

Božica M. Jović¹
University of East Sarajevo
Faculty of Philosophy

CREATING AS DECEPTION: THE CONCEPT OF 'CULTURE OF ERASURE' IN MURIEL SPARK'S NOVEL *THE FINISHING SCHOOL*

Abstract: This paper will deal with the peculiar, Scottish view of the position of creative imagination in literature. A specific cultural background for this view will be presented, together with the reading of one of the latest novels by Muriel Spark, The Finishing School (2004). Concepts such as 'culture of erasure,' 'Calvinism' and its cultural heritage in the modern Scotland, as well as the role 'imagination' plays in the national spirit against the specific Scottish historical background will be investigated into. The focus of the paper will be less on Muriel Spark as an individual author, rather, the point of the paper will be how to contextualise some themes within Spark's novel within the specificity of a national culture and history.

Key words: Muriel Spark, 'culture of erasure', imagination, tradition.

Muriel Spark (1918–2006) gained her international fame through her outspoken acceptance of a postmodern revisionary approach to everything human/humanistic: from history to politics to the question of personal freedom: 'Throughout the mid- and late 1960s, Muriel Spark sought contemporaneity' (Rankin 1994: 41). However, she never lost her specific Scottish obsession with *sin*, here conceptualised as a sin of imagining an alternative reality—in other words, of being a writer. However, she did carefully, whether consciously or subconsciously, surround her Scottish state of mind with the fabric of international, postmodern themes and stylistic solutions².

¹bozica.jovic@ff.ues.rs.ba

²It is worth noting, however, that Muriel Spark did convert to Catholicism, which is an interesting point in itself.

How is it possible, if we assume it to have originated within a Christian theology, to have the concept of sin survive into the contemporary, secular rationality? Cairns Craig has built a whole argument about this issue in his epochal study *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (1999). The key words here are 'national' and 'imagination'. The manner in which these concepts are described and utilised by Craig, define in turn the possibility of them being read into any of the contemporary Scottish authors, regardless of the internationalisation of their literary themes and motifs.

The story goes far back into the history: the birth of the Scottish nation and the Reformation. John Knox, a prominent and very militant Reformation leader, inexorably installed the Calvinist variant of Christian faith in Scotland and thus helped create a new nation. In Scotland the doctrine of 'Twa Kingdoms' cemented the unification of the connection between God and his people in a very pragmatic way, by the creation of a new, Protestant Scotland in the 16th century: 'The Reformation vision of Scotland as a godly commonwealth' (Macdonald 2000: 11). However, social and spiritual welfare can only be obtained through a strict discipline: any form of intellectual enjoyment was considered idolatry, which included non-sacral music, painting, sculpture, etc.

Craig defines 'tradition' in simple terms, as something that 'continue(s) to know itself and to recognise its own identity despite the transformations of history' (Craig 2002: 11). 'Tradition' and 'identity' are complex concepts in themselves, especially so nowadays, because depending on who is doing the definition, the definition will emerge in all its variants accordingly. For example, Allan Massie, a Scottish writer, firmly claims that 'there is no continuing nation' (Craig 2002: 14), and that therefore, there can be 'no such thing as the Scottish novel' (Craig 2002: 14). He is not alone. Craig tries to overcome this obstacle by focusing on various ways tradition is being defined nowadays. The peculiar Scottish negation of its own tradition, if we accept the view of tradition as a continuity, is phrased by Craig as 'a culture of erasure', which is very much akin to the term 'Caledonian antiszygy', a term coined by a professor of English literature, G. Gregory Smith in his book *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (1919). Gerard Carruthers affirms that Smith came up with the idea as a witty comment on 'the "polar twins" of Scottish literature, realism and fantasy.' (Carruthers 2009: 12). A split in national consciousness, an absence of continuity, 'a culture of erasure' is defined by Craig as 'readings of the Scottish past which see in each historical development not the evolution of a tradition but the erasure of the Scottish past' (Craig 2002: 30). A single identity is something very much questioned in today's world. For example,

the English novelist, critic, and a short story writer, A. S. Byatt was very much in dire straits, according to her own words, when trying to compile an anthology of *English* short story: the concept of Englishness has been deconstructed so well that one feels almost ashamed to doggedly insist on its single homogeneous identity: “There is a reluctance to think about Englishness. [...] When I was asked to put together an Oxford Book of English Short Stories, I hesitated. [...] I canvassed all my friends and acquaintances for names of English writers—it was surprising how often they came up with Irish, or Scottish, or Welsh.” (Byatt 1998: xiv-xv). This old-fashioned idea of national identity as a homogeneous identity has become obsolete. Therefore any national identity must out of necessity be heterogeneous, if it wants to be taken seriously. And there happened something extraordinary regarding Scottish national identity: it has never been homogeneous in the first place. It does not need to be deconstructed; its natural state is multifaceted. ‘The idea of the nation as a single and unified totality is itself an invention required by a specific phase of the development of ... nation-states... The nation-as-unity is the reflex of the idea of the nation as founded on linguistic purity and homogeneity.’ (Craig 2002: 30). The Scottish people do not speak their language, they speak English or a variant of English with a Scottish accent called Scots. Their native tongue (Gaelic) is almost forgotten. Then we may ask, how is a ‘national’ voice to be expressed, if we reject the homogenous model of any national identity? It seems that we have to look into a purely ontological position of a ‘nation’: from its territorial position to the cultural one. Since everything ‘traditional’ has been understood predominantly as a homogeneous concept, in order to uncover the hidden Scottish cultural identity, we need to reach out to the latest, postmodern, models: hence we introduce Fredric Jameson.

The introduction of Fredric Jameson’s definition of the self is relevant because it demonstrates how any similar abstract concept—whether it be a sense of self or a national tradition—can be analogously defined. According to Jameson, postmodernism holds its subject ‘fragmented’ not ‘alienated’. The process of ‘alienation’ presupposes some sort of history, depth, memory even, and is easily identified within modernism and its artistic agenda: “[T]he great modern writers have all been defined by the invention or production of rather unique styles [...] All of these styles, however different from each other, are comparable in this: each is quite unmistakable; once one is learned, it is not likely to be confused with something else.” (Jameson 2001: 1962-1963). Parody, for example, is possible only as long as you *remember* the old masters and have something on which you can build your parody. ‘Fragmentation’, on the other hand, does not need a history,

memory or depth: “the immense fragmentation and privatisation of modern [i.e. postmodern]—its explosion into a host of distinct private styles and mannerisms—foreshadows deeper and more general tendencies in social life [...] society has itself begun to fragment” (Jameson 2001: 1963). ‘Fragmentation’ or ‘pastiche’ is possible in the world in which ‘parody has become impossible’ (Jameson 2001: 1963). It no longer needs a sense of history or memory; it exists in what Jameson calls ‘perpetual presents’ (Jameson 2001: 1974) or ‘our historical amnesia’ (Jameson 2001: 1974).

The Scottish national identity, very much like postmodern identities, perpetually deconstructs itself. It also suffers from ‘historical amnesia.’ Let us not forget Allan Massie’s exclamation of ‘there is *no continuing* nation’ [emphasis added]. This process can be understood as a kind of erasure. However ‘erasure’ in postmodernism and ‘erasure’ in the Scottish tradition are similar only on the surface. Deconstruction in postmodernism has been brought about in order to enable escape from oppressive homogeneity or singleness; Scottish ‘culture of erasure’ owes its existence to the inability to escape from the singleness in the notions of tradition and national identity. In the end, Craig concludes: “The tradition of the modern Scottish novel [...] is not an ‘expression’ of a national ‘geist’ [...] not as an essence which will exclude or include various writers as the ‘truly Scottish’, but as a dialogue between the variety of discourses which [...] constitute the space that is the imagining of Scotland” (Craig 2002: 33). How is the imagining of Scotland and Scotland’s imagination process going on? First, the notion of imagination has held a dubious value position in Scotland. Randall Stevenson, a Scottish literary critic, when commenting on the famous Scottish novel from the 1980s, *Lanark* by Alasdair Gray, concludes with: ‘The real achievement of *Lanark* is not in *seducing* [emphasis added] readers with illusion [i.e. the fictional narrative as opposed to autobiographical one in the novel], but allowing them to *escape* from it.’ [Emphasis added] (Stevenson 1994: 61). In his, now considered classic, *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987), Brian McHale firmly asserts that true postmodern fiction is about *ontology*, that is the state of being, particularly that of the reader. Opposed to this has been early novelists’ novels’ preoccupation with *epistemology*, the resolution of the story, readers’ unconditional acceptance of the characters’ life-like presentation, etc. He draws on Roman Jakobson’s antithesis of dominants, one epistemological (the state of becoming) the other ontological (the state of being). Of course, McHale is very careful to separate these terms and their definitions used in literature from their purely philosophical counterparts. This juxtaposition has brought awareness of the artificiality of imagination’s creations. The surreal or magical imagining interspersed with realism in the postmodern novel has ‘characterised postmodernism in terms of its ontological instability and

indeterminacy' (McHale 1987: 26). Moreover, a writer in the postmodern world can only exert a feeble 'demiurgic or quasi-divine function' (McHale 1987: 29). Such an approach to human creative imagination is almost identical to the Calvinistic erasure of imagination, because the Word of God, the biblical text, is the only true creation, the only true and allowed imagining in comparison with which any other imagining and any other 'text' loses its moral justification. It almost amounts to a *sin*, and this is where Muriel Spark affirms her Scottish identity.

Muriel Spark's novel *The Finishing School* (2004) is a story about a young intellectual couple, Nina and Rowland Mahler, who migrate from England to 'Europe', apparently an exotic place for proudly insular British people. The first stop is Brussels, the second Vienna, and then they move to Switzerland. There in Lausanne they open a very expensive and stationary boarding school for international students, their previous schools being: 'a mobile school which would move somewhere new every year.' (Spark 2016: 1-2). Right at the start the reader can sense the authoress' subtle sense of irresponsibility towards her creations, that is, she herself does not take them too seriously. Muriel Spark throughout her career showed a special inclination towards the absolute acceptance of the moral duality in human behaviour—the ability to manipulate others, on one hand, and innocence from such impulses, on the other. Of course she mirrored it in almost all of her leading characters: Jean Brodie of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), Alexandra of *The Abbess of Crewe* (1974), and Margaret of *Symposium* (1990), to name a few. However, it is of interest to note that her novel *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960) is surprisingly mild and gentle, that is, the characters somehow appear to *believe* in faithfulness and absence of a need for any manipulation. We might surmise that it may be due to Muriel Spark allowing herself for that one moment to show the gentle side of her creative persona or, which is more likely, the novel needs a deeper deconstructive analysis in order to fathom out this basic matrix of duality in human nature, which is understood to be universally present. At the beginning of the novel, the authoress clearly draws a line between manipulative leading characters and the innocent inferior characters (in this case, the unsuspecting parents):

Nina who spoke good French [...] was dealing with the bureaucratic side of the school and with the parents, employing a kind of impressive carelessness. She tended to crush any demands for full explanations on the part of the parents. This attitude, *strangely enough*, generally made them feel they were getting good money's worth.' [Emphasis added] (Spark 2016: 2).

Nina and Rowland's field study is in humanities and Rowland, a promising young writer, hopes to create future young writers through his lectures. Of course, his intention fails and the story disintegrates into Rowland's dark obsession with and jealousy of other people's talents and creativity. At times the story promises to verge into pure psychopathology but the authoress decides to turn it into a farcical comedy at the end of the novel. Muriel Spark even made her character write the same kind of book she is writing: a novel about a school full of international students. The writing of the fictional novel—as opposed to the actual, Spark's one, whose success story is yet to come—ends successfully with Rowland who 'moved to Istanbul where he met with many problems too complicated to narrate here. [But] His book, *The School Observed*, was published satisfactorily' (Spark 2016: 179).

The story of the novel opens with a proposed script narrated by the hero: 'You begin,' he said, 'by setting your scene.' (Spark 2016: 1). The fact that Rowland is a professor of Creative Writing at his own school and that he is giving a lecture on writing to a group of students, is of a secondary importance here. It has already been pointed out that a truly postmodern novel, unlike a modernist or Victorian novel, never emphasises the *epistemology*: the narrative flow, the logic of characters' psychology, the resolution, the explanation, the fulfillment. As a matter of fact, its epistemology only serves to highlight its *ontology*: the author's political, moral or philosophical position in life, the reader's as well. There we look for the resolution, the explanation, the fulfillment. Hence, the postmodern novelist always creates a powerful sense of *artificiality*, the forced sense of realism of the interior logic within the narrative flow. The fictional, i.e. forced, artificial fact is that Muriel Spark is 'setting' a scene for her novel about a possible novel by a fictional novelist. The narrative point of the opening scene has a twofold purpose: the first one is epistemological as has been already mentioned, because we might as well dispense with the novel form altogether if we are to forgo the first level. This level serves the purpose of starting a story that will have an ending, however artificially constructed. The other, the ontological one, points at the authoress herself and the fact of *her writing*: 'It was early July, but not summery. The sky bulged, pregnant with water. The lake had been invisible under the mist of some day.' (Spark 2016: 3). So runs the narrative. However, the *birthing* process for both Muriel Spark and her fictional character has been stressed in the very beginning: the unfortunate Rowland is racking his brains trying to get hold of a suitable description of a day, but not just any day. As a matter of fact, both Rowland and his creator need to find a suitable description for a specific day:

“You begin,” he said, “by setting your scene. You have to *see* your scene, either in reality or in imagination. For instance, from here you can see across the lake. But on a day like this you can’t see across the lake, it’s too misty. You can’t see the other side.” Rowland took off his reading glasses to stare at his creative writing class whose parents’ money was being thus spent [...] “So,” he said, “you must just write, when you set your scene, ‘the other side of the lake was hidden in mist.’ Or if you want to exercise imagination, on a day like today, you can write, ‘The other side of the lake was just visible.’ But as you are setting the scene, don’t make any emphasis as yet. It’s too soon, for instance, for you to write, ‘The other side of the lake was hidden in the fucking mist.’ That will come later. You are setting your scene. You don’t want to make a point as yet.” (Spark 2016: 1-2)

The author is mirroring *herself* through her character. The procedure itself is nothing new, but the obvious artificiality of her character’s thought processes is. This is a good illustration of the importance of the ontological aspect of the postmodern writing. The ontological aspect, unlike the epistemological one, is of primary importance, according to McHale. It is the *only* criteria which can firmly posit a literary text within postmodernism. Stylistic features can be, and often are, inherited from previous eras. Muriel Spark’s antihero is trying to grasp his own ontological position in the known universe, but ends up simply mirroring what he intends to truthfully represent. The problem is that mirroring itself always posits a false image. And that is where Muriel Spark’s Scottish background shows: although on the surface both the postmodernist distrust of a straightforward reliable narrative and the Calvinist obsession with the apparent sinfulness of human imagining powers, look alike, the roots of the two phenomena are profoundly different: the one is rooted in modern relativism, the other in theology :

The strain of Rowland’s efforts to cope with his novel was felt more by Nina than by Rowland himself. He confidently talked of ‘authors’ birth-pangs’, ‘writers’ block’, ‘professional distractions’ (reading the school essays); he was full of such phrases, so much that Nina in her accesses of sympathy would even invent them for him. ‘How can you give a creative writing course,’ she said, ‘while trying to write creatively yourself? No wonder you feel put off, Rowland.’ ‘Yes, it’s almost impossible,’ he said, ‘to describe a process you are actually involved in.’ (Spark 2016: 49)

This postmodern procedure here applied by Muriel Spark, which can be done almost mechanically nowadays, and therefore can be without any inherent originality, testifies to both Spark’s contemporaneity and her traditionalism. What is original is

the whole untold story of the authoress' own cultural and national background that eventually contextualises her postmodern narrative technique within something deeply alien to both the postmodern world and contemporaneity in general. That alien something is what is, often pejoratively, termed as 'traditional'. This 'tradition' had nestled itself firmly within the Calvinist dogma and the simultaneous creation of the modern Scottish national identity. The two are inseparable, regardless of an individual's religiosity.

Muriel Spark's purpose of storytelling in this particular novel is not to offer us a satisfying and mildly interesting story about a struggling British couple in the realm of education, but to bring to light the hidden, theological concepts of sin. Whether this theological rendering is still relevant is irrelevant; it is there and it makes its presence unapologetically. Therefore, the main character must be shown to possess a diabolical twin, which will explain the main character's *inherent* sinfulness. On the surface, we as human beings are striving for good, but our inner, unredeemed nature, is fundamentally drawn to evil. How else to contextualise Rowland's miserable moral downfall and the real threat of danger and darkness present in the narrative. Rowland's 'other half' is a young student Chris. This is how he is introduced into the narrative: 'Chris [...] and his two friends were watched from the window' (Spark 2016: 4). At the very beginning, we have a hint of something dark and unsettling that will prove to be real further on. For Chris ends up almost murdering Rowland by the end, and that is not arbitrary, that is to say, this murderous impulse on the part of Chris does not come about as a result of the authoress' wish to give us a deep psychological portrait of an adolescent's creative crisis, but to enlighten her readers as to what is truly going on in Rowland's mind. Hence Chris is also a writer, also as someone who proposes a 'script'. The obvious schematic artificiality of both Rowland and Chris's 'psychology' testifies to Spark's preoccupation with theological implications of human ontological position: 'According to the catechism of the Roman Catholic faith [...] six sins [...] are specified. The fourth is "Envy of Another's Spiritual Good", and that was the sin from which Rowland suffered.' (Spark 2016: 93). The obviously incongruous detail here is the theological explanation of a mental disturbance as a *sin*, but Spark manages to pull it off, to be understood seriously. The act of writing is evil in itself. Thus the concept of 'culture of erasure' finds itself embedded into the narrative as its ultimate end and meaning. The 'evilness' of our imagination and its power to create 'alternative realities' or 'mirroring realities', exposes itself in the fact that Rowland almost succumbs to a nervous breakdown due to his creative crisis, and also from the fact that Chris, also a writer, is at times pure evil, a murderer-to-be. The relationship between Rowland and Chris is crucial

for the novel: they are like brothers, like Abel and Cain, striving for excellence, each in his own way, but the devil stands in their way, so to speak. The devil is jealousy.

What is jealousy? Jealousy is to say, what you have got is mine, it is mine, it is mine? Not quite. It is to say, I hate you because you have got what I have not got and desire. I want to be me, myself, but in your position, with your opportunities, your fascination, your looks, your abilities, your spiritual good. Chris, like any of us, would have been astonished if he had known that Rowland, through jealousy, had thought with some tormented satisfaction of Chris dying in his sleep. (Spark 2016: 64-65)

Rowland is jealous of Chris's 'secret', a text for the novel Chris is writing. This fact alone shows us that creative imagination is never harmless. It is not just that Rowland happens to be experiencing a *permanent* creative crisis—an example of Spark's pure spitefulness at her leading character's expense, a very entertaining detail in itself—being highly ridiculous if one takes the novel to be a story about a talented, struggling novelist, but the point is to draw the reader's attention to the very nature of *writing*, any imaginative writing. The manuscript is kept hidden in Chris's stuff, and there are a lot of comic passages in which Rowland is rummaging through his students' belongings in order to uncover the hidden text. In the meantime, he is being transformed into a monster. Stumbling by pure chance upon the precious manuscript, he becomes aware of the fact:

Leaving aside the story, of which Rowland was at present unaware, he had scrutinized the first fifteen pages of Chris's book at the same time as he experienced a choking sensation. No, no, this could not be, this is good, very expert. It can't be Chris's work—the logic doesn't hold that he could set such a scene. Something will have to go wrong. Root it out, stop it. And 'Oh, my God,' thought Rowland, 'what am I thinking?' (Spark 2016: 13-14)

Not surprisingly, Chris's 'novel' is about the infamous Scottish queen, Queen Mary of Scots, whose propriety and sexual behaviour were very closely scrutinised by the Calvinist reformer, John Knox. The history must out of necessity become fiction, and there we find a problem. The fact that Chris allows himself only the type of fiction closest to factual truths, speaks for *his* Scottish background, that is, his fear of removing himself too far from 'reality' even in imagination. Actually, it speaks for the authoress' Scottish background. How is reality, facts, history to be transformed into fiction? Should we ever do that? Both the postmodernism and Scottish literary tradition question the possibility of ever successfully completing the task, but again, from different points of view. The postmodernism's view is that

the 'reality' is so intricately complex that one should abandon the idea altogether and be satisfied with a fragmented piece that mirrors 'reality'. The Scottish tradition forbids any mirroring of 'reality' from the theological reasons: human beings should not waste their precious time in imagining alternative realities but should focus on finding redemption and salvation in the given Reality. Therefore, it questions the *moral justification* of transforming 'reality' into fiction. Spark's two miserable writers-to-be discuss this important question:

'Do you find,' said Rowland to Chris, 'that at a certain point your characters are taking over and living a life of their own?' 'I don't know what you mean,' Chris said. [...] 'Your characters don't live their own lives?' 'No, they live the lives I give them.' 'They don't take over? With me, the characters take over.' 'I'm in full control,' Chris said. [...] Rowland could have stabbed the boy for his modesty and calm. He walked away. He left Chris alone for two days, speaking to him only briefly at meal times. But Rowland was off his food, he wasn't well. (Spark 2016: 54-56)

This is a common question with Muriel Spark. In her other novels, like *Symposium* and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, she is exploring the possibilities of her characters' search for freedom. Of course, the illusion of freedom lasts only temporarily, and the author ends up punishing her characters' foolish wish for escape. This procedure has a theological significance, especially so if we consider one of the founding dogma of Calvinism, which is *predestination*. Predestination means the inability to escape from one's own predestined fate. Not only is the escape impossible, but the very wish to change one's future fate is, theologically speaking, a sin and therefore punishable. Not surprisingly, both Rowland and Chris, the characters who are trying to alternate reality by writing fiction, are gradually morally deteriorating. Rowland is slowly losing his mind, whereas Chris actually tries to commit murder:

Suddenly the bathroom door opened. Rowland looked round for Nina but found Chris in his pyjamas, standing in the doorway. 'What are you doing here?' Rowland said. 'You've been in touch with my publisher, Grace Formby. I've been thinking it over. You're going to use me as a rung in your ladder,' Chris said. 'Don't be absurd. Get out of here.' 'And write a book about living with adolescents and teenagers, the only thing you know.' 'Get out of my bathroom,' Rowland said. He sat up and reached for his long-handled bath-brush, and started scrubbing his back. [...] 'You have exploited me,' said Chris. (Spark 2016: 175-176)

Luckily for her characters, Muriel Spark, decides for them not to end in a tragedy—unlike *Symposium* and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, in which the punishment is the actual madness—but opts for a farcical ending in which all the previous animosity is resolved, just like in any good classical comedy, in a marriage: ‘Chris proceeded to establish himself as a readable novelist and meanwhile joined Rowland at College Sunrise as soon as he was of age. After a year they engaged themselves in a Same-sex Affirmation Ceremony, attended by friends and Chris’s family.’ (Spark 2016: 179).

Muriel Spark’s artistic procedure has been in all probability subconsciously inspired by the original fear of human imagination, or, better still, the ability of human imagination to imagine alternate realities, felt by both Calvinists and John Knox’s followers. How is it possible for such concepts to survive across ages? They are subtly inherited and incorporated into the contemporary works of art. In the same way in which postmodern authors have inherited and incorporated earlier modernists: ‘They [i.e. postmodernists] no longer “quote” such ‘texts’ [earlier works of art or even kitsch, depending on who is the particular artist] as a Joyce might have done, or a Mahler; they incorporate them, to the point where the line between high art and commercial forms seems increasingly difficult to draw.’ (Jameson 2001: 1961). It does not make a difference whether the postmodern artists are so much fascinated by the so-called pop culture—‘commercial forms’—that they subtly build them into their works of art, or whether they unwittingly allude to a grim-faced form of Christian theology known as Calvinism, as is the case with Muriel Spark—a form of theology deeply disliked nowadays, we might add—the artistic procedure is the same and the end result is the same. In order to fully understand any postmodern author, we must jolt ourselves out of our ‘historical amnesia’; reconnect contemporary culture to its roots or ‘traditions’, and then repeat the same procedure with the authors whose productions we are enjoying. Or better still, we should follow this procedure every time we engage in what is fondly termed as ‘art consumption’.

References

1. Byatt, A. S. (ed.) (1998), Introduction, *The Oxford Book of English Short Stories*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
2. Carruthers, Gerald (2009), *Scottish Literature*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
3. Craig, Cairns (1999), *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

4. Jameson, Fredric (2001), Postmodernism and Consumer Society, In: Vincent B. Leitch et al. (eds.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, New York/London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1960–1974.
5. Macdonald, Lesley O. (2000), *A Unique and Glorious Mission: Women and Presbyterianism in Scotland, 1830-1930*, Edinburgh: John Donald.
6. McHale, Brian (1987), *Postmodernist Fiction*, New York/London: Methuen.
7. Rankin, Ian (1994), The Deliberate Cunning of Muriel Spark, In: Gavin Wallace et al. (eds.), *The Scottish Novel since the Seventies*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 41–53.
8. Spark, Muriel (2016), *The Finishing School*, Edinburgh: Canongate Books, Kindle Edition.
9. Stevenson, Randall (1991), Alasdair Gray and the Postmodern, In: Robert Crawford et al (eds.), *The Arts of Alasdair Gray*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 48–61.

Božica M. Jović

Univerzitet u Istočnom Sarajevu

Filozofski fakultet

VARLJIVOST STVARALAČKE MAŠTE U ROMANU MJURIEL SPARK DODATNO ŠKOLOVANJE

Rezime

Ovaj rad predstavlja pokušaj da se posljednji objavljeni roman velike škotske spisateljice Mjuriel Spark (1918–2006), *The Finishing School* (2004), sagleda kroz prizmu postmodernističkog pristupa nacionalnom identitetu, pitanju uloge umjetnosti u savremenom svijetu, kao i relevantnosti humanističkog sagledavanja pozicije čovjeka u postindustrijskom, potrošačkom društvu. Nacionalni identitet sagledava se kroz kulturološku analizu određenog evropskog prostora, kao i kroz istorijsku uslovljenost takve određene kulture. Naročita pažnja poklanja se vremenu škotske reformacije, kao ključnog istorijskog događaja koji je uslovio moderni škotski identitet.

Postmodernistički pristup je uveliko koncipiran po principima marksističke kritike u anglofonom svijetu. Kao ključni autor navodi se Fredrik Džejmsom. Međutim, savremena kontroverza u pogledu relevantnosti takve kritike, kao i u pogledu tumačenja pojma „postmodernističko” ogleda se u današnjim filozofskim raspravama, na koje rad skromno upućuje.

Metodom detaljnog iščitavanja teksta, roman *The Finishing School* analizira se kao produkt jednog postmodernog, internacionalnog stvaraoca koji je svojim cjelokupnim opusom istraživao dubinu, odnosno izopačenost svijesti savremenog čovjeka naspram tradicija kao što su humanizam, teološka pi-

Božica M. Jović

tanja ili univerzalno moralno učenje. Međutim, ovaj rad pokušava da dokaže mogućnost spisateljičinog *nesvjesnog* uklapanja u dati kulturološki obrazac, nastao još u renesansi. Koliko je u tome uspio, ostaje da se vidi.

► **Ključne riječi:** Mjuriel Spark, „kultura brisanja”, imaginacija, tradicija.

Preuzeto: 13. 4. 2021.

Korekcije: 21. 5. 2021. / 27. 7. 2021.

Prihvaćeno: 6. 8. 2021.