

EXPLORING ARTISTIC PSYCHOLOGY OF THE CREATIVE WORK BY MURIEL SPARK

M.Z.Djalaldinova,

PhD Doctorate Candidate,

Andijan state institute of foreign languages

Annotation: Muriel Spark, a luminary in the literary world, is celebrated for her incisive exploration of human nature, often through the lens of unconventional characters and intricate plots. Her novels delve deeply into the psychology of creativity and the artist's mind, offering a profound commentary on the complexities of artistic life. This article examines the psychological dimensions of art as illustrated in some of Spark's most notable works, including "The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie" and "Aiding and Abetting."

Key words and phrases: artistic psychology, complexity, creativity, exploration, human nature, intricate plot, psychological dimension.

In "The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie," Spark crafts a character whose influence over her students mirrors the power and control often wielded by artists over their creations [1]. Miss Brodie, a schoolteacher in 1930s Edinburgh, sees herself as a sculptor of young minds, molding her students according to her ideals. Her role as an artist is twofold: she shapes their intellectual and emotional landscapes while projecting her own desires and ambitions onto them. Miss Brodie's assertion that she is in her prime and her tendency to romanticize her life and ideas reflect an artist's quest for meaning and relevance. She views her teaching not merely as a profession but as an art form, with her students as living masterpieces. This dynamic highlights the psychological tension between artistic vision and reality. Miss Brodie's eventual downfall underscores the dangers of artistic hubris and the ethical implications of imposing one's will onto others.

"Aiding and Abetting," a later novel by Spark, further explores the psychological underpinnings of artistic manipulation [2]. The story revolves around the infamous case of Lord Lucan, a British peer who disappeared after being accused of murder, and his supposed therapist, Dr. Hildegard Wolf. The novel presents a complex interplay between reality and illusion, a recurring theme in Spark's exploration of artistic psychology. Dr. Wolf, herself a fraud, represents the artist who constructs elaborate fictions to manipulate and control her subjects. Her double life as a healer and a con artist speaks to the dual nature of the artist's psyche capable of both creation and deception. The novel's intricate plot and shifting perspectives mimic the process of artistic creation, where truth is often subjective and malleable. Spark uses Dr. Wolf's character to delve into the psychology of deception, illustrating how artists can blur the lines between reality and artifice. The novel suggests that this capacity for manipulation is inherent in the artistic psyche, raising questions about authenticity and morality in the pursuit of artistic expression.

Throughout Spark's oeuvre, there is a recurring theme of artistic isolation and alienation. Many of her characters, particularly those with artistic inclinations, struggle with a sense of otherness and detachment from the world around them. This is evident in "The Driver's Seat," where the protagonist, Lise, embarks on a journey of self-destruction, disconnected from societal norms and expectations [3]. Lise's extreme actions can be interpreted as a manifestation of the artist's desire to break free from conventional boundaries and assert their individuality.

In "Loitering with Intent," Spark portrays a young writer, Fleur Talbot, who navigates the literary world with a mix of ambition and cynicism [4]. Fleur's experiences reflect the psychological challenges faced by artists, including the pressure to conform to market

demands and the struggle to maintain artistic integrity. Her sense of alienation is compounded by the duplicitous nature of the literary establishment, echoing Spark's own experiences as a writer.

Muriel Spark often blurs the line between madness and creativity, suggesting that the artist's mind operates on a different plane of reality. This theme is prominently featured in "The Ballad of Peckham Rye," where the enigmatic Dougal Douglas disrupts the lives of the residents in a South London neighborhood [5]. His behavior, which oscillates between eccentricity and madness, challenges societal norms and provokes introspection among those he encounters. Dougal's character embodies the archetype of the mad artist, whose unconventional worldview and actions defy rational explanation. Spark uses this portrayal to explore the fine line between genius and insanity, highlighting the unique psychological landscape inhabited by artists. This intersection of madness and creativity is a testament to Spark's understanding of the complex inner workings of the artistic mind.

Muriel Spark's novels offer a rich tapestry of insights into the psychology of artists, revealing the intricate interplay between creativity, manipulation, isolation, and madness. Her characters, often larger than life and imbued with artistic sensibilities, navigate a world where the boundaries between reality and artifice are fluid and ever-changing. Through her keen observations and sharp wit, Spark provides a compelling exploration of the artistic psyche, inviting readers to ponder the profound and sometimes unsettling nature of creative expression.

References:

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