

Milan, September 2015

Exotic West

The West is us.

The boundaries of the West were changeable and changing over time and we know that they coincide with a political and egocentric idea of this planet.

The very idea of the West was conceived in the West at a time when common credence preferred to believe that the Earth was at the centre of a star system. This ingrained and egocentric idea was nevertheless transformed over time along with historical changes and had an effect on Man's inner existence.

The ocean now called the Atlantic used to be called the Western Ocean.

And if the lands where the Sun sets are known as the Western lands, while the Sun rises in the East, we should conclude that this idea took shape exactly at the physical halfway-point between these two opposing sides, and that the people who used these geographical names for the first time must have had the pretension that they were at the centre of the world.

The decision to give a name to everything that is to the East and give another one to everything that is to the West was the result of a cultural and political authority that was exacted and shared with force.

This idea was imposed and spread widely until the returning wave flooded our identity and transformed our geo-socio-political awareness.

This global idea christened the planetary coordinates referring to them as the place where the Sun sets, as opposed to the lands where the Sun rises.

This concept could have occurred at any physical point on the Earth, but the events and the very structure of history meant that the peoples who felt this profound awareness were also determined to impose it.

Exotic is an adjective with a Western viewpoint.

It was a truly Western way of describing this languid and alienating feeling, when referring to far-away, mysterious and remote places and qualities that would be fascinating in any era. Travelling to these lands where the Sun sets also increased the legends, and recounting tales about distant things became an exercise for the soul.

Recently, within the period of one generation, we have seen this exercise of abandonment practised by the soul melt away. All its allure has dissipated like a fog from Milan. And it is all down to the real-time satellite monitoring of the entire planet: it no longer bears any shadows and mysteries for anyone who has a computer or a desire to travel.

The Sun still rises but the long shadows of bodies towards that West only evoke numerical coordinates along meridians.

Exotic West and Western exoticism represent the setting of that concept of exotic as we knew it; its consumption, like a squeezed lemon. The Sun of the East no longer warms our romantic hearts.

Nothing is exotic about the West anymore.

This new sense of loss is the right result for a West that, due to evolutionary needs, has erased all the shadows and shades of an evocative and sensual world of imagination.

Although this was driven mainly by an idea of geopolitical superiority, its persistence within the imagination of everyone in the West had coloured the passions and warmed the literature of that languid decadence that only a Western West could look for.

Now, after the loss of this sentiment, we are forced to find warmth and see it expressed in the eyes and hopes of those who have a dream of the West linked to hopes of economic and social redemption.

Faith in what he sees, lies in the eye of the beholder, even though we, as exotic Westerners, still feel the need for a feeling of warmth and sensual decadence to fill our hearts.

So once again this sense of the exotic originates from disorientation and all the force of this transformed feeling now lies within the things observed.

Things observed and then portrayed have the strength once again to be evocative and superior to the reality of x-ray photography.

Exoticism lies within Western Man and Eastern Man and painting the Engadine mountains enables this exotic mirage to be touched once again with the soul.

L.P.