

Molly Listen

ENGL 3822

Brodie, Jean is Not my Lover

In *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Jean Brodie's character is inferred and constructed according to her appearance, speech, and behavior over the course of the novel. Her character traits are given depth through multifarious focalizations by the narrator, Sandy Stranger, the Brodie set, and by Miss Jean Brodie herself. This analysis aims to distinguish between the questions, "who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective? and the very different question who is the narrator? – or, more simply, the question who sees? and the question who speaks?" (Genette 186). Each different focalization and perspective provides a distinct method of characterization and reveals differing insight into Miss Brodie's physical appearance, actions, and personality traits. An in-depth analysis and exploration of Jean Brodie's character over the course of the novel allows for a deeper grasp and appreciation of her role and influence in the plot. An understanding of characterization and focalization will indicate Jean Brodie's function in the text and implicate the peculiar school teacher's significance in the Brodie set's lives and in society at large.

In terms of physical characteristics, Jean Brodie is portrayed as large, dark, and Roman. She is described as a "mighty woman," as "fairly large" compared to Mr. Lowther, and as "towering above" Sandy (6, 94, 112). These portrayals suggest her masculinity and dominance over other characters in the text. As described by the narrator, "Miss Brodie's bones were small, although her eyes, nose and mouth were large" (107). This physical description captures Miss Brodie's conflicting and often self-contradictory traits. Her nose is described as "arched and proud" and again "her nose arched proudly" (27, 124). The repetition of "proud," suggests that

she is egocentric and noble. The brown color of her hair and her tendency to hold her head up are repeated several times. When teaching, she is described as having her “brown head held high,” “lifted her fine dark Roman head with dignity,” and even in old age, “her hair was still brown, and coiled matriarchally at the nape of her neck” (8, 48, 124). These portrayals indicate that she is confident, motherly, and youthful. She is described as “dark” by Mr. Lloyd and by the narrator, “It was difficult to see how Teddy Lloyd had imposed the dark and Roman face of Miss Brodie on that of pale Rose” (105, 107). These physical traits, although largely external, and thus, outside of Jean Brodie’s control, implicate the way that she is perceived by others. Miss Brodie’s “dark” physical qualities are placed in contrast to the the “red-gold hair” of Gordon Lowther, the “golden lock” of Teddy Lloyd, or the blond hair, pale skin, and blue eyes of Rose (76, 108, 3, 105). As described in *Narrative Fiction*, “the metonymic relation between external appearance and character traits has remained a powerful resource in the hands of many writers” (65). These external traits, coupled with Miss Brodie’s status as a “Roman” distinguish her as an outsider to the native Edinburgh students and staff of the Marcia Blaine School.

In addition to her permanent physical traits, Jean Brodie’s choice of clothing correlates with her expression of identity. After spending time in Italy over a holiday, Jean Brodie says she “wore a long black gown with a lace mantilla, and looked magnificent” (46). At various other points in the novel, she wears a “loose brown tweed coat,” a “brown felt hat,” a “brown dress like a gladiator,” and a “long-preserved dark muquash coat” (27, 27, 47, 58). These choices in dress point to a correlation with her political affiliations. When she switches allegiances from Mussolini to Hitler, she says that the German brown-shirts “were exactly the same as the Italian black, only more reliable” (104). However, her wardrobe is not restricted to only dark clothing. Jean Brodie also describes herself wearing a “silk dress with the large red poppies which is just

right for my colouring” (46). At one point, she wears “heather-blue tweed,” but the light color of her outfit is placed in contrast to “the brown of a recent holiday in Egypt” (113). Each of these vibrant outfit choices are described in contrast to Miss Brodie’s dark skin. After she is rumored to be kissing Mr. Lloyd, Sandy and Jenny notice a “change” in Miss Brodie, which indicated by a modification in her wardrobe. The narrator explains that Miss Brodie, “wore newer clothes and with them a flowing amber necklace which was of such real amber that, as she once showed them, it had magnetic properties when rubbed and then applied to a piece of paper” (55). Miss Brodie’s necklace suggests her magnetizing and powerful influence over the girls’ lives. Her changing choice of wardrobe mimics her inconsistent expression of identity. Outfit selections indicate her political loyalties, amplify her “darkness,” and contrast her to the “orderly type” of traditional school mistresses (44). Over the span of the novel, Miss Brodie’s physical descriptions and shifting choices of clothing give insight into her wavering portrayal of self.

As the most focalized character, Jean Brodie’s interactions with other characters indicate personal information that she chooses to withhold or reveal to the Brodie set or to other characters in the novel. Often, Miss Brodie’s perspective is inferred through direct speech and not through exploration of her inner thoughts or feelings. This is an example of what Genette describes as, “the hero performs in front of us without our ever being allowed to know his thoughts or feelings” (Genette 190). In *Narrative Fiction*, Rimmon-Kenan describes that “A character’s speech, whether in conversation or as a silent activity of the mind, can be indicative of a trait or traits both through its content and through its form” (Rimmon-Kenan 62). This means that a character’s spoken words and internal thoughts, often revealed by the narrator and not through Miss Brodie’s focalization, can help to pinpoint a character’s specific traits. Miss Brodie demonstrates her dedication to the Brodie set when she tells them, “You girls are my

vocation. If I were to receive a proposal of marriage tomorrow from the Lord Lyon King-of-Arms I would decline it. I am dedicated to you in my prime” (22). This example indicates Miss Brodie’s status as an intra-homo-autodiegetic narrator, a status she frequently embodies. She is part of the action, within the level of the diegesis, and is in the “spotlight” of the scene. Miss Brodie also describes her political affiliations on several occasions in class when she tells her students of Mussolini’s fascisti and says that Mussolini “has performed feats of magnitude and unemployment is even farther abolished under him than it was last year” (47). Later, her political allegiance shifts to Hitler, but after the war, she admits, “Hitler *was* rather naughty” (131). The casual shift from enthusiastic fascist to political indifference indicates her “state of fluctuating development” (45). Miss Brodie uses her classroom as a political forum, distancing her from the “narrow-minded, half-educated” school-teachers who follow the rigid curriculum and are described as “pacifists” (114). In lieu of traditional education, Miss Brodie provides her own lessons, claiming, “But Safety does not come first. Goodness, Truth and Beauty come first” (7). In contrast to her support of “goodness” during class, Miss Brodie’s harshness is revealed through her treatment of Mary, when she “grasped Mary’s arm, jerked her to her feet and propelled her to the door where she thrust her outside and shut her out” (52). She is portrayed as gentle and motherly while at the same time is also depicted as an authoritarian enforcer. Her fluctuating character is also indicated by Sandy’s perception of her body. From Sandy’s focalization, “Some days it seemed to Sandy that Miss Brodie’s chest was flat, no bulges at all, but straight as her back. On other days her chest was breast-shaped and large, very noticeable” (8). Miss Brodie’s body is described as paradoxically juvenile and womanly, displaying physical characteristics that shift from day to day. Miss Brodie’s physical traits, as perceived from Sandy’s focalization, suggests Sandy’s constantly wavering opinion of her teacher and portrays

Miss Brodie's presence as ephemeral and erratic. Miss Brodie's often contradictory appearance, actions, and speech reveal her character's lack of singularity.

Miss Brodie's character can also be deduced through habitual speech and action.

Repeated sayings and actions capture many of the nuances of Miss Brodie's character that cannot be determined from a statement that is said only once. Over the course of the novel, Miss Brodie repeatedly stresses that "these are the years of my prime" while making frequent, almost incessant reference to being in her "prime" (6,8,22,25,48,58,103,129). On several occasions, she claims that there must be "a leaven in the lump," which is a reference to the Bible (6, 51,119). She also tells the members of the Brodie set that she will make them the "crème de la crème" on multiple occasions (5,11,21, 102). In addition, Miss Brodie makes frequent reference to her fear of being "betrayed," which indicates how much she values loyalty (39, 63, 120, 136). Frequent repetition of phrases or habitual actions "reveal the character's unchanging or static aspect" (Rimmon-Kenan 61). In the classroom, the narrator describes a "long division sum she always kept on the blackboard in case of intrusions from outside during any arithmetic period when Miss Brodie should happen not to be teaching arithmetic (46). This example reveals the regularity of Miss Brodie's non-school-related lessons even while the girls are in the classroom. From the narrator's focalization, "Miss Brodie frequently took the little girls to the art galleries and museums" (19). The frequency of this action suggests that Miss Brodie spends a significant amount of time with the Brodie set outside of class and makes an effort to make them appreciate art and history. In addition, "Miss Brodie was always very careful to impress the parents of her set and to win their approval and gratitude" (111). Miss Brodie's relationship with her students' parents indicates her desire to be a well-liked and trusted figure in the girls' personal lives. Miss Brodie's seemingly forced presence in the girls' lives outside out school characterizes her as

manipulative and controlling. She attempts to show possession over the girls in the Brodie set when she says, “It is because you are mine” while justifying why Teddy Lloyd is so interested in painting each member of her set (103). The frequency and habituation of speech and actions allow for a glimpse into Miss Brodie’s normal routine, the regularity of seeing students outside of class, and the lessons that are continually reinforced to the Brodie set by their teacher.

The unnamed narrator is on the highest narrational level, making him or her at a higher level than any other character in the novel. The narrator lives outside the storyworld and exists outside of the diegesis, while acting as a peripheral observer and commentator on Miss Brodie and the other characters. As described in *Narrative Fiction*, the narrator represents a focalizer who “is located at a point far above the object(s) of his perception” (Rimmon-Kenan 78). From the focalized perspective of the narrator, Miss Brodie is characterized as “dangerous” (7). The narrator describes how the Brodie set “were taken into her confidence, they understood her private life and her feud with the headmistress and the allies of the headmistress” (25). This quote qualifies the narrator’s position as an extra-heterodiegetic narrator. The narrator’s elevated perspective, external from the diegesis, indicates a higher degree of insight than from the viewpoints of characters who participate in the action. As a result of his or her external position, the narrator has the ability to transgress time and to analyze Miss Brodie’s character at various points in time and space. The narrator shows frequent hostility toward Miss Brodie, and indicates, “there was nothing outwardly odd about Miss Brodie. Inwardly was a different matter” (45). This example demonstrates the narrator’s power to glance into Jean Brodie’s mind. From the narrator’s omniscient perspective, he or she is the only character who is able to examine characters both internally and externally. Aside from these small insights from the narrator’s focalization, the mental state of Miss Brodie can only be inferred from her interactions and

perceptions by others. However, at times, the narrator rescinds his or her powers, revealing less than perhaps is known, “It was impossible to know how much Miss Brodie planned by deliberation, or how much she worked by instinct alone” (83). The narrator indicates that Miss Brodie’s actions are “impossible to know” by the characters on the level of the diegesis, while at the same time suggesting that his or her external focalization allows for a more in-depth or psychological understanding of Miss Brodie’s character. When the Brodie set is in Senior school, the narrator reveals, “By the time their friendship with Miss Brodie was of seven years’ standing, it had worked itself into their bones, so that they could not break away without, as it were, splitting their bones to do so” (123). This suggests that, over the course of their companionship, Miss Brodie has forcibly wedged herself into the identity of each member of the Brodie set. As a result, the narrator characterizes Jean Brodie as a malicious character, who aims to prevent the Brodie girls from divorcing themselves from her influence or from one another. The narrator, although purportedly outside of the action, demonstrates agency in sculpting the implied reader’s perception through his or her cynical focalization and portrayal of Miss Brodie.

Contrasted to the unnamed narrator’s extradiegetic frame, Sandy is an intradiegetic narrator because she lives in the storyworld and participates in the action alongside the other characters. Sandy’s focalization of Miss Brodie is frequently marked with eye imagery, “Sandy watched Miss Brodie through her little pale eyes, screwed them smaller and shut her lips tight” (20). Sandy’s small, beady eyes characterize her as a judgmental observer of Miss Brodie’s speech and movements. In their youth, Sandy and Jenny’s story, “The Mountain Eyrie,” indicates admiration and curiosity of Miss Brodie’s love affairs (17). When the Brodie set is young, they “placed Miss Brodie on the lofty lion’s back back of Arthur’s Seat, with only the sky for roof and bracken for bed. The broad parkland rolled away beneath her gaze to the

accompanying flash and crash of a thunderstorm” (76). This example heightens Miss Brodie as a regal figure, or as an all-powerful God with providential ability to manipulate the weather. On several occasions, Sandy focalizes Miss Brodie as a god-like figure, “Sandy saw her smile back as would a goddess with superior understanding smile back as should a goddess with superior understanding smile to a god away on the mountain tops” (52). In this example, Sandy is an intra-homo-allodiegetic narrator because she is not in the “spotlight” of this scene. When Sandy and the other members of the Brodie set are walking to the Old Town, Sandy “perceived herself, the absent Jenny, the ever-blamed Mary, Rose, Eunice and Monica, all in a frightening little moment, in unified compliance to the destiny of Miss Brodie, as if God had willed them to birth for that purpose” (30). This example, from Sandy’s focalization, portrays Miss Brodie as an authoritarian leader, seemingly guiding the wandering members of the Brodie set toward their divine destiny. This is also an example of Sandy’s position as an intra-homo-autodiegetic narrator because she is a part of the action and storyworld, and finds herself in the “spotlight” of the action in this scene. Miss Brodie is focalized by Sandy as a religious or providential character several other times over the course of the novel. The narrator provides a glimpse into Sandy’s mind when she “began to sense what went to the makings of Miss Brodie who had elected herself to grace (116). After Miss Brodie has fallen completely out of Sandy’s favor, Sandy’s focalization portrays a much more pessimistic view of Miss Brodie, “She thinks she is Providence, thought Sandy, she thinks she is the God of Calvin, she sees the beginning and the end” (129). These focalizations by Sandy characterize Miss Brodie as a dominant, forceful, and even fearful leader. In addition, they show how a single trait, Miss Brodie’s god-like importance in the Sandy’s life, can be focalized differently at various stages in the novel’s storyline and at various stages as Sandy grows up.

Sandy's perception of Miss Brodie's character is also portrayed through analogous landscapes. Through Sandy's childhood focalization, the Marcia Blaine School "had always been lit with the sun or, in winter, with a pearly north light" (34). Later, Miss Brodie's character is portrayed with a similar description. The narrator says, "It was then that Miss Brodie looked beautiful and fragile, just as dark heavy Edinburgh itself could suddenly be changed into a floating city when the light was a special pearly white and fell upon one of the gracefully fashioned streets" (118). In this example, Miss Brodie's characteristics shift from beautiful, fragile, and pearly white to a comparison of dark heavy Edinburgh. Coupled with the shifting traits of Miss Brodie at various points throughout the novel, the correlation with landscape "may enhance the reader's perception of this trait once it has been revealed through the character's action, speech or external appearance" (Rimmon-Kenan 67). This suggests the complexity, shiftiness, and inability to neatly summarize Miss Jean Brodie's character. As told from Sandy's focalization, this example doubles to show Sandy's loss of respect for and loyalty to Miss Brodie.

Miss Brodie is characterized as having a presence which permeates the lives of her students. Even when she teaches in the Junior classes, "Miss Brodie's voice soared up to the ceiling, and curled round the feet of the Senior girls upstairs" (20). This quote foreshadows Miss Brodie's influence in the lives of the Brodie set even after each of them advance into the Senior school. Over time, Sandy begins to mimic the speech, actions, and appearance of Miss Brodie, which results in Sandy and Miss Brodie becoming analogous characters. Analogous characters are described in *Narrative Fiction*, "When two characters are presented in similar circumstances, the similarity or contrast between their behavior emphasizes traits characteristic of both" (Rimmon-Kenan 70). When compared side-by-side, Miss Brodie's and Sandy's character traits

reveal several similarities. In their youth, Sandy repeats to Jenny, “Little girls, you are going to be the *crème de la crème*,” imitating Miss Brodie’s frequently used expression (14). Similarly, Sandy also reiterates Miss Brodie’s belief that “prime is best” (15). Even when she begins to distrust Miss Brodie, Sandy tells Teddy Lloyd, “‘You have instinct,’ Sandy told him, ‘but no insight, or you would see that the woman isn’t to be taken seriously’” (132). This mimics Miss Brodie’s use of the words “instinct” and “insight” when she says, “‘my prime has brought me instinct and insight, both’” (114). When Teddy paints portraits of Sandy, she scolds him, “‘You are still making me look like Jean Brodie,’” (131). Teddy also offers to construct a large group painting of the Brodie set and Sandy says, “‘We’d look like one big Miss Brodie, I suppose’” (109). The likeness of the Brodie set to Miss Brodie in portraits suggests that the image and influence of Miss Brodie have permeated the lives of Teddy Lloyd and each member of the Brodie set. When asked if the main influences of her school days were literary, political, or personal, Sandy says, “‘There was a Miss Jean Brodie in her prime’” (137). The ambiguity of her answer indicates that Miss Brodie impacted Sandy through education, politics, and in her personal life.

During her transition into adulthood, Sandy Stranger becomes estranged from Miss Brodie and her classmates. This transition is exposed gradually, and is hinted at by small clues like when Sandy repeatedly tells Jenny, “‘Don’t tell Miss Brodie’” in an effort to exclude Miss Brodie from their private lives (73-74). Over time, Sandy’s distrust of Miss Brodie ultimately leads to Sandy’s betrayal of her once-beloved teacher. Miss Brodie remains ever-faithful to the Brodie set, but Sandy claims, “‘It’s only possible to betray where loyalty is due,’” (136). From Sandy’s focalization, Miss Brodie’s expectation of loyalty has been surpassed. However, from Miss Brodie’s focalization, unwavering faithfulness is still required of Sandy and by all other

members of the Brodie set. Despite their similarities, Miss Brodie and Sandy's differences in understanding and defining the concept of "loyalty" indicate their inability to see from the same point of view. Sandy confirms this belief when she reflects on her childhood and interacts with other characters. When a man comments about the importance of the influences of one's teens, Sandy replies, "'Oh yes,' said Sandy, 'even if they provide something to react against'" (34). This quote suggests that Sandy's adult focalization of Miss Brodie is drastically different from her childhood focalization of Miss Brodie. Miss Brodie tells Sandy, "'Sandy, I'll swear you are short-sighted, the way you peer at people. You must get spectacles'" (114). Although she criticizes Sandy for being short-sighted, Miss Brodie suffers from a lack of insight, which is indicated by her inability to predict or realize that the Brodie sets' understanding of "loyalty" is different from her own. When placed in several similar situations, Miss Brodie and Sandy choose different paths of life, exemplifying Sandy's "reaction against" Miss Brodie's influence. Miss Brodie refuses to have a love affair with Mr. Lloyd, confessing that she "renounced the great love of my prime" (58). Sandy makes the opposite decision, "for the best part of five weeks of the summer they had a love affair in the empty house" (131). Contrary to Miss Brodie's belief that Sandy will make "'an excellent Secret Service agent,'" instead, she becomes "Sister Helena," a well-known psychologist and nun (116, 35). Although Sandy and Miss Jean Brodie are analogous characters in many ways, their different perspectives and actions show the points which their characters diverge and reveals Sandy's transition from loyal pupil to vexed enemy of Miss Brodie.

In addition to Sandy and the narrator's perspective, Jean Brodie is also focalized by her peers and by other members of the Brodie set. In contrast to examples of direct dialogue spoken by Miss Brodie, the other characters offer a different perspective. Their peripheral point of view

gives insight into the way Miss Brodie's character shifts or is perceived differently by her students and peers. As described in *Narrative Fiction*, Miss Brodie's complex and conflicting characteristics mimics that of a real person, "human personality was grasped as a combination of qualities shared by many people" (Rimmon-Kenan 60). When his wife remarks that Miss Brodie sounds "a bit queer," Teddy proclaims that she is "'a magnificent woman in her prime'" before tossing his hair and storming out of the room" (110). After Miss Brodie's death, Eunice remarks that Miss Brodie was "full of culture. She was an Edinburgh Festival all on her own" and assures her husband that she "wasn't mad. She was as sane as anything. She knew exactly what she was doing" (26). Another member of the Brodie set, Jenny, also remarks on Miss Brodie, "She keeps wanting to know who betrayed her. It isn't at all like the old Miss Brodie, she was always so full of fight" (136). This sentiment is echoed by Miss Mackay, the headmistress, "'when Miss Brodie first came to the school, she was a vigorous young teacher, but now—...I fear Miss Brodie is past her best" (123-124). Although some characters, like Eunice and Teddy, have fond memories of Miss Brodie, she is portrayed as a completely different person after Sandy betrays her, as indicated by Jenny and Miss Mackay. These quotes show several different external viewpoints and focalizations of Miss Brodie's character both during and after her "prime."

While Miss Brodie is focalized by various members of the Brodie set and by her peers, she also acts as a seeing and focalizing character. Jean Brodie is described according to her eyes on several occasions. She is called "brown-eyed Jean Brodie" (93). It is also said that her "brown eyes were fixed on the clouds," and in Teddy Lloyd's portrait, her eyes are contrasted to Rose's "it was the type of stare from Rose's blue eyes, perhaps, which was like the dominating stare from Miss Brodie's brown" (121, 105). Repetition of eye imagery indicates Miss Brodie's perception of other characters as a perceiving and focalizing figure. Miss Brodie's status as a

focalizer is reinforced through her classifications and descriptions of self. For most of the novel, Miss Brodie focalizes herself as being in her “prime” and as Teddy’s “Muse” (103, 129). The narrator describes that Miss Brodie has no doubt that “God was on her side whatever her course, and so she experienced no difficulty or sense of hypocrisy in worship while at the same time she went to bed with the singing master” (90). In this example, Miss Brodie believes that she, like Rose, is “above the common moral code” (117). Through her own focalization, Miss Brodie views herself as a woman who is young, desired, and powerful. This focalization is drastically different from Sandy and the narrator’s perspectives, who each consistently point out Miss Brodie’s character flaws and shortcomings.

At various points in the text, Miss Brodie focalizes members of the Brodie set and her colleagues. Over the course of the novel, Miss Brodie concentrates the most time and attention on focalizing Sandy and Rose, while telling them that all of her ambitions are fixed on the two of them (112). As the girls enter Senior school, Miss Brodie is distanced from the other members of the set while growing closer to Sandy and Rose. Miss Brodie, “looked at Rose in a special way, while Sandy looked at Miss Brodie” (84-85). In this example, Sandy focalizes Miss Brodie, while Miss Brodie focalizes Rose as her cherished prodigy. Miss Brodie focalizes Sandy and Mr. Lowther through a hypercritical lens. In her youth, Miss Brodie tells Sandy, ““I have my eye upon you, Sandy. I observe a frivolous nature. I fear you will never belong to life’s élite or, as one might say, the crème de la crème”” (22). Even when Mr. Lowther looks lovingly at Miss Brodie, she “looked at him severely and possessively” (94). Similarly, she perceives Sandy in a negative way, “Almost shrewdly, Miss Brodie fixed on Sandy” (112). In contrast, she praises Rose, ““Rose is bound to be painted many times. She may well sit for Mr. Lloyd on future occasions, she is one of the crème de la crème”” (102). Miss Brodie selects Sandy and Rose as

her most trusted confidants and goes to great lengths to prescribe roles for each of them, “Miss Brodie wanted Rose with her instinct to start preparing to be Teddy Lloyd’s lover, and Sandy with her insight to act as an informant on the affair” (116). Despite Miss Brodie’s perception of closeness with her students, both Sandy and Rose abandon and betray her. Sandy tells Miss Mackay that she is interested in “putting a stop to Miss Brodie” and Rose “shook off Miss Brodie’s influence as a dog shakes pond-water from its coat” (134, 127). Miss Brodie’s perceived closeness with Sandy and Rose, and their subsequent actions suggest a discrepancy in focalization between Miss Brodie and her students. Miss Brodie’s collapsed relationships with Sandy and Rose indicate her failed effort to influence and prescribe traits and characteristics onto her pupils.

The way Miss Brodie is portrayed indicates that this novel has societal or cultural implications in addition to its meaning expressed on the page. This is explained in “Text and Function,” when Lotman and Piatigorsky describe how “a text has supplementary meaning” (Lotman 235). *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* examines the influence of politics and the role of specific individuals in childrens’ education. It suggests that the impact of the education system has reverberating and continuing effects years after children are in school. Sandy’s position as a prominent psychologist and later, a nun, implies that she is impacted, and perhaps even traumatized by the influences of her formative years. In addition, Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Lowther both have inappropriate interactions with the young girls and with Miss Brodie. Mr. Lowther “smiled and patted their hair or pulled pretty Jenny’s ringlets” and “Rose was required to pose naked” for Mr. Lloyd’s paintings (93, 128). The inappropriate actions of the male teachers toward the young girls suggests that flirtatious or sexual conduct is commonplace in teacher-student relationships. Similarly, Miss Brodie is portrayed as simultaneously hyper-sexualized,

masculine, politically-motivated, and even “dangerous” (7). Miss Brodie’s characteristics suggest that unmarried female teachers, an example of an “Edinburgh spinster of the deepest dye” may be detrimental to society (25). Based on these portrayals of teachers, it could be implied that this text encourages a more informed and involved position in childrens’ education. Perhaps as a result of this text, and others, American society has begun to analyze the role and presence of parents and teachers in the classroom. A modern Western audience would generate meaning from this text by analyzing its role in society and in relation to other texts since *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* was published. In “Text and Function,” this concept is described, “The system of text meanings determines the social functions of texts in a given culture” (Lotman 240). Miss Brodie’s position as a fascist sympathizer probes the question of the role that politics should have in school. Miss Brodie is described as “the leader of the set, Miss Brodie as a Roman matron, Miss Brodie as an educational reformer” (118). When read in a modern context, Miss Brodie’s frequent reference to and sympathy toward Hitler and Mussolini creates inherent skepticism and distrust of her character. Miss Brodie’s presence in her students’ lives would also encourage a modern reader to question the influence that teachers have on their students’ political opinions. On the whole, the book is an educational tool which acts as a form of autocritical discourse while forcing the reader to question the content taught in schools. Over the past fifty-seven years since *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* was published, Miss Brodie and the other characters in the novel have garnered supplementary meaning. This is described in “Text and Function” when Lotman and Piatagorsky articulate that “a hierarchy of texts is created with a successive growth of text meaning” (239). Although it is impossible to know Muriel Spark’s political stance or her inner motives for writing *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, the text

implicates some of the potential cultural and social weight that the text has accumulated over time.

Although this is hardly an exhaustive list of character traits, interactions, and portrayals of Miss Jean Brodie, a study of characterization and focalization gives some insight into her multifaceted character. To some, she is “Jean,” and to others she is “Miss Brodie.” She is simultaneously feminine, masculine, threatening, unconventional, and influential. Miss Brodie’s prime turns out to be nothing more than trips back and forth to Nazi Germany, a few failed love affairs, futile advice to her students, and a collection of quotable catchphrases. She is most commonly focalized by the narrator and by Sandy Stranger, each who depict her as untrustworthy and flawed. But each person who focalizes her has a differing perspective as to who she is and what her motives are. As stated by Genette, “Narrative always says less than it knows, but it often makes known more than it says” (Genette 198). Through close analysis, the gap between what is said and what is known about Miss Brodie narrows, but is never completely closed. Nonetheless, examining Miss Brodie’s character in terms of appearance, speech, and actions as perceived by herself and others yields valuable insight into the “complexities and nuances” of her role while aiming to reveal the “‘inner life’ of the focalized” (Rimmon-Kenan 71, 82). *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* provides a prime example of Miss Brodie’s character, which is fraught with flaws, exquisite complexity, and conflicting characteristics.

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