Muriel Spark's *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* and *The Driver's Seat*, and Their Potential Effects on the Reader's Ethos

University of Tampere
Department of English
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Heli Metsä

Tampereen yliopisto
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Tutkin pro gradu – tutkielmassani Muriel Sparkin kahta romaania, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960) ja *The Driver's Seat* (1970). Muriel Sparkia on yleensä tutkittu katolisena ja moralistina. Kriitikot ovat myös keskittyneet romaanien uskonnollisiin piirteisiin ja tekijälähtöiseen tarkastelutapaan. Tässä tutkimuksessa otan kuitenkin lukijan paremmin huomioon ja jätän uskonnon vähemmälle huomiolle vaikka tutkinkin moraalia ja etiikkaa. Tutkimukseni aiheena on näiden kirjojen lukemisesta aiheutuvat mahdolliset eettiset seuraukset lukijan eetokselle tai minuudelle. Henkilöhahmojen arvot ja asenteet voivat vaikuttaa lukijan minuuteen, kun lukija samastuu ja alkaa imitoida henkilöhahmoja. Tarkoituksena on tutkia kirjojen päähenkilöitä ja selvittää heidän moraalinsa. Koska kirjoissa korostuvat seksuaaliset suhteet ja väkivalta, ja koska moraali liittyy vahvasti ihmisten välisiin suhteisiin, tutkin näitä kahta aspektia. Samalla tutkin onko lukijan mahdollista samastua heihin ja mitä mahdollisia vaikutuksia tällä voi olla lukijan eetokselle. Henkilöhahmojen lisäksi tutkin miten kertojan ja implisiittisen kertojan asenteet ja suhteet hahmoihin vaikuttavat tulkintoihin.

Teoreettisena lähtökohtana käytän eettistä kritiikkiä ja narratologiaa. Eettinen kritiikki painottaa sitä, että lukemisella on mahdollisia vaikutuksia lukijan eetokselle ja sitä, että tekstit tarjoavat tiettyjä tapoja ajatella ja tuntea. Yksi keskeisistä eettisen kritiikin kriitikoista on Wayne C. Booth ja hyödynnän hänen ajatuksiaan ja käsityksiään eettisestä kritiikistä vaikka en olekaan kaikesta täysin samaa mieltä. Boothin eettisen kritiikin mukaan lukijalla on moraalinen velvollisuus lukea niin kuin kirjailija tarkoitti kirjan luettavaksi. Mielestäni lukijalla on enemmän osuutta merkityksen luomiseen ja kirjan moraali sijaitsee sekä tekstissä että lukijassa. Narratologia puolestaan tarjoaa käsitteitä ja ideoita, jotka ovat hyödyllisiä tutkimuksessa: eri tasojen tekijät ja lukijat (esim. implisiittinen tekijä, kertoja) ja niiden väliset suhteet.

Spark maalaa hyvin synkän kuvan yksilöistä ja yhteiskunnasta. Henkilöhahmojen moraalit ovat kyseenalaisia, eivätkä he kykene näkemään itseään tai toisia; he ovat hajanaisia, eikä heistä saa kunnon kokonaiskuvaa. Tämän takia lukijan on miltei mahdotonta samastua henkilöhahmoihin. Tästä huolimatta lukija joutuu kohtaamaan henkilöhahmojen ja kertojan arvot, jotka heijastavat itsekkäiden ja välinpitämättömien ihmisten ajatus- ja tunnemaailmaa. Implisiittinen kertoja pysyy melko kaukaisena eikä kommentoi paljon romaanin tapahtumia. Hänen arvonsa ja asenteensa kuitenkin poikkeavat suuresti kertojan ja henkilöhahmojen arvoista; hän välittää henkilöhahmoista vaikka kommentoikin tapahtumia epäsuorasti vain muutaman kerran. Joka tapauksessa Sparkin romaanit ovat hyviä lukijan eetokselle, sillä hän pystyy niiden avulla parantamaan moraalista ymmärrystään ja kehittämään eettisiä kykyjään. Koska Sparkin romaanit ovat niin minimalistisia ja niiden pääaiheena on moraali ja ihmisten väliset suhteet, lukija joutuu keskittymään erittäin tarkasti tutkiessaan niiden moraalisia ulottuvuuksia.

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1. Introduction

Most of the critics seem to concentrate on Spark as a Catholic, convert and moralist; they emphasize the importance of religion in her writing. Hynes, for instance, thinks that it is not possible to read Spark "without some elementary attention to Catholicism's role in her writing".[1] Massie argues that Spark's Jewish-Scottish background makes her a moralist; the message is "that of an Old Testament prophet or Calvinist preacher"[2] Critics have spent most of their energy on analysing the novels as manifestations of Spark's religious ideas or her picture of the world; they have examined the worlds she has created and the characters who inhabit those worlds – the purpose seems to have been to evaluate them as regards her vision of the real world and the world hereafter.

In addition to the importance of religion, critics have discerned other characteristics that recur in Spark's novels. There seems to be some sort of consensus among the critics about the most essential features that best describe her novels: her interest in the nature of reality, fiction and truth; the humour, irony, satire and parody in her novels and the economy and minimalist style of writing.

Although many critics emphasize the importance of religion in Spark's writing, they are not entirely unanimous on this issue. According to Pearlman, religion may form the philosophical base of her vision but her contribution to literature lies in her characters and patterns that she repeats throughout her work. He argues that there are pervasive patterns in her fiction: for instance, the use of names with suggestive or symbolic content and the repetitive use of certain objects.[3] Those critics who regard Spark's religion as the carrying force of her fiction explain all the features in her work

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[1] Joseph Hynes, *The Art of the Real: Muriel Spark's Novels* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1988) 36.
[2] Allan Massie, *Muriel Spark* (Edinburgh: Ramsay Head Press, 1979) 20.
[3] Mickey Pearlman, *Re-inventing Reality: Patterns and Characters in the Novels of Muriel Spark* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1988) 5-7.

with the help of her vision[4]. According to Whittaker, there are specific reasons why Spark uses certain kinds of plots, structure, style and even why she uses comedy[5]. She argues, for example, that Spark's attitude to the concept of time affects the structure of her work: Spark can use tenses unconventionally because she thinks that chronological time is not "an adequate metaphor for conveying her awareness of the world *sub specie aeternitatis*". Spark often reveals the ending at the beginning, thus redirecting the reader's interest to speculations of "how?" and "why?".[6]

Spark also appears to be extremely interested in the nature of reality, fiction and truth. This interest shows in the characters she has created in her novels: there are people who intentionally twist or distort the truth or impose their own plots on others or are in some way involved in fiction making – blackmailers (*Memento Mori*[7], *Not to Disturb*[8]), compulsive liars (*The Ballad of Peckham Rye*[9]), writers (*Loitering with Intent*[10], *Memento Mori*, *The Comforters*[11], *A Far Cry from Kensington*[12]) and directors of film (*Reality and Dreams*[13]).

Humour, satire, irony and parody also seem to characterize much of Spark's work.[14] In my opinion, Spark's novels are amusing, witty and sometimes even hilarious, but they include serious themes, such as death and religion, and contain disturbing elements, such as murders committed in cold blood. This may be the cause

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[4] See Peter Kemp, *Muriel Spark* (London: Elek, 1974) 14-5, Alan Bold, *Muriel Spark* (London: Methuen, 1986) 13, 23-24, Norman Page, *Muriel Spark* (Basinstoke: Macmillan, 1990) 29, Dorothea Walker, *Muriel Spark* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988) Preface, and Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, *Vocation and Identity in the Fiction of Muriel Spark* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990) 137-8.
[5] See Ruth Whittaker, *The Faith and Fiction of Muriel Spark* (London: Macmillan, 1982) on plots (91, 93-8); on economy (127-9); on style (133-4, 137-8, 142, 144-5); on comedy (145-8).
[6] Whittaker 130-1.
[7] Muriel Spark, *Memento Mori* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959).
[8] Muriel Spark, *Not to Disturb* (London: Macmillan, 1971).
[9] Muriel Spark, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963).
[10] Muriel Spark, *Loitering with Intent* ([Falmouth:] Granada, 1981).
[11] Muriel Spark, *The Comforters* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964).
[12] Muriel Spark, *A Far Cry from Kensington* (London: Constable, 1988).
[13] Muriel Spark, *Reality and Dreams* (London: Constable, 1996).
[14] See Bold 27, 30; Page 89, 90; Francis Russel Hart, "Ridiculous Demons," *Muriel Spark: An Odd Capacity for Vision*, ed. Alan Bold (London: Vision, 1984) 39, 41; Jennifer L. Randisi, "Muriel Spark and Satire," *Muriel Spark: An Odd Capacity for Vision*, ed. Alan Bold (London: Vision, 1984) 132-3, 138-9; Kemp 9, 13; and Hynes 104.

of some confusion among the critics. They have differing views on Spark's third novel, *Memento Mori*: Page says the novel is "very funny… witty and ironic, stylish and elegant… never sombre".[15] Bold, on the other hand, describes the novel with such words as, "sombre theme", "macabre melodrama", "pessimistic exposition"[16].

Humour and irony are connected to the issue of detachment. Spark has been accused of callousness; she seems cold and unsympathetic. Massie says that Spark's wit is sharp, her humour is not very warm: it appeals to the mind and imagination not to the heart. Wit disturbs complacency: "Like the lizard it will turn on its own tail and bite". In Spark's novels "those who are set up, or set themselves up, as the people who understand the action are shown as themselves deceived". But "the weakness of wit is its distrust of emotion". Spark's limitation is her shrinking from human love:

> "[T]he paradox her art lives with… is that, for her characters, it is often easier to love God than Man". "Confronted by the implications of this paradox… wit is the recourse. The world itself may be God's joke; but we must take it as it presents itself".[17]

Thus Massie connects Spark's humour with her religion, as Whittaker.

Considering the different characteristics, it seems that it is very difficult to categorize Spark. Whittaker says that although Spark is a Roman Catholic, "her novels are not deeply polemical, and her Catholicism never emerges as propaganda for the faith". Whittaker also argues that there is a strange ethical and realistic bias in her novels. She has succeeded in remaining independent of pressures of realism and post-modernism, which is – according to Whittaker – quite remarkable. Whittaker says that for Catholic writers mimesis is almost immoral since they are concerned with the inimitable; realism is only used as "a foil against which the authorial revelation of the divine action will shine more brightly". Spark's novels reflect the suppositions of the

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[15] Page 21.
[16] Bold 49, 50, 53.
[17] Massie 91-4.

French new novel (nouveau roman): the use of reflexiveness and present tense, neutral description with a great deal of details, etc. However, she does not use the technique mimetically but didactically: "she subverts the original function of the techniques designed in part to convey stasis and quiddity, by using them dynamically, towards an end". Reflexiveness reminds the reader that reality lies in the realm of God, who is the omniscient author.[18] Spark's religion seems to make her a special writer. Page also thinks that Spark stands out clearly from other authors: Spark "deliberately disappoints, many readers' expectations of what a 'serious' or 'important' novel should offer": there is brevity, comedy, parody, "the lack of interest in psychological complexity, in motivation, in character development". Page says one should not judge her by criteria that derive from the traditional novel since she is "a writer who has from the start made clear her own tough-minded independence of… most of what constitutes the English tradition of fiction".[19] Leonard's views on Spark's significance, not unlike Whittaker's, are connected with her religion: Spark offers "us a new model of human community and church by calling us to overcome the divisions among us of black and white, rich and poor, prejudiced and liberated, domineering and submissive, old and young, divided and whole, believing and searching" by liberating us from the shackles of traditional fiction and use of language. The result is a community rooted here and now, but directed to the future.[20]

I do not want to undermine the massive amount of work that critics have done on Spark's literary work. I merely want to shift emphasis from the author-centred criticism to a criticism that takes the reader more fully into account. It is a matter of focusing on the ethos of the reader and how it is affected by the experience of reading Spark's

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[18] Whittaker 1-2, 4-5, 8-9, 11.
[19] Page 119.
[20] Joan Leonard, *Violence and Community in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor and Muriel Spark* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1988) 202.

novels (in this case, two specific novels – *The Driver's Seat* and *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*[21]). In my opinion, not enough attention has been paid to the role of the reader and too much attention, or at least enough, has been paid to studying Spark's background, i.e. her religion, and how it affects her writing. I want to challenge Edgecombe's views. He says that

> Spark's "novels draw strength from the suppletive force of the dogma that underpins them", and this strength is humanist since it "guarantees the worth and dignity of the characters in the narratives". "Whether the reader assents to the informing Catholicism is not the point; what matters is the intensity and conviction of the author's recourse to that body of doctrine". "Human beings… would provide an unedifying spectacle were it not for the fact that a compassionate, 'providential' attitude is governing the process". "The rapid, disengaged treatment of complex issues would invite charges of superficiality, were that treatment not steadied by the weight and solidity of the doctrine it coasts over and guides itself by[22]…the transcendent vision humanizes the dangerously inhuman pace of the narrative in *Memento Mori*".[23]

Edgecombe suggests that the humanist touch in Spark's novels is largely in Spark's novels and in her background (her Catholicism). I am arguing that the reader takes the humanist perspective but it does not depend as much on Spark as on the reader's own position as a moral and ethical human being. The word "humane" can be defined as something "[m]arked by sympathy with and consideration for the needs and distresses of others; feeling or showing compassion and tenderness towards human beings".[24] The adjective "moral" is used of a "character or disposition, considered as good or bad, virtuous or vicious; of…the distinction between right and wrong, or good and evil, in relation to actions, volitions, or character of responsible beings"[25]; "morals" refer to "[m]oral science; moral doctrine"[26] and "ethics" to the "moral principles by which a

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[21] These two novels will be referred to as *BPR* and *DS*, respectively.
[22] Edgecombe is here referring to *The Mandelbaum Gate*, first published in 1965, and the novels written before it.
[23] Edgecombe 141, 146-7.
[24] "Humane," Def. 1b., *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989 ed.
[25] "Moral," Def. 1a., *The Oxford Englich Dictionary*, 1989 ed.
[26] "Morals," Def. 8a., *The Oxford Englich Dictionary*, 1989 ed.

person is guided"[27]. Thus it is clear that morals and ethics are concerned with the way in which people see and treat each other.

The humanist perspective and the reader's position are closely connected with ethical criticism, which forms the foundation of the theoretical approach in this thesis. Ethical criticism is interested in the ethos of the reader. The word "ethos" can be explained with the help of the word "ethical". According to Booth, "ethical" covers all qualities in the ethos of the reader, whether judged good or bad; ethos refers to a person or to a self.[28] Ethical criticism has three aims: readerly understanding of potential literary effects, readerly understanding of moral criteria and critical recommendations.[29] I aim at discovering how Spark's novels invite the readers into specific ways of feeling and thinking; finding out what kind of ethical values the reader affirms; and offering a reading of BPR and DS by evaluating the ethical presuppositions and the potential ethical influence the novels may have on the reader. The reader's ethos may be influenced by the texts she reads; the values of the novel may affect the reader's ethos. Morals do not merely refer to moral judgments (What is right? What is wrong?), they are tied with the process of forming selves or identities.

Despite the critics' interest in studying Spark as a moralist, my view differs from theirs. The emphasis will not be on the author and on examining the religious views of Spark; instead, I will focus on the reader and I will not treat morality in connection with religion. Kemp argues that Spark's novels may also appeal to non-believers because it is the opposite of their view of life – "art here satisfying temporarily that human appetite for shape and neatness that a religion can permanently satisfy". He says that the form of her novels is deeply satisfying and that she is invariably entertaining. Kemp

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[27] "Ethics," Def. 3b., *The Oxford Englich Dictionary*, 1989 ed.
[28] Wayne C. Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley (Calif.): University of California Press, cop. 1988) 8.
[29] Marshall Gregory, "Ethical Criticism: What It Is and Why It Matters." *Style* (Summer98, Vol. 32 Issue 2). 26 Nov 2003 <http://search.epnet.com/direct.asp?an=3237098&db=afh> 8.

points out that Spark's novels are no easy comfort, though – there is "the disturbing tenor of their content". They are not "lifeless, bleakly didactic", "homiletic"; they are "elegant disturbers".[30] I only partially agree with Kemp: Spark's books are certainly "elegant disturbers", but they do not appeal to non-believers only because of their form; it is also the content that appeals to them – no reader can experience a novel only on an aesthetic level, the content plays an important role in the experience as well. We are all moral beings and everyone, religious and non-religious people, considers issues of morality and morals; one does not have to be a member a religious group or a religious person to appreciate moral issues in novels. In fact, all novels contain moral elements and I am arguing that morality does not only lie in the text but also in the reader.

I argue that religion does not play that big a part in Spark's fiction as some critics maintain. Of course, there are religious elements in her work but I am arguing that issues of religion and faith form only one part[31] of the bigger picture that Spark offers for the reader: the dangers of not seeing oneself and others and "the disintegration of the self"[32]. It can be said that religion is not the main topic, or even a topic, in some of her novels. In my opinion, even the non-believer can see the humanist concern in Spark's novels and without "the transcendent vision"; the novels make sense even without the religious perspective. Some of the novels contain very little religious elements but, in my opinion, there is no less morality in them. Edgecombe comments on those novels, especially those written after *The Mandelbaum Gate*:

> "The listlessness of such works as *The Public Image* and its congeners can…be traced to the fatally detached account of a valueless society….If writers plan to satirizes futility, they need sturdier moral equipment than graceful cynicism. Satire requires passion if it is to sustain its corrective

[30] Kemp 16.
[31] Interestingly, the Catholics in Spark's novels are not very often 'good' Catholics. They often have a distorted view of religion or they practice religion for their own benefit. For instance, there are scheming nuns in *The Abbess of Crewe* (London: Macmillan, 1974).
[32] See Pearlman 21.

> power…the erasure of the Catholic dimension, hitherto the guarantor of high seriousness, gives to some the flavor of blasphemous parody"[33]

Edgecombe argues that the absence of Catholicism, for instance, in DS results in a loss of moral and aesthetic stature.[34] Kane's views differ from those of Edgecombe. He says that Spark creates "clear, sharp images of a moral wasteland, where the ethical statement is expressed more by what is missing than by what is present"[35]. Since morality is in the reader too, one can study these novels as well.

Morality is not necessarily connected with religion and nor is the reader's position necessarily associated with religion. Leonard sees Spark's novels as parables, "where religious meaning is expressed only in terms of everyday human experience" and which "startle us with suddenness of the sacred in the midst of the ordinary". Leonard specifically focuses on the issues of violence and community. She argues that Spark uses "violence to comment on the state of the modern human community". The violence in her work "jars the reader from a complacent view of him/herself in relation to the world and shows precisely how the destructive force reveals the horror and alienation in the modern person".[36] The violence in Spark's novels is of 'intermediary' or religious kind. Leonard argues that the "fundamental tension between violence and community in Spark's fiction provides both the light that illumines an ideal vision of humanity and the darkness against which it reacts".[37] My contention is that Spark's novels may affect the reader, even "jar" her, but maybe not in the religious sense. I think Pearlman's ideas about "the disintegration of the self" seem more apt here. He uses William Barrett's words when he says that her Spark's work "bears… the pressures of its period… modern mass society, simply by its size and impersonality,

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[33] Edgecombe 148-9.
[34] Edgecombe 152.
[35] Richard Charles Kane, *Demonic Didactism: The Moral Impulse in the Bizarre Literature of Iris Murdoch, Muriel Spark, and John Fowles* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1988) 4.
[36] Leonard 113, 6, 4.
[37] Leonard 175-6.

tends to absorb and obliterate the individual". The message is: people fail you. Pearlman continues: "Human relationships are undependable, society is distracted, uninvolved and elusive, time is fragmented and self diminishes. Identity evades us".[38] I agree with Pearlman, the disintegration of the self is much more important a theme than religion.

The two novels, whose ethical effects I will study, BPR and DS, were written in 1960 and in 1970, respectively. Muriel Spark started her career as a novelist in 1957 by writing *The Comforters*. She is still alive today and writing books. In over forty years she has written about twenty novels. Some critics have discerned different periods in Spark's life and divided her work into different phases. The earliest years – from *The Comforters* to *The Girls of Slender Means* (from 1957 to 1963) – form the first phase of her career as a novelist. The next novel, *The Mandelbaum Gate*, represents a break. With this book she experimented with a longer form[39]. The next five novels – *The Public Image, The Driver's Seat, Not to Disturb, The Hothouse by the East River* and *The Abbess of Crewe* (from 1968 to 1974) – are quite similar, thematically and stylistically. According to Massie, there is a very minimalist style, "description reduced to the minimum necessary for an immediate atmospheric purpose, often however achieving the extraordinary detailed clarity of dream-images"; these novellas are callous, heartless and desperate; natural order is disturbed; there is a loss of an intimate sense of place – they are essentially immaterial; absolute certainties are stripped away and normality turned topsy-turvy.[40] Page describes the first and second group of novels: the early novellas lovingly recreated a past observed with humour, the later ones are set in a contemporary and cosmopolitan world "that is as hard and shiny, and apparently as

[38] Pearlman 21.
[39] All of Spark's other novels are quite short.
[40] Massie 73, 76-7, 92.

unfeeling, as plastic"[41]. One of the reasons I chose BPR and DS is that one belongs to the first group of novels and the other to the second. In spite of the few years between these two novels they are similar in some ways and very different in other. As Page writes, a Spark novel "contrives to be simultaneously unmistakable and unpredictable: each bears the imprint of her idiosyncratic manner and resembles nothing but the other novels of the same author, and yet one can never be quite sure what she will do next"[42]. It will be interesting to study whether the reader's ethos may be affected in a different way depending on whether one is reading DS or BPR.

In BPR, Dougal Douglas, a Scotsman, comes to Peckham to bring vision into the lives of the workers. He is hired by two firms – Meadows, Meade & Grindley and Drover Willis, and he aims at studying the morals of the people, their "the spiritual well-being" (p. 17). Dougal investigates the history and people of Peckham and discovers their false moralities. At the same time, bad things start to happen: absenteeism, blackmail, violence and murder. Dougal leaves Peckham after the worst has happened: Mr Druce, the head of Meadows, Meade & Grindley, murders his mistress, Merle Coverdale. After Dougal's departure, the people continue living their lives as they had done before.

DS is also a story about violence. Its main character, Lise sets off on a holiday trip in order to find a man. However, she is not looking for any ordinary boyfriend but a man who will kill her according to her plan. At the holiday resort she desperately seeks her "type" who will end her life. DS is a grim tale of a young woman encountering different people with one single purpose in her mind. Eventually, she will find her man and will be murdered.

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[41] Page 63.
[42] Page 99.

Another reason for choosing these two novels is that BPR contains more religious elements and DS hardly any. As far as demons and the Devil are considered part of religion, BPR contains religious elements. Its main character, Dougal Douglas, is described as having diabolical features. One of the conversations between Merle and Dougal shows this:

> Merle: "You're driving Mr Druce up the wall." Dougal: "I have powers of exorcism." Merle: "I thought you said you were a devil yourself." Dougal: "The two states are not incompatible" (p. 102).

Although Dougal may seem like a mischievous character who brings "tears and absenteeism, fraud and blackmail, violence, and murder"[43] to Peckham, he is not all bad. He may even be seen as a good character who tries to change the lives of the people by making them see their false morals and double standards. He has a morally instructive role, as Malkoff says "[w]hat Dougal offers is freedom from the confines of artificial moralities; he preaches the respect for oneself that must precede respect for others"[44]. He is an angel-devil. Notwithstanding Dougal's angelic and demonic qualities, which make him a controversial and ambiguous character, and despite the supernatural elements[45], religion is not the main topic in these two novels – morality, however, is.

The morality in these novels centres on two things – violence and sex. I will focus on the morality of the characters's behaviour, as far as sexual and violent aspects are concerned. These two novels are filled with examples of how people ignore each other, how they do not see the others as real human beings. Morality is also connected with language. The characters in BPR talk about morals and comment on each others' moral

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[43] This quotation is taken from the back cover of the Penguin edition of *BPR*.
[44] In Kane 84 (Karl Malkoff, *Muriel Spark* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968) 24).
[45] Bold argues that "a macabre element… derives form Scotland, where the supernatural persists from the ballads, through Burns, Scott, Hogg and Stevenson, to Spark herself…the ballads helped to shape Spark's prose with its time shifts, its combination of the natural and supernatural, its atmosphere of enchantment". He also thinks that BPR is a prose ballad, an atmospheric work, showing an urban landscape under supernatural pressure. (Bold 26, 58)

behaviour; the main character, Dougal, studies their morals and their use of words that include words, such as "ignorant" and "immoral". In DS, the characters do not talk about morals. It is my aim to study how this difference affects the potential effects in the reader's ethos.

In addition to ethical criticism, I will also use narratology as a theoretical approach. Narratology deals with many different things: narration (voice), focalization[46] (mood) and narrative situation; action, story analysis and tellability; tense, time and narrative modes; setting and fictional space; characters and characterization; and discourses (representations of speech, thought and consciousness). Here, I am especially interested in the narrator since it is important to examine what kind of narrator there is in PBR and DS. I am also interested in the different audiences and the values associated with these audiences.

With the help of ethical criticism and narratology, I will analyse the morals and ethics of the characters (i.e. the values of the fictional worlds) as regards sex and violence. The reader's responses and interpretation are influenced by how things are presented to the reader; in other words, the narrator and the implied author influence the ethical impact of the novel. Thus I will discuss the narrator and the implied in relation to the characters and the reader. Combining the different elements – the characters, the narrator, the implied author and their attitudes – I will attempt to discover whether the reader can identify with the characters or not, and how the identification or the lack of it affects the potential ethical effects on the reader.

The second chapter of the thesis is the theoretical section, which sheds more light on ethical criticism and narratology. Chapters 3., 4. and 5. form the analysis section:

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[46] Focalization refers to point of view from which the story is narrated. The technique of presenting something from the point of view of a story-internal character is called internal focalization (Manfred Jahn, "Narratology: A Guide to the Theory of Narrative," Part III of *Poems, Plays, and Prose: A Guide to the Theory of Literary Genres,* vers. 1.7. 28 July 2003, English Department, University of Cologne, 15 Jan 2004 <http://www.uni-koeln.de/~ame02/pppn.htm> N1.18). The narrator presents an external focalization of the world of the story (Jahn N3.2.1).

Chapter 3. deals with the morals and ethics of the characters; Chapter 4. deals with the narrator and the implied author; and Chapter 5. focuses on the reader, and examines the possibility of identification with the main characters, Dougal and Lise, and the potential effects on the reader's ethos.

2. Theoretical Approaches

This chapter is divided into two parts: 2.1 deals with ethical criticism and Wayne C. Booth, who is one of the leading figures in ethical criticism; 2.2 deals with narratology.

2.1 Ethical Criticism

This chapter focuses on ethical criticism. First, I will define it in more depth. It can be seen either as something everyone does or as a distinct theoretical approach. Then I will discuss Wayne C. Booth's ideas on ethical criticism. After that, I will introduce some arguments for and against ethical criticism.

One can see ethical criticism as something everyone does since we are all moral beings, who practice ethical criticism all the time, including while reading literary works. According to Gregory, "since all cultures and individuals employ moral categories as guides for directing and evaluating life with others, the very capacity for making and enforcing moral categories…lies close to the center of whatever it means to be human in the first place". We do not only live with these standards in real life but we also bring them into play when we read fictions; we employ our standards in all of our social relations, including those we conduct with fictional characters.[47] We cannot read without thinking about moral issues.

One can also see ethical criticism as a distinct theoretical approach. Gregory argues that ethical criticism does not have a very firm theoretical grounding and it needs it. He says that it is often conducted in a "helter-skelter, contradictory, and intellectually incoherent way".[48] Booth is along the same lines as Gregory. He says that ethical criticism is practised everywhere "often surreptitiously, often guiltily, and often badly because we have so little serious talk about why it is important, what purposes it

[47] Gregory 3.
[48] Gregory 1.

serves, and how it might be done well"[49]. Gregory argues that ethical criticism should not replace other critical approaches but complement them.[50]

As far as the recent history of ethical criticism is concerned, John Gardner's *On Moral Fiction*, which was published in 1978, was "an important precursor to the revival of contemporary interest in ethical criticism". He argued that moral criticism was absolutely necessary "for the health of English studies".[51] Since then many theorists have paid much attention on this important issue. Wayne C. Booth is one of the key-figures in the field of ethical criticism. He has had an "enormous influence on the way we talk about narrative" and his books, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, first published in 1961, and *The Company We Keep*, published in 1988, have contributed to this[52]. Nussbaum also praises *Company*: it is "a compelling case for the coherence and importance of ethical criticism"[53]. According to Handwerk, as far as its concerns and the frankness of its aims are concerned, the book is "a text of fundamental importance, surely the most coherent and comprehensive overview we have of how ethical criticism appears in the current field of literary theory"[54]. Perkins, too, thinks highly of Booth although he has his reservations. He thinks that *Company* does not offer new information or a new method of criticism, and it is long-winded. However, it does have two considerable merits: it introduces the concept of "coduction", a type of criticism, that most of us engage in already, making us more conscious of our own mental operations; it also reminds us that our experiences in reading have ethical dimensions and that we cannot

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[49] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 19.
[50] Gregory 1.
[51] Todd F. Davis and Kenneth Womack, "Introduction: Reading Literature and the Ethics of Criticism," *Style* (Summer98, Vol. 32 Issue 2, p 184), 26 Nov 2003 <http://search.epnet.com/direct.asp?an=3237097&db=afh> 2.
[52] "Wayne C. Booth," *Critical Theory* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998, 1999) 24 Feb 2004 <http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/litlinks/critical/booth.htm>.
[53] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) 231.
[54] Gary J. Handwerk, "The Company We Keep," *Modern Language Quarterly* (Jun89, Vol. 50 Issue 2), 16 Jan 2004 <http://search.epnet.com/direct.asp?an=9308982&db=afh>
200-1.

evaluate a book without making ethical judgments. Perkins's final judgment is that Booth "heartens us to make more direct and overt our ethical discourse as critics" and "[t]he ethical effect of his company is an increase in critical self-awareness and honesty".[55]

I will next deal with the main concepts and ideas Booth introduces in *Company*. He talks about books as friends, universal syllogisms, "coduction", the relativity of ethical offerings, authorial intention and morality. First, I will deal with the friendship metaphor. The key to Booth's ethical criticism lies in the title of his book, *The Company We Keep*: the company we keep does matter and we should be careful when we choose our friends. I use the word "friend" here because Booth argues that stories can be seen as friendship offerings. All narratives offer with their titles and opening sentences a cry of invitation. Many seem to offer simply one or another kind of pleasure, others appear to offer something the implied author considers useful: "aggressive practical advice, moral instruction, visions of a higher reality, distressing or even shattering warnings, a chance to live together for a while with a new friend".[56] Booth argues that we practice an ethical criticism regardless of our theories: we choose our friends and their gifts, and thus who we will be, for the duration. Booth also says we judge ourselves as we judge the offer.[57]

Nussbaum regards Booth's friendship metaphor "marvellously rich and illuminating". However, she feels that some of its aspects remain incompletely explored. There is an unresolved tension between the two ways of characterizing these friendships:

> The main line of Booth's argument speaks of the literary relation as a friendship, and refers to Aristotle for elucidation. But in Aristotle's

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[55] David Perkins, "The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction by Wayne C. Booth," *ADE Bulletin*, Number 94, Winter 1989, 24 Feb 200 <http://www.mla.org/ade/bulletin/N094/094049.htm>.
[56] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 174-5.
[57] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 177-8.

> account…each [friend] retains independence and critical autonomy. Booth, however, also describes the reader's relation to a literary work in a different way, invoking the language of erotic seduction. He talks frequently of 'succumbing,' of 'that primary act of assent that occurs when we surrender to a story'[58]…the fact that we surrender trustingly to the forms of desire in the text…is crucial to his case for saying that ethical assessment is urgently required.[59]

Nussbaum points out that novels are in many cases both friendly and erotic. They ask the reader to join in a public moral world and sometimes "lure her away from that world into a more shadowy passionate world, asking her to assent, to succumb". Booth's book does not seduce its readers. Booth plausibly suggests that we respond to literature in the most fully human and social way only if we succumb and ask ourselves why we succumb and what relation our experience has to the experience of others. According to Nussbaum, there can be no interchange of the kind we associate with love and friendship when we read. This does not undercut Booth's metaphor as he uses it, but it prompts several ethical reflections that do not come up until one states the obvious. Firstly, books are not enough for good human living – one needs real people as well. Secondly, the lack of realness in a book can be a good thing: one cannot feel certain "bad" feelings of real life (e.g. jealousy) but one can feel sympathy and love. Thus books can be a school for the moral sentiments, "distancing us from blinding personal passions and cultivating those that are more conducive to community".[60]

Nussbaum also points out that one can treat books as one would never treat real people – one person may hire a prostitute and another read a Dick Francis novel. There must be an enormous moral difference between these two people, and Booth's insistence on the friendship metaphor fails to bring this out. The reader does not do any harm to anyone.[61]

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[58] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 32, 140.
[59] Nussbaum 237.
[60] Nussbaum 238-40.
[61] Nussbaum 240.

Altieri argues that the figure of friendship is not an adequate principle for either the qualities that distinguish readers' individual valuations or for the frameworks that give such choices public significance. This theory does not account for the full range of values explored by literary texts or for the often contradictory values emerging within this range. Altieri argues that because we want to be challenged and we want "the fascination of engaging what refuses to contour itself to the models of dialogue allowed by a virtue-based model of friendship", we would rather have some of the texts we value prove interesting enemies rather than all be admirable friends.[62]

If books can be seen as friendship offerings, what does the reader really do when she encounters a text? According to Booth, there are three possibilities: one can surrender uncritically to whatever one finds appealing, or one can preserve a distance that will protect one from changes in one's ethos, or one can surrender as fully as possible on every occasion, but then deliberately supplement, correct or define one's experience with the most powerful ethical criticism manageable. With the last one, there are two directions one can take: one can deliberately supplement or correct this narrative with that narrative or one can talk together about the ethical strengths and weaknesses of our experience.[63] Booth argues that serious ethical disasters occur when people sink themselves into an unrelieved hot bath of one kind of narrative. The dilemma is that to understand a book well enough to repudiate it, you must have made it a part of you.[64]

In addition to the friendship metaphor, Booth's discusses universal syllogisms. He thinks that too many critics have assumed that their task is to damn what is evil or to expose other critics as incompetent or immoral for failing to do so. The temptation is

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[62] Charles Altieri, "Lyrical Ethics and Literary Experience," *Style* (Summer98, Vol. 32 Issue 2, p 272), 26 Nov 2003 <http://search.epnet.com/direct.asp?an=3237102&db=afh> 5.
[63] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 280-1.
[64] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 282-5.

understandable. Ethical critics seem especially open to the temptation of over-generalization: "The step from intense, ineluctable, personal experience to the proclamation of *the* truth about art is all too easy".[65] Booth introduces the logic:

> 1. Any work that does (or says, or is) X is bad (or, less frequently, good).
> 2. This novel by Mailer does (or says, or is) X.
> 3. Therefore we know, without having to look closely at the full structures of this novel by Mailer, and without considering the different experiences that different readers might make of it, that it is morally harmful.

Plato has often been read as establishing this tradition:

> 1. Any work that teaches disrespect for the gods is bad.
> 2. Homer teaches disrespect for the gods.
> 3. Therefore, Homer should not be allowed into the ideal state.[66]

According to Booth, the search for universal standards is misguided because its major premise assumes a universal form and because it implies our judgments are arrived at through deduction.[67] It is also misguided because it assumes that we always read a text in the same way. Booth says that this kind of search piles up narratives into a single pyramid – it will damn a large share of the world's most valuable art. Booth says there are many good kinds.[68] The logic does not work anymore:

> 1. *One* good (or bad) thing a narrative can do is X.
> 2. Such-and-such an aspect of this narrative does X, while other aspects may be thought bad (or good), in varying degrees.
> 3. Therefore…???[69]

Blanket defences of general kinds, and blanket attacks on other general kinds are likely to obscure particular virtues and particular vices in individual works, and thus give ethical criticism a bad name.[70]

Universal syllogisms do not help but Booth's concept "coduction" does. Booth suggests that we arrive at our sense of value in narratives by experiencing them in an

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[65] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 49, 51.
[66] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 54.
[67] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 56.
[68] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 56.
[69] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 59.
[70] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 60.

immeasurably rich context of others that are both like and unlike them. The logic we depend on as we arrive at our particular appraisals is the result of a direct sense that something now before us has yielded an experience that we find comparatively desirable/admirable/lovable/repugnant/contemptible/hateful. The judgment requires a community.[71] Booth defines coduction: "'Of the works of this general kind that I have experienced, *comparing my experience with other more or less qualified observers*, this one seems to me among the better (or weaker) ones, or the best (or worst). Here are my reasons.'" Coduction can never be 'demonstrative', apodeictic. The notion of coduction collapses the distinction between how we arrive at a value judgment (inquiry and discovery) and how we defend it (explanation and proof) – revaluation, revision may take few minutes or years.[72] We do not first come to know our judgment and then offer our proofs; we change our knowledge as we encounter, in the responses of other readers to our claims, further evidence:

> Regardless of how we may choose to defend our judgments as though they resulted from deduction or induction, or to relate them to universals we hold dear, they reward our attention only when they spring from coduction: a thoroughgoing particular engagement with *this* narrative, considered…as an ever-growing awareness of what is humanly possible in some one kind of endeavor.[73]

Booth argues that coduction can be rational. Descriptions of narratives "cannot be effectively separated from appraisal; if descriptions, interpretations, and interpretive theories can be rational, evaluation can be also"[74]. Perkins maintains that here Booth assumes what he ought to prove. Another of Booth's arguments is that when readers form diverse ethical judgments of the same text, they may be responding to different "powers" in the narrative. That judgments vary does not necessarily mean that they are

[71] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 70-2.
[72] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 72-4.
[73] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 76.
[74] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 82-3.

subjective. Coduction is not irrational because we give arguments for our appraisals, nor is it solipsistic because we engage with others.[75]

Nussbaum considers Booth's account of coduction attractive although she feels that more could have been done to give the model of practical reason a detailed philosophical grounding.[76] Handwerk also criticizes coduction. He asks: "what counts as an 'adequate' basis for coductive comparisons?" He points out that with Booth we watch a mind that excels in its cultural breadth and capacious generosity. However, the excellence of the critic cannot guarantee the excellence of the method, and it is unclear whether ethical criticism's coductive method rests on implicit, normative human standards.[77]

Bawer thinks that Booth is right in saying that critical truth (if there is such a thing) is arrived at communally and in the long term, and that the only way to produce useful and reliable literary criticism is to encourage coduction within the community of ethical critics, but that we learn from some critics and dismiss others is hardly news. What is Booth then saying? He hardly intends that there would be some official list of 'in' and 'out' critics. Bawer suggests Booth is only defending the idea of criticism as a communal endeavour.[78] He also argues that Booth's "tireless" use of the conceit of the author as the reader's friend is explained by his emphasis on community. Booth says that "[w]henever a narrative really works for us, we are sure to feel…that the author… is our kind of person, practicing 'virtues' …we admire". Bawer points out that this is not so: you often admire books by people you dislike and vice versa.[79]

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[75] David Perkins, "The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction by Wayne C. Booth," *ADE Bulletin*, Number 94, Winter 1989, 24 Feb 2004 <http://www.mla.org/ade/bulletin/N094/094049.htm>.
[76] Nussbaum 241.
[77] Handwerk 203.
[78] Booth's ideas seem too simple to some critics: Handwerk says his tasks are resolutely basic ones: "to remind us that certain basic questions matter in doing literary criticism, that they are worth trying to get formulated adequately from the start, and that we often fail to do so" (201).
[79] Bruce Bawer, "Ethical Culture," *American Scholar* (Autumn89, Vol. 58 Issue 4): 610-15, 16 Jan 2004 <http://search.epnet.com/direct.asp?an=8910230075&db=afh> 614.

Besides coduction, another important aspect of Booth's ethical criticism is relativity. He stresses the relativity of the ethical offerings of literary texts. Offerings are relative to the ethos of the person to whom it is offered. He argues that no narrative will be good/bad for all readers in all circumstances but this need not hinder us in our effort to discover what is good/bad for us in our condition here and now. Booth speaks for a critical pluralism with limits.[80] What kind of limits are there, then? Bawer interprets Booth and says that such a pluralism should not "embrace all meanings as equally valid and so, finally, meaningless"; he argues that those who write ethical criticism should be embraced and those who do not should be rejected.[81]

Perkins discusses critical pluralism, too: he argues that Booth faces the dilemma of the liberal – he approves of ethical discussion and consciousness-raising but disapproves of ethical conviction when it becomes militant and intolerant. Booth is also reluctant to apply the same reasoning to critics and readers that he does to books. He does not admit that critical pluralism has its costs. The pluralist's "carnival of values" weakens commitment and conviction. Perkins suggests that the most insightful and powerful criticism may come not from comparison and coduction but from love and hate. He does not reject critical pluralism and coduction; he thinks that, in describing them, Booth brings to consciousness, makes explicit, and defends the attitudes and critical methods of most readers today. But although pluralism is necessary, it may still be "a pis aller". Perkins points out that "[t]hat Booth preaches it with so much enthusiasm indicates, paradoxically, a certain closure of his own perspective".[82]

Booth's ethical criticism has its merits but it also has its shortcomings. The issue of authorial intention and the role of the author as the source of meaning is an important matter that needs to be discussed in depth. Booth's criticism centres on the implied

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[80] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 489.
[81] Bawer 611.
[82] Perkins.

author's ethos. He says that the offerings of the implied authors have to be judged with reference to the ultimate ethos of the would-be giver.[83] According to Booth, we ask "Is this pattern of life that this would-be friend offers one that friends might well pursue together?"[84] He says that when we practice ethical criticism, we judge the author's craft, i.e. the implied author's ethos itself. In discovering that we know something about the quality of a text, we already discover something about the ethos of the author: he or she shows the integrity of a devoted craftsman.[85]

The ethos of the implied author and its evaluation are connected with morality. As Rabinowitz points out, Booth suggests that there is "a moral imperative to read as the author intended". Rabinowitz disagrees, but at the same time he argues that authorial reading is more than just another among a large set of equally valid and equally important ways of approaching a text.[86] The moral element ties in with the reader's responsibilities. Booth argues that the reader has responsibilities to the work of art, i.e. to the implied author[87]. Booth asks: "If I am to give myself generously, must I not also accept the responsibility to enter into serious dialogue with the author about how his values join or conflict with mine?"[88] The reader also has responsibilities to her own soul as flesh-and-blood reader: the reader serves herself best if she both honours the implied author's offering – in its full 'otherness' from her – and takes an active critical stand against what seem to her its errors or excesses – an ethics that entails surrender and refusal.[89] The reader's responsibilities do not end here: there are those to other individual readers and those to society. According to the former, the reader owes the

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[83] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 221.
[84] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 222.
[85] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 107-8.
[86] Peter J. Rabinowitz, *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1987). 29-30.
[87] Booth thinks that the work of art and the implied author are virtually the same thing since it is the implied author who mainly creates the meaning of the work.
[88] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 135.
[89] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 136-7.

effort to practice ethical inquiry about the works she likes/dislikes. According to the latter, there should be a "plea for engagement with the political questions that naturally spring from any serious thinking about the ethical powers of fictions".[90]

Phelan feels indebted to Booth since his approach derives from Booth's emphasis of "narrative as a distinctive and powerful means for an author to communicate knowledge, feelings, values, and beliefs to an audience" – viewing narrative as rhetoric.[91] However, his approach is different from that of Booth: Booth emphasizes the author as constructor of the text "whose choices about the elements of narrative largely control the responses of the audience". Booth's work moves in the direction of defending the author and the importance of authorial intention for determining the meaning of a text. Phelan, on the other hand, does not see authorial intention as fully recoverable and controlling response even though he insists that when we read rhetorically, we "encounter something other than ourselves".[92]

I do not totally agree with Booth. I do not think there is a moral imperative to read as the author intended. As Phelan argues, authorial intention is not fully recoverable. In my opinion, Booth's insistence on the importance of ethical criticism is valid but I do not see that the author is the main source of the meaning of a text. Although Booth's ethical criticism has its shortcomings, I do not agree with some of the objections to it. These objections partly depend on how the critic sees the approach, what his or her definition is: there are different ways of practising ethical criticism. One of the arguments against ethical criticism is the threat of censorship. Ethical criticism, at least not the one I am referring to, is not censorship. Ethical critics may offer warnings or recommendations concerning particular novels, but they should not be confused with

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[90] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 136-7.
[91] James Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric: Technique, Audiences, Ethics, Ideology* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1996) 18.
[92] Phelan 19.

dogmatists. The latter practice censorship; ethical critics, as Gregory puts it, do not suppose "censorship will even or ever work, much less…make people virtuous". He says that the ethical critic who warns his or her 'friends' of a danger that the friends maybe have not thought about, or "who makes arguments about the possible negative effects of yielding to certain invitations of feeling, thinking, and judging is not performing a censor's function".[93] Ethical critics do just this: they try to make the reader understand that texts may have potential effects the reader's ethos; they try to discover what kind of ethical values the reader affirms and they study particular texts in order to give critical recommendations about which things the reader should pay attention to when reading.

The threat of censorship is not the only objection and, in fact, in recent times ethical criticism has fallen on hard times. Booth has studied its history and come to the conclusion that the contrast between theoretical ostracism and popular practice is surprising. Until the late nineteenth century, almost everyone took for granted that a major task of any critic is to appraise the ethical value of works of art.[94] Why did ethical criticism fall on such hard times then? According to Booth, many things have contributed to this. One is the rise of theories that elevated abstract form to the top of every aesthetic pyramid. Once works of art are seen as the imposition of form on content, theorists will conclude that the true or only value of art is found in its form, abstracted from the content, and ethical criticism of that content will be inferior in interest, quality, validity and relevance. Ethical criticism is banned from the beginning, except as it presupposed the value (never called 'ethical') of experiencing a form purged of content.[95]

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[93] Gregory 12-3.
[94] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 25.
[95] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 36-7.

The notion of cognitive triviality is also connected with the acceptance of ethical criticism. Those who oppose ethical criticism, point out that the moral theses associated with works of art are usually truisms: "Artworks, more often than not, presuppose articles of common knowledge or philosophy, recycling them, perhaps imaginatively, but hardly discovering them…if many of the moral 'discoveries' cited in literature not only are known, but need to be known for readers…to recognize them, then the idea that we learn from art appears altogether without substance".[96] Carroll points out that this argument objects general claims about the cognitive value of art – not just that it affords moral education. He says that, in addition to 'knowledge that' (propositions), there is 'knowledge how' and 'knowledge of what it would be like'. Art excels in providing 'knowledge of what such and such is or would be' and this is the kind of knowledge that the best ethical critics should look for. This kind of knowledge is relevant to deliberating about how one should act and to making judgments about others. This approach can be called the 'acquaintance approach'. However, there is a problem with this approach: "the ethical critic who adopts the acquaintance approach appears to presuppose that the kind of situations and characters about whose haecceity we learn from art and literature are sufficiently like those we might encounter in everyday life to be morally relevant to practical and moral reasoning and judgment".[97]

Another response to cognitive triviality argument is the 'subversion approach': ethically commendable works of art present readers with depictions or descriptions that subvert our settled moral views. This approach can be combined with the acquaintance approach. But this approach has its shortcomings: it is limited in scope since most artworks are not morally radical.[98]

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[96] Noël Carroll, "Art and Ethical Criticism: An Overview of Recent Directions of Research," *Ethics* 110 (January 2000): 350-387, 26 Nov 2003 <http://search.epnet.com/direct.asp?an=2893289&db=afh> 354.
[97] Carroll 361-4.
[98] Carroll 364-6.

The third response to cognitive triviality is the 'cultivation approach': education may include the honing of ethically relevant skills and powers and also the exercise and refinement of moral understanding. Carroll argues that "[w]here artworks cultivate our moral emotions by exercising and/or expanding them, the ethical critic can commend them"; in the opposite case, the critic can castigate them. This approach can be combined with the acquaintance approach too: "On the cultivation view, the ethical critic can regard artworks as object lessons in moral reflection in general; they need not take artworks to be lessons for dealing with specific kinds of situations". Especially fiction can contribute to the enlargement of our capacity for moral understanding. In addition to abstract maxims, we have abstract moral concepts. Art can provide concrete examples and thus advance our understanding of how to apply them to particular cases; it can teach us how to apply maxims and concepts to concrete cases, "engaging and exercising our emotions and imagination, our powers of perceptual discrimination, moral understanding, and reflection, in ways that sustain and potentially enlarge our capacity for moral judgment".[99]

Ethical criticism might also be opposed because it is thought to be subjective. Booth says that there is an awareness of how variable our judgments really are. We disagree about the canon, even within a given culture; our culture disagrees with all the other cultures; individual readers do not agree with themselves from one decade to the next. In theory, once one decides that values are created only by valuers and have no objective status, the fact that valuers vary so markedly seems to confirm the original doctrine.[100] Booth argues that variability of judgment is the very mark of rationality – it does not indicate mere non-rationality or subjectivity. If irrational forces were

[99] Carroll 366-9.
[100] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 34-6.

determining our readings, we would have total agreement. Booth also argues that judgment varies far less in substance than on the surface of critical statements.[101]

Perkins, however, is not satisfied with Booth's arguments: Booth quickly routs the notion that ethical criticism is "utterly" and "totally" subjective, but this does not help much since no intelligent person is likely to hold the position he tramples down. Perkins points out that a degree of subjectivism cannot be denied. The question is, then, whether ethical criticism should be considered "knowledge" or opinion.[102] Some might argue that one cannot obtain knowledge about values, only about facts. If the fact/value split is taken seriously, all judgments of value are by definition "merely personal opinion" or at best conventions of a given community. Booth says that in literary theory the split has always produced uncomfortable compromises: it has banned too much of what the critic knows should be said.[103]

From the fact/value split seemed to follow a dogma about what it means to prove a case: true reason proceeds by means of critical doubt. Thought proceeds by critically probing the world's convictions to discover which of them cannot be doubted. This kind of thinking has had and has devastating consequences for criticism of the arts: the step that provides the data with which criticism of narrative deals can only be that primary act of assent that occurs when we surrender to a story and follow it through to its conclusion. We discover the powers of any narrative only in an act of surrender; to begin with doubt is simply to destroy the datum.[104]

In my opinion, ethical criticism can be regarded as knowledge since texts may have more or less tangible effects on the reader's ethos. Surely the responses and

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[101] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 97-9.
[102] Perkins.
[103] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 28-9.
[104] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 32.

interpretations vary among the different readers but this should not hinder us from practicing ethical criticism.

2.2 Narratology

In this chapter I will deal with the narrator and what kind of narrators there can be. I will also introduce different audiences involved in reading: actual audience, authorial audience, narrative audience and ideal narrative audience. The issue of authorial audience and its relation to actual and narrative audience will also be dealt with. I will also discuss authorial intention in more depth.

Narratology examines the ways in which narrative[105] structures our perception of both cultural artefacts and the world around us. The study of narrative is very important since "our ordering of time and space in narrative forms constitutes one of the primary ways we construct meaning in general". Hayden White has said that it is 'a meta-code, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted'.[106] As a discipline, it began to take shape in 1966, when the French journal *Communications* brought out a special issue entitled "The structural analysis of narrative". In 1969, Tzvetan Todorov coined the word 'narratology', which is:

> The theory of the structures of narrative. To investigate a structure, or to present a 'structural description', the narratologist dissects the narrative phenomena into their component parts and then attempts to determine functions and relationships.[107]

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[105] According to Jahn, 'narrative' has "a story based on an action caused and experienced by characters, and a narrator who tells it" (N1.2.)
[106] Dino Felluga, "General Introduction to Narratology," *Introduction to Narratology*, 15 Jan 2004 <http://www.sla.purdue.edu/academic/engl/theory/narratology/modules/introduction.html>.
[107] Jahn N2.1.1.

Practically all theories of narrative distinguish between what is narrated (story) and how it is narrated (discourse).[108] Narratological investigation usually pursues one of two orientations: discourse narratology or story narratology.[109]

The word 'narration' refers to the way in which a story is told and thus belongs to the level of discourse.[110] There can be different kinds of narrators. In addition to first-person narration, there is third-person limited narration (third-person limited omniscience). In this case the narration focuses a third person narration through the eyes of a single character. In third-person narration "the voice of the telling appears to be akin to that of the author him- or herself". There is also third-person omniscient narration, in which "the teller of the tale, who often appears to speak with the voice of the author himself, assumes an omniscient (all-knowing) perspective on the story being told: diving into private thoughts, narrating secret or hidden events, jumping between spaces and times."[111]

Narratives can be described with the help of four concepts: homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrative, and overtness and covertness. Genette (1972) proposed the first two terms: homodiegetic and heterodiegetic. In a homodiegetic narrative, the story is told by a narrator who is present as a character in the story; it is roughly first-person narrative. In heterodiegetic narrative, the story is told by a narrator who is *not* present in the story (third-person narrative).[112] The words overtness and covertness (Chatman 1978) refer to the narrative voice and whether the narrator is more or less covert or overt, i.e. will she fade into the background and hide.[113] Heterodiegetic narrators typically assume the power of omniscience. Jahn calls this type of heterodiegetic-overt

[108] Jahn N2.1.2.
[109] Jahn N2.1.3.
[110] Felluga
[111] Felluga
[112] Jahn N1.10.
[113] Jahn N1.9.

narration an "authorial narrative situation" (or authorial narration).[114] There can also be heterodiegetic-covert narration, in which the narrator is covert and the 'spotlight' is on one of the characters in the story.[115]

In narratology, the basic voice question is "Who speaks?" ("Who narrates this?"). In Jahn's account, voice is also understood as a characteristic vocal quality projected through a text.[116] A narrator is the voice of the narrative discourse: she establishes the contact with the 'narratee', decides what is to be told and how it is to be told, and what is to be left out.[117] There can be overt or covert narrators.[118] And voices can be either textual/intratextual or extratextual. The former are those of the narrator and the characters, the latter belong to the author.[119]

In addition to the narrator, the implied author and the characters, there are three types of audiences. Rabinowitz talks about the actual audience, the authorial audience (hypothetical audience for which the author designs her work), the narrative audience (imaginary audience for which the narrator is writing)[120]. The difference between authorial and narrative audience is that the latter is implicitly addressed by the narrator, and it takes on the beliefs and values that the narrator ascribes to it; the former takes on the beliefs and knowledge that the author assumes it has.[121] Rabinowitz says that authorial and narrative audiences are fictions in radically different senses: the former is hypothetical rather than fictional, and authors try to approximate the actual audience as closely as possible; the author acknowledges the fact that the narrative audience is different from the actual and authorial audience and expects her audience to acknowledge that too. This difference makes fiction fiction and makes the double-

[114] Jahn N1.15.
[115] Jahn N1.17.
[116] Jahn N3.1.
[117] Jahn N3.1.1.
[118] Jahn N3.1.4.
[119] Jahn N3.1.7.
[120] Rabinowitz 20-1, 95.
[121] Phelan 93.

leveled aesthetic experience possible.[122] As far as values of the audiences are concerned, the authorial audience evaluates the narrator's values; the actual audience evaluates the author's.[123]

Narrative audience is different from 'narratee'[124], which is the person to whom the narrator is addressing herself. The narratee is "perceived by the reader as 'out there', a separate person who often serves as a mediator between narrator and reader"; the narrative audience is "a role which the text forces the reader to take on".[125]

Phelan points out that Rabinowitz has a fourth type of audience: 'the ideal narrative audience', an audience which the narrator wishes she was writing for.[126] The term has dropped out of use but the concept is still used; Rabinowitz's third and fourth audiences have conflated into the single category of narrative audience. Phelan, however, thinks that they should be separated again. The default position of narrative audience is not zero degree[127] but closer to actual audience.[128] We have a dual perspective inside the fiction:

> we step into and out of the enunciatee position, while we remain in the observer position and discover what the narrator assumes about our knowledge and beliefs in the enunciatee role. Furthermore, moving into the enunciatee role means that we move into the ideal narrative audience – the narrator tells us what we believe, think, feel, do – while in the observer role we evaluate our position in the ideal narrative audience.[129]

Phelan proposes that narratee stands, and Rabinowitz's definition of narrative audience is modified to refer to "the actual audience's projection of itself into the observer role within fiction", and Rabinowitz's definition of the ideal narrative audience stands.[130]

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[122] Rabinowitz 98-9.
[123] Phelan 100.
[124] 'Narratee' is originally Prince's term.
[125] Rabinowitz 95.
[126] Phelan 140.
[127] "Zero degree" narratee refers to the enunciatee with minimal positive traits: "knowing the narrator's language, being able to infer presuppositions and consequences as they are reflected in that language, having an excellent memory" (Phelan 139).
[128] Phelan 142.
[129] Phelan 144.
[130] Phelan 145.

According to Phelan, "one of the variables in narrative discourse will be how much the narratee and the narrative audience overlap… the more fully the narratee is characterized, the greater the distance between narratee and narrative audience; similarly, the less the narratee is characterized, the greater the coincidence between the two"[131].

How is authorial audience connected with authorial intention? Each actual reader is different from the next (class, gender, race, personality, training, culture, historical situation). An author does not know the audience, but she cannot write without assuming the readers' beliefs, knowledge, and familiarity with conventions. These assumptions culminate in the authorial audience.[132] Rabinowitz, treats authorial intention as a matter of social convention rather than of individual psychology: "treat the reader's attempt to read as the author intended, not as a search for the author's private psyche, but rather as the joining of a particular social/interpretive community; that is, the acceptance of the author's invitation to read in particular socially constituted way that is shared by the author and his or her expected readers".[133] Authors do not have total control over the act of writing, nor do the readers have total control over the act of interpretation: "once authors and readers accept the communal nature of writing and reading, they give up some of that freedom".[134]

There are difficulties with authorial reading and authorial intention. In my opinion, the reader may try to read as the author intended but this has nothing to do with the actual author's intentions; as Rabinowitz points out, it is not about individual psychology. As far as Spark is concerned, the critics have a great deal of information concerning her life, her religious views, and so on. However, I am interested in the

[131] Phelan 146.
[132] Rabinowitz 20-1.
[133] Rabinowitz 22.
[134] Rabinowitz 23-4.

average reader, who does not have much extra-literary information about the writer or inclination to get that information. She will have her assumptions and ideas about the implied author but they are based on the text at hand; in other words, the reader will make assumptions about the implied author as she considers the characters and the narrator the relationships between them. The reader who practises ethical criticism will regard Spark, the implied author, as a moral person who cares about her characters.

Rabinowitz, too, acknowledges that there are difficulties with authorial reading. Most people read as if trying to extract the author's meaning, but how much the reading actually incorporates the ideology of the actual reader and how much it merely represents the reader's attempt to join the authorial audience – we cannot be sure.[135] He also adds that texts are often ambiguous: readers from different interpretive communities may well find different things in it; actual readers may find meanings in a text that subvert the meaning apparently intended by the author; authors often attempt to communicate ambiguity itself. Even within a given interpretive community, interpretation depends heavily on the reader's starting point.[136]

[135] Rabinowitz 194.
[136] Rabinowitz 36-7.

3. Morals and Ethics of the Characters

This chapter focuses on the characters and their morals and ethics. It is divided into three parts: the first one examines the sexual relations of the characters in the novels, the second violence and the third further studies how the ways in which the characters communicate with each other contribute to the issue of self and other – how language is used to show moral and ethical qualities in the characters.

Before I ponder the morals of the characters, I have to say a few words about how one comes to know these morals. As far as 'real' people are concerned, there are three moral components: cognitive (the ways in which we think about moral issues), emotional (the feelings associated with moral thoughts and behaviour) and behavioural (the ways in which we behave).[137] The moral and ethical views of human beings are a sum of many things and they cannot simply be reduced to behaviour. In other words, observing behaviour is not sufficient; it cannot account for the entire moral landscape of human beings. Of course, one's feelings and thoughts about moral issues are reflected in one's behaviour but there are other things that affect our behaviour[138], and, as Eysenck points out, there is often a difference between two components.[139]

One can ponder whether these things apply to fictional characters. In real life, no person can see inside another person's mind. However, in literature the narrator can provide information on the feelings and thoughts of the characters. The author can use an omniscient narrator who can see the private thoughts and feelings of the characters. She can also use limited omniscience, in which case the narration focuses a third person narration through the eyes of a single character. In DS and BPR, there is no omniscient narrator. In fact, sometimes the narrator in DS is unable to see the main character's

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[137] Shaffer (1993) in Michael Eysenck, *Simply Psychology* (Hove: Psychology Press, 1996) 171.
[138] Personality, which consists of a set of traits, affects behaviour. But these traits alone cannot predict behaviour: one's standing on relevant traits, the nature of the situation one is in and current states of functioning (e.g. one's mood) influence behaviour, too (Barry D. Smith, *Psychology: Science & Understanding* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998) 514-5).
[139] Eysenck 171.

thoughts and feelings and points this out[140]. Thus the three moral components cannot easily be seen due to the lack of interior characterization.

Since the readers cannot know all the feelings and thoughts of the characters in DS and BPR, they must settle for their behaviour and decide that their morals and ethics can be inferred with the help of their behaviour, i.e. what they say and do, and with the help of their physical appearance[141]. Their morals and ethics become clearer when one examines what the characters are like, what their personalities are like. One of the topics that narratology studies is characterization. Characterization analysis investigates the ways and means of creating the personality traits of characters. The basic analytical question is "Who (subject) characterizes whom (object) as being what (as having which properties)?"[142] There are three basic parameters: narratorial and figural characterization, explicit and implicit characterization and self- or auto-characterization and altero-characterization. The first parameter answers the question "Who characterizes - the narrator or the character?" The second deals with the way in which the traits are shown: are they attributed by words or implied by somebody's behaviour? The third answers the question "Does the characterizing subject characterize himself/herself or someone else?"[143] An implicit characterization is a (usually unintentional) auto-characterization in which someone's physical appearance or behaviour is indicative of a characteristic trait. Behaviour can be verbal or non-

[140] See 4.1.
[141] Rabinowitz talks about rules of "snap moral judgment": "authors may need devices to allow readers to judge characters quickly – either because the characters are too minor for full development, or because the author needs an initial scaffolding that can then be developed (or undercut ironically) as the novel progresses". Rabinowitz argues that these rules fall into one of two general classes: metaphorical rules of appearance and metonymic rules of enchainment. According to metaphorical rules of appearance, physical appearance can be assumed to stand metaphorically for inner quality. According to metonymic rules of enchainment, "the presence of one moral quality is linked to the presence of another that lies more or less contiguous to it". We are often expected to assume that one moral failing naturally accompanies another. (85-6, 89, 91)
[142] Jahn N7.
[143] Jahn N7.1.

verbal. Generally speaking, all explicit characterizations are always also implicit auto-characterizations.[144]

In DS and BPR, the narrator does not comment on the characters very explicitly, or at least not very often; she characterizes them by showing their behaviour, letting them speak and act. In BPR, the narrator does not describe the physical appearances of the characters at great length and her comments are often short. The narrator describes Dougal at a café: "Dougal, whose deformed shoulder had actally [sic!] endowed him with a curious speciality in the art of fighting…did not at the moment boast of the fact" (p. 45). In DS, the narrator does not comment much on Lise's character. Maybe in her case the fact that the narrator cannot describe her characters says a great deal about her (and about the narrator too): the narrator asks, "Who knows her thoughts? Who can tell?" (p. 74)

The characters characterize other characters to some extent. They comment on each other's words and behaviour. Thus it is explicit. However, one can argue that the characters do not really say much about other characters since they cannot see them well. In fact, Spark often shows how poor judges of characters her characters can be. In BPR, one of the characters, Leslie, is a mischievous boy, who is never up to any good. However, Miss Frierne, Dougal's landlady, thinks he is harmless and says "I know it by instinct, and instinct always tells" (p. 86). Another character, Joyce Willis, thinks very highly of Dougal and comments on him: "A fine brain and a sound moral sense" (p. 119). She almost considers him her son although she hardly knows him and Dougal turns out to be quite untrustworthy a character.

As Joyce Willis' comment shows, the characters in BPR talk a great deal about morals, and they comment on each other's behaviour. For instance, Mavis, Dixie's mother says she was "living a lie" with her first husband and she also says it is immoral

[144] Jahn N7.5.

since there was no love between them. The characters do not only talk about themselves, they criticize others. Dixie says Merle is "immoral" with Mr Druce. Merle, on the other hand, says Mr Druce is doing the immoral thing by staying with his wife. The humour of these comments lies in the fact that the characters are quite quick to judge other people but do not apply their moral standards to themselves; they pretend to be moral but they are really not. Dougal's boss at Drover Willis puts their ideas to words, as he says to Dougal that "we want some moral line that will be both commendable by us and acceptable to our staff" (p. 84). It seems ironic since the last thing they want is to start acting morally.

One can argue that when characters characterize other characters, it is auto-characterization at the same time. When they comment other characters' morals, they reveal what their morals are like. Of course, the characters make explicit comments on themselves. When Humphrey asks whether Dougal is the Devil, he replies: "No, oh, no, I'm only supposed to be one of the wicked spirits that wander through the world for the ruin of souls" (p. 77) – this is a case of explicit, auto- and altero-characterization. Dougal replies to Miss Cheeseman, who feels uneasy about Dougal changing facts: "I thought it was a work of art you wanted to write…If you only want to write a straight autobiography you should have got a straight ghost. I'm crooked" (p. 76). These are no flattering comments.

There are poor judges of character in DS, too. The question of characters characterizing each other is a relevant question since the whole issue of seeing oneself and other people is at the heart of the novel. It seems that the characters see only one aspect of a person rather than seeing the whole person. For instance, Bill is a keen believer in macrobiotics and his diet includes a daily orgasm. Lise becomes the means of him achieving this goal. Lise, for her part, sees other people as means to an end. Wherever she goes she wants to attract as much attention as possible. The people she

meets (e.g. at the airport) will later come forward when her body is found, and they will tell the police what they know about her. The men she meets are characterized as being her type or not being her type; Lise's mission is to find her "type", the man who will kill her.

In addition to altero-characterization, there is also implicit auto-characterization. In DS, Lise's physical appearance, especially her lips and her clothes, are described at great length. The narrator pays attention to her "lurid" clothes (she buys a garish outfit whose colours do not match at all) and to her "meticulously neat" flat (p. 18). Even more attention is paid to the different things that she handles (e.g. her keys, the things she buys at the department store). It is quite significant that the narrator describes things that Lise uses or that are in her vicinity so exhaustively[145]. But when it comes to her feelings and thoughts the narrator is not sure; she can only guess. Thus it is the externals that characterize Lise. Massie points out that there is an almost Dickensian use of externals to reveal character, history and point to destiny and that the "clear definite etched strokes of externality reveal sick confusion within".[146] Massie may have a point. It could be that there is so much emphasis on externals because there is nothing much inside, or that one cannot see the character. It could be that there is not anything inside Lise; she is just her exterior, her dress. Maybe it does not matter what one has inside since nobody can see it.

It is not just Lise's physical appearance that characterizes her. She does things that do not make much sense. Sometimes she seems a little crazy: she talks to the

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[145] Kemp points out that DS is "a product of great formal discipline, each part being carefully related to the novel's theme and necessary to the structure of the whole, its threads of imagery weaving together to display the fabric of contemporary life: a fabric, they insist…is utterly synthetic and unnatural". Kemp also says that the unnatural pervades the novel, it emphasizes wrapping and protection: "Clothes, food, implements, documents: continually, almost obsessively, attention is drawn to the way that these are covered up by plastic or by paper". The civilization in the novel is one in which the natural is kept behind some outer layer that protects or conceals it. Because of this there is a constant emphasis on externals. (123)

[146] Massie 74-5.

telephone although there is nobody at the other end: "'Oh, of course,' Lise says, and when she has hung up she laughs heartily…She has now stopped laughing, and now breathing heavily says to the mute telephone, 'Of course. Oh, of course.'" (pp. 17-8) In addition, she tells lies to different people. For instance, she says to Carlo that she is a tourist, a teacher from New Jersey: "I'm a widow and an intellectual…My late husband was an intellectual…He was killed in a motor accident" (p. 114). Lise says so many conflicting things about herself that the reader must know that some of them are lies. She certainly does not seem to be a very trustworthy character. The narrator does not offer inside views of her mind, which does not help to explain her behaviour. Thus she remains a little mysterious.

Dougal Douglas is often described as a diabolical creature, if not the Devil himself. He has a crooked shoulder. The reader may use metaphorical rules of appearance and judge him by his looks. Even if the physical side does not count, Dougal proves to be quite an untrustworthy character. Like Lise, he tells lies and he does not seem to have much inside[147]. The difference is that Lise seems to be a little more human than him. All in all, both Lise and Dougal are not very trustworthy characters, and their morals do seem to be a little dubious: a person who is always telling lies does not treat other people with proper consideration and respect.

To sum up, there is all kind of characterization in the novels. But can the reader trust what the characters say about themselves and others? How much does their behaviour tell about them? Explicit figural altero-characterization, explicit figural auto-characterization and implicit figural auto-characterization do not necessarily give a truthful picture of the characters. The characters are not good judges of character and the main characters seem to be compulsive liars. The narrator, too, does not seem very reliable. It should be noted that even the choice of including some things and leaving

[147] Of course, this is due to the narrative technique.

out others says something about the character. The narrator need not comment on the characters explicitly, and what is left unsaid is as significant as what is said or even more important. It seems that the narrator cannot see the characters or wants to seem that way. Next I will deal with the sexual relations of the characters.

3.1 Sexual relations

BPR and DS focus on relationships between different characters, especially between men and women. Since morals are basically about relationships between people, about how they see and treat each other, I will examine the sexual relations between men and women in the novels in relation to morality.

The main couples in BPR are Humphrey and his fiancée Dixie, and Mr Druce and Merle Coverdale, the head of the typing pool at Mr Druce's company. What describes best the relationship between Humphrey and Dixie, and that between Mr Druce and Merle, is that they cannot see each other for what they really are (whatever that is), and that they stay with each other for reasons that do not involve love. When one looks at these couples, one cannot help but ask oneself "Why are these people together?"

Humphrey and Dixie do not seem to have much in common. Dixie is working two jobs and saving every penny for their wedding and future life as a married couple. She obviously frowns upon the working class[148] and wants to move up on the social ladder: In Costa's Café, where Humphrey, Dixie, Dougal and Elaine are spending time, Dixie "addressed the men, ignoring Elaine as she had done all evening, because Elaine was factory" (p. 43). Her fiancée, on the other hand, is a refrigerator engineer and continually talks about the working class and their rights. It seems that they do not

[148] In BPR, the end is revealed at the beginning. Thus we know that Humphrey leaves Dixie at the altar. Dixie remarks on her ex-fiancee: "He's common. You only have to look at his sister…a fellow came up to her and asked her for a dance. And Elsie said, 'No, I'm sweating" (p. 12). It seems that Dougal influences Humphrey's decision to leave Dixie at the altar but after Dougal leaves Peckham, Humphrey and Dixie are married. Dougal had no permanent influence on them; they still cannot see each other. It does not seem to matter that Humphrey is "common".

share the same values and interests; she seems materialistic and he idealistic. Dixie is very worried about money: ”There’s got to be money down for the house…What about my spin-dryer?” (p. 56). Their relationship is not based on seeing the other person and appreciating what she or he is. It seems that they act on a very superficial level, on one that does not take the person in question fully into account. The moral thing to do would be to try to see the other person and treat him or her with proper appreciation. This could be the point: one cannot see other people, at least in this novel. How do sex and morality combine here? In my opinion, sex seems to hold them together but they have problems: Dixie is becoming more and more unwilling, which upsets Humphrey. He says that there is something wrong with her, and that she is always thinking about money: ”You’re losing all your sex. It’s all this saving up to get married” (p. 57). Dixie says he is getting too sexy and it is Dougal’s fault: “It’s through you having to do with Dougal Douglas. He’s a sex-maniac…He’s immoral.” (p. 56) Eventually they break up.

Merle and Mr Druce’s relationship is interesting when examined in the light of morality. According to Merle, it is immoral to stay with your spouse if there is no love between husband and wife. Indeed, it is quite interesting how the characters continually talk about how ”immoral” some things are and how they comment on people ”living a lie”. The reader cannot help but notice this. Even Dougal notices their use of these phrases. Merle’s morality seems very dubious: one kind of adultery is acceptable (moral), and another kind is not. If you love your partner, it is moral even if you are cheating your husband or wife. But Merle’s relationship with Mr Druce shows that she holds a double standard. According to her morals her relationship with him would be regarded as immoral since they do not love each other. However, Merle does not acknowledge this. Their relationship consists of daily rituals and it appears to be full of

routines and automation, even their lovemaking is nothing special[149]. They are together for the 'benefits': he pays for her flat and he has sex with her. But these benefits do not make them happy. Merle may have a place to live but she is unhappy. She confesses Dougal that she really hates Mr Druce. Mr Druce is unhappy too. His relationship with his wife is very unhappy but neither does his relationship with Merle offer any comfort or satisfaction. Dougal even hints that Mr Druce's sexual orientation is not heterosexual or is somehow strange: when Merle and Dougal discuss her relationship with Druce, Dougal says that he is Druce's "first waking experience of an attractive man" (p. 100). Dougal also tells Merle after finding out that Mr Druce likes to ride in the lifts up and down that Mr Druce must get some sexual satisfaction out of it.

Merle's and Mr Druce's relationship end in her murder. Mr Druce is afraid that Dougal has found out something about him that he can use against him. Mr Druce learns that Merle has been with Dougal on several occasions and suspects she has told Dougal something about him. Mr Druce kills Merle for his own protection. Obviously there is no love between them and his morals are of very dubious kind: one can murder a person if he or she poses a threat. There is hardly any consideration for others. The great irony is that although there seems to be a great deal of plotting and people are conspiring against one another, there is nothing really there. Mr Druce is so paranoid that he believes what his informer, Trevor, tells him. Dougal does provoke the characters: he tells some of the character that he is with the police. But, in my opinion, the characters are already prone to do these things; Dougal only gives a little nudge although it makes him seem a very dubious character. He sees their insecurities: he says to Merle when they talk about Mr Druce and his suspicions "What guilty wee consciences you've all got" (p. 127).

[149] In fact, it is not fully described, only that Mr Druce is a little violent: "They stayed in bed for an hour, in the course of which Merle twice screamed because Mr Druce had once pinched her and once bit her" (p. 54).

The other relationships in BPR are similar to the main relationships. It seems that no one has a "normal"[150] sexual relationship with another person. Some characters do not have any; they have denied that part of their selves altogether. For instance, Dougal's and Humphrey's landlady Belle Frierne once met a Scot, Gordon Highlander, when she was a young woman. But that encounter was such a shock – he put her hand under his kilt – that she has never touched a man since. Dougal himself seems to be a very uncaring person, who cannot stand people when they are ill. His girlfriend, Jinny Fergusson, is only a voice on the telephone (we never 'see' her) and she does her best to avoid him because he treated her so badly when she was ill. He is puzzled when she treats him coldly and finally leaves him: "I can't help it. Sickness kills me…Understand me, try to understand my fatal flaw. Everybody has one." (p. 24)

In DS, there seems to be nothing else than relationships between men and women. The whole novel centres on Lise's search for her man, for her "type". It is not really explained why she is looking for her man, nor is there much information on her thoughts and motivations. Maybe the implied author is criticizing that women are supposed to find their Mr Right. If DS is about finding Mr Right, it is a twisted and reversed search since she is not looking for a man who she will spend her life with but a man who will end it. What is ironic about Lise's search is that her claim that she will recognize her man when she sees him resembles the idea of "love at first sight" although it is reversed. Lise says of a man at the department store: "Not my man at all.

[150] A "normal" sexual relationship in the novel seems to be of the kind that there is no real passion, or love, between the parties. Another characteristic is that the people involved do not see each other. In Jinny's and Dougal's case, this is literal: she is only a voice on the telephone, and when she was ill he did not visit her at all. It also seems 'normal' not to have a sexual relationship with anyone at all. In my opinion, the characters cannot have a normal sexual relationship with anyone since they cannot see themselves or others. Sexuality is a part of one's identity, and since their identities seem disintegrated, their sexual relations reflect this situation.

The one I'm looking for will recognise me right away for the woman I am, have no fear of that"[151] (p. 95).

The first man who attracts Lise's attention turns out to be her man, her murderer, Richard, although she does not fully realize this until at the end. Lise's relationship with Richard is filled with reversals and controversies. She seems to be controlling the situation: she is the stronger party and the man is the weaker party, who cannot help but kill her; she is the hunter and the hunted, the attacker and the victim. On the one hand, she systematically follows her plan: she buys the murder weapons; she instructs him how to commit the murder. But, on the other hand, Richard rapes[152] her although she strongly tells him that that is not part of her plan. She seems to have a mixed attitude to sex and she sends mixed signals to men: on the one hand, she talks about sex; on the other hand, she vigorously says she does not want to have sex. According to Lise sex is "all right at the time and it's all right before but the problem is afterwards…Most of the time, afterwards is pretty sad" (pp. 153-4). Something dreadful must have happened to Lise; she must have had bad experiences with men before. She seems to be very confused about herself and other people. Richard is a convicted sex-offender but Lise does not really see him. Since he has once tried to kill a woman, she trusts him to kill her but, at the same time, thinks he will not rape her. How can you trust a sex-offender? They take sexual advantage of women. Richard then rapes her[153]. She proceeded with her plans although she could not control the situation in the end. It shows her inability to see other people – 'real' people are not instruments and do not only act according to one's plans.

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[151] As Walker points out, the man has already recognized her and has tried to escape (88).
[152] In DS, sex is connected with violence. Men can become violent in their pursuit of a woman. It can also be argued that sex is connected with life. In the novel, Bill makes a pass at Lise and spills his macrobiotic seeds on the floor. As Bold points out, this sexual metaphor reveals that Lise "is not interested in sustaining life through sex." (93)
[153] "All the same, he plunges into her, with the knife poised high." (p. 159)

Lise's (sexual) confusion is also shown in her relationship with Bill, the man she meets on the airplane. At first, she flirts with him openly and in the taxi she lets him kiss her. In one of their conversations, she says that men in Naples are sexy. Then later she rejects his advances and says that she does not want to have sex with him.

Pearlman points out that in Spark's novels there is often confused sexuality, which "reinforces the general sense of absurdity". This issue of sexuality is related to a bigger issue, that of the problem of identity since sexuality is a part of one's identity. Pearlman talks about the "disintegration of the self": "Human relationships are undependable, society is distracted, uninvolved and elusive, time is fragmented and self diminishes".[154] It is not just in DS and BPR that characters seem to be sexually confused (and not just sexually). In *Memento Mori*, for example, Godfrey Colston, a married man, takes pleasure in seeing women showing their suspenders. Pearlman comments on Godfrey: he is "emotionally vapid, dull and constricted", he has a compulsive attraction to sex that cannot fulfil and is joyless. According to Pearlman, "[t] he feelings of isolation and aloneness are mirrored in the sexual lives of Spark's characters".[155] It may be that the sexual confusion of the characters is part of their identity crisis. Their morals are part of this issue; morals and morality involve the way one sees oneself and others. The characters are so confused that their morals do not mean anything; in BPR they are only empty words[156]. The characters do not see other people, and they seem to interact with them on a very superficial level. What can be said about Mavis, who describes her first marriage: "everything sorta wenna pieces" (p. 38)? It sounds a little too vague, as if Mavis does not really care. Lise's morals and ethics are reflected in her behaviour: she has little regard for herself and other people; she is committed to end her life and does not care about the repercussions to Richard,

[154] Pearlman 21.
[155] Pearlman 99-100.
[156] See 3.3.

who will be caught and sent to prison. Lise's sexual confusion is one aspect of a more general crisis of identity; her confusion about sex reflects her confusion about herself; she is disintegrated.

More attention is paid to Lise's sexuality and there are a couple of references to prostitution. The narrator comments on Lise's skirt: hers is unfashionably too long "just as, in former times, when prostitutes could be discerned by the brevity of their skirts compared with the normal standard, so Lise…looks curiously of the street-prostitute class beside the mini-skirted girls and their mothers whose knees at least can be seen" (p. 75). This is a case of reversal that Spark likes to use in her novels: Lise is compared to a prostitute although her skirt shows less bare skin than other people's. Interestingly the narrator implies that Lise is sexually promiscuous although she is always saying that she does not want to have any sex. This, however, is not the only reference to her promiscuity. At the garage, Carlo and the men are upset about the trouble the youth have caused and when Carlo sees her, he says some very nasty things to her, including that she should "go home to the brothel where she came from" (p. 111). It seems that much attention is drawn to the physical aspects, women selling their bodies.

The images of prostitution are connected to the idea of men taking advantage of women. Indeed, it seems that, as far as sex and morality are concerned, women seem to suffer from men behaving badly. The different sexual relationships – Dougal and Jinny, Merle and Mr Druce; Lise and Carlo, Bill and Richard – tell a tale of women being hurt by men's actions. The most dramatic things happen to Merle and Lise: they are murdered by men. The issue of male aggression will be dealt with in the next chapter.

3.2 Violence

In this chapter I will deal with the different forms of violence that occur in the novels. Violence is not just physical; it can be emotional or psychological, too. Spark's novels are not without violence, whether physical or emotional. Sometimes there is no actual violence, just a hint or a sense of threat. I will also connect these acts and hints of violence to morality – how morality and violence can be tied in with the idea of a disintegrated self.

In BPR, the most visible act of violence takes place in the relationship between Merle and Mr Druce. Their affair is dispassionate and so is the murder of Merle. It is just as automatic, dull and devoid of passion as the other aspects of their relationship: "He came towards her with the corkscrew and stabbed it into her long neck nine times, and killed her. Then he took his hat and went home to his wife" (p. 136). There are many hints that precede the murder. A great deal of attention is paid to Merle's long neck and sharp objects pointing towards it: for instance, at the office Mr Druce toys with a paper-knife and points it towards Merle's neck. At the night of the murder, Merle takes some red wine: "I feel I need something red, to buck me up" (p. 134), and Mr Druce points her with a corkscrew, which he then plunges into her neck[157]. The morality of this murder and their relationship is that they seem to be unable to see each other; the murder of Merle is similar to their affair – it is full of indifference and lack of caring.

There are also other acts of violence or hints of violence in the novel. For instance, Humphrey and Trevor fight over Dixie. There is also mental violence, blackmail: Leslie (Dixie's little brother), Trevor and Collie try to blackmail Dougal with Dougal's notebook. They think it contains information they can use against him. Trevor questions Merle about Dougal and says, "We got to carve up that boy one of

[157] Here is male aggression again. The knife and other objects can be seen as phallic symbols.

these days…D'you want to get carved alongside of him?" (p. 133). These instances give the novel a very gloomy atmosphere.

Another example of a hint of violence is the pram on a balcony with no railings. Merle has lived in Peckham for twelve years but has not noticed it before until Dougal mentions it. She becomes frightened because she thinks there is a baby inside. Dougal points out that it is not a baby but a doll. Actually the pram has been there for a quarter of century, and nobody has given much notice to it. Thus the violence or the shadow of violence seems to be connected with the issue of ignorance and indifference of the people in Peckham. Nobody sees anything or anyone.

Lise's story is very morbid. There are many hints of her death, which are quite subtle in the beginning but which turn into quite specific remarks on her gruesome death. The future blends in with the present. Everything that happens in the present is somehow connected with her demise. For instance, the woman Lise meets at the airport "smiles…and not even sensing in the least that very soon…she nevertheless will come forward and repeat all she remembers and all she does not remember and all the details she imagines to be true and those that are true, in her conversation with Lise when she sees in the papers that the police are trying to trace who Lise is" (pp. 32-3). It is on page 37 that we find out that she will be murdered[158]. Another example is when Lise asks directions to Hilton from a police officer and says, "Do you carry a revolver? Because if you did, you could shoot me?" (p. 122) and then she drives off. The following day he is shown her body and he recognizes her and remembers what she had said. She obviously wants to attract as much attention as possible so that the police officer would not forget her.

[158] The story is narrated in such a way that the present is blended with the future; there are many hints to Lise's death but the murder does not occur until the very end. The end is known before it has happened. The story is also narrated in the present tense, which gives it a sense of immediacy. As Whittaker argues, the use of the present tense gives immediacy and tension to the plot but also demonstrates Lise's rootlessness (85).

Lise's plan to kill herself with the help of her man creates a perpetual shadow over the story. In addition, in my opinion, the whole society seems to be in turmoil. For instance, some students are demonstrating and the police break up the crowd with teargas: "Suddenly round the corner comes a stampede…A band of grey-clad policemen come running towards them, in formation, bearing tear-gas satchels and with their gas-masks at the ready" (p. 109). Lise escapes to a garage where she meets the owner, Carlo, who is happy to take her to her hotel. Lise drifts from one violent encounter to another. Carlo tries to have sex with her but she manages to escape. At the department store, a newscast on television tells about a coup in a middle-eastern country. What is significant is that none of the places in the novel are specified[159], not even the city in which Lise is spending her holiday. It seems that Spark is commenting on society as a whole; there is violence everywhere and disintegrated people.

The murder of Lise was already mentioned in the previous section. She is murdered by a man but she does the most harm to herself. She cannot see herself and other people; she harms herself and others by using them as instruments in her grim plan. However, the real problem does not lie only in her and her inability to see other people as real human beings. The problem lies in all the people. The other characters cannot see her either and they use her too (e.g. Bill). There seems to be something wrong with society as a whole. The whole society, which consists of all the people, is to blame. Lise travels abroad but the place is never specified, it does not seem to matter where she is. She speaks four languages – English, French, Italian and Danish – but no one seems to understand or care. It seems that it does not matter where one is, as I argued in the previous paragraph. It may be that the implied author, Spark, is

[159] When Mrs Fiedke asks Lise where her home is, she answers: "Nowhere special. It is written on the passport" (p. 80), which she leaves in the taxi.

commenting on the state of society as well as on individuals. Problems can be seen everywhere, not only in certain places.

The characters in DS seem ignorant and indifferent. This notion is intensified by images of people behaving as animals (which do not have morals): when Lise and Mrs Fiedke are walking on the street, the youth are compared to antilopes: "who swing and thread through the crowds like antilopes whose heads, invisibly antlered, are airborne high to sniff the prevailing winds" (p. 79). In the department store there are charging buffaloes on the TV screens (p. 94). Later Lise is described as "a stag scenting the breeze…inhibiting her stride to accommodate Mrs Fiedke's pace, she seems at the same time to search for a certain air-current, a glimpse and an intimation" (p. 107). Morals make us human and here people are compared to animals. It seems that in the world of the novel, men and women are lowered to the level of animals, acting ignorantly and even violently.

There is definitely something wrong with people's morals when they act so violently, even commit murder. Violence can be seen as connected with the confusion about their identities, as their sexual confusion. When people are confused about themselves and other people, women (and even babies[160]) seem to get hurt the most. In both novels, there are many instances of male aggression against females. Why has the implied author included so much violence against women in these novels?[161] The fact that she is a woman probably makes her more sensitive to this issue. In my opinion, the use of violence against women emphasizes the point: the characters' ignorance and indifference seem more horrible and more wrong when the men who are physically stronger attack women, who are physically weaker. When people are confused about

[160] There is no real threat against babies since there was a doll in the pram but the hint of violence suffices to create an uneasy atmosphere.

[161] There are acts of violence and hints of action but also talk on violence. For instance, Dougal talks about Peckham's history and mentions Boadicea's death on Peckham Rye. Lise talks to Mrs Fiedke and says "One should always be kind in case it might be the last chance. One might be killed crossing the street, or even the pavement, any time, you never know." (pp. 81-2)

their identities and their morals collapse, women will suffer the most. There is violence in Spark's other novels, too. Men are sometimes objects of violence but it seems that more often it is a woman than a man that gets hurt. For instance, in *A Far Cry from Kensington* and *Memento Mori*, a woman is murdered. Women are always victims of violence.

3.3 Communication between the Characters

The sexual relations and violence tell a grim tale of the morals of the characters. The way they communicate with each other also reflects the way they see themselves and other characters. In this chapter, I will deal with the ways in which they use language and how it can be seen as reflecting their disintegration.

Many of the characters in BPR use words but do not really mean them. Dougal uses words in this way to mock the other characters. In an interview at Meadows, Meade & Grindley, he says that "[t]he world of Industry throbs with human life. It will be my job to take the pulse of the people and plumb the industrial depths of Peckham" (p. 17). The words sound quite empty because they do not have any real connection with reality; they are only words. Humphrey's words sound empty, too. They are filled with jargon: "Overtime should be avoided except in cases of necessity because eventually it reduces the normal capacity of the worker and in the long run leads to under-production, resulting in further demands for overtime" (p. 125). The characters also talk about morals[162] (i.e. the way they treat each other), and the phrases "immoral"

[162] Both companies hires Dougal to do human research. He studies the morals of the character and finds out that there are four types of morality: emotional (no love between man and wife), functional (class solidarity, trade union movement), puritanical (monetary advancement) and traditional (Christian, one per cent of population) (p. 83). There does not seem to be much 'traditional' morality. Religion, which is connected with morality, does not play a big role in the novel. The only character who talks about religious issues is Nelly but she has fallen outside of society. According to Kane, she serves as a ghostly chorus implicitly criticizing the trivial activities of the other villagers (93-4). Another reference to religion is the excavation at the police station. Dougal says the tunnel leads to Nunhead. One night the nuns packed up and left with a lot of debts. A policeman says there are bodies of nuns down there. When

and "to live a lie" occur frequently but they do not have any real significance[163]. One critic offers an interpretation to why the characters use language this way; Kemp comments on the issue of empty words: vague, complacent adjectives, such as "immoral", are symptoms of real ignorance, true immorality; Peckham is a society of cliché and hypocrisy, self-deceit and prejudice.[164] Kemp continues:

> With only parody moralities of this kind to fall back on…people have nothing genuine to help them cope with awkward aspects of their personality, no alternative but to suppress. They take refuge from reality in verbal camouflage or spurious social roles; and, if stripped of this defensive hypocrisy, react first with self-pity, then with either violence or breakdown.[165]

Kemp's interpretation of the novel seems a valid explanation of why the characters use such language. There does seem to be a great deal of "verbal camouflage" in the novel. The characters seem to hide behind empty words because they do not seem to know any other way to cope. The language reflects the fact that they are not in touch with their thoughts and feelings; they are alienated from themselves and others. They are disintegrated and cannot see themselves.

Communication and the use of language is a relevant theme in DS, too. There is irony in the fact that Lise speaks four languages. What is the point of knowing so many languages if it does not matter what one says since nobody can see anyone any way? When Bill tries to rape her, she cries in four languages and when she instructs Richard, she says, "Kill me" in four languages. Both novels show that words do not necessarily mean what one thinks they mean. Words ring hollow, and communication does not

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Dougal leaves Peckham, he uses the tunnel. He finds some bones and juggles with them. It seems that he is mocking religion. Religion and humour are mixed at the end too: after Peckham, Dougal went to a Franciscan monastery and drove the monks mad. References to religion in DS are scarce: Miss Fiedke is a Jehova's Witness and she remarks, "I'm a strict believer…but I never trust the airlines from those countries where pilots believe in the after-life" (p. 101).

[163] See Merle's idea of immorality in 3.1.

[164] Kemp 50.

[165] Kemp 55.

work if one uses these words. Words do not seem to matter; the characters do not see each other anyway.

If the characters do not mean what they say and act in a strange way, how can we know what they really think and feel? Do they even know what they think and feel? This may be the whole point. On the one hand, the reader cannot really see what the characters are about; and on the other hand, the characters may be confused about themselves and unable to see themselves – as Pearlman says, their selves are disintegrated. If behaviour is indicative of their moral views, then they do not seem to care about other people. Nor do they care very much about themselves. They seem to be confused and hurt themselves and those around them. Acts of violence and the way the characters treat the ones with which they are having a sexual relationship show the general predicament in which the characters are.

From the perspective of an ethical critic, these novels contain values and norms that should be examined carefully. One of the objectives of ethical criticism is to study what kind of values the reader affirms while reading a text. The values of the characters imply self-centredness and self-absorbedness. They only seem to think about themselves and not about the well-being of others. How would an ethical critic react to this? If the morals of the characters seem dubious, should the reader condemn the novel? Booth warns readers (and especially critics) about universal syllogisms. The reader should consider other things besides the characters and their values. One should regard a novel (or any text) as a whole; one ought to take the narrator's and the implied author's attitudes into account, too. Booth argues that if there are morally dubious elements in a work the only way it can escape our charge is through demonstration that somehow the injustice is effectively criticized by the work itself[166]: the implied author

[166] One can argue whether this is true. In the chapter on the implied author, there is more discussion on authorial intention and where morality lies, in the reader or in the work (in the implied author).

does not speak for the injustice but against it.[167] In the next chapter I will examine how the narrator and the implied author complicate the picture, how they influence the reader's responses and interpretations.

[167] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 390.

4. The Narrator and the Implied Author in the Novels

4.1 The Narrator

In this chapter I will deal with the narrator. First, I will consider the issue of the narrator's covertness and overtness. Then I will examine her reliability by considering the way in which time is distorted and how the characters are seen by her. After that, I will try to examine the values of the ideal narrative audience and draw conclusions about the narrator and her attitude towards the characters.

In most of Spark's novels, the narrator is heterodiegetic, i.e. she does not take part in the actions of the novel – this is the case in both DS and PBR[168]. As far as overtness is concerned, Jahn explains that

> [a]n overt narrator is one who refers to him/herself in the first person…, one who directly or indirectly addresses the narratee, one who offers reader-friendly exposition whenever it is needed…, one who exhibits a 'discoursal stance' or 'slant' toward characters and events, especially in his/her use of rhetorical figures, imagery, evaluative phrases and emotive or subjective expressions ('expressive function'), one who 'intrudes' into the story in order to pass philosophical or metanarrative comments, one who has a distinctive voice.[169]

A covert narrator, on the other hand, is

> one who neither refers to him- or herself nor addresses any narratees, one who has a more or less neutral (nondistinctive) voice and style, one who is sexually indeterminate,… one who does not provide exposition even when it is urgently needed, one who does not intrude or interfere, one who lets the story events unfold in their natural sequence and tempo.[170]

The narrators do not seem very overt in DS and BPR but they cannot be said to be entirely covert either: they seem to "intrude" in the story and do not let the story tell itself, and sometimes they use words that are not neutral (e.g. in DS, Lise's clothes are called "lurid"). The fact that they cannot know the characters' thoughts and feelings draws the reader's attention to their presence, especially in DS. Jahn says that "[c]overt

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[168] In *A Far Cry from Kensington* and in *Loitering with Intent*, however, the narrator is the main character in the novel.
[169] Jahn N3.1.4.
[170] Jahn N3.1.4.

narration can be most easily achieved by letting the action be seen through the eyes of an internal focalizer"[171] but there is not much internal focalization in DS or BPR[172].

There is evidence that the narrators do not simply let the story unfold before the reader's eyes. The way in which time is presented shows that they are not entirely covert. In BPR, people are guessing and gossiping about the events that have occurred, and nobody is sure what has really happened. Everyone seems to have their own version of the events but the narrator does not tell it to the reader until the end (that Humphrey and Dixie got married two months later), she is withholding information:

> Arthur Crowe [Dixie's stepfather] was reported in the papers next day as having said: 'I had a feeling the wedding wouldn't come off.' (p. 8)
>
> Witnesses of the fight [between Trevor and Humphrey] were putting the story together…Before closing time the story had spread to the surrounding public bars, where it was established that Humphrey had called at 12 Rye Grove earlier in the evening. (pp. 12-3)
>
> within a few weeks, everyone forgot the details. The affair is a legend referred to from time to time in pubs when the conversation takes a matrimonial turn. Some say the bridegroom came back repentant and married the girl in the end. Some say, no, he married another girl, while the bride married the best man…It is generally agreed that he answered 'No' at his wedding, that he went away alone on his wedding day and turned up again later. (p. 14)

The narrator takes the perspective of the people of Peckham: they do not know for sure what has happened, and they can only speculate. The critics have noticed this too. They usually comment on the novel by saying it resembles a ballad, it is "offered with a deceptive lightness, and with a succinctness influenced by the Scottish Border ballads".[173] It is also said that the "events of the novel are given a distance, a

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[171] Jahn N3.1.4.

[172] At the beginning of DS, there seems to be focalization. The story begins with Lise buying clothes in a store. She seems to be viewed from the perspective of the salesgirl: she is referred to as "the customer", a dress is described as not "successful line" (p. 10). Then it also seems the narrator can see inside Lise's head when she leaves the store: "she turns to look back and says, with a look of satisfaction at her own dominance over the situation with an undoubtable excuse, 'I won't be insulted!'" (p. 12). But the narrator seems to become more and more unsure of what goes on in Lise's mind; she starts using words, such as "seems", "might be" and "presumably".

[173] Whittaker 95.

fictionality, by passages at the beginning and the end, which firmly place the episodes of the novel in distant realm of hearsay and fable".[174]

In DS, time is distorted: the future is known before the present. The narrator offers hints of Lise's death[175]. She also seems to be incapable of entering Lise's mind; she can only guess:

> whether she has failed to leave it [an envelope] at the door-keeper's desk by intention, or whether through the distraction of the woman's laughter, one could not tell from her serene face with lips slightly parted. (p. 24)
>
> It may be that she is indeed contemplating an immediate departure from the hotel. (p. 71)
>
> The narrator asks: "Who knows her thoughts? Who can tell?"[176] (p. 74)

Obviously the narrator is self-conscious. It may emphasize the point that people cannot see each other: the narrator cannot see the characters. But is the narrator honest when she claims that she does not know; does she not really see the characters? At the hotel, a maid visits Lise's room and she then leaves "never to return within Lise's cognisance" (p. 71). The narrator does seem to see inside Lise's mind in this particular case, which makes the narrator look unreliable. The narrator also looks unreliable when one considers the sense of predestination[177] in the novel. There are many hints of Lise's death, which occurs at the very end of the novel. Obviously the narrator must know something. But she chooses to remain silent on a number of other things.[178] There is also something else that makes the narrator look a little suspicious: the references to prostitution.

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[174] Whittaker 95.
[175] See 3.2.
[176] Walker comments on these words: the author has disowned Lise (87). I disagree. I think it is the narrator who says these words and the implied author has not disowned her.
[177] There seems to be remarkable coincidences: the man Lise first pays attention to turns out to be her murderer; Mrs Fiedke, the old woman she meets and spends time with, turns out to be Richard's aunt; Mrs Fiedke is staying at the same hotel as Lise. All this emphasizes the fictionality of the novel; there could not be such coincidences in 'real' life.
[178] Walker argues that it is the implied author who tells the reader about Lise's death, and that this is the only time she makes comments (86).

Another aspect that should be mentioned is the way in which the characters are seen by the narrator. In DS, the characters are not referred to by their names until they introduce themselves in conversation (when there is dialogue between characters) or until someone else who knows the name uses it: Lise's story starts on page nine, but she is referred to as "the customer" or as "the girl". On page 13, her lips are described: "she, whose lips are usually pressed together with the daily disapprovals of the accountant's office where she has worked continually…for sixteen years and some months" (p. 12). It seems rather odd that her lips should show this until one takes a closer look of the narrator. The narrator is observing Lise and her interaction with other people; she has watched her and tells about a conversation she and her superior had: "You've got your packing to do, Lise" (p. 13). After this Lise's name is used. However, it is still a little odd that considering the narrator has observed her over some time, she does not give information she can give out. The narrator withholds information on other things too. For example, Mrs Fiedke's slippers, which she buys for her nephew, disappear: "Her package of slippers is lost, is gone…[it] has been lifted, has been taken away by somebody" (p. 100). Later when Lise is going through her things, the slippers are found there. Mrs Fiedke had put them there but the narrator did not say a word about it when it occurred. Maybe the narrator is not paying enough attention to all the things that happen around Lise; this makes her look a little indifferent.

Bill and Mrs Fiedke are treated in the same way as Lise; their names are used in the text only after they have introduced themselves to Lise. If the narrator cannot see Lise, she cannot see other characters either. For instance, she describes the doorman at Hilton: he looks at Lise indignantly who "*presumably* resents her taste, her clothes, …and whose built-in computer system rates her low on the spending scale" (p. 125, my italics).

The narrator is different in BPR**.** The characters are called by their names from the beginning. In addition, more information is available about them. For instance, Dixie is introduced: "aged seventeen, daughter of the first G.I. bride to have departed from Peckham and returned" (pp. 9-10). This does not necessarily imply that the narrator could see inside the character's mind. In my opinion, she recounts it because it is common knowledge; everybody in Peckham knows it. The same applies to the other characters as well, for instance Dougal and Humphrey. The narrator talks about Dougal's past, about what has happened between him and Jinny. In my opinion, the narrator knows these things because Dougal and Jinny have talked about them. When Dougal recounts his dream as the Devil, Humphrey "smiled, looked wise and said, 'Inhuman'; which three things he sometimes did when slightly at a loss" (p. 50). Again, the narrator cannot see inside Humphrey's mind; she observes him or this is common knowledge. In Walker's words, "[i]t is as if a camera were following and recording actions and words".[179] The people in Peckham do seem to be very inquisitive and nosy. When Dougal is buying cheese, the narrator comments on shopping in Peckham: "In the little shops in the Peckham by-streets, the other customers take a deep interest in what you are buying" (p. 18). The narrator's choice of presenting her case reflects the characters' qualities: they deal with "hearsay and fable", rather than really seeing each other, they gossip and believe the rumours they hear. Mr Druce's fate, for example, gives it a rather sad and ironic edge: he ends up killing Merle.

After showing the unreliability of the narrator in her way of showing the events and describing the characters, I wish to examine more closely what kind of ideal narrative audience there is in DS and in BPR, what kind of values it has and how it is compared with the narrative audience. The ideal narrative audience is an audience which the narrator wishes she were writing for. In these novels, this audience does not

[179] Walker 85.

seem to care much about the characters. It stays at a distance and does not take the story very seriously since the narrator does seem rather unreliable. It also seems to acknowledge that people are unreachable, unseeable. The narrative audience and its values, on the other hand, are different. The narrative audience is "the actual audience's projection of itself into the observer role within fiction", and it evaluates its position in the ideal narrative audience. Observing the values of the ideal narrative audience, I conclude that I do not wish to endorse those values. The amount of ignorance and indifference is too much; as Page puts it, "insistence on the indifference of the external world is one aspect of an all-pervading coldness, objectivity, 'hardness' and even heartlessness in the narrative tone and method – aesthetic and formal qualities that mirror the inhumanity and indifference of the contemporary world" – for people to behave with inhumanity is unnatural and unnaturalness is a central theme.[180]

What do other critics say about DS? Massie says there is callousness, heartlessness and despair.[181] Pullin remarks that the insistence on the present tense is ominous and there is a strong undertone of emotional violence.[182] The narrator does present a very grim image of the world with disintegrated people, and the narrative tone is detached, cold and callous. In my view, there is similar coldness and callousness in BPR, too. As Heptonstall argues, "[t]he tale is told lightly, but its theme is too dark for the amused, ironic tone of the narrative".[183]

To sum up, the narrator does not seem very reliable; she only tells the reader what she wants to tell. She also does not seem to care much about the characters. This does not necessarily imply that the implied author does not care; using such a narrator is a

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[180] Page 69.
[181] Massie 76.
[182] Pullin 75.
[183] Geoffrey Heptonstall, "The English novel in the twentieth century: 10 – Muriel Spark," *Contemporary Review* (Oct 96, Vol 269 Issue 1569) <http://search.epnet.com/direct.asp?an=9612190537&db=afh>.

part of her technique that is intimately connected with the theme or the content of the novels. In the next chapter I will concentrate on the implied author.

4.2 The Implied Author

This chapter deals with the implied author. Booth describes her: she is the one who has chosen every detail, every quality, found in the work or implied by its silences; she knows that the story is not literally true and that the authorial audience knows all this too; she creates the narrator, which Booth calls "the teller".[184] I will examine the implied author's relationship with the characters by looking at the use of humour and irony. I will also examine her relationship with the reader, and the ways in which the narrator intervenes in the story.

The implied author uses humour, irony and parody[185], which require distance between the author and the characters in order to work. The implied author does seem to stay at a distance, as well as the narrator. Although she intervenes only a couple of times, the few 'comments' that she makes are enough to ensure the reader that the implied author is not indifferent. The indifference of the narrator is so conspicuous that the reader is bound to react; in other words, the values of the ideal narrative audience are so different from those of the authorial audience that the reader cannot but see the distance between the implied author and the narrator. The reader cannot assume that the implied author is similar to the indifferent narrator. The values of the authorial audience

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[184] Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction,* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) 429-30.

[185] An example of humour in BPR: Dougal "raised his right shoulder, which was already highly crooked by nature, and leaned on his elbow with a becoming twist of the body". He then says to Druce that he feels that he is his man. Druce replies: "Is that so?" and Dougal answers: "Only a hunch." (p. 15) In DS, there is much irony and parody in the reversal of things: Lise wants a dress that is not stain-resisting, she is unhappy when she cannot find her murderer, she comments on the man who moved his seat on the airplane: "He wasn't my type at all…Just as a matter of interest…because I'm not looking to pick up strangers" (p. 51) However, this humour is quite macabre. The reader can detect irony in her words: but she will pick up a stranger although she feels that he is no stranger. The reader may find the examples funny but underneath them there are serious issues. The characters inability to see themselves and others is mocked although it has devastating consequences (e.g. Merle and Lise die). All this makes the implied author seem a little ambiguous and controversial.

(what impressions the readers have on Muriel Spark as an implied author) are not the same as those of the ideal narrative audience. The implied author is making a point with her use of such characters and narrators.

The implied author's relationship with the characters is not straightforward. Although she cares about them, she mocks them and makes the reader laugh. It is a paradox: one has to use dubious means to achieve a goal; the implied author has to remain at a distance and mock the characters in order to show that indifference and ignorance cannot be tolerated. Kemp notices this ambivalence too: Spark satirizes and takes her characters very seriously at the same time.[186] Spark's humour is purposeful. Some critics say Spark is not a satirist but, in my opinion, the novels aim at[187] making the reader see the dangers of an indifferent world. Page argues that she lacks an essential attribute of the true satirist, who, "moved to anger or indignation or contempt by the world's folly and wickedness, wants to expose things as they are in order to change them, to make the world a better place". Spark accepts human folly and sin as part of the order of things. Page adds that most satire is social and political but her theological preoccupations exist on a different plane.[188] In my view, the reader does not have to accept the inhumanity and lack of feeling in the novels.

What is the implied author's relationship with the reader? Booth talks about the responsibilities of the implied author and those of the reader. He argues that it is very important that the readers and the implied authors pay attention to these. Implied authors have responsibilities to the real reader, to the work of art, to the implied reader, to society, and so on.[189] The reader has responsibilities to the writer, to the work of art (i.e. to the implied author), to herself, to other readers, to society, and so on.[190] Booth

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[186] Kemp 13.
[187] I am not talking about authorial intention here.
[188] Page 89-90.
[189] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 126-33.
[190] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 134-7.

argues that the reader has the moral obligation to read as the author intended. My view differs from that of Booth. Where as Booth seems to think that the meaning of a text resides more in the text (in the implied author) than in the reader, I am more inclined to think that it resides more in the reader. In my opinion, morality is intimately connected with reading but there is no moral imperative to read as the author intended since we cannot know what the authorial intention is. I do agree that readers should be aware of these things: they should examine the ways of thinking, feeling and judging that a text invites them; they should study what kind of values they affirm while reading. However, these do not entirely come from the implied author because the reader herself plays an important role in the formation of meaning (and thus in the morality of a novel). The aims of ethical criticism do still apply but the implied author is given less emphasis. The two novels prove my case. In BPR, the characters discuss morality, which makes the reader more aware of it. In DS, the characters do not do this but the reader can and should, nevertheless, pay attention to the issues of morals and ethics, and the values of the characters, the narrative audience and the authorial audience because the values (morals and ethics) are still there even if they are not explicitly talked about and they may affect the reader's ethos. Of course, texts partially guide the reader in her responses and interpretations; one cannot make up any kind of interpretations of a text. However, there should be an increased awareness of the ethical powers of texts.

Should the implied author intervene? Should she offer commentary on the morality of the characters? This goes back to the question of the reader's responsibilities: the moral imperative to read as the author intended. Can the reader be trusted? Booth does not seem to trust the reader (the critic may be trusted but it seems that Booth wants all the readers – whether critics or readers – to practice ethical criticism). Booth argues that the implied author has her responsibilities: she cannot

present a story in any way she wants. If the novel invites the reader to affirm dubious ethical values without authorial intervention, then it is highly questionable whether the reader should embrace its friendship offerings. Booth's views seem to bestow a huge weight upon the shoulders of the implied author and, on the other hand, undermine the abilities of the reader. He argues that the need for authorial judgment increases with an increasing complexity of virtues and vices within the same character.[191] In my opinion, authorial intervention is not as important as the reader's effort to practice ethical criticism by examining the values and norms of the characters and the different audience, and also the attitudes of the implied author and the narrator. The general atmosphere of selfish people in an uncaring world is enough for the reader – how can anyone see it as something normal, desirable or something to be achieved?[192]

Whether the implied should intervene or not, she intervenes in BPR and DS. For the better part of the novels she remains quite silent but in the final paragraph of BPR, it is said that

> But it was a sunny day for November, and, as he [Humphrey] drove swiftly past the Rye, he saw the children playing there and the women coming home from work with their shopping bags, the Rye for an instant looking like a cloud of green and gold, the people seeming to ride upon it, as you might say there was another world than this. (p. 143)

In my opinion, it is the implied author who is speaking because the language is different. Most of the novel consists of dialogue and there is not much description of things. In this passage, however, the words seem to imply good things. It seems more lyrical and not anything the narrator, who seems callous and detached, would say. Some critics see in these sentences reference to the afterlife, to the world we enter when we die but I think it is not necessary to see this as a religious reference. Indeed, there might be a different world than the one in which the people of Peckham Rye live, a

[191] Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* 187.
[192] Maybe someone does but this is my response.

world in which people truly care about one another, and a world in which morals and morality are not just empty words but actually mean something.

In DS, the ending is quite revealing as well. Richard tells the police what has happened, and he then

> sees already the gleaming buttons of the policemen's uniforms, hears the cold and the confiding, the hot and the barking voices, sees already the holsters and epaulets and all those trappings devised to protect them from the indecent exposure of fear and pity, pity and fear. (p. 160)

Up till now, DS has seemed quite callous and cold, without genuine human feeling. But at the end the words 'pity' and 'fear' enter the picture. There is irony in these last words. The whole novel seems to be "protected form the indecent exposure" of feelings, but it does not make things better; on the contrary, it is all very tragic. Whittaker comments on "fear and pity": "it is only at the end, when 'pity and fear' are finally stated openly, that we realise their relevance and their nagging omission from the whole story".[193] The characters and the narrator cannot see each other and at the end the implied author, who can see them, intervenes and notices those "trappings".

The implied author does not only intervene at the end. When Lise is in a taxi, it is said that her "lips part *blissfully* as she breathes in the air of the wide street on the city's outskirts" (p. 77, my italics). In my opinion the implied author is ironic: Lise is a beautiful heroine supposedly anxious and happy to meet her man, who turns out to be her killer. The implied author also intervenes when Lise and Mrs Fiedke are at a café: "Mrs Fiedke marvels *benevolently* while Lise *bashfully* plays with crumbs on the tablecloth" (my italics, p. 83). Here the implied author mocks Mrs Fiedke, who seems to be a simple woman living in the past. To her everything is quite innocent and Lise's oddities do not bother her for long she even tries to help Lise to find her "type". In a

[193] Whittaker 118.

way this is focalization, the implied author takes Mrs Fiedke's perspective but does it humouristically.

There is yet another instance, in which the implied author seems to take over, for a second: Bill is arrested after trying to rape Lise, and the reader is told that the police will take him into custody "*mercifully* for him as it turns out, since in the hours logically possible for the murder of Lise on that spot Bill is safely in a police cell, equally beyond suspicion and the exercise of his diet" (p. 147, my italics). This is hardly an objective comment. Since the narrator cannot know the characters' minds[194] and does not seem to care, these words cannot be hers. They are the implied author's, who seems to feel pity for Bill. Bill wants to be Lise's type although this would be most harmful for him: "mercifully" imply that the implied author acknowledges the overall situation and knows what will happen.

After considering the characters and their morals and ethics, the narrator and the implied author, it is time to examine the reader more closely. This will be done in the next chapter.

[194] It seems that it is not certain whether the narrator can see in the minds of the characters. It could be that Spark, the implied author, is ambiguous on purpose.

5. The Reader

This chapter concentrates on the reader and examines to possibility, or impossibility, of identifying with the characters. It also deals with the ethical consequences of identification or non-identification; it examines the potential effects that DS and BPR may have on the reader's ethos.

5.1 Identification with the Characters

In this chapter, I will focus on Lise and Dougal because they are the main characters in DS and BPR, respectively. Although it seems very hard to see what goes on in the characters' minds, the reader does not stop trying to figure out what motivates them. For instance, Lise must have a terrible crisis of identity. Why would she put so much effort and energy in trying to destroy herself? Before I move into examining Dougal and Lise, I will further study ethical criticism and its relation with self and other. The concepts of identification and vicarious imagining will also be dealt with.

Earlier I have used the word "ethos" when talking about ethical effects on the reader but the concept of the "self" is also connected with it. In my opinion, the self is another way of looking at the reader. From the psychological perspective, the self is 'one's "own person" as contrasted with "other persons" and objects outside [one]self'[195]. The concept of "self-concept" helps to define the self. One's cognitive self-concept affects one's interaction with other people. Through self-perception and social comparison, which are social cognitive processes, one develops a self-concept as one interacts with other people – one then engages in interpersonal behaviour influenced by that self-concept. [196] How one perceives oneself strongly affects one's attitudes, emotional reactions, ways of thinking and behaviour. Smith argues that self-

[195] Norman Holland, "Unity Identity Text Self," *Reader-response Criticism: from formalism to post-structuralism*, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) 120.
[196] Barry D. Smith, *Psychology: Science & Understanding* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998) 657-8.

perception can be seen as an extension of the concept of person perception: one perceive oneself in much the same way as one perceive others. If one has a high degree of self-awareness, one is more aware of the alternative perspectives of others and more sensitive to their needs and values.[197] In addition to self-perception, social comparison helps to develop a self-concept. According to the social comparison theory, we match our own characteristics against those of others; the self is a social mirror in which we learn to see ourselves as others see us. Self-concept is principally an individual's interpretation of how others view him or her.[198]

The concept of the "other" is connected with the self: the self and other are interconnected; there is no self without the other and vice versa. There are different selves and, from my point of view, there is my-self and selves of other people, the other. It is also important to see that in ethical criticism the boundary between self and other is not definite or stable.

The self and ethos are essential when one studies the reader, but what is the difference between them? When one talks from a psychological perspective, one uses the word "self". On the other hand, when one talks from the ethical point of view, one uses the word "ethos". In my opinion, ethos is a more abstract term than self.

Ethical criticism deals with the self, too. Booth's ethical criticism draws from the ancient tradition of seeing the self: there is no such thing as the isolated individual self, which ancient philosophy, classical rhetoric, traditional religion took for granted.[199] However, the notion of the self as individual and essentially private has proved astonishingly persistent in spite of all the critical alternatives available. Booth argues that if one think of oneself as someone enacting the various roles 'assigned' to one, one discovers that there are no clear boundaries between the others who are somehow both

[197] Smith 666-8.
[198] Smith 668.
[199] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 238.

outside and inside me and the 'me' that the others are 'in'. He says that our primary, natural condition is to be joined.[200] What happens with the self when one makes an attempt to embrace others? Booth thinks it may easily lead to "an anxiety about mere conformism". When one looks inside, one finds no core; when one looks outward, one may feel threatened by multiplicity: "to take on all the roles offered me would be to dissolve in the corrosive acids of surrounding influences, experienced as 'they-ness'".[201] Booth points out that there can be another kind of loss of self into others: one is pledged only to perform the roles one chooses as well as possible and one may hope to develop an ethical criticism, a caring about the other. There can then be "a kind of free-flow in both directions, annihilating all anxiety about boundaries". The ideal situation is that there would be no conflict between altruism and self-ishness. Booth says we must learn to distinguish those 'others' who will nurture from those who may cripple. The company one keeps is very important to Booth and he says that it should be so to us too.[202]

The relationship between the reader and fictional characters involves elements of imitation. Gregory talks about the effects that literary works may have. He says that there can be direct imitations of fiction and they have moral and ethical consequences. He claims that we all imitate fictional models much more frequently than we think; we imitate less obviously tangible features like values and attitudes, and values and attitudes affect action in the end "but such a remove of distance and time as may leave us unaware of how deeply our actions are rooted in fictional models". Assuming roles is important if we want to take a place in society and to be recognised as persons.[203]

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[200] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 239-40.
[201] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 265.
[202] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 266, 268.
[203] Gregory, 7-8.

Imitation is connected with identification. If the reader can identify with a character, if she can step into her shoes and imagine what it is like to be her, imitation will work better. Gregory argues that

> "vicarious imagination gives us the power to identify, to experience others' feelings and ideas and experience – their entire mode of being – as if they were our own…How identification works seems tied …to the way our imagination, acting as a bridge, allows us to leave the boundaries that make up our own sense of self…in order to take on other senses of selves".[204]

Vicarious imagining is a powerful and important form of learning and learning is a powerful and important part of character – what we know is a large part of who we are. Stories are answer to the constraints of brevity and linearity – no one can or does rely on first-hand experience.[205]

Imitation, identification and vicarious imagining may have effects on the ethos or the self we are and will become. According to Gregory, "there are ethically better and worse versions of our selves always pending and always being realized". The moral character is always in motion. The choices we make reflect the self we are and they are also a creation of the self we are becoming. Becoming a self is something we do, not something we are; it is a consequence of the actions we choose – the self does not react to forces such as culture, history, language, master narratives, gender, class, race with no intervention from inside, from the person's will or consciousness. We are never so situated that we are fully formed and forever fixed. Gregory does not believe in the poststructuralist views of a completely constructed self 'built up' "at the site of cultural intersections" although he does not say that the self is entirely stable and atomistic. We have freedom to choose morally – to choose this ethos over that ethos and thus decide who we are and who we are to become.[206]

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[204] Gregory 11.
[205] Gregory 11.
[206] Gregory 9-10.

5.1.1 Dougal Douglas

Dougal Douglas seems to be an elusive character; it seems a little difficult to try to grasp him. He changes his name: at Meadows, Meade & Grindley, he is Dougal Douglas; at Drover Willis, he is Douglas Dougal; to Miss Cheeseman, the woman whose autobiography he is writing, he is Mr Dougal-Douglas. He also changes his appearance all the time: while Mr Druce interviews him, he changes roles – he is a confessor in his box, divorce judge, etc. Dougal tells a great deal of lies and the story he tells depends on the person he is telling it. It can be argued that a person who is so disintegrated is quite impossible to identify with.

In addition to being elusive, Dougal is portrayed as an evil character from the start. The ending is revealed at the beginning (Humphrey will leave Dixie at the altar), and it casts a dark cloud over Dougal: Humphrey's and Dixie's break-up is regarded by some people as Dougal's fault, and he seems to be a character who is up to no good and will cause trouble. There are also many hints that Dougal is the Devil or at least a diabolical character:

> Dougal describes dreams that he has had to Humphrey: "of girls in factories doing a dance…I see the Devil in the guise of a chap from Cambridge who does motion-study, and he's the choreographer" (p. 50).
>
> Dougal looked at Humphrey "like a succubus whose mouth is its eyes" (p. 28).
>
> Humphrey: "You supposed to be the Devil, then?", Dougal: "No, oh, no, I'm only supposed to be one of the wicked spirits that wander through the world for the ruin of souls" (p. 77).

Some of the characters think he is inhuman, including Humphrey and Mr Weedin, who think he is a diabolical agent, if not the Devil. Dougal also seems to know things he should not know: he knows Merle and Mr Druce are having an affair. When Merle asks him about this, he replies "I've got second sight" (p. 30). Dougal does not seem to be a very likeable character, nor does he appear to be very good object of sympathy since he

seems to cause a great deal of trouble. Does it mean that we cannot identify with unpleasant characters? If we are not told much about the characters, it makes it hard for us to identify with them, even more so if they are evil. In my opinion, we can identify with characters who have flaws. We are humans and thus fallible. The question is: how much imperfection can the reader tolerate? I suppose it depends on whether the character's motivations are explained, whether she regrets, shows signs of remorse or ponders seriously her situation and shows that she cares about others and not just about herself; in short, if her 'evilness' is somehow justified. Booth talks about how the implied author can control sympathy: even characters whose behaviour would be intolerable to us in real life can be made sympathetic by means of this "paralogical" proof that they are human beings like ourselves. Withholding the hero the right to reflect his own story can prevent too much identification. But to gain moral sympathy, in addition to the generalized sympathy inside views can provide, the author must give us evidence of a character's capacity for admirable choice.[207]

Dougal's arrival seems to cause problems in the characters' relationships. However, one should think whether the problems were already there or whether he only gave the characters a little nudge towards the direction they were already heading. Humphrey leaves Dixie at the altar. But it can be argued that they cannot really see each other and they are together only out of habit or for some other reason. The same is true for Merle and Mr Druce although they have a more dreadful ending: he stabs her to death. Can Dougal be blamed for the other violent acts in Peckham? He manipulates, lies and provokes people but the problems are already there from the beginning. He does not seem to be a very nice person nor is he utterly bad. Dougal seems to be an ambiguous character. As Kane says, he is detached and does not seem to care about the

[207] Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* 278, 282, 418.

people[208] but, sometimes, it seems that he wants to "jolt the whole town into a new perception of moral values".[209] He does seem to draw the characters', and at the same time the reader's, attention to their 'moralities'. Although Bold connects Spark's morality closely to her religion he has a point: "the theme of moral desolation is implicit in the behaviour of characters provoked into action by the interference of a diabolical agent".[210] There is moral desolation, but, in my opinion, the characters do not need much provocation. Kane says that only Karl Malkoff has recognised the morally instructive role that the demonic character plays. Malkoff argues that "[w]hat Dougal offers is freedom from the confines of artificial moralities; he preaches the respect for oneself that must precede respect for others"[211]. There is definitely irony in Dougal's character: a morally dubious character, "the Devil", teaches the characters about morals. They do not really repent, or change their ways. After Dougal leaves, they go on living as usual.

In my opinion, the reader cannot identify herself with Dougal. One of the main reasons is the lack of interior characterization. The cold and detached manner of the narrator prevents empathy[212]: if the reader cannot see and know all the facts about why the character is behaving in a certain way, she cannot identify with the character. Another reason is that Dougal seems more inhuman than human. He seems to possess supernatural qualities, for instance, at the cemetery he poses as an angel and then as an angel-devil[213]. However, he does not seem a totally unlikeable character since he exposes the false moralities and hypocrisies of the people in Peckham; he makes them

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[208] Dougal seems to be understanding and yet seems to want to make the characters see their false morals. For instance, he is quite sympathetic towards Miss Frierne, saying "You are too innocent for this wicked world" (p. 85). But when she tells him that she had refused to go and talk to her brother, a homeless man who she has not seen in many years, he says she should have approached him.
[209] Kane 85.
[210] Bold 58.
[211] In Kane 84 (Karl Malkoff, *Muriel Spark* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968) 24).
[212] Empathy is the "ability to share the emotions of another person, and to understand that person's point of view" (Eysenck 241).
[213] "He posed like an angel-devil, with his hump shoulder and gleaming smile, and his fingers of each hand widespread against the sky" (p. 30).

look ridiculous although there is a bleak edge to it since some of the characters suffer a great deal. Dougal seems to be both good and bad.

In spite of not being able to identify with Dougal, the reader is still faced with Dougal's values and those of the other characters. Dougal seems to care and, at the same time, does not care. The other characters are hypocrites and indifferent and ignorant people. How does the reader "succumb" then? If the values are so different from one's own, the reader succumbs but rejects them quite quickly. The narrator does not offer much help to the reader but that does not matter in the end. The implied author seems to have different values from the narrator and the characters' but I do not think the reader is dependent on her attitude in her rejection (or acceptance if that would be the case). Although the characters (or the narrator) cannot see each other, the same does not apply to the reader – at least when she practices ethical criticism. Booth talks about roles that the reader tries out. Ethical criticism concerns with the acceptance and refusal of character roles that texts offer. As Booth says, the reader has to decide whether a proffered new role is one that she can afford to take on.[214] We are social selves and we should acknowledge the ethical power that narratives have and Booth maintains that we should try on for size the character roles offered us.[215] As Booth sees it, the reader should try to see the characters and evaluate the role that they offer.

5.1.2 Lise

The character of Lise poses similar problems to Dougal's character, which is due to Spark's technique: she does not use an omniscient narrator who would tell us what goes on in the character's mind. The narrator does not seem to know what motivates her, and why she behaves the way she does although the narrator, at times, seems ambiguous

[214] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 260.
[215] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 268.

and untrustworthy. Lise seems controversial and she sometimes acts in a very strange fashion. The reader may think that the things she does are somehow connected with her murder[216] but not everything is explained. This is strange considering the shortness of the novel – in such a short novel, one would imagine that every word and phrase counts and nothing is wasted. For instance, at the ladies' room at the Hilton hotel she writes on the package that contains the ties (that will be used in her murder) "Papa"[217] and on another bag she writes "Olga" with her lipstick. The reader will be puzzled at her behaviour. Who is Olga? And why does she buy an electric food blender at the department store? These things are not explained. She seems to be a mystery or a very confused young woman who does not know what she is doing. It seems that the reader's role increases when she is faced with these odd details.

While Dougal seems to be a very changing character on the surface, a great deal of attention is paid to Lise's physical appearance, to her clothes and her lips: her lips are usually pressed together, implying disapproval. Her mouth is described to be "a final and a judging mouth, a precision instrument, a detail-warden of a mouth" (p. 12), and "[h]er nose is short and wider than it will look in the likeness constructed partly by the method of identikit, partly by actual photography, soon to be published in the newspapers of four languages" (p. 26). The reader may have difficulties in identifying with Lise since she seems to be nothing else but her physical appearance. Pearlman thinks she does not have any core: she has no reality because no one knows her; she is as depersonalised as the world she inhabits. She is the dress, and there is no philosophy, identity, morality, nationality or reality under the dress which would identify her; there

[216] When Lise buys scarves and neckties, or when a villa is mentioned, the reader will speculate that these things may be connected to her murder.
[217] Lise obviously has issues with men. Maybe it all derives from her relationship with her father. The package could be a kind of suicide note to her father.

is no distinction between reality and appearance. In short, she is "a hollow woman in an emotional wasteland".[218]

Lise's relationships with other characters are characterized by her search of her "type": All the men seem potential candidates and she evaluates them on the basis of her definition of her type (what that really is we do not learn). Some of the men seem to be afraid of her and this puzzles her: "He stares, as if recognising her…Something about Lise…has caused a kind of paralysis in his act of fetching out some papers from his brief-case" (p. 40). It seems as if they sense what she has on her mind, that she is on the look-out for a man who would kill her, according to her own plan. It also seems that she does not see men as real people; they are anonymous. Any man is a potential murderer (or a rapist), which signifies a promise, not a threat. Identification seems quite difficult considering Lise's search and her attitude to men.

While Lise cannot really see men, she does not care much about the women either: She and Mrs Fiedke go to the toilet in the department store. The old lady stays a long time in the cubicle, and Lise knocks and calls to her. When another woman appears and asks who she is, Lise replies "I don't know…I'll go and get someone" (p. 88). Lise never gets anyone and Mrs Fiedke is helped by other women.

Lise is a mess and her actions do not always make sense; the reader cannot see inside of her and there seems to be nothing there; she is also taking part in a quest that will end her life. These things make it quite impossible to identify with her. She does not seem very sympathetic either since she does not seem to care about other people. It is quite clear that anyone who wants to herself has to have some serious problems[219], some sort of serious identity crisis. The fact that Lise is looking for her murderer and the whole novel emphasizes this makes the reader wonder, "why is she doing this?"

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[218] Pearlman 101, 103.

[219] It is said in the novel that she has worked continually in the accountants' office for sixteen years, except for the months when she was ill. However, it is not told what was wrong with her.

The reader cannot find answers, not enough anyway and nothing can fully explain why she is doing this.

The reader cannot identify with Lise or with Dougal. In my opinion, she cannot really identify with the other characters either. In DS, Lise is the only main character and there is very little information on her, let alone on other characters. They seem one-sided: for instance, Richard is a 'recovering' sex-offender and Bill is all about his macrobiotics. The characters do not seem multi-faceted. Nor are the characters multi-faceted in BPR. There should be more information on these characters, on their motivations, before the reader could identify with them. They seem to be self-centred and thus unlikable.

According to Booth, the implied author asks us to be this kind of people (whatever that means), to live life this way for the duration of the reading of the novel – to imitate the lives of the characters. As far as Spark is concerned, we succumb and immerse in the story but we do not identify with the main characters. They do have values and attitudes but their selfishness and indifference is of too general kind that we could try their roles. More information is needed in order for us to identify and imitate the characters. But this does not mean we would leave the experience of reading these novels untouched or unchanged. There are still the values of the characters, and those of the narrative and authorial audiences. The overall sense of dislocation and of being lost is very strong. Even if the characters do not touch us very deeply and we do not start imitating them, the novels do send a message; the values are there all the same – selfishness, lack of caring and, in general, not seeing other people.

5.2 Potential Effects on the Reader's Ethos

In this chapter the potential effects on the reader's ethos will be dealt with. First, I will deal with the way in which the novels represent society and the individual and how it

may affect the reader. Then I will discuss what kind of ethical effects there can be if the reader cannot identify with the characters. This issue is connected with attitudes and values. Moreover, the subjectivity of the readers' responses and interpretations needs to be considered. The reader is also aware that she is reading fiction; Spark's novels do not even try to be realistic. I will show how this affects the potential effects. Finally, I will consider DS and BPR as friendship offerings. Should they be embraced or rejected?

Spark seems to be saying that people are lost, they do harm to themselves and others – consciously and unconsciously – and no one can see one another. Spark's novels are about individuals but they are also about society. As Pearlman argues, "[c]haracters seem locked in by enclosed space and, at the same time, curiously detached from the societal structure. Society does not imprison them since the societal structure is often so amorphously portrayed", for instance in DS. The enervating power of limiting space defines the characters; the more her characters are enclosed by limited space, the more their actions take on an absurd quality.[220] Society is sick and so are the people in it; since people cannot see themselves or other people, they spread this 'disease' to other people, who then cannot see themselves or others – it is a never-ending cycle. I do not think there should be identification even if that was possible. Spark paints a picture of society that should not exist, a picture that is too grim to be imitated.

If the reader does not identify with the characters, what are the potential effects on her ethos? Do the values of the characters affect her? When the reader practices ethical criticism, she acknowledges that values may have an effect on her. She will ponder the issues of self and other, morals, ethics and morality. In BPR, there is a special emphasis on these issues, which makes the reader even more aware of them and

[220] Pearlman 42.

makes her think about them in more depth[221]. DS, too, deals with morality but the characters do not talk about it like in BPR. In spite of this, the reader will think about the relationships between men and women since they are one of the novel's main concerns. The novel is stripped bare of everything that is not absolutely necessary. One might also argue that it has been stripped too bare. In my opinion, this focuses the reader's attention on every detail about Lise and her conversations and behaviour with different people, especially men. The style is so minimalist that the reader has to be very careful and thorough when she reads.

There can be effects on the reader's ethos although they may not be very easily discernible. Attitudes and values are less tangible than actions. Nevertheless, attitudes and values ultimately influence our behaviour. An anticonsequentalist[222] would disagree; he would doubt that there are any consequences at all. But as Carroll argues, "[i]f one endorses certain variations of the cultivation approach, one may argue that one's moral assessments of artworks are based not on forecasts of the behaviour that the artworks are likely to elicit, but on the quality of the moral experience that the artwork encourages as the audience engages with it". Although the ethical critic does not have to claim anything about the likely behavioural effects of the work, he or she can still comment on the moral value of the pathways that the readers are invited to follow.[223]

How subjective are these effects? I have argued that reading literature may have real effects, more or less tangible. All responses do not have to be the same but there cannot be an infinite number of responses either. As Booth says, there is no such thing

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[221] This refers to the cultivation approach: literature can hone our ethical skills and also exercise and refine our moral understanding.
[222] The anticonsequentalist wonders how the ethical critic knows that the works in question will have the behavioural consequences imputed to them. There seems to be no knowledge of regurlarly recurring patterns of behaviour that predictably follow from exposure to fiction. If art does not have such consequences, there is no point in attempting to evaluate art ethically (Carroll 355-6).
[223] Carroll 370.

as total openness: every use of language carries a freight of values or more or less fixed norms. Even if there were such a thing as a totally open work, every reader would automatically try to close it in order to make something of it.[224] Booth also points out that we can draw quite diverse values from what we call the same story, depending on our age and circumstance.[225] What matters here is that the reader acknowledges that there may be effects and she ought to study the text in order to find out what they may be. One sould also remember the relativity of friendship offerings, as Booth argues.[226]

Responses may vary but the reader is constantly reminded that she is reading fiction. In my opinion, this is because the reader should not forget her position: she is to actively consider the issues of morality and their relevance to her own life. The novels do not try to be realistic: there are supernatural elements (Dougal's diabolical features), time is distorted (the future woven in the present in DS), and the theme of writing is recurrent (Dougal is writing Miss Cheeseman's autobiography by inventing and lying about things that have happened to her in the past, Lise is writing her own destiny). Language itself can be deceptive; words do not mean what they normally mean, such as the word "immoral". Dougal puts together a list of phrases that Miss Cheeseman might use, and they are horrible clichés, such as "He spelt disaster to me", "We were living a lie", "They were poles apart", "Once more fate intervened" (p. 91). DS is not realistic in the sense that there are so many reversals in it: looking for the man of one's dreams turns into looking for your killer; shopping turns into buying murder weapons, and so on. It is a "savage parody", as Kemp puts it.[227]

How should one deal with Muriel Spark's novels as friendship offerings? Can one embrace them as friends? As I have pointed out earlier, much depends on the reader

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[224] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 62.
[225] Booth, *The Company We Keep* 69.
[226] See Booth, *The Company We Keep* 489.
[227] Kemp 122.

herself. She has responsibilities, which are not quite the same as Booth has in mind. Readers should be aware that novels may make them affirm certain values and they should acknowledge that there may be potential ethical effects, i.e. their ethoses change, however slightly. In my opinion, Spark's friendship offerings (i.e. how the reader sees the novels, not authorial intention) are worthy of embrace because they make us seriously think about issues of morality; morals and ethics are at the centre of DS and BPR, and morality also lies in the reader. The reader has to take an active role. As far as coduction is concerned, critical judgments seem to be arrived at through a communal endeavour. Spark's criticism seems to support this view: some of Spark's critics seem almost unanimous in their views on her religion and its effects on her work. However, I think the critics are not the only ones who can practice coduction; all the readers can and should do this. Spark's is a very popular author and her readers are usually not critics.

6. Conclusions

Morality can be studied in connection with religion but, in my opinion, this does not necessarily have to be the case. Reading literature, or any texts, always involves moral considerations; we, as human beings, cannot read without thinking moral issues since we are moral beings and literature is filled with depictions of relationships between people. Morals, after all, are basically about relationships between people, about how they see and treat each other. In Spark's two novels, DS and BPR, the issue of morals is much more important than religion: everywhere there are characters who cannot see themselves or other characters, the lack of genuine caring is so conspicuous that the reader is bound to notice it.

Reading literary text does not only involve analysing the morals and ethics of the characters, or considering the text from the humanist perspective. It also involves the reader acknowledging that her own self or ethos may be affected. The reader practises ethical criticism by evaluating the ways of thinking and feeling that the text evokes, by thinking what kind of values she affirms while reading. Reading literature may influence the reader's ethos: attitudes and values may change and ultimately behaviour although this is harder to prove. These potential effects are linked with vicarious imagining, identification and imitation. If the reader can see inside the character's mind and identify with her, she can imitate her attitudes and values.

The sexual relations and violence tell a grim tale of the morals of the characters. The way they communicate with each other also reflects the way they see themselves and other characters. They seem to be lost, their identities disintegrated. They seem to live on a very superficial level that does not take a person fully into account; physical appearances and material things are emphasized – there is no love and sex is only physical. It seems impossible to identify with disintegrated characters: if only one or two sides are shown, one can hardly form an adequate picture of these characters. Their

sexual behaviour and violent behaviour speaks volumes, and what is striking is the violence against women. The novels represent such a "moral wasteland" that the reader cannot but react. Although the reader has to first immerse in the novel, or succumb, she will quite quickly reject these values that imply selfishness and disregard for other people.

BPR and DS are not very different from each other although in BPR the characters discuss morality and in DS they do not. In fact, in BPR the characters do not really care about morals; they are eager to judge other people but are incapable of applying the same rules to themselves. For them words, such as "morality", are empty and without real meaning. Thus the situation is basically the same in the two novels: the characters cannot see themselves or other characters.

In addition to the characters' morals and ethics, the narrator's and the implied author's attitudes to the characters affect the reader's responses and interpretations. The values of the ideal narrative and authorial audiences influence the final judgment. In DS and BPR, there is a sense of coldness, impersonality and callousness. The style reflects and reinforces the subject matter: it is a very cruel and heartless world, in which no one seems to care about anyone except themselves. Even the narrator seems a little indifferent and unreliable; she does not seem to be able the see the characters. The implied author is ambiguous too: her relationship with the characters is ambivalent; she mocks and ridicules the characters but at the same time cares about them. Spark, the implied author, uses irony to show what is wrong. She uses dubious means to achieve a goal; she has to remain at a distance and mock the characters and use a cold and callous narrator in order to show that indifference and ignorance cannot be tolerated. She intervenes only a few times but, in my opinion, there is no need for more interventions. The lack of humanism and of genuine feelings of love and caring will be enough for the reader.

The implied author's, the narrator's and the characters' attitudes together influence the reader's ethical judgment of the novels. Even if the reader cannot identify with the characters and receive a more profound picture of the characters, she can nevertheless benefit from her encounter with them. She can regard it as a useful exercise in improving her moral understanding and in honing her ethical skills since such minimalist novels as BPR and DS, which have morals and ethics as their main topics, make the reader pay more attention to every detail in the novels and consider the moral dimensions of relationships. Such novels should be regarded as friends.

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