them later" (157).

A long way before Eunice Gardiner's becoming a nurse is narrated in the section cited above, it is made clear that "twenty-eight years after Eunice did the splits in Miss Brodie's flat" Eunice "had become a nurse and married a doctor" (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 26). Within the chapter, it is also made clear that Sandy was "in her middle age, when she was at last allowed all those visitors to the convent" (33). The details here directly corroborate Eunice's becoming a nurse and Sandy's entering the convent. Mary ends differently, however, and her life is narrated differently. It is not glimpses of her shorthand typist future readers see through the prolepsis. In fact, the first of these proleptic moments in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* concerns Mary, the "ever-blamed Mary" (30), who "lived into her twenty-fourth year" (15).

She had relapsed into her habitual slow bewilderment, before she died while on leave in Cumberland in a fire in the hotel. 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. She heard no screams, for the roar of the fire drowned her screams; she gave no scream, for the smoke was choking her. She ran into somebody on her third turn, stumbled and died. (15)

A fitting death, no doubt, for the girl famous for being a stupid, silent lump.

The extent to which the narration of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* intermingles with Jean Brodie's biases will never be known, nor the veracity of Mary's alleged stupidity and silence and lumpiness, but all these make plain, to Peter Robert Brown, the dangers of "Miss Brodie's attempts to write 'master narratives' in which the girls' lives are subsumed into Miss Brodie's own story, the story of her prime" (238-9). The dangers, in short, of an uncontrolled artistry. He sees it thus:

That Mary is the scapegoat of the Brodie set is a critical commonplace, and Miss Brodie's treatment of her is frequently interpreted as underscoring Miss Brodie's Fascist and Nazi sympathies. Some critics argue that Mary's death by fire parallels the killing and cremation of Jews in the Holocaust. Although Miss Brodie does not actually kill Mary, such interpretations are, I think, sound. But Mary becomes a scapegoat in part because she is labelled stupid, and we should recall that among the Nazi's first victims were those deemed 'congenitally feeble-minded.' (240)

What Brown highlights as a critical commonplace here appears viable when read parallel to the description of Mary's running hither and thither and stumbling and dying in the fire after having "relapsed into her habitual slow bewilderment" (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 15). But it would be remiss of a dissertation with an express interest in postmodernism to not scrutinise the critical consensus surrounding Mary. Though titled "There's Something about Mary': Narrative and Ethics in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*," Brown does not substantiate his interpretation of ethical behaviour through a sustained appreciation of Spark's narrative strategies. For instance, the early revelation of

Mary's death could have reinforced his point about how "Miss Brodie and the others fail: in treating Mary as a function, a mere place-holder, they attempt to subject her to their wills and refuse to see her as an end in herself," precisely because Mary's part in the narrative similarly becomes a function through which her death is accomplished (243). Accentuating and abetting Jean Brodie's fascist treatment of Mary, the narration explicitly spells out her beginning and her end in a manner akin to Judy Suh's identification of fascism's violations. A sense of doom looms over that sentence about Mary going on to be a shorthand typist near the end of the novel: it gestures at a future—though also previous—fact that she dies in a hotel fire in Cumberland, aged twenty-four.

A more nuanced reading of the narrative aspects of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* would have lent further cogency to his analysis of ethics in the case of Mary, but Brown's neglect spotlights a more fundamental bias in his take on what passes for ethical treatment of or views on people. This is a specious argument. Brown's reading of Mary as an indictment on Jean Brodie's reckless aestheticising, which approximates Holocaust proportions, leads him to his overall claim: "Spark, like other moral and ethical writers, desires to illuminate our lives by insisting that we respect persons as ends in themselves; to alter Spark's words slightly, she demands that we recognise the hidden possibilities in people" (247). That the horrors of the Holocaust involved cremation and scapegoating and labelling people 'stupid' do not therefore mean that every representation of these subject matters is a Holocaust-related statement. Nor is Spark to be so easily classified as a moral and ethical writer who would—imagining this is singularly difficult—seek recourse to such clichés as "insisting that we respect persons as ends in themselves" and demanding that "we recognise the hidden possibilities in people" (247). In fact, the hidden possibilities Brown appropriates for his purposes abuses its original context which, as it

happens, originates in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. In another proleptic sequence, readers learn that Jenny

did not again experience her early sense of erotic wonder in life until suddenly one day when she was nearly forty, an actress of moderate reputation married to a theatrical manager. It happened that she was standing with a man whom she did not know very well outside a famous building in Rome, waiting for the rain to stop. She was surprised by a reawakening of that same buoyant and airy discovery of sex, a total sensation which it was impossible to say was physical or mental, only that it contained the lost and guileless delight of her eleventh year. She supposed herself to have fallen in love with the man, who might, she thought, have been moved towards her in his own way out of a world of his own, the associations of which were largely unknown to her. There was nothing whatever to be done about it, for Jenny had been contentedly married for sixteen years past; but the concise happening filled her with astonishment whenever it came to mind in later days, and with a sense of the hidden possibilities in all things. (80-1)

The description is lengthy but Jenny's feelings are concise. Her chance meeting with this man, unnamed and faceless and never mentioned again, reawakens that "total sensation which it was impossible to say was physical or mental, only that it contained the lost and guileless delight of her eleventh year" (80-1). In other words, this sensation comes of confronting the mundane and quotidian from an unfamiliar aspect, something that the girls seemed to have grown out of in the Senior School. Jenny's encounter with that man

in the rain revives, if only in tiny part, the artistic vision she gleaned from Jean Brodie in an earlier time that liberates the “hidden possibilities in all things” (81). A vision through which chemistry cascades into colours and Greek is a matter of voluptuous sounds; the very same vision deemed pernicious when Jean Brodie extends it to dominate and control. Much as it is Sandy who most comprehensively acquires Jean Brodie’s artistic impulses, complete even with coercive edge when she insists on how ‘nasty’ should be pronounced, Jenny, too, is indelibly shaped by Jean Brodie. Only Jenny is less conscious of this, having succumbed to the accustomed boredom that growing up entails.

Given all this, then, to pin down a single meaning by extrapolating from the “hidden possibilities in all things” is to grossly misunderstand its connotations (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 81). Even if it is for a noble morality that Brown argues, like respecting people as people. But, really, it is an unfortunate turn of phrase that rehashes Miss Mackay’s strong but very vague feelings about Jean Brodie’s not contributing to the “school as a school” (5). Strength of feeling is no substitute for clarity of thought and expression. And as much as he intends to condemn Jean Brodie’s treatment of Mary through a reading of her fascist rhetoric, Brown’s argumentation is fundamentally similar to Jean Brodie’s, which is to explain complexities such that one answer remains on the basis of what one believes to hold value, whether that be moral or aesthetic. In any case, Spark is not a moral and ethical writer of Brown’s fancy. She describes her love for her characters thus: “I love them intensely, like a cat loves a bird. You know cats do love birds; they love to fondle them” (qtd. in Hodgkins 534). Elsewhere Parul Sehgal says, “This is Spark’s particular genius: the cruelty mixed with camp, the lightness of touch, the flick of the wrist that lands the touch” (2). This is hardly stuff of a saccharine moralism, not to say anything of the sardonic glee in Spark’s own feline analogy.

Other interpretations take a kindlier view of Jean Brodie than Peter Robert Brown. Gerard Carruthers, for one, finds that Jean Brodie “is not gratuitously wilful, but fighting to mark out a space in which she can exist,” since she belongs to that “‘war-bereaved spinsterhood,’ so that the catastrophic loss of manpower (literally, but also in terms of authority) allows them, it is implied, a fairly sudden partial liberation” (498). He reiterates: “What we have, then, is Brodie occupying a fragile space where fiction is her safeguard against forces that would not easily concede to Brodie her chosen career or her love life” (499). Carruthers makes a valid point as he addresses Jean Brodie’s artistic vision while acknowledging the socio-economic realities of Edinburgh in the 1930s and Miss Mackay’s stifling grip on the school. Without writing them off as inconsequential, Jean Brodie’s fascist associations can be read less emotively as representing how a liberatory and revolutionary spirit can give rise to monstrosity when its momentum is unchecked and the implementation of ideals unbridled, not unlike historical fascist regimes of the twentieth-century. It is not for nothing that Spark advocates “a less impulsive generosity, a less indignant representation of social injustice, and a more deliberate cunning, a more derisive undermining of what is wrong.” Mary’s relationship with Jean Brodie demands interpretation that turns on “less emotion and more intelligence” (“The Desegregation of Art” 80).

While this seems tangential in a discussion about Mary, it constructs a different framework for assessing Jean Brodie’s apparent fascism. It is noteworthy that the efforts to defend the oppressed Mary depend on overidentifying with specific imagery—death by fire, most prominently—and overlooking other details which signal at complexity. Critics who intercede for Mary Macgregor on account of her being snubbed and fascistly mistreated by Jean Brodie repeat those very manoeuvres by ignoring Mary’s feelings and

the descriptions of Mary's feelings to establish her as victim. They are, like Jean Brodie, blind to their own ironies. The proleptic passage detailing Mary's death in the hotel fire reveals also that on "one occasion of real misery," after having been deserted by her first and last boyfriend, "she thought back to see if she had ever really been happy in her life; it occurred to her then that the first years with Miss Brodie, sitting listening to all those stories and opinions which had nothing to do with the ordinary world, had been the happiest time of her life" (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 15). After furnishing the details of Mary's death, running this way and that in the fire, the narration draws back to the narrative present: "But at the beginning of the nineteen-thirties, when Mary Macgregor was ten, there she was sitting blankly among Miss Brodie's pupils" (15).

'Who was spilled ink on the floor—was it you, Mary?'

'I don't know, Miss Brodie.'

'I dare say it was you. I've never come across such a clumsy girl. And if you can't take an interest in what I am saying, please try to look as if you do.'

These were the days that Mary Macgregor, on looking back, found to be the happiest days of her life. (15-16)

Twice repeated: the happiest time of Mary's life was spent with Jean Brodie. Moreover, the second iteration of this immediately follows Mary being scapegoated for spilling ink on the floor. The tension behind these successive sentences might be defused by assuming a certain narrative irony at play, that those were, in fact, not Mary's happiest days. A convenient and unconvincing reading. Nor is it to be supposed that Mary's reported stupidity, so frequently mentioned in the novel, causes her to misremember these

mean times to be her happiest. Mary is not as sharp as Sandy, who at age ten discerned finer subtleties, having had a feeling at the time that their childhood and schooldays were “*supposed to be* the happiest days of her life” (16, emphasis mine). But Mary’s happiness, like every one of the other girls in the Brodie set, is steeped in a reality embellished by Jean Brodie, with “all those stories and opinions which had nothing to do with the ordinary world” (15). Despite the variations in the girls’ reception and response, Jean Brodie’s artistic vision is so deeply ingrained in the girls that their lives continue to be coloured by it. Sandy creates situations purposefully and animates fictional characters as friends; Jenny’s acuties blunt as she matures but still the hidden possibilities in all things well up and kindle her imagination; Mary, after leaving school, “had not thought much about Jean Brodie, certainly never disliked her” but in her most miserable moments she sought comfort from the fact that she had been happy once, and that her happiest moments were those days spent at Jean Brodie’s knee (15). It was Rose, in the end, who “shook off Miss Brodie’s influence as a dog shakes pond-water from its coat,” though even that shaking off is the sort of instinctive move Jean Brodie lauded for years (119).

That the Brodie set as an institution singled Mary out as scapegoat and treated her as a stupid girl—which likely she was, stupider than the rest at any rate—does not preclude Mary’s happiness. These are not mutually exclusive by any means and of all the girls it is, notably, only Mary who is said to feel happy. If Peter Robert Brown got one thing right, it is that “the ultimate satiric targets of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* are human institutions” but as Muriel Spark has shown with the girls’ not caring for the house system and not having team spirit, disregard for institutions is itself institutional (246). It is not, as concerns Brown’s measure of Mary, a matter of drawing a line between scapegoating and happiness or unethical and ethical. Rather, Spark’s postmodern touch

allows for counterintuitive, if paradoxical, leanings: happiness and being scapegoated can coexist. And while Jean Brodie and Sandy had been most unkind to Mary, Sandy reflects: “When any ill befalls me I wish I had been nicer to Mary” (77). Though tied to her own selfish obsession over who betrayed her and her suspicions land for the moment on Mary, Jean Brodie similarly wonders: “Perhaps I should have been kinder to Mary” (77). Systematic bullying can be laced with remorse, too.

Such remorse does nothing in the way of atonement for the scapegoating and bullying, but the Holocaust association is a blunder. Setting aside everything said and felt by the characters, one should carefully discern the distortions that follow from Spark’s use of prolepsis in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. What Muriel Spark says in the interview with Martin McQuillan previously explored in the context of her postmodernism is illuminating: “I always think causality is not chronology. I go on that; one thing doesn’t necessarily lead to another inevitable thing, although it does lead to something else in actual fact” (216). Because it is interspersed with proleptic sequences, the chronology of events in the novel is neither linear nor single. The revelation of Mary’s death, an early revelation in the chronology of the novel, casts a long shadow over all the scenes involving her. It is therefore tempting—more so because it appears poetically compelling—to connect causally the systematic bullying of Mary to her tragic end in the hotel fire with all the Holocaust-specific connotations and Jean Brodie’s proclivity for fascism. Yet the chronology of a novel’s pagination is different from the causal relationships between events, and the drawing of explicit, concrete moral lessons from Jean Brodie’s actions and behaviours misapprehends an essential point: she is an artistic representation, a character in a novel; a character to whose interiority readers never gain access. Spark is, aside from her use of prolepsis, famous for leaving her characters’ interiority blank. Jean Brodie is, in

Gabriel Josipovici's words, "in a sense only the sum of the memories of her of 'the Brodie set,' and she emerges from this, in the novel, as mysterious, imperative, life-affirming, even if slightly dotty" (34).

On whose memories, exactly, does the narration depend then? What motivations behind such remembering? As Rose says to Sandy while discussing Mary's death in the fire, "How were we to know?" so critics should rethink their convictions along this very question (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 77). Critics who find in Mary nothing but helplessness and haplessness do her greater abuse than Jean Brodie's alleged fascism does, because

the prophetic glimpses of the future fate of her characters which are one of the distinctive features of Mrs Spark's narrative method do not serve the purposes of a pat moralism or a reassuring providential pattern. They unsettle, rather than confirm, the reader's ongoing interpretation of events, constantly readjusting the points of emphasis and the principles of suspense in the narrative. (Lodge 153-4)

Even if it were to serve a pat moralism, Mary's suffering must be explicated against Jean Brodie receiving punishment commensurate with, or at least directed at, her culpability. Jean Brodie loses her job and spends her remaining days obsessing over which of the girls betrayed her, yes, but it is clumsy to count that as punishment of a morally justified kind since that is entirely a product of Sandy's betrayal, which has nothing to do with Mary. Jean Brodie's postmodern inclinations fail; her uncontrolled artistry becomes dangerous for Joyce Emily and maybe even Mary in some slight way. But to accept without question the tenuous connections between chronology and causality in reading Jean Brodie is to be

lost to sketchy assumptions. For this unsettling and disconfirming and constantly readjusting edge to *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* provides latitude for a nuanced reconsideration of Jean Brodie's ostensibly dangerous impulses, thereby casting a wholly different complexion on the meanings of Sandy's betrayal.

CHAPTER II

CAUSALITY AND CHRONOLOGY IN THE BETRAYAL OF MISS JEAN BRODIE

In fact, it was the religion of Calvin of which Sandy felt most deprived, or rather a specified recognition of it. She desired this birthright; something definite to reject. It pervaded the place in proportion as it was unacknowledged. In some ways the most real and rooted people whom Sandy knew were Miss Gaunt and the Kerr sisters who made no evasions about their belief that God had planned for practically everybody before they were born a nasty surprise when they died. Later, when Sandy read John Calvin, she found that although popular conceptions of Calvinism were sometimes mistaken, in this particular there was no mistake, indeed it was but a mild understanding of the case, he having made it God's pleasure to implant in certain people an erroneous sense of joy and salvation, so that their surprise at the end might be the nastier.

Muriel Spark. *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*.

The thing about Miss Brodie in a person like Sandy—I don't put Sandy as the wise woman in the novel, I put Miss Brodie as the wiser—the thing about Miss Brodie is that she has no restraining influence whatsoever, whereas Sandy did.

“‘Fascinated by Suspense’: An Interview with Dame Muriel Spark.”
by Robert E. Hosmer Jr.

Although Chapter I has determined that the dangers of Jean Brodie's artistry depend on too many questionable assumptions, it has not provided a tenable alternative. The key to

rethinking those meanings in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* lie in Sandy's betrayal of Jean Brodie following Joyce Emily Hammond's death en route "to Spain to fight for Franco," a trip the girl made at Jean Brodie's behest (124). Sandy points out to Miss Mackay that her schemes "aimed at ridding the school of Miss Brodie and breaking up the Brodie set in one stroke" fails on account of the headmistress having looked in the wrong place (77). Sandy tells her: "you won't be able to pin her down on sex. Have you thought of politics? ... She's a born Fascist" (124-5). And so it transpired that "Miss Brodie was forced to retire at the end of the summer term of nineteen-thirty-nine, on the grounds that she had been teaching Fascism" (125). In a letter to Sandy informing her of this forced retirement, Jean Brodie writes: "What hurts and amazes me most of all is the fact, if Miss Mackay is to be believed, that it was one of my own set who betrayed me and put the inquiry in motion ... I can write to you of this, because you of all my set are exempt from suspicion" (125). Jean Brodie obsesses over the identity of her betrayer for the rest of her days and the "whine in her voice—'... betrayed me, betrayed me'—bored and afflicted Sandy" (60).

Reading *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* to serve conventional moralistic positions falters on argumentative flaws, like the heavy-handed attempts to paint Jean Brodie as baldly Fascist, but the desire for a coherent moralism persists even in criticism meticulous with the nuances of the novel. For instance, David Lodge puts this forward:

The last straw for Sandy is the discovery that Miss Brodie connived at Joyce Emily's fatal expedition to Spain. It is not that Miss Brodie encouraged the girl to switch allegiance to Franco that shocks Sandy ... but the fact that Miss Brodie encouraged her to go at all. This is the final,

decisive evidence, for Sandy, that Miss Brodie's irresponsible egotism is out of hand, and must be prevented from doing further damage. (164)

It is indeed Miss Brodie's "irresponsible egotism" manifesting as reckless aestheticising that causes Joyce Emily's death (164). It is also not a matter of Fascism or other political leanings; it is, rather, a matter of preventing Jean Brodie from "doing further damage" (164). In her conversation with Miss Mackay, Sandy makes clear that she is "not really interested in world affairs ... only in putting a stop to Miss Brodie" (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 125).

While they come to various conclusions about the novel's conclusion, where Sandy seems imprisoned in the dark parlour of the convent, critics tend to share David Lodge's view of the betrayal. Gerard Carruthers argues that that could "indicate punishment for her information to Miss Mackay regarding Brodie's flirtation with fascism that leads to Brodie having to resign her post" (500). However, he acknowledges that Sandy is "quite rightly hard-hearted, saying of Brodie's old complaints of the betrayal the teacher has inferred must have come from one of her girls, 'it is only possible to betray where loyalty is due'" (500). On this point, Carruthers continues: "Sandy, in fact, gripping her grille might be read by the end of the novel's events as undergoing the religious process of unselfing, something that is not necessarily without personal anxiety. She is divesting herself of images and stories of which previously she has produced a surfeit" (500). Sandy realises, Carruthers implies, that she carries Jean Brodie's destructive potential. After all, it is Sandy who most comprehensively inherits Jean Brodie's artistry and, by extension, must share some of the responsibilities that followed from that. And while this chapter maintains that the Jean Brodie-as-Fascist reading is fallacious and that

Mary was truly happy, Sandy's bullying is not therefore absolved. It is plausible that Sandy chooses to stay confined to the convent and, as such, avoids inflicting the pernicious effects of an uncontrolled artistry that comes quite as easily to her as it did Jean Brodie. Carruthers concludes: "It is with regard to such a reading that Sandy's desperately enclosed state as a nun makes sense. She is struggling to divest herself of world involvements since these necessarily mean making images and stories that can never show anything like the complete truth" (501).

In his essay "A Bit of the Other: *Symposium*, Futility and Scotland," Alan Freeman addresses this issue in more metaphysical terms. He reads Jean Brodie's attempts to narrate the beginnings and ends of the girls and her compulsive need to dominate and control as manoeuvres to play God; the very same moves Fascist regimes made. In this frame, he says that

God's realm is inaccessible to our personal stories, and for Sandy, truth remains stranger than fiction. She ends the novel enigmatically, clutching the grille through which the public may speak with her. Placed outside of this life, but also cut off from the other she seeks, Sandy is caught between them, a prisoner on either side of the grille. In these novels, the pursuit of causal effect of a higher nature flounders on the futility of human agency, as dreams turn to dust, and actions lead mostly nowhere. (130)

What Freeman alludes to is this: Sandy is, by Jean Brodie's influence, party to the exhilarations of approximating divinity through aestheticising but manages to rein in those impulses where Jean Brodie fails. Being placed in the convent is less punishment or prevention than an extended representation of Sandy's being caught in a liminal space.

She is at once institutionalised outside the realities of everyone else and put within an institution promising higher meanings characterised by their very inaccessibility. Human agency can never divine higher natures. This is a reiteration of what Jean Brodie should have learned in her ineffectual endeavour to dictate the girls' lives and what they are famous for.

Patricia Waugh offers yet another reading in her essay "Muriel Spark and the Metaphysics of Modernity," proposing that "though Sandy Stranger initially admires Miss Brodie's reckless aestheticising of experience, Sandy very quickly begins to recognise and stand back from the irresponsibility and dangerous enchantments of Brodie's delusional transformations of the real" (89). Waugh feels that while

Sandy learns to respect the thinginess of objects and to detach herself from the dangerous enchantments and consolations of art, her tortured grip on the bars of her cell at the end of the novel suggests that, even as Sister Helena, she has not quite shaken off a haunted obsession with the aesthetic seductiveness of the prime of Miss Jean Brodie." (89-90)

It is to Sandy's exchange with the man who visited her at the convent at the end of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* that Waugh refers:

'What was your biggest influence, then, Sister Helena? Was it political, personal? Was it Calvinism?'

'Oh no,' said Sandy, 'But there was a Miss Jean Brodie in her prime.' She clutched the bars of the grille as if she wanted to escape 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. But Sandy always leaned forward and peered, clutching the bars with both hands. (35)

Waugh's reading plays on an undercurrent of sadness in the novel—it all leads to disappointment and loss—and concludes thus: "Truth does not necessarily console" (90). That holds true for Sandy and for Jean Brodie and for the readers of Muriel Spark. In a similar vein, Marilyn Reizbaum posits that a conspicuous

conflict or uncertainty seems still at work when we see Sandy, behind the grille in that haunting image at the novel's end, where what has transfigured or disfigured her is the voice she always hears, and which she has betrayed, in a double sense of revelation: the need to expose her is at once the desire to know her. (44)

Though differing in their approaches and emphases, what runs across the critical perspectives explored in succession above stacks the message of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* with guilt, particularly underscored by Sandy becoming a Roman Catholic nun since the religiosity of Roman Catholicism is guilt-ridden. From David Lodge to Gerard Carruthers to Alan Freeman and from Marilyn Reizbaum to Patricia Waugh, Sandy's position in the convent behind bars is read, whether as punishment or penance, on the notion that impulses to aestheticise reality is, because dangerous, to be discouraged or restrained. There are distinct merits to these readings; they are certainly convincingly argued. Yet this is all too convenient, too linear, too neatly and causally linked to the guilt or sins from or surrounding Sandy's betrayal of Jean Brodie. For to decide on Sandy's

penance or punishment in a world of Muriel Spark's is to privilege the chronology of events as narrated in the novel too much. And causality is not chronology.

As such, Chapter II of this dissertation dismantles the abiding assumptions surrounding Sandy's betrayal of Jean Brodie and its implications by scrutinising the dynamics between causality and chronology in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. It continues to pay careful attention to Spark's prolepsis and pursues Matthew Wickman's conception to a further, more substantial conclusion: "Prolepsis ... functions as an instrument of 'purification' in that it winnows out significant details from a mass of observations, asides, quips and other strands of meaning" (72). For this purification transfigures the meanings of betrayal and ties together the threads of artistic vision and artistry explored in Chapter I. It charts, through the following sections, why and how and to what end Sandy betrays Jean Brodie. Chapter II concludes that instead of turning against and away from Jean Brodie, Sandy advances and refines the artistic impulse to the very limits of human possibility. Through her betrayal, Sandy traverses between the problems of knowing the world into being in the world and holds, ultimately, the postmodern potential in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*.

THE LOSS OF SPARKLING STYLE: SANDY'S BETRAYAL OF MISS JEAN BRODIE

That scene above where Sandy interacts with the man who visited her is another of those proleptic moments in the novel and it is on the second representation of this very scene that *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* finishes:

And there was that day when the inquiring young man came to see Sandy because of her strange book of psychology, 'The Transfiguration of the Commonplace,' which had brought so many visitors that Sandy clutched the bars of her grille more desperately than ever.

'What were the main influences of your school days, Sister Helena? Were they literary or political or personal? Was it Calvinism?'

Sandy said: 'There was a Miss Jean Brodie in her prime.' (127-8)

Twice repeated: the bars, the grille, Sandy's desperation and that line about a Miss Jean Brodie in her prime. To trace unexplored variations of the meanings and implications of Sandy's betrayal, one must scrutinise this twice-depicted scene. Sandy gives essentially the same answer in both iterations, which is that Miss Jean Brodie in her prime was her greatest influence. According to Frank Kermode, who pays tribute to Spark in his essay "Unrivalled Deftness: The Novels of Muriel Spark,"

Spark has no compunction about repeating herself, even word for word ... if her overview of the fictional proceedings seems to demand it. There is what might be called a recursive quality about her narrative manner; but none of these apparently wanton departures from the normal procedures of duller novelists can be attributed to clumsiness; they are part of the story, and also part of the joke. (111)

Essentially the same answer is, in this and every case, not the same answer. There is an ostensibly innocuous departure. In the proleptic sequence, the young man asks: "What was your biggest influence, then, Sister Helena? Was it political, personal? Was it

Calvinism?” (35). In the final scene, the young man asks: “What were the main influences of your *school days*, Sister Helena? Were they *literary* or political or personal? Was it Calvinism?” (128, emphasis mine). School days, literary: these are significant deviations for *The Prime of Jean Brodie* in a scene repeated almost word for word. There are no accidents with Muriel Spark; there are no mistakes. And it is a little bizarre that despite all the praise Spark’s prolepsis garners, no sustained efforts are taken to fully comprehend its role in shaping the narrative import of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* especially as it manifests in these two instances.

Before proceeding further, it is important to establish Sandy’s motivation for her betrayal or, at least, what Sandy’s motivation was not. Though clouded, this can be gathered from her attitudes towards Jean Brodie because the betrayal much more intimately connects Jean Brodie to Sandy than moralistic readings posit. That line, “There was a Miss Jean Brodie in her prime,” which ends the novel, doubles as Sandy’s response to the inquiring young man’s question: “What were the main influences of your school days, Sister Helena? Were they literary or political or personal? Was it Calvinism?” (128). Grammatically, Sandy is correct in referring to Jean Brodie in the past tense—there *was*—since Jean Brodie died years before she said those words to the young man. Yet the meaning of this line shifts decisively if one puts emphasis on Jean Brodie’s prime being expressed in the past tense, not Jean Brodie herself. For Jean Brodie’s prime, so much referred to that it practically acquires absolute status, is tethered to a temporal aspect. Another proleptic sequence informs readers that “it extended, this prime of Miss Brodie’s, still in the making when the girls were well into their teens. And the principles governing the end of her prime would have astonished herself at the beginning of it” (44). When she was eighteen, Sandy “thought of Miss Brodie eight years ago sitting under the elm tree

telling her first simple love story and wondered to what extent it was Miss Brodie who developed complications throughout the years, and to what extent it was her own conception of Miss Brodie that has changed” (119-20). Neither Jean Brodie nor her prime is a constant.

Change and inconsistencies characterise Jean Brodie’s prime and these are fairly clearly charted through the novel. For instance, it had seemed to Sandy much earlier that “Miss Brodie’s disapproval of the Girl Guides had jealousy in it, there was an inconsistency, a fault,” and although she “thought she might see about joining the Brownies,” she decided that “it was necessary to put the idea aside, because she loved Miss Brodie” (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 31-2). Sandy’s loyalty is unyielding in the face of Jean Brodie’s inconsistencies and faults, and this particular scene also highlights Jean Brodie’s alleged fascism because it occurred to Sandy even then, as they walked “there at the end of Middle Meadow Walk, that the Brodie set was Miss Brodie’s fascisti ... marching along,” all “knit together for her need and in another way, marching along. That was all right” (31). Her betrayal of Jean Brodie is all the more intriguing for two reasons. Firstly, it is not tied to putting an end to the fascism as Sandy claims to Miss Mackay because she made the connection all those years ago and ruled it all right. Secondly, it is also not directly linked to Jean Brodie’s own inconsistencies and faults and petty jealousies since Sandy was willing to overlook that out of love for Jean Brodie. Sandy’s betrayal is, significantly, bound up with Jean Brodie being past her prime.

Curiously, it was Jenny who, in a letter to Sandy, first decides that “Miss Brodie is past her prime. She keeps wanting to know who betrayed her. It isn’t at all like the old Miss Brodie; she was always so full of fight” (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 127). While

the only mention in the novel that Jean Brodie's prime is past comes from Jenny, the preceding page details how Sandy, plagued by Jean Brodie's persistent questions, replies "like an enigmatic Pope:³ 'If you did not betray us it is impossible that you could have been betrayed by us. The word betrayed does not apply'" (126). Sandy is mocking Jean Brodie by phrasing this like her gnomic declarations of earlier years, as when Jean Brodie expresses her disdain for the Girl Guides thus: "For those who like that sort of thing ... that is the sort of thing they like" (31). Beyond this similarity, however, is more. This suggestion that Jean Brodie had betrayed the girls is folded into the proleptic sequence which reveals Sandy to be Jean Brodie's betrayer: "the whine in her voice—'... betrayed me, betrayed me'—bored and afflicted Sandy. It is seven years, thought Sandy, since I betrayed this tiresome woman. What does she mean by 'betray'? She was looking at the hills as if to see there the first and unbetrayable Miss Brodie, indifferent to criticism as a crag" (60). The 'old Miss Brodie' in Jenny's terms, the 'first and unbetrayable Miss Brodie' in Sandy's terms, is she who was unassailably indifferent to criticism as a crag. Jean Brodie fails to maintain that style that she cultivates for herself and in her girls and, unknown to her, betrays her girls. It is for this loss of style and being past her prime—matters of artistry—that Sandy betrays Jean Brodie.

Behold Miss Jean Brodie in her prime:

³ The associations between Sandy's reference to "an enigmatic Pope" seems obvious but there is an inherent ambiguity about which "enigmatic Pope" Sandy speaks like (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 126). With the characteristic vagueness of religious pronouncements and given the Roman Catholic setup, it is natural to be assume that it is *the* Pope, Supreme Pontiff and Bishop of Rome. But that particular line also rings with a circular, paradoxical logic that could be a parody of Alexander Pope's poetry. For instance, in Epistle I of "Essay on Man":

All nature is but art, unknown to thee
 All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
 All discord, harmony not understood;
 All partial evil, universal good:
 And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
 One truth is clear, Whatever is, is right. ("Essay on Man" 1.10.9-14)

That Alexander Pope was Roman Catholic adds interest to this permutation of meanings.

The other junior school teachers said good morning to Miss Brodie, these days, in a more than Edinburgh manner, that is to say it was gracious enough, and not one of them omitted to say good morning at all; but Sandy, who had turned eleven, perceived that the tone of ‘morning’ in good morning made the word seem purposely to rhyme with ‘scorning,’ so that these colleagues of Miss Brodie’s might just as well have said, ‘I scorn you’ instead of good morning. Miss Brodie’s reply was more than ever anglicised in its accent than was its usual wont. ‘Good mawning,’ she replied, in the corridors, flattening their scorn beneath the chariot wheels of her superiority, and deviating her head towards them no more than an insulting half-inch. (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 54)

Jean Brodie’s ‘good morning’ greetings commingle graceful comportment with pride of spirit. Combined with her poetic panache—“Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness ... He fell like an autumn leaf”—Sandy gleans from Jean Brodie only sparkling, sparkling style (12). This is even more overtly represented in Jean Brodie’s little episode with the Mona Lisa:

‘You girls,’ said Miss Brodie, ‘must learn to cultivate an expression of composure. It is one of the best assets of a woman, an expression of composure, come foul, come fair. Regard the Mona Lisa over yonder!’

All heads turned to look at the reproduction which Miss Brodie had brought back from her travels and pinned on the wall. Mona Lisa in her prime smiled in steady composure even though she had just come back from the dentist and her lower jaw was swollen. (22)

Whether Sandy imagined that bit about Mona Lisa smiling through her swollen lower jaw or Jean Brodie narrativised it to reinforce her point about maintaining “an expression of composure, come foul, come fair,” what Jean Brodie means to Sandy remains the same: she is a bastion of self-sufficient certainty distinguished by superb style (22). This is, Sandy acknowledges unambiguously, “a good prime” (56). Even as Sandy wonders in her late teens “to what extent it was Miss Brodie who developed complications throughout the years, and to what extent it was her own conception of Miss Brodie that has changed,” her view of her teacher shifts perceptibly (119-20). This unnamed, unidentified shift gained words and concepts and facts that mushroomed around her decision to betray Jean Brodie. Yet the idea of betraying Jean Brodie—or Jean Brodie betrayed—did not originate with Sandy. It originates with Jean Brodie herself.

As Jean Brodie continued her entangled relations with Teddy Lloyd the art master and Gordon Lowther the singing master, she proclaims, “I have had much calumny to put up with on account of my good offices at Cramond ... However, I shall survive it. If I wished, I could marry [Gordon Lowther] tomorrow” (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 113). But the “morning after this saying, the engagement of Gordon Lowther to Miss Lockhart, the science teacher, was announced in *The Scotsman*. Nobody had expected it. Miss Brodie was greatly taken aback and suffered untimely, for a space, from a sense of having been betrayed” (113). That Jean Brodie suffered from “a sense of having been betrayed” is, of course, Sandy’s interpretation, but it is also tied to how Jean Brodie behaves at Gordon Lowther and Miss Lockhart’s wedding: “Miss Brodie’s brown eyes were fixed on the clouds, she looked quite beautiful and frail, and it occurred to Sandy that she had renounced Teddy Lloyd only because she was aware that she could not keep this beauty; it was a quality in her that came and went” (113-4). Again, whether it was accurately a sense

of being betrayed Sandy caught in Jean Brodie's demeanour or merely other shades of surprise or displeasure is immaterial. For there is no certainty, no self-sufficiency, no instinctive artistic impulse that could override her very real shock of reality; there is neither composure nor superiority. She is merely "quite beautiful and frail," her prime merely the glow of a beauty that, Sandy realised, came and went; it was a quality she could not keep up (114). Miss Jean Brodie in her prime is unbetrayable because she would never have condescended to feel betrayed but there she is, in Sandy's eyes, suffering from a sense of having been betrayed.

It is crucial that this "first and unbetrayable Miss Brodie" be read not as 'unbetrayable' because Sandy did not feel inclined or able to betray her, which is the unquestioned assumption of all the aforementioned critics who wrote of Sandy being pushed to betrayal out of some innate moral desire to stop Jean Brodie. That which made Jean Brodie betrayable and that which made Sandy feel Jean Brodie to be past her prime both come down to Jean Brodie's dissipating dignity. Although Sandy continues looking for Jean Brodie in her prime, evidenced by her desire in later years to find again "the first and unbetrayable Miss Brodie, indifferent to criticism as a crag," Sandy never does (60). Miss Jean Brodie in her prime had an actively fascinating "method of making patterns with facts" (72); Miss Jean Brodie past her prime is, Sandy and Jenny observe, reduced to "trying quite hard to piece together a whole picture from their random remarks" about Rose and Gordon Lowther (96). Miss Jean Brodie in her prime had pride and verve; Miss Jean Brodie past her prime is desperate and despondent. Miss Jean Brodie in her prime had convictions and beliefs; Miss Jean Brodie past her prime becomes increasingly needy, asking questions about Rose and Gordon Lowther "in an enquiring tone" and (96), after having been betrayed, whinges on with a "whine in her voice—'... betrayed me, betrayed

me” (60). Sandy realises that Jean Brodie has lost the style she once had so much of and these cracks in what Jean Brodie represents to Sandy are irreparable. Together with Jenny’s assertion that Jean Brodie is past her prime and Jean Brodie’s behaving as though she had been betrayed, Sandy finds Jean Brodie betrayable. The crux of the betrayal is therefore that Sandy actualises the potential for a betrayed Jean Brodie.

OF THE MOST ECONOMICAL METHOD: BETRAYAL AS ART FORM

Since the prime of Miss Jean Brodie is, by Sandy’s lights, the sparkling style of Miss Jean Brodie, and it is only style that Sandy believes in, Sandy betrays Jean Brodie when all that disappears. Her betrayal is an artistic statement. Still, there is that scene where Sandy

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. But Sandy always leaned forward and peered, clutching the bars with both hands, and the other sisters remarked it and said that Sister Helena had too much to bear from the world since she had published her psychological book which was so unexpectedly famed. But the dispensation was forced upon Sandy, and she clutched the bars and received the choice visitors. (35, emphasis mine)

This scene is famous from the oft-rehearsed interpretation that Sandy’s clutching the bars is a penance, a punishment and an entrapment, whether by her own choice or by divine

intervention. It is by this reading a slightly haunting scene. Yet, why should this clutching of the bars, this comportment of nunly behaviour, feed into a coherent moralism where Sandy is punished for her betrayal and suffers passively? Betrayal is an artistic move and what marks this scene is the “as if” (35).

According to Vassiliki Kolocotroni, “‘as if’ ... the phrase is a key Sparkian trope, a device that allows for the irruption of the paradoxical and the uncertain within the narrative flow. It is as if the reader’s attention is drawn to the artifice of the character or the plot in question, while holding on to the plausibility of its reality” (24). While Kolocotroni’s view is shared by more or less everyone who writes about Muriel Spark, it has not been diligently applied to the reading of Sandy clutching the bars. It is plausible that Sandy is being punished for her betrayal of Jean Brodie but the uncertainty and the artifice of this scene has been neglected. Patricia Waugh offers in her essay “Muriel Spark and the Metaphysics of Modernity” an insightful comment on Spark’s fictional world that motivates an exploration of Sandy’s motives that is closer to the novel’s disposition. To Waugh, the world “so built exists in a perpetual condition of ‘as if,’ a staged artifice that has to be consistently willed into existence for those who inhabit its frame” (72). This suggests, in accord with Kolocotroni, that the artifice of Sandy as a character needs fuller attention, which can be approached by interrogating the critical consensus on Sandy’s being put literally behind bars. For whether as punishment or as means to keep the world safe from the dangers of an uncontrolled artistry, such morality is read into the text and only willed into existence by critics. Moreover, “The Transfiguration of the Commonplace” that Sandy publishes from her position in the convent is significant not only in how that title resonates with what the girls learn from Jean Brodie’s artistic impulses that transfigures the commonplace. Sandy’s work is a “psychological treatise on

the nature of moral perception” which, for the purposes of this chapter, reiterates how one should look beyond simple ideas like how sin needs to be atoned for and betrayal punished (35). She is, after all, “Sister Helena of the Transfiguration” (34).

To begin with, the dual personalities there in one sentence, “Sandy” and “Sister Helena,” point towards a deliberate characterisation: Sandy views herself as both Sandy and Sister Helena, the other nuns view Sandy as Sister Helena (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 35). In so many ways, Sister Helena is the character or persona that Sandy creates and finally adopts for herself, having at various points been Sergeant Anne Grey’s right-hand woman, Alan Breck’s friend, Anna Pavlova’s protégé and a married lady. Suggestions of such artistic creation recur in how Sandy carries herself as Sister Helena, too. When “she was a nun, sooner or later one and the other of the Brodie set came to visit Sandy, because it was something to do, and she had written her book of psychology, and everyone likes to visit a nun, it provides a spiritual sensation, a catharsis to go home with, especially if the nun clutches the bars of the grille” (121). Particularly interesting is how a nun is visited for “spiritual sensation, a catharsis to go home with,” a sensation brought about by deliberate presentation because she “clutches the bars of the grille” (121). She is not, as so many critics have decided, desperately trying to escape the bars that restrain her. Sandy consciously chooses to present herself as incarcerated, clutching the grille “as if she wanted to escape from the dim parlour beyond” with the intention of creating for her visitors a pleasurable spiritual sensation (35). This is all artistic effect.

Such a reading of Sandy and her grille better appreciates, in Vassiliki Kolocotroni’s terms, the “artifice of the character or the plot in question, while holding on to the plausibility of its reality” (24). The plausibility of Sandy’s desperation to escape

exists, but that, along with the Sister Helena persona from whom her choice visitors receive advice and comments and spiritual sensations, is an artistic self-styling that Sandy accomplishes by being in the convent. If anything, Sandy's apparent incarceration *cannot* be read as punishment because even her presence in the dim parlour of the convent is in the first place an artistic effect. None of this is causally connected to her betrayal of Jean Brodie. For in her later teenage years, the

more she discovered [Teddy Lloyd] to be still in love with Jean Brodie, the more she was curious about the mind that loved the woman. By the end of the year it had happened that she had quite lost interest in the man himself, but was deeply absorbed in his mind, from which she extracted, among other things, his religion as a pith from a husk. Her mind was as full of his religion as a night sky is full of things visible and invisible. She left the man and took his religion and became a nun in the course of time. (123)

Religion is not religiosity. It is art: her mind became "as full of his religion as a night sky is full of things visible and invisible" (123). This is again couched in terms of what Sandy and the girls learned from Jean Brodie, which is seeing beyond the superficial to glimpse things visible and invisible. It is on this intuitive desire for "the hidden possibilities in all things" that Sandy extracts (80), with precise economy, "his religion as a pith from a husk" and "became a nun in the course of time" (123). Sandy loses interest in Teddy Lloyd simply because her artistic vision requires not the man, only his religion. To take his religion and leave him is the most economical method.

Tracing this logic of the most economical method reveals how Sandy's betrayal of Jean Brodie is, in fact, also an artistic move of similar manner. As the girls, aged fifteen, sat for Teddy Lloyd in turns and the art master invariably painted their likenesses as variants of Jean Brodie, narrative time skips ahead into another proleptic moment:

In amongst her various bewilderments Sandy was fascinated by the economy of Teddy Lloyd's method, as she had been four years earlier by Miss Brodie's variations on her love story, when she had attached to her first, war-time lover the attributes of the art master and the singing master who had then newly entered her orbit. Teddy Lloyd's methods of presentation was similar, it was economical, and it always seemed afterwards to Sandy that where there was a choice of various courses, the most economical was the best, and that the course to be taken was the most expedient and most suitable at the time for all the objects in hand. She acted on this principle when the time came to betray Miss Brodie. (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 101)

Sandy's betrayal of Jean Brodie employs the most economical method because she chooses the "most expedient and most suitable at the time for all the objects in hand" (101). She plays off the concurrence of Miss Mackay's probing with Joyce Emily Hammond's death and the convenient Fascist overtones; she marries Jenny's idea that Jean Brodie is past her prime with Jean Brodie's behaving as though she had been betrayed and actualises the betrayal. The betrayal may be motivated to some degree by Sandy's disappointment with Jean Brodie but it is nevertheless an artistic effect by the most economical method. And this most economical method of betrayal is inextricable from the "Teddy Lloyd's methods

of representation,” a fascination of Sandy’s that began with her fathoming of “Miss Brodie’s variations on her love story” under the elm tree (101).

In a way, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and the prime of Miss Jean Brodie begin and end with that elm tree. It is to the elm tree Sandy’s mind constantly returns, as she grows older and becomes embittered with Jean Brodie and decides that she is but a ridiculous woman. It was under that elm tree where the girls, aged ten, learned the thrills of poeticising and artistic representation and that it is style that makes one believe in something. It was also there that Sandy realised that “Miss Brodie’s old love story was newly embroidered, under the elm, with curious new threads” (71). This was “the first time the girls had heard of Hugh’s artistic leanings. Sandy puzzled over this and took counsel with Jenny, and it came to them both that Miss Brodie was making her new love story fit the old. Thereafter the two girls listened with double ears, and the rest of the class with single” (72). Sandy became “fascinated with this method of making patterns with facts, and was divided between her admiration for the technique and the pressing need to prove Miss Brodie guilty of misconduct” (72). This fascination never dies; not with Jean Brodie, not with Jean Brodie’s prime. It becomes Sandy’s guiding principle for her betrayal with one key improvement: where Jean Brodie tends towards excess and flourishes, Sandy takes to concision and economy of method. Sandy’s betrayal is not a rejection of or a turning away from Jean Brodie’s aestheticising. It is a refining of Jean Brodie’s aestheticising.

Sandy’s betrayal of Jean Brodie and her subsequent seeming incarceration where she “clutched the bars of the grille as if she wanted to escape the dim parlour beyond” all comes down to an overall artistic effect she achieves (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 35).

They all feed into Sandy's predispositions to artistic representation, which are honed by her years with Jean Brodie. But since it is only as an 'as if' situation that "the reader's attention is drawn to the artifice of the character or the plot in question, while holding on to the plausibility of its reality," then the implications of Sandy's moves should also be read along the lines of this 'as if' (Kolocotroni 24). If Jean Brodie's artistry, reckless by measures, is a nascent postmodernism, then what Sandy achieves is a more polished version of such postmodern being. Like Foucault's postmodern explication previously referred to in the Introduction, "Modern man ... is not the man who goes off to discover himself, his secrets and his hidden truth; he is the man who tries to invent himself" (40). For it is not "to accept oneself as one is in the flux of the passing moments; it is to take oneself as object of a complex and difficult elaboration: what Baudelaire ... called *dandysme*"; a "dandy who makes of his body, his behaviour, his feelings, his very existence, a work of art." This "does not liberate man 'in his own being,' it compels him to face the task of producing himself" (40). Sandy lives up and lives according to this model of a dandy in all respects—apart from being a man, that is—because her narrative trajectory in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* inheres in an embodied artistry. Sandy intensifies an epistemological dominant into an ontological one. It no longer is the way Sandy knows and deals with the world; it is how she is in it, and how her worlds come into contact with each other. This artistry spans her girlhood imaginations of fictional characters springing to life and walking beside her, to Jean Brodie and Teddy Lloyd's influence on her economical methods, her subsequent choices to betray Jean Brodie, to convert to Roman Catholicism and to enter the convent, and all the way up to her clutching the bars as if she were desperate to escape. Sandy makes herself a work of art.

A POSTMODERN TURN: THE ARTFUL IMPLICATIONS OF BETRAYAL

This is not to assert that the betrayal means nothing more than playfulness in simple contradiction to the many critical opinions on the issue. While this chapter posits Sandy's betrayal of Jean Brodie as artistry, it resists the implication that this is apolitical aestheticising. Privileging artistry does not render the political irrelevant because these are not competing categories inimical to each other and it is possible to hold these ideas simultaneously without sacrificing the significance of either. Whether fuelled by some altruistic and moral purpose or, as has been argued here, artistry of the most economical method, Sandy's betrayal of Jean Brodie is the core of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. If a more considered emphasis is put on the nature of Sandy's betrayal as artistic effect in the first instance, then the purport of the betrayal shifts; the overall point of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* shifts, too. The development of the various sections so far points to how art, manifesting across childish imaginations and the dangers of artistry and betrayal, is not the locus of the indulgent or entertaining or vaguely beautiful. Rather, art presents consistent challenges to the apparent fixity of what has been unquestioningly accepted as truth, political implications of which shift with every reading. Beyond this, beyond the level of art as subject matter in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, such an approach also allows literary criticism to escape the bounds of the overwrought logic of simple alternatives: art, not science; Sandy, not Jean Brodie; morality, not aestheticising. Neither reading nor the meaning of texts is a matter of finding answers that are conclusive or single. It is the sustained discovery of the "hidden possibilities in all things" (81).

On this note, Marina Mackay proposes a compelling idea in "Muriel Spark and the Meaning of Treason":

Spark's interest in treason is intractably real-worldly and historical, intimately connected to the political contexts in which she began her career as a novelist, but, importantly, that it also offers a different way of thinking about those concerns with the textual, fantastical, and world-making force of the imagination that point toward an incipient postmodernity: treason, for Spark, is always aligned with forms of political and social creativity. (507)

By her conception, treason—betrayal—begins with the textual, fantastical and imaginative; it is artistry. What Marina Mackay calls an “incipient postmodernity” is therefore impetus to explore the political implications of Sandy's betrayal while fully acknowledging its nature as art. For “treason ... is always aligned with forms of political and social creativity” (507). Her take on betrayal pushes the novel's conclusion to new possibilities as the meanings of betrayal are implications that are to be understood by its “political and social creativity” (507).

In her work, Mackay refers to Rebecca West, known for her interests in treason and coverage of the Nuremberg Trials. Although West “never goes as far as to propose romantically that artistry and treason are exactly interchangeable forms of dissidence ... she certainly attributes treason to fictive and fabulatory impulses that find expression in the construction of parallel worlds” (509). That treason and artistry are “interchangeable forms of dissidence” is significant because it began with Jean Brodie resisting the stuffy principles of Marcia Blaine's School through her artistry (509). Sandy later supersedes Jean Brodie by her betrayal in that she resists the limitations and small-mindedness of Jean Brodie's artistry. Indeed, treason and artistry can be “exactly interchangeable forms

of dissidence” because every major point in Sandy’s narrative comprises “fictive and fabulatory impulses that find expression in the construction of parallel worlds” (509). Only in the very first stages are these parallel worlds stuff of pure imagination perceived by Sandy alone as, for instance, when she converses with Alan Breck from *Kidnapped* so “it was not necessary to talk to Mary” (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 28). Even as a child, her parallel worlds manifest outwardly when she writes “The Mountain Eyrie” with Jenny, a reimagining of “the true love story of Miss Jean Brodie” wherein her lover, Hugh Carruthers, does not die in the war (41). The story represents as a plausible alternative to reality and reality does not and cannot deny that very plausibility. For the reality of Hugh Carruthers having died in the war is itself narrative to begin. Jean Brodie tells them about him under the elm tree: “Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness ... He fell like an autumn leaf” (12). The versions of Hugh Carruthers’s life represent the parallel worlds allowed by and constructed on artistry.

All these fit in easily with what Marina Mackay describes as “fictive and fabulatory impulses that find expression in the construction of parallel worlds” (509). It is significant that these are scenarios constructed on ‘as if’ conditions where artifice is paradoxically emphasised by its presentation as reality; both can be held simultaneously as true and valid. Quite clearly, these parallel worlds and scenarios and ‘as if’ conditions are, to revisit the arguments made in the previous chapter, narratives of a postmodern kind. Chapter I concludes that Jean Brodie’s postmodern impulses fail because the effectiveness with which she dismantles Miss Mackay’s hegemony in the school flounders when she arrogates herself to a new, absolute standard. More than this, a comparison between Jean Brodie and Sandy’s construction of parallel worlds establishes more vividly why Jean Brodie fails. Similarities abound in the examples above where Jean Brodie and Sandy

weave narratives of Hugh Carruthers. Significantly, Sandy and Jenny realise that “Miss Brodie’s old love story was newly embroidered, under the elm, with curious new threads” (71). It is “the first time the girls had heard of Hugh’s artistic leanings ... and it came to them both that Miss Brodie was making her new love story fit the old” (72). Jean Brodie constructs her stories about Hugh Carruthers as if they could be true, and they could very well be, but she miscalculates because she in her arrogance recklessly spun new details, conflating traits of her new love interests with her old, as if nobody would catch those disparities.

While Jean Brodie’s influence on her is indelible and drives all that she does, Sandy continually refines herself, most tellingly through how “she extracted, among other things, [Teddy Lloyd’s] religion as a pith from a husk” (123). At no point does Sandy fix herself or her artistry or her narrativising as accomplished. Even “The Mountain Eyrie, the true love story of Miss Jean Brodie,” and the other imagined correspondences Sandy and Jenny penned are not read by anyone (41). The plausibility of all their imagined versions coexists with their paradoxical realities. Sandy and Jenny “buried their last composition” (80), having “found a damp hole half-hidden by a stone at the back of a cave and they pressed into it the notebook containing the love correspondence of Miss Jean Brodie, and never saw it again” (74). This is where Sandy surpasses Jean Brodie. Sandy’s narrative, when conceived of as a series of succeeding artistic moves, demonstrates if not an awareness then an instinct to develop her artistry. Jean Brodie’s failure is inflected slightly differently along Linda Hutcheon’s conception of postmodernism: “postmodernist critique must acknowledge its own position as an ideological one” by calling attention “to what is being contested and what is being offered as a critical response to that, and to do so in a self-aware way that admits its own provisionality” (13).

Jean Brodie never acknowledges her position as ideological when she counters Miss Mackay's "Safety first" with "Safety does not come first. Goodness, Truth and Beauty come first. Follow me" (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 10). Likewise, she never sees her position as provisional and she is certainly not self-aware.

Beyond the ironies of her behaviour previously discussed, her insistence on staying put at Marcia Blaine's is not ended by her removal after Sandy betrays her to Miss Mackay. Her obsession with who betrayed her actually shows that her mind fixes her there. The accumulation of meanings here gives Sandy's words to Miss Mackay a new dimension: "you won't be able to pin her down on sex. Have you thought of politics? ... She's a born Fascist" (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 124-5). Having fixed herself in various contexts, Jean Brodie can be pinned down. In fact, as the narrative of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* goes, she could have been pinned down on sex as Miss Mackay wished but Sandy provides a more economical method. To betray Jean Brodie using what Jean Brodie could not herself master is deliciously ironic. Where Jean Brodie is a compilation of fixities, Sandy is constantly shifting. Between the prolepsis and the diffuse narrative threads, Sandy as a character receives little continuity. While individual scenes and sentences take on myriad significance and resonance, like Sandy's "There was a Miss Jean Brodie in her prime," the consequences of Sandy's choices are never properly accounted for (35, 128). "The Mountain Eyrie" does not amount to anything beyond their girlhood fascinations with sex and love, taking up with Teddy Lloyd gives her Roman Catholicism but ends offhandedly and, as has been elaborated on at length, the significance of her betrayal consists entirely in its artistry. Like Sandy's compositions of Jean Brodie's love correspondences, the otherwise conflicting or paradoxical meanings of Sandy's character

are not resolved. Sandy is the ‘as if’ par excellence: she is never fixed. And having betrayed Jean Brodie, Sandy moves on and into the convent.

The meaning of Sandy’s last word, on which *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* closes, therefore shifts again. The inquiring young man who came to interview Sandy asks, “‘What were the main influences of your school days, Sister Helena? Were they literary or political or personal? Was it Calvinism?’” And “Sandy said: ‘There was a Miss Jean Brodie in her prime’” (128). Sandy is not choosing “Miss Jean Brodie in her prime” to stand for the main influences of her school days and denying the literary and political and personal and Calvinism (128). Those influences are clearly significant. What she is saying is, in fact, that all those influences, the literary and political and personal and Calvinist, have been filtered through “Miss Jean Brodie in her prime,” which in Sandy’s view is the artistic vision that transfigures the commonplace (128).

To continue the foregoing study on the artistry of existence and reality, in part also to sidestep the tired, commonplace rhetoric of dual consciousness as per the Caledonian antisyzygy,⁴ the seemingly slight role of Calvinism in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is also bound up in Sandy’s artistic impulses. Sandy’s position in the convent as Roman Catholic nun stands in awkward relation to the renowned heavy-handed Calvinism of Edinburgh, and while it is also of minor biographical interest that Spark was brought up in Edinburgh and converted to Roman Catholicism, its import outstrips the circumstantial and the frivolous. For the half-English Sandy, it was Calvinism “Sandy felt

⁴ Coined by G. Gregory Smith in *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence*, the Caledonian Antisyzygy has been an influential model in the reading and criticism of Scottish literature. Emblematic of Scottish literature are the conflicting dualities that inhere in a single text or character. The Caledonian Antisyzygy presents itself as a “zigzag of contradictions” and a “combination of opposites” and “we need not be surprised to find that in his literature the Scot presents two aspect which appear contradictory. Oxymoron was ever the bravest figure, and we must not forget that disorderly order is order after all” (4-5).

most deprived” of and she “desired this birthright; something definite to reject” (108-9).

Out of her desire comes this realisation presented in prolepsis:

the most real and rooted people whom Sandy knew were Miss Gaunt and the Kerr sisters who made no evasions about their belief that God had planned for practically everybody before they were born a nasty surprise when they died. Later, when Sandy read John Calvin, she found that although popular conceptions of Calvinism were sometimes mistaken, in this particular there was no mistake, indeed it was but a mild understanding of the case, he having made it God’s pleasure to implant in certain people an erroneous sense of joy and salvation, so that their surprise at the end might be the nastier. (108-9)

It has been pointed out frequently that Jean Brodie is one of those people in whom God implanted that erroneous sense of joy and salvation and Sandy’s betrayal foreshortens that. But what is striking in this passage is less of what Calvinism entails or how nasty God is, implanting with savage glee that erroneous sense of joy and salvation. It is how Sandy reads Miss Gaunt and the Kerr sisters and how Sandy reads John Calvin and how she builds her certainty on Calvinism—“there was no mistake, indeed it was but a mild understanding of the case”—out of these readings (108). And reading is, not just for Sandy, an artistic enterprise. Sandy’s reading of Calvinism is important because in equal measures she reads this manner of Calvinism from and into Jean Brodie’s behaviour. For Sandy “smelt them in the excesses of Miss Brodie in her prime” and despite being “unable to formulate these exciting propositions,” Sandy began in an “oblique way ... to sense what went to the makings of Miss Brodie who had elected herself to grace in so particular

a way and with more exotic suicidal enchantment than if she had simply taken to drink like other spinsters who couldn't stand it anymore" (109).

Since Sandy eventually concludes that Jean Brodie "thinks she is Providence ... she thinks she is the God of Calvin, she sees the beginning and the end," Sandy's becoming a Roman Catholic nun can be understood as opposition to the Calvinist God, characteristics of which plausibly connected to her growing disdain for Jean Brodie (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 120). After all, her decision irked Jean Brodie: "That is not the sort of dedication I meant. Do you think she has done this to annoy me?" (63). Between Sandy's conception of a nasty Calvinist God and the "oblique" resemblance she saw in Jean Brodie, the chronology of the novel builds on Sandy's feeling "deprived" of Calvinism, a "birthright" she desired so as to have "something definite to reject" (108-9). But this is not causally connected to her later conviction that Jean Brodie thinks she is Providence and "the God of Calvin" (120). The meanings of the references above are coloured entirely by prolepsis: what Sandy "smelt in the excesses of Miss Brodie in her prime" and "the makings of Miss Brodie who had elected herself to grace in so particular a way" is expressed only by a retrospective clarity (109). These descriptions are adult-Sandy's reappraisals of her oblique teenage cognitions and unformulated propositions, invariably inflected by creative remembering to an extent that is not clear. As such, perspectives like Martin Price's, expressed in a 1962 review of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* in *The New York Times* are only true to a very small degree: "Sandy comes, in time, to see Miss Brodie's romantic fervour as inverted Calvinism, the reaction of a religious woman against a dour creed" (2). Sandy does not *come to see* Jean Brodie in any cumulative way. At every stage, Sandy merely rereads Jean Brodie and draws conclusions according to her prevailing interests and contexts.

In terms of artistic endeavour, Sandy's every move supersedes her last such that their implications no longer consist in simple fascinations with the artistically-inclined, as in her insistence on the pronunciation of 'nasty' or the coloured crystals of the science room and the sensuous sounds of Greek words (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 41). Eventually Sandy outgrows Jean Brodie and, extrapolating from Teddy Lloyd's most economical methods, blends literary, political and personal influences in a betrayal that retains the essence of Jean Brodie's teaching. "Art is greater than science," Sandy learns: "Art comes first, and then science ... Art and religion first; then philosophy; lastly science. That is the order of the great subjects of life, that's their order of importance" (25). The significance of Sandy's narrative arc culminating in her entrance into the Roman Catholic Church cannot be overstated because it is her last move in a series of magnifying artistic choices. Besides being an artistic move, it is a virtuoso realisation of "Art and religion first," achieved by her constant rereading and eventual betrayal of Jean Brodie (25). What was by art begun is in religion accomplished.

'CREATIVITY MEANS CASUALTIES': MATTERS OF VIOLENCE AND BEING STUCK

Since contextually determined alternatives are to be found in every process, everything can be betrayed and should be held betrayable. It is along these lines that Sandy's betrayal, borne out of critical appraisals of her surroundings, attests to Marina Mackay's observation: "what creative-fiction making and political treachery have in common in Spark's novels is their shared scepticism about orthodoxy, their resistance to consensual and monolithic understandings of what constitutes the real" (520). There is a continually

conscious scrutiny of the hegemonic meanings around her that postmodern implications can be gleaned, especially as it also corresponds to the art of ridicule Spark advocates in “The Desegregation of Art.” By such measure, betrayal offers desirable and effective resistance to the violence inherent to structures of prevailing meanings or, to employ a postmodern term, metanarratives. Marina Mackay’s point about Spark’s novels engaging in a “shared scepticism about orthodoxy” (520) joins with Linda Hutcheon’s idea that postmodernism “questions centralised, totalised, hierarchised, closed systems ... It acknowledges the human urge to make order, while pointing out that the orders we create are just that: human constructs, not natural or given entities” (41-2). As concerns Sandy, it is therefore crucial that her conversion to Roman Catholicism be read only as artistry, and not as guilt or punishment. It sheds light on how so many systems of meaning, religion in this case, exhibit an ironic blindness to their own violence.

To Sandy, “it was the religion of Calvin of which [she was] most deprived, or rather a specified recognition of it. She desired this birthright; something definite to reject” (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 108). Though her desire for that birthright commingles with her desire to reject it, her decision to extract, most economically, Teddy Lloyd’s Roman Catholicism for herself is telling. Couched as a protest against Roman Catholicism, Protestantism at its most trenchant questioning ripped the sole system of belief in the Western World apart, relegating the Catholic Church to a narrower, more qualified *Roman* Catholicism. The universal becomes only a denomination. What instigated such a sheer change is in no way less than the onslaught of the postmodern turn. Far from calling the Protestant Reformation a postmodern move—it decidedly is not—its protesting edge evaporates quite as easily as Jean Brodie’s aesthetic vision does. The Calvinism of Edinburgh in Sandy’s time is a similarly oppressive, terrorising sort of

religion medieval Roman Catholicism was and Protestantism, by nomenclature defined by its protesting, settles into the form of religion against which it protested. Gerard Carruthers notes in his essay “‘Fully to Savour Her Position’: Muriel Spark and Scottish Identity” how “it has become fashionable to see the Scottish trauma in consciousness as related to Calvinism” (492). Bound up in the nastiness she reads into the Calvinist God and how she reads Jean Brodie as one of those who “elected herself to grace in so particular a way,” Sandy’s willingness to betray the birthright she so desired, as she decides on Roman Catholicism in the end, can be read as protesting Protestantism (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 109). In spite of all that, in spite of all the scrutiny and scepticism and resistance informing her choice, Sandy “had found quite a number of Fascists much less agreeable than Miss Brodie” in the Roman Catholic Church (125).

The merits of postmodernism can be said to inhere in a social and political creativity that constantly resists the violence of hegemonic meaning. Yet only as an assertion or a sentence is this coherent. The postmodern meanings of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* may be found in Sandy’s betrayal of Jean Brodie but these meanings are themselves predicated on violence. Just because Sandy’s seeming incarceration is not punishment or penance for her betrayal, as this dissertation contends, does not mean that her betrayal is irreproachable, even less does it mean that her betrayal does not inflict violence on Jean Brodie. What has been so much discussed about Sandy’s betrayal of Jean Brodie invariably inclines towards an understatement of that violence on the easy assumption that Jean Brodie deserves it. In Gerard Carruthers’s view previously referred to, Sandy is “quite rightly hard-hearted, saying of Brodie’s old complaints of the betrayal the teacher has inferred must have come from one of her girls, ‘it is only possible to betray where loyalty is due’” (500). Ultimately, though, violence is not undone. Violence is not

avoided; violence is not even too differently manifested. Marina Mackay's point that "what creative fiction-making and political treachery have in common ... is their shared scepticism about orthodoxy, their resistance to consensual and monolithic understandings of what constitutes the real" (520) is conditioned also by her recognition that "creativity means casualties" (515). Efficacious as it is in resisting violence, creativity is violent.

And Sandy is stuck. Her violence aside, her embodiment of artistry of postmodern significance notwithstanding, Sandy's constant shifting and her series of artistic moves end. For all the critical and artistic rejoinders to her circumstances, each superseding the last, Sandy's artistic moves end in the convent; for all the divergence between them, Sandy granting interviews and dispensing wisdom from the convent seem only a slight variation on Jean Brodie's externalising fixed meanings. Has she failed as Jean Brodie had despite having come further? Violence is. Violence, however, should not be taken as simply undesirable. There is no escaping violence. But the social and political creativity that stem from, surround and spring out of Sandy's betrayal, which accomplishes her version of putting art and religion first, are aligned with the "textual, fantastical, and world-making force of the imagination that point toward an incipient postmodernity" of which Marina Mackay writes (507). It is in the constructive, world-making force that postmodernism mitigates inevitable violence.

The very last line of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, referenced across a variety of contexts thus far, offers another intriguing possibility that intersects with these matters of violence and being stuck, and the postmodern meanings of this wee novel. Peering out of the dark parlour to answer her visitors' questions, Sandy frequently revisits "the biggest influence" (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 35) and "the main influences" of her life and

determines this each time: “There was a Miss Jean Brodie in her prime,” through which the literary, political, personal and Calvinist influences are filtered (128). Sandy’s repeated ascribing of her achievements, most notable of which her psychological treatise “The Transfiguration of the Commonplace,” to Jean Brodie in her prime may appear ironic. Nonetheless, it is here that Sandy discloses a postmodern bearing because the space she inhabits is at once owed to and apart from Jean Brodie. Hutcheon’s conception applies: postmodern interrogation is “not a rejection of the formal values in favour of the latter [but] a rethinking of each in the light of the other” (42). Sandy rethinks her position in the convent in light of her school days during Jean Brodie’s prime and rethinks her school days during Jean Brodie’s prime in light of her position in the convent. More than a postmodern leaning in narrative content, the first iteration of this scene is represented in prolepsis. That line, “There was a Miss Jean Brodie in her prime,” resonate with renewed complexity and nuance each time Jean Brodie’s prime is referred to, pondered over or declared (35). For while Sandy’s narrative in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* ends on the novel’s last page, the implications of the narratives attributed to Sandy, only some of which are explored in the novel, do not end.

At any rate, the crucial difference between Jean Brodie and Sandy’s being stuck lies here: whereas Jean Brodie fixes herself out of pride or vanity or because she is simply limited, Sandy becomes stuck because she literally has nowhere else to go. There is nowhere else because “Art and religion” is the zenith of all things in life according to what she learns from Jean Brodie (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 25). The commonplace interpretations of Sandy being stuck in the convent are, in a curious way, not wrong insofar as the series of artistic moves have all but led her to a place where no higher, humanly possible stage is attainable. The epistemological intensifies into the ontological.

Physically stuck in the convent as she is, having settled on being Sister Helena as she has, Sandy is not stagnant. In all her time in the convent, Sandy's artistic endeavours continue to flourish. In the years that elapse after Sandy "extracted, among other things, [Teddy Lloyd's] religion as a pith from a husk" and becomes a nun, she works on and publishes "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace" (123). With that completed and only "in her middle age" Sandy is "at last allowed all those visitors to the convent—so many visitors being against the Rule" (33). The reach and influence and manner of Sandy's artistry continue to develop and evolve, first by means of "her psychological book which was so unexpectedly famed" (35), then by means of the conversations she has with the "many visitors" who came to see her afterward (33). These never end. Sandy constantly crosses between the epistemological and ontological.

This inflects Muriel Spark's own opinion on the matter expressed in her interview with Robert E. Hosmer Jr.: "The thing about Miss Brodie in a person like Sandy—I don't put Sandy as the wise woman in the novel, I put Miss Brodie as the wiser—the thing about Miss Brodie is that she has no restraining influence whatsoever, whereas Sandy did" (248). Leaving aside who the wiser woman is—wisdom is perhaps a troublesome category for a postmodern study—it is important to note that Sandy refines what Jean Brodie attempted for herself and inspired in her girls. What Jean Brodie fails at, in terms of aesthetic vision and postmodern being, comes down not to self-restraint. It is a shortcoming. Contrary to Spark's take, then, it is Sandy who has no restraining influence, when one considers her betrayal of Jean Brodie and subsequent entry into the convent as successive artistic moves. And in this, the postmodern potential of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* converges on Sandy.

When carefully appraised and undistracted by the easy conflation of causality and chronology, Chapter II shows how the significance of Sandy's betrayal of Jean Brodie outstrips simple morality and consequences. It traces betrayal as an art form and demonstrates how the meanings of betrayal, which consist in social and political creativity by way of art and religion, take on a postmodern aspect and dramatise the bidirectional shifts between the epistemological and ontological. All this is precipitated by prolepsis which, as laid out in Chapter I, may not be an overt postmodern narrative strategy but Spark wields it to postmodern effect. Chapter II foregrounds how prolepsis in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is a relooking that attains to a postmodern effect across content and form. That line, "There was a Miss Jean Brodie in her prime," reveals how the conclusion is not simple, straightforward closure but significant and continuous retrojections of Jean Brodie's prime and everything else it colours: artistry, Fascism, betrayal, Roman Catholicism (128). Shaped by previous iterations, every iteration retroactively modulates all previous ones.

There was, indeed, a Miss Jean Brodie in her prime.

CONCLUSION

EXTRAPOLATING FROM MURIEL SPARK'S ART OF BETRAYAL

She was a creature apart, not of us but living among us with lively disdain and mistrust—rather like, well, a cat.

Parul Sehgal. "What Muriel Spark Saw."

She seemed always to be just out of reach, like the enigmatic smile of an ever-vanishing Cheshire cat.

Patricia Waugh. "Muriel Spark and the Metaphysics of Modernity: Art, Secularisation, and Psychosis."

In its "infinite unpackability," as Candia McWilliam puts it, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* allows for a transformative study of Muriel Spark's oeuvre and her postmodernism (vi). Through its study of Jean Brodie's artistic vision and its potential for violence, Chapter I scrutinises the complexities and dangers that follow from the intertwined threads of art and reality. This emphasis on the artistry of all lays ground not only for a rethinking of Sandy's betrayal of Jean Brodie in Chapter II but also highlights how its political implications are more sensitively fulfilled. For if everything is held to be betrayable then the potential for artistic rereadings abound. Thus, this Conclusion

extrapolates from the meanings of betrayal in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* presented in Chapters I and II to chart a discernible postmodern thrust against a broader context of Spark's works. Spark most clearly lays out her take on postmodern artistry in "The Desegregation of Art." Since the "art and literature of sentiment and emotion ... cheats us into a sense of involvement with life and society," being essentially "a segregated activity," we should turn to "the satirical, the harsh and witty, the ironic and derisive" because the "art of ridicule is an art that everyone can share in some degree, given the world that we have" (80-1). As such, there should be "a less impulsive generosity, a less indignant representation of social injustice, and a more deliberate cunning, a more derisive undermining of what is wrong" (81).

It is no surprise, then, that Spark's depiction of betrayal as dissections of the consensual and monolithic are perpetrated by "intensely clever" characters who are, as Parul Sehgal describes in her piece published in *The New Yorker*, "with few variations ... a bit lonely, a bit criminally inclined" ("What Muriel Spark Saw" 2). They are good conduits for Spark's ridicule, with that deliberate cunning and derisive undermining of what is wrong. For the "art of Spark" is characterised, as Ali Smith sees it, by "all the carefree carefulness, all the far-reaching economy all the merciless, sharp mercy" that "adds up to something huge—a sprightly philosophical rejection of twentieth-century angst" (*A Far Cry from Kensington* ii). This art allows some fleeting respite from a world plagued by obsessions with uncertainty and the incomprehensibilities of this world. And betrayal accomplishes that "special calling of arts and letter" which, to Spark, is to "bring about a mental environment of honesty and self-knowledge, a sense of the absurd, and a general looking-lively to defend ourselves from the ridiculous oppression of our time, and

above all to entertain us thoroughly in the process” (“The Desegregation of Art” 81-2). Artistry is all.

While “The Desegregation of Art” is a speech given in 1970, and which critics identify as a turning point in Spark’s career, those very threads of Spark’s postmodernism are found in novels published before that. *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* was, for instance, published in 1961. It is more appropriate, therefore, to regard “The Desegregation of Art” not just by its chronology in the span of Spark’s career but to look at and look back to it as one reads her works since it both prefigures and sheds retrospective, postmodern light on her novels. “The Desegregation of Art” represents, as it were, moment of prolepsis. By engaging with Spark’s own notions about postmodern artistry laid out in “The Desegregation of Art,” this Conclusion explores how Spark’s assertion that she “would like to see less emotion and more intelligence in these efforts to impress our minds and hearts” is accomplished by modulations on betrayal across content and form in novels dating before and after “The Desegregation of Art” (80).

It explores two instances where Spark’s postmodern touch promises possibilities for a longer, more extensive study that far exceeds the limits of this foregoing dissertation. It first reads *Memento Mori* (1959) which, like *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, was published before 1970 and which involves similar moral ambiguities and a sense that readers’ expectation for an ending with finality is betrayed. *Memento Mori* is Spark’s third book—not her first—but it is, as A. L. Kennedy finds, what “marks her real debut as a mature novelist” (xi). Thereafter, it turns to Spark’s last novel, *The Finishing School* (2004), as it resonates with *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* in significant ways: it is set in a school and betrayal involves teacher and student. The two novels span five decades, each

of them arising from distinct stages in Muriel Spark's career, but they are a difference of posture rather than type. Together with *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, these novels are poised along what Ali Smith identifies in her introduction to *A Far Cry from Kensington* as the "Sparkian balance of artifice and truth" (xii). Finally, it extracts postmodern meanings from the betrayals presented in these novels and addresses how to know oneself, what to do with oneself in a postmodern world and how to be in a postmodern world since as Brian McHale argues, postmodernist fiction is coloured by the bidirectional shifts between the epistemological and ontological dominants.

MEMENTO MORI (1959)

'Remember you must die' rings through *Memento Mori*. At the heart of the novel are mystery telephone calls plaguing a group of old people with reminders that they must die. These characters brandish a set of monstrous, merciless behaviours, driven in part by a desperate realisation that being "over seventy is like being engaged in a war. All our friends are going or gone and we survive amongst the dead and the dying as on a battlefield" (*Memento Mori* 31). Time is running out and those endless telephone calls—"Remember you must die"—propel the novel with an intensity towards its conclusion where their deaths are narrated in a list: "Charmian died ... Godfrey died ... Guy Leet died ... Ronald Sidebottome is allowed up in the afternoons but is not expected to last another winter. Janet Sidebottome died ... Chief Inspector Mortimer died ... Miss Valvona went to her rest" (225-6). Human civilities die in the face of death and the contingencies of virtues and goodness are disclosed. In this context, A. L. Kennedy

describes the novel as depicting “a world largely robbed of compassion and how terrible that is, what a death in life can produce. *Memento Mori* shows perhaps the world’s greatest crime, the avoidable wrong, the human fault, the death of mercy (xii-iii). This holds true, especially as regards the “avoidable wrong, the human fault” which is the “death of mercy” (xiii). With the preponderance of blackmail and coercion and lies, these characters with long, intertwining histories betray each other with almost reckless abandon. Yet, betrayal in *Memento Mori* means more than treachery the likes of which extensively discussed before. This section reads the significance of Jean Taylor’s betrayal of Charmian Piper in connection with Spark’s handling of mystery in *Memento Mori*, which has to do with death and remembering it. On a fuller appreciation of death and its effect on life, it explores how the interpenetrating dynamics between betrayal and the mystery of the telephone calls evoke the postmodern meanings underlying *Memento Mori*.

Jean Taylor says: “There is a time for loyalty and a time when loyalty comes to an end. Charmian should know that by now” (*Memento Mori* 175). Her phrasing here resonates with Sandy’s hard-hearted declaration about not owing Jean Brodie any loyalty in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. That Jean Taylor betrays Charmian Piper out of kindness is therefore unexpected. By having Godfrey Colston informed of the affair Charmian had with Guy Leet between 1902 and 1907, and again from 1926, Jean Taylor reveals a fifty-year old secret of Godfrey and Charmian’s marriage. But her revelation is aimed at saving Godfrey from Mrs Pettigrew who, possessing evidence of Godfrey’s extramarital affairs, blackmails him mercilessly. Jean Taylor sees “it necessary that Godfrey Colston should stop being morally afraid of Charmian—at least it is worth trying. I think, if he knows of Charmian’s infidelity, he won’t fear any disclosures about his. Let him go and gloat over Charmian. Let him—”(175). Jean Taylor’s betrayal is a moral choice; a

more moral one than Charmian's silence on this in any case. For at various moments, "Charmian wondered, once more, which of Godfrey's secrets [Mrs Pettigrew] could have got hold of. The Colston Brewery affair? Or merely one or more of his numerous infidelities" (162). Although "she was tempted to go to Godfrey and say, 'There is nothing you can tell me about your past life which would move me in the slightest. I know most of your supposed secrets, and what I do not know would still not surprise me,'" Charmian never musters the courage to do this, choosing instead to let Godfrey suffer Mrs Pettigrew's afflictions (162).

Jean Taylor's betrayal ensures the failure of Mrs Pettigrew's blackmail and the matter concludes with Godfrey's telling Mrs Pettigrew "You can't tell Charmian anything ... that she doesn't know already" (*Memento Mori* 209). While this frees Godfrey from oppression and makes him feel that "life was worth taking care of," to the effect that he drives more carefully than before, Spark's off-hand treatment leaves the resolution less than satisfying as the narrative simply shifts to Dame Lettie's gruesome murder and other disparate threads and does not return to this (208). Furthermore, her schemes with Godfrey may have floundered on Jean Taylor's betrayal but it is Mrs Pettigrew—and only Mrs Pettigrew—who unambiguously "had her reward" at the end (224). The final section of *Memento Mori* lists the characters' futures which, for the most part, is a catalogue of their deaths and their dying. Charmian's, for one, is narrated as such: "she "died one morning in the following spring, at the age of eighty-seven" (225). Mrs Pettigrew's future is presented first in the list and is the longest and most detailed:

Mrs Pettigrew had her reward. Lisa's will was proved in her favour and she inherited all her fortune. After her first stroke Mrs Pettigrew went to live

in a hotel at South Kensington. She is still to be seen at eleven in the morning at Harrod's Bank where she regularly meets some of the other elderly residents to discuss the shortcomings of the hotel management, and to plan various campaigns against the staff. She can still be seen in the evening jostling for a place by the door of the hotel lounge before the dinner gong sounds. (224-5)

It is also important that Mrs Pettigrew is described in the present tense: "She is still to be seen ... [s]he can still be seen" (225). Not only does Mrs Pettigrew's part in the narrative not end with death, she continues to live and continues to enjoy herself in her circumstances and, unlike every other character whose futures are narrated, is neither suffering nor dying. Her death is left out entirely. With Mrs Pettigrew, Spark rather betrays readerly expectations for some manner of poetic justice.

While narratives need not follow an uncomplicated morality where good behaviours are rewarded and the likes of Mrs Pettigrew punished, the conclusion to *Memento Mori* is unsatisfying. Connected to this are the telephone calls—"Remember you must die"—because Spark similarly frustrates her characters' instinctual desire for straightforward, conclusive resolutions to this mystery surrounding them. Even readers, who are able to rationalise the chronology of events in all their detail and hence better placed to unravel this narrative puzzle, get no satisfactory answers because Spark insists on leaving them unsolved. She declares twinklingly that "they have to lie with the mystery, because life is a mystery, ultimately" (Interview with Robert E. Hosmer Jr. 241). This corresponds to Linda Hutcheon's study of how postmodern literary expressions often "interrogate the nature of ... narrative closure, of representation, and of the context and

conditions of both their production and reception” (54). But it seems too easy to simply regard all this as a postmodern game Spark writes into *Memento Mori*. Life is a mystery, perhaps, but the eventuality of death is not. One should, after all, remember that one must die. Tracing the mystery of the telephone calls from this presentation of death therefore casts a different complexion on betrayal in *Memento Mori* because, as Inspector Henry Mortimer opines, “if you look for one thing ... you frequently find another” (211).

To begin with, the mystery telephone calls cannot be taken only logically. It is not even clear if it is one caller or many callers. They all heard different voices: everything from “a common man,” “a cultured, middle-aged man ... the tone is sinister in the extreme,” “a schoolboy” (*Memento Mori* 150), a “man of the Orient” (152) and, only for Henry Mortimer, “always this woman, gentle-spoken and respectful” (156). Alec Warner suggests mass hysteria and Dame Lettie insists that “there must be a gang” (152), but it is crucial to take more seriously the recurring suggestion that “the offender is Death himself” because the meanings of *Memento Mori* morph on this (144). Death defines life. Without suggesting that there are supernatural elements at play in *Memento Mori*, death, or at least the acknowledgement of its inevitability, is a prolepsis of sorts. The disquieting effects of prolepsis is less stark in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* because it interrupts narrative flow fairly unobtrusively, which is perhaps why it attracts little critical attention. Here, these telephone calls by unidentifiable callers endlessly grating on—‘Remember you must die’—join this deeply unpalatable fact with unresolved anonymity. If there is postmodern significance to be gleaned from *Memento Mori*, it is less of the superficial absence of narrative closure and more of how Spark, through her presentation of old people and death, returns a truthfulness to life by breaking the characters’ preferred façade

that excludes death. Which is itself ironic, considering how death is the most unsurprising eventuality of life: it is absolute.

Death leaves injustices untouched and mysteries unsolved, good behaviours unrewarded and betrayals unpunished. In this, *Memento Mori* draws out how the desire for a coherent morality and satisfying conclusions is blind to its own limits. As with *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, morality and the implications of betrayal are not the myopic business of reward and punishment because that proceeds from a forgetfulness of death. Ruth Whittaker points out, in her essay “On Memento Mori,” that those

who recognise and accept the possibility of the apparently irrational, who realise the existence of a world not explicable in human terms, find the experiences liberating. Their reality is enlarged to include heaven and hell. Those who cannot cope with the new, extraordinary and often frightening experience remain trapped in their narrow rational world. (110)

That reality can be enlarged on the acceptance that complete knowledge eludes human capacity, since death can never truly be known, is to take a postmodern turn. As subject matter or narrative or metanarrative, whether death is the final, definitive end is immaterial. From its particular outlook on death, *Memento Mori* propounds a postmodern potential that colours the single, provisional instances of life before that. For when one remembers that one must die and takes its very unknowability as the first principle of judgement, everything can be taken with a considered equanimity, everything can be looked at different since, in Parul Sehgal’s view, “we learn how powerlessness can make [one] an expert in the art of appraisal” (3). Naturally, most characters, preoccupied with their petty vendettas, do not acquire such equanimity. Returning to the issue of Jean

Taylor's betrayal, it is significant that Charmian registers only "Godfrey's brightness and health" (*Memento Mori* 207) when he informs her that he is "getting rid of Mrs Pettigrew ... [the] most domineering bitch" (208). This scene, which is also the last involving either of them, ends thus: "Charmian began to laugh, and could not stop, and eventually had to be put to bed" (208). Underlying Charmian's laugh is a sense of joy that comes with liberation following her embracing the fact that she must die. Her reply to her call, 'Remember you must die,' is that "for the past thirty years and more I have thought of it from time to time. My memory is failing in certain respects. I am gone eighty-six. But somehow I do not forget my death, whenever that will be" (128-9).

Charmian's perspective on death liberates her from the torments of their marriage; she is no longer trapped by the narrow rationalities of responding to secrets and betrayals. Not only does life matter more when death is kept in view, it is no longer confined by a single version of rationality and new meanings begin to develop. Betrayal, for one, takes on a favourable sheen in *Memento Mori* without assuming status as a prescribed course of action. It is only in the situation facing Godfrey Colston and Charmian Piper and Mrs Pettigrew that Jean Taylor's betrayal is necessary and even desirable. Likewise, the lack of resolution or revelation to the mysterious telephone calls in *Memento Mori* is unsatisfying only from a single version of narrative conventions, especially on account of the era in which Spark was writing. Ali Smith points this out in her article, "The Typing Ghost," published in *The Guardian* in July 2009: "Writers such as John Wain, Colin Wilson, John Braine and John Osborne honed a documentary-realist art that, by its fusion of kitchen-sink realism, fury and mundanity, proclaimed itself authentic" (1). But *Memento Mori* proceeds with "a paradoxical lightness, and a sense of mixed resolution and unresolvedness that leaves its readers both satisfied and disturbed [and] would take to task

its own contemporaneity and ask profound questions about art, life and belief” (1). Uncommon as it is for mysteries to be left off or abruptly discontinued, taking death seriously is infinitely more real and realist than whatever kitchen-sink variety is in vogue.

Moreover, *Memento Mori* can be read along Gabriella Turnaturi’s point about betrayal first raised in the Introduction of this dissertation: “For the betrayer—for all betrayers, and not just spies—the world that surrounds us loses its obviousness and appears as simply one of many possible versions of reality and truth” (34). In Jean Taylor’s case, her betrayal blurs the boundaries of her loyalty to Charmian. It loses its obviousness and its nature as but one version of loyalty in a world she knows about becomes, in turn, obvious: Godfrey’s benefit enters her consideration. Beyond this, Spark’s betrayal of readerly expectations for closure in *Memento Mori* brings up a more metaphysical aspect to all this, given death as its subject matter. With this group of old people espousing many different opinions on death, and these are made manifest alongside and against each other when the telephone calls start ringing in, meaning in life becomes recalibrated. For

Spark’s work delights in mentioning the unmentionable, that nice people think nasty thoughts and do nasty things, that dressed people can also be naked, that sex is rarely as elevated or romantic as we’d wish, that the idea of strangers, or old people, or ugly people having sex can be appalling, that forgetting death renders us foolish and that dying can make us seem more foolish still. (Kennedy xii)

When death is put in view, all can be subverted. Boundaries change, lines shift, everything once clear loses its obviousness and all is equalised: everything is betrayable. *Memento*

Mori is thus Spark's response to that sentimental-realist narrative disposition she judges to have "cheat[ed] us into a sense of involvement with life and society," being essentially "a segregated activity" ("The Desegregation of Art" 80). Through a considered presentation of death, Spark returns a truthfulness to life, a truthfulness that includes characters' myriad grappling with the fact that one must, actually, die. Forgetting death renders us foolish but remembering it does not stave off dying. There is no escaping death. Death is unrivalled desegregation.

Reading betrayal and mystery in *Memento Mori* from the perspective of death illustrates how it is the nature of things to be unresolved and left hanging. Nothing is surprising. This does not mean that life lurches from context to context to inexplicable ends. It is merely that one's response to inherent uncertainties depend on contextually determined options. As Henry Mortimer says,

If I had my life over again I should form the habit of nightly composing myself to thoughts of death. I would practise, as it were, the remembrance of death. There is no other practice which so intensifies life. Death, when it approaches, ought not to take one by surprise. It should be part of the full expectancy of life. Without an ever-present sense of death life is insipid. You might as well live on the whites of eggs. (153)

As with every instance of prolepsis in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* that so intensifies its narrative momentum, remembering death is prolepsis that so intensifies life. That death is decided and inescapable does not defeat all meaning and purpose. Rather, it gives life meaning in every shifting, changing context: "To remember one's death, in short, is a way of life" (*Memento Mori* 154). Betrayal in *Memento Mori* joins with the presentation of

death and mystery in modulation of Muriel Spark's postmodernism, and transfigures the quotidian and everyday into fascinating narratives. Approached from betrayal, "the eccentric joy and energy of this novel, what may be the rush of the author's enthusiasms, her mature passions, is part of what makes a book on an unsupportable subject not just philosophically stimulating but also delightful" (Kennedy xii). For death, like betrayal, recurs in Spark's work in relation to reading and writing, not always literally but always connected to the artistry, demonstrating again how the epistemological intensifies into the ontological.

The dynamics between betrayal and death, and reading and writing, are even more intimately interwoven in *Loitering with Intent* (1981) and *A Far Cry from Kensington* (1984), two of only three novels—out of Spark's twenty-two—narrated from first-person perspectives and which Spark acknowledges as autobiographical. *Loitering with Intent* opens with Fleur Talbot sitting "on a stone slab of some Victorian grave writing [her] poem as long as the sun lasted" (1). With death and that graveyard constantly revisited, Fleur rejoices. She goes on her way rejoicing, finding how "wonderful it feels to be an artist and a woman in the twentieth-century" (15). *A Far Cry from Kensington* similarly keeps death in view, with hints of the occult, against a backdrop of the publishing industry, with Spark's own experiences of betrayal written into Hector Bartlett, the "*pisseur de copie*. It means that he pisses hack journalism, it means that he urinates frightful prose" (110). And in "the literary there are many pisseurs de copie" (58). Across these novels, Spark takes up again the ideas behind betrayal and death and joins them with a postmodern blend of ridicule and the conflation of art and reality. But it is clear, in the end, that if "you don't remember Death, Death reminds you to do so. And if you

can't cope with the facts the next best thing is to go away for a holiday" (*Memento Mori* 179).

THE FINISHING SCHOOL (2004)

"When you finish at College Sunrise you should be real and truly finished," so begins the first pages of Muriel Spark's last novel (5-6). Her career is real and truly finished with *The Finishing School* (2004), and the novel ends, "As we go through the evening and into tonight ..." (181). Aside from the poignance of these lines as death catches up with Spark two years after its publication, *The Finishing School* exudes by a familiar liveliness, impelled in part by betrayals and the interlacing of life with the art of writing. College Sunrise, the eponymous finishing school of the novel, is run by Rowland Mahler and his wife Nina. That it is "almost unknown in the more distinctive educational circles, and in cases where it was known, it was frequently dismissed as being rather shady," is unsurprising (8). For the school is "aimed principally at affording Rowland the time and space and other opportunities to complete his novel, while living their lives pleasantly" (9). This bohemian finishing school with "an experimental and tolerant tone" is gripped by an intense "jealousy over a book, a work of art, a piece of writing" which, from Nina's point of view, is "indeed a fact she was trying to swallow": "It was a fact, not merely a possibility, not something new in the world, but something new to Nina as she grasped it" (80). Of

all the pupils Chris caused Rowland the most disquiet. He was writing a novel, yes. Rowland, too, was writing a novel, and he wasn't going to say how good he thought Chris was. A faint twinge of that jealousy which was to mastermind Rowland's coming months, growing in intensity small hour by hour, seized Rowland as he looked. (4)

A game of cat and mouse follows. Chris loftily forges ahead with his story about Mary, Queen of Scots and Rowland becomes increasingly desperate, having at some point "an urge to tip a bucket of green paint over Chris's red hair. Green paint, and it all running over his face, and obliterating his book. Or perhaps to wreck the computer with the whole work in it. Switch it off, wreck, terminate it" (75). With that loaded image of splashing green paint, this overflowing jealousy is incited by each of them thinking himself betrayed by the other: Rowland feels Chris exploited his school and hospitality for selfish gains while Chris feels Rowland exploited his talent and contacts for his own ambition.

This culminates in the altercation between them in the bathroom towards the end of the novel that very nearly results in Rowland's death:

There was a rapid movement. Chris's bright red head bent suddenly before Rowland's eyes. If what happened in the next part-second could be described in slow motion it was this: Chris bent down and grabbed the little live heater in both hands, holding it high above his head. He approached the bath. 'You'll kill me. Put that down,' yelled Rowland. Exactly as he spoke he jabbed Chris in the groin with his bath-brush and vaulted over the bath. At the same instant, Chris, in pain from the jab, bent forward so that the live electric stove fell into the water. The lights

went out, as it was discovered later all over the house. Rowland felt a quiver up his leg. His heel had been seared. The water still sizzled with the heat of the fire, where Rowland was so very nearly electrocuted. (176)

Then, suddenly and within the span of two pages, a year lapses and Chris and Rowland “engaged themselves in a Same-Sex Affirmation Ceremony,” and the novel ends in two pages after that (179). Spark’s ending is bizarre to the last. If, as Parul Sehgal notes in “What Muriel Spark Saw,” to “read Spark is always to read about reading,” then this ending and the jealousy of the novel should be read along its connections with literary art (3). After all, both Chris and Rowland are writing novels, and the jealousy fuelling *The Finishing School* is also the subject matter of Chris’s book: “We are in the latter half of the sixteenth century, in Scotland. The causes of these homicides were jealousy. Uncontrollable jealousy” (124); “Jealousy, green jealousy, that was the motivation of the age” (125). Though narrowly avoided in the case of Chris and Rowland, even homicide applies. Between Chris and Rowland is a mutual, parasitic dependence subsisting on jealousy. Despite Chris’s regard of himself as a literary prodigy, he tells Nina: “I need his jealousy. His intense jealousy. I can’t work without it” (118):

What is jealousy? Jealousy is to say, what you have got is mine, it is mine, it is mine? Not quite. It is to say, I hate you because you have got what I have not got and desire. I want to be me, myself, but in your position, with your opportunities, your fascination, your looks, your abilities, your spiritual good. (64-5)

One remains himself but constantly projects his desires outwards, simultaneously wanting and wanting to be the other. Bound up with this jealousy and writing novels is not only their engagement at the end of the novel but also Nina and Rowland's marriage.

Nina and Rowland's marriage is not the focus of *The Finishing School* but there exists a significant though easily overlooked thread of betrayal. Rowland discovers that his notebook of observations has been meddled with: "I've found words in my notebook that I didn't write," he tells Nina one night (95). Nina suggests Chris to be the culprit but it is Nina who has been changing Rowland's words: "Nina looked up 'antiguous' in the dictionary but couldn't find it. She changed it to 'contiguous'" (161). Like all else, Rowland's writing is rewritable and, because he is rather mediocre, he does not know better and never finds out about Nina's betrayal. Curiously, this revelation that Nina is behind the alterations is written into a self-reflexive passage about Rowland's observations on marriage:

A perfect marriage, one partner of which is a great and successful artist, probably can exist, but very, very rarely. The difficulty lies in conflicting dedications. Most marriages, where both or one is an artist, are rickety. —Most marriages of this kind comprise one failed artist.

The dedication of an artist involves willing oblivion to everything else while the art is being practiced, and for the hours antiguous to it.
(160-1)

Rowland obviously feels that he is an artist whose artistry is supported by Nina, merely his wife, who at the start "believed in it, and in Rowland as a novelist, as much as he did himself" (9). Following from Rowland's own opinions, though, his marriage with Nina is

rickety: he being an artist and Nina not. At the same time, Rowland finds a rival in Chris, whose talents are more immediately noticeable, but sees that as motivation for refining his own art. By the time Chris and Rowland become engaged in the end, “Rowland’s book, ‘The School Observed,’ was published satisfactorily, as was Chris’s first novel, highly praised for its fine, youthful disregard of dry historical facts” (179). Given that their relationship is built on jealousy, and both Chris and Rowland consider themselves great artists, each ostensibly spurs the other on to greater artistic achievement. Chris says, “I like Rowland. I couldn’t manage without him in a way. He’s the yolk of an egg. The white part’s not enough. The yolk, for better or for worse” (31-2). The perfect marriage is, though “very, very rare,” apparently possible in the case of Chris and Rowland because, by implication, they take turns being the “great and successful artist” (160).

Though seemingly insignificant and not highlighted as such, Nina’s betrayal of Rowland holds important implications for the postmodern slant to *The Finishing School*. In her capacity as “Rowland’s wife and colleague” at College Sunrise, Nina is defined by Rowland (5). However, her betrayal inverts this dynamic between them. Nina’s secretly reading Rowland’s notebook of observations and making changes as she saw fit demonstrates how relooking is improving. Nina also even adds whole sections of details Rowland’s unobservant nature misses out on. On the basis of this notebook of observations, parts of which penned by Rowland and extensively altered by Nina, Rowland publishes “The School Observed.” But it is Nina who more truly observes the school in her time there. The title of Rowland’s book, “The School Observed,” suggests a relooking at the finishing school he ran, regarding it a certain way, complete with observations and opinions. But all this is accomplished by Nina. Chris’s disregard of dry historical facts in his book that involved “a new theory of Mary Queen of Scots’ husband”

(144) in so many recapitulates Sandy's fascination with Jean Brodie's "method of making patterns with facts" (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* 72). He reimagines the causes of the murder of the husband of Mary, Queen of Scots. There are no stable, unchanging facts; there are only patterns of facts and betrayals that can be relooked and reimagined at will. Across form and content and various subject matters, Spark's postmodernism consists in this idea of looking and relooking. Yet, with Chris and Rowland, their manner of relooking is perfunctory at best. They lack Jean Brodie's subversive edge, Sandy's ruthless finesse and the consequence of Jean Taylor's conviction. In sum, they are but an engaged couple of whom one is a petulant teenager with vaguely intelligent notions and the other a grown man prone to flights of fancy but without talent to carry them off. It is Nina whose narrative arc carries substance and Nina whom the narrative returns to.

Later, after Rowland moves away to Ravenna then Istanbul and Nina marries Israel Brown, she observes College Sunrise differently when she returns to Ouchy from time to time: "The house of College Sunrise was now a youth hostel. When she passed the house, she sometimes felt nostalgia, not at all for Rowland, but for College Sunrise itself" (180). *The Finishing School* thus turns on Nina's looking and relooking and the novel closes on a last look that Nina casts on College Sunrise:

And once, on her way to the hotel on just such an errand, on a summer evening, she heard one more from the open windows, the chatter of young voices, so that it seemed almost like College Sunrise again. She waved to Albert. And she heard the dear voice of Hazel forecasting the weather on Sky News: 'As we go through this evening and into tonight.' (181)

AFTERWORD

Muriel Spark's postmodern manner, her advocating satire and ridicule as a desegregated art form and her penchant for forcing into sharper reappraisal many things so easily taken for granted consist in holding all things to be betrayable. Put forward in terms of betrayal in this dissertation, Spark's ridicule illustrates how art which is done well desegregates. Since every philosophical leaning, every school of thought and every intellectual position is exclusionary in some way, betraying the impulse to conform staves off the violence inherent to these systems. For our

noble aspirations, our sympathies, our elevated feelings should not be inspired merely by visits to an art gallery, a theatre or by reading a book, but rather the rhetoric of our times should persuade us to contemplate the ridiculous nature of reality before us, and teach us to mock it. We should know ourselves better by now than to be under the illusion that we are all essentially aspiring, affectionate and loving creatures. We do have these qualities, but we are aggressive, too. ("The Desegregation of Art" 82)

Unfazed by conventions, whether they be novelistic or moralistic, Spark portrays the silliness of human beings and the silliness of the things they want to believe in. For most writers, these are almost too impolite to mention as is. To Mark Lawson, "no one found the uneasy as easy as Muriel Spark" (xv). Together with a keen sense of style and imagination, she creates an oeuvre of unparalleled concision and precision on her astute handling of narrative forms. On this note, Ian Rankin is also right in pointing out how Spark's "genius stems from the fact that she was an expert stylist who could engage the general reader while still posing tough moral questions" (ix). In spite of all this, though,

“critics often ignored the edgy, experimental side of Spark’s craft, opting instead to focus on her glittering prose and comedic lightness of touch” (ix).

What this Conclusion demonstrates is that Spark may have garnered attention and critical interest through the decades for many reasons, but the potential for rereading and rediscovery remains largely untapped. Whether by the study of betrayal in its various forms or by a directed interest in postmodern meanings, Spark’s works inspire constant, wry reevaluation of all things, illustrating how, in a postmodern world, everything is narrative. Indeed, as Nicholas Rescher puts it, “‘the truth’ means little when it is not processed in narrative terms. Narrative ... is not an optimal instrument for depicting reality as nature encompasses it, but it is singularly well fitted to the production of meaningful (as opposed to actual) story worlds” (qtd. in Macleod 584). Socio-cultural leanings come and go, and philosophical trends ebb and flow, but “Spark’s fiction does not function as yet another exhibit of postmodernism as much as act allegorically as a kind of metanarrative helping to explain the conundrums of a literary history which culminates in postmodernism as an unsatisfying narrative climax” (64). Her works traverse, in their singular stylishness, the ambiguities behind postmodernist fiction, seemingly at once modernist and not, and at once postmodernist and not.

Little wonder Parul Sehgal describes Muriel Spark as “a creature apart, not of us but living among us with lively disdain and mistrust—rather like, well, a cat” (3).

WORKS CITED

- Barfield, Owen. *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*. Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1973.
- Bold, Alan. *Muriel Spark*. New York: Methuen & Co., 1986.
- Brown, Peter Robert. "‘There’s Something about Mary’: Narrative and Ethics in The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie." *Journal of Narrative Theory* 36.2 (2006): 228-253. *Project Muse*.
- Carruthers, Gerard. "‘Fully to Savour Her Position’: Muriel Spark and Scottish Identity." *Modern Fiction Studies* 54.3 (2008): 487-504. *Project Muse*.
- Connor, Steven. *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourses of Human Sciences." *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Oxford: Routledge, 1978. 351-378.
- Foucault, Michel. "What is Enlightenment?" *The Foucault Reader*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984. 32-50.
- Freeman, Alan. "A Bit of the Other: *Symposium*, Futility and Scotland." *Theorising Muriel Spark*. Ed. Martin McQuillan. New York: Palgrave, 2002. 127-38.
- Haddox, Thomas F. "Religion for ‘Really Intelligent People’: The Rhetoric of Muriel Spark’s ‘Reality and Dreams.’" *Religion and Literature* 41.3 (2009): 43-66.

- Hodgkins, Hope Howell. "Stylish Spinsters: Spark, Pym, and the Postwar Comedy of the Object." *Modern Fiction Studies* 54.3 (2008): 523-43. *Project Muse*.
- Herman, David. Introduction. *Muriel Spark: Twenty-First Century Perspectives*. Ed. David Herman. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010. 1-18.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 1988.
- Hynes, Joseph. Introduction. *Critical Essays on Muriel Spark*. Ed. Joseph Hynes. New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992. 1-18.
- Josipovici, Gabriel. "The Large Testimony of Muriel Spark." *Hidden Possibilities: Essays in Honour of Muriel Spark*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014. 17-35.
- Kennedy, A. L. Introduction. *Memento Mori*. By Muriel Spark. London: Virago Modern Classics, 2011. ix-xiii.
- Kermode, Frank. *The Sense of an Ending*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- . "Unrivalled Deftness: The Novels of Muriel Spark." *Hidden Possibilities: Essays in Honour of Muriel Spark*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014. 107-18.
- Kolocotroni, Vassiliki. "Poetic Perception in the Fiction of Muriel Spark." *The Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark*. Ed. Michael Gardiner and Willy Maley. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010. 16-26.

Lanchester, John. Introduction. *The Driver's Seat*. By Muriel Spark. London: Penguin Classics, 1996.

Lawson, Mark. Introduction. *Loitering with Intent*. By Muriel Spark. London: Virago Modern Classics, 2012. ix-xvi.

Lodge, David. *The Art of Fiction*. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.

—. "The Uses and Abuses of Omniscience: Method and Meaning in Muriel Spark's 'The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie.'" *Critical Essays on Muriel Spark*. Ed. Joseph Hynes. New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992. 151-73.

Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986.

MacKay, Marina. "Muriel Spark and the Meaning of Treason." *Modern Fiction Studies* 54.3 (2008): 505-22. *Project Muse*.

MacLeod, Lewis. "Matters of Care and Control: Surveillance, Omniscience, and Narrative Power in 'The Abbess of Crewe' and 'Loitering with Intent.'" *Modern Fiction Studies* 54.3 (2008): 574-94. *Project Muse*.

McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1987.

McQuillan, Martin. "I Don't Know Anything about Freud: Muriel Spark Meets Contemporary Criticism." *Theorising Muriel Spark*. Ed. Martin McQuillan. New York: Palgrave, 2002. 1-31.

McWilliam, Candia. Introduction. *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. By Muriel Spark. London: Penguin Classics, 1961. v-xiii.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. "On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense." *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*. Trans. Sandra L. Gilman, Carole Blair and David J. Parent. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989. 246-57.

———. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Trans. Shaun Whiteside. Ed. Michael Tanner. London: Penguin Classics, 2003.

Page, Norman. *Modern Novelists: Muriel Spark*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990. Print.

Pope, Alexander. "Essay on Man." *Essay on Man and Other Poems*. Ed. Stanley Appelbaum. New York: Dover Publications, 1994. 45-78.

Price, Martin. "Splendid by Destructive Egotism." *The New York Times* January 21, 1962: 1-3.

Rankin, Ian. Introduction. *Symposium*. By Muriel Spark. London: Virago Modern Classics, 2014. ix-xii.

Reizbaum, Marilyn. "The Stranger Spark." *The Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark*. Ed. Michael Gardiner and Willy Maley. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010. 40-51.

Sawada, Chikako. *Muriel Spark's Postmodernism*. PhD Dissertation. University of Glasgow, 2004.

Sehgal, Parul. "What Muriel Spark Saw." *The New Yorker* April 8, 2014: 1-5.

Smith, Ali. "The Typing Ghost." *The Guardian* July 18, 2009: 1-6.

Spark, Muriel. "'Fascinated by Suspense': An Interview with Dame Muriel Spark." By Robert E. Hosmer Jr. *Hidden Possibilities: Essays in Honour of Muriel Spark*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014. 227-55.

———. *The Abbess of Crewe*. New York: New Direction Classics, 1995.

———. *A Far Cry from Kensington*. London: Virago Modern Classics, 2009.

———. "The Desegregation of Art." *The Informed Air: Essays by Muriel Spark*. Ed. Penelope Jardine. New York: New Directions Books, 2014. 77-82.

———. *The Finishing School*. New York: Anchor Books, 2004.

———. *Memento Mori*. London: Virago Modern Classics, 2011.

———. *Loitering with Intent*. London: Virago Modern Classics, 2012.

———. *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. London: Penguin Classics, 1961.

———. "'The Same Informed Air': An Interview with Muriel Spark." By Martin McQuillan. *Theorising Muriel Spark*. Ed. Martin McQuillan. New York: Palgrave, 2002. 210-29.

Stannard, Martin. *Muriel Spark: The Biography*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2009.

- Suh, Judy. "The Familiar Attractions of Fascism in Muriel Spark's 'The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie.'" *Journal of Modern Literature* 30.2 (2007): 86-102. *JSTOR*.
- Turnaturi, Gabriella. *Betrays: The Unpredictability of Human Relations*. Trans. Lydia G. Cochrane. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- Waugh, Patricia. "Muriel Spark and the Metaphysics of Modernity: Art, Secularisation, and Psychosis." *Muriel Spark: Twenty-First Century Perspectives*. Ed. David Herman. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010. 63-93.
- . Introduction. *Postmodernism: A Reader*. Ed. Patricia Waugh. London: Edward Arnold, 1992. 1-10. Print.
- . *Practising Postmodernism/Reading Modernism*. New York: Edward Arnold, 1992.
- Whittaker, Ruth. "On Memento Mori." *Critical Essays on Muriel Spark*. Ed. Joseph Hynes. New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992. 109-13.
- Wickman, Matthew. "Spark, Modernism and Postmodernism." *The Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark*. Ed. Michael Gardiner and Willy Maley. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010. 63-73.
- Wilde, Oscar. "The Decay of Lying." *Intentions*. Ed. Thomas B. Mosher. Portland: Bibliolife, Inc., 1994. 3-52.