

Replication masked in rejection

Business



Among the Brodie set in Muriel Sparks' *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Rose and Sandy present the most complex trajectories.

Through much of the novel, the two remain Miss Brodie's closest confidantes. Yet, the two girls ultimately stray the most from Miss Brodie, with Rose openly shedding her teacher's influence and Sandy going further by affirmatively exposing Ms. Brodie's fascist inclinations to the school. Paradoxically, despite consciously rejecting Miss Brodie's teachings, Rose and Sandy most profoundly personify their teacher's influence as both come to reflect, innately, distinct aspects of Miss Brodie's personality. Indeed, Miss Brodie herself notes Rose's "instinct" and Sandy's "insight" as manifestations of her own defining traits (114).

Notwithstanding their chosen independent paths, Rose's natural poise, Sandy's intellect, and both girls' individualistic instincts reflect Miss Brodie's enduring imprint. Outwardly, Rose manifests Ms. Brodie's molding as she mirrors her teacher's dignified demeanor. The discussion around the subject of sex best reflects that parallel as it constitutes a perpetual preoccupation among the schoolgirls. Miss Brodie comes to serve as an object of the girls' sexual curiosity and the focal point around which they display their school-age obsession with the subject.

Miss Brodie herself never directly engages in any explicit dialogue around her sexual life. Instead, she stirs the girls through stories of her lover, leaving the rest to their imagination. In similar fashion, Rose's classmates brand her as "famous for sex" from a young age, due not to any tales of her own sexual exploits but rather, in some part, the cool and detached manner in

which she deals with the topic (3). The novel, in fact, implies that Rose remains a virgin until marriage, hardly a trait for a sexual character. Never seen speaking about sex, Rose's appeal may actually "lay in the fact that she had no curiosity about sex at all" (58).

This differentiates Rose from others in the Brodie set, given their unbridled infatuation with the topic. Sandy and Jenny engage in endless banter on sex that only reveals their inexperience and basic misconceptions, from use of the phrase "committed sex" to describe the act, to insisting that Ms. Brodie "would have had a baby" had she consummated her relationship with Hugh (18). Seemingly immune to such teenage naivete, Rose avoids direct discussion about sex, projecting an above-it-all manner closely reflecting that of her teacher. Ironically, the two characters most associated with sex – Miss Brodie and Rose — steer entirely clear of inane sexual exchanges.

Notably, Rose also experiences "the change," code for her menstrual cycle, before the other girls, indicating her more advanced development and bringing her physical appearance to resemble more closely that of Miss Brodie. Miss Brodie's determination to orchestrate a love affair between Mr. Lloyd, the unattainable object of her own affection, and Rose demonstrates her awareness of the similarities between Rose and herself. In turn, Mr. Lloyd reflects these similarities through art.

Upon viewing Mr. Lloyd's painting of Rose, Sandy immediately recognizes the stunning resemblance, noting how the "stare from Rose's blue eyes" mirrored the "dominating stare from Miss Brodie's brown eyes" (105). Rose's appearance and bearing so precisely reflects Miss Brodie that Mr.

Lloyd uses Rose as medium through which to express his love for Miss Brodie. While Rose comes closest to matching Miss Brodie's disposition, Sandy's semblance to her teacher delves deeper. In the years prior to senior school, Sandy remain immersed in juvenile preoccupations, differing from the more mature Rose at this stage.

Chided by Miss Brodie for her lack of attention, Rose often gets lost in fantasies and daydreams. It becomes gradually evident, however, that Sandy's mind operates in a similar fashion to Miss Brodie's. Her infatuation with Miss Brodie's stories naturally impels Sandy, from a young age, to attempt to understand Miss Brodie's perspective. Once she reaches senior school, Sandy's abstract fascination with Miss Brodie's sexuality transforms to a more deliberate desire to probe Miss Brodie's " deep hearts' core" (85). Sandy's increasingly analytical mind, portrayed by Mr. Lloyd as " unnatural" in a young girl, sets her on a path to attain Miss Brodie's intellectual depth (131).

In this sense, Sandy literally epitomizes Miss Brodie's objective of putting " old heads on young bodies" (5). Moreover, Sandy stands as staunchly opposed to teamwork as Miss Brodie, favoring the Brodie set's split-up as " perhaps a good thing" (108). Sandy's express disdain for what she views as an attempt to retain the set's group identity as " one big Miss Brodie" first attracts Mr. Lloyd's attention (109). Instantly recognizing, in Sandy, Miss Brodie's penetrating perspective, Mr.

Lloyd promptly kisses her, revealing the extent to which he sees Miss Brodie's mind operating in Sandy. That the two fall into a five-week love

affair – despite the prior attempts to connect Mr. Lloyd to Rose and Rose’s outward resemblance to Miss Brodie – suggests that Sandy possesses the qualities of Miss Brodie that Mr. Lloyd truly admires. Beyond demeanor and mindset, Rose and Sandy’s inclinations towards individualism reflect Miss Brodie’s greatest mark on their character, which, conversely, enable both to shed Miss Brodie’s influence more readily than the others in the Brodie set. Miss Brodie serves, at Blaine, as the ultimate beacon of individuality, blindly adhering to her unique teaching style despite its impact on her reputation, popularity, and job security.

Hence, she denounces “team spirit” as a means “employed to cut across individualism” (82). Both Rose and Sandy exhibit Miss Brodie’s individualistic stamp. Rose’s maturity and composed nature in comparison to others in the Brodie set, instantly sets her apart on her own unique course. Her ability to “shake Miss Brodie’s influence as a dog shakes pond-water from its coat” most markedly reflects the ascendancy of her own identity (127). While Rose consciously frees herself from Miss Brodie’s sway, it is, ironically, the very individualism ingrained by Miss Brodie which enables her to do so.

For her part, Sandy strays far from both social norms and the culture of the Brodie set. Despite her youthful fixation on sex, Sandy eventually converts to Roman Catholicism and becomes a nun, reflecting at some level a rejection of Miss Brodie, the one-time center of the girls’ sexual curiosities. At a deeper level, however, Sandy’s conversion evidences the most profound embrace of the individualistic standard Miss Brodie set. Similarly, Sandy’s subsequent betrayal of Miss Brodie to the school authorities stems from the same analytical tendencies Sandy adopts from her mentor, that prompt her

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to reconsider the effects of Miss Brodie's teachings upon children. Moreover, exposing and eliciting the downfall of one's mentor represents the ultimate act of individualism.

Despite rejecting her influence in later life, Rose and Sandy each innately reflect Miss Brodie's manner and personality. Rose mirrors her profile, presence, and poise, while Sandy displays her insight, acuity, and perspective. That Rose casts-off Miss Brodie's influence and Sandy betrays her in fact demonstrates the prevailing power of Miss Brodie's teachings. In this sense, Rose and Sandy's repudiation of Miss Brodie ironically proves that Miss Brodie's imprint remains permanently entrenched in them.