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YEATS'S SENSIBILITIES, LEDA, AND AMBIGUITIES IN ELENA FERRANTE'S *THE LOST DAUGHTER*

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In *Leda and the Swan*, one of the greatest Anglophone lyric poets of the 20th century W. B. Yeats explores the idea of a single act having tremendous importance for human history. Such a momentous event can bring about the end of civilization and become the dawn of a new age. This is a great cataclysmic moment in history (merging history and myth) for Yeats. The paper suggests that Yeats's sensibilities subtly permeate the narrative and form of Elena Ferrante's *The Lost Daughter*, thus illustrating the mode of ambiguous past penetrating the present – the tradition that interested Yeats – arguably becoming what in Ferrante has been seen as a form of radical and committed reflection on myriad of contemporary issues. In this context, Yeats and Ferrante communicate the ideas of fragmentation and instability, the sensation of the world crumbling and reforming, and, in doing so, they refer to an instability of boundaries and identities. This is a sensation experienced by both female protagonists – Yeats's mythical Leda and her more contemporary counterpart.

Keywords: Yeats, Leda, sensibilities, fragmentation, identity.

INTRODUCTION

“The hardest things to talk about are the ones we ourselves can't understand” (Ferrante, 2008: 2). With this promising sentence in *The Lost Daughter* author Elena Ferrante invites us to a provocative and ambiguous journey to dark sensibilities and painful, shadowy truths that are about to be revealed. This is Ferrante's devastating power as a novelist: she deals with the emotional depths and mercilessly records the cycle of psychological damage among multiple generations of women in the main protagonist's background in a direct language and straightforward form. She uses blunt words that slice like a razor to describe Leda's scars. “Everything in those years seemed to me without a remedy, I myself was without remedy,” she recounts. And: “How many damaged, lost things did I have behind me, and yet present, now...” (Ferrante, 2008: 36) In trying to escape their past, Ferrante's women are fated to fall into what de Rogatis calls *the pit*, where they become part of a never-ending, almost archetypal line of oppressed women. To clarify this point, we refer to scene from Ferrante's second novel, *The Days of Abandonment*:

“The mother imposes her own negative legacy, dragging her daughter into the vortex of an ancient world where she risks repeating the same suicidal act carried out by countless unknown women. ... the mother is a symbol of the inextricably difficult coexistence of two opposing states: motherhood and womanhood” (Ferrante, 2004: 94).

This brings us to Ferrante’s key words she returns to constantly: the linked concepts of *frantumaglia* and *smarginatura*. The first has to do with fragmentation and instability, the sensation of the world crumbling and reforming and a feeling that everything we know can be destroyed in an instant; the second refers to an instability of boundaries and identities – a sensation, we will argue, once experienced by the cyclical-cataclysmic sensibilities of W. B. Yeats that corresponds to a contemporary, identity-melting, violent and oppressive psychological reality of Elena Ferrante. In our method, the two sensibilities, modern and post-postmodern, seem to melt into each other in the sense of *interdependency*, focusing on the importance of *ties*, within the context of ambiguous past and shattered present, that can never be broken. According to Yeats and Ferrante, this serves as an ultimate knowledge.

Partly a *Bildungsroman*, partly a *psychological* drama, partly a *feminist* read, Ferrante’s 140 pages long *The Lost Daughter*, practically a novella, corresponds strongly to 14-lines long Yeats’s sonnet in terms of sharing the same resistance to a clear categorization, both remaining in ambiguous, allegorical spheres on dark edges of human experience. In terms of style, they share the same elusiveness, and are open to a variety of interpretations. In fact, Ferrante’s use of different genres communicates to what de Rogatis labels a *hypergenre* – which is clearly one of Ferrante’s strengths – another quality she has in common with her modern predecessor (De Rogatis 2008). With this in mind, we turn to Yeats’s sensibilities and a lasting ambiguity in dealing with how past develops but also shatters present, i.e. reality we know.

1. YEATS: THE PAST AND ITS SEDUCTIVE POWER

Widely considered to be one of the greatest poets of the 20th century, Yeats belonged to the privileged Anglo-Irish minority that had controlled all aspects of life in Ireland. He passionately established his Irish nationality and maintained his cultural roots to the extent that was equal to his efforts to establish his artistic self. In an essay entitled “Yeats as an Example” (1948), his contemporary W.H. Auden observed that Yeats adopted the *modern* spirit of making a lonely “choice of the principles and assumptions in terms of which he made sense of his experience” (Kermode, 2008: 16). In addition, Auden gave Yeats the credit of having written “some of the most beautiful poetry” of modern times (Kermode, 2008: 17).

Yeats began writing because he was inspired by the culture and history of Ireland. Actually, his life was influenced the most by the three things he loved best: Ireland, his beloved Maud Gonne, and literature. His style was specifically designed to be different from any other author’s and is meant to touch a part of the mind that has never before been reached by verse or prose. His approach to poetry was definitely new in the world of literature. In doing so, Yeats redefined the boundaries that had limited earlier writers and presented new, fresh possibilities for a new age.

What specifically has to do with our topic is Yeats's long-lasting fascination with the contrast between a person's *internal* and *external* selves – between a true person and those aspects the person chooses to present as representations of the self. This is the difference between the appearances and a hidden, inner self – the idea that can be attributed to Ferrante's research of one's identity as well. In a collection of essays, *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1918), Yeats explained this idea: "I think all happiness depends on the energy to assume the mask of some other life, on a re-birth" of one's identity (Kermode, 2008: 318).

Within a wider context, Yeats believed in certain patterns, interpenetrating *cones* representing mixtures of opposites of both a personal and historical nature (Finneran, 2000: 9). He contended that "cones were initiated by the divine impregnation of a mortal woman – first, the seduction of Leda by Zeus; later, the immaculate conception of Mary".¹ Applying this pattern both to historical eras and to individuals' lives, Yeats observed that "a person completes the phases as he advances from birth to maturity and declines toward death". Additionally, he assigned particular phases to specific types of personalities; so "although each person passes through the many phases during a lifetime, *one* provides an overall characterization of the individual's entire life" (Finneran, 2000: 11).²

Leda and the Swan, published in 1924, is one of the most ambiguous poems by W. B. Yeats. Written in the form of a sonnet, the poem focuses on the story from Greek myth on the seduction of the Greek beauty Leda by the god Zeus, who has adopted the form of a swan. According to the myth, Zeus impregnates Leda with the child who will become Helen of Troy. "This single act", explains Tearle, "brings about the Trojan War, and, with it, the end of Greek civilization and the dawn of a new (largely Christian) age. Because in seducing Leda, Zeus made her conceive Helen of Troy, whose beauty would bring about the outbreak of the Trojan War" (Tearle, 2016). This is seen as a great cataclysmic moment in history (merging history and myth) for Yeats. For the poet, who was interested in such momentous events, and believed that civilization progressed on a cycle, was also interested in something he called *annunciation* – meaning divine interfering in human affairs,³ in which such epoch-changing moments breathe new life into human civilization. This is what Zeus (or swan) represents in the poem.

Leda and the Swan fuses images and themes involving raw *strength*, *surrender* and the *change*. His reflection of the change is terrifying in many ways: "A sudden blow" (st. 1), "dark webs / nape caught in his bill" (st. 1), "feathered glory" (st. 2), "the broken wall ... / And Agamemnon dead ... / mastered by the brute blood" (st. 3). Many of Yeats's poems end with a question: in *Among the School Children*, Yeats asks: "How we can know the dancer from the dance?" (Finneran, 2000: 168); and in *Leda and the Swan* he inquires: "Did she put on his knowledge with his power / Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?" (Finnegan, 2000: 387). What does that mean? Does it suggest that Leda should have learned from her experience, and that the outcome is partly her fault? Is Leda mastered? Or is she preserved by the intervention? There is no clear answer. When Zeus assaulted Leda with his power, did he also insert foreknowledge of what would the event cause? According to Tearle, perhaps the *knowledge* is simply knowledge, regardless of what Leda does (Tearle, 2016). Yeats's mastery is visible in his ability to merge the images of violence with the more

ambiguous softness. Yet, “dark webs” suggest something delicate designed on prey. With the additional fact that swans (according to the story) mate for life, there is no doubt that the change is a permanent one. Elusive and ambiguous, the poem defies any straightforward analysis. It is what makes it so compelling: Yeats’s poem asks questions, rather than provide answers. In the following sections, we will see how Yeats’s sensibilities contribute to ambiguity of the contemporary Italian canon by Elena Ferrante.

2. DARK WEBS: TRAUMA OF THE PAST

Here is how the opening excerpt in *The Lost Daughter* invites us immediately to the ambiguities of the past:

“I had the impression...of being at the sea, in the middle of the day. The beach was empty, the water calm, but on the pole a few meters from shore a red flag was waving. When I was a child, my mother had frightened me saying, Leda, you must never go swimming if you see a red flag: it means the sea is rough and you might drown. That fear had endured through the years, and even now, although the water was a sheet of translucent paper stretching to the horizon, I didn’t dare go in: I was anxious. I said to myself, go on, swim: they must have forgotten the flag, and meanwhile I stayed on the shore, cautiously testing the water with the tip of my toe. Only at intervals my mother appeared at the top of the dunes and shouted to me as if I were still a child: Leda, what are you doing, don’t you see the red flag?” (Ferrante, 2008: 5)

The Lost Daughter (2008) is Ferrante’s third novel, published after *Troubling Love* (1992), and *The Days of Abandonment* (2004). Each book is narrated by a woman: an academic in *The Lost Daughter*, and a writer in *The Days of Abandonment*. The narrator of the later novel, *My Brilliant Friend* (2012), is also keen on possibilities of writing and being a writer. Ferrante’s novels are intensely, violently personal, bringing “the key chains of confession before the unsuspecting reader” (Wood, 2013). The material that the early novels visit and revisit is intimate and often shockingly candid: “child abuse, divorce, motherhood, wanting and not wanting children, the narrator’s desperate struggle to retain a cohesive identity within a traditional setting and amid the burdens” of the present (Wood, 2013). In this context, they present themselves as *case histories*, full of conflicted feelings of “flaming rage, lapse, failure”, and delicate psychic crises.

However, what concerns Ferrante’s Leda more deeply – a sensation experienced also by Yeats’s mythical Leda – is the threatened dissolution of her self. What does her life amount to, without the purity of her past memories? She is haunted by the memory of the dark figures from her Neapolitan childhood, trying not to look back, not to act like her Neapolitan predecessors, not to be “consumed by fear” (Ferrante, 2004). Although much of the drama takes place in Leda’s head, Ferrante’s talent for *psychological* horror makes her trauma deep and instinctive. The final achievement is a “mind in emergency, at the very limits of logic and decency” (De Rogatis, 2019).

Ferrante has said that she likes to write narratives “where the writing is clear, honest, and where the facts – the facts of ordinary life – are extraordinarily gripping

when read” (Ferrante, 2018). But what is cohesive in our recapturing Yeatsian sensibility is that, in sympathetically following her heroine’s extremities, Ferrante’s own writing has no limits, and, in a Yeatsian manner, is “willing to take every thought forward to its most radical conclusion and backward to its most radical birthing” (De Rogatis, 2019: 26). This is most obvious in the all-consuming way in which Leda, the narrator, thinks about trauma of the past.

According to psychology, after having been traumatized somewhere in the past, we are likely not to have been able properly to process and digest what we have gone through. However, a key feature of a fulfilling life is a capacity to overcome the trauma. The psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott defines the process as the following:

“Psychological trauma can be defined as a negative event so overwhelming that we cannot properly understand, process or move on from it – but, and this is the ambiguous aspect to it, nor can we properly remember it or reflect upon its nature and its effects on us. It is lodged within us but remains hidden from us, making its presence known only via symptoms and pains, altering our sense of reality without alerting us to its ambiguous subterranean operations” (Winnicott, 2019).

It is not surprising that a lot of psychological trauma happens in childhood.⁴ For Bridget Riley, the leading symptom of a trauma is fear. “The legacy of having been traumatized is dread, a forgotten, unconscious memory of fear projected outwards into a future” (Riley, in: Winnicott, 2019). As the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott observed: “The catastrophe the traumatized fear will happen has already happened” (Winnicott, 2019). That is why, in order to find out what might have happened to us long ago, we should ask ourselves not so much about the past, but about our fears of going forward. According to Winnicott, “our apprehension holds the best clues as to our history”.⁵

Leda, the narrator of *The Lost Daughter*, is a forty-seven-year-old academic who is torn between motherhood and professional advancement. She is no longer married to her scientist husband, who lives in Toronto, where her two grown daughters, Bianca and Marta, have also gone to live. The psychological drama reveals itself in noticing that Leda has ambivalent and often sharply hostile thoughts about her daughters. In a manner of Schopenhauer’s philosophy, she wonders, did she really want her children, or was her body simply expressing itself, as a reproducing animal? “I had wanted Bianca, one wants a child with an animal opacity reinforced by popular beliefs” (Ferrante, 2008: 32). As James Wood observes, “for the narrators of Ferrante’s novels, life appears to be a painful conundrum of attachment and detachment” (Wood, 2013). What is appalling to Leda is that her daughters are “so umbilically connected to her own flesh and at the same time are always pushing elsewhere, are so alien and other” (Ferrante, 2008: 33). Thus she feels for them “a complicated alternation of sympathy and antipathy” (Ferrante, 2008: 34). When her daughters were six and four, she left them for three years in order to pursue her academic career. “All the hopes of youth seemed to have been destroyed, I seemed to be falling backward toward my mother, my grandmother, the chain of mute or angry women I came from” (Ferrante, 2008: 56). Feeling suspended on a chain of maternity – grandmothers, mothers, daughters, all flesh of one’s own flesh – the only way to survive is to cut the links and get out, at least temporarily. Leda thinks: “I loved them

too much and it seemed to me that love for them would keep me from becoming myself” (Ferrante, 2008: 58). She remembers vividly this sense of ambiguity:

“I felt their gazes longing to tame me, but more brilliant was the brightness of the life outside them, new colors, new bodies, new intelligence, a language to possess finally as if it were my true language, and nothing, nothing that seemed to me reconcilable with that domestic space from which they stared at me in expectation. Ah, to make them invisible, to no longer hear the demands of their flesh as commands more pressing, more powerful than those which came from mine” (Ferrante, 2008: 62).

Tiziana de Rogatis makes a parallel between Ferrante’s fiction and Helene Cixous or French feminist literary theory, stating that both belong to a kind of practical *feminine literature* although she finds something “post-ideological” in Ferrante’s manner (or “post-apocalyptic”, as Yeats would say). To get those difficult words on the page means to go *beyond* domestic context, beyond tradition, beyond “dark webs” of fear, restrictions and violence of the past, and find “a language to possess finally as if it were my true language”. For, before “the writer is an adult, she is a child. Before she creates a family, she inherits one”; and in order to find her true language she needs to escape “the demands and prohibitions of this first, given community” (Bernheimer, 2012). There is a joy in Leda’s rediscovering her *true* self: a trip to the sea, a brief holiday, the chance to take her books and prepare classes for the next semester, the encouragement of a forgotten solitude, the promise of getting things done – these seemingly ordinary circumstances provide a sudden illumination against a background of ignorance, violence, and parental threat – a past in which Leda is “struggling to speak in Italian” (for people in her formative period used Neapolitan dialect). In *The Lost Daughter*, Leda describes her need to leave violent and limited Naples of her past – through education, she will get out of the trauma, escaping her origin.

Both *Leda and the Swan* and *The Lost Daughter* are delicate tales of *convergence* and *reversal*, identifying the moments when a current change occurs. For Yeatsian Leda, that is a violent encounter with Zeus; for Ferrante’s Leda, that is an intense clash with her volatile past. Like Yeatsian Leda, Ferrante’s protagonist is a survivor; like her predecessor, she has had to “wrench her survival out of the drama of attachment and detachment” (Wood, 2013). Both find a kind of survivor’s guilt, for the final *irony* is present in the novella’s title, as it is in the last lines of the poem and novella - the biggest reversal, a *shift* in perspective that has taken both to the point. In his highly romanticized version of the myth, W. B. Yeats portrays Leda as a medium open for change and growth. For both Ledas, the given consequences are presented as glorious, life-changing.

2. FERRANTE: LEDA OF OUR DAYS

The Lost Daughter begins with the narrator, Leda, a literature professor, reflecting on the moments before she ended up in a hospital, surrounded by her ex-husband and daughters. Those moments prior to her crash trigger the past and its influence on her. From the very beginning, the novella shows the interplay of the *past* and *present*, which is a narrative pattern that will shape, and constantly provoke conflict. The

central mother-daughter dichotomy builds itself progressively, revealing Leda's relation to her own mother and daughters, and is observed alongside her examination of a particular Neapolitan mother and daughter and the doll they play with. It is clear that Leda's introspection dwells on the present as well as the past, for *The Lost Daughter* is a psychological study case of mothers and daughters. Leda's introspection, which borders with obsession, together with the constant way of how past and present merge and evolve, is what accumulates the energy of Ferrante's narrative power.

In *The Lost Daughter*, nothing is seen on the surface; only below the surface things are visible. All ambiguities revealed by her obsession with the past lie at the bottom. In Yeatsian manner, Ferrante uses the concentrated form of her narrative to deal with its intensity. In her essay on mythical structure, Kate Bernheimer examines how the form and design of the mythical pattern permeates different narratives. She states that "inside a mythical lyrical context... resides a story that enters and haunts you deeply" (Bernheimer, 2012: 2). The depth of haunting is what we can connect to the intensity of Leda's *circuitous* kind of past reflections in the book. In her essay on the novella, Debra Spark points out "its ability to explore a philosophical or moral idea, and its usefulness for fables, or stories that tend to archetype" (Spark, 3). The novella's "focusing in obsession and what spirals narratively from its condensed shape seems descended from the mythical structure", which Bernheimer similarly links to the novella's associative powers: "Despite their reputation as plot-driven narratives, myths are actually extremely associative" (Bernheimer, 2012: 69). Leda's past reminiscences in *The Lost Daughter* stem from her habit of making associative connections. According to Spark, that quality represents a dynamic charge of the novella.

The Lost Daughter is the third book written by Ferrante; yet, it is the one to return to over and over again to examine, as de Rogatis states, "how the narrator is able to both charge the past with the urgency of the present, and lace the two together in ways that allow the narrative toward momentum" (De Rogatis, 2019: 124). This way, the present is shattered by the past, but not fully broken by it, concludes de Rogatis. *The Lost Daughter* skillfully depicts Leda's *psychological journey*, for everything that happens is below the surface, in the "tight, chaotic, frenetic space of the narrator's mind" (Stewart, 1993: 48). Operating between the emotional and physical – reflected in the book's opening – the book starts with Leda contemplating, in a calm and optimistic way, on learning her daughters will be moving in with their father. Feeling fresh and inspired by this newfound freedom, she plans a holiday at the beach. On this vacation Leda develops a daily routine of observing a Neapolitan trio – a young mother Nina, her daughter Elena, and the girl's doll.

Leda's observations of the strangers at the beach are depicted alongside the history with her own daughters, so we feel the psychological intensity of Leda's memories, and the way they melt down with the present impressions. The more we learn about Leda's past, the more her story merges with the Neapolitans, mixing the two experiences together. Leda is captivated by the mother and her bond with the child. The power this bond has over Leda crystalizes in Elena's doll, which becomes emblematic of the influence and corruption the past has over the present. When Leda, in an ambiguous, inexplicable way, steals Elena's doll, she has a need to take care of

it. Leda's longing to care for the doll as if it were a real child can be seen from a point Susan Stewart explains in her study *On Longing*, on the relation of an adult to a plaything (as the fashion doll, for example), for a reason of suppressing the longing (Stewart, 1993: 57).⁶ To put up with her present, Leda must resurrect her past, which is, we will learn, *bottled* in the doll. The doll becomes a representation, not only of childhood, but of her motherhood as well.⁷

Leda, we find out, not only temporarily abandoned her daughters, Bianca and Marta, when they were children, but confesses to loving one over the other: "I treated one as a daughter, the other a stepdaughter" (Ferrante, 2008: 120). In Ferrante's narrative outlook of a constant comparison between the mothers and daughters, Elena's doll ultimately "becomes a powerful symbol of abandoned children – of one daughter that mother neglected, of both daughters she temporarily abandoned, and of Leda herself, as before she was a mother, she was herself a daughter" (De Rogatis, 2019: 149).

Following Yeatsian manner, in an alternatively attractive and grotesque way, the action that *initiates* Leda, (similar to rite of passage of her mythical predecessor), is her decision to grab Elena's doll. It is that what Leda pushes over the edge of her neurosis – an overwhelming, yet comforting entrance into the real nature of her mother-daughter bond.

Ferrante, similar to Yeats, is a skillful master of suggestion, which, in a concentrated form, leads to a dramatized experience.⁸ The examination of the psychological drama of both Ledas, Yeatsian mythical one and her contemporary Italian counterpart, provides an apt portrayal of that intensity.

CONCLUSION

Finally, when we come to the point of Leda's self-realization, it is related to a newfound ability to observe people and communicate with them on a deeper level. For that reason, let us examine one intriguing absence in the story. Interestingly, Leda's daughters are not physically present in the novel, taking part in the events, until the very last moment. They do not become directly present until they call their mother at the very end, after Leda returns the doll to Nina, who then stabs her with a hat-pin and leaves. (Leda drives back to Florence that night in an ambivalent state of mind, but she is not actually hurt by the stabbing, or the crash.)

The final words of the novella are Leda's reply to her daughters, who have called her on the phone: "Mama, what are you doing, why haven't you called? Won't you at least let us know if you're alive or dead?"

"Deeply moved, I murmured:

'I'm dead, but I'm fine'" (Ferrante, 2008: 140).

When the girls enter the space of the novella's narration – when we hear their voices, they create a sense of relief. They play and tease their mother, but they now have a powerful presence, they represent a reality, that shatters all Leda's insecurities,

her memories and thought-speculations. Leda becomes captivated by those voices, and so are we.

Why does Leda say, in response, that she is dead and she is fine? De Rogatis explains that she is dead because she has been lost to herself, in the way of self-realization; and she is fine because she realizes, hearing their voices, the depth of her confusion about being a human (De Rogatis, 2019). The difficulty of being human is not a matter of constituting your existence under some conception, or the other. The difficulty of being human is to be fully awake to the *presence* of the actual people with whom we share our life. That is the lesson of life. Yeats's oeuvre, haunted by the subtle way of how potent influence of the past is on shaping and re-shaping the present, communicating with the powerful ambiguities of Ferrante's voice, helps us understand this mystery. Ambiguity remains a solid, unanswered and perhaps unanswerable dichotomy between the past pretensions and the present realizations. Somewhere in-between endures the individual self, or, at least, the matured, altered version of it.⁹

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JEJTsov SENZIBILITET, LEDA I AMBIVALENTNOST U *MRAČNOJ KĆERI* ELENE FERANTE

U *Ledi i labudu*, provokativnom i ambivalentnom sonetu jednog od najvećih anglofonih lirskih umetnika 20. veka, V. B. Jejtsov istražuje ideju o esencijalnoj važnosti koju jedan, jedinstven događaj može imati za istoriju čovečanstva. Ovakav sudbinski događaj može da dovede do kraja civilizacije i da, kao takav, predstavlja rađanje novog doba. Za Jejtsova, ovo predstavlja veliki kataklizmički trenutak, koji u sebi objedinjuje istoriju i mit. Iako naš metod ne podrazumeva direktnu komparaciju jednog od najvećih poetskih glasova engleskog modernizma sa savremenim književnim fenomenom oličenim u delu italijanske spisateljice, dato istraživanje pokazuje srodnost njihovih poetika. Rad ima za cilj da ukaže da Jejtsov senzibilitet suptilno prožima naraciju i formu *Mračne kćeri* Elene Ferante, ilustrujući tako način na koji ambivalentnost prošlosti utiče na sadašnjost – u skladu sa Jejtsovim interesovanjem za tradiciju – postajući ono što kod Feranteove prepoznajemo kao radikalnu i istrajnu posvećenost mnoštvu savremenih pitanja. U tom kontekstu, Jejtsova i Feranteova komuniciraju ideje o fragmentovanosti i nestabilnosti savremenog individualca, impresiju jednog sveta neodrživosti i promena, i, na taj način, ukazuju na nestabilnost granica i identiteta. Ovo je senzacija koju proživljavaju istoimene junakinje – Jejtsova mitska Leda i njena savremena naslednica.

Ključne reči: Jejtsova, Leda, senzibilitet, fragmentacija, identitet.

¹ Yeats found that “within each 2 000-year era, emblematic moments occurred at the midpoints of the 1000-year halves. At these moments of balance, he believed, a civilization could achieve special excellence, and Yeats cited as examples the splendor of Athens at 500 B.C., Byzantium at A.D. 500, and the Italian Renaissance at A.D.1500” (Kermode, 2008: 234).

² Yeats published his ambiguous and intriguing theories of personality and history in *A Vision* (1925, rev. 1937). Some of his symbolic patterns (most of Yeats’s poetry used symbols from ordinary life and familial traditions) provide important background to many aspects of his entire canon.

³ Apart from being a Modernist, Yeats also cultivated his Romantic heritage. For more on Romantic inclination toward mystical, see also A. Mušović, *Engleski romantičarski pokret – Pogled u beskonačno ili društvena angažovanost?* (2009).

⁴ Children are especially vulnerable to being traumatized, because of inability to understand themselves and necessity to rely “completely on parents who are often less than mature, patient or balanced. A child may, for example, be traumatized by a parent’s violent rage, or through

exposure to a depressed episode. Or, a child may be traumatized by what psychologists term 'neglect', which may mean that, it was not properly loved" (Winnicott, 2019).

⁵ A leading consequence of trauma is to have no active memory of what was traumatic – and "therefore no sense of how distorted one's picture of reality actually is". In other words, trauma colors our view of reality, while preventing us from noticing the extent to which it blurs our experience of the present. As the psychoanalyst concludes, what is needed is often "a lot of *self-reflection* and perhaps the *odd* breakdown" to get traumatized people observe the world differently (Winnicott, 2019).

⁶ For more on psychology of loss and suppressing the longing, see also A. Mušović, *Tragom romantičarskog i sentimentalističkog duha – Psihologija gubitka u delu F. Skota Ficdžeralda* (Mušović, 2020: 10-11).

⁷ The doll as an object is ambiguous itself, representing a miniaturized human shape. According to Stewart, they can be controlled and posed, and in this particular case, represent an object that is emblematic of the guilt that feeds Leda's past reminiscences (Stewart, 1993: 58).

⁸ In her book column for *The Guardian*, Elena Ferrante explains that "the skill of the writer is best displayed when what she suggests is much more than what she says" (Ferrante, 2018).

⁹ *The Lost Daughter* [*La Figlia Oscura*] was published in Italian in 2006, and in English in 2008, in translation by Anne Goldstein; in Serbian translation by Jelena Brborić was published as *Mračna kći* (2019).