

**WOMEN'S RIVALRY IN ELENA FERRANTE'S NOVEL
*MY BRILLIANT FRIEND***

A THESIS

BY:

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Medan, 10 July 2023

The Writer

NOVI DWI LESTARI

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APPENDIXES

A. The Biography of Elena Ferrante

Elena Ferrante is a pseudonymous Italian novelist. Ferrante's books, originally published in Italian, have been translated into many languages. Her four-book series of Neapolitan Novels are her most widely known works. Time magazine called Ferrante one of the 100 most influential people in 2016.

Not many facts are known about Elena Ferrante's biography, due to the author's anonymity. She has claimed in interviews that she was born in Naples, the daughter of a seamstress and that she has three sisters. Her knowledge of classical literature has also led critics to claim that she must have studied literature.

Despite being recognized as a novelist on an international scale, Ferrante has kept her identity secret since the 1992 publication of her first novel. Speculation as to her true identity has been rife, and several theories, based on information Ferrante has given in interviews as well as analysis drawn from the content of her novels, have been put forth.

B. The Literary Works of Elena Ferrante

Fictions

1. *L'amore molesto* (1992) English translation: *Troubling Love* (2006)
2. *I giorni dell'abbandono* (2002) English translation: *The Days of Abandonment* (2005)
3. *La Frantumaglia: Carte* (1991-2003).
4. Ferrante, Elena. *La Frantumaglia: Carte* (1991-2003) *Tessere* 2003-2007. E/O, 2007.
5. Ferrante, Elena. *La Frantumaglia: Carte* (1991-2003): *Tessere* 2003-2007: *Lettere* 2011-2016. E/O, 2015. (2003; English translation *Frantumaglia: A Writer's Journey*, 2016)
6. *La figlia oscura* (2006) English translation: *The lost daughter*, (2008)

7. *La spiaggia di notte* (2007) English translation: *The Beach at Night* (2016)
8. *The Neapolitan novels*:
 - *L'amica geniale* (2011) English translation: *My Brilliant Friend* (2012).
 - *Storia del nuovo cognome*, *L'amica geniale* volume 2 (2012) English translation: *The Story of a New Name*, (2013)
 - *Storia di chi fugge e di chi resta*, *L'amica geniale* volume 3 (2013) English translation: *Those Who Leave and Those Who Stay*, (2014).
 - *Storia della bambina perduta*, *L'amica geniale* volume 4 (2014) English translation: *The Story of the Lost Child*, (2015).
9. *L'invenzione occasionale* (2019) English translation: *Incidental Inventions*, (2019).
10. *La vita bugiarda degli adulti* (2019) English translation, *The Lying Life of Adults*, (2020).
11. *I margini e il dettato* (2021) English translation, *In the Margins: On the Pleasures of Reading and Writing*, (2022).

C. The Summary of *My Brilliant Friend's* Novel

"My Brilliant Friend" is a story of friendship—humbling, raw, human friendship—amid the backdrop of a poor section of postwar Naples, Italy. The novel opens with a flashback: the narrator is Elena, a woman in her mid-60s, looking back on her six-decade friendship with Lila Cerullo. The girls meet at age six in their poor Naples neighborhood. They immediately bond over school and common hatred for the neighborhood 'ogre,' Don Achille.

As the girls grow older, they compete in all things. Elena was a good student, but Lila was better. However, at the end of elementary school, Lila is unable to continue because her parents won't pay for it, but Elena does. Lila's father is a shoemaker, and Elena's is a porter in a Naples hotel. Without Lila to compete with, she continues through school with success. At times she needs Lila's help, and at times she is carried by her intelligence and flair for writing.

The girls reach adolescence with all of the normal trappings: insecurities, varying levels of self-confidence, and crushes on the local boys. By age thirteen, Lila

has developed into the beauty of the neighborhood. Elena, too, longs to be pretty and finds as many ways as she can match Lila's success.

The goal for both girls is to rise above their birth and leave 'the neighborhood,' the area where families have lived for generations and are at the whim of the Solara family. Lila, who is brilliant but cannot go to school, throws all of her energy into a way out: she and her brother Rino design and hand-make a pair of shoes that they hope to mass market and sell with the Cerullo name. The shoes become her focus and obsession for more than a year. All of her fierceness and intelligence are poured into the project. Meanwhile, Elena excels at school, with some help from Lila in Latin and Greek.

When Elena reaches the age of high school, she is promoted and encouraged to attend. When she has the upper hand, Lila has the lower, and vice versa. Elena is an honored student, and Lila is the prettiest girl around, the goal of most of the young men in the neighborhood. Elena fills her time with several empty relationships to try to keep pace with Lila's string of admirers. Although her heart belongs to Nino Sarratore, the son of the local poet and rumored lecher, she settles for a few neighborhood boys that help her feel loved and wanted.

The girls turn fourteen, then fifteen, in this tumultuous period. Marcello Solara, the son of the new 'ogre' of the neighborhood, courts Lila ruthlessly with his money and power, and she resists him against her family's will. Elena goes away for a summer to an island in the sea, becoming strong, confident, and beautiful. The Sarratores are there as well; Nino kisses her, and the beauty of the moment is lost when his father sexually assaults her.

Upon Elena's return from the beach, she finds Lila fending off the interest of Stefano Caracci, the grocer, one of the wealthiest young men in the neighborhood, competition for the Solaras' influence. She walks a tightrope between these two young men, finally throwing Marcello over and choosing Stefano, who agrees to invest in an expansion of her father's shoe business.

During their engagement, Lila becomes even more beautiful because of Stefano's wealth. The locals love and hate her with their envy. Elena is caught in the same trap and is also trying to deal with her feelings of inadequacy and pressure to leave the neighborhood. The novel ends on a cliffhanger, at Lila's and Stefano's wedding. They are sixteen years old: Elena has two years left of high school and is desperate to leave and elevate herself above the 'plebs' among whom she was born. Lila walks with feigned boldness into her marriage, finding at the last minute that her husband Stefano has sold out to the hated Solara family.

D. The Characters in My Brilliant Friend's Novel

- 1. Elena Greco** (also known as Lenù or Lenuccia): the narrator and main character of the novel. She is the first-born child of the Greco family and has three young siblings. The novel follows her from age six when she enters school and meets Lila, until the age of 16. Lenu grows up in poverty in Naples but is very intelligent and academically successful. She has a long, close, but often ambivalent friendship with Lila.
- 2. Raffaella Cerullo** (known to all as Lina, and by Lenù as Lila): Lila is the daughter of a shoemaker. She is strikingly beautiful and magnetically charismatic, even from a young age, but she is also manipulative and willful. Lila is Lenù's best friend, whose disappearance leads her to write the novel.

Lila is considered by most to be very intelligent, but she is not allowed to continue with formal education after elementary school. She is also known as an unruly, wild child. The novel ends with her marriage, at the age of 16, to Stefano Carracci.

3. **Stefano Carracci:** the son of Don Achille and Maria Carraci, brother to Pinuccia and Alfonso. After his father's death, he takes an active role in running the family grocery store. The store eventually becomes quite successful, making him wealthy. Stefano pursues and eventually marries Lila while she is also being courted by Marcello Solara. Marries Lila at the end of the novel, when it is revealed that he had a deal with Marcello Solara, the man she believed she was escaping.
4. **Don Achille:** father to Stefano, Pinuccia and Alfonso. A contrabandist feared by the whole neighborhood, that the young girls relate to an ogre. He is murdered when they are children.
5. **Donato Sarratore:** Works as a train conductor and is a very reserved and serious man. He is married to Lidia Sarratore and the father of five children, including Nino and Marisa. He is a womanizer, who has an affair with the mad widow Melina and also carries on a flirtation with Nella. He is a poet who publishes a book of poems, an accomplishment that Elena finds very impressive. While he is staying at the same vacation home as Elena, he makes sexual advances toward her.
6. **Pasquale and Carmela Peluso:** Friends of Lila and Lenù. Pasquale becomes involved with the communist party.
7. **Melina:** known to all as the crazy widow, having had a mental breakdown after being left by her lover Donato Sarratore. Mother to Antonio and Ada.

- 8. Antonio Cappuccio:** friend to Lenù and Lila. Dates Lenù during their teenage years. He works as a mechanic, and he and Elena are romantically involved during her teenage years. He is more committed to Elena than she is to him, but she finds him physically attractive and enjoys exploring her sexuality with him.
- 9. Giovanni "Nino" Sarratore:** son of Donato Sarratore, leaves the neighborhood when they are little. Lenù is secretly infatuated with him. Nino is very intellectual and serious. Elena has romantic feelings for him from a young age and these continue throughout her adolescence.
- 10. Marisa Sarratore:** Nino's sister. During their time on the island of Ischia, Elena and Marisa develop a friendship.
- 11. Enzo Scanno:** Enzo is the eldest son of Nicola. He is part of the same social circle as Elena and Lila.
- 12. The Solara brothers:** Marcello and Michele, sons of the local loan shark, insinuated to have Camorra connections. Marcello is obsessed with Lila and pursues her aggressively. She, however, rejects his marriage proposal and marries Stefano instead.
- 13. Maestra Oliviero:** she teaches Lila and Lenù in elementary school, and pressures the Greco family into sending Lenù to middle and later high school.