

Memento mori

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Memento Mori

While I thoroughly enjoyed this novel, I was left more than a bit confused by the end of it. The characters were quite humorous and even disturbing at times with their scheming, blackmailing, hypocrisy, denials, and even their beliefs on the important matters in life which seemed so realistically self-centered that I could believe them to be real people in authentic circumstances. And yet, the amount of characters to keep track of was daunting in number as well as the numerous background stories and it was only by their ties to each other that I was able to grasp on to the plot-line behind it.

Muriel Sparks successfully created a reality of her own with a web of wickedness that is so thoroughly layered in the p of nearly a century that I was left not necessarily unsatisfied but overjoyed that she left a question unanswered till the very end. Who was that mysterious caller? Many suggestions were given and yet I was aware that one shined out among the rest. For Inspector Mortimer says it quite clearly that “ considering the evidence,” which is altogether vexing and baseless, “ the offender is Death himself. ” (p. 144)

It didn't really matter who specifically the caller was and underlying the great mystery was a spiritual resonance that forced the reader to grip the book wanting to shout at the characters to stop their nonsense and just take advantage of their last remaining years because death is waiting patiently to take them and they were ready to keep going with their secrets and their obsessions which like invisible merciless gods, ruled over them all their lives

until Jean Taylor, the only morally sound character it seemed, decided to reveal Charmian's own ongoing affair allowing progress for Godfrey to live a bit more passionately for just a short while longer.

I had no qualms viewing the suspect as a spiritual entity because the last line of the book only validated this notion by referring to the quote at the beginning of the book as, " Jean Taylor lingered for a time, employing her pain to magnify the Lord, and meditating sometimes confidently upon death, the first of the Four Last Things to be ever remembered" (p. 224). In that final page, I was left thinking everyone got their just desserts as they would inevitably reach and I was grateful for the review of how they all died just so I wasn't left even more overwhelmed by all the information given.

But the very last line brought me back to thinking about the recurring theme of religion throughout the novel as Charmian may have very well been the closest character to resemble Spark herself. I tried to look up a biography for her to see if my suspicions were closer to the truth that she had filtered in her own experiences and was pleased by my findings that she did in fact have a son and he may very well have been an artist such as Eric was talented in that field but critical and resentful for his mother's success as a writer. That got me thinking of how Spark's saw writing as a connection to her spirituality and perhaps this relationship mirrored her own feelings towards her son's Judaism when she was a Roman Catholic herself and how that came as a backhand to the face for her.

It was also more than a coincidence that Charmian had been sending Eric money just as Spark's did for her son until she had enough of their strained relationship and nearly if not completely severed her ties with him.

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So to say that I was well aware of her own questioning and thought-provoking feelings towards her religion would be an understatement. For I have felt that same ghostly if not lingering call to my own Catholic roots, always feeling a sense of something greater, a presence working its way in and out of the seams in this reality and yet while wanting to place it inside of a religion, merely value it as a part of humanity to peer back at us in our most profound moments, which certainly includes the embrace of death. I found myself thinking again and again of the quotes placed before the start of the novel.

For the book appeared to incorporate all three quotes but especially the third by having the reader judge each character themselves by their thoughts and actions, as though we are death waiting to take them justly for their either trivial or purposeful lives, hoping to place them in either heaven or hell with every wrong or morally right move they made. I wanted such characters like Charmian to have a pleasant sleep, to just drift off because she was trying so to regain some strength for herself and reach such a point but for characters like Mrs. Pettigrew I wanted the exact opposite and was appalled by her having received that wealth after-all.

However, she did try so very ard to get exactly what she wanted and at least she had the drive to do something of purpose for herself, never mind that she was a successful villain. I was left with a smile on my face for its originality and thoroughness which can only be executed by a talented author who is able to place herself in her characters without it being an angst or far too emotional diary altogether. If only the grotesque characters could have been given far worse deaths when death itself is not justly

enough. But then, it wouldn't have been so realistic, and in that sense I could only agree with how she preferred it. Realism is always more convincing when relating to religion somehow anyway.