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You Must Believe in Spring

and

Subverting Causality: Repetition and Readers in Muriel Spark's Work

Mohamed Sayed Tonsy Mahmoud

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Mohamed Tonsy
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Abstracts

Creative Component

You Must Believe in Spring is a *bildungsroman* that follows three days of Shahed's life in Egypt. Set in the near-future – early 2030's – it deals with themes of revolution, alienation and privilege. Being a disciple of the national Sufi institute, and a swimmer representing the Armed Forces, Shahed toes the line between the two major factions in Egypt. He traverses a country under lockdown to find Nizam – a revered Sufi sheikh – who's been imprisoned. Shahed is there to deliver him to an army barracks in the Sinai, where Nizam is meant to give a sermon. Along with his official mission, Shahed is carrying a bottle of ethanol disguised as drinking water that he's planning on using to self-immolate in the barracks to protest the Armed Forces' continued oppression of people in the country.

On Shahed's journey, the issue of rebelliousness, and the effectiveness of it, becomes increasingly muddled. His grandmother's mythologised stories of the 2011 Revolution fall apart amidst the horrifying reality of life in the city and Nizam's prison. Once Shahed delivers Nizam to the barracks, and finds himself close to fulfilling his plan, Nizam escapes, leaving Shahed alone, grappling for both life and freedom. Besides being a tale of one person's idea of revolt, this manuscript deals with how people portray their narratives to reach their own personal ends.

You Must Believe in Spring is forthcoming with Hajar Press, September 2022.
<https://www.hajarpress.com/books/you-must-believe-in-spring>

Word count: 74 780

Critical Component

This research discusses the role of repetition in the interaction between text and reader in the cases of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and *The Driver's Seat*. In both texts the interaction is invoked through Spark's use of repetition throughout the narrative. Spark produces a state of constant return to various *spaces* in the narrative that function as *narrative anchors*. This constant repetition of *spaces* – as defined by Michel de Certeau in *Spatial Stories* – allows Spark to subvert traditional narrative forms, and challenge the issue of causality within the chosen works. Both works handle the issue of repetition in a way that's directly influenced by the content of the narrative. *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* relies on the repetition of words, while *The Driver's Seat* relies on relational aspects between words that goes beyond the semantic structure, which Wolfgang Iser discusses in *The Phenomenology of Reading.* There have been previous attempts to derive a definitive Cartesian structure for Spark's narratives, but the temporal complexity of both novels make such efforts impossible. Cartesian closed-form structural analyses of the narratives neglect the fact that any semblance of structure is only implied for works of fiction. The reader constructs the framework through the reading process. The *narrative anchors* that turns *narrative units* and *places* into *spaces* allow the reader to orient themselves and measure the changes that have occurred in the narrative, without compromising the subversive aspect of the novels' style. Iser's theories on phenomenology, repetition, absences in texts elaborate on the relationship between the text and the reader. Repetition cements the 'virtual reality' of the narrative, which allows the reader to inhabit the text and witness the changes the *spaces* experience when exploring the narrative, resulting in a constantly evolving narrative structure.

Word count: 24 995

Subverting Causality: Repetition and Readers in Muriel Spark’s Work

Reading temporally complex structures, such as Muriel Spark's, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie (The Prime)* and *The Driver's Seat (The Driver's)* should seem like an impossible feat when just presented with the words on the page. Not only is the temporal structure complex, but both narratives also avoid falling into the realm of causality-driven narratives. They manage to function, to portray more than their content through their use of a repetitive internal structure, which demands reader engagement. Spark's writing is of a particular style, without being stylised. Saying more than that her style is "particular" risks reducing her writing to the realm of affectation, or excess. In her essay *On Style*, Susan Sontag states that it is impossible to discern style as being something that's layered on to a work of art. Writing can be stylised, but often subject-matter dictates the style. "An art of excess, lacking harmoniousness, can never be of the greatest kind." (20; 31) The chosen narratives are indeed harmonious, despite a complex temporal structure that darts from various points in the narrative's timeline, while repeating *units – narrative anchors –* that help orient the reader.

Writing is inherently performative due to the use of language, which recalls on previous learned notions that can be retraced by the reader. (Derrida, 5-6; Deleuze 93-95) Interaction with the reader is at the root of its function as a communicative tool. One of writing's defining characteristics is the possibility of its repetition, in terms of words, phrases, and entire bodies of work; its *iterability*. Any writing is a repeatable form of communication since it can be reread in the absence of the author and "in the absolute absence of the receiver" (Derrida 7-8). This fulfils one of the needs of works of fiction, where prose should be sustainable without the author and any definite addressee being present, even at the risk of the work being misunderstood (Derrida 9). The possibility of writing being misunderstood, for works of fiction, can be wielded to produce an impressive narrative drive, through the performative power of the *narrative units*, as is found in Spark's writing. The words Spark mobilises possess a performative function on the page that engages with the

reader because of the aforementioned repetition, the words' *iterability*. *Iterability* can be defined as a *narrative unit's* ability to manifest onto the pages, and change with each repetition. This raises the question of success and failure in narratives and storytelling. However, it's important to point out that being misunderstood does not mean a narrative has failed. Given that readers create their own *spaces* within narratives – a "virtual reality" of sorts – success lies in readers' continued engagement through the narrative, not an ability to reconstitute a definite structure for what they have traversed. Readers can derive meaning and knowledge from narratives, which – as *knowledge* – can still exist outside the "institution of the real" ("Heterologies" de Certeau 200). Thus, what the reader derives from a narrative does not have to be bound by institutionalised forms of knowledge, or scientific methods, and need not be provable in the "institution of the real" to be *knowledge*:

> In effect, fiction plays on the stratification of meaning: it narrates one thing in order to tell something else; it delineates itself in a language from which it continuously draws effects of meaning that cannot be circumscribed or checked. In contrast to an artificial language which is "univocal" in principle, fiction has no proper place of its own. It is "metaphoric"; it moves elusively in the domain of the other. Knowledge is insecure when dealing with the problem of fiction; consequently, its effort consists in analysis (of a sort) that reduces or translates the elusive language of fiction into stable and easily combined elements. ("Heterologies" de Certeau 202)

This proves to be an important point to remember when analysing Spark's writing, particularly when deciding what kind of *narrative unit* can fall under the umbrella of an *iterable* element.

This analysis will delve into the narrative, and rather than focusing on structure, it will focus on specific *narrative units* used within the narrative. Movement is produced between one *iteration* of these *units* and the next through their repetitive use. This movement itself becomes a structure that's only perceived by the reader, through their engagement with the narrative. As words on a page, devoid of reader engagement, the chosen narratives are challenging to explain. A structural analysis of *The Prime* has already been performed by John Holloway in his work, *Narrative Structure and Text Structure: Isherwood's A Meeting*

by the River, and Muriel Spark's The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie. In his analysis, Holloway draws Hasse diagrams that are meant to illustrate the different operations enacted by the events in the novel to reflect on the narrative structure. Holloway's commentary on Spark's use of words within the narrative is brief. He points to Spark's use of words as an anomaly without analysing their contribution to the structure of non-causal narrative structures. Still, some of Holloway's observations regarding Spark's prose will be referred to later, especially when considering the use of the word "betray" in the narrative. Holloway's analysis deals with the narrative as a static, unchanging experience, as if the story is already constructed, even at the first reading. He does refer to the difficulty of such an endeavour, specifically with works of *The Prime*'s quality that possess non-linear temporal structures. A static narrative is not the viewpoint advocated by my analysis. This research deals with the narrative as an experience that's constantly becoming, rather than an experience already-achieved then recreated through the reading process.

What is lacking in a traditional narrativist analysis of temporally complex structures is reader engagement. The narrative is achieved through the reader's efforts. As Iser states in *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*: "We may take as a starting-point the fact that the linguistic signs and structures of the text exhaust their function in triggering developing acts of comprehension" ("Act of Reading" 108). The result of a piece of fiction is not to reveal its contents, but an experience. Iser elaborates, saying that a text is like a "game" which would fail in engaging the reader's participation if it does more than set out "governing rules" ("Act of Reading" 107-108). Fundamentally, there is nothing wrong with determining narrative structures. However, defining a structure which considers the narrative as predetermined and constructed – outwith the reader's experience of the narrative – will not work when causality is challenged, which is the case in Spark's work. As a reader experiences a narrative – transforming the *narrative units* into *places* and *spaces* by engaging

with them – a structure becomes visible, but only becomes complete in retrospect. This is the case for narratives that have complex temporal structures, where strands from different timelines overlap, making it difficult to discern causality, or define an absolute sequence of events.

For a reader to engage with a narrative, there must be some mutual understanding between reader and text that there exists meaning(s) to be derived from it. It would be naïve to assume that a reader approaches a text with no notion of what to expect. This arises from a process of "inference not by intuition" (Benn Michaels 193). This allows the idea of a private self to emerge, from which a text is seen as part of a public since it is external to the interpretive reader (Poulet 44). Texts follow linguistic forms. They also follow (or subvert) rules of grammar and meaning-making, which forms a parallel public that the reader can accept on their own terms. Thus, the reader sets the terms of interactions and functions of interpretations they're ready to mobilise to eke out meaning from text. However, at the point of reading a text, the text anticipates the reader as much as the reader anticipates the text, becoming more nuanced as the narrative is experienced (Husserl 80).

Patrick J. Whiteley's discussion of *The Prime* in "The Social Framework of Knowledge" performs a similar analysis. By examining various episodes within *The Prime*, Whiteley shows how *The Prime* manipulates readers' anticipation of events while simultaneously allowing the reader to construct the narrative to highlight Spark's dissection of "socially mediated" knowledge (81). Whiteley's analytical lens is grounded in social theory by attributing various entities to different forms of social groupings. For example, he discusses the Brodie set as comparable to the notion of "the communion" by Georges Gurvitch, the social grouping that is "least conducive to knowledge," a statement that will be proven true given Brodie's aversion to any subject she does not respect (Whiteley 85). While Whiteley's analysis is useful, it takes the idea of pre-established social groups as a framework

and applies it to the text. On the other hand, this analysis aims to see the relational dynamics that arise between various *narrative units* and how that conveys knowledge to the reader. Both rely on analysing relational dynamics between various entities within the narrative, but to different ends. Still, Whiteley's analysis raises important points that will be referred to throughout.

What is evident about these narratives' structure – which Holloway hints at without expanding upon – is that they are anchored along *narrative units*. Words can be described as *narrative units* – as defined by Roland Barthes – that create the *place* where a narrative might take place (Barthes 91). A reader engaging with words – discerning meaning, events, actions, agency on behalf of the characters – populates these *narrative places,* turning them into *spaces.* "*Space is a practiced place.*" De Certeau defines *spaces* and *places* as:

> A place (*lieu*) is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. It thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location (*place*)[…] A place is in its own 'proper' and distinct location, a location it defines.[…]
>
> A *space* exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. ("Practice" 117)

In this analysis, de Certeau's definitions will be taken a step further. *Narrative units* will be considered to be any delimitated element that is *iterable* within a narrative. A *narrative unit* can have limits defined by semantic units – i.e. a *narrative unit* can be a word – but that's not always necessarily the case, as will be seen in *The Driver's.* Discussion of *places* and *spaces* will adhere to de Certeau's definitions. However, the term *narrative units* will still be used, though only when considering the text on the page, while disregarding reader input and engagement. Again, the reason the structures dictated by the omniscient narrators in both novels function, is because of readers' engagement with the narrative. This is only possible because they're given the tools to turn the *narrative units* into *places*, which can then turn into *spaces* that readers can populate and perceive. Essentially, the narrator gives the reader a

torch to explore the space, rather than just providing a map. A reader experiencing a narrative discerns changes that have occurred within a narrative when a *narrative unit* is repeated on the page. Recalling the *unit* from a previous *iteration*, while experiencing it in its current context allows the reader to see it as having changed the *places* and *spaces* they're currently engaging with. Simultaneously, the repeated *unit* helps the reader anticipate a different *space* than what they have previously experienced, by virtue of the "unforeseeable connections" established from the material they have absorbed through the reading process ("Reading Process" 283).

This is not just an arbitrary framework that's been chosen to apply to Spark's texts. It is a technique that the works call for because of how the narrative voices mobilise the *units* chosen, and how *spaces* are created to illustrate the changes undergone by the *units*. Perceiving changes to *spaces* shows the reader the distance travelled through the narrative, temporal or otherwise. Unlike Holloway's analysis this research will not traverse the whole narrative. The works are too expansive, and a further complication will arise if that were the goal. Consider Spark's use of the word, "betray." It appears several times within the last pages of the novel – and not for the first time with this exact phrasing – "'It's only possible to betray where loyalty is due,' said Sandy" (127). Having traversed the narrative, it is difficult to pinpoint when the word "betray" first appears, unless readers deliberately search for the first instance of the word. However, earlier in the narrative, a *space* created with different *narrative units* seemed to form the shape of a *space* that "betray" could fill, as if the narrative itself was still not prepared for the *unit's* appearance:

> Miss Brodie never discussed her affairs with the other members of staff, but only with those former pupils whom she had trained up in her confidence. There had been previous plots to remove her from Blaine, which had been foiled. (9)

A *negative space* that calls for a *narrative unit* to appear is created.

Elaborating on this *negative space* is the episode when Miss Mackay, the headmistress, crashes Miss Brodie's class and the girls adequately pretend that they were being instructed in the school's curriculum, Miss Brodie approves of their silence:

> 'You did well,' said Miss Brodie to the class, when Miss Mackay had gone, 'not to answer the question put to you. It is well, when in difficulties, to say never a word, neither black nor white. Speech is silver but silence is golden. Mary, are you listening? What was I saying?' (13)

Miss Mackay asked, why were the girls crying? In Miss Brodie's approval of the student's reactions, the reader finds an approval of purposeful omission. Miss Brodie is anti-establishment, subverts the traditional curriculum, and her students connect to her. She is also a fascist, a fact that becomes problematic given that, as is the case with Brodie's students, knowledge gained through the narrative "converge[s] on [Brodie's] personality" (Whiteley 85). Brodie's fascism – as a descriptor of her set – results in Joyce Emily's attempt to get closer to the group by travelling to fight alongside fascists in Spain, resulting in her death. Such is the problem of having knowledge funnel into knowledge of Brodie. Similarly, to understand the narrative the reader must understand Brodie better (Cheyette 98). Thus, the reader finds themselves understanding Brodie's approval of purposeful omission; it becomes a point of understanding in the narrative.

Avoiding the *narrative unit* "betray" doesn't remove the sting of betrayal, and the word still finds its way onto the page, appearing numerous times in proximity to Sandy who betrayed Miss Brodie. Brodie even defends Miss Mackay, the headmistress who is trying to get rid of her, when Rose effects an *ad hominem* attack. Brodie calls the comment "disloyal." As Whiteley remarks, "Brodie may have in mind loyalty ultimately to herself" given her wont to maintain the Brodie set's integrity (90). Simply, Brodie possesses a negative *affinity* towards "disloyal" as a competing *narrative unit*, for it implies a correlation to "betray." The tension between the earlier omission of "betray" in the narrative and its blatant resurfacing means, once the question, 'Who betrayed Miss Brodie?' is answered, it's swept up by 'Why?'

and ‘What does it mean to “betray”?’ both of which propel the novel forward. This analytical method is not meant to derive reasons, or answers these questions. However, if a complete analysis of the narrative were conducted, I would have to infuse the method with my own notions of what these narratives might be trying to convey, if only as shorthand, which would conflict with the reasoning behind this method.

My aim is to illustrate that changes undergone in the chosen narratives are reflected in the reader’s experience of certain *iterable narrative units*, which will be referred to as *narrative anchors*. In his essay, *The Reading Process: A Phenomonological Approach*, Iser talks about the “unforeseeable connections” the reader can discern from the material they have absorbed, and the importance of repetition in solidifying these connections (“Reading Process” 283). *Narrative anchors* are those *iterable units* that provide consistent reference points within the narrative through which the reader can measure progress within the text by recognising the changes undergone by the *unit* between one iteration and the next. So, how do these building blocks construct the reader’s experience? *Narrative units* form sentences, and these sentences animate a *place* that exists in the narrative. A *place* is an object, a word of written text, person, or physical space where a certain delimitation for its affective area within the narrative is evident. Presented on the page, without the reader’s interaction, I shall revert to referring to these *places* as *narrative units*. A *place* becomes a *space* when characters, actions, interact with these *places* in a way that portrays a dimensionality that goes beyond the immediate reported interaction. Without digressing into the phenomenological aspect of reading as a craft, suffice it to say that a singular *narrative unit* does not form a narrative, but a string of *narrative units* – by virtue of the reader’s memory, knowledge of syntax, and imagination – help turn a *place* into a *space* (Deleuze 100).

In each of the chosen texts, a certain *genus* of object is going to be given this status of *place*, and the analysis of how these *places* become *spaces* through the narrative unfolding

will follow. How are these objects chosen? Any *narrative unit* can be subjected to this analysis. What's important is that they follow the criteria set out by Wolfgang Iser, in his analysis of the reader's interaction with texts. The criteria states, a *narrative unit* must be able to transcend the semantic unit of the surrounding context and become "depragmatized". Essentially, they must find a *place* in the 'virtual reality' the reader creates when traversing a narrative:

> A further complication consists in the fact that literary texts do not serve merely to denote empirically existing objects. Even though they may select objects from the empirical world[…]they depragmatize them, for these objects are not to be denoted, but are to be transformed. Denotation presupposes some form of reference that will indicate the specific meaning of the thing denoted. The literary text, however, takes its selected objects out of their pragmatic context and so shatters their original frame of reference; the result is to reveal aspects (e.g. of social norms) which had remained hidden as long as the frame of reference remained intact. In this way, the reader is given no chance to detach himself, as he would have if the text were purely denotative. Instead of finding out whether the text gives an accurate or inaccurate description of the object, he has to build up the object for himself—often in a manner running counter to the familiar world evoked by the text. ("Act of Reading" Iser 109)

In *The Prime* "betray" is not a physical object within the narrative, but it elaborates on a certain presence and affects the interaction between the various characters, and only because the reader experiences the word in all its forms throughout the narrative. "Betray" is not accessible to the characters, at least not equally. Miss Brodie isn't aware that Sandy betrayed her, and only ever suspects it, which the reader becomes aware of only at the end of the novel.

Spark's characters are often two-dimensional representations of people (Gregson 3). Few can be defined as *spaces*, and only once they gain a holistic temporal dimension within the narrative ("Prospecting" 141). Mary Macgregor is known for being perceived as less smart than the rest of the Brodie set, and for dying in a fire. Her death happens outside of the narrative's scope, while simultaneously being part of Mary's *space,* because of the narrator's constant return to the death-scene. Mary's *space* exists for her, and the characters around her, though it's impossible to discern characters' feelings towards her. What the reader gains from

the narrator's continuous return is the possibility of gaining various sorts of connections towards Mary's *space*:

> 'When any ill befalls me I wish I had been nicer to Mary.'
> 'How were we to know?' said Rose. (Spark 77)

There are many connections that lead back to the memory of Mary's death, and the reader gets to experience that same return. When sympathy is expressed, is it because she died in a fire, or because of how she was treated? There's a viable argument for both. As Peter Robert Brown points out in *"There's Something about Mary:" Narrative and Ethics in The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, "The essentially partial nature of narrative and, indeed, of human understanding is central to Spark's work" (233). This reinforces the notion that for every point, there exists a counter-point.

Characters' *iterability* can be analysed, but it risks compromising the method itself. The danger with analysing characters using this method, is that *affective states* might be attributed to them, i.e. readers can assume that they are purposefully acting of their own free will, in a way that's completely apart from reader engagement ("Prospecting" 142). Reaching such a conclusion contradicts the initial reason for using this framework, which is to show that Spark's characters, and her novels, deliberately subvert causal relationships, and that it is the reader that constructs the narrative's structure as the story progresses. Mary dies in a fire, while the characteristic of "stupidity" still applies to her, is that why she died? The causal relationship is there for the reader to assume, if that's how they construct the narrative structure, but according to what's presented on the page – in terms of *narrative units* that turn into *places* and *spaces* – there is no definitive answer (Cairns 205). This absence of absolutes is purposely left for the reader to fill. For the Brodie set, Mary is the "*nobody*[…] the set's internal nonentity" that various actors within the narrative work to distinguish themselves from (Whiteley 90). Similar to the reader, Mary's membership in the Brodie set is tenuous. For Mary, it lasts until her *iterable* death, for the reader, it lasts the length of the narrative

(Whiteley 91). The only thing that can be said for Mary, is that her death is noted, and it changes because of how often it occurs. Does it affect the narrative as much as the discussion of "betrayal"? No, because – to borrow Iser's term – it is easier to "depragmatize" words, but for a reader immersed in a narrative, characters will be assumed to exist with a consciousness that's inaccessible to the reader, especially with third-person narration. It's easy to assume that the narrator should be capable of accessing characters' psyches and motivations; however, for Spark's characters to exist with their own consciousness that consciousness must be unknowable, an absence for the reader to fill. This is especially true in Spark's case, for "She is calculatedly reductive" in how she presents her characters (Gregson 3). However, Spark herself stated explicitly that the narrators in her work are always specific characters, separate from herself, who possess qualified authority over the narrative being relayed (Brown 230; 232). Thus, the narrative's biased, two-dimensional views of characters is the result of a subtler form of dimensionality. So, it is unknowable if Mary's "stupidity" and her death are linked. Moreover, if the characters' consciousness were communicable then there would have been no difficulty in deriving a causal narrative structure for Spark's work, which is not the case ("Prospecting" 142). The purpose of this research, again, is to analyse the unexpected forms of narrative structure and the repetition of various *narrative units* that allows these unconventional narratives to function.

Analysis will begin with *The Driver's Seat*. The delimitation of *places* and *spaces* is harder to pinpoint in this narrative, because they don't follow *semantic boundaries* as is the case with *The Prime of Miss jean Brodie*, where the *narrative units* to be analysed are the words. The *iterability* of these depgramatized *places* and *spaces* will be shown to allow the reader to take hold of *narrative anchors* that help to make structural sense of the narrative in a way that defies causality. A fault lies in how narrativists attempt to derive a linear, or Cartesian structure, where events link together to form a definitive structure. This research

doesn’t aim to derive a different meaning from the narratives by wilfully ignoring causality, but to provide a different form of reading that doesn’t hinge on causality, where the output is not a binary choice between ‘Lise planned her own death,’ or ‘Richard killed Lise.’

One last question remains: in both cases the narrator is third-person omniscient. It’s been suggested previously that the third-person perspective employed by Spark in *The Prime* is somehow related to an argument of Calvinism vs. Catholicism. The Calvinist argument being that the universe is dictated by rhetoric, “the world itself is a work of fiction, that with the fear of playing God the authors must find a way of acknowledging authorial fallibility, while working with a distrust of language and a sense that it always falls short of expressing God’s meaning” (Christianson 98). On the other hand, the Catholic connection is in the narrative’s impermeability to anyone except God (Christianson 99). These arguments provide interesting grounds for discussion, particularly when considering Sandy and her “betrayal” of Miss Brodie. However, the aim of this research is to steer away from considering authorial intent, whether intentional or accidental. Assuming authorial intent contradicts Derrida’s statement that writing can exist in the absolute absence of the author. It’s difficult to shoehorn Spark’s writing into categories for the same reason that de Certeau deemed fiction an important source of knowledge, albeit one that evades institutionalised forms of knowledge:

> In the analysis of a reading experience, when does one come to the point? The answer is, “never,” or, no sooner than the pressure to do so becomes unbearable (psychologically). Coming to the point is the goal of a criticism that believes in content, in extractable meaning, in the utterance as a repository. Coming to the point fulfils a need that most literature deliberately frustrates (if we open ourselves to it), the need to simplify and close. (Fish 89)

Following this, the stance taken by this paper is not to assume some intellectual higher ground, but as Hans Robert Jauss pointed out in his essay *Art History and Pragmatic History*, there is a difference between narrative forms of fiction and non-narrative historicisms. I’m not setting out to discuss why Spark might, or might not have delved further into rhetoric, or

battled with specific dogmas and contemporaneous societal issues, or where her allegiances might lie, and why. In *Freedom and Necessity,* Michael Giffin discusses the problem with ignoring theological readings of texts:

> [B]ecause of institutional prejudice and censorship; because of movements in literary analysis; and because of a general predilection to read in many texts a flat rejection of theology where in fact there is often a serious theological interrogation within a discernible tradition of discourse. (310)

Catholicism might have provided a framework from which to argue the point of Calvinist rhetoric, but that doesn't prove a causal relationship. While Giffin points out that Spark herself drew those "observations on the theological nature of her work," my concern is that the theological discussion would become a point of arrival for the narrative. This analysis does not render those readings false, but acknowledges them as one of many readings. Given that Spark asked for testimony and witnesses, so that she may accurately write an autobiography that's substantiated by characters beyond herself, I do not think this analytical method to be a stretch, nor a rejection of such readings (Galloway).

However, it is important to note that Ian Gregson's critical piece, *Muriel Spark's Caricatural Effects*, argues against this sort of analysis, describing it as "platitudinous" and a "truism of contemporary theory" (4). He states: "The minds of almost all Spark's characters are 'numb' in this sense: what should be most meaningful has become meaningless" (5). Through the unnaturalness of Spark's "reductive" characters, Gregson shows that their true concerns are the elements alluded to by the text that they can never truly aspire to reach – given their lack of dimensionality – which is where the theological elements appear (5). However, like the criticism of Holloway's narrativist analysis, the problem with such a criticism is that it still considers the narrative apart from the reading experience. Gregson's comments on *The Driver's* protagonist are ones that will be referred to later.

The reason I chose two works of Spark's rather than comparing her work to texts by other authors where repetition plays a crucial role – Andrei Platonov's *The Foundation Pit* is

one such text, as is Nawal el-Saadawy's *Searching* – is that beyond the scope of this essay, the philosophical concepts that Spark displays within her prose are curious as dialectical processes in and of themselves, "in which everything earlier extends and supplements itself through the later" (Droysen qtd. by Jauss 62; Jauss 54). Gerard Carruthers performs an insightful overview of Spark's writing in *The Remarkable Fictions of Muriel Spark* where changes in her writing are made apparent. An article by Marilyn Reizbaum titled *The Stranger Spark* performs an astute analysis of place, multiplicity of voices and the various narrative forms employed by Spark across her career. Reizbaum's analysis allows for meanings of the various states of Spark's characters to raise metaphorical questions. However, I shall not refer to it because it still considers the narratives outwith the reading experience. Reizbaum performs a deliberate search rather than allowing experiences of Spark's work to unfold. Michael Schmidt similarly performs an overview of the literary context that Spark's work appeared in, while charting changes in her style in *The Novel*. Schmidt placed Spark's writing in proximity to experimental authors such as Christine Brooke-Rose whose works expanded on concepts pertinent to readings of Spark's work (Schmidt 835). However, considering works by more than one author for this analysis would bring up questions of linguistics and form that, while interesting, will not add to the interpretive functions laid out by this research. Deleuze and Guattari make a similar statement regarding Kafka's writing in their book *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*:

> What interests him even more is the possibility of making his own language — assuming that it is unique, that it is a major language or has been – a minor utilization. To be a sort of stranger *within* his own language. (26)

In both *The Prime* and *The Driver's* there exists a profound sense of alienation from the language. Spark was quoted as saying, "[T]o describe myself as a 'Scottish Writer' might be ambiguous, as one wouldn't know if 'Scottish' applied to the writer or the writing" (Aly 94).

The language used in her writing is adjacent to, but does not completely overlap with the language she lived in. Similar to Kafka, Spark:

> [D]eliberately kills all metaphor, all symbolism, all signification, no less than all designation. Metamorphosis is the contrary of metaphor. There is no longer any proper sense or figurative sense, but only a distribution of states that is part of the range of the word. (Deleuze and Guattari 22)

This is the point where this paper's research begins, and the gap it hopes to fill. The narrative will form a variety of states, constructed by *narrative units*, hinged on *narrative anchors*, that produce various *narrative spaces* for the reader to occupy. The repetition of these *anchors*, recalls previous *spaces* the reader has occupied because, at that point, the narrative will have progressed, the *units* would have been mobilised – turning *places* into *spaces* – that the reader populates themselves. This helps propel complex narrative structures forward while maintaining the readers' engagement with plots that might try to delineate, or subvert traditional structures, in this case, causality-based structures:

> A major, or established, literature follows a vector that goes from content to expression. Since content is presented in a given form of the content, one must find, discover, or see the form of expression that goes with it. That which conceptualises well expresses itself. But a minor, or revolutionary, literature begins by expressing itself and doesn't conceptualise until afterward ("I do not see the word at all, I invent it")[…] When a form is broken, one must reconstruct the content that will necessarily be part of a rupture in the order of things. To take over, to anticipate, the material. (Deleuze and Guattari 28)

This elaborates on what Sontag was saying with regards to style and stylistics, how both differ from form, and the impossibility of considering content without style.

The Driver's Seat

Described as a mystery novel that's been turned inside-out, the first lines of *The Driver's Seat* are indicative of the temporal space the reader will be traversing:

> 'And the material doesn't stain,' the salesgirl says.
> 'Doesn't stain?'

> 'It's the new fabric,' the salesgirl says. 'Specially treated. Won't mark. If you spill like a bit of ice-cream or a drop of coffee, like, down the front of this dress it won't hold the stain.' (3)

The reader becomes aware of the present-tenseness of the narrative voice from the first line. The second line – Lise's question – floats by itself, isn't anchored to her name, which could have easily been attached at the end, just as the salesgirl was identified. However, Lise – as a *space* – is left absent, just as she will be from her murder. The salesgirl quickly defines what a stain is and what could possibly cause a stain. The unidentified customer, "a young woman," proceeds to try and remove the stain-resistant dress "'Get this thing off me. Off me, at once'" (Spark 3).

There are already a few instances of repetition present. The salesgirl repeating the quality of the dress renders the garment into becoming a *space* of its own, one with increasingly defined and elaborate *borders*. The more nuanced definition of what the salesgirl defines as stain-resistant, and the kind of marks that will be avoidable seems to push Lise into a frenzy where she must remove the offending garment. She's been made to interact with an object under terms that she doesn't agree to. The reader becomes aware of Lise's *affinity* – as a *place* – towards the dress's *space,* which is that of rejection. However, given the lack of introduction to who Lise is, the reader finds an absence to be filled, one that allows a deeper engagement with the narrative. As David Herman elaborates, "Spark's backgrounding of Lise's interiority can be linked with arguments that the socio-political order is in some sense contingent on the violent erasure of the self" (482). The present-tense narration, along with Lise's constant reinvention of herself, makes her difficult to define, except by her interactions with surrounding *spaces*:

> All representations of a direction, a passage, or a distance—in short, everything which includes the comparison of several elements and expresses the relation between them—can be conceived only as the product of a temporally comprehensive act of cognition. On this interpretation, the assumption that the intuition of a temporal interval takes place in a now, in a temporal point, appears to be self-evident and altogether inescapable. (Husserl 40)

There's a particular distance that Lise's *place* tries to maintain with other *narrative units* around her, and through this analysis, it will become evident that Lise is particular averse towards *places* that are likely to become inhabitable *spaces* for the reader. Spark is "following writers of the French nouveau roman such as Alain Robbe-Grillet, who conceived the role of fiction as the dispassionate description of the external world as a substitute for the traditional novel's concern with character" (Norma Page qtd. by Herman 475). Dwelling too much on the temporality portrayed within the narrative, will necessitate an analysis of the phenomenological experience of the reader's interaction, one that goes beyond the scope of this paper. What's necessary to know, is that given the repetition that's seen in the text, and the constant displacement and recurrence of various relational aspects between the various *narrative units* within the novel, a sense of narrative time is present. This will be elaborated upon later, but for the immediate analysis, the focus will be on how *narrative units* function as *narrative anchors* that help the reader traverse a narrative that challenges traditional formal structures.

The Driver's uses a subtler form of repetition than the one employed in *The Prime*. The subtlety arises from the *narrative unit* being repeated. Rather than *narrative units* whose borders closely resemble the *semantic unit* – i.e. singular words of text, regardless of context – the repetition in *The Driver's* is of the reactionary nature of Lise's *place* to surrounding *places-spaces* in the narrative. By putting the dress's "stainless" quality in close proximity to Lise, who is as yet unidentified, it is obvious that the narrative voice does as Iser stated:

> The literary text […] takes its selected objects out of their pragmatic context and so shatters their original frame of reference; the result is to reveal aspects […] which had remained hidden as long as the frame of reference remained intact. ("Act of Reading" 109)

The dress isn't just a dress, it is "stainless," and the definition of stainless is elaborated upon, creating a completely different frame of reference. The *place* has changed. The distance

between both *iterations* of the *places* is the *space* as defined by de Certeau. The dress becomes a *space* – one Lise rejects – because of the repetition of its quality. The dress has attained longevity (Deleuze 94-95). The question of why the *space* created by this dress is intolerable to Lise – still unidentified – and the lack of explanation given, invites the reader to participate in the narrative. The *space* becomes inhabitable, the reader starts constructing the "virtual reality" of the narrative. The dress has become a *space* before Lise has even become a *place*. "There is nothing in Lise that the society has not been able to already to colonize or discredit," yet she still resists and asserts her presence against these imposing structures (Kort 139). Lise's quality is that of absenteeism, which can change at any moment as her surroundings transform. In his essay *Spatial Stories,* de Certeau states:

> The ways of "conducting a story offer, as Pierre Janet pointed out, a very rich field for the analysis of spatiality. Among the questions that depend on it, we should distinguish those that concern dimensions (extensionality), orientation (vectorality), affinity (homographies), etc. I shall stress only a few of its aspects that have to do with delimitation itself, the primary and literally "fundamental" question: it is partition of space that structures. ("Practice" 123)

What de Certeau points out regarding delimitation, and structure, is crucial to consider at this point in the narrative, for it is the separateness between Lise and the dress that reveals the structure of the narrative. Rather than just accepting the existence of this structure, which allows this separation, it's important to analyse what makes it possible, and within these narratives it's the repetition of the *narrative unit*. Within this narrative, *spaces* and *places* will be divided into smaller components. Those divisions, the *spaces* between the different *places* form the structure, which is heavily reliant on repetition to reinforce *boundaries*, transgress them, and find exceptions. These components are what make complex narratives such as *The Driver's* understandable. The structure is in the content, and its expression. If the repetition did not exist, then the content of the narrative would be the sole purveyor of the story; however, content follows expression in this case. This structure allows the narrative to divulge the ending, while maintaining tension, and eluding the necessity to

provide causality. In his essay *Spark contra Spark,* Michael Gardiner accurately expresses what Lise attempts to do throughout *The Driver's*, "the main character tries to outwit her writers," and to a great extent, her readers who view the typical ending as being the only one available to her (48).

For Spark to truly give readers an equal opportunity to assess the death and its lead-up, they're invited into the absences left in the narrative. It's important that all readers get the same pieces of information, hence the closeness of the narrative voice, which inhibits subjectivity over the *narrative units* present. Iser noted a similar obscuring technique being employed when analysing *A Heritage and Its History.* He states:

> [T]he dialogue technique and the extreme sparsity and neutrality of the author's interpolations reduce narrative to a bare minimum. In this way, we are confronted directly by the actual 'reality' of the characters, instead of by an edited version of that reality, so that both author and reader appear to stand at an almost identical distance from the people they are observing. ("Implied Reader" 239)

In *The Driver's* the reader isn't given enough opportunity to *actively* anticipate what will happen in the immediate future, while simultaneously being told what will happen during the investigation surrounding Lise's death (Husserl 50-51). The text presented must be taken at face-value, however, a narrative still comes to pass, and the question to be answered is how repetition helps this occur.

There's a choice that's been made to withhold information. However, for the sake of roundness, and to abide by the analytical method set out – which states that the reader constructs the structure as the narrative is being experienced – the beginning needs to be further dissected before discussing how the narrative voice obscures. The issue is not whether Lise is right to reject a "stainless" dress, but because of the repetition, and the lack of a concrete explanation as to why she rejects it so violently, the reader is given an absence to fill, as advocated by Iser. It's a pretext upon which the reader can act, and interact with the narrative. The dress has transgressed a boundary that Lise is aware of, but that the reader is

not. In de Certeau's terminology, the *boundaries* and *affinities* of the various *units* have been made obvious by the narrative voice. This allows the reader to extract whatever they wish from the "virtual reality" of the narrative. Once the absence is inhabited by the reader, they must continue to find an absence, otherwise, that level of engagement disappears. This sense of engagement is enforced, not just by the story's continuation, but through the repetition of previously learned elements, whose *boundaries* are known, and whose *affinities* to move in certain ways can be anticipated by the reader. This allows the reader a sense of security within the narrative space. If these built-up *units* are not used properly the words on the page cease to be performative and revert to being mere *narrative units,* giving information, without allowing the reader to interact equally with the narrative to turn the *units* into *places* and *spaces*. Consider the nature of the detail provided by the narrator:

> "[O]ther dresses in the new stainless fabric have sold, but this, of which three others, identical but for sizes, hang in the back storeroom awaiting the drastic reductions of next week's sale, has been too vivid for most customers' taste." (Spark 3)

The other dresses exist, but are invisible, and will carry on existing beyond this narrative's temporal scope. So why mention them? Precisely because of the repetition of the *place* the dress occupies. That it is repeated, and is made "stain-resistant," to last, renders them into *spaces.* They are made to change, have their price reduced because of their qualities, while being resistant to change. They are *spaces* that are reflective of the individual *places* they occupy because they are static between one moment of repetition and the next. Their *boundaries* are reinforced, and as *narrative units,* the reader can trust that they will have the same *affinity* towards Lise, or rather, she will have the same *affinity* towards them. This elaborates on Lise's negative space, since for as long as the narrative lasts, except for a few brief moments, she remains obscure to the reader. The dresses will attain a history of their own, and this idea of longevity seems to be what repels Lise.

Consider Lise's comment on "sex" near the end of the novel: "'It's all right at the time and it's all right before,' says Lise, 'but the problem is afterwards. That is, if you aren't just an animal'" (99). This comment occurred on the back end of an exchange about "sex" where the word was repeated numerous times, to different effects. In that same way, "sex" can be considered a *space*, but more will be said about that later. The persistence of a certain *space's affinity* is what repels her. This comment would have had less of an impact if Lise's *boundaries* weren't tested against other *places* and *spaces* beforehand. Having Lise's *boundaries* remain vague, with the testing of them prior to that point reaffirming those *boundaries* while keeping their points of delimitation a mystery, maintains narrative tension. At that point, even if Lise and her motivations seem mysterious, the reader trusts the narrative structure, and this is because of the *narrative units* which have acted as *narrative anchors* that can be relied upon.

Lise does not accept the salesgirl scrutinising how she conducts herself – that she seems like the kind of person who would stain a dress – and becomes defensive, before she is even identified as a character. The boundaries that constitute the *space* where Lise exists in the narrative are porous, and she is fiercely protective of them. The reader is only given the *negative space* that Lise forms. Lise can only be defined as a *space* because of her persistent presence within the narrative. The effectiveness of *The Driver's* story is that Lise – on the surface – seems to remain faithful to her process and what she sets out to do, while keeping her role a mystery until her death. She constantly lies about her identity, and makes up stories about her life to the people she meets. Even the omniscient narrator, who can tell the future, cannot see the depth of Lise's *negative space*, a task that's left to the reader. Everything Lise interacts with, from characters to physical spaces, elaborates her own *space*, though she – in terms of the kind of *space* being discussed – is absent. The novel "is pitched against the norm, buckling commonsense notions of the self by excavating all psychology; queer, that is,

in that it offers no essence to the self, but rather posits the self as some form of discursive residue devoid of meaning or interpretable content" (Kempt qtd. in Herman 482). Maintaining the repetition of these kinds of interactions about her, the ones that elaborate on her *space* without overly defining it, or pointing to definitive *boundaries,* keeps the tension high, and allows the reader to find an absence to fill. Finding and filling this absence keeps the reader orientated.

Returning briefly to Gregson's criticism of this form of analysis, consider his comment: "Lise's fanatical self-discipline can be seen as one of many attempts to pull all the strings; she makes a puppet of herself so that she can exercise total control" (13). This is an oversimplification, one that considers the character's consciousness knowable despite the text's effort to keep Lise's motivations behind her actions vague. Lise is in control as much as the reader attributes her control. No form of domination can happen by a character who only exists as an absence with a fated end (Cheyette 96). Pointing out Lise's aggressive stance towards power structures that have kept her subjugated does not help in elaborating on how that method of control functions, which is what the novel spends ample time expressing. On the other hand, the reader can easily dominate the narrative through Lise's absence by framing her struggle within the narrative as existing between "the two poles of submission and domination" as Gregson argues (13). In that case, Lise will indeed be viewed as "snapped shut" and "unnatural," and the possibility of deriving further knowledge from the narrative will be similarly closed to the reader. By attempting to arrive at "the point" of the novel – as Fish expresses it – Gregson's dismissal of an in-depth analysis of the relational dynamics within the text finds him missing how the narrative arrived at his point.

Gregson views theology as being the outlier in terms of topics broached by Spark's texts. While discussing the protagonist from *The Comforters* earlier in his criticism, Gregson quotes Frank Kermode: "Caroline 'does her best to resist manipulation by the mind of the

unseen novelist'" (8). Thus, the "authorial puppet" that Gregson attributes theological importance to is clearly being referenced, and Spark does not shy away from discussing religion openly through her fiction when necessary (8; Cheyette 100). If the concern were truly the absence in the narrative, then there's another element Gregson ignores. If characters are indeed "authorial puppets" and – in this paradigmatic view of Spark's work – the novelist reigns supreme, then who are Spark's characters performing for? Gregson focuses on how Lise "makes a puppet of herself so that she can exercise total control" without considering the audience she's performing for. In this case, it seems the absent point of contention Gregson is searching for is the reader – an integral part of the patriarchal structures that form the "public" for which Lise performs. Simply, Lise does set out to kill herself and succeeds, but by diluting the discussion into controlled-versus-controlling, Gregson ignores the power dynamics set out by the *narrative units'* relational dynamics, which show a more complicated picture than the dominant-submissive dichotomy Gregson advocates for. Furthermore, if the theological implications of her writing were the point of interest, then it would be important to acknowledge Spark's ability to occupy various spaces in her fiction given that she is a Catholic convert (101). Bryan Cheyette writes: "Her faith in a universal higher authority, in other words, is thrown into disarray by a fictional practise which is plural and partial and embraces a multiple sense of self" (101). Thus, a reductive view of controlled-controlling dynamics restricts possible readings of Spark's work according to arbitrary criteria. The only point of access allowing a view into these dynamics is the reader who finds in Lise a *negative space* to experience the narrative's relational dynamics.

Regarding the term *negative space,* Iser made a similar observation when analysing the function of "negativity" in Beckett's prose trilogy. In his analysis, Iser finds a consistent inability to access, or know the "individual situations" of Beckett's characters. Clever associationism becomes the sole access point for readers into the experiences of the

unknowable aspects of his characters ("Prospecting" 144). Such is the nature of *negative space* that will be explored in this analysis. Lise exists, but remains unknowable. Her *negative space* only becomes apparent through the relationships between surrounding *narrative units,* relationships that manifest only when readers experience the narrative.

To gain further insight into how Lise also sees characters – and possibly herself – as "absence[s]," readers only need to wait until page 67. When Mrs Fiedke asks how she'll recognise the "friend" she's supposed to meet:

> 'Will you feel a presence? Is that how you'll know?'
> 'Not really a presence,' Lise says. 'The lack of an absence, that's what it is. I know I'll find it. I keep on making mistakes, though.' (67)

Besides pointing deliberately to the necessity of the kind of analysis being conducted, that of *places* asking to be populated by readers, to form them into *spaces*, this is the only seemingly accurate self-analysis that Lise has conducted. She recognises that the interaction between different *spaces* is what allows the possibility of action to take place. It's an admittance of the lack of further dimensionality to the characters presented in the narrative. The other curious detail in this interaction with Mrs Fiedke, is Lise's admittance that "'I keep on making mistakes, though.'" Here, it's necessary to discuss the close narrative voice. From what the reader has seen, through the narrator's voice, Lise does not make mistakes. She is made to feel uncomfortable by her landlady, but even when she's laughed at for her choice of clothing, there seems to exist a protective shield around her, a veneer of imperviousness, that she keeps up. Her possessions are elaborated on in extensive detail, the book and the map being of particular interest. The narrative voice's ability to move forward in time and view her death with equal closeness, as when characters repeat what Lise has done, or said, sometimes within the same page, to no new effect besides the awareness that Lise is dead in this – as yet unrealised – future forces the reader to view the negative *space* that's still

forming around Lise. For example, consider the scene where she passes by a policeman, after stealing – the mechanic – Carlo's car, which happens after he tries to assault her:

> she pulls up and asks him the way to the Hilton.
>
> He is a young policeman. He bends to give her the required direction.
>
> 'Do you carry a revolver?' Lise says. He looks puzzled and fails to answer before Lise adds, 'Because, if you did, you could shoot me.'
>
> The policeman is still finding words when she drives off, and in the mirror she can see him looking at the retreating car, probably noting the number. Which in fact he is doing, so that, on the afternoon of the following day, when he has been shown her body, he says, 'Yes, that's her. I recognize the face. She said, "If you had a revolver you could shoot me."' Which is to lead to many complications in Carlo's private life when the car is traced back to him, he being released by the police only after six hours of interrogation. (78-79)

In terms of the *places* created by these passages, the change between one *iteration* of the words exchanged with the policeman, and the next, is Lise's death. Do the words condemn her? Do they show that she felt threatened? A *space* is created through their reiteration, but it's one that further elaborates Lise's *negative space* without addressing her in the situation happening in the 'now' of the narrative, which the reader is quickly reminded of in the next paragraph, "But now, at the Hilton Hotel her car is held up just as it enters the gates in the driveway." (79) Saying, "But now," reinforces the importance of the connections created between the different *narrative units* as being a reliable indicator of progression while maintaining structural integrity. The repetition in this interaction does what Deleuze describes as "passive synthesis" which collapses repetitive instances into one another, producing "the lived, or living, present" (94). Deleuze states, "The past" – in this case, the memory the reader retains of Lise's actions towards the policeman – "is then no longer the immediate past of retention but the reflexive past of representation, of reflected and reproduced particularity" (95). Being confronted immediately afterwards with the reiteration of Lise's words shows that Lise will die, and she will not be present as more than an absence in both cases. This allows the reader insight into what to expect, without divulging any information regarding Lise's *negative space.* The *boundaries* of her *negative space* are

reinforced, and the proximity of the present to the reflective nature of Lise's future helps reorient the reader between the 'now' and the future.

The specificity of the *iteration* of Lise's words, through the policeman's report, makes the *space* more urgent, and more vivid. Lise's *space* anticipates the policeman's ability to persist through the narrative since she confronts him, and drives off, before he's able to prove himself as being, or not being the "friend" she's looking for. This reaffirms her *affinity* towards inhabitable *spaces*, ones that the reader can occupy. The absence left in this passage lies in the meaning of the repetition for the policeman himself. The reiteration of Lise's *space* and its *boundaries,* even if largely obscure, allows for the *narrative unit* to become an *anchor*, that the reader can use to manoeuvre through the narrative, by providing fixed points in the "virtual reality," being created. Instead of just recognising her, the policeman is a witness who accurately recalls what she said, accurately recalls her *place*, and then gives Carlo trouble, though he's innocent of her death. The reading of the *place* is accurate, but the reader recognises the *space* created as being a deliberate construction that emphasises Lise's absence, which allows the reader to draw similar associations between the *narrative units* as they had done previously (Deleuze 95). If the discussion between the police and Carlo were elaborated upon, if the policeman had said something of Lise's tone, then there would have been no absences to be filled by the reader. There would have been a sense of *space* that Lise occupies, rather than her persistent absence, from which the reader could derive a more causal structure to the narrative, but that is suppressed, while maintaining the overall narrative structure. Furthermore, the specific reiteration of Lise's speech subverts any notion of Gregson's dichotomous controlling-controlled relationship, since there's no reinvention of the events the policeman was reporting. Whatever control is available is given to the reader through the connections they establish between the various *narrative units*. It's even mentioned that "A photograph of Carlo and also a picture of his young apprentice who

holds a lively press conference of his own, moreover will appear in every newspaper in the country" (79). Whatever accountability they face, it is not towards the reader, but a different group of entities – the reader has no control over their fate. Carlo and his apprentice will become more recognisable to others within the narrative than Lise ever was due to the dissemination of their photographs. Carlo and the apprentice will gain the most basic form of lasting mention, which is to be *iterable,* so even if they're questioned mistakenly, they're more of a *space* than Lise would ever become, much like the transgressing dress. In stark contrast, Lise remains unknowable even though her fate is known and exists within the reader's scope. This steady portrayal of Lise's *negative space* allows the reader reliable *narrative anchors* to use when navigating the novel.

One might consider that the narrator has addressed the reader by strategically withholding pieces of information to maintain narrative tension. By keeping the distance between Lise and the various other characters consistent – even if the distance obfuscates – the consistency allows a quasi-semantic structure to develop. A language is developed through the repetition, one that allows the reader to anticipate the future, as they experience the narrative. Knowing the various *narrative units'* relational dynamics, readers are given tools to measure any changes that occur within the narrative whenever they encounter a *narrative anchor.* Without digressing too much into the phenomenological experience of time, suffice it to say that Husserl – as discussed by Derrida – argues for an organic genesis of a transcendental structure that excludes psychological formalism, i.e. it does not abide by a Cartesian structure where reasoning is traceable. When the reader approaches a narrative, there are infinite possibilities. When the ending is exposed by chapter three, does that mean the infinite has been quantified? No, it is to be found elsewhere. As Deleuze and Guattari said:

> That which conceptualises well expresses itself. But a minor, or revolutionary, literature begins by expressing itself and doesn't conceptualise until afterward ('I do

> not see the word at all, I invent it')[…] When a form is broken, one must reconstruct the content that will necessarily be part of a rupture in the order of things. Take over, to anticipate, the material. (28)

If there is a structure, the reader creates it, and if a formal – causal – analysis were done, one that assumes a pre-established structure, it would fail to communicate its contents. Its contents are in its expression (Derrida 202-203; 205).

The harsh criticism of the salesgirl trying to sell Lise a "stainless" dress also shows the quick temporal pace of the narrative itself. The quick back-and-forth in the first few lines, besides portraying the present-tenseness, illustrates how quickly a *space* can form. If the reader is unaware of Lise's *affinity* and *boundaries*, and she does indeed remain mysterious for the rest of the narrative, her *negative space* is seen as capable of changing at any moment. Hence the impression that she's putting on airs. When Lise criticises the "hippy" girl, while accompanying Mrs Fiedke about a record store, Lise says:

> 'Look at this idiot girl. She can't stop dancing.'[…]'Look at her,' Lise says in a murmur. 'Just look at her. No, wait! – She'll start again when the man puts on the next record.'
>
> The record starts, and the girl swings. Lise says, 'Do you believe in macrobiotics?' (57)

Was she truly affronted by the "idiot girl"? Can it compare with her reaction to the dress? These are implicit questions, and completely divergent from the narrative itself. However, they are important because they function as *narrative anchors*, without which, the reader would be lost. These are the keys to the *narrative spaces*, they are the questions that test Lise's *boundaries*. Without them the *narrative units* would not become anything more than text on a page. The words would function to tell the content, but Iser's "virtual reality" would not be created for the reader. The present-tense narration places the onus on the reader to rediscover these *units* and trace the line between the different *iterations.* This distance, the changes felt, are the *narrative anchors.*

Through the act of "looking" at the dancing girl, a distance is created between Lise and the "idiot girl". It is also one of the most oft-repeated acts in the narrative. In a novel narrated in the present-tense, "looking" draws more distance, and repeating it shows an almost academic subjectivity to the act of observation. As soon as she gets confirmation that she's aware of how the "idiot girl" functions, she loses interest and moves on, and it's only Mrs Fiedke who seems to be aware of the "hippy" *dimension* of the girl. In fact, Lise never refers to the "idiot girl" again, it is Mrs. Fiedke who asks if she's a "hippy," though she gets no answer. Lise only refers to someone else accompanying the "idiot girl" as a "hippy." It is only when Mrs. Fiedke is about to question the "hippy" *dimension* of the "idiot girl" *space* that the reader is informed that "The girl with pigtails is dancing on by herself in front of them." The pigtails were not visible until then, only becoming visible because her *space* had approached Mrs. Fiedke's own *space.* Mrs Fiedke saw the "hippy" girl, but Lise only looked at the "idiot girl". The interaction between Mrs Fiedke and the "idiot girl", even though it's still that of a spectator, exposes different qualities than the one Lise sees.

Consider when Lise is at the mechanic's and with her foot on his desk, she asks if he's married:

> He looks through the office at his men who are occupied with various jobs and who, although one or two of them cast a swift glance at Lise with her foot up on the desk, do not give any sign of noticing any telepathic distress signals their employer might be giving out. (73)

What they see is out of the ordinary, because more than one of them casts a glance at Lise's foot on the desk. However, when "He looks through the office at his men" there's no connection made, a distance is felt, and only because similar interactions in the novel have left the reader with a similar outcome. "Looks" do not result in understanding. It acknowledges a shared space where an understanding can be formed, but none exists. Lise doesn't understand the "idiot girl" and only "looks" at her, expressing the affective limit of the narrative's "virtual reality." The act of "looking" allows the reader to measure the

distance between different *narrative units*, thereby helping readers orient themselves. Allowing readers to measure the distance between *narrative units* maintains a consistent quasi-semantic language that the reader can rely on, and makes any shift in the relational dynamics between these *units* effective in establishing tension. This is particularly important in a narrative where the ending is divulged early in the novel. Paraphrasing R.D. Laing, Iser states:

> "[I]t is characteristic of human relations that we have no real knowledge of how we experience one another. This fundamental gap in our knowledge leads us first to a productive process through which we build up our own conceptions of how our partner experiences us; we base our reactions upon these projections. Our imaginary picture, then, is a product that enables us to cover the unbridgeable gap in human relations. However, we then find that this product is only the image of a reality that certainly exists—for our partner must experience us in some way or other—but that we can never know. Consequently such images can also distort human relations and even destroy them, as they tend to become reified, that is, come to be taken for realities in themselves and not just as substitutes that we need in order to bridge the gaps of the unknowable in interpersonal relations. ("Prospecting" 142)

So, if there's no tool provided for the reader to measure these distances, reader interpretation of the relationships between various *narrative units* risks becoming "distorted," by appearing knowable, since there ceases to be indicators of the established distances and *boundaries* between *units*. Again, in *The Driver's*, the reader needs the absences between various *units* to function as a *narrative anchor*. Populating these absences is what propels these narratives forward, while keeping them structurally sound. If the distance isn't re-asserted, there will be no absences for the reader to fill, and their engagement with the narrative will be lost.

Lise keeps the "idiot girl" as a point of observation, scientific in nature. However, as soon as this *place* fulfils the predicted action, there's no more meaning to be derived from the interaction, and she questions Mrs Fiedke about macrobiotics. The "idiot girl" is an eternal *place*, one with temporal depth, but no variety – from Lise's point-of-view – that she will not be allowed to become a *space.* Surely this contradicts Derrida's theory on writing as a vehicle of communication, for this would indicate that the writing's meaning has been saturated. This

might be true if the *narrative units* are being considered without the reader's interaction; however, having gone through the narrative and reaching this point of observation, the reader experiences what Iser discussed when elaborating on the transcendence of words beyond semantic limits. This interaction doesn't elaborate on Lise's stance towards dancing, or what makes a person an "idiot," but shows that she can summon a distance, and that the reader too can feel that distance. Things for both Lise and the reader are simple, in this interaction, but the reader, knowing that Lise puts on airs, lies consistently, and is "looking" for a friend of hers, views this moment as a landmark, for it is one of several "looking" acts.

It might seem that there's a conflation of physical spaces in the novel, characters and how each interacts with the other. However, this is drawn from cues given by the novel. Back in her flat, the reader is informed that:

> The lines of the room are pure; space is used as a pattern in itself, circumscribed by the dextrous pinewood outlines that ensued from the designer's ingenuity and austere taste when he was young, unknown, studious and strict-principled." (9-10)

This sentence describes how the novel is to be read. Physical spaces are created with pure lines, qualities that Lise will pick and choose from, without letting any of them permeate through to her. "Pure lines" allow Lise's *boundaries* to remain intact without having to show any *affinity* towards it. As the reader has already seen, if a *place* attains any sort of *space,* particularly one whose borders transgress with Lise's, she rejects them, as she did with the dress, the policeman who could have given her directions that prove he's able to connect different spaces, and "sex." Even the various corners of the apartment don't exist beyond their functional period. The apartment has storage spaces that are retrievable from an otherwise blank slate, much like how Lise conducts herself. As much as the narrator dictates Lise's life and death, Lise does the same. Picking and narrating her environment in a way that suits her, stowing things under hidden cabinets through the clever use of language. "A small pantry-kitchen adjoins this room. Here, too, everything is contrived to fold away into the

dignity of unvarnished pinewood" (10). In a way, here the reader finds the interaction of Lise with the apartment, but not as the interaction of an entity within a space, but of two different *spaces*, Lise and the apartment. Even then, the apartment is just the architect's vision, realised. The description of "young, unknown, studious and strict-principled" can equally apply to Bill, the leader of the Yin Yang Movement who forces Lise's attention onto himself to various degrees of success. Indeed, when the reader perceives the different functions the apartment's design features, the furniture almost seems to gesture, making allowances for the occupant (10-11).

The malleability of the apartment's space contrasts with Lise's rigidity. Consider Lise's search for a dress, and her persisting to drink water while laughing, as if the state of pleasure that caused laughter has no consideration for what the rest of her *space* is experiencing. Contrasting with Lise, the apartment readily facilitates changes in functions. The bed can make way for a seating space, but she laughs and drinks at once. "And in the bathroom as well, nothing need be seen, nothing need be left lying about" (10). Don't bathrooms contain mirrors? "Lise keeps her flat as clean-lined and clear to return to after her work as if it were uninhabited" (Spark 11). The implication here is that while Lise perceives the physical space, and exists within it, she lacks any definition beyond being an occupant, and even then, barely so. The strict boundary between Lise's *space* and the *spaces,* including the physical ones she inhabits, are reinforced, precise, but exist for unknown reasons. The repetition of this absence, and the reinforcement of these boundaries between *spaces* is the absence that the reader is allowed to fill with their own experiences.

In *The Driver's*, various points in time are *places*. Hence the motif of the map that Lise carries around, that shows the landmarks as small functional pieces, even though physical spaces are as static as the map she observes them on, but in the narrative, they have the potential to become *spaces*. And not necessarily when Lise interacts with them. What she

sees and dictates, even if it's also interacted with in a similar fashion, reported by the narrative voice, does not mean that the *spaces* have been exhausted. They only need another *space* to approach them, for the *place* the narrative is occurring in to change, for a different quality to arise.

> 'How do you know his age?' says Mrs Fiedke.
> 'Well, didn't you tell me, twenty-four?' Lise says.
> 'Yes, but I haven't seen him for quite a time you know. He's been away.'
> 'Maybe he's even younger. Take care, go slowly.'
> 'Or it could be the other way. People age when they've had unpleasant experiences over the years. It came to me while we were looking at those very interesting pavements in that ancient temple up there, that poor Richard may be the very man that you're looking for.' (66)

Age, in this passage – as time in the rest of the narrative – seems to be the moment where a *place* affected by the passage of the narrative state, becomes a *space*. For the reader, the *place* exists within several points in time, leading to a sense of attained history. What's interesting about this passage is that Mrs Fiedke seemed to have obtained a bit of insight into the *space* Lise embodies within the narrative. "'It just came to me while we were looking at those very interesting pavements in that ancient temple up there,'" (66) as if, recognising the *space* created by another *space*'s interaction with the "interesting pavements" she realises the kind of action that could transpire.

Again, the act of looking plays a role in this interaction, which Lise quickly acknowledges when she responds to the suggestion that Mrs Fiedke's nephew is the one Lise is looking for. "'Well, it's your idea,' says Lise, 'not mine. I wouldn't know till I'd seen him. Myself, I think he's around the corner somewhere, now, any time'" (67). Emphasising that the idea is not Lise's is unnecessary. The repetition of the distance between Mrs Fiedke's vision and hers doesn't show that they don't understand each other, but that they interact with the physical spaces surrounding them differently. Given that the reader is more aware of Mrs Fiedke's *space,* finding an awareness of a difference between her *space* and Lise's *negative space* serves to provide the reader with insight into Lise's *space* since there are very few

direct references to it. Interestingly, Mrs Fiedke, only attains insight because she incorporated the paving stones they "were looking at" into a past-tenseness. She starts off, "'It is in my mind,' says Mrs Fiedke; 'it is in my mind and I can't think of anything else but that you and my nephew are meant for each other. As sure as anything, my dear, you are the person for my nephew'" (66). The idea of it is complete. She gained a bit of distance from the object of observation – the pavements – and because it is in the past, the interaction between her *space* and the physical *space* results in an addition to the narrative. In it, she incorporates both her absent nephew, who appeared enough as a topic of conversation, as someone who can potentially receive or reject Mrs Fiedke's gifts, and Lise. Lise and the nephew, are both absent, in that we only get very few insights into their *spaces*.

Due to the repetitive nature of Mrs Fiedke's dialogue, and the way she successfully incorporates Lise into her own narrative, her nephew becomes part of the narrative. He exists within the *boundary* of Mrs Fiedke's *space*, which is possibly why she feels the urgent need to meet him as soon as he arrives at the hotel. His arrival time, and the kindness of the hotel porter is consistently reimagined. The repetition empties her fretful imaginings of urgency, leaving the reader to occupy the imagined *place* of the moment of arrival, like a point on a map where a landmark stands ("Practice" 123; 128). He is even attributed a name and an adjective, "poor Richard" (66). In Mrs Fiedke's tone, that declaration of her nephew's name and state encapsulates him into the *space* of the paving stones. As if he will be unleashed. All the characters, are relegated to the realm of *places* to each other. They can observe each other, but only as static sprites. Their inability to gain any further dimensionality, a temporal dimension that persists whereby a deeper connection can be gained is always avoided. Lise is stuck with the mechanics in the garage, and needing to gain a bit of empathy, she invents a back-story, speaks their language, which allows her to recover and try to clean her coat before being offered a drive back to her hotel by Carlo.

What is most devastating about the death of Lise is that she isn't entirely eliminated. She is merely relegated to the form of *place*, a point in time that only existed at the moment of her death, the moment the killer interacted with her, much like the rest of the landmarks interacted with her. The fidelity of the various *narrative units* to their pre-established *boundaries,* and the constant recall of these *boundaries* is still the main element that allows the reader to find an absence to interact with. If a character becomes stubbornly elusive, that act's meaning becomes hollowed out, especially if there's no change in the boundaries of the spaces involved, which implies an ineffective act, or one whose changes are meant to be determined by the reader (Husserl 72; Deleuze 82).

Arriving at the last pages of the novel she tells her soon-to-be killer "'Kill me,' she says, and repeats it in four languages" (102). There is no metaphor in what she means. If there was any confusion due to the semantic structure of the sentence – which is as straight-forward as one can get with such a statement – the knowledge that it's been repeated in four languages assures the reader that what they have read is what's been said. The closeness of the reader to the narrative voice is too close in this case to see more than the demand of the act of killing. There's also the question of rape. This seems to turn the reader full circle, to the beginning of the novel. When Lise tells Richard, "'You're a sex maniac.'" He responds, "'No,no,' he says. 'That's all over and past. Not any more'" (99). After Lise says "'Well you won't have sex with me'" his reaction is to declare "'Sex is normal,' he says. 'I'm cured. Sex is all right.'" So far, there is a perfect two-dimensionality to this interaction. The characters are still the *places* – the sprites – the reader expects of them. However, given the distance established through the repetitive use of "sex" which has allowed it to potentially have numerous meanings for the reader, since it's been associated with "'maniac'", "'you won't have sex with me'" and "'Sex is normal[…] Sex is all right.'" So, which is it? The reader is given a *narrative unit* that they have an established history with before finding it manipulated

into non-meaning by its repetition through different voices, towards various ends, all of which are mysterious to the reader except for the fact that Lise will definitely die. There's an absence that's left for the reader to fill. Again, the distance that Lise establishes between her *space* and any *place* that has a potential to gain a temporal dimension and become a *space* is established, and the expectation is rejection because of the structure that the narrative has established. Then Lise says, "'It's all right at the time and it's all right before,' says Lise, 'but the problem is afterwards. That is, if you aren't just an animal. Most of the time, afterwards is pretty sad.'" What's striking at this moment is the admittance that an act that happens at one moment has a lasting effect. Apart from her dress, which she chose specifically so that it can carry a stain through different points in time, and her interaction with Mrs Fiedke at the ruins where Lise admitted she keeps on making mistakes, this is another moment where the reader finds out that Lise is forced to dwell in a moment. However, the moment never occurs within the narrative's scope. So, Lise's *space* has the dimension of time, but only according to her words. She hypothetically exists.

As for the temporality of the novel, the killing seems to be where the timelines – the future-present where Lise's death is discussed distantly, and the present-present where Lise's life is expressed – overlap. It is where the narrator expects Lise to end up. The place marked with an 'x' on a map. This method of storytelling is embodied by de Certeau's theory that there exists a "map" form of storytelling, where landmarks are placed at various defined distances from each other, and the impression left by this map of the changing *boundaries* is the narrative as it's portrayed ("Practice" 118-119).

There is no mystery in the killing of Lise, which begs the question, is this truly where the timeline catches up to itself? The *space* that Lise occupies gets relegated back to being a *place* in flashforwards when other characters recount their interactions with her. If so, what is revealed? Is anything revealed? Again, the issue at hand is not the content of the narrative, or

the allegory about violence against women, but the deeper mechanism, which is the *space* constructed by the reader that allows elements to be displaced, and for a perceived structure to fulfil itself by the repetition of these spaces throughout the narrative. This constant displacement of *narrative units* and their *iterability* at various points in the narrative, along with the perpetuation of certain types of interactions, is also what keeps stops causality from properly taking hold. If relationships between the various *narrative units* keep shifting, without any insight into the reason, then any attributed causality is solely derived from the reading experience. As Iser states:

> Sentences join in diverse ways to form semantic units of a higher order which exhibit quite varied structures; from these structures arise such entities as a story, a novel, a conversation, a drama, a scientific theory. By the same token, finite verbs constitute not only states of affairs which correspond to the individual sentences, but also whole systems of very diverse types of states of affairs, such as concrete situations, complex processes involving several objects, conflicts and agreements among them, etc. Finally, a whole world is created with variously determined elements and the changes taking place in them, all as the purely intentional correlate of a sentence complex. If this sentence complex finally constitutes a literary work, then I call the whole stock of inter-connected intentional sentence correlates the 'portrayed world' of the work. (Iser 110)

So, what happens to the character's respective *spaces* – the ones the reader occupies? Their *boundaries* and *affinities* have been exposed. *The Driver's* as a narrative space, is a topography of obstacles. The reader can rightly question the point of pursuing this narrative since the ending is revealed at the beginning of the third chapter. However, in the case of *The Driver's* the narrative tension lies in the *boundaries* and *affinities* of the *spaces* towards one another, and that's what keeps the reader engaged. Spark rightly uses a very close and precise narrative voice. This proximity, rather than elaborating, obscures the context (Benn Michaels 192).

When Lise sees Bill's rice scattered on the floor and questions it, he identifies it as rice, "One of my sample packs must have burst and this bag isn't closed properly.' He zips up the bag and says, 'Never mind'" (38). His reaction is in stark contrast to Lise's reaction to the

dress. The way both relate to their surrounding *spaces,* their *boundaries* and *affinities* have been elaborated upon towards whichever end the reader chooses. What the reader is aware of is that Bill is allowed to make mistakes before brushing them off. It's not far-fetched to imagine Bill in some distant future as famous as the absent architect whose presence is felt through Lise's interaction with her apartment. Bill is blunt in his speech, and when on the plane, he'd relegated Richard, Lise's killer – who wasn't identified at that point – to the past tense. When he says that Richard, who had just changed seats, wasn't her type, Lise responds:

> 'How do you know?' Lise says immediately as if responding only to Bill's use of the past tense, and, as if defying it by a counter-demonstration to the effect that the man continues to exist in the present, she half-stands to catch sight of the stranger's head, eight rows forward in a middle seat, at the other side of the aisle, now bent quietly over his reading. (27)

The specificity of her response, and her reaction to Richard being placed in the past, makes her think that he no longer exists in the physical space she's inhabiting. This reinforces the idea that time in the narrative is associated with *places,* and that *spaces* meet time when they arrive at the requisite *place,* rendering it into a *place.* The persistence of these relational dynamics is what makes this narrative readable and understandable, even without the sense of causality. Lise's reaction to Bill's statement, following the rice spillage, and the kiss is a raised eyebrow before "She pushes the swing door and goes with it, not looking back" (39). Characters follow the physical spaces, and in this case, Lise "goes with" the door, as if being led by a person. This can be read as an interpretation of the accessibility of spaces for women, and how that is dictated by men such as Bill, the architect of her apartment, Carlo the mechanic and it would be a satisfying reading. However, that would go against what Jauss, Deleuze and Guattari said regarding the importance of looking beyond the basic content of the narrative. "Goes with it" elaborates on the absence that the reader feels in the narrative, of a reason that's constantly being pursued. "Goes with it," is more fitting for a body being

drawn out into a vacuum because of a difference in pressure, a natural response to an unfurling.

> 'It is confusing,' she says in English, handing over her passport.
> 'Yes, you left part of yourself at home,' the concierge says. 'That other part, he is still en route to our country, but he will catch up with you in a few hours' time. It's often the way with travel by air, the passenger arrives ahead of himself. Can I send you to your room a drink or a coffee?' (Spark 40)

Displacement is Lise's state, and it is stated explicitly. The part of her that's still not caught up is referred to as 'he', which she doesn't correct. Is this a fault on the part of the concierge whose English is a literal translation? What of the narrator and the reader who have travelled with her? Does it change the reading experience if an explanation exists? "She is downstairs at the desk where, behind the busy clerks, numbered pigeon-holes irregularly contain letters, packages, the room-keys, or nothing, and above them the clock shows twelve minutes past two" (46). The place where time is kept is also where identifying objects concerning the occupants of the physical space are kept. They also hypothetically exist unless they're allowed to act in a way that gains them a temporal dimension. In *The Driver's*, time is a *place*, in the de Certeau sense of the term. The hotel at the arrival of Mrs Fiedke's nephew exists at a different time, the hotel – busy with tourists – that Lise leaves to traverse the city is a different *place,* and this is most obvious at the end, where the time of her death, and the *place* of it, have been disputed over.

"Lise opens the door and gets out with the paper-knife in her hand. 'Come on, it's getting late,' she says. 'I know the spot'" (100). "The spot" is both the *place* and the time. This is also greatly divergent from her previous relationship with the door of the hotel, before, she "goes with it," but when opening the door of the car there's an active choice. The difference in relational dynamics between the *spaces* dictates that Lise as a *space* has changed, that she's no longer reacting, and she's arrived at the right *place* and the right time. Having previously marked it with an 'x' on the map, a monument had been added that the

narrative is meant to drive towards. Arriving at the right spot, Lise will coincide with the right *place* and that *will* be the time. This awareness of time as being specific *places* is seeded into various parts of the narrative, specifically whenever there are excerpts indicating that a character has been questioned about Lise. The character attests that Lise was at this physical space, and did, or said a certain thing, that draws the scene out. No mention of time was present, the only thing being necessary to know is that it was not the time of death. Only one person's *space* coincides with two *places* – those of Lise and the marked 'x' on the map – that determine the time of death. It fulfils what Mrs Fiedke hinted at before when she said that she was certain her nephew is the man for Lise. Her conception of him as a *space* overlapped with her memory of the pavements as a *place* that had become a *space* given her effort to recollect them.

> 'I think I fell asleep for a moment,' Mrs Fiedke says. 'It wasn't a bad turn. I just dropped off. Such kind people. They wanted to put me in a taxi. But why should I go back to the hotel? My poor nephew won't be there till 9 o'clock tonight or maybe later; he must have missed the earlier plane. The porter was so kind, ringing up to find out the time of the next plane. All that.'
> 'Look at her,' Lise says in a murmur. (57)

Mrs Fiedke is somewhat aware of timekeeping, but muddles her nephew's arrival time. Put plainly, her nephew will get there when he gets there. The hotel and her nephew's *space* – the absent participant in this interaction – are both *space* and temporal point. It doesn't matter what the time is, because the time will be kept in the hotel anyway, when he does eventually show up. It could be the reason she consistently changes his arrival time.

As the reader has already seen with Lise, "'When will you be finished with my passport?'" she asks. "'Any time, any time, Madam. When you come down again. When you go out. Any time.' He looks at her dress and coat, then turns to some other people who have just arrived" (40). There is an inherent point in time within the *space* Lise exists in, that will allow her passport to be returned to her. If at "Any time" then why not at that point? Because of the importance of her return to the desk. She must return, be in the desk *space* again,

because time is only told from that interaction. All she knew from her initial interaction with the concierge is that she has arrived ahead of "himself." The part of her she's left "at home." A home that Lise can exist in, mould to get it to become the space she needs it to be, though there's no sense of time-keeping besides the functions available, which the apartment allows. While facilitating her life, the apartment is the place she meets the time to sleep, the time to cook, etc… The establishment, and persistence of these *boundaries* for the various *places* and *spaces* allows the reader to recall, different moments when these *boundaries* had been set. The work that memory does in this case is that it allows the reader to invest further in the narrative, while anticipating the future. However, given that in the case of this narrative Lise's death is disclosed early on, and the causality of the killing is challenged because of the distant narrative voice, the relational aspect between the *narrative units* have the added function of acting as *anchors*.

So, it's quite understandable for her to become furious when, after inspecting her hotel room she finds it to contain what's expected there. "She switches on the central light which is encased in a mottled glass globe; the light flicks on, then immediately flickers out as if, having served a long succession of clients without complaint, Lise is suddenly too much for it" (41). Again, time is the *place*, which is embodied by the room in this case. A *space* is enforced upon Lise, only because of her awareness of the succession of visitors. If it's a *space* that others have met on equal terms, then surely it cannot accommodate her. Lise is once again faced with the "socio-political order that eliminates any possibility of individuation. She feels a displacement from the controlled sense of time she feels at home. In her flat, where she's controlled and the *boundaries* between her *space* and the apartment's *space* are drawn out in "pure lines," "Her face is solemn as she lies, at first staring at the brown pinewood door as if to see beyond it. Presently her breathing becomes normal." The use of the word "Presently," is arguably excessive since the entirety of the first chapter has

established the present-tenseness of the narrative. By indicating that "Presently her breathing becomes normal" the reader is brought close to the point in time that it obscures the temporality of the action. If an eye is fixed on the second-hands of a clock-face in anticipation of an event then the action will be missed. But the action is not missed. So, what does the "Presently" imply in terms of the *state* of the *space* that Lise *is* and the apartment is? To answer that, let's consider a second *iteration* of Lise's attempt to find terms of dialogue with her surrounding *space*, which – as already established – she interacts with from spatial properties of her own. "In her room she gets rid of the boy quickly, and without even taking her coat off lies down on the bed, staring at the ceiling. She breathes deeply and deliberately, in and out, for a few minutes. Then she gets up, takes off her coat, and examines what there is of the room" (41).

It is no coincidence that the syntax in both instances conveys speed within the sentence. There is no comma after identifying the room she's in and her getting rid of the boy "quickly". In terms of the reader's experience of the narrative, it took longer for Lise to rid herself of the "stain-resistant" outfit than it did for her to go through these actions in the hotel room. She doesn't manage to relax, as she'd managed to do in the first chapter, after successfully buying a suitable outfit. The *boundaries* between her *space* and the hotel room's *space* are ill-defined. If it were not for the recurrence of these dynamics, the narrative would fall into obscurity, it would no longer be readable, or effective in conveying Lise's story. Her breathing is deep and deliberate, and we're told it lasts for a few minutes, which contrasts greatly with her previous "Presently" in her apartment.

The Driver's inverts the purposes of a zero-degree narratee by eliminating causality, though the inability to discern causality is an inevitable characteristic of narrating in the present-tense (Prince 10). Given that the reader only perceives the constant return of the *space* Lise occupies to certain forms of interactions with other *spaces*, it's impossible to

discern causality. So, whether Lise sets out to find someone to kill her, is not the issue. However impressive the narrator's manoeuvres were in avoiding a causal relationship between the various incidents in the narrative – coincidence and planning were conflated throughout – it would not have functioned as a successful piece of writing, for the structure would not have supported the obscurities portrayed. If a narrative is to be oblique, the relationship between the various *narrative units* can be used as they were in *The Driver's Seat*, to *anchor* the reader into a reliable "virtual reality," one that's persistent in the techniques employed, for the narrative to be understood. This is a structure that's only experienced through the reading process, through the active engagement of the reader. Lise's existence is self-evident because of the narrative's existence, but the narrative is not knowable except as an experience ("Prospecting" 145). To be viewed as a narrative already accomplished would have necessitated a deliberate bias to how some of the *spaces* acted within the narrative, a certain dimension of choice, which would have completely missed a deeper and more nuanced reading of the novel ("Prospecting" 151).

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie

The narrative in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* begins with a fence of bicycles, which gives "the impression that at any moment the boys were likely to be away" (5) By the second page Spark has already delved deep into the life of the narrative, with the Brodie Set described as having "remained unmistakably Brodie, and were all famous in the school, which is to say they were held in suspicion and not much liking" (6). The word "Brodie" already implying more than a simple alliance to a teacher. A sense of continuous change accompanies these first impressions that the reader gains of the narrative. The *narrative units* to be analysed will closely follow the boundaries of *semantic units*, i.e. the *narrative units* are the *words* found on the page.

From early in the narrative, Spark's prose pushes the reader to start entertaining the position of the principal characters at a time of change that's already on its way to producing visible effects. "[R]emaining unmistakably Brodie" implies a tendency to pull away from being "Brodie" – an *affinity*. Joyce Emily, the new girl, "still wore the green uniform of her old school." This difference, manifested in her own persistence to keep herself as she was in her old school, is seen as an opposing force. The suspicion of Joyce Emily being an outsider is quickly fulfilled; as a result, she is swiftly distanced from the rest of the characters by Miss Brodie allowing her set to "[Remain] unmistakably Brodie" (Whiteley 83).

As in *The Driver's*, gaining a history that conflicts with a different *place*, asks for rejection. The Brodie Set is made up of various *places* that are meant to have no further depth – no sense of becoming a *space* – besides their continued affiliation with the Brodie Set – Gurvitch's aforementioned "communion," the social grouping "least conducive to knowledge" (Whiteley 85). They remain consistent in their habits, in the "individualisms" prescribed to them by Miss Brodie to avoid inner conflict, and in their perception of finding Miss Jean Brodie to be in her "prime" (Cairns 202; Whiteley 83). Within the narrative, "prime" – as a *space* – will be shown to be vacant, emptied of meaning to allow the reader to inhabit the absence created by its constant repetition, which will allow it to function as a *narrative anchor*. "'Not while I am in my prime,' she said. 'These years are still the years of my prime. It is important to recognize the years of one's prime. Always remember that'" (Spark 10). Due to its invariable *iterability* as a time that's existed and still exists in the same fashion, it attains *spatial* depth because of its persistence.

Before continuing with the analysis, keen readers will have realised that the same sort of *iteration* analysis could be applied to *The Prime* as has been done with *The Driver's*, for there are moments that are consistently repeated, in a way that lifts them from the immediate semantic limits and depragmatizes them, as Iser advocates. So, why choose to limit the scope

to *narrative units* whose borders resemble the *semantic units*? Both allow readers to draw the previously advocated connections between one instance and the next, so why is the focus in *The Prime* on words, rather than these vaguely shaped *places* and *spaces* that were advocated for in *The Driver's*? In *The Driver's*, there was restraint. Some of the dialogue and words occurred in a language that wasn't English, though those moments weren't presented any differently. Examples of this include the encounter with the receptionist, and the mechanics after Lise was tear-gassed in the student protests. In both instances, the distinction was only pointed out by the narrative voice. The *places* produced by the *narrative units* in those instances were made equivalent to the other backstories that Lise made up. There are words that occurred often enough in the narrative for them to be possible *narrative anchors* in *The Driver's.* "Sex" showed up in very distinct, but confined *places* in the narrative, so it could have been a candidate for such an analysis. As did "map," "book," "breath," and various other words; however, they were all distant – already assumed as being depragmatized – and the present-tenseness of the narrative kept them at that distance. This is largely due to the tense used by the narrative voice. The present-tense in *The Driver's* means the characters are as dimensional as the physical spaces they inhabit, however, in *The Prime* there is a distinction between both (Herman 482). As Deleuze expresses it, "The past in general is the element in which each former present is focused on in particular and as a particular," where the difference between "retention and reproduction" must be distinguishable (105). In *The Prime*, each *narrative unit* occurs as a strictly delimitated "particular," which allows a retention of the *narrative anchors,* to be called upon again when needed. "Reproduction," in Deleuze's observation on analysing the past, can be seen as the reader's experience of the narrative.

In *The Prime,* physical spaces are given a history that's completely apart from the characters, but which they're able to interact with nonetheless. A difference in the planar

qualities of *places* and *spaces* exists, and this will be apparent when discussing the position of “the Castle” within the Brodie set’s meander about Edinburgh’s Old Town. This structural distinction is important, and while the reader might not be aware of it during the construction process of the virtual reality they’ll be traversing, it effects the experience. Again, it’s important not to consider these narrative structures as being constructed prior to the reader’s experience of the narrative. This distinction between different kinds of *narrative units* is something that Roland Barthes touches upon in his essay *Structural Analysis of Narratives*:

> “In the same way, since the ‘language’ [‘*langue’*] of narrative is not the language [*langue*] of articulated language [*langage articulé*] – though very often vehicled by it – narrative units will be substantially independent of linguistic units; they may indeed coincide with the latter, but occasionally, not systematically.” (Barthes 91)

This analytical method sets out to show that an applied sense of the systematic by the reader is the narrative structure that allows temporally complex narratives – with a blurred sense of causality – to maintain coherence by mobilising *narrative anchors.* Furthermore, if the same kind of analysis, and the same *narrative units* were used in both analyses, it would contradict the point of setting out this analytical method, and would reaffirm Giffin’s fears, that ignoring certain thematic qualities provides for a shallower reading of the narrative. It would also discount the reader’s input and engagement with the narrative. If it were merely about the *semantic units* then reader input could have been *arguably* less important than emphasised. Analysing the same genus of *narrative units* would also narrow the writer’s scope of work. Putting the words in the right order doesn’t produce an effective narrative.

The *narrative units* to be analysed in *The Prime* are the words, “science,” “prime,” “art” and “betray” for their pertinence to the narrative itself. As previously shown with Miss Brodie, and her set’s interaction with Joyce Emily, there’s a sense of continuous return to a particular *unit* (Whiteley 83). Whiteley’s discussion of *The Prime* elaborates on how Brodie’s arrogance mirrors the girls’ individuality, for it is Brodie who attributes each character with unique characteristics that prevents any competition from arising within the Brodie set (84).

Each character occupies a separate *space*. As pointed out previously, within the narrative, as is the case within Brodie's classroom, knowledge gained "converge[s] on [Brodie's] personality" (Whiteley 85). This sense of continuous change and return is not only a thematic apparition in the novel, it is also deeply embedded in the words utilized. Spark, as in *The Driver's*, displays a highly poetic, and economical use of words. *Narrative units'* repetition and contextual difference between one *iteration* and the next propels the narrative forward, while providing mirrors for the reader to see the rest of the narrative, with all its potential themes, unfold.

As previously stated, a structural analysis of the narrative has already been performed by John Holloway in *Narrative Structure and Text Structure: Isherwood's A Meeting by the River, and Muriel Spark's The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie.* In his analysis, Holloway draws Hasse diagrams that are meant to illustrate the different operations enacted by the events in the novel, to reflect on the narrative structure of the novel. Holloway refers to different sequences of events in narratives as "runs," with the whole narrative being referred to as a set *The Prime* (587). Holloway provides commentary on the mobilisation of words within the narrative, and how that allows *The Prime* to subvert predictable narrative structures – specifically causality based ones. However, Spark's use of words was pointed to as an anomaly without furthering a discussion of how Spark mobilized the words in such a way that helped form the narrative structure for the reader (589; 603). Still, some of Holloway's observations regarding Spark's prose will be referred to later, especially when considering her use of the word 'betray.'

Spark's text never misses an opportunity to portray Miss Brodie as someone with a deeper understanding of the signs surrounding her, one that goes beyond surface-level interaction (Whiteley 87). As a theme, comprehension is reinforced by a poignant,

overpowering editor in Miss Brodie in her prime who keeps the Brodie Set, in their formative years, in check:

> ‘Social what?’ said Miss Brodie, who always made difficulties about words when she scented heresy.
>
> ‘It’s in the Church Hall, Miss Brodie.’
>
> ‘Yes, yes, but social what? Social is an adjective and you are using it as a noun. If you mean a social gathering, by all means attend your social gathering and we shall have our own social gathering in the presence of the great Anna Pavlova, a dedicated woman who, when she appears on the stage, makes the other dancers look like elephants. We shall see Pavlova doing the death of the Swan, it is a great moment in eternity.’
>
> […]
>
> Then, with a voice desperate with the menace of hysteria, and a charming accent [Anna Pavlova] declared, ‘I have never been understood. Never. Never.’
>
> […]
>
> Pausing before she removed the other shoe, Sandy said to Pavlova, ‘I am sure I understand you.’” (62-63)

Why did the reader need to experience this discussion? To be aware of the teachable aspect of words. This extract show the various kinds of comprehension emphasized, from the literal meaning of words, to the dancer’s declaration of being misunderstood. Does Anna’s “charming accent” negate “the menace of hysteria”? These subtle changes in the dynamic between various characters, made possible through the *mobilised narrative units*, displays one of the levels of interaction possible when wielding *narrative units*. What’s central, in this case, is not the characters, but the words on the page. Rather than constituting knowledge in and of themselves, words contain elements of knowledge:

> [Spark’s] texts are highly self-reflexive in the sense that ‘conscious of their literariness, [they] “narrativise” it and strive by a permanent or occasional reference back to themselves, to reveal the law underlying every linguistic creation. (Apostolou 102)

When discussing the ‘social,’ the importance of understanding, being understood and editing – through Miss Brodie’s interjection – is apparent and is reflected through Spark’s writing. This is something that can only be achieved through a close reading of the text, a struggle that Sandy abandons when she becomes a Catholic nun, “her willing embrace of those concrete particulars that for Brodie remained ill-conceived wishes,” directly signalling

her departure from Brodie's Calvinist leanings (Montgomery 98). This concreteness Sandy pursues mirrors "Brodie's appalling arrogance", for while the *units* assigned to individual students portray the uniqueness of each character, they simultaneously betray the asymmetrical power dynamics Brodie employs to maintain control of her own narrative and set (Whiteley 84). To escape Brodie's controlling hegemony over language, Sandy needed to enact the same concreteness (Cairns 203). Brodie "is like the magician: she is the exclusive agent of the powers that she wields, the only one who can impart the knowledge that she holds" (87). This further explains Brodie's aversion to "science" since experiments are repeatable regardless of conducts them, and are expected to exhibit similar results.

Concreteness is paramount when it comes to *The Prime.* As Deleuze claims, "Returning is the becoming-identical of becoming itself. Returning is thus the only identity, but identity as a secondary power, the identity of difference" (Deleuze 52). This is more pertinent when it comes to the analysis of *The Prime* because tangible *places* and *spaces* are created, with distinct borders, where the repeatable element is drawn attention to through the reader's engagement, even if this difference is not at the forefront of the reader's mind. Reading of Miss Jean Brodie's "prime" in the beginning of the narrative does not have the same resounding effect as reading it at the end. By the end of the novel, the word is loaded and heavy with meaning. The narrative arc that these *narrative units* are subjected to, coupled with the reader's engagement, makes it possible for the causal link between Sandy's betrayal and Miss Brodie to remain ephemeral – accessible only through the reading process – while allowing the overall narrative to feel fulfilled.

The *narrative units* chosen to be analysed had to fulfil the following criteria: The word must be *reiterated* numerous times through the narrative, for the context it appears in to have changed, to give the inherent meaning of it within the work a chance to change. Furthermore, the word must be relevant to the plot in one form or another so that the reader

can invest – consciously or unconsciously – meaning to the word, one that's relevant to a greater understanding of the work. The word does not have to directly advance the plot, but can be a device – a *narrative anchor* – that orients the reader, or adds greater depth to the work, or intertextual context. Finally, the words need to be ones that are not too weighty with definitions, or controversial, unless their meaning is re-established early on within the narrative, so that the definition is narrowed down. Conversely, if the point of the word was to be controversial – as is arguably the case with "betray" – but the meaning changes, it can be a viable candidate for the argument.

Considering the kind of meaning – or lack thereof – derived from repetition of "prime", Holloway states:

> "I should perhaps add that several of the words employed in the run summaries (e.g., 'wrong,' 'teach,' 'betray') must be taken with reserve. They may be said to be valid within the surface of conventions of Σ_2, but the novel, in using them, draws attention to the face that their use has become conventialized to the point of emptiness. It seems to me that Σ_2 draws attention to this but does not make it its business to labour at redefining such terms as 'teach' or (sexual) 'wrong.' Some will think the omission disastrous: others, including myself, not." (Holloway 589)

As Holloway suggests, the redefining of key terms within *The Prime* could have been "disastrous" however, this is the absence that's been previously mentioned, the one Iser advocated for, which allows the reader to create one of de Certeau's *places* from the *narrative unit* that could turn into a *space* wherein the narrative takes place. As always, this hinges on reader engagement with the narrative. The word "prime" is the most obvious suspect to be analysed, as well as "science," both of which change, gain intricate meanings and derive different emotions from the reader throughout. "'Not while I am in my prime,' she said. 'These years are still the years of my prime. It is important to recognize the years of one's prime, always remember that. Here is my tram-car. I dare say I'll not get a seat. This is nineteen-thirty-six. The age of chivalry is past'" (Spark 10). This occurs just after Miss Brodie leads her set away, revealing to them that there's another plot to try to force her out of

the school. On the next page, which draws out a scene that occurs "Six years previously," the reader encounters:

> 'I have frequently told you, and the holidays just past have convinced me, that my prime has truly begun. One's prime is elusive. You little girls, when you grow up, must be on the alert to recognize your prime at whatever time of your life it may occur. You must then live it to the full. Mary, what have you got under your desk, what are you looking at?' (11)

Within this flashback, Miss Brodie draws even further back to a different time where her "prime has truly begun" and in the flashback the reader is perceiving that it's already underway. The implication here is not difficult to discern, the use of repetition has the effect of making it seem familiar, though readers would be inclined to point to Holloway's idea of the "emptiness" of the *iterable* word. This repetition does contextualize "prime," turning it into a *place* that's allowing the reader to engage, anchoring the *space* that Miss Brodie embodies to it – an *affinity*. If her motivations are elusive, then at least the reader can measure the experienced change between one occurrence of "prime" and the next. The distance between both – as was seen in *The Driver's* – becomes the *space* the reader perceives, which forms the narrative. Having a flashback wherein a character refers to another previously lived experience, or a boundary that's been traversed, can disorientate a reader; however, the repetition, and the anchoring of the *space* that "prime" has become – to Miss Brodie – allows this to function. There is a strong sense of the reality Brodie attempts to conjure around herself, and in the beginning of the narrative, she maintains hegemony over how it is told.

What kind of effect does this constant displacement in time of "prime," from one timeline, to six years previous, to again positing it as a border that's been crossed into a time of "prime"-ness have on the reader's experience? It turns each episode, each moment of time, into its own *place* within the narrative map. These episodic *places* are not going to be analysed using this method – as was done for *The Driver's* – but it's important that they be

recognised in order to point to the work that repetition does. The word "prime" helps to elaborate on the borders of Miss Brodie's *space*. It determines the divisions the reader is allowed to see within the narrative ("Practice" 123). The tone used, which implies Brodie's appropriation of "prime" is achieved because of the reader's involvement with the work. The word has the emptiness Holloway mentioned, because of the depragmatised aesthetic that is drawn from the work by the reader who reverts to previous notions of "prime" they might have previously possessed ("The Reading Process" 283). "Prime" exists differently, but consistently the same, the only marker being the narrated change in time, which makes "prime" timeless, and fleeting. The only substance it contains comes from its repetition. Though, this substance is quickly inhabited by the reader, for it's been vacated of meaning and calls for interaction. In Iser's words, it's been depragmatized and turned into a *place,* which the reader can turn into a *space* by allowing the isomorphic influence between the reader and narrative to take place.

As in *The Driver's,* all of the characters in *The Prime* are two-dimensional:

> 'Attend to me, girls. One's prime is the moment one was born for. Now that my prime has begun – Sandy, your attention is wandering. What have I been talking about?'
> 'Your prime, Miss Brodie.'" (12)

Brodie's *affinity* towards "prime" extends her *dimension* temporally rendering her into a *space*. However, this would have not been possible if it weren't equally recognised by Sandy. This repetition of "prime" by another character, shows the reader that while the borders, contents and the *space* "prime" might not be what they expect, there are other characters whose *places* are delimited by this *space* of "prime," whose actions are affected by it. Acknowledging the role played by "prime" allows the narrative to diverge into different timelines with no distinct temporal structure, since there are reliable *narrative anchors* functioning to keep the structure intact. "Prime" becomes a constant that has equal and

lasting effect for the characters, and the reader wields this understanding to navigate and orient themselves within the narrative.

Spark utilizes an impressive form of misdirection throughout the book, as when Miss Brodie says, "'You girls are my vocation. If I were to receive a proposal of marriage tomorrow from the Lord Lyon King-of-Arms I would decline it. I am dedicated to you in my prime.'" Sandy attempts to walk like Sybil Thorndike, which results in one of Miss Brodie's first reprimands to her, and warnings of how "'One day, Sandy, you will go too far.'" Rose Stanley then finds ink on her blouse and is told "'Go to the science room and have the stain removed; but remember it is very bad for the tussore'" (23). Following this is a lengthy episode that tries to position Miss Brodie's *space* as a transferrable one, because the next passage describes the set's fascination with the "science room" and "Miss Lockhart who seemed to carry six inches of pure air around her person wherever she moved in that strange-smelling room." (24) Miss Lockhart possesses the qualities of the *space* about her as Miss Brodie possesses "prime". This marks the set's first awareness of a form of knowledge that doesn't "converge on Brodie," as Whiteley expressed it (85). By imparting on students a sense of agency – "observer equivalent status," where individuals can meet an experiment on their own terms and find the same results as long as the experiment is repeatable – the set starts to realise that being apart from Brodie does not preclude acquiring knowledge (Whiteley 87):

> "Miss Lockhart in the science room was to Sandy something apart, surrounded by three lanes of long benches set out with jars half-full of coloured crystals and powers and liquids[…] Only once when Sandy went to the science room was there a lesson in progress[…] 'All the girls in the science room were doing just as they liked,' said Sandy, 'and that's what they were supposed to be doing.'" (24-25)

Within the "science room" and around Miss Lockhart, even much later in the novel, when Miss Brodie is playing golf with Sandy, it seems that the teachers' respective *spaces* don't overlap with each other. It seems that Miss Brodie's opinion that the tussore might get ruined

also forces a complete separation of *spaces*. Their *boundaries* towards each other are established and firm. When Gordon Lowther is reported to have been seen playing golf with Miss Lockhart, that signals the end of the relationship he shared with Miss Brodie. The episode surrounding the "science room" contains many iterations of the words identifying the *space*, the one Miss Lockhart fits in. This ends when Miss Brodie says:

> 'You must be more careful with your ink. I can't have my girls going up and down to the science room like this. We must keep our good name.'
>
> She added, 'Art is greater than science. Art comes first, and then science.'
>
> […] But she turned again to the class and said: '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)

After the reader experiences the reestablishment of a definition for "science," and particularly, the "science room" the narrative voice reverts to the *space* Miss Brodie occupies, categorising and ranking that experience for the reader, not for themselves, but for the realm of the narrative. "Science" was repeated fourteen times within two-and-a-half pages. Without this repetition, "science" wouldn't have been given a chance attain a different history in the reader's mind, one they are able to recall whenever it's mentioned again. Following this change, this redefined *space* needed to be positioned by the *spaces* the reader was already familiar with. Thus, to close the frame of this episode, after the trouble Miss Brodie had been facing from the administration is reiterated, the reader finds several occurrences of "prime" once again, reminding them of where this episode began, and the *units* that act as *anchors* for the narrative (26-27). This reoccurrence of "prime" following the "science room" scene – once a strict hierarchy is established – is where the first occurrence of "betray" is witnessed, but more will be said about that later.

Another example of "prime" being used as a *narrative anchor* occurs later in the narrative, when Teddy Lloyd has kissed Sandy, and they're sat at dinner with the rest of his family. After his wife describes her impression of Miss Brodie as "queer" the "art master" retorts:

> ’Jean Brodie,’ said Teddy, ‘is a magnificent woman in her prime.’ He got up, tossing back his lock of hair, and left the room.
>
> Deirdre blew a cloud of reflective smoke and stubbed out her cigarette, and Sandy said she would have to go now. (104)

This passage can be read as a reaffirmation of Teddy Lloyd’s fidelity to Miss Brodie. It’s not unimportant that he’s referred to by his first name, but Miss Brodie forever remains Miss Brodie, except to Mr Lowther, whom the girls only *assume* must refer to Miss Brodie as Jean. However, the previous passage with Teddy’s assertion of Miss Brodie’s “prime” existence, shows that “prime” is not just a vacant *space.* Following his statement, he leaves the room, and is quickly followed by Sandy, as his wife reflects. By vacating the area where “prime” would have to be explained to a *space* – Deirdre’s – who’s not displayed an *affinity* towards Brodie, “prime” is left intact. “Prime” possesses no meaning if presented apart from Miss Brodie. It is part of the reality that Brodie curates for her students to maintain control over them (Cairns 202). Thus, “prime” has not been completely hollowed out to be filled by any multitude of qualities, it still possesses a determined *affinity* towards Miss Brodie. This implies that in the absence of Brodie, “prime” loses its *spatiality,* for there is no vehicle to give it a temporal dimension. This realisation anticipates, and is quickly fulfilled by the episode that follows. If there is a distinct lack – when considering the *spatiality* of the narrative as it’s been set out – then the *space* needs to be filled. This can be done by the reader, who is invited to fill certain *spaces* within the narrative, or by another *space*. In this case, the episode that follows, elaborates on Miss Brodie’s *space,* as anticipated through the proximity of the narrative voice’s association of “prime” with the assertions of Brodie’s followers.

This episode starts with a description of interactions which were reported to have happened between Miss Brodie and Mr Lowther, and how these interactions – the *spaces* between the characters that confirm their *boundaries* – seemingly held a *place* for Teddy. Comparing Miss Brodie’s potential lovers, starting with Mr. Lowther:

> Still Miss Brodie refused him. He fell into a melancholy mood upon his retirement from the offices of choir-master and Elder, and the girls though he brooded often upon the possibility that Miss Brodie could not take to his short legs, and was all the time pining for Teddy Lloyd's long ones. (104)

Lowther lacks an understanding of Miss Brodie's *space*, for it obscures its *dimensions* and *affinities*. As a result, he's unable to figure out the differences between himself and Teddy, beyond what's readily visible. Does this mean he's mistaken? Not in the conclusion he's derived, but the reason for Brodie's rejection of him is probably not Teddy's lengthier legs.

This places Miss Brodie as the central *space* in this episode. This centrality is anticipated by Teddy's previous assertion of Brodie's "prime," and furthered when Brodie confides in Sandy while playing golf in the following episode. It's pointed out that Sandy started becoming Miss Brodie's confidante "not long after Sandy's visit to the art master's residence" (105). It had been apparent from earlier in the narrative how highly Miss Brodie places "art," – "'Art is greater than science. Art comes first, and then science'" (25). Thus, it is no wonder that she feels the threat of Sandy with her "tiny eyes" when she hears that:

> Sandy had met the science mistress surprisingly on the golf course on Saturday morning playing with Gordon Lowther.
>
> 'Good shot, Sandy. I know very little of Miss Lockhart,' said Miss Brodie. 'I leave her to her jars and gases. They are all gross materialists, these women in the Senior school, they all belong to the Fabian Society and are pacifists[…] Sandy, I swear you are short-sighted, the way you peer at people. You must get spectacles.' (107)

There's an obvious insecurity in Miss Brodie's reference to Miss Lockhart and "her jars and gases," since earlier in the narrative, when the set started taking "science" lessons more nuanced definitions were provided for the materials used:

> 'These are Bunsen burners, this is a test-tube, this is a pipette, that's a burette, that is a retort, a crucible…'
>
> Thus she established her mysterious priesthood. (75)

This elaboration of "science"-related definitions, and Miss Lockhart's "priesthood" show that *space* embodied by "science" has porous *boundaries*, ones that are willing to accept the Brodie set, if only their respective *spaces' affinities* point towards it. Still, a barrier exists to

Miss Lockhart's "priesthood" when considering Brodie's prior elaboration on the ranking of various subjects, "But she turned again to the class and said: '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). Putting "science" at the end, shows the distances between the various *spaces* the words form. However, that's their arrangement according to Miss Brodie. Later in the narrative, the narrator's choice of the word, "priesthood" to describe Miss Lockhart changes this impression of "science" as being inferior, and illustrates a difference between one *space*'s *affinity* towards "science" and the next. When the narrator talks of Miss Lockhart's "priesthood," "science" appears to not be as distant from "religion" as Miss Brodie implied. Thus, there exists a tension between the reality Brodie curates for her set and the "virtual reality" of the narrative (Cairns 203). Given the constant reiteration of "science," it's been vacated of enough meaning that it provides the reader with an absence they can fill, one to which Brodie possesses no *affinity*. This change in the *boundaries* of "science" through the set's interaction with Miss Lockhart further exposes the unqualified rigidity of Brodie's "solipsistic" forms of knowledge, and allows the reader an alternative *narrative anchor* to "prime," one with no affinity to Brodie (Whiteley 86). The interaction between Miss Brodie and Sandy on the golf course ends with this back-and-forth:

> 'It's unnerving,' said Miss Brodie. 'Do you know, Sandy dear, all my ambitions are for you and Rose. You have got insight, perhaps not quite spiritual, but you're a deep one, and Rose has got instinct, Rose has got instinct.'
> 'Perhaps not quite spiritual,' said Sandy.
> 'Yes,' said Miss Brodie, 'you're right. Rose has got a future by virtue of her instinct.'
> 'She has an instinct how to sit for her portrait,' said Sandy.
> 'That's what I mean by your insight,' said Miss Brodie. 'I ought to know, because my prime has brought my instinct and insight, both.' (107-108)

Following this interaction, Sandy's interest in "religion" is amplified. What the narrative voice does to the *spaces* created by the words is distance them, shuffle them about, while reiterating them in a simple economical fashion that readers can reliably count on, and

anticipate. Economical, meaning that when a distance is portrayed between one *space* and the other – as when Miss Lockhart's "priesthood" was described – it is made obvious without obscuring the rearrangement. By relying on the readers' memories of previous *iterations* of the *narrative anchors,* the reader sees the "virtual reality" of the narrative reshuffled. The reality Brodie curates for her students and the narrative's "virtual reality" have common *narrative anchors*, but it is only through the reader's engagement with the narrative's "virtual reality" that readers can see the machinations of Brodie's curated reality, exposing her as a manipulator for the rigidity of the *narrative anchors* she possesses an *affinity* towards (Cairns 203).

The only mention of Miss Brodie during the pages recounting Sandy's interests and pursuit of Calvinism, comes in the following:

> "Sandy was unable to formulate these exciting propositions; nevertheless she experienced them in the air she breathed, she sensed them in the curiously defiant way in which the people she knew broke the Sabbath, and she smelt them in the excesses of Miss Brodie in her prime." (109)

Sandy, as a *space,* has attained a different *affinity* and *dimensionality,* particularly as it concerns the various *spaces* that other characters have interacted with, including "art," "science," "religion," and "prime". For the characters, the personal impact of their interaction with these *spaces* is largely ambiguous, and purposely so, for it contrasts with Brodie's insistence on setting specific roles for her students, further exposing her fallibility as a controlling entity within the narrative (Cairns 205). Within the narrative, associations are drawn, with no deeper meaning attributed to them besides the existence of a link. In the previous excerpt, we see the most effective use of the word "prime". Beyond redefining the positions of the various *spaces* and *places* in the narrative, it provides a familiar, repeatable unit that the reader can refer to. Sandy, as a *space,* has so far only existed within Miss Brodie's orbit. Brodie's students are shown to be "puppets who have to perform the preordained roles assigned to them by their teacher's master narrative of their existence" and

it is that narrative, which Sandy resists (Cairns 202). If there was no reflection on the word "prime" in that instance, Sandy's change, her divergence from what Miss Brodie preaches, and her maxims would have functioned only in terms of content, and the novel's consistent structure would have been disrupted (Whiteley 94-95). Without the occurrence of "prime", the passage would not have had the added effect of providing structural support to the narrative. "Prime" is still a *space* of its own, it's not just Sandy who is changed, but the distance that "prime" – and consequently, the narrative – has travelled from its starting point becomes evident. Brodie is no longer the sole purveyor of reality for her students, for Sandy has found the tools to communicate and situate her own, while realising its position relative to Brodie's own version of reality. The bind is, without having knowledge of Brodie's version of reality, Sandy would never have arrived at her own (Cairns 205).

What about "betray"? It is what Miss Brodie obsesses over, particularly since, from very early in the narrative there's mention of, "former pupils whom she had trained up in her confidence. There had been previous plots to remove her from Blaine, which had been foiled" (9). The first outright mention of betrayal is portrayed in Eunice's recollections of Miss Brodie, which she shares with her husband. When asked about Miss Brodie's death, Eunice says,

> 'Just after the war. She was retired by then. Her retirement was rather a tragedy, she was forced to retire before time. The head never liked her. There's a long story attached to Miss Brodie's retirement. She was betrayed by one of her own girls, we were called the Brodie set. I never found out which one betrayed her.'" (27)

Besides the introduction of "betrayal" as playing a role in the novel, it's also the first instance of "prime" being questioned, prior to the mention of "betrayal." Eunice said:

> 'She used to give us teas at her flat and tell us about her prime.'
> 'Prime what?'
> 'Her prime of life.'" (27)

Before this moment, "prime" had been attached as a *space* with an *affinity* for Miss Brodie's own *space*. They were attached, and the *dimension* of "prime," along with its *affinity* for Miss

Brodie's *space,* extended both of their temporal dimensions. However, this excerpt shows that rather than possessing a relationship with "prime," for which she has a natural *affinity*, Miss Brodie's *space* encompasses that of "prime," thereby shrouding it in mystery. Thus, a story of "Miss Brodie in her prime" dies with Miss Brodie. Outside of the interaction between Miss Brodie and "prime," their respective meanings collapse, and are left hollowed out for other characters, and the reader to inhabit in a different fashion. However, given the introduction of "betrayed" in the interaction between Eunice and her husband, the relational dynamics between "prime" and Brodie are changed within the narrative. Given the talk of "confidence", "assassination", and "plots" against Miss Brodie, the appearance of "betrayed" cannot be surprising, especially after the meaning of "prime" had been hollowed out for the reader. For the reader, the relationships have shifted, but the structure has remained intact. If "betrayed" hadn't been introduced at this point, "prime" might have been left as a non-*unit,* both void of meaning and purpose. If relationships between *units* change, then there must be a reason for it. However, giving a reason might result in a sense causality being introduced in the narrative, which is what *The Prime* deftly avoids. Thus, what's introduced is something that a reader might have anticipated, but only through the absences provided. The introduction of "betrayed," allows for further elaboration of the relationship between the various elements in a way that remains faithful to the narrative structure.

As has been displayed, nuance in the narrative's use of language allows readers to uncover subtle associations between various elements that would have otherwise remained obscure (Cairns 202). This is evident in Jenny and Sandy's invented tales, Teddy Lloyd continuously portraying Miss Brodie through portraits of different members of her set, and the Brodie set's meander through Edinburgh at the guidance of "Miss Brodie in her prime." This meander occurs directly after the first mentions of "betrayed":

> It is time now to speak of the long walk through the old parts of Edinburgh where Miss Brodie took her set, dressed in their deep violet coats and black velour hats with

> the green and white crest, one Friday in March when the school's central heating system had broken down and everyone else had been muffled up and sent home. (27)

Using the language attained through this analytical method, readers can discern that through the narrative voice, there's an introduction of an interaction between various *units* in the narrative, *units* whose *boundaries* are precisely delimitated through a description of the set's outfit, while being differentiated from the other students who were sent home. The singularity of "one Friday in March," shows the specificity of time, while implying the continuation of it, if it wasn't already obvious through the flashbacks and flash-forwards to the characters' adult lives. Unlike in *The Driver's, places* and *spaces* cannot be conflated with narrative time. *The Prime* portrays a completely different kind of storytelling than *The Driver's*, even if a similar analytical method is applied to both.

> Now they were in a great square, the Grassmarket, with the Castle, which was in any case everywhere, rearing between a big gap in the houses where the aristocracy used to live. It was Sandy's first experience of a foreign country, which intimates itself by its new smells and shapes and its new poor[…] and some boys shouted after Miss Brodie's violet-clad company, with words that the girls had not heard before, but rightly understood to be obscene. (32-33)

This passage is a landmark in the novel, if only for how deliberately it points to the necessity of such a *spatial* analysis of the narrative. The "Castle" – unidentified but knowable – being referred to as existing "everywhere," is a detail of the greater *space* the narrative exists in, Edinburgh. Seeing "the Castle" allows the set to confirm their location, it's a point of retention.

"[T]he Castle" is a landmark which the characters are familiar with. The grounding familiarity allows the "foreign country" they are entering to seem both different, yet relatable since it is still connected to the point of retention, which grounds this episode. "[T]he Castle," as a focal point, facilitates the "reproduction" of the episode as a "particular." "[T]he Castle" manages to become a *space* because of the familiarity attributed to it by the narrative voice, and the links drawn between it and the characters, to whom the reader is able to link various

iterable narrative units they have experienced through the characters' experience of the narrative space. This wielding of associations allows the narrative voice to mobilise previously unencountered *units* for the reader to interact with.

The Prime is a collection of brief, but impactful episodes, all with various landmarks present that are familiar, even if they don't necessarily guide the reader. Like "the Castle" these landmarks need not do more than orient readers within the narrative space. *Narrative units* are shuffled about the narrative space, providing focal points, even if it's difficult to discern where the narrative eye is viewing these *units* from, or why the narrative is arranged in the particular order it's presented in. Seeing "the Castle" doesn't help the set occupy this "foreign country" further, but it helps in a different way. While grounding the characters' recollection of the "foreign country" seeing "the Castle" *shows* the set's uniforms for being armour-like – "Miss Brodie's violet-clad company" – rendering unto them the impression of an invading force. Indeed, Sandy suggested before "that the Brodie set was Miss Brodie's fascitsti, not to the naked eye, marching along, but all knit together for her need and in another way, marching along" (31). The repetition of "marching along" presents it in two different lights, the distance between the two *units* of "marching along" is left for the reader to occupy and determine, according to their various inherent biases of what these words mean, and the images they conjure up:

> Fascism is fictionalised in this continuous oscillation between the real and the imaginary, the within and the without, and in its fictionalised form it seduces the 'reality' of the students and their teacher. (Apostolou 103)

Does this make Miss Brodie evil? Does she have the capacity for evil? Is she benign? None of the negative influence that she enacts is ever portrayed as being anything but members of her set reading into her words, an activity she'd support, as is evident, but then where does responsibility lie? Or better yet, the question which the narrative asks, did Sandy "betray" Miss Brodie? I won't venture to answer this question, but show the various *spaces*

and *places* as they're laid out around *iterations* of "betray". Again, what's important to realise is that Sandy didn't "betray" Miss Brodie for any specific reason. Pretending otherwise is deliberately misreading the narrative, but the way it functions is a teachable moment in itself. For it still shows how a structure for a narrative is built by the reader, makes sense for the connections made, but cannot be reconstituted within a Cartesian method of recollection. Sandy might have "betrayed" Miss Brodie following her affair with Teddy Lloyd, but it's coincidental that they occurred one after the other, especially in a temporally complex narrative such as this where the timeline shifts continuously. Events are fixed temporally, but they would not function as they do in the book's complex form if they were placed in chronological order.

Conclusion

Having spoken of Derrida's views on writing, we're still faced with J.L. Austin's question: what is success in writing with a multitude of meanings and the risk of being misunderstood (Derrida, 16-17)? Of course, it needs no discussion that fiction need not have one discernible reading for it to be successful. As Gregson said, it is a "truism" of contemporary literary theory. Then why set out this analytical method? In order to recognise a different language, an alternative form of thought, that does not subscribe to, and is not limited to the *semantic* rules of the language that the narrative is relayed in.

Besides Platonov's *Foundation Pit*, which was referred to in the introduction as being another narrative where this method could be applied, there's a multitude of narratives of oppression that could benefit from an analysis of repetition. So, why did Spark find it necessary to subvert traditional narrative structures using language? Was it a natural occurrence, an organic tendency to want to do something different? Part of a greater artistic movement? Is it linked with her history as a fabricator of false information during World War

II? Is it as a response to her previous estrangement in then-Rhodesia from familiar places (Schmidt 828)? It could be a reflection on being Scottish while writing in an English whose canon has largely relegated writing by Scots as being apart from English Literature (Gardiner 50; Cheyette 95). Indeed, in *Spark contra Spark* Michael Gardiner reflects on Caroline's religious conversion in Spark's first novel, *The Comforters,* and the character's writing of herself as being anti-imperialist (51). Repetition in *The Comforters* also blatantly drives the narrative forward.

In my opinion, Spark's need to subvert traditional forms and the limits of semantic structure stems from the feminist angle of her writing, which continuously outwits the hegemonic "institution of the real" that would judge it for its content. Her narrators and characters talk openly about sex. Her characters are equally complex, or equally shallow – depending how the narratives are read. It is evident that the question of responsibility over Lise's death is concerned with the entrenched patriarchy that we live in, and Sandy's pursuit distanced her from the opposite sex – the "fence of bicycles" at the beginning of the narrative – and sexualisation was one of the factors that leads to her "betrayal" of Miss Brodie. So, is this analytical method just a way to derive and eke out further meaning while blinding oneself to these potential readings? Of course not. This method is merely a way to show that a subversive narrative needs to have that subversion mirrored in its expression.

Mathias Enard and Kamel Daoud, when questioned about the Charlie Hebdo killings, and their narratives which tackle the relationship between the politicized East and West, said that *romain d'urgences* – novels of urgency – never last. These being the reactionary narratives, meant to portray a pointed argument in narrative form that defends, attacks, condemns, resists, or takes one of the other multitude of positions that could be held by a heavy-handed writer (Assouline 32-33). They do not last because they do exactly what Susan

Sontag advises against, they provide stylised content. Spark's narratives possess a distinctive style, but they're not stylised. The style of writing follows its form, content and expression.

Consider narratives such as Nawal el-Saadawy's *Searching*, another work in translation. The protagonist is a researcher who tries to open her own lab after her lover goes astray, though it's never clear why he's disappeared. There's also no deliberate causal relationship between her lover's estrangement and her setting out to take control of her own life by building an independent research centre. However, for the protagonist, this change in course is an attempt to put meaning back into the advertising signs she sees on the street, where names and letters float, disjointed, apart from the surface they're written on, vacant of meaning. Both Spark and Nawal el-Saadawy feel a disconnect from the language they're writing in, due to the lack of representation felt from those upholding these languages. Being half-Jewish and having lived in then-Rhodesia, Spark consistently found herself on the fringes of the spaces she occupied. To repeat an oft-quoted maxim of Audrey Lorde, "The master's tools will not dismantle the master's house", so rather than use the "master's tools," Spark built her own using *narrative units* that transcended the semantic and demonstrated them by subverting traditional narrative forms (91).

Fiction constructs a body of knowledge that contains its own language, dictionary, and assembly method. It allows authors and writers who deal in – what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as "a minor literature" – to create grounds for understanding that otherwise could not have existed. In such works, to paraphrase Jorge Luis Borges, nouns become metaphorical, permanence only implies a lasting meaning that exists for as long as the lasting meaning is relevant, the connection between one *iteration* and the next is purely coincidental, and reasoning lies with the reader (13-14). As in the real world, there is a problem of violence against women in Spark's world, but *The Driver's Seat* is more than a feminist treatise on how society views responsibility, victimization and erasure of selfhood (Herman 482). It

challenges the lens others would use to analyse feminist works by handing responsibility over to the reader. When Flaubert was put on trial for the moral corruption *Madame Bovary* caused, the defence's argument was that the distant narrator left a gap for the reader to inhabit the novel, so if moral corruption is the issue, it only exists in the eye of the reader (LaCapra 56). This isn't a new insight into the reading process. However, the problem with the phenomenological experience of reading is the anticipation of what comes next within the narrative, which doesn't allow the reader to view meaning beyond the content, which is buttressed by the structure. If readers are not provided with tools that allow for an awareness of the various mechanisms that can operate within narratives to surface, then the repetition might fall into the realm of a curiosity, and the knowledge to be gained from it becomes inaccessible.

The narrative accompanying this analysis – *You Must Believe in Spring* – is relayed in English, but – for the characters – is lived in Arabic. To reflect that dissonance, I needed to analyse narratives relayed by writers who feel both foreign and at home in the languages they write in. By analysing how language buttresses the structure of Spark's narratives I hoped it would help me understand how a British writer practising her craft in English addresses this sense of alienation through structure and expression, or as Lorde expressed it:

> Within the interdependency of mutual (nondominant) differences lies that security which enables us to descend into the chaos of knowledge and return with true visions of our future[…] Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged. (91)

Through the occasional use of Arabic words, phrases and whole sentences, I aim to blur the limits of the mobilised *narrative units* by making them phonetically readable, but impossible to understand for non-Arabic speakers. This places the reader in the shoes of a protagonist who feels alien to his surroundings, particularly in a city where language and story-telling techniques are mobilised by those in power to suit their own means and ends. Furthermore, the Arabic is in a slang, so for those who understand it, their presence portrays a sense of

self-reflection for the protagonist – Shahed – who is suddenly reminded that the language he uses to narrate his story is divergent from the one he lives in. Similar to the description of Spark's "self-reflexive" choice of language, the protagonist's Arabic interventions express a consciousness of how he "narrativise[s]" his own life, in a way that fits in with mythologised inter-generational traumas (Apostolou 102).

Shahed obsesses over the opaque mythologizing of the country's past. As with Miss Brodie, he finds a way to relate his knowledge of surrounding events in a way that reflects him and the reasoning behind his self-appointed task. Shahed's struggle stems from his inability to outrun those traumas. This is another reason why Spark was an ideal candidate for this analysis, as Wesley A. Kort points out in *Taking Exception: Muriel Spark and the Spiritual Disciplines of Personal Space*:

> Her fictional worlds, especially in her later work are marked increasingly by the power of social constructions to determine human identity and to compromise particularity and integrity. (128)

As much as Shahed doesn't want to fall for the trappings of societal structures, particularly the ones that exist in oppressive regimes, there's a seduction to Cartesian entities that easily self-identity. Knowing how history twists language and narratives, Shahed is left with the option of being either killer or victim. Overestimating his ability to break the cycle of horrors isn't Shahed's failure, because the horrors have been repressed by those around him to the realm of narratives that they mobilise for their own ends. He is a combination of Miss Brodie's self-centeredness and Lise's *negative space.* Just as Lise's death cannot be neatly placed at her feet, Shahed's situation is dictated by the surrounding societal structures that rob him of individuality and only grant him the predictable end.

One apparent difference between Spark's narratives and the accompanying fiction manuscript is gender. While Spark's central characters are mostly women, Shahed's narrative is occupied mostly by men. In a way, the Sufi and sporting environments Shahed dwells in

are counterpoints to *The Prime,* where toxic female relationships feature. This decision was made because there have been numerous books by Arab writers discussing "the woman question," but there has not been much literature discussing toxic masculinity, and the hostile interactions that arise in male-dominant spaces due to patriarchal forms of governance (Elsadda 3; 158-159). Shahed's narrative brings the role of toxic masculinity to the forefront, and one thing I was wary of doing was to victimise female characters in male-dominant spaces to make a point about toxic masculinity, for it perpetuates the representation of women as victims (hooks 60).

Ignoring the mechanisms outlined in this analysis could be viewed as a privileged position, one allowed to native English speakers to whom representation within the language, understanding, and being understood when faced with particular *semantic units* is a given. This is even more pertinent to narratives that challenge traditional structures. Hopefully, this method sets out enough reasoning, and enough of an example through its reading of two exceptional texts to show that the knowledge gained from how readers experience non-causal based narratives, is as valuable as the content derived from it. While a story can be full of content – as much as one can say that between two covers, pages can be "full" – it is important to remember that content follow expression; expression is content, especially as it concerns subversive writing.

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