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RECONCILING THE DIVIDED SELF IN MURIEL SPARK'S THE MANDELBAUM GATE

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Abstract: *In the novel *The Mandelbaum Gate* Muriel Spark presents a protagonist, Barbara Vaughan, who has many similar characteristics to herself, and who, haunted by feelings of disjunction and split identity, seeks to examine her sense of self on a journey to Jerusalem, a city divided between two hostile countries at the time the novel is set in the early 1960s. In this paper I examine how the various oppositions within the protagonist's personality (Catholic-Jewish, intellectual-passionate, etc.), which are initially presented in terms of conflicts (conflicts which are also present in a parallel fashion in the outer world), are reconciled, and what this reconciliation means in terms of whether the self must choose between unity and diversity, or whether both are possible simultaneously. I argue that Muriel Spark approaches the problem of the reconciliation of the oppositions in Barbara's self from two perspectives, the existential and the religious. I suggest that in Spark's vision, while both an existential and a religious approach are able to lead towards a resolution of Barbara's internal conflicts by encouraging a movement in her away from preoccupation with her self and towards an orientation to the outside, the existential approach is contained within the religious approach, because the religious perspective, as well as recommending the same orientation towards the outside of the self as the existential perspective, also provides a sense of direction more specific than an outward direction, in terms of an orientation towards the supernatural. Spark presents a dynamic resolution in which a love for others allows the protagonist to overcome contradictions in her self, affirm her personal history, and experience the material and spiritual elements of her journey as compatible.*