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India and the Virtuous Indian in Dante

Ephraim Nissan

Introduction

Whereas in his *Divine Comedy*, the Italian poet Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) strove to embrace orthodoxy even as he was castigating such members of the clergy (even popes) he considered sinful, the fact deserves attention that when he cleverly raises an objection concerning the virtuous yet unbaptised, and how it could be fair that they would be denied spiritual salvation, he does so by providing as an example the virtuous Indian who does not know Christianity, or at any rate has not adopted it. Dante the author avoids having Dante the character voice that objection; rather, he has a mystical being in Heaven read his mind, expound the problem, and provide an answer that makes an important concession. What did Dante know about India, on the evidence of his writings? The present study is concerned with these matters.

Geography in Gabrieli's *Dante e l'Oriente*

References to India in Dante's writings, and in the *Divine Comedy* in particular, do sporadically occur.[1] We are going to quote a relevant passage from Giuseppe Gabrieli's book *Dante e l'Oriente* (1921a). Cf. Gabrieli (1921b). Gabrieli had previously published ([1919] 1920) *Intorno alle fonti orientali della Divina Commedia* [*Concerning the Oriental Sources of the Divine Comedy*], and in the controversy about whether Islamic sources had influenced the *Divine Comedy*, he sided with those generally favourable to that hypothesis, but he was opposed to how Asín Palacios in particular had dealt with the matter.[2]

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Chapter 2 of *Dante e l'Oriente, "L'Oriente geografico di Dante*", begins by identifying cosmographical sources available to Dante, then briefly surveys developments in ideas about the location of the Earthly Paradise during the Middle Ages, and next turns to actual geography. That part in that chapter comprises a list of regions or countries, and before turning to a list of cities, Gabrieli concluded the list of countries as follows (where *Mon.* stands for *De monarchia*, *Inf.* stands for *Inferno, Purg.* stands for *Purgatorio*, and *Par.* stands for *Paradiso*):

> [FENICIA] (*Par.* XXVII, 83-84),
> FRIGIA (*Mon.* II, III, 63),
> ASSIRIA (*Mon.* II, IX, 23; *Purg.* XII, 59),
> PERSIA (*Purg.* XXVI, 21),
> INDIA (*Inf.* XIV, 32; *Par.* XIX, 69–70 ecc.).

In Canto 14 of *Inferno*, blasphemers are punished. The *terzina* at lines 28–30 relates that Dante sees fire come down similarly to snow when it falls. Then the next *terzina* (lines 31–33) states that the like of this, Alexander the Great had seen in India; that *terzina* is as follows:

> Quali Alessandro in quelle parti calde
> d'Indïa vide sopra 'l süo stuolo
> fiamme cadere infino a terra salde,
>
> [Such as Alexander in those hot parts
> Of India saw over his hosts
> Flames fall solid down to earth,]

Dante Inquires about the Spiritual Fate of the Virtuous Indian

In Canto 19 of *Paradiso*, the souls that in the heaven of the planet Jupiter are aggregated together into the Eagle solve a problem which Dante proposes (but Dante does not need to state the problem, as the eagle reads his mind and provides an answer right away), and later in the same canto the souls in the Eagle criticise harshly the kings of Christendom reigning in the year 1300. In the answer given by the eagle, there is this *terzina* (lines 70–72):

> ché tu dicevi: "Un uom nasce a la riva
> de l'Indo, e quivi non è chi ragioni
> di Cristo né chi legga né chi scriva;
>
> [As thou hast said: "A man is born on the bank
> Of the Indus, and there is nobody there who would think
> Of Christ, nor any who would read or write;]

It is a problem of theodicy. The next two terzine are as follows:

> e tutti suoi voleri e atti buoni
> sono, quanto ragione umana vede,
> sanza peccato in vita o in sermoni.
>
> Muore non battezzato e sanza fede:
> ov'è questa giustizia che 'l condanna?
> Ov'è la colpa sua, se ei non crede?".
>
> [And all his wishes and deeds, good
> They are, as far as human reason sees,
> Without sin in life or in discourse.
>
> He died unbaptised and without [the true] faith:
> Where is this justice that condemns him?
> Where is his fault, if he does not believe?"]

The reply Dante is given is that nobody who does not believe in Christ has ever gone to Heaven or will ever go there, but on the Day of Judgement (when humankind shall be parted into two "collegi", one of them to be eternally rich in the sense of spiritual reward, and the other one a loser), many who proclaim they are Christian will be judged worse than some non-Christians (lines 103–111):[3]

> esso ricominciò: «A questo regno
> non salì mai chi non credette 'n Cristo,
> né pria né poi ch'el si chiavasse al legno.
>
> Ma vedi: molti gridan "Cristo, Cristo!",
> che saranno in giudicio assai men prope
> a lui, che tal che non conosce Cristo;
>
> e tai Cristian dannerà l'Etïòpe,
> quando si partiranno i due collegi,
> l'uno in etterno ricco e l'altro inòpe.
>
> [He started again: "Into this kingdom
> Never ascended any who did not believe in Christ,
> Neither earlier nor later than he was nailed to the wood [of the Cross].
>
> But look: there are many who exclaim "Christ, Christ!"
> And who when judged, will be much less close
> To him, than somebody who does not know Christ,
>
> And some Christian will damn the [unbaptised] Ethiopian
> When the two groups shall depart,
> One forever rich, and the other deprived.]

It was especially this passage, which appears to imply that the virtuous infidels' place is in the Limbo rather than in Hell proper, that led Rodolfo Mondolfi, a school headmaster in Livorno, a Jew and a man of letters, to conclude in his *Gli Ebrei. Qual luogo oltremondano sia per essi nella Commedia di Dante* (Mondolfi 1904: an essay of 12 pages) that Dante placed the Jews in the Limbo — but it probably was wishful thinking on Mondolfi's part: the lowest place in the Cocytus, itself the lowest place in Dante's Hell is the Giudecca, in

context so named after Judas Iscariot, and yet, *Giudecca* was a medieval name for a Jewish neighbourhood. Dante relegates traitors and presumably the Jews (as can be inferred by the name *Giudecca* he gives the very bottom of Hell) to the very bottom of Hell, in the Ninth Circle, where they are immersed in a frozen lake (the fourth, and worst, section is the Giudecca, reserved to traitors of one's benefactors): the river Phlegethon changes name "in becoming the Cocytus when it reaches the bottom of Hell" (Cachey 2010: 333).

In Medieval Italian, the Giudecca was the Jewish neighbourhood in a town (and is different from the Ghetto, as instituted in the early modern period, in that residence just in the Ghetto was compulsory, rather than the Jews' own choice). Dante's Giudecca at the bottom of Hell is on the face of it so named because Lucifer is chewing the body of Giuda, i.e., Judas Iscariot. And yet, Dante's choice to name the place *Giudecca* is far from innocent: it arguably implies that in Hell, it is the Jew's Place, the place of all Jews since the Passion. (Cf. Sylvia Tomasch's "Judecca, Dante's Satan, and the Displaced Jew" [1998].)

We cannot know for sure that such was Dante's intention however, because Dante the narrating character passes through the Giudecca in a hurry, and this because Dante the poet was constrained by the fixed size of a canto: in the last canto of the *Inferno*, he had to relate about his passage through the Giudecca, then he is describing the body of Lucifer, then describing how he and Virgil pass through a tunnel from the centre of the earth to the shore of the island of Purgatory (at the antipodes of Jerusalem); so crammed is the last canto of the *Inferno*, that Dante's apparently had no room to dwell on encountering the denizens of the Giudecca, but the latter's very name is quite eloquent.

As for the frozen lake at the bottom of Dante's Hell, note that ancient Egyptians already imagined a "lake of criminals" in the afterlife. Concerning "valley of darkness" in *Psalms* 23:4, Gary Rendsburg writes (2001: 189): "As far as I am able to determine, no one has pointed to the equivalent Egyptian expression *nt kkt* 'valley of darkness', occurring most notably in the Book of the Dead, spell 130,[5] as a place to which the deceased will not go on account of his righteousness (parallel to 'lake of criminals' and other expressions)".

In contrast to Dante's conceding that the virtuous yet unbaptised Indian would not go to Heaven (thus conforming with dogma), and yet on the Latter Day, that infidel would be closer ("prope") to Christ than some Christians who proclaim "Christ, Christ" and yet go on sinning severely — in Hinduism, Knut Jacobsen writes (2009: 386):

> Naraka, niraya or hell is a possible destination after death, as a punishment for evil deeds, but not usually as a damnation caused by wrong faith as in the Western religions of Christianity and Islam. Hindu inclusivism can mean that all religions are considered as valid means leading to the same salvific goal. Hindu gurus who attract an international audience often encourage devotees not to change religion since it is not necessary and does not in itself serve any purpose.

And then again in contrast, an apparently early *hadith* in Islam goes as far as reserving different levels of hell to different faith communities. Einar Thomassen writes (2009: 407–408):

> One aspect that received considerable attention by later Muslim writers was the topography of hell. The Qur'an itself gives few details on this topic, though it does state, in 15:44, that Jahannam "has seven gates; for every gate there shall be a separate party of them" (that is, of those who have gone astray). A widespread interpretation of this verse, attested in a relatively early *hadith*, was that hell had seven levels. Each of these levels came to be associated with one of the names employed for hell in the Qur'an, and to each level a specific category of inmates was assigned. The result was the following architecture:
>
> 1. *Jahannam*, reserved for Muslims who have committed grave sins;
> 2. *al-Laza*, the Blaze, for the Jews;
> 3. *al-Hutama*, the Consuming Fire, for the Christians;
> 4. *al-Sa'ir*, the Flame, for the Sabaeans;
> 5. *al-Saqar*, the Scorching Fire, for the Zoroastrians;
> 6. *al-Jahim*, the Hot Place, for the idolaters;
> 7. *al-Hawiya*, the Abyss, for the hypocrites.[6]

It is interesting to note that a main motive in this elaboration is the placement in hell of the various non-Muslim groups, a fact which confirms the impression that an important function of the idea of hell in Islam is to effect identity construction and boundary demarcation vis-à-vis "the other".[7] On the other hand, Islamic tradition also witnesses a different type of systematization, in which the various levels or regions of hell are distinguished in accordance with the types of sinners consigned to each of them and/or the types of punishments inflicted.

Telling the Time, and Daylight in Relation to the Ganges

The River Ganges is mentioned in the first three *terzine* of *Purgatorio*:

> Già era 'l sole a l'orizzonte giunto
> lo cui meridïan cerchio coverchia
> Ierusalèm col suo più alto punto;
>
> e la notte, che opposita a lui cerchia,
> uscia di Gange fuor con le Bilance,
> che le caggion di man quando soverchia;
>
> sì che le bianche e le vermiglie guance,

là dov'i' era, de la bella Aurora
per troppa etate divenivan rance.

[Already the sun had reached the horizon
Whose meridian circle covers
Jerusalem with its highest point;

And night, that goes in circle opposite to him [i.e., to the sun],
Had come out of the Ganges with Libra,
Which falls off her [i.e., the night's] hand when she is above;

So that the white and vermilion cheeks,
There where I was, of the comely Aurora [Dawn]
Owing to exceeding age were turning orange.]

That is to say, on the shore of the island of Purgatory Dante was seeing that dawn was giving way to daylight. As Dante believed the Earth to be a globe, he was able to indicate the position of the sun with respect to Jerusalem (at the antipodes of the island of Purgatory), setting down as seen from Jerusalem, whereas the night was about to arrive there from India. The constellation of Libra, Dante states, could still be seen early in the night, but no longer later during the night.

Canto 17 of *Purgatorio* relates a vision Dante has in a dream, and his entrance into the Earthly Paradise. The first two *terzine* of Canto 17 are as follows, and identify the time in the day, there at the summit of the mountain of Purgatory, with respect to the position of the sun, now visible over the River Ganges:

Sì come quando i primi raggi vibra
là dove il suo fattor lo sangue sparse,
cadendo Ibero sotto l'alta Libra,

e ['n] l'onde in [or: il] Gange da nona rïarse,
sì stava il sole; onde 'l giorno sen giva,
come l'angel di Dio lieto ci apparse.

[Just as when he [the sun] makes his earliest rays vibrate
There where his maker shed the blood, [i.e., in Jerusalem, the place of the Passion]
As Ibero [the river Ebro in Spain] was falling under Libra standing high,

And the waves in the Ganges from the ninth hour he was heating again,
So the sun stood; hence, the day was going away,
When the glad angel of God appeared to us.]

In his commentary to the *Divine Comedy*, published in Venice at the Tipi del Gondoliere in 1837 in two volumes, Niccolò Tommaseo[10] at this point, in his gloss to the word "quando", explained plainly: "Il sole nel Purg. tramontava, in Gerusalemme nasceva. Quando il sole in Ariete nasce a Gerusalemme, è ora di nona sul Gange, fiume d'Oriente" ("The sun in Purgatory was setting, in Jerusalem it was rising. When the sun in Aries rises in Jerusalem, it is the hour of the nones on the Ganges, a river of the Orient"). Then, in the next gloss, Tommaseo signalled, for Dante's lexical selection "vibra", a parallel in Boethius ("Subito vibratus lumine Phoebus", i.e., "the Sun, suddenly vibrant with light") which presumably inspired Dante to describe sunrise similarly.

The next gloss signals a textual variant of the first line of the second *terzina*: the text in Tommaseo's edition reads "E 'n l'onde in Gange da nona rïarse", but Tommaseo signals that some others read "E 'n l'onde in Gange da nona rïarse" (with the article "il" instead of the preposition "in"), and those adopting that variant reading, Tommaseo wrote, explain: Libra is opposite to Aries; Libra is on the meridian of Spain, whose river Ibero, i.e., Ebro (Iberus, mentioned by Statius) flows at that time under Libra. At that very time, as the river Ganges flows into the waves of the sea, these are very hot, because the sun warms them: it is the ninth hour, [but at its beginning, thus] at noon. Tommaseo continued: Aries is distant from Libra one quarter of a circle. He then stated that he himself rather read: "E 'n l'onde in Gange" ("And in the waves in the Ganges"), providing his own explanation for his reading: the sun in Purgatory was about to set, which was as it makes his earliest rays vibrate in Jerusalem, and as it makes its rays vibrate in the Ganges,[11] whose waves are made very hot by the ninth hour. Tommaseo continues by stating that then the line beginning with "cadendo" is like a parenthesis, and the sense of the verb *cadere* (which is usually 'to fall') here is the same as the sense of *trovarsi*, 'to find oneself', 'to be', and indeed the latter sense is (Tommaseo avers) frequent for *cadere*. The next gloss is to "Ibero"; Tommaseo quotes Solinus, "Iberus amnis totae Hispaniae nomen dedit" ("The river Ebro gave its name to the whole of Spain").

Tommaseo, in his glosses to the first line of the next *terzina*, the line about the Ganges, criticised Dante: "Il periodo è troppo involuto, e la erudizione geografica troppo" ("The syntax of the sentence is too complicated, and geographical erudition is too much"). He continues with the allegorical understanding (already current since the Middle Ages) of Dante's description: sunset is the hour of luxury, the angel is one's conscience, and Virgil stands for reason. The angel and Virgil enable Dante to overcome temptation. Then Tommaseo quotes from *Psalms*: "Probasti cor meum, et visitasti nocte: igne me examinasti" ("Thou triedst my heart, and visitedst by night: Thou examinedst by fire"). This is the incomplete first hemistich of *Psalms* 17:3 according to the *Vulgate*, but the sense of the Hebrew original is not identical: "Thou examinedst by fire" is just one word in Hebrew (three in Latin), and two Hebrew words follow, which mean: "Thou foundest not [anything wrong]".

The Ganges and Francis of Assisi

Another mention of the Ganges is found in Canto 11 of *Paradiso*. It is the canto of St. Francis. As usual in the *Divine Comedy*, Dante does not say directly what he means, and rather lets the reader infer it. Instead of stating that Francis was born in Assisi, he names other places in the region. In the place that the reader has to infer, "nacque al mondo un sole, / come fa questo talvolta di Gange" (lines 50–51) ["a sun was born into the world, / As this [the real Sun] does sometimes out of the Ganges"].

This analogy may be baffling, as if sunrise in India is meant, sunrise happens all over the world. Rather, the birth of Francis of Assisi is being likened to a turning point, to daybreak in a country (to Dante in the Far East) where sunshine, when (as opposed to the night) there is daylight, the sun is hot and shining.

The Ganges in Dante's *Quaestio de aqua et terra*

In Chapter 2 in his *Dante e l'Oriente*, Giuseppe Gabrieli concluded the list of seas and rivers with the following:

> l'INDO (*Par.* XIX, 71), il GANGE (*Purg.* II, 5; XXVII, 4; *Par.* XI, 51; *Aq. et Terra* XIX, 40–3).

Aq. et Terra stands for Dante's *Quaestio de aqua et terra* (*The Question of the Water and the Earth*), of which White (1902) is a translation into English. Alain Campbell White (by whose times, the authenticity of the ascription of that work to Dante was still controversial, but which he accepted) began the introduction to his translation by stating:

> In 1508, one hundred and eighty-seven years after the death of Dante, Giovanni Benedetto Moncetti da Castiglione Aretino — an Italian monk whose position and character have never been definitely settled — printed, in Venice, a small treatise, the *Quaestio de Aqua et Terra*, professing to be a scientific discussion held by Dante in Verona, on Jan. 30, 1320, concerning the relative levels of earth and water on the surface of the globe.
>
> At the time of its publication no interest was taken in the subject-matter of the treatise. Dante himself was read but little, the Divine Comedy and the *Convito* [i.e., the *Convivio*, *The Banquet*] being the only works of his accessible to the public. Consequently the *Quaestio* immediately sank into complete obscurity. We have no evidence that anybody besides Moncetti ever laid eyes on the manuscript from which it was supposed printed; and the first edition became so rare that in 1843 Torri knew of only one copy. Up to the present time, however, five other copies have been found.

In his "Analysis of the Treatise", White (1902: viii) has this item:

> The form of this emerging continent has been studied, and it is that of a half-moon, extending 180 degrees longitudinally from Cadiz to the River Ganges, and 67 degrees latitudinally from the Equator to the neighborhood of the Arctic Circle.

On p. 36, White (1902) has this passage in Dante's Latin (but the medieval spelling of the Latin text is standardised, as given by White): "Nam, ut communiter ab omnibus habetur, haec habitabilis extenditur per lineam longitudinis a Gadibus, quae supra terminos occidentales ab Hercule ponitur, usque ad ostia fluminis Ganges, ut scribit Orosius". On p. 37, one finds White's English translation: "For as is the universal opinion, this habitable region extends on a longitudinal line from Cadiz, which was founded on the westernmost boundaries by Hercules, even to the mouths of the river Ganges, as Orosius writes".

Indico legno ("Indian Wood") as a Name for Amber

Mabel Priscilla Cook's article "Indico legno" (1903) is in English, notwithstanding its title being in Dante's Italian. It begins thus (*ibid.*: 356, my additions in brackets):

> "Oro ed argento fino, cocco e biacca,
> Indico legno lucido e sereno,
> Fresco smeraldo in l'ora che si fiacca"
>
> [Gold and refined silver, cochineal and ceruse [i.e., white lead],
> Indian wood shining and clear,
> Fresh emerald in the hour getting tired]
>
> are the substances Dante cites in Purgatorio, VII, 73–75, as being surpassed in color by the flowers and grass of the Valley of the Princes. The criticism on verse seventy-four divides into two schools according to the punctuation assigned to the passage by commentators. One section, and perhaps the greater, holds that Dante meant the whole line to refer to one substance, some word from India; the other, putting a comma after the first word, has it that the poet had two colors in mind when he wrote the words: the color of indigo and that of some "wood shining and clear", which latter is however rather dull and obscure of interpretation. Among the substances guessed at by the commentators there is none that fits well the sense of the passage, neither ebony nor "quercia marcia" [rotten oak] having colors appropriate to a description of bright flowers. […]

Upon consideration of how Dante indicated colours, Cook reckoned (1903: 358–359, my brackets):

> With the exception of such a case as that of a color described as being

> "fra rose e viole", we have found the colors of flowers in Dante to be limited to red, white, and yellow. The "indico legno" would then seem to be some substance having one of these three colors. If we allow ourselves to be guided by the symmetry of the passage, — and Dante delighted in such formalities, — we find a second yellow to be required, and then we shall have: *oro, argento, cocco, biacco, indico legno*; [gold, silver, cochineal, white lead, Indian wood;] i. e., yellow, white, red, white, yellow (?). What vegetable substance will satisfy all the needs of the passage? "Legno" is used to denote so many of wood that it is easy to see that it may be product of a tree, natural or artificial. […] According to Pliny (*Nat. Hist.*, VII, 2), "the trees, in India, are said to be of such vast height that it is impossible to send an arrow over them. This is the result of the singular fertility of the soil, the equable temperature of the atmosphere, and the abundance of water." Dante refers to this belief in *Purg.*, XXXII, 40–2, where, growing by the source of Lethe and Eunoë, above all atmospheric influence, in the soil where all fertility has its origin, the tree of knowledge "spreads its top so wide and high that it would be wondered at by the Indians in their forests."

Then, having turned to "Pliny's *Natural History*, Book XXXVII, Chapter 11, [where] we find India given as one of the sources of amber: a material, which, being of vegetable origin and both shining and clear, would fit our passage well, and one whose bright yellow would complete the color symmetry" (Cook 1903: 359), and having surveyed further information about amber as would have been available to Dante (from Dante, from Virgil who in his eighth Eclogue recognised the vegetable origin of amber, and from Ovid, Solinus, and Isidore of Seville), Cook concluded that by "indico legno", Dante meant 'amber'. She felt that the passage in Isidore suits how Dante described the "indico legno" (Cook 1903: 361–362):

> Isidore in his *Origines*, Book XVI, Ch. XXIII, describes the nature of amber and recognizes its vegetable origin in the following words: "Electrum vocatum quod ad radium solis clarius auro argentoque reluceat. Sol enim a poetis electron vocatur. Defaecatius est enim hoc metallum omnibus metallis. Hujus tria sunt genera. Unum quod ex pini arboribus fluit, quod succinum dicitur." This last passage yields us three interesting points of comparison with the line in Dante's poem. "Reluceat" conveys the same idea as Dante's "lucido"; that this quality is said to be greater in amber than in either gold or silver would give an ascending scale, such as we might look for, to the sequence of the colors of the line in the *Purgatorio*; "defaecatus" means clear, free from gregs, a meaning very well embodied in the Italian adjective "sereno".
>
> The joint evidence of the various passages quoted would seem to be that the phraseology used by several of the authors with whose works Dante was familiar, in describing amber or using it in similes, was closely related to "Indico lucido e sereno". The Indian origin is a point of common knowledge: Pliny does not hesitate to use the word "lingo" in connection with it; and by associating it with and "adamantis" he, silently to be sure, notes those qualities which Isidore expresses by the words "reluceat" and "defaecatius".

Concluding Remark

Dante's references to India come in two categories: (a) astronomy or geophysics, in relation to daylight or heat in different places of the globe, as Dante believed that the Earth is a globe indeed; (b) theodicy, divine justice: Dante problematised, *vis-à-vis* Christian orthodoxy, the spiritual status of the virtuous Indian, as an example of non-Christians who are nevertheless virtuous. In a companion article also published in this journal, I consider how literary writers or literary critics stemming from Indian or Chinese cultures have sometimes appropriated Dante in some surprising manner into their own respective culture.[12]

Notes

[1] In articles of theirs, Claudio Mutti (1991) and, very briefly, Adolfo Cecilia (1970) have been concerned with this while writing in Italian. My emphasis and discussion in the present paper are different.

[2] At http://www.liberliber.it/online/autori/autori-g/giuseppe-gabrieli/ Paolo Alberti supplies in Italian the following biographical information. Giuseppe Gabrieli was born, the son of peasants, in 1872 in Calimera, in the Salento (the plain in southernmost Apulia). It was apparently after he read Firdusi's *Book of Kings,* in I. Pizzi's Italian translation, that Gabrieli decided to concern himself with Oriental languages and civilisations. In 1891 he enrolled at the University of Naples, and began to study Arabic. In 1893, he enrolled at the Istituto di Studi Superiori in Florence (the future University of Florence), studying especially Arabic and Hebrew, and he graduated there in 1895. He then became a teacher at high schools in Lecce (the town whose classical lyceum he had attended, and to whose province Calimera belongs), then in Santa Maria Capua Vetere and in Naples. In 1900–1902 he was headmaster of the Liceo-Convitto (a lyceum cum boarding school) in Maglie, another town in the Salento. In 1902, he became the librarian of the Reale Accademia dei Lincei in Rome. In 1915, he obtained *libera docenza* (habilitation to teach in academia on an untenured basis) in Arabic language and literature at the University of Rome, but he was met with hostility in the academic world. These difficulties with academic politics led him to focus on his scholarly writing. His introduction, "Il nome proprio arabo-musulmano" ("The Arabic-Islamic Proper Name"), to the first of the two volumes

of the *Onomasticon Arabicum* is perhaps his most important publication. He had been collaborating with Leone Caetani, who in 1924, having chosen to exile himself to Canada, entrusted his personal library to Gabrieli, who sorted it and made it accessible to the public. Gabrieli write some publications about Dante in relation to Islam, and also concerned himself with bibliography, with the inventory of Oriental manuscript at Italian library, with Egyptology, and with the early history (1603–1657) of the Accademia dei Lincei. In 1939, the Fascist regime abolished the Accademia dei Lincei, and replaced it with the Accademia d'Italia. Gabrieli, who had been the librarian of the former, was confirmed as the librarian of the latter. He died in 1942.

[3] Judaism does recognise that the spiritual state of the virtuous non-Jew is better than that of a Jewish sinner. Besides, in Judaism Adam's original sin does not have implications for the fate of the souls of his descendants, and non-Jews are only required to abide by the Noahid laws, a small set of very general rules of conduct (such as having courts of justice, or not eating the flesh of animals while these are still alive). In that manner, the legitimacy of specific differences is recognised.

Isaac Newton was aware of the doctrine of Noah's seven precepts, and incorporated this in his own esoteric doctrine of macrohistory. Garry Trompf has written: "Newton held that the fundamental principles of all knowledge relevant to our present order were divinely granted to Noah after the Flood. This knowledge springs from the 'true religion' of Noah who received seven precepts from God (prohibiting idolatry, blasphemy, fornication, murder and theft; and enjoining care of animals, and the setting up of governments [cf. Talmud, *Sanhtedr.*]). {*Quod corrige: Sanhedrin.* More precisely: Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Sanhedrin,* at the bottom of folio 56a and at the beginning of 56b}). In Biblico-Christian terms this religion was expanded in the Mosaic decalogue, reaffirmed by the prophets, distilled by Jesus (love God and your fellow human), used as a guide by the early Church (cf. Acts 15:20, 29), and discreetly embraced by Newton himself as the self-inscribed champion of *vera religio* in the Last Times. But it was relayed to the Gentiles—the Sabaeans, Confucius, the Brahmins (who owed their name to Abraham), and Pythagoras all passing on the Noachian 'basics of civilization'. Thus a stepping-stone model of recurrent reinstantiation is suggested, but different from the prevening one of the *philosophia perennis*" (Trompf 2006: 710; Trompf's own brackets; our added braces). "Noah's religion was enmeshed with natural philosophy. Thus Newton's own work on the spectrum of light was connected back to the post-diluvian rainbow; and mathematics derived from the proportions of the Ark and the cubit unit of measure used for it. Gentiles had their place in mediating this *prisca scientia*" (*ibid.:* 711). Cf. Trompf (1991).

[4] Lakes also occur in Dante's *Inferno* in a description of the effects of murder by the brigand Caco: "Questi è Caco, / che, sotto 'l sasso di Monte Aventino, / di sangue fece spesse volte laco" (*Inferno* 25.25–27: "This is Caco, who, under the rock of Mount Aventine, of blood oftentimes made a lake"). Also consider Dante's curse for Pisa, calling on two islands, Capraia and Gorgona, to move together to the mouth of the River Arno, so that a lake would result in which all inhabitants of Pisa would be drowned: "e faccian siepe ad Arno in su la foce / sì ch'elli anníeghi in te ogne persona!" (*Inferno* 33.83–84: "may the islands of Capraia and Gorgona / move in to block the Arno at its mouth / and so drown every living soul in you!", as rendered by Cachey 2010: 342).

[5] Rendsburg (2001: 189) cites for this Budge (1898: 279) for the Egyptian text according to the Theban recension of the *Book of the Dead,* and Faulkner (1990: 119) for an English rendering.

[6] "Hypocrisy is one of the most used words in the Qur'ân and Sura 63 is entirely devoted to this issue. From the second half of the seventh century onwards Islâm, in a very different way from Christianity, began to develop a theology of Hypocrisy, accompanied by an eschatological key that points directly to the afterlife. This is the starting point and the acknowledgment behind an Islamic eschatological thought that initially affected the debate on the status of the sinner" (Demichelis 2015: 388).

[7] "There is, for instance the verse that occurs twice in the Qur'an and which says: 'Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve' (2:62; cf. 5:69). On the other hand, there exists a strong exegetical tradition that claims that those verses have been abrogated by 3:85: '…whoever desires a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers'. Nonetheless, the question of the salvation of 'the others' continues to be a significant topic in contemporary Muslim discourse. Influential theologians are currently speaking out against the idea of 'a monopoly of salvation' in Islam — though not without causing opposition. The issue is hotly debated among Muslims on the Internet" (Thomassen 2009: 414).

[8] At this point, the blood-shedding is that of the Son at the Crucifixion, and yet, Dante refers to the Maker, God the Father. His wording in this line of verse blends those two persons of the Trinity.

[9] Latin *nona* stood for the third quarter of the day. The hours of the day and of the night depended upon daylight, and thus upon the season. In the Canonical Hours, the Nones in the catholic liturgy are the daily office that was originally said at the ninth hour, corresponding to 3 pm, but now often earlier.

[10] Niccolò Tommaseo (1802–1874), a Croatian by background, also identified himself as an Italian, was a major Italian lexicographer, and was among the other things an important folklorist (with his 1841 Italian-language collection of the lyrics of Tuscan, Corsican, Illyrian (i.e., Croatian), and Greek folk songs) and Italian lexicographer.

A recent paper by Eliana Moscarda Mirkovi and Ivana Periši which has appeared in 2015 in the e-journal *Studia Poliensia* (a journal in Pula [Italian Pola] in the Istria peninsula; the authors are Italianists at Juraj Dobrila University in Pula): it traces the influence of the works of Dante Alighieri on Croatian literature and culture. They point out, among the other things, that Dante was in places that now belong to Croatia, and mentioned this in the *Divine Comedy.* His translators into Croatian include Mihovil Kombol and Izidor Kršnjavi. It was only in the mid-20th century that the *Divine Comedy* was translated integrally into Croatian, but as early as the 15th century,

attempts had been made. Kombolian style shaped a generation of Croat poets. Mirkovi and Periši (2015) also consider 19th-century Croat commentators of Dante who were influential in Croatia: Niccolò Tommaseo, and Antonio Lubin (1809–1900).

[11] Bear in mind that as Dante did not know about the Americas, for him the circumference of the earth (which for him was a globe) was shorter than that it actually is. India is much to the west of the island of Purgatory in the middle of the Ocean, so while it is sunset in Purgatory, it is still mid-day there. But further west again, in Jerusalem, it is sunrise. Further west, it is still night.

[12] That article is going to appear in the next issue of this journal: E. Nissan, "Some Asian Modes of Appropriating Dante—as an Immortal Taoist (by Liang Ch'i-ch'ao), as Confirmation of Indian Philosophy (by Ananda Coomaraswamy), and as Being Returned to Islam: Anwar Beg's Rationale for Iqbâl Using Dante in the *Jâvîd-Nâma* (an Analogue to Yoḥanan Alemanno's Rationale on the Theft of Philosophy and Its Recovery)".

[13] As the journal *PMLA* is usually referred to by its acronym, which appears as its only name on its covers, I am sticking to the acronym, instead of adopting its full-fledged name *Publications of the Modern Language Association*. Had the present study only been in literary studies instead of being interdisciplinary, it would have been superfluous to explain *PMLA*.

[14] The journal *Studia Poliensia* is one of several journals in science or the humanities, accessible through a portal at http://hrcak.srce.hr/ (Hr ak Portal znanstvenih asopisa Republike Hrvatske).

London

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Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*: From Despair to Meaninglessness

Michel Dion

Between Emily Brontë (1818-1848) and Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), there seems to be a change of epoch. Brontë lived during the Industrial Revolution. But unlike Woolf, Brontë has not seen the Suffragettes' movement in Great Britain, and more generally, the first-wave feminism. However, from a literary (and even philosophical) viewpoint, Brontë and Woolf could be considered as sisters in the same literary (and even philosophical) continuum. Virginia Woolf (1980, 50) admired the way Emily Brontë integrated poetry within her novel (*Wuthering Heights*). In *Emily Brontë, Her Life and Work*, Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford have well understood the historical importance of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*:

> Emily's principle characters – Catherine and Heathcliff – are figures hurled headlong on their way bu the whirlwind force of their passions. They have no sense of wrong; and small sense of the personality of others (…) Emily's novel has indeed paved the way for the modern novel of flux and sensation. The obsession of Catherine and Heathcliff with their own subjective feelings, their complete lack of any objective set of values, and their failure of interest in the outer world of opinion (…) (Spark and Stanford 1953, 267).

Spark and Stanford suggested that *Wuthering Heights* has given birth to the *stream of consciousness* literary movement, including the following epoch-making novels: *À la recherche du temps perdu* (Marcel Proust), *Ulysses* (James Joyce), and *To the Lighthouse* (Virginia Woolf). In a way or another, there seems to be a connection which goes from Emily Brontë to Virginia Woolf. It is not an

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actual continuity between Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and any novel written by Virginia Woolf. Rather, it is an issue of consciousness-oriented focus. Woolf's *The Waves* is probably her most philosophically-based novel: every reality is philosophically questioned. Even the notion of reality itself remained uncertain. But above all, Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Woolf's *The Waves* dealt with despair and meaninglessness, although they were conveying a very different perspective. In this article, we will describe the way Emily Brontë considered the arising of existential despair and the way Virginia Woolf explained the arising of existential meaninglessness. Both processes are interconnected, although Brontë's and Woolf's focus are quite different.

Emily Brontë and *Wuthering Heights* (1847): The Arising of Existential Despair

In *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë expressed a philosophical quest for the meaning of good and evil, while unveiling the intuition that good and evil can never be defined. In doing so, Brontë was designing her novel so that it could mirror a perspective of moral relativism. But how could we deal with moral issues without taking into account our habits, conventional/conformist behaviors, and social expectations? Brontë was full aware that habits are moulding our tastes and ideas (Brontë 2013, 36). The power of habits creates so close and strong ties that even our reason cannot get rid of them. It could even be cruel to loosen those ties, said Brontë (2013, 374). So, it is not an easy task to choose a moral relativism perspective, since our habits will tend to safeguard the status quo, although it would mean to keep some sense of good and evil. If such inner contradiction is not healed, then it could give birth to a process of existential despair. The inability to transform our own habits and to integrate moral relativism in our way of thinking, speaking, and acting will create inner thunderstorms. If the crisis is not well managed, then the process of existential despair will begin. Emily Brontë defined the process of existential despair in four basic steps. Firstly, we are discovering the various dimensions of our inner turmoil. Secondly, we are unable to denounce the unreasonable character of our own feelings and emotions. Thirdly, we are observing the growing feeling of meaninglessness in our heart and mind. Fourthly, we are losing any hope and falling into existential despair.

First step: Unveiling our inner turmoil

Brontë presented the inner turmoil as being made of cruelty, frustration, jealousy, and resentment. The inner turmoil is deeply harmed by wickedness, bitterness, and revenge. Pride as self-exaltation and the conviction of 'being perfect' are the most harmful ways to deal with the inner turmoil. The inner

turmoil unveils our unability to transform our habits and to adopt the moral relativism perspective. There is then an *a priori* belief to the effect that moral relativism could make people feel calm and serene, when confronting moral dilemmas and/or being pervaded by negative emotions. Facing destructive emotions then makes us unpeaceful towards such spirit poisons.

Existential loneliness is certainly the basic context in which everything that happens in one's life is interpreted. The cruelest persons are subjected to envy and are broken by existential loneliness. They desperately need to be loved (Brontë 2013, 337). Brontë was strengthening the courage to live in the unsurpassable (existentially-based) loneliness. Frustration and resentment could provoke a fit of anger. Jealousy could also give birth to anger. However, the real origin of anger is often lost in the meanderings of the self. Brontë was implicity acknowledging that the origin of negative emotions (such as anger) is often unconscious. That's why Brontë talked about the strategy of psychological forgetfulness: the real origin of one's negative emotions is hidden (to himself/herself), and then falls through the cracks. We could ardently try to repress a feeling that makes us quite uncomfortable, said Brontë (2013, 350). But how could we explain wickedness? Brontë believed that the wicked person feels pleasure, when seeing people (especially, his/her enemies) suffering, or sinking into evil (Brontë 2013, 220, 240, 337). The wicked person feels pleasurable to express hatred and malicious gossip. He/she is not really concerned with what those emotions are unveiling. Brontë argued that the wicked person tries to harm those people he/she hates. The nasty individual can conceal his/her vengeance during many years and then go ahead with his/her cruel plan, with meticulousness, without feeling any remorse or guilt (Brontë 2013, 265-267). Brontë's view of wickedness seems quite close to Stendhal's image of wicked persons. In *Le Rouge et le Noir* (1830), Stendhal (1783-1842) talked about the 'wickedness of a wild boar'. Stendhal expressed the extreme, instinctive, and wild character of wickeness/nastiness (Stendhal 2011, 494-500). Stendhal and Brontë were both focusing on passion, energy, and existence. Both writers were writing in a way to deepen the feeling of one's existing. However, unlike Stendhal, Brontë was aware of the process of despair, as an integral part of human existence.

Wickedness have very negative consequences not only for the victims, but also for the wicked person himself/herself. One of them is bitterness. Sometimes, people who feel deep bitterness are acting in such way to provoke other's hate rather than love and friendship (Brontë 2013, 97). Anne Williams (1985, 125) explained that the main principle of *Wuthering Heights*'s structure is human love as being linked to nature and passion. Human love is then defined as being disinterested (altruistic) and universal (egalitarian). Friendship and love are considered as the real foundations of humankind. That's why Brontë asserted that we could become selfish and irascible if we deeply lack signs of friendship and love (Brontë 2013, 255). Egocentrism and altruism are both connected to self-esteem, although the way one's self is loved by an egocentric personality cannot be compared with the way it is loved by an altruistic personality. But self-esteem remains the way we are loving what we are perceiving to be (our self-perceived self). Self-esteem implies that we cannot love a personal trait we do not actually have (Brontë 2013, 187). Self-esteem is also an issue of others' perceptions. When people we love (our parents and friends) show us our defaults and even their hate, we will be doubtful of our own being and worth. Our self-esteem is then under attack. One's doubt about his/her being and worth will eventually provoke so bitterness that he/she will hate everybody, as if everyone would be guilty to have annihilated his/her self-esteem (Brontë 2013, 300). Defending our self-perceived self against any attacker thus becomes our basic meaning of life.

Like wickedness, resisting to any critique of our self-perceived self could give birth to the spirit of revenge, thus initiating the vicious circle of violence. Emily Brontë (2013, 104) showed that we could be anxious, when discovering that we are rebelling ourselves against our own feeling of revenge. Yielding to our desire of vengeance could make suffering others as well as ourselves (Brontë 2013, 215-216). The spirit of revenge tries to annihilate others' wickedness. It could also aim at destroying any critique of one's self-perceived self. It could happen when pride has reached a very high level. The inner turmoil is made of pride as self-exaltation. Pride is the real cause of every inner turmoil, said Brontë (2013, 84). Self-exaltation is not compatible with truth. It rather implies to hide the truth behind impenetrable words, so that truth remains inaccessible. Self-exaltation could also make people believe that they could have access to truth itself, while it is impossible to know truth itself. The prideful individual could feel a very intense pain when the truth he/she has hidden in plain sight is unveiled. He/she desperatly tried to avoid such disclosure, in order to safeguard his/her own self-image and self-esteem (Brontë 2013, 189). Hiding truth about the real self should then be closely linked to the way some individuals are strengthening their self-image and fighting anyone who would like to criticize the truthfulness of their self-perceived self. The self-perceived self is presented as the real image of the true self, as if there could not be any gap between what-is-perceived and what-remains-hidden within one's heart and mind. Such distortion of the true self is made possible through a deep conviction to be perfect. Perfection is a delusive notion. Seeing one's self as being 'perfect' could be considered as an unreasonable way to be oneself (Brontë 2013, 189). Looking at somebody as a perfect being (rather than someone who

suits us just fine) is distorting his/her own being. Perceiving somebody we love as if he/she would be a 'perfect being' could reduce our propensity to grow, psychologically and socially speaking. If the other is 'perfect', then we are 'imperfect'. The other overcomes our weaknesses, defaults, and wrongs. The 'perfect being' will eventually crashes the 'imperfect being'. The 'perfect being' will be the progressive destroyer of our self, that is, an enemy we have created by ourselves. Others' perfection could eventually project ourselves onto the existential despair.

Second step: Being unable to denounce the unreasonable character of our feelings and emotions

When we are deeply aware of our inner turmoil, then we will face the unreasonable character of our feelings and emotions. It is particularly the case when our attitude, words, and conduct clearly express a lack of fairness, of love, or of compassion. Sometimes, lacking fairness presupposes neglecting to use our reason (Brontë 2013, 64). Sympathizing with someone who is suffering is easy when we have been subjected to similar pain. It could even help to anticipate how the individual could suffer in the near future (Brontë 2013, 263).Cruelty and hate are directly denying any worth to love. Such negative emotions could stay in our memory for a very long period of time. Bearing somebody a grudge could make bad rememberings much more cruel that some harsh words (Brontë 2013, 199). We can hate someone simply because he/she reminds us very bad memories (Brontë 2013, 252).Being compassionate towards others and being pleased for others' happiness have common requirement: the origin of the emotion (compassion/happiness) is reasonably connected to concrete attitude, words, and conduct, without falling into extreme and abusive expressions. Sometimes, our joy is so great that we fear it could be grounded on something unreal (Brontë 2013, 127). Our joy could be meaningless, when its intensity is not compatible with the original events that make us joyful (Brontë 2013, 127). In his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Adam Smith (1723-1790) reached the same conclusion (Smith 1999, 37-47). Life joy, anger could be meaningless, when it cannot reasonably follow from the original events (Brontë 2013, 132, 152). Melancholy is the certainty that joy is no longer possible on Earth (Brontë 2013, 215). It is not reasonably connected to its original events. When melancholy raises its height, the feeling of meaninglessness knocks on the door. The paradox of melancholy is that melancholy gives birth to a given certainty, while nothing is supposedly certain in the existence. Moreover, the paradox of melancholy conveys the message that we should denounce the unreasonable character of our feelings and emotions, while being absolutely unable to do so. Such powerlessness will make possible to fall into a feeling of meaninglessness.

Third step: Observing the growing feeling of meaninglessness in our heart and mind

Melancholy opens the door to the feeling of meaninglessness. It also makes possible for us to understand that we are not presently the totality of who-we-are. Our being is in becoming. We can only be who-we-are in becoming our own self. There would not be any meaning to be oneself if we would already be who-we-are, that is, without any possibility to become who-we-are (Brontë 2013, 112). Soeren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) defined truth as the passion for the infinite, that is, as subjectivity (Kierkegaard 1974, 181-182). An ethical life-view implies an ultimate passion for one's existing:

> All knowledge about reality is possibility. The only reality to which an existing individual may have a relation that is more than cognitive, is his own reality, the fact that he exists; this reality constitutes his absolute interest (…) the absolute demand is that he become infinitely interested in existing (Kierkegaard 1974, 280).

Our heart is the birthplace of our feelings and emotions (Brontë 2013, 212-213). Brontë suggested that living with our inner trends and conditioning factors is better than being subjected to external realities. Self-affirmation could help us to find out hidden parts of our self. But it is only possible if we have abandoned any attitude of pride and self-exaltation (Brontë 2013, 189). Abandoning pride and self-exaltation could release us from the subjection to melancholy. That's why Brontë asserted that a sensible person is self-sufficient (Brontë 2013, 56). Not being self-sufficient would be meaningless. But extreme indulgence is meaningless (Brontë 2013, 303). Even stupidity becomes meaningless, when stretched to the limits (Brontë 2013, 149). Using vain and meaningless words could make us feeling shameful. We could be shameful to have meaningless thoughts (Brontë 2013, 45). Brontë (2013, 113) suggested that it is hard to find out any meaning from the totality of non-sense, which makes us suffering. Melancholy has gathered all non-sense together, so that there would not be any existential certainty. Even fears could be meaningless (Brontë 2013, 385). At any moment, self-esteem could be erased. Anxiety (and/ or anger) could come along with humiliation, and vice versa (Brontë 2013, 150, 337). Suffering could give birth to anxiety, particularly when it is accompanied by delirium (Brontë 2013, 54). Anxiety could be the ultimate outcome of an unbearable pain (Brontë 2013, 376). But it would be meaningless to complain about a future pain that could occur in twenty years, or even in some unknown point (Brontë 2013, 276). So, meaninglessness takes various forms. Every emotion (anxiety, anger, fear) could be meaningless. The growing feeling of meaninglessness in our heart and mind makes more and more hard to recover any meaning from given emotions and feelings.

Fourth step: The arising of despair as the loss of any hope

The growing feeling of meaninglessness in our heart and mind gives birth to existential despair, which is closely linked to the loss of (religious) faith. Emily Brontë talked about the 'finally earned eternity'. Eternity is then not only a life without duration limitations, but also selfless love and fulness of joy (Brontë 2013, 204). But eternity is seen as superstition, since it is contradicting common sense (Brontë 2013, 54). After death, we cannot live with the same self which was the real origin of our existential suffering. Brontë expressed a deep doubt about the belief that the self is surviving after the death of the body. Brontë strongly insisted that we cannot live without our body (physical being) as well as without our soul (spiritual being). Human being is a physical and spiritual being. If dying is the final end of physical life, then our spiritual being cannot survive (Brontë 2013, 207). Such growing loss of faith will hasten the arising of existential despair.

Losing faith means that we are falling into nothingness. For believers, death makes the dream of the after-life realizing itself. Losing faith is being in despair, that is, having lost our hope in the after-life and any other existentially-based hope. Believers look at their death with a deep hope in eternity (as the after-life). Despair is the irreversible end of any hope. Despair is even the deep conviction that any hope is delusive, vain, and self-destructive. That's what Emily Brontë used the term 'abyss of despair' (Brontë 2013, 278). Despairing is refusing any possible hope, particularly when it is quite attractive. Sometimes, the state of our heart is falling out between disdain and despair (Brontë 2013, 34). Despair could express the loss of any hope towards ardently wished change. Such hope could be lost for a more and less long period of time, said Brontë (2013, 35). Despair is not fate. It is not predetermined. We could avoid existential despair, although the potentiality of despair makes an integral part of human existence. Sometimes, we do not want to hide our despair (Brontë 2013, 197). Despair is the loss of any hope in a better world (Brontë 2013, 225). Emily Brontë analyzed the way despair could reach its height. In such situation, anxiety seems to disappear. Despair could be so powerful that it could annihilate any form of anxiety. Despairing is not only losing any hope, but also losing the capacity to feel anxiety. An overmastering despair makes existential anxiety disappear (Brontë 2013, 161).

Virginia Woolf and *The Waves* (1931): The Arising of Existential Meaninglessness

At the real beginning of her novel, Woolf (2017, 21) mentioned that the roots of oneself are disappearing into the depths of the world. Woolf defined the process of existential meaninglessness in three basic steps. Firstly, we become aware of our compartmentalized world. Secondly, we are uncovering the underground world: impermanent life, changing I/self, existential loneliness, meaningless and useless realities. Thirdly, despair helps us to recover our world, to reinvent Time, and to give worth to life experiences.

First step: Being aware of the comparmentalized world

The well-ordered world is compartmentalized, so that every syllable has a specific meaning (Woolf 2017, 29). The real world is only the world we are perceiving from a particular perspective. It is only true for here and now (Woolf 2017, 32). The real world is my own world, not only because I am here-and-now (the historicity of my own being), but also because I look at the world in specific way (my being-who-is-interpreting-reality). Everything seems to be real, without any illusion (Woolf 2017, 141). Such sense of reality makes arising a deep feeling of belongingness to the compartmentalized world (Woolf 2017, 191). Illusion seems to be a psychological distortion. It does not explain the perceived world. The compartmentalized world is characterized by the denegation of illusions, and thus, the absolutization of self-perceived realities.

Second step: Dis-covering the underground world

Refusing the compartmentalized world, Woolf introduced the 'underground world' (Woolf 2017, 31). The underground world is not the self without world, but rather the self who does not have any existential certainty, even about its own existence. Everbody does not exist, since he/she does not have any face (or appearance). That's why everybody is searching for his/her own face as his/her own existential project (Woolf 2017, 41). Having face is opening the way for self-improvement through others' perceptions and interpretations of our own self (Woolf 2017, 218). Being without face implies that we do not have any impact on others' behavior and thought. It means that the whole world can kick us out and go ahead with its own purpose and means (Woolf 2017, 124, 218). Being in the underground world is being without face. Our own existence is only recognized when people actually need to acknowledge it (Woolf 2017, 130). Being without face is still being-in-Beauty (Woolf 2017, 263). In the underground world, nothing is stable and conclusive. Things, beings, and phenomena are always moving (Woolf 2017, 53). Everything is always changing. Reality is basically change and flux (Woolf 2017, 94). The unstable universe (underground world) in which we live cannot provide us the hidden meaning of things, beings, and phenomena. We cannot know anything. Rather, we are experiencing life in its various forms, while mixing the known and the unknown (Woolf 2017, 120), without even seeing the

frontiers between the known and the unknown. The unstable world (or underground world) cannot give us any feeling of calmness and any existential certainty (Woolf 2017, 244).

Living in the underground world makes us perceiving the overwhelming presence of impermanence. Life is always going to change (Woolf 2017, 115-116). Nothing is permanent (Woolf 2017, 242). That's why death is our ultimate enemy (Woolf 2017, 286). Life is ephemeral (Woolf 2017, 117). Every instant is passing away (Woolf 2017, 135, 176, 182). Every dying instant is tragical, since it is closely linked to the others. That's why our life does not have any intrinsic purpose. Life is an indivisible, undifferentiated, and unified mass of tragical instants (Woolf 2017, 131). Things, beings, and phenomena are combined to form a unified whole, although such wholeness is hardly perceived (Woolf 2017, 135, 198). In the compartmentalized world, Time seems to be infinite (Woolf 2017, 136). But in the underground world, living means feeling that the weight of the whole world rests upon our shoulders (Woolf 2017, 168). We can still create our own life, although it is always going on (Woolf 2017, 174). The will to live is shared by all human beings (Woolf 2017, 257). However, in the underground world, human beings are deeply convinced that the will to live is vain. Everybody feels the mystery of life, that is, its unfathomability (Woolf 2017, 258). In the underground world, nobody knows what it means to live. Individuals could have access to specific parts of life. However, they cannot grasp the indivisible life, its various contents and forms. Life then becomes chaotic. It is now a mix of cruelty and indifference. In the compartmentalized world, the mystical feeling of adoration implies that Divine perfection has triumphed over the universal chaos (Woolf 2017, 58). But in the underground world, there are only uncertainties, and thus an endless set of unreliable perceptions and interpretations.

Living in the compartmentalized world opens the door to very specific dimensions of one's self. We are presupposing that any I (self) is an history (Woolf 2017, 45). But is it really the case? What does it mean to have a personal history, if not an endless series of changes (Woolf 2017, 185, 211)? What does it mean to say that our personal history is true (Woolf 2017, 213)? True stories do not exist, so that a true personal history is meaningless (Woolf 2017, 232). Nietzsche (2008, 37) believed that every people needs some knowledge of their own past. However, such knowledge must favour the present and be used to define the future people are dreaming about. If not, any knowledge of the past become useless and meaningless. That's precisely what's the underground world all about. In the underground world, nothing is stable and meaningful. Even personal history is meaningless, since there are frail and vague frontiers between the past (who-we-were) and the present (who-we-are-now) as well as between the present and the future, and even between the past (who-we-were) and the future (who-we-will-be). The notion of an I/self becomes elusive. Even Time has no meaning at all. Does a relentless fate actually exist? Does fate influence my own actions? Is fate determining who-I-am-becoming (Woolf 2017, 57)? Becoming who-I-am implies to get rid of inner contradictions (Woolf 2017, 59, 64). The meaning of my self could even disappear (Woolf 2017, 77, 133). Every self is becoming what-it-is. Every self has the desire to become what-it-is. However, we cannot wholly be who-we-are. We have to become who-we-are. But we do not know exactly who-we-are as well as who-we-are-now-becoming. We do not even clearly know who-we-would-like-to-be (in the near future).

One's self can never be grasped as-it-is. Everybody is always changing, although his/her desires remain the same (Woolf 2017, 131). Everybody has multiple selves. That's why it is so hard to understand each other (Woolf 2017, 81). If I have had multiple selves until now, which one is really me (Woolf 2017, 85-86)? The real self does not have any historical, social, economic, political, cultural, and even religious/spiritual ground (Woolf 2017, 86). But having multiple selves makes quite difficult to know who-I-am, even here and now (Woolf 2017, 87). It could be striking for us to find out some hidden dimensions of our self, regardless of the specific self they are unveiling (Woolf 2017, 89). Woolf was deeply impressed by the literary genius of Marcel Proust (Forrester 2009, 262; Brisac and Desarthe 2004, 194). Like Proust (2001, 14, 126, 268-269; 1987, 153; 1987a, 262; 1972, 259-260), Woolf believed in the paradox of multiple selves: everybody has multiple selves throughout his/her own life, although he/she is the same being. Every self has successive layers (Woolf 2017, 254, 267, 274). The paradox of multiple selves does not eradicate the deep sense of one's identity: everybody is continuously building up his/her own self. But we cannot build up our self without taking into account the way people are looking at us (Woolf 2017, 118, 226). Although everybody has multiple selves, he/she is an indivisible being (Woolf 2017, 229). That's the way the strong feeling of the I/self is born (Woolf 2017, 250). Reducing someone to one of his/her multiple selves is destroying his/her desire (and project) to be who-he/she-is (Woolf 2017, 93, 250). Every individual is a complex being (Woolf 2017, 94). Thus, self-understanding is not an easy task (Woolf 2017, 212). Self-awareness is always fragmentary (Woolf 2017, 260). In every self, there is something that is always changing, unattached, totally free (Woolf 2017, 82). Our true I/self could be isolated from our factitious I/self (Woolf 2017, 84), although it could be quite hard to distinguish both selves. It is particularly the case when one's self is facing various self-destructive experiences, such as lying, concealing, doubting, and fearing (Woolf 2017, 109,

259). But Woolf remained convinced that we should have the courage to be ourselves. When we feel that all human beings belong to the same body and soul (as an undifferentiated mass of people), then we lose our desire of individualization, and thus our need of self-affirmation. As long as we are unable to do so, we will focus on our individual differences, even if we have to exaggerate our weaknesses and defaults (Woolf 2017, 138, 239). The underground world will progressively make us falling into the trap of meaninglessness.

The underground world is emphasizing the incommunicability of one's experiences, and thus the absoluteness of existential loneliness. Although they could be quite similar from an individual to another, one's life experiences remain incommunicable. That's the real origin of our tragical loneliness (Woolf 2017, 155, 174, 264). As an individual, everybody is incomplete. We help each other to bridge the gulf between others' loneliness and our own loneliness, from an existentially-based perspective (Woolf 2017, 73). Things, beings and phenomena are interdependent. We cannot do anything without others' help (Woolf 2017, 160). Existential loneliness makes extremely difficult to tolerate pressure (Woolf 2017, 133). Being-in-loneliness provides us a powerful sense of Being (Woolf 2017, 134). But the underground world is exacerbating the feeling of existential loneliness, so that feeling of nothingness is now arising into our heart and mind (Woolf 2017, 213, 219). The feeling of nothingness is interpreted as being the burden of our own existence (Woolf 2017, 115). But existential loneliness could also help us to unveil very important (and often mysterious) dimensions of reality (Woolf 2017, 255). We are responsible for the mystery of things, beings, and phenomena (Woolf 2017, 281), since our own being is always interpreting reality. We know nothing about the universe, although we could believe that it is a unified reality (Woolf 2017, 282-283). Accepting our existential loneliness requires to reject the 'shroud of Being' (Woolf 2017, 284). The underground world makes us quite aware of the unsurpassable and existentially-based loneliness.

In the underground world, we are facing illusions. We believe that the world could not unveil any intrinsic meaning (Woolf 2017, 263). The world is meaningless. Any meaning of the world is a projected (and illusory) meaning that has nothing to do with the essence of the world. Idenfying any meaning makes it disappear (Woolf 2017, 214). Meanings are created by our own mind. They are not intrinsic to things, beings, or phenomena. Any (created) meaning is disappearing, since it is not a reliable ground for understanding reality as such. In the underground world, individuals are often tormented by the fact that the meaning of things, beings, and phenomena is self-evident. We have to choose specific meaning among various historically-based meanings (Woolf 2017, 96). And such existential choice is fundamentally determined by inner

and external conditioning factors. Ben Bachir (2012, 32) unveiled that Woolf's conviction that life has no intrinsic meaning makes quite difficult for her to accept her own existing. The feeling of meaninglessness provokes voidness within our self (Woolf 2017, 139). The centeredness of life expresses the absence of any intrinsic meaning. Nothing is conveying an intrinsic meaning. The underground world is unstable because of its intrinsic meaninglessness (Nietzsche 1968, 318).

Ultimately, the underground world has to deal with death and Time. If death is meaningless, then existence and Time are also meaningless. People who are fighting the formless meaninglessness (Woolf 2017, 220) are living in the 'world of fight and effort' (Woolf 2017, 261). Fighting our meaningless existence is combating existential uncertainty, that is, the fact that our existing does not have any intrinsic meaning. This is the existential struggle against the idea of God. In Dostoyevsky's *Demons* (1962, 608), Kirilov said that we cannot believe in God's inexistence without affirming our own divine (free) will. In *The Karamazov Brothers* (2002, 808), Dostoyevsky explained that the annihilating the idea of God will deify humankind and make universal (and disintered) love possible. Fighting existential uncertainty will not make the underground world disappear. On the other hand, accepting existential uncertainty seems to be the only way for learning serenity and calmness.

Third step: The recovered world, from despair to the eternal renewal

The recovered world is neither the redeemed world, nor the annihilation of the underground world. It is not the renewal of the compartmentalized world. Rather, the recovered world is the unstable and uncertain world, as we could take it upon ourselves, with an existentially-based courage, without denying any worth to the experience of existential despair/meaninglessness. Everybody recovers the continuity of his/her own self, when becoming character of a collective procession (Woolf 2017, 42). The passionate meaning of one's existence makes possible to reinvent the worth of things, beings, and phenomena (Woolf 2017, 121). Woolf seems here to adopt a Kierkegaardian viewpoint. The world could be recovered through the experience of despair. Only despair can provide the 'eternal renewal' (Woolf 2017, 286). In *The Sickness Unto Death*, Kierkegaard (1968, 175-179, 208-213) asserted that every individual existence is despair. However, Kierkegaard believed that relation to the Absolute (God) could make possible to redeem such despair (defined as sin). Woolf rather insisted on the power of despair itself. The eternal renewal does not come from God, but from the power of despair itself.

The feeling of despair follows from the conviction that our own being is annihilated, so that our own life does not have any worth at all (Woolf 2017,

97). Everything is useless: birth and death, pleasure and joy, and all types of anxiety are useless. Everything is illusory. Woolf called such phenomenon the 'impartiality of despair' (Woolf 2017, 275). Perfection, renown, and money do not have any worth (Woolf 2017, 130). Meaningless words are not helpful, since they make the feeling of voidness increasing (Woolf 2017, 98-99). Despair gives us the conviction that our actions are worthless (Woolf 2017, 115). Despair could be so intolerable that it causes very deep and unspeakable anxiety (Woolf 2017, 140, 146, 179). Words remain useless, since our existentially-based experiences are unspeakable. What are words, if not pure creations of our mind (Woolf 2017, 55, 212)? Despairing is abandoning the 'old coat of my self' (Woolf 2017, 277). But how could we describe world without any self (Woolf 2017, 277)? Without self, any world is useless and meaningless. Then, the radical absence of one's self destroys his/her existential certainty (Woolf 2017, 278). It provokes a endless set of doubts and oversights (Woolf 2017, 278).

We should never try to make despair disappearing. The potentiality of despair is an integral part of human existence. Despair gives us the opportunity to change our view on reality itself. For doing so, we must reinvent Time. Recovering our world needs to abolish the time of the clock (Woolf 2017, 179). Dorothy Bevis (1956, 14) rightly said that in *The Waves*, we cannot isolate the time of the mind from the time of the clock. Focusing on the time of the mind makes possible to dis-cover the unreal world of the past (Woolf 2017, 150). The absence of past and future makes the present moment overwhelming the flow of Time (Woolf 2017, 245, 269). In order to recover our world without denying the worth of despair, we must overcome such an 'abyss of Time' (Woolf 2017, 223). Wisdom implies not to be focused on our own future. Wisdom cannot be isolated from an infinite compassion (Woolf 2017, 155). Wisdom and compassion are the attitudinal components of the recovered world. But they imply to reinvent the worth of life experiences and to revisit the most basic human relationships. Friendship and love are the most sacred feelings of human heart, since they give access to Beauty and Truth (Woolf 2017, 143). Jealousy, hate, and envy are 'underground feelings' that make impossible to reach Beauty and Truth (Woolf 2017, 142, 159, 217). The recovered world emphasizes the importance of human body, imagination, and memory. Our own body has its own existence (Woolf 2017, 68). Our imagination is corporeally induced. We cannot imagine something that has nothing to do with our own body (Woolf 2017, 130, 216). Remembering any event is an internalizing process that could be quite harmful (Woolf 2017, 169, 256). The interdependence between human body, imagination, and memory will make possible to recover our world, without deying any worth to existential despair.

Conclusion

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* dealt with meaninglessness, while acknowledging the presence of a powerful paradox. Emily Brontë was dealing with the process of existential despair. However, when Brontë used the emotion of melancholy, she was aware of its intrinsic paradox: we have to denounce the unreasonable character of our feelings and emotions, but melancholy is certainty about the unsurpassable existentially-based uncertainties. Existential despair is the loss of hope, and thus the loss of (religious) faith. The only way to avoid existential despair is to take the paradox of melancholy upon ourselves.

In *The Waves*, Virginia Woolf showed how refusing the comparmentalized world will make us falling into the underground world. In the underground world, we will perceive any thing, being, and phenomenon as being meaningless. Even the quest for the meaning of our own I/self will be vain, since there is no meaning at all. Nothing is intrinsically meaningful. In the underground world, we will face the paradox of multiple selves: although any self includes successive layers over time, it is a unified reality. As long as we cannot take such paradox upon ourselves, we will be unable to recover our world, without denying the existential worth of despair. The feeling of meaninglessness will crush us forever.

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Between Solitude and Solidarity: Objectification in the Existential Novels of Camus and Naipaul

Donovan Irven

"It would be impossible to insist too much on the arbitrary nature of the former opposition between art and philosophy…They interlock, and the same anxiety merges them." (Camus 1991a, 96-97).

The Absurd and Philosophical Literature

Works of fiction become philosophical, in part, when they endeavor to glean ontological significance from the psychological struggles of their subjects. The characters in a philosophical novel are often presented as confronting the futility of their actions as they reconcile themselves to a narrative structure that is presented to them as an *a priori* necessity. It is the "given-ness" of the narrative structure that awakens the character to the absurdity of their existence. That the narrative precedes the character and presupposes their role in a story's development opens the character to a psychological schism between solitude and solidarity. Solitude – because they alone must choose whether or not to reconcile themselves to the imposition of this external structure; and solidarity – because their reconciliation must take place among those others who also occupy various roles within the external structure.

The purpose of this essay is to pursue the rift from which the confrontation with the absurd arises. From the tension between solitude and solidarity comes a reflection upon the how the subject may or may not be reconciled with the narrative structure within which it is embedded. To do so will require focus and the philosophically salient features of this confrontation will be compared

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