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Ambivalence in Muriel Spark's Early Novels

Ambivalence v prvotních románech Muriel Sparkové

(Bachelor's Thesis)

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

In Olomouc

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Introduction

As the title suggests, this thesis concerns a special trait of Muriel Spark's early works, particularly a phenomenon of her times – ambivalence or ambiguity. For this purpose, I have chosen the framework consisting of eight novels reflecting Spark's unique imagination: *The Comforters* (1957), *Robinson* (1958), *Memento Mori* (1959), *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960), *The Bachelors* (1960), *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963), and *The Mandelbaum Gate* (1965).

First of all, this thesis is divided into three sections. In the first part, I will briefly introduce the richness of both private and public life of Scottish satirist Muriel Spark. Furthermore, I will consider the way it influenced her writing career which I find truly important before recognizing the technique of creating ambivalence in her works. The dual perception she forms in her novels is the reason why she deserves a considerable interest from the critics and the reason she becomes a magnificent novelist at the same time.

There is a short chapter on the tradition of doubleness in Scottish literature included in the thesis as well. The term ‘Caledonian antisyzygy’ perfectly describes the oeuvre of the Scottish authors, whose conflict of ideas was apparent long before the career of Muriel Spark.

The third chapter is dedicated to the actual analysis of each of the novels mentioned above. Spark's oeuvre is typical for the usage of oxymorons, by which she designs parallel worlds. In addition to disturbing norms, in her fiction she connects different realms, so the fictional domain is perceived from the contradictory perspectives.¹ Therefore, my objective is to analyse the impact of the ambiguity on the characters, their behaviour or thinking. Furthermore, I will establish the central figures of her fiction that are affected by the phenomenon.

Finally, I will summarize my findings about the duality in Muriel Spark's works I gathered while writing this thesis.

¹ Brian Cheyette, “Life-Stories: Redeeming the Past”, in *Muriel Spark* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2000) 7.

1 Muriel Spark – The Authoress

Since Muriel Spark was once termed as “a singular paradox”², I consider it essential to state the most important events from her life before revealing her unusual heterogeneous writings. However, her path of becoming an appreciated and outstanding novelist was not smooth. She was betrayed by her close friend – the event that would become the turning point, when Spark decided to write *Curriculum Vitae: Autobiography* (1992) – not to gain respect from her readers, but in order to defend herself. She wanted to be neither categorised nor popular from rumours.³

Muriel Sarah Camberg was born on 1 February 1918 in Edinburgh. She was not only welcomed by her parents Bernard and Sarah Camberg, but also by her almost six years older brother Philip.⁴ As for her primary education, she attended Presbyterian-oriented school in Edinburgh. There she found an inspiration for her later work *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, where the character of Miss Jean Brodie is partially derived from Spark's actual teacher – Christina Kay (Stannard 2009, 28). Also, Muriel had never attended the university (Jelínková 2006, 7).

“Muriel Spark may have been raised in Edinburgh, but she grew up in Africa” (Stannard 2009, 46). Stannard's statement perfectly describes Muriel's next life stage. After getting married to mentally unstable Sydney Oswald Spark, they decided to leave for Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), where she gave a birth to their son Robin on 9 July 1938. Besides this happiness, Africa was the place where she realized she made a terrible mistake marrying Sydney. As Ossie's mental conditions were getting worse, she made a decision to escape his husband and intended to return to her homeland with her son. She gained freedom, when she finally got home. However, it was not Muriel they knew before, but a strong woman and a loving mother (Stannard 2009, 44 – 60).

² Brian Cheyette, “Life-Stories: Redeeming the Past”, in *Muriel Spark* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2000) 19. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

³ Ema Jelínková, “Paní Sparková, enigma”, in *Ambivalence v románech Muriel Sparkové* (Olomouc: Periplum, 2006) 7. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

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

Surprisingly, it was her appalling life in Africa that started her writing career. Spark's dreadful African experience became the motif of *The Seraph and Zambesi* (1950) – this successful work won the award from *The Observer* (Jelínková 2006, 8). Suddenly, Muriel Spark – before just a mother, became also a famous authoress.

The following years were those of changes. In the second half of the 1950's, despite her Presbyterian education and upbringing, she decided to convert to the Roman Catholic Church and the Catholicism became “her natural frame of mind” (Stannard 2009, 206). She did not write any novel before the act of conversion, therefore it can be assumed it only helped her with writing fiction,⁵ as she later revealed in *My Conversion*:

I decided at last to become a Catholic, by which time I really became very ill. I was going about, but I was ready for a breakdown. I think it was the religious upheaval and the fact that I had been trying to write and I couldn't manage it. I was living in very poor circumstances and I was a bit undernourished as well. I suppose it all combined to give me my breakdown. I had a feeling while I was undergoing this real emotional suffering that it was all part of the conversion. But I don't know. It may have been an erroneous feeling.⁶

Alongside with her religious conversion in 1954, as most critics claimed, she also converted to the art of novel (Cheyette 2000, 6). Impressed by her brilliance, Macmillan published her very first book *The Comforters* in 1957 (Stannard 2009, 161 – 176). Perhaps, what interested Macmillan the most was her authorial voice, by which she wanted to warn and advise the readers.⁷ What is more, one successful novel was not enough, so Spark kept on writing and published twenty-one novels in a very short period of time, the last one being published in 2004.

In the 1960's, Spark gained popularity not only in the United Kingdom, but also on the other continent. It was caused mainly by the publication of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* in *The New Yorker*. Given that she was the first British woman to receive the entire issue accolade, the magazine gave her an offer to work in America which she accepted after she realized that everything was falling apart, and it would further continue. “She felt

⁵ Alan Massie, “Calvinism and Catholicism in Muriel Spark”, in *Muriel Spark: An Odd Capacity for Vision* (London: Vision Press, 1984) 95.

⁶ Joseph Hynes, *Critical Essays on Muriel Spark* (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1992) 25.

⁷ Allan Massie, “A personal voice: Anthony Powell, Graham Greene, Iris Murdoch, Muriel Spark, Kingsley Amis”, in *The Novel Today: A Critical Guide to the British Novel, 1970 – 1989* (New York: Longman, 1995) 16. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

excluded from her childhood home – and shortly afterwards went to live in New York” (Stannard 2009, 253 – 256; 263).

No doubts Muriel wanted to try as much as possible during her lifetime. After living in Africa and cosmopolis, she went to live in a vivid city of Italy – Rome in 1965. However, it was not Rome, but Tuscany where she eventually found her home and where she also died on 13 April 2006 at the age of eighty-eight. In addition to her many prizes and awards, she was made a Dame of the British Empire which only proved her being a special and valued personality.

Though, the feature of ambivalence is not only found within her fiction works. Muriel Spark herself was the uncategorizable authoress. Duality could perfectly suit into the description of her character – insider and outsider at the same time. Being Catholic or Jewish, European or cosmopolitan – this ambivalence in her personal life provided her with endless possibilities for her brilliant writings. What is more, even Spark's feeling for Scottishness changed – regarding to doubleness. From this perspective it is clearly understandable that “being dual” was close to Muriel – the reason why she incorporated this feature either into her plots, narratives, or characters. Her life story supports the autobiographical features found in her fiction – she wants us to recognize real people behind her characters.⁸ Yet her works “are notable not for their fidelity to life, nor for an attempt to impose patterns on experience, but for their strange awareness of that strange substance whence patterns are formed” (Massie 1995, 15).

⁸ David Goldie, “Muriel Spark and the Problems of Biography”, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010) 13.

2 The Tradition of Doubleness

Even though Muriel Spark could be named as “a mistress of ambivalence”, this unusual feature has its beginnings rooted even before she started her writing career – doubleness is connected with Walter Scott, James Hogg, John Galt, Thomas Carlyle and John Davidson.⁹ They are the “ambiguously constituted writers” whose “conflict of ideas and attitudes” (Walker 1996, 13 – 14) is apparent in their oeuvre.

Nevertheless, the key to the understanding is “in the conflict itself and in the proposition that it is this conflict which ignites the humanitarian elements in these writers to burn so brightly” (Walker 1996, 14). With regard to those elements, George Gregory Smith coined the term ‘Caledonian antisyzygy’, which means “the conjunction of opposites” (Walker 1996, 14) and it is applicable to the Scottish literature and life. If we have a look into the glossary of literary terms, we find out that the closest term that describes antisyzygy is an oxymoron.

Walker further claims that it is the duality of antisyzygy which allows “the humanitarian sympathies” of the aforementioned writers “to co-exist with their conservatism” (Walker 1996, 15). However, it is questionable if the same is true about their “follower” Muriel Spark, since she never wanted to be categorized in any way.

⁹ Marshall Walker, “Terms of Reference: Patriotism and Change; Scottish Identity and Tradition”, in *Scottish Literature Since 1707* (New York: Longman, 1996) 10. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

3 Ambivalence in Spark's Fiction

As stated in the first chapter, Muriel applied the feature of ambivalence a lot throughout her fiction, especially with her characters being dual in their manners or behaviour. What is unique is that she felt no fear to create these idiosyncratic works, even though early post-war Scottish fiction rather favoured realism. Her playful art can be briefly described in a statement, as Marshall Walker points out: “Spark's novels spin in an orbit of their own.”¹⁰

In general, Spark created the characters who rather stay in their own enclosed community, as in *The Bachelors*, *The Girls of Slender Means*, *Memento Mori* or *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, the latter serves as the best example to realize the presence of a group in the novel. Her characters are not trapped by motives, but by a situation into which they get because of the narrator, who wants to define one's group identity.¹¹

3.1 The Comforters

The Comforters is the novel of several attributes – being the first authoress' work, it is also considered to be “an autobiographical novel”. Caroline Rose, the protagonist, is somehow similar to Muriel Spark. Caroline has also converted to the Roman Catholic Church, hence the duality patterns applied by Muriel are becoming more and more visible throughout the plot. Here, the links between the fact and fiction are undoubtedly tight.

Caroline herself starts to write a book entitled *Form in the Modern Novel*, so as Muriel stated, “it is a novel about writing a novel”¹². Living in a flat in Kensington, she hears the voices of the “Typing Ghost”¹³ and that will lead her to a state of bad psychological condition

¹⁰ Marshall Walker, “Post-war Fiction: Realism, Violence and Magic”, in *Scottish Literature Since 1707* (New York: Longman, 1996) 319 – 324.

¹¹ Janet Menzies, “Muriel Spark: Critic into Novelist”, in *Muriel Spark: An Odd Capacity for Vision* (London: Vision Press, 1984) 121 – 124.

¹² Bryan Cheyette, “Half-Worlds: Writing against Conversion”, in *Muriel Spark* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2000) 21. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

¹³ Muriel Spark, *The Comforters* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963) 161. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *C*.

and insanity. With her life being predicted, she becomes a fragmented one and it turns her life into a narrative fiction. Caroline Rose ends up being stuck between two parallel worlds, as Muriel herself.

The title of the novel suggests those who give Caroline advice – the Comforters¹⁴ – and Spark gave a reference to the name of the novel's villain as well. Mrs. Hogg, whom Caroline finds as an unintelligent and pretentious convert, with her name refers to James Hogg and *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Spark's choice of the name serves as a warning, she wants to point out that there are not only two options, but sometimes there is a third one – particularly a false religion, which may cause a self-destruction. There is no doubt that religion is a central theme of the novel, it also gave rise to another contrast: the contrast between what the religion requires and what the mankind is able to devote.¹⁵

There are also other considerable religious links to be found within the context of the novel. The title is derived from the book of Job, showing us the connections between the “Typing Ghost” and Job. While the “Typing Ghost” is morally ambivalent, Job is a victim of “a half-world” – the one between God and Devil. Thanks to the ghostly disturbing voices, Caroline finds out she and her friends are just fiction (Cheyette 2000, 22 – 23).

After Caroline Rose admits being the character of novel, she knows the only way how to escape from the insanity is to do what the “Typing Ghost” wants – to write the novel with the title of *The Comforters*. However, despite having everything planned by the Ghost, Caroline decides to go her own way. The “Typing Ghost” does not like its authority over Caroline being questioned, so the Ghost takes a revenge.

After all, as Jelínková stated in *Ambivalence v románech Muriel Sparkové*, knowing things will happen does not necessarily mean they should be influenced. At this point Caroline understands she must deal with her ambivalent being – both as an author and a character of the novel.

Her sense of being written into the novel was painful. Of her constant influence on its course she remained unaware and now she was impatient for the story to come to an end, knowing that the

¹⁴ There arises a biblical connection with Job, who was unable to make his Comforters understand his thoughts – Caroline resembles this need of comforting, for she is the one who suffers.

¹⁵ Allan Massie, “Calvinism and Catholicism in Muriel Spark”, in *Muriel Spark: An Odd Capacity for Vision* (London: Vision Press, 1984) 98.

narrative could never become coherent to her until she was at last outside it, and at the same time consummately inside it. (C 181)

Unlike Caroline who has to deal with a split identity, the Comforters struggle with some apparently different issues. Firstly, the fact that Baron Stock and Mervyn Hogarth are being interested in black magic surely becomes disturbing for Caroline, for she rejects this kind of entertainment. The reason why she finds it inappropriate is because of her religious manners. Secondly, the wit of Louisa, the grandmother of Caroline's fiancé Laurence, gives to the novel a certain tenderness which is much needed after the "Typing Ghost" makes Caroline insane. In the end, we find out that Louisa is no more than the head of the diamond smuggling gang. By creating such contrasting but unified characters, Spark shows us how brilliant her imagination was. Even though writing a very first novel may seem as a tough job – it was definitely not for Muriel Spark.

The motif of the evil is highly concentrated into the other convert of the novel – Georgina Hogg, who is the head of the Pilgrim Centre of St Philumena. On the one hand, she tries to deny Caroline's true Catholic belief because Caroline does not want to talk about her reasons for conversion. As Cheyette states in *Muriel Spark*, there arises another similarity between the main protagonist and the authoress – their conversions are being oppressed. On the other hand, Georgina perhaps wants to equal herself to Caroline, so she claims she hears voices as well. "Georgina's Catholicism, in other words, denies the private realm and Caroline's fragile artistic consciousness" (Cheyette 2000, 24).

By the end of the novel, there is a scene of both converts fighting under the water where Georgina dies – it symbolises Caroline's reconciliation with the community and her own being:

The woman clung to Caroline's throat until the last. It was not until Mrs Hogg opened her mouth finally to the inrush of water that her grip slackened and Caroline was free, her lungs aching for the breath of life. Mrs Hogg subsided away from her. God knows where she went. (C 197)

The Comforters is fragmented as a whole; there is a division between similarities of the people and the "half-worlds" (Cheyette 2000, 26). Spark rather wants to leave her readers thinking until the end than to predict. For this reason, she never stops "playing" with ambivalence, as she promptly shows us in the very last chapter and makes us curious about the torn letter that after all appears in Caroline's book. She uses the reader's mind as a unifying element of her ambiguous fiction.

3.2 Robinson

The title of Spark's next novel proclaims its connections to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* from 1719. Moreover, it would not be a typical novel of the authoress, if Muriel did not use the parallels from her life in her fiction. Again, the significance lies in the Robinson's name, which is actually the name of her son (Robin-son).¹⁶ *The Comforters* and *Robinson* are not as different as it may seem, there is something spiritual to be found in both of the novels.

The story concerns three survivors, namely January Marlow, Tom Wells and Jimmy Watford, who were on a plane to the Azores when it suddenly crashed onto the Robinson's island located somewhere in the North Atlantic Ocean. It all happened on the tenth of the May, 1954. In this novel, the playful ambiguity of Muriel Spark can be seen from the very beginning – through the names of the characters. Robinson is not just a name of the remote island, it is also the name of its owner. Similarly, January is the name of a month, the protagonist of the story, and her place of birth as well. From the name January arises another connection – particularly to Janus, the ambivalent god who could look in two possible directions – January Marlow is split as well (Cheyette 2000, 29).

The protagonist reminds us of the authoress alone. January Marlow is a single mother with a son and a convert as well. When we take the year 1954 into the account, the year of Spark's conversion to the Roman Catholic Church and Muriel being a single mother with a son, there are no doubts that the authoress has put herself into the action.¹⁷ What is more, even the dating of January's stay on the island corresponds almost exactly to the harsh period of Spark's breakdown – from 10 May to 8 August (Stannard 2009, 189).

On the one side, January is a recent convert to the Catholic belief, while on the other side, she has a strange habit and “a desire to throw wide my arms and worship the moon”¹⁸. It is true that Catholics reject this pagan worshipping and January realizes it herself: “I am

¹⁶ Michael Gardiner, “Body and State in Spark's Early Fiction”, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010) 29. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

¹⁷ Michael Giffin, “Framing the Human Condition: The Existential Dilemma in Iris Murdoch's *The Bell* and Muriel Spark's *Robinson*”, *Heythrop Journal – Quarterly Review of Philosophy and Theology* 48, no. 5 (2007): 728, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=8abc5162-a7ff-4024-b3b2-13b86ecef16%40sessionmgr104> (accessed March 9, 2018).

¹⁸ Muriel Spark, *Robinson* (London: Penguin Books, 1964) 8. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *R*.

a Christian” (R 8), so she rather leaves with a compulsion. Consequently, this scene is an example of searching for one's unity.

Even though the plot of *Robinson* is quite simple, by placing such contrasting characters into the island no one can escape from Muriel creates an exciting and dramatic atmosphere. It is not a joy that Robinson feels when he has to take care of his unexpected visitors, but he stays rather unconcerned about it. Jimmy Watford, a distant relative of Robinson, wants him to leave the island. Next, the immoral character of Tom Wells, a blackmailer comparable to the character of Georgina Hogg, reminds Robinson of the reasons why he has left the society. But January is more than these two – her personality is in contrast with Robinson's. While she worships the Virgin Mary, Robinson is an ex-Catholic who is ignorant about the religious symbols and is “constitutionally afraid of any material manifestation of Grace” (R 99). In addition to this, Robinson's full name is Miles Mary Robinson, which is why he has an antipathy for the Virgin Mary by which he denies this feminine aspect of his character (Cheyette 2000, 31).

To appear on the island where you have to live with three strangers, it cannot get along without the disagreements. In the middle of the story, Robinson disappears and the conflict arises. Thinking that the blood they found was Robinson's, they come to a false conclusion that the owner of the island is dead. Now, the trio of the survivors has to live with a feeling that one of them is a murderer.

In order to find the murderer, January searches her diary entries. January believes she can do it because both of her instinct and her intellect. She finds the possible murderer – Tom Wells, who tries to murder her for the accusation. Only after Robinson arrives back to his island, the disturbing situation is being calmed down and therefore we know that January's intuition betrayed her. Nevertheless, she is not completely incorrect about Tom Wells – he is definitely the character which represents the evil in *Robinson*.

In this novel, Robinson serves as the one who helps reveal the true self of each of the survivors. By leaving the island, he establishes the proper conditions for them to do so. However, Robinson is the character who suffered the most, for he loses the sympathy of Miguel who decides to attend the Catholic school. As this is not enough for Robinson, at the end, while January reads the evening newspaper, we get to know:

“Robinson”, the tiny man-shaped Atlantic island owned by the recluse of Mr M. M. Robinson, is sinking, say experts. (R 174)

Robinson is another Spark's novel about the conversion of the protagonist, in which the sharing of characteristics between the main protagonist and the authoress is being presented. Concerning the themes, besides religion and fraud, Martin Stannard says the novel is about the investigation of a female identity (Stannard 2009, 190). Although Muriel created women protagonists who behave similarly in many ways (in *The Comforters* and *Robinson*), their decisions at the end of the stories show us how different they actually are. January keeps her diary for a better comprehension of a dead self, whereas Caroline tears her notes up so she can finally establish herself a free person.

3.3 Memento Mori

Unlike the previous novels in which the plots mostly concern the characters of a young age, Spark's next novel is about the group of seniors. The novel itself is a combination of both tragedy and wit typical of brilliant “Sparkian” oeuvre. Martin Stannard says that *Memento Mori* is probably “the most moving depiction of old age in British fiction” (Stannard 2009, 204). Yet, it represents Spark as a didactic and orthodox authoress (Cheyette 2000, 36).

The idea for writing *Memento Mori* in 1959 comes from Spark's watching her grandmother (Stannard 2009, 16), for she chooses the characters over the age of 70. Moreover, the starting point for writing, according to Muriel, was the awareness of the old age (Cheyette 2000, 37). Besides the theme of mortality, it also questions the moral manners of the characters represented in the story.

“Remember you must die” is not only the Latin equivalent to the title of the novel, but also the message of the unexpected and mysterious caller who gives a call to every major character. Even though the occupants of the Maud Long Medical Ward do not think that the death may come soon, thanks to the anonymous phone calls they must admit it may happen. However, “this ‘death sentence’ kills not the characters but the idea of life as endlessly subject to will and rationalisation” (Gardiner 2010, 35). Nevertheless, the promise of death they get from the caller, as Gardiner points out, may also free oneself from one's own matter (Gardiner 2010, 35).

Charmian Colston, once a famous writer, similar to the women protagonists Caroline Rose and January Marlow, is one of the novel's protagonists. At the age of eighty-five, Charmian is not afraid of the coming death, because her thinking is rather novelistic, distant from the reality (Gardiner 2010, 36). Likewise, her two-years-older husband Godfrey does not fear the death of the others, for “each new death gave him something fresh to feel”¹⁹. His personality can be described as bold and courageous, as long as he thinks he is the one who governs his senses and body. It may seem cruel, but after his wife has had a stroke, the eventual “rival” that he sees in his wife is being weakened. Every success of his life evoked a lost in him.

In *Memento Mori*, Spark provides us with distinct insights into the matter of a mystifying calling – the first victim of which is a sister of Godfrey, Dame Lettie Colston – a former charity activist. Perhaps, as a resident of the Maud Long Medical Ward, she has nothing better to do than to rewrite her last will so frequently even the others get bored of it. So when she receives the phone calls, she can finally catch the attention by something else besides her testament, and claims it is someone of an ominous voice that she hears in the phone.

Because the residents want their stereotypical lives back, they insist on getting the matter investigated, so they call Chief Inspector Henry Mortimer who is a victim of those calls himself, to solve the issue. In contrast with Lettie's story about the caller, he says it reminds him more of a woman, “gentle-spoken and respectful” (*MM* 153). Though, the fact that Mortimer connects that voice with a certain tenderness may be disturbing, but nothing in Muriel Spark's fiction is left without the explanation. Cheyette says that it is because he sees “death as a part of a life-circle, as something which intensifies life” (Cheyette 2000, 40).

Another important character is eighty-two years old Jean Taylor, the right hand of Charmian Colston, who also lies in Maud Long Medical Ward fighting for her life. Because she receives those phone calls as well, she identifies herself with Mortimer and they come with the conclusion that it is “Death himself” (*MM* 175) calling them. On the other hand, Alec Warner has another proposal and he believes the mystery around the caller may arise from “mass hysteria” (*MM* 152). Despite the serious point of the story,

¹⁹ Muriel Spark, *Memento Mori* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961) 22. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *MM*.

Spark's satire is very well-known for its entertaining element, as it is shown in the following passage:

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. (*MM* 175)

Besides the odd caller, the continuity of the plot is being disturbed when Mrs Pettigrew, another Spark's blackmailer, tries to seduce Godfrey. She is successful as long as he is obsessed with sex. Although some might argue that Godfrey is unfaithful to his wife because of Mrs Pettigrew's corrupt practices, he is not an innocent one – for many years he would cheat on his wife, just to satisfy his needs. Charmian knows about Godfrey's infidelity, and when it comes to rescuing Godfrey from Mrs Pettigrew, she rather stays outside their issue and leaves her husband to deal with the situation himself. Charmian does so, for she believes it would only strengthen the “rivalry” between them.

Spark does not favour happy and long marriages and *Memento Mori* is not an exception. The marriage between Charmian and Godfrey, even a long-term one, is not an example of a proper marriage. Even though Charmian can be perceived as the suffering one from this couple, she also had a lover – Guy Leet. But Charmian comes to the point when she realizes that being quiet about Godfrey's infidelity was perhaps a mistake: Jean Taylor, a maid and companion at the same time, tells Godfrey about it and makes them both equal for being disloyal to each other. This gesture can be perceived dually. She may mean it as a revenge for taking her for granted, but more presumably, she actually meant to establish peace between them, which she manages to do.

These trio of the characters – Mortimer, Jean, and Charmian – are “Spark's holy trinity” (Cheyette 2000, 43), as they act fearlessly towards Death, while the others act upon the message they get from the strange caller. As Jean Taylor says:

It's difficult for people of advanced years to start remembering they must die. It is best to form the habit while young. (*MM* 39)

“Taken as a whole they represent a diverse way of understanding the eternal verities although, it might be argued, each of their individual perspectives – pagan, orthodox Catholic, aesthetic – is by itself limited” (Cheyette 2000, 41). It is the theme of mortality that Spark presents ambivalently.

Memento Mori is a novel that focuses on paradox, which can be mostly seen through the contrasting feelings of the characters when it comes to distinguishing the caller. It is both dramatic and funny setting Spark has created, and it is proper to call it “a book of death” (Stannard 2009, 206). The phrase “Remember you must die” certainly divides the community into two halves, but Mrs Pettigrew is not behind and by the way she “divides reality...she makes it fractured and unreal” (Cheyette 2000, 43). Cheyette adds that:

Only those who cannot see beyond themselves are, in effect, deranged. In this oddly brutal world, one can only be redeemed by going beyond the messiness of life. (Cheyette 2000, 43)

3.4 The Ballad of Peckham Rye

It seems that Muriel Spark has an infinite number of possibilities in terms of her imagination – writing four brilliant works within three years is enough to serve as a proof. Moreover, her next novel, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*, is a great example of how she has moved ahead in her writing style.

It introduces the first of her amoral novelist manqués, both good and evil, attractive and repulsive, who help her to explore the difficulties of retaining a singular perspective in the light of the God-given certainties of existence. (Cheyette 2000, 44)

Unlike *Memento Mori*, the novel of rather pessimistic tone, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* is Spark's most hilarious work. She has chosen a small English suburb as a setting whose name appears in the title – Peckham. In addition, it is partly “a parody of the working-class novel, of the British obsession with class and the culture of victimhood” (Stannard 2009, 222). Once again, Spark creates two distinct worlds as “there are classes within classes in Peckham”²⁰, which are being supported by realistic features. Spark continues to play with readers' minds from the very beginning – the term ‘ballad’ may confuse their thinking.

The story opens with a wedding scene where Humphrey Place “walked out on his wedding” (*BP* 7) with Dixie Dean, which people think is because of an influence of a strange Scot: “It wouldn't have happened if Dougal Douglas hadn't come here” (*BP* 7).

²⁰ Muriel Spark, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (London: Penguin Books, 1963) 29. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *BP*.

But after few weeks, no one remembered the details of the affair, yet it became a kind of a “legend” (*BP* 14) for the locals.

At the time when Dixie gets engaged to Humphrey, Dougal Douglas comes to Peckham to join the manufactory of nylon textiles. His ambitions are far from modest, for he wants to “take the pulse of the people and plumb the industrial depths of Peckham” (*BP* 17). However, his character is being redoubled as he accepts a job in a rival concern under the name of Douglas Dougal in order to enjoy the benefits of being employed at two firms. By this pretentious act, he encourages an absenteeism of people, against which he truly wants to fight.

What is more, Dougal Douglas or Douglas Dougal is mistakenly perceived by many people as “a wholly diabolical figure” (Cheyette 2000, 44). As Cheyette further states, it is presumably because of his red hair and the connection to the Scottish mythology, particularly to the ballad tradition. While certain similarities with the “Typing Ghost” or the mysterious caller from *Memento Mori* can be drawn, Dougal is somehow a creator of “spiritual catalyst...who bring together sacramentally the inner and outer realms of less visionary individuals” (Cheyette 2000, 44). Doubleness plays the key role in Dougal's identification as the character of evil and the residents of Peckham critically need the spirituality he provides.

Douglas uses the fact that people need him rather in his favour. Wherever he comes, he creates chaotic atmosphere, and even more, he destroys the lives of the others. To take it from the beginning, he ruins the relationship of his roommate Humphrey and Dixie. Then, Miss Frierne, his landlady and another woman that he keeps in touch with, has a stroke, Mr Weed suffers from a mental collapse, Mr Druce murders his long-time lover – Miss Merle Coverdale, and a group of rude children starts to act more violently towards the habitants of Peckham.

However, the evil is not only presented through the amoral deeds Dougal makes, but also via his appearance – his “deformed shoulder” (*BP* 17) certainly does not contribute to his attractiveness. But when Humphrey asks him if he is the Devil, Dougal plainly answers he is only supposed to be “one of the wicked spirits that wander through the world for the ruin of souls” (*BP* 77). Though, regarding his answer, it is not clear if he considers himself

as a wicked one, for he does not state he is a devilish spirit, but rather what he claims is that he is supposed to act like one.

Furthermore, the other characters question Dougal's identity as well, showing his ability of metamorphosis. When he takes Miss Merle Coverdale for a walk, he takes her through the cemetery. There he acts like “an angel-devil” (*BP* 30), standing like an angel on a grave with an insane smile on his face. Indeed, Dougal is perfectly aware of himself performing the role of an ‘angel-devil’.

Spark perfectly creates the split identity of the protagonist Dougal Douglas until the very end of the novel – his devilish acting is in a direct contrast with a sentimental need for feelings. He admits having “a secret weakness” (*BP* 24) which he stiffens up by saying that “everyone has one” (*BP* 24). Dougal is something of “a hypochondriac in his fear of contact with illness”²¹. From this point of the story, readers may realize the other side of his personality, and actually, they may consider him as “a poor thing”.

With regard to those misfortunes, collapses and deaths that Dougal's being in Peckham causes, Dougal is not only a catalyst, but he mostly quickens their flow. What is more, Merle and Druce are among those characters who “have settled into a very mundane, threadbare kind of sinfulness” (Carruthers 2010, 29). Because of his disturbing nature, Dougal makes Merle Coverdale believe that the relationship with Mr Druce is pretentious. He uses the same strategy with his supervisor Mr Druce, but this time Spark ends it with a brutal scene:

He came towards her with the corkscrew and stabbed it into her long neck nine times, and killed her. Then he took his hat and went home to his wife. (*BP* 136)

Similarly, Miss Frierne becomes another victim of Dougal's playing with the residents of Peckham. Typically, one may find her drinking a bottle of gin, and this is also true for Dougal who finds her in the kitchen slipped down of a chair. However, it is not because of the alcohol – this time she has had “a stroke” (*BP* 137). By causing the paralysis of her spirit, Dougal contributes to her physical paralysis as well.

²¹ Gerard Carruthers, “‘Fully to Savour her Position’: Muriel Spark and Scottish Identity”, in *Muriel Spark: Twenty-First-Century Perspectives* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010) 28. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

The ending of *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* is somehow similar to that of *Robinson*, when Dougal decides to leave for “Africa with the intention of selling tape-recorders to all the witch doctors” (BP 142), but after a time he comes back and starts his writing career. Simultaneously, there is a scene of Humphrey and Dixie's wedding, to which Dougal is rather not invited, since “he is sent to traumatize the metropolitan modernity with his very deliberated and very Scottish grotesqueness” (Carruthers 2010, 28). They do not allow him to thwart their second wedding attempt.

Although, the similarities of the protagonist with the authoress herself may not be as visible here as it is in *The Comforters*, Spark makes “elegant oxymoronic patterns she is in full control of but from which she stands in comprehensive ironic detachment” (Carruthers 2010, 31). What is more, her novels discuss “the values of clarity and order”, which is why she has published the turbulent novel of *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* just after *Memento Mori* (Cheyette 2000, 13).

3.5 The Bachelors

The Bachelors, Spark's next novel published in the same year as her previous work, may be perceived as a “didactic” (Cheyette 2000, 47) or “autumnal novel” (Stannard 2009, 236). The reason why Stannard compares the novel to one of the seasons is because of the period when it is set – particularly from October to November, 1959. It deals with the lives of the male characters who are in the middle age. The plot is set in London – “the great city of bachelors”.²²

In addition to the setting of the novel, the world of the bachelors is displayed as an egoistic form of one's existence. The way people think about the bachelors is rather negative, for they misuse the feelings of the others. What is more, when it comes to the reality, they cannot accept what is given and they better flee away. “The bachelorhood should be associated with guilt and that the characters should regard their status as a stigma.”²³

²² Muriel Spark, *The Bachelors* (London: Macmillan, 1962) 1. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *BCH*.

²³ Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, “The Bachelors: Secular Vocation”, in *Vocation and Identity in the Fiction of Muriel Spark* (Columbia: University Missouri Press, 1990) 8 – 9. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

In *The Bachelors*, Spark's deliberate choice of the names reflects the roles of the characters. While Ronald Bridges, as his name suggests, is supposed to act as a unifying element of the story, Spark places the character with a diabolically-sounding name – Patrick Seton – into the role of a retrospective catalyst.

Ronald Bridges is an epileptic, about whom one may think is disabled because of the seizures. But after a few moments of rejections, he fulfils his desire to make his life meaningful. Thus, he becomes “a truth-machine” (*BCH* 9) and gains “a reputation in the detection of forgeries” (*BCH* 11). Yet, Spark does not disappoint us and she incorporates Catholicism into *The Bachelors* as well, but this time in a different way. The novel shows the rotten side of the religion when Ronald asks the old priest about the priesthood:

A vocation to the priesthood is the will of God. Nothing can change God's will. You are an epileptic. No epileptic can be a priest. Ergo you never had a vocation. But you can do something else. (*BCH* 7)

Although Ronald has to resist the despair and disappointment, the humour does not leave him as he makes fun of himself by stating: “I'll be a first-rate epileptic and that will be my career” (*BCH* 8). “Ronald's facetiousness is not bitter, but rather the result of new-won peace of mind” (Edgecombe 1990, 11).

The other of the bachelors – Patrick Seton shares some of the characteristics with Ronald Bridges, such as being an epileptic. However, he is the character that opposes Ronald, when the question of morality is considered. Patrick commits a “fraudulent conversion” (*BCH* 4), for which he is being prosecuted. Nevertheless, the duality of Patrick's personality is displayed at its worst when he decides to kill his pregnant lover Alice Dawes. For Seton, the idea of family would only mean the loss of the dual reality (Jelínková 2006, 38). Regarding those disparities, Cheyette concludes that “whereas Ronald, through his epilepsy, brings together the natural and the supernatural during his truth-giving seizures, Patrick...splits them apart” (Cheyette 2000, 49).

Once again, Spark shows us her excellent ability to combine the aspects which one may find unreal to be fused. In particular, she provides us with an insight into the disquieting lives of the bachelors yet interlaced with humorous and witty scenes. It can be said that Spark's interpretation of such important events can be a sign of how she has fully matured as the authoress.

Patrick Seton, “a spiritualist who attempts to act as a medium between distinct spheres” (Cheyette 2000, 49) is undoubtedly talented and admired by the other members of the “Interior Spiral”. Nonetheless, he misuses his talent for he only wants to gain more and more financial resources – it is the example of “possessiveness” (Stannard 2009, 236), one of the many themes Stannard claims to be presented throughout the novel. Indeed, Seton continues in his practices from which he profits. Because Seton knows Dr. Lyte's secret, who does not want to be accused of an illegal abortion, he offers him the chalet in the mountains. Unfamiliar with his frightful plans, he also provides him “a good supply” (BCH 95) of the insulin for Alice who is a diabetic.

Fortunately, the trial being the climax of *The Bachelors*, unleashes Seton from his plan. The trial is the place where the bachelors meet – Ronald Bridges as a “truth-seeker” and “a handwriting expert” (BCH 84) is called upon the case to investigate the fraud committed on Freda Flower. Despite the fact that Seton's plans did not go well, he still hopes for the death of Alice and their baby: “I'm winning. She won't live” (BCH 216). What is more, he is even capable of abusing Alice's presence at the court and tries to save the situation: “Only to say that the lady I am living with is expecting a baby and needs me by her side...” (BCH 240). Not knowing Patrick's hatred, Alice stays loyal until the very end; it is the God whom she believes in no more, for Patrick Seton is found guilty.

In this novel, Spark juxtaposes two distinct characters of her creation. Unlike Dougal Douglas from *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*, who is sometimes mistakenly regarded as the evil spirit, Patrick Seton is undoubtedly recognized as the character of evil in this work. While Patrick is self-confident and arrogant, Ronald is “the weaker one” who tries to find his own identity throughout the years. Furthermore, Ronald tries “to mend those wounds” committed by Patrick – he helps Elsie “whose life on her own admission has been meaningless to find an intrinsic purpose” (Edgecombe 1990, 31).

Although one may think that the conviction would stop him, this does not happen as Ronald is not omnipotent – he may help the jury to find Seton guilty, but he cannot make his pretentious character stop from murdering. Yet, it is the irony we find on the last pages of the novel – the prosecutor Martin Bowles is just another person that commits fraud. *The Bachelors* does not deal only with the theme of blackmailing, it also concerns “marriage, celibacy, sexuality, vocation, existential angst, responsibilities,

possessiveness, jealousy, the relativity...of good and evil, original sin...and transfiguration” (Stannard 2009, 236).

3.6 The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie

Unlike the previous works where Spark uses various autobiographical features, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is a novel where she actually incorporates the whole image of her primary school, together with her teacher. Her sixth novel was phenomenal, presumably because the school environment gets never too old – it is full of irony, satire and humorous youth's issues. According to Alan Bold, only two outstanding novels were written in the twentieth century, with *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* being the one of them.²⁴

At first, it may seem that Muriel has created rather a girlish novel about one's growing up. However, it turns out to be a dramatic story with a theological background. As mentioned above, the setting she creates is close to her as she establishes Marcia Blaine School and resembles the protagonist Miss Jean Brodie to the woman who actually taught her – Christina Kay. While the plot of this novel concerns six girls – Eunice, Jenny, Mary, Monica, Rose and Sandy, or so-called “Brodie set”²⁵, Christina Kay favoured only two, particularly Frances and Muriel herself (Stannard 2009, 29). In general, the “later works more thoroughly locate her life-story in time and place so as to explore as fiction many of her past selves and identities” (Cheyette 2000, 53).

The plot is set into the thirties – the period of Fascism in Europe which becomes a sort of an inspiration for Miss Jean Brodie, namely the dictators Mussolini, Franco and Hitler. She never tries to hide her admiration for it, even when teaching the girls whom she wants to become the ‘crème de la crème’. Moreover, her teaching methods somehow differ from the rest of the teaching staff – she is more than devoted to education, for her words only prove it: “Give me a girl at an impressionable age, and she is mine for life” (*JB* 9). Nevertheless, while one may think it is wonderful to devote so much time to the pupils,

²⁴ Marshall Walker, “Post-war Fiction: Realism, Violence and Magic”, in *Scottish Literature Since 1707* (New York: Longman, 1996) 322.

²⁵ Muriel Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (London: Penguin Books, 2000) 5. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *JB*.

she becomes obsessed with the need of their loyalty. Stannard further writes that Miss Brodie does not exactly reflect the character of Christina Kay – “her teacher's spirit is reincarnated in Jean Brodie as ambiguously beneficial”...as Brodie is only “Kay transfigured” (Stannard 2009, 31).

Furthermore, Miss Brodie can be compared to Dougal Douglas from *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* – both of them are Scots who are fragmented both on the outside and inside. In the case of Miss Brodie, the ambiguity can be seen mostly through what she feels and claims, which is in a direct contrast with what she actually acts like throughout the novel.

Despite the fact that Miss Brodie devotes ‘the prime’ of her life to her set of chosen girls, sooner or later they get to recognize her intentions with them – “she cultivates not independent spirits but slaves” (Stannard 2009, 31). The fact that Brodie includes her pupils involuntarily in her “intellectual games” means that she is “inevitably perceived ambivalently”²⁶. Brodie thinks she can control other people's lives, as “she is Providence” (*JB* 120). At this point, she persuades one of her students Joyce Emily to join General Franco and to fight in the Spanish Civil War where she is killed. What is more, she even pushes Rose to sleep with Teddy Lloyd, which ends in with the anger of the girls from the Brodie set.

Yet, it is Sandy who contributes the most to ruining the teaching career of Jean Brodie – she becomes her “Judas”²⁷. Sandy's unpleasant role is the only way how to stop Miss Brodie from hurting the others. Throughout the years she gets to know that Brodie is “a mythomaniac who fictionalizes everything” (Cheyette 2000, 54), as they are constantly being told the story of her fiancée which has been significantly modified every time this subject comes up. Although the qualities of Sandy may be similar to those of the authoress herself, indeed she is just “a metaphor for Muriel's adult consciousness evaluating her adolescent infatuation” (Stannard 2009, 31). In addition, Sandy betrays Brodie in other ways as well – she becomes a nun of the Catholic Church and writes a book – *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. By this act, she ridicules the principles Brodie

²⁶ Faith Pullin, “Autonomy and Fabulation in the Fiction of Muriel Spark”, in *Muriel Spark: An Odd Capacity for Vision* (London: Vision Press, 1984) 84. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

²⁷ Alan Bold, “Introduction”, in *Muriel Spark: An Odd Capacity for Vision* (London: Vision Press, 1984) 14.

teaches them (Miss Jean Brodie hates the Catholic Church) and ends ‘the prime’ of Miss Jean Brodie.

Nonetheless, Sandy is not the ‘winner’ of this imaginary fight between her and Brodie, for her role of a “revisor”²⁸ does not go well – she becomes Teddy Lloyd's lover instead of Rose. Sandy “begins to usurp for herself the heroine's role in the stories she subsumes” (Glavin 1988, 226) and wishes to become Jean Brodie, but she is not successful. Even though Sandy wants to delimit the influence of Brodie, in the end she has to accept it, which only proves she behaves ambivalently:

“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.” (*JB* 128)

Also, Sandy can be described as an uncategorizable character of this novel, for the duality accompanies her not only in the attitude as exemplified above, but in her thinking as well, showing the conflict “between admiration for inventiveness and moral disapproval of behaviour” (Pullin 1984, 89).

Sandy was fascinated by this method of making patterns with facts, and divided between her admiration for the technique and the pressing need to prove Miss Jean Brodie guilty of misconduct. (*JB* 72)

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie is a novel of cogent and amoral protagonists at the same time – each of the character shows it in a different situation. While Sandy, predetermined by her surname Stranger, betrays Miss Jean Brodie and rejects her ideas, Brodie also betrays the girls – she tries to re-establish their personalities according to her portraits, which is in a contrast with their own individualities. What is more, Pullin says that if Caroline from *The Comforters* is considered to be an artist and manipulator of her own destiny, then “Miss Jean Brodie is a failed writer, a creator of myth in which she involves her girls but remains personally uncommitted, paring her fingernails” (Pullin 1984, 84).

In the end, this novel is just another Spark's work about doubleness of self and time as well. Her characters of an enclosed community have to deal with plotting and

²⁸ John Glavin, “Muriel Spark's *unknowing* fiction”, *Women's Studies* 15, no. 1 – 3 (1988): 226, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=6&sid=b2d85ba9-ef1b-4469-ac69-4d99dfe04429%40pdc-v-sessmgr01> (accessed March 23, 2018). Henceforth cited parenthetically.

psychological issues – Brodie with her fascist ideas is paradoxically in the opposition with the Brodie set chosen by herself. Yet, Spark uses the laughter above all seriousness and leaves her readers to freely understand the story in their own way.

3.7 The Girls of Slender Means

“Long ago in 1945 all the nice people in England were poor, allowing for exceptions.”²⁹ From the very beginning, Spark shows us that she does not consider the time as an important element of this work – regarding the fact that the novel was published in 1963, the events of 1945 were certainly not “long ago”. In an interview with Frankel, she admits: “I play around a great deal with time, for instance; in some of my books I do away with time altogether. What interests me about time is that I don't think chronology is causality.”³⁰

The authoress sets us down among the group of girls with slender means who live in The May of Teck Club in Kensington – a hostel – more specifically the place that should secure “the Pecuniary Convenience and Social Protection of Ladies of Slender Means below the age of Thirty Years” (*SM* 9), who come to London because of the occupation. In addition to the opening of the novel, which is a kind of a metafiction itself, Spark contrasts the realistic description of post-war London with the irony she uses to comment on “harsh human realities”³¹.

Spark introduces us with the life of the protagonist Nicholas Farrington in flash-backs, the narrative style much favoured by her. Jane Wright describes Nicolas as “an anarchist and poet sort of thing” (*SM* 10), who used to visit The May of Teck Club after the war but has been martyred as a missionary in Haiti. After the members of the Club get to know Nicholas is dead, it is not surprising that the girls of slender means do not mourn, but they

²⁹ Muriel Spark, *The Girls of Slender Means* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966) 7. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *SM*.

³⁰ Sara Frankel, “An Interview with Muriel Spark”, *Partisan Review* 54 (1987): 451.

³¹ Helena M. Tomko, “Muriel Spark's *The Girls of Slender Means* at the Limits of the Catholic Novel”, *Religion & Literature* 47, no. 2 (2015): 44 – 45.
<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&sid=4b1586f6-7125-4c5d-81d1-854e3e8ca2bd%40sessionmgr120> (accessed March 24, 2018). Henceforth cited parenthetically.

rather summarize the events of 1945. Thus, Nicholas becomes the memento mori of the novel, for his name is constantly being repeated in the phone calls between Jane Wright and the other members of the Club.

Joanna Childe is “a teacher of elocution” (*SM* 11), “an emblem of ambivalent and mysterious femininity”³². The little we know about Joanna's presence in the novel is mostly perceived via her recitation of poetry, especially of *The Wreck of Deutschland* (1875).³³ Moreover, she is in an opposition with the other girls from the Club, for she behaves according to what is proper for a woman of her age. It is especially “exceedingly beautiful” (*SM* 31) and extremely slim Selina Redwood whom Joanna is opposing in the attitude, behaviour, and vocation – Selina repeats the Two Sentences from the Poise Course twice a day in order to get a balance, “an equanimity of body and mind” (*SM* 50). She concentrates on it so much that it becomes her “daily bread”. At this point we realize that the “slender means” do not only refer to a lack of money, but it also touches their intellectual and spiritual state, into which this poverty transpires (Tomko 2015, 47).

The beauty of Selina “bewitches” Nicholas as well – she is his dream. However, she is beautiful only on the outside – Selina represents “the dark side of the moon, cold, remote and indifferent” whereas Nicholas is “the epitome of indeterminacy” (Cheyette 2000, 60). Yet Nicolas loves her as “his native country” and sleeps with her with “the aim of converting her soul” (*SM* 92).

It is not only Joanna whom Spark treats ambivalently in this novel, but also the indecisive character of Nicholas Farrington. On the one hand, he claims to be an anarchist himself; on the other, he says he does not like “anarchists by and large” (*SM* 69). As written above, he loves Selina, but he wants to change her at the same time. Perhaps, the dual representation of his character is even more noticeable than that of Joanna's.

The explosion in the garden changes everything. It causes a blaze in The May of Teck Club with the girls being “imprisoned” at its top floors. What we know from the beginning of the story is that only the thinnest girls are able to get through the window – Selina and two other girls. In the meantime, Selina goes back to the burning hostel, for she only

³² Vassiliki Kolocotroni, “Poetic Perception in the Fiction of Muriel Spark”, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010) 20.

³³ *The Wreck of Deutschland* is a poem written by G. M. Hopkins about the victims of the shipwreck, among which were the nuns who were forced to leave Germany – it is dedicated to their memory.

wants to save her Schiaparelli taffeta evening dress – it is the moment when Nicholas realizes how material Selina is. She is a means to his conversion despite his love, and his note in the manuscript only proves it – “a vision of evil may be as effective to conversion as a vision of good” (*SM* 140).

As Nicholas watches Joanna Childe dying in the burning Club and reciting the liturgy to the very end, he becomes more convinced about the transfiguration of himself into a religious vocation. Paradoxically, the poem Joanna likes to recite the most predicts her fate as her goodness is lost in the flames forever.

The character of Nicholas Farrington is comparable with that of Sandy Stranger from *The Prime of Miss Brodie*, for both of them commit a “serious” conversion to the Catholicism. While Sandy converts mostly because she rejects the ideas of Miss Brodie, Nicholas' reasons are more a kind of mystery, although Joanna and Selina convert him in a way.

Joanna's personality is sometimes misconceived by readers, for she is thought to be the moral opposite of Selina. If Selina represents the physical world, then Joanna is sometimes “a disembodied human voice who is detached completely from what is palpable” (Cheyette 2000, 61). The qualities they bear are contrasting to such extent, that they become extremes. In *The Girls of Slender Means*, Spark does not recognize the evil herself, she invites her readers to decide on their own.

Paradoxically, the death of Nicholas and Joanna's sacrifice in the burning Club are not meant to be a kind of a moral lesson. Indeed, it is only the slenderness that saves the materialistic presence of Selina. Ironical as it seems, Spark's readers should get used to the fact that the irony and satire belong to the main elements of her oeuvre.

3.8 The Mandelbaum Gate

Spark's eighth novel, firstly entitled with "The Gentile Jewesses", reflects the crisis of her identity. For Spark, this novel a key to the understanding of herself – more presumably to the questions of her past and the conversion. For this reason, *The Mandelbaum Gate* is described as "heterodox and anarchic" (Cheyette 2000, 63) work.

What is more, she creates the setting that illustrates her situation – being between two poles – for *The Mandelbaum Gate* is "a piece of no-man's land between the Jordanian and Israeli sides of Jerusalem" (Cheyette 2000, 63). Spark travelled to Israel herself and visited the places she describes in the novel to search "for symbols, particularly of her grandmother's origins" (Stannard 2009, 242 – 243).

The latter novel differs from the previous works by its form as well. Spark somehow divides the story into two parts, which may cause her readers to get baffled. In the first part, her characters are mostly confused, whereas in the second, Spark establishes their passion and impulsiveness above anything else. "They disappear from history; where they are, what they do, slip into mystery."³⁴

Barbara Vaughan, the protagonist, is similar to the characters of Caroline Rose and January Marlow, for all these protagonists bear some of the authoress' characteristics. Barbara from *The Mandelbaum Gate* is a half-Jew with a Gentile upbringing, who decides to convert to the Catholic Church in order to end the dual perception of her being, as she is in "a state of conflict"³⁵. Her relatives are not enthusiastic about her "religious background", as she remembers:

My Gentile relations tried too hard to forget I was a half-Jew. My Jewish relations couldn't forget I was a half-Gentile. Actually, I didn't let them forget, either way. (*MG* 37)

Despite the fact that Catholic Church serves as "a refuge" for Barbara in this novel, she starts a relationship with Harry Clegg, an archaeologist, who is already divorced. Her

³⁴ John Glavin, "The Mandelbaum Gate: Muriel Spark's Apocalyptic Gag", in *Muriel Spark: Twenty-First-Century Perspectives* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010) 155. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

³⁵ Muriel Spark, *The Mandelbaum Gate* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967) 23. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *MG*.

acting may be perceived as confusing, for she creates these paradoxes herself. The uncertainty about her identity results in a decision to visit Jerusalem.

Barbara finds out that the pilgrimage to Holy Land is not a means to answering her questions. Instead, her Jewish roots get her in a trouble – Muriel likes to “punish” her characters for their zealotry (Jelínková 2006, 49). Nevertheless, the split of Barbara's ambivalent being can be mostly observed through the historical background Spark establishes in this novel, especially during the Eichmann trial (1961), which Barbara is supposed to attend to her surprise. While Barbara is individual and unique, Eichmann is the one who “drains people of their uniqueness” (Cheyette 2000, 68):

The man was plainly not testifying for himself, but for his prewritten destiny. He was not answering for himself or his own life at all, but for an imperative deity named Bureau IV–B–4, of whom he was the High Priest. (*MG* 179)

Even though the pilgrimage to Jerusalem makes her deal with a range of unpleasant situations, the Eichmann trial is foundational to her journey – she finally identifies with herself as she passes through the Gate. “In Jordan, Barbara will learn to give up control of her destiny: passivity will pacify”.³⁶ Thus, she decides not to follow the rules of the Catholic Church as she is about to marry Harry, about whom Barbara's family think is inappropriate and their marriage may cause a scandal.

Barbara is not the only one who gets somehow affected by the pilgrimage, Spark places the character of Freddy Hamilton, racist English diplomat, into its influence as well. Whereas the life of a diplomat ought to be mostly about cultural understanding, Freddy is incapable of this and fails to engage himself in any kind of a relationship (Edgecombe 1990, 64). And yet, he becomes Barbara's saviour and accompanies her on a tour of Holy Land, which similarly as in the case of Barbara, contributes to his self-knowledge. On this matter Edgecombe wrote that Barbara acts as “the catalyst of this remarkable transition from detachment to passion” (Edgecombe 1990, 67).

Because creating contrasts is Spark's “privilege”, readers do not have to wait a long time for a character that opposes Barbara's – it is the character of Abdul Ramdez. While she quests for unity, he is a balanced man with “a chameleonic adaptability” (Edgecombe

³⁶ Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, “The Mandelbaum Gate: Interrogative Vocation”, in *Vocation and Identity in the Fiction of Muriel Spark* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990) 69. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

1990, 76). It is thanks to him and his sister Suzi that Barbara finds the sense of her being, together with Freddy, who flees from his racist diplomatic routine.

What Muriel Spark proves in her works is that even the most severe theme, such as one's conversion or death, can be interlaced with irony, satire and humorous scenes, which is also true for *The Mandelbaum Gate*. For instance, when Mrs Rickward gets to know Barbara wants to marry Harry, she comes to Jerusalem to search for her in order to recall the inappropriateness of this marriage to Barbara. What is more, Mrs Rickward is the one who establishes “the happy ending” for Barbara, for she sends the documents to Rome (the place where Harry may get divorced) which actually help to dissolve Harry's previous marriage.

The Mandelbaum Gate is probably the most disliked novel for Spark. It is her longest work, and its length is the reason why she finds it so disturbing. However, its significance cannot be denied – the Gate became “a symbol of transition” (Stannard 2009, 245) for Spark. Furthermore, publishing this novel establishes a turning point in her writing career – similarly as her protagonist Barbara, she decides “to go on a journey” – to the writing of the experimental novels. *The Mandelbaum Gate* closes the first chapter of her productive career, in which she wrote eight outstanding novels within nine years.

Conclusion

Muriel Spark, together with the feature of ambivalence she deliberately chose to enrich her novels in the first period of her writing career, are the major themes this thesis concerns. The first chapter is about the authoress herself, because I firmly believe that her personality directly influenced her novels. It is not only the doubleness within the stories, but also Spark's split identity that played a key role when we consider the themes of her works as well – Catholicism, conversion or fraud – many of those experienced by Muriel herself.

Spark made a courageous step when she decided that the ambiguity should become an inseparable trait of her oeuvre, since these idiosyncratic works were considered as an unusual phenomenon when she started her writing career. The possible source of the inspiration for doubleness was the circle of the Scottish male writers, whose works contained the feature described as the 'Caledonian antisyzygy' – simply said – oxymorons.

What is more, she said that only after the conversion to the Roman Catholic Church she could free herself enough to write the outstanding fiction she did. Soon, her witty irony and satire made her popular and favoured among the Scottish authoresses, and she proved her "position" by publishing twenty-two novels in her lifetime.

Furthermore, Muriel likes to fuse her works with the facts from her life, and even more, to create the protagonists with similar fates – as Caroline Rose from Spark's very first novel *The Comforters*. Caroline is a convert and a writer, whose personality is visibly fragmented – she hears a mysterious voice that predicts her life. However, she bravely chooses to go her own way and decides to deal with the identities both of the author and the character of a novel. Unlike Muriel's next novels, it is not difficult to decide who represents which "side" in *The Comforters*. While in *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* Dougal Douglas is mistakenly perceived as a pure evil, Georgina Hogg surely represents the evil in here. By placing the character of Georgina into the novel, Spark wants to warn us of the decisions we make.

The brilliance of the authoress certainly lies in the ability to create a new astonishing plot, even though she rarely changes the themes and motives of her works – the same is true about the book of *Robinson*. As stated in the subchapter on *Robinson*, the novel also

questions the identity of its protagonist January Marlow who appears on a remote Robinson's island. Despite the fact that she converts to the Catholicism, she is not able to abandon her pagan habits. Again, readers can get a completely different view on the conversion – the ambiguous one – since January is compared to the ambivalent god Janus whose ability is to look in two possible directions.

While the novels mentioned above concern the characters of a young age mostly, *Memento Mori* depicts the group of seniors whose boring life is reversed after they get calls from the mysterious caller. No one knows who it is and the sentence they hear – “Remember you must die” – bears a second meaning as well. The first meaning is obvious, as it indicates the death of oneself, whereas it can also demonstrate the feeling of freedom at the same time. Moreover, Spark creates various insights into this matter, for some residents think of Death as a part of a life-circle, while for the others it is Death they fear the most. Therefore, in *Memento Mori*, it is proper to claim that it is rather the theme of mortality that the authoress presents dually.

The Ballad of Peckham Rye, her fourth novel in a row, is a proof how she has matured in writing, as this work is probably the most hilarious one. Her fearless creation of the ambivalent character of Dougal Douglas or Douglas Dougal is situated into the Peckham to create the chaos and reshape the fates of its residents. As stated above, the difference between Georgina Hogg and Dougal Douglas is that his presence is demanded in the story, for he acts as a catalyst that people need in their lives. Yet, it is “Sparkian” paradox that makes *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* to be perceived as an amoral and anarchic work.

What Spark likes to do in her works is to give a certain reference to the names of her characters. Similarly, in *The Bachelors*, she juxtaposes its protagonists. Whereas Ronald Bridges tries to put the things together, Patrick Seton wants to disrupt them – his acting does not go far from the satanic. The only thing they have in common is that they both suffer from the epilepsy, which is also the cause readers get to know a rotten side of the Catholicism – it is when Ronald has to forget about his desire of priesthood because of his disability. Despite the seriousness of the story, the novel ends happily and ironically, as readers come to the conclusion that not only Seton represents the evil in here, but the jury commits fraud as well.

Most critics say that it is *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* that makes Muriel Spark recognized as an outstanding novelist. This fact can be hardly denied, as this novel evoked the interest of foreign publishers as well, particularly *The New Yorker* magazine. The novel is about Miss Jean Brodie who teaches in Marcia Blaine School and the set of girls chosen by her – her ‘crème de la crème’. Being inspired by fascist ideas, she is able to sacrifice her girls which she finds proper – the girls become the embodiment of the slavery in this novel. However, Sandy is brave enough to avert her influence as she destroys her teaching career. This is the point of the story when Sandy can be compared to Dougal Douglas, for her presence is also required in order to stop the Prominence of Miss Jean Brodie. Yet, Brodie is not the only ambiguous character of the novel, Sandy's reaction at the end of the novel proves how complicated her thinking is, for she admits the influence of Miss Jean Brodie over her.

Muriel shows us that she does not consider the time as an important element of her fiction – *The Girls of Slender Means* serves as a great example. The May of Teck Club is a place, around which the whole plot is concerned. The story is told in flash-backs by the women from the Club, from whom readers get to know about the life of Nicolas Farrington, a former visitant of the Club who died in Haiti. Spark fearlessly creates the characters of Selina and Joanna, although contrasting to a large extent, they both become the reasons for Nicolas' conversion to the Roman Catholic Church. Furthermore, Nicolas and Joanna are not easy to be defined in terms of their behaviour.

While all these mentioned works have some feature in common, *The Mandelbaum Gate* is “an intermezzo” in Spark's oeuvre. She did not like the novel, probably because she uses it as a means to the understanding of herself. Moreover, the setting and the main character of Barbara Vaughan perfectly fits into the description of Spark's split identity. Barbara wants to end the dual perception of her being, so she converts and determines to go for a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. There she gets into a trouble because of her Jewish origin, when Freddy Hamilton helps her. They both get affected by the pilgrimage, for Barbara is a catalyst of Freddy's transition to self-knowledge. The most remarkable moment of the story is when Barbara finally identifies with herself – it is during the Eichmann trial when she discovers the uniqueness in her and decides to go her own way.

The Mandelbaum Gate is a turning point in Spark's career, because since writing this novel she decided to treat her novels in a completely different way. Muriel was never

afraid of putting herself into her fiction or designing the fates of the characters one may not like. Indeed, this is the reason why she became a sparkling and much appreciated novelist not only at the time of her greatest successes, but also nowadays.

Resumé

Hlavním tématem, kterým se tato práce zabývá, je sama Muriel Sparková a prvek ambivalence, kterým v raném období spisovatelské kariéry obohatila své romány. Věřím, že autorčina vlastní ambivalentní identita (anglicko-židovská) silně ovlivnila její díla, proto jsem se rozhodla věnovat první kapitole právě jí. Klíčovou roli v jejích dílech hraje nejenom dvojitvárnost, ale také autorčina rozdvojená osobnost. V jejích příbězích se tak často setkáme s tématy, jako je katolická víra, konverze, ale také podvody, protože každý autor „krade“ témata pro svá díla z života dalších lidí.

To, že se Sparková rozhodla, že se dvojitvárnost stane neoddělitelnou součástí jejích děl, byl velice odvážný krok, jelikož tato idiosynkratická díla byla v té době minimálně neobvyklá. Zdrojem inspirace pro vytvoření ambivalentních děl byl pravděpodobně kruh skotských spisovatelů, jejichž díla obsahovala typické prvky takzvané „Kaledonské antiszyzygy“ (v podstatě oxymóronu).

Autorka také tvrdí, že až konverze k římskokatolické církvi ji umožnila psát beletrii, tedy něco, čím se dříve nezabývala. Brzy se díky svým satirickým dílům, ve kterých se vtipně vyskytují prvky ironie, stala populární, a to především mezi skotskými spisovatelkami. Své postavení pak také utvrdila tím, že dohromady vydala dvacet dva děl.

Jak už bylo řečeno, Sparková ráda obohacovala svá díla fakty ze svého života. Navíc její protagonisté měli často podobný životní osud, jako například Caroline Roseová z prvního románu *Utěšitelé*³⁷. Caroline je spisovatelka, která konvertovala a je „psychicky na dně“. Navíc neustále slyší záhadný hlas (vlastně zvuk psacího stroje), který jí předpovídá budoucnost. Nicméně se tomu rozhodně čelit, a musí se tak vyrovnat s tím, že je autorkou i postavou v románu. Na rozdíl od ostatních románů od Sparkové je v *Utěšitelích* snadné zjistit, kdo zastává jakou stranu. Zatímco v *Baladě z předměstí* je Dougal Douglas vnímán jako čisté zlo mylně, v *Utěšitelích* je naprosto zřejmé, že Georgina Hoggová personifikuje zlo. Skrze charakter Georginy nás chce Sparková upozornit na důležitost našich rozhodnutí, například nutnost se postavit zlu a neuhýbat před ním.

Brilantnost autorky jistě spočívá ve schopnosti tvořit nový a strhující děj, přestože témata a motivy děl se téměř nemění, což je také případ knihy *Robinson*. Jak je uvedeno

³⁷ Překlady titulů jsou převzaty z titulu *Ambivalence v románech Muriel Sparkové* (viz literatura).

v podkapitole o *Robinsonovi*, román se zaměřuje na identitu protagonistky January Marlowové, která se ocitne na opuštěném Robinsonově ostrově. Přestože konvertuje ke katolické církvi, nedokáže se vzdát svých zavedených pohanských zvyků. Čtenáři opět vidí konverzi ze zcela jiného úhlu pohledu, a to z pohledu ambivalence, jelikož January je často přirovnávána k ambivalentnímu bohu Janusovi, božstvu s dvěma obličejí, který se dokáže dívat dvěma směry najednou.

Zatímco výše zmíněné romány se soustředí především na mladé lidi, *Memento Mori* je o skupině seniorů, jejichž nudný život se zcela změní poté, co obdrží telefonát od neznámého volajícího. Nikdo neví, o koho jde, navíc jim volající neustále opakuje jedinou větu „Pamatujte, že musíte zemřít.“. Tato věta má také dvojí význam. První význam je zřejmý, jde o smrt. Druhý možný výklad této věty spočívá v paradoxním pocitu svobody – většinou osvobození od bolesti stáří. Sparková se nám toto téma snaží podat z různých úhlů pohledu. Pro některé lidi je totiž smrt součástí života, ale pro ostatní je to něco, čeho se nejvíce obávají. Dá se tedy říct, že v *Mementu Mori* je to právě téma smrtelnosti, které se autorka rozhodla ztvárnit dvojznačně.

Balada z předměstí, v pořadí čtvrtý román, je důkazem, že ve psaní vyspěla, jelikož se jedná o její nejtipnější dílo. Nebála se vytvořit ambivalentní postavu Dougala Douglase neboli Douglase Dougala, jehož poslala na předměstí Peckhamu a s jeho pomocí vytvořila chaos a zvrátila osud místních obyvatel. Rozdíl mezi Georginou Hoggovou a Dougalem Douglasem spočívá v tom, že jeho přítomnost je v příběhu vyžadována, protože působí jako katalyzátor, který lidé ve svém životě potřebují, aby byli konfrontováni s dobrem a zlem. Právě kvůli „sparkovskému“ paradoxu je *Balada z předměstí* vnímána jako nemorální a anarchistické dílo.

Sparková si ráda hraje se jmény postav a ráda na ně určitým způsobem odkazuje. Podobně je to i v knize *Starí mládenci*, kde proti sobě staví hlavní protagonisty. Zatímco Ronald Bridges³⁸ se snaží najít řešení a „přemostit opačné názory“, Patrick Seton³⁹ se naopak snaží zničit vše, co podléhá jeho vlivu a jeho chování je naprosto neodpustitelné. Jediné, co mají tito dva společného, je to, že oba trpí epilepsií. Díky tomuto se čtenáři dozví o zkažené stránce katolicismu, protože Ronald se kvůli svému postižení musí vzdát snu stát

³⁸ Příjmení *Bridges* z anglického slova „bridge“ = most.

³⁹ Příjmení *Seton* autorka připodobnila k samotnému Satanovi.

se knězem. Přes vážnost příběhu má román ironický, ale také šťastný konec. Čtenář totiž dojde k závěru, že Seton není jediné zlo v příběhu, protože porota se také dopustila podvodu.

Většina kritiků tvrdí, že to, co z Muriel Sparkové dělá skvělou spisovatelku, je právě román *Nejlepší léta slečny Jean Brodieové*. Tento román totiž vyvolal zájem zahraničních vydavatelů, a to především časopisu *New Yorker*. Román je o slečně Brodieové, která učí na škole Marcie Blaineové, a také o dívkách, které si vybrala jako své důvěrnice. Fascinují ji fašistické názory a je schopná obětovat své dívky, jako by ona byla Bohem a dívky jejími loutkami. Sandy je ale natolik odvážná, že zvrátí její vliv, a zničí jak její kariéru, tak ono „dábelské“ sebevědomí. Tady se dá Sandy přirovnat k Dougalu Douglasovi, protože je naprosto nezbytné, aby v příběhu působila, a mohla tak zabránit dalšímu zkázonosnému vlivu Jean Brodieové. Brodieová ale není jediná ambivalentní postava v románu, protože to, jak se Sandy na konci příběhu zachová, jen dokazuje, jak složitě ve skutečnosti smýšlí, protože přiznává, že na ni slečna Jean Brodieová měla velký vliv – natolik velký, že před ním marně utekla do kláštera.

Sparková ukazuje, že čas pro ni není v jejích dílech vůbec důležitý. *Nezámožná děvčata* slouží jako skvělý příklad. Děj se odehrává v Klubu May Teckové. Příběh vypráví formou retrospektivy ženy z klubu, a díky nim se čtenář dozví o životě Nicolase Farringdona, bývalého návštěvníka klubu, který zemřel na Haiti. Sparková vytvořila kontrastní postavy Seliny a Joanny, a přestože jsou každá jiná, obě se staly důvodem, proč Nicolas konvertoval k římskokatolické církvi.

Zatímco všechna výše zmíněná díla mají něco společného, *Mandelbaumova brána* je takzvané „intermezzo“ mezi díly Sparkové. Román se jí nelíbil, pravděpodobně proto, že ho používá jako prostředek k pochopení sebe sama. Navíc výprava a hlavní postava Barbara Vaughanové perfektně zapadají do popisu Sparkové rozdvojené osobnosti. Barbara chce skoncovat s dvojitým vnímáním sebe sama, konvertuje a rozhodne se, že půjde na pouť do Jeruzaléma. Kvůli svému židovskému původu se tam ale dostane do problémů a pomůže jí Freddy Hamilton. Tato pouť je oba hodně ovlivní, jelikož Barbara přivede Freddyho k sebepoznání. Nejpozoruhodnější moment příběhu nastane, když si Barbara konečně uvědomí, kdo je. Stane se to během soudního procesu s Adolfem Eichmannem, během něhož konečně přijde na to, v čem je jedinečná a rozhodne se jít svou vlastní cestou.

Napsání díla *Mandelbaumova brána* způsobilo naprostý zvrat v autorčině kariéře, jelikož od té doby začala své romány psát úplně jinak. Sparková se nikdy nebála vložit do příběhu samu sebe, ani toho, že psala o lidech, kteří se čtenářům nemuseli líbit. To byl ale také jeden z důvodů, proč se stala tak uznávanou a vynikající spisovatelkou, a to nejen za dob její největší slávy, ale i nyní.

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Abbreviations Used

<i>C</i>	<i>The Comforters</i>
<i>R</i>	<i>Robinson</i>
<i>MM</i>	<i>Memento Mori</i>
<i>BP</i>	<i>The Ballad of Peckham Rye</i>
<i>BCH</i>	<i>The Bachelors</i>
<i>JB</i>	<i>The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie</i>
<i>SM</i>	<i>The Girls of Slender Means</i>
<i>MG</i>	<i>The Mandelbaum Gate</i>

Annotation

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Title of the Thesis: Ambivalence in Muriel Spark's Early Novels

Supervisor: Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D.

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Abstract:

This thesis deals with the feature of ambivalence in Muriel Spark's early novels written in the period from 1957 to 1965, particularly: *The Comforters*, *Robinson*, *Memento Mori*, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*, *The Bachelors*, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, *The Girls of Slender Means* and *The Mandelbaum Gate*. In the first part, there is a brief summary of the main events from the life of the authoress, because she likes to incorporate the autobiographical facts into her fiction. This thesis also focuses on the tradition of doubleness – typical of Scottish literature and culture. The next part is dedicated to the actual analysis of the works, where I establish how the ambivalence affects each novel as a whole and its characters as well. Furthermore, I support my claims by adding concrete examples from the aforementioned works.

Key words:

Muriel Spark, Scottish literature, ambivalence, ambiguity, duality, doubleness, character

Anotace

Jméno a příjmení: Adamčová Alexandra

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Název práce: Ambivalence v prvotních románech Muriel Sparkové

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Abstrakt:

Bakalářská práce se zabývá ambivalencí v prvotních románech Muriel Sparkové napsaných v letech 1957–1965, jmenovitě: *Utěšitelé*, *Robinson*, *Memento Mori*, *Balada z předměstí*, *Staří mládenci*, *Nejlepší léta slečny Jean Brodieové*, *Nezámožná děvčata* a *Mandelbaumova brána*. Součástí práce je krátký přehled hlavních mezníků ze života autorky, protože ráda je využívá ve své tvorbě. Práce se rovněž zaměřuje na tradici dualismu ve skotské literatuře a kultuře. Další část je věnovaná samotné analýze děl, ve které zjišťuji, jaký vliv má ambivalence na román jako celek i jeho postavy. Mé tvrzení dále podporuji konkrétními příklady z výše uvedených děl.

Klíčová slova:

Muriel Sparková, skotská literatura, ambivalence, dvojznačnost, dualismus, charakter