

ARTICLES / SAGGI

AN ITALIAN VIEW OF THE EAST: THE FUNCTION OF THE EXOTIC IN *CHRISTMAS IN CEYLON* BY GUIDO GOZZANO*

Wilhelm Snyman

Sommario

Sebbene l'Italia non avesse pienamente partecipato al trionfalismo letterario che aveva caratterizzato l'epoca dell'espansionismo europeo in Asia del primo Novecento, il fascino dell'oriente compare tuttavia nelle opere di alcuni scrittori, quali per esempio Giovanni Comisso o Emilio Salgari, in cui si trovano degli esempi classici del cosiddetto "impossessarsi" imperialista dell'oriente. Guido Gozzano, invece, rivela un atteggiamento assai più sfumato verso l'oriente, in quanto i suoi scritti sfidano alcune delle premesse della critica orientalista.

The aim of this article is to revisit Gozzano and see him in a wider context, not confining him to his significance as a *crepuscolaro*, but to also examine an example of his prose – as distinct from his poetry – as a reflection of the crisis of modernity. Gozzano's prose writing centred on the East, limited though it is, serves to highlight a much greater conflict, a conflict that draws in various debates surrounding Orientalism in the sense used by Edward Said. *Natale in Ceylon* in particular provides an example of a writer, not only in conflict with

* Il presente articolo è stato presentato come seminario all'Università di Oxford nel novembre 2005.

himself, but is also emblematic of the wider classic conflict of the Western writer approaching the East as a domain for self-reflection, self-realisation, appropriation or outright dominance.

While the literature on the Orient written by Westerners is obviously vast and fraught with infinite complexities, the aim here is merely to introduce an exemplar, an Italian writer who viewed the Orient, India and Ceylon in particular, in a way which echoes much of what had been written by established authors from other Western cultures. Yet the text retains a peculiarly Italian sensibility inasmuch as it is reflective of a particular period of Italian political and cultural history which haunts our writer during his sojourn in the East in 1911.

Christmas in Ceylon (Natale a Ceylon) contains within its few pages a classic example of the whole Orientalist discourse, with all its attendant ambiguities, inconsistencies, and contradictions with a few particularities added in. Gozzano forms part of the Western mind-set, but as his Italian and modernist approach is inevitably imperialist in some of its forms, it reveals also a deeper disenchantment directed at his own culture and at his own persona.

We must also bear in mind that as Stäuble points out (Ravenna, 1972) that

Gozzano è il personaggio principale della sua opera: vi appare al centro, non solo per l'abbondante uso della prima persona, non solo per il carattere soggettivo e personale di liriche e novelle. Ma soprattutto per la vasta presenza dell'atteggiamento riflessivo e vigile che egli assume verso temi e motivi della sua opera. (Stäuble, 1972: 107)

Natale a Ceylon encapsulates – among other tensions – the tension between the Westerner and his view of the East. To start with, the title itself points to the potentially absurd, incongruous notion of Christmas in an alien environment, one that is clearly not Christian, where the concept of Christmas is at best an imported one, grafted on to the local

scene. The title also alludes to the alienation of its author, far away from the family gathering and continuum of Western ritual that can be assumed to inscribe the author's view of the world:

Si può notare come egli ponga sempre un paragone fra il suo mondo europeo e il mondo indiano che non hanno nulla in comune, nemmeno la natura. (Marchiori, 1992: 62)

The central question is to what extent does Gozzano's text fall victim to the much derided, classic trap of Orientalist thinking, i.e. for our purposes, viewing the East or the exotic merely for the purposes of gratification and self-realisation of the subject? Has the proverbial "other" been relegated in Charles Forsdick's words to "the status of backcloth on which to project the self or to the role of the object of a self-centred quest"? (Forsdick, 2000: 47).

Unsurprisingly, given the year of 1912 when Gozzano went to Ceylon, there is much in his text that conforms exactly to this kind of preoccupation, this self-serving use of the Orient. This is over and above his preoccupation with himself as a vehicle for his own experience, the extent to which he has made a myth out of himself, mythologised the self. The use made of the Orient by theorists would argue limits, at best, or invalidates, at worst, Western texts that seek to lend authenticity to the Orient or to writings about the Orient, never mind opening the debate on truthfulness and the tension inherent between language and experience. The reservations, if not outright condemnation, voiced by a myriad of critics about Western Orientalist texts, often seem justified and understandable given the arrogance which has over the centuries governed many a writer's view of "alterity", when confronted by that which is different from his or her culture. Much of this criticism has its origin in justified resentment of the colonial experience and much of this criticism of Western Orientalist texts contributes, quite obviously one might even say, to a

deeper appreciation of the limitations of such texts. Since Edward Said and *Orientalism* in 1978, nothing has quite been the same. In his wake many an ardent disciple and critic have expanded on his central notion of the West's appropriation of the East, or at any rate, of that which is not Western. To repeat Forsdick's succinct definition of Said's *Orientalism* for the purposes of this inquiry:

Orientalism is essentially a work about Orientalist exoticism which reinserts the purely aesthetic into the political context and accordingly treats representation of the exotic within the wider general field of imperialism. (Forsdick, 2000: 47)

Gozzano's *Journey to the Cradle of Mankind* (*Viaggio verso la cuna del mondo*) from which *Christmas in Ceylon* is taken, presents the reader then with a difficult intertextual situation through which to navigate, because unlike Joseph Conrad, Somerset Maugham, Henri Fauconnier and how many other orientalist contemporaries, Gozzano, as part of a recently industrialised Italy, does not use the text, however subliminally, to justify his country's imperialist expansion. Simply put, besides Libya and Somalia, Italy did not have an empire and that which it did have was of such recent acquisition that no imperial literary tradition or even significant polemic had had time to come into being. Libya was only acquired in 1911, the year before Gozzano's voyage to the East and the 50th anniversary of a united Italy. There's no Italian Kipling in Gozzano's time or a writer of similar resonance in the Italian pantheon, other than perhaps Gabriele D'Annunzio and Emilio Salgari, the latter a writer with a particularly fecund imagination in his portrayal of the exotic East. But D'Annunzio, though ardently nationalist like Kipling, was not the product and propagator of Empire in the way Kipling – who was born in India – was. (D'Annunzio may have been a propagator of empire, but with little to propagate.) As to the effect on a national psyche that D'Annunzio and Kipling had on their respective societies, that

requires further and likely to be fruitful research. Nor can the similarities between Gozzano and D'Annunzio be ignored – Stäubler calls him

[...] un piccolo D'Annunzio a livello provinciale, continuamente frenato dal dubbio, dalla consapevolezza critica, dal demone dell'ironia [...]. (Stäubler, 1972: 31)

Even Germany, a relative late-comer on the imperialist scene, had a Hans Grimm as a major literary exponent of the German imperial agenda. And Holland had Louis Couperus as a literary witness. But not so Italy in any comparable measure at that stage, for reasons that are essentially self-evident.

These are extra-textual considerations, but extra-textual considerations also form an inevitable and integral part of the Orientalist discourse and help to furnish some of the elements needed to “unlock” certain aspects of Gozzano's text. An Orientalist texts such as we find in Gozzano, has a validity of its own, within the parameters that the work itself sets up. In his poetic specifics, where he is on home territory, his voyage is towards the inner self, a poet deeply influenced by Positivism:

Ma il materialismo si offerse al poeta come un modo di prendere coscienza dei suoi intimi moti, appetiti e tendenze; di illuminare la sua individualità sensoriale [...]. (Marzot, 1979:67)

Within the history of Italian literature, Gozzano is part of a poetry movement called *Il Crepuscolarismo*, *i crepuscolari*, or the Sunset poets. That is to say part of a conscious literary, stylistic movement that rejected and reacted against the alienation and erosion of values that accompanied the Italy's rapid industrialisation prior to World War I, or to use Spagnoletti's definition:

quell processo di disgregazione del sopramondo ideale della poesia, fornito di antenne di civile a patriottica retorica da cui nessuno restò indenne. Nello svuotarlo di senso, caddero per merito soprattutto di Gozzano le basi ideologiche non poco affascinose su cui reggeva l'illimitata fiducia nel progresso della scienza... (Spagnoletti, 1994:174)

Gozzano rejected the nationalistic, Nietzsche-inspired bravado with which D'Annunzio is suffused. In short, Gozzano is an author, part of the canon of Italian 20th century literature, who was not dependent nor necessarily defined by his orientalist detour, but by more by his work as a poet. But his voyage to the East was reflective of – as is typical of many better-known Western orientalist writers – a yearning to escape the burden of his own culture. His extra-European experience is therefore intimately interwoven with his European self and its attendant anxieties. To expect him to have understood the intricacies and complexities of the culture he was exposed to in Ceylon is absurd and so his writing on the East is naturally fraught with limitations and undeniable prejudice. But it is still reliant on assumptions about the orient and reflects a response to alterity in which the appropriation of what he sees is limited to the personal sphere and does not implicitly or consciously mask a political agenda or preoccupation as has been demonstrated in his contemporaries of other national literatures. As such his work widens our perspective on the orientalist discourse *à la* Said and serves to shed light on the works such as *I Colloqui* (*The Colliloquies*) for which he is better known: the oriental experience is reflective of the European one and vice versa.

The next question we ask is to what extent does Gozzano, in Zawiah Yahya's words, encourage the reader to "collude" with him into "assuming the perspective of the 'Other', i.e. the colonialist

viewpoint,” by presenting himself as the “unified subject of enunciation”. She goes on to say that:

As for fictional representation, the ‘truth’ about the colonized is ideologically determined in the same way. Whatever ‘truth’ is presented will always be partial truths. The colonialist writer always works within the constraints of her/his imperial ideological framework and can only represent the natives in the way that this ideological agenda allows him/her. (Yahya, 2003: 34)

Taking Yahya’s statement as a point of departure, we can begin to delve into Gozzano’s text. His opening passage reads in the English translation as follows:

Waking in this climate is such gentle agony. Numbed by the hothouse atmosphere, my mind takes some time to revive, struck by what feels like a rapid succession of camera flashes, as if in sleep my consciousness has fled to the remotest land of its yearnings only to be forced to return in a few seconds’ time. Reason, however, awake and alert, goads the torment, inquiring, commenting, mocking:

’Tis futile to deceive me, o nocturnal wanderer! I am in Ceylon, I know I am in Ceylon ’Tis futile to bring me a piece a piece of Piedmontese landscape, the smile of a friend, or my mother’s face with each awakening. I know I am dreaming. The faint ringing of bells you invent is quite a good imitation of my native country at Yuletide, but it isn’t real. What is real is the deafening choir of parrots and apes on my bungalow roof. In a few seconds I shall wake up in Ceylon, in my solitary shelter, in the depths of a tropical rainforest. (Marinelli, 1996: 13)

Lento martirio del risveglio sotto questi climi! La coscienza intorpidita dall'atmosfera si serra calda, si ridesta penosamente come una ribalta che s'illumini a scatti successivamente ed improvvisi; si direbbe che nel sonno essa abbia abbandonato il corpo, si sia involata per il paese remotissimo delle sue nostalgie e debba ora riguadagnare in pochi secondi la spaventosa distanza, ritrovarsi la via tra lobo e lobo del cervello; la ragione, invece, già vigile e desta, assiste a quel tormento, indaga, commenta, deride.

È vano che tu m'illuda, o vagabonda notturna! Sono a Ceylon, so d'essere a Ceylon! – È vano che tu mi porti ad ogni risveglio un limbo di paesaggio ligure o canavesano, il sorriso d'un amico, il profilo di mia madreSo di sognare. Questo suono fioco di campane che tu fingi per ricordarmi la patria, imita assai bene il clangore natalizio quando la bufera di neve lo investe turbinando. Ma non è vero. Vero è soltanto il coro assordante e rauco dei pappagalli e delle scimmie sul tetto del mio bungalow. Fra pochi secondi mi sveglierò a Ceylon, nel mio rifugio solitario, in piena foresta tropicale [...]. (Gozzano, 1998: 31)¹

We note for a start an almost adolescent rapture at the novelty of the author finding himself in the long yearned-for exotic clime. It could be Ceylon it could be anywhere, but it happens to be Ceylon. And yet, brief though this passage from *Christmas in Ceylon* is, it alludes to many of the young author's preoccupations as borne out as well in his

¹ There are various ambiguities in Marinelli's translation. Translation is perforce an inevitable interpretation. Marinelli's use of "'Tis" has rather arcane echoes in English, which the original does not. Also where Marinelli uses the words "gentle agony", this rather poetic if oxymoronic coupling of "gentle" and "torture" is absent in the Italian original. Gozzano uses the word "lento" which simply means "slow" which does not necessarily mean "gentle", even though the overall idea of a languishing mental state is evocatively conveyed by Marinelli's translation.

poetry. First of all, the English translator omitted to insert the crucial date and place when Gozzano allegedly wrote the short story, namely Adam's Peak, 25th December. What is more, according to subsequent research, Gozzano spent only six weeks in India, from early March 1912 to mid-April, i.e. not at Christmas (Surdich, 1993: 17). So what does this signify? Exoticism peddled merely for the sake of the European readership back in Italy, or does it point to a deeper preoccupation on the part of the poetic and tortured soul of our author? As Surdich points out, we are dealing with what could be called a *metareportage*, a kind of reflection governed by the awareness of distance, of an "Elsewhere" (*un Altrove*) derived from his reading and which now intervenes and seems to give him licence to create a literary melange, a cobbling together of his various experiences in the Orient, presented as a single entity. This yearning for an "Elsewhere" is not specifically an Oriental "Elsewhere", as Gozzano has always searched for a refuge, be it Brazil, be it the Canary Islands or a lost island in the Atlantic, as long as it was away, distant (Surdich, 1993:16). He is in love with notion of being where he is not. Surdich makes reference too to one of Gozzano's poems entitled *La via del rifugio* (The Road to Refuge/Shelter) a poem which evokes the state of dreaming, that which prevents life being lived, a state of dreaming which Gozzano indeed admits prevents him from living. Ceylon again is that dream, the evanescent focus of his existential inertia. More specifically, his poem *La più bella* refers to the impossibility of finding resolution to his yearning, to his inner conflict – a state of unhappiness consciously lived. In it the unfound island alludes to his preoccupation with the exotic, but focused on the realms of Spain and Portugal:

But the Undiscovered Island's the loveliest of all/ the
island that was ceded to the Spanish King/ with the royal
seal of his kinsman the King of Portugal / and a papal
bull in Latin with Gothic lettering/.

The poem resolves itself with:

In vain the caravels with prows to slice the spray,/ the galleons bulging vainly with every swollen sail: with the papal peace the island hid itself away,/ and Portugal and Spain go searching still. / She lures them with her perfume, like a courtesan,/ the Undiscovered island ... But if they come her way,/ rapidly she'll vanish like a vision on the wind,/ hiding herself in the azure colors of faraway... (Palma, 1981: 223)

Ma bella più di tutte l'Isola Non-Trovata:/ quella che il Re di Spagna s'ebe da suo cugino/ Il re di Portogallo con firma sugellata/ e bulla del pontefice in gotico latino/ ...Invano le galee panciute a vele tonde,/ le caravelle invano armarono la prora: con pace del Pontefice 'isola si nasconde,/ e Portogallo e Spagna la cercano tuttora./ S'annuncia col profumo, come una corteggiana', l'Isola Non-Trovata... Ma, se il pilota avanza, rapida si dilegua come parvenza vana,/ si tinge dell'azzurro color di lontananza... (Gozzano, 1980: 282)²

The exotic quest continues and Gozzano seems to acknowledge that that which is Elsewhere, the Other, cannot be appropriated and *Christmas in Ceylon* furthermore bears this out in that not only is it a fictional tale parading as fact, but as the vignette progresses towards its denouement, the conflict that the author feels becomes increasingly evident: the mission of his fascination with the exotic gives way to a more realistic, indeed nigh Positivist, involvement with the exotic

² While it is not the scope of this inquiry to revise the translation into English, it should be noted that Gozzano uses the words "Non-Trovata", which the translator has preferred to translate as "Undiscovered" whereas he could have said "Not-Found", the word "undiscovered" having a problematic legacy inasmuch as it being often used to mean "not discovered by white men". "Not-Found" is a purer rendition of the original and the imperialist overtones of "undiscovered" through the nonchalant usage by European explorers and writers is thus rendered innocuous, innocent by non-association.

island Ceylon, now replacing the Canary Islands The most beautiful island in either case is still that which has not been found. The same sense of disillusionment we find in another poem entitled *Un'altra risorta* (translated as *Another Resurrected*):

Alone, and wandering like a wanderer/ without an aim, a little sad, with tired/ step, I heard hurried footsteps at my side,/ then saw the shadow: recognizing her,/ shuddering like a man expecting war,/ I turned and looked at her: her hair was white./ But it was a sad encounter, it wasn't bitter....

Promises ... Empty disillusionment!/ Alone, apart, far from the maddening crowd/ I find my dreams again and the faith I had,/ alone, apart, forgetting: that's what I want.../ I live in the countryside with a great aunt, an invalid mother, an uncle weak in the head. (Palma, 1993:141)

Solo, errando così, come chi erra/ senza meta, un po' triste, a passi stanchi,/ udivo un passo frettoloso ai fianchi;/ poi l'ombra apparve, e la conobbi in terra.../ Tremante a guisa d'uom ch'aspetta Guerra,/ mi volsi e vidi I suoi capelli bianchi...

le mille offerte... Oh! Vana fantasia!/ Solo in disparte dalla molta gente,/ ritrovo I sogni e le mie fedi spente,/ solo in disparte l'anima s'oblia.../ Vivo in campagna, con una prozia,/ la madre inferma ed uno zio demente. (Gozzano, 1980:205)³

A poem of love meanders in an amusingly prosaic fashion as Gozzano almost ridicules his ardour for adventure, the eternal wanderer hoping

³ It is puzzling that the translator has preferred to use the words "Empty disillusionment" which somehow, despite poetic licence, challenges logic, whereas Gozzano's original reads "Vana fantasia" which can be rendered by "vain fantasy" or at least the notion of the imagination being exercised fruitlessly, an idea which the English translation cannot sustain.

to find that which cannot be found, that which he dreams of, only to be confronted by a banal, materialist reality. Similarly, in his orientalism as we find it in *Christmas in Ceylon*, we follow his path through distillation to disillusionment.

As in the above excerpt from *Christmas in Ceylon*, the word “wanderer” echoes with the use made of it in *Un'altra risorta*, a state of becoming never being, is implied and which Surdich also discusses as being part of Gozzano's attraction to Buddhism (Surdich, 1993:12).

The experience of being in exotic climes is clearly an ambiguous and fraught one, frightening it would seem, as it reminds Gozzano of the relativity of his existence, of all that is a given, of what is stable or had the appearance of stability in his home culture. He seems to be taking cognisance of the fact that where he is now in Ceylon, other rules apply and that the new environment conforms almost to a dream sequence, that has suspended him from “real” life. He is as if caught between the yearning for a dream environment, a yearning to be suspended from life, yet wanting to be of this world. His own literary and poetic formation as part of *i Crepuscolari* underlines his sense of uselessness as a poet in the Western industrial context (Guglielminetti, 1994: 239), and it this sense of isolation, by not belonging to the very world he yearns for, for the exotic or meaning in his home context, which is echoed in *Christmas in Ceylon*. Why is the “agony” “tortured”? The psychological oscillation between where he is and where he wants to be is clearly evident in the extract, with words like “yearning” and then implying that the force of reason goads him out of his state of suspension along with the unresolved state of seeming to long for the bells at Yuletide while inverting the traditional exoticism of parrots and monkeys as being reminders of how far away he is from home, rather than seeing them as objects of wonderment, objects that are so obviously not European, but part of the panoply of the exotic that interfere with any hope of resolution of his inner conflicts.

One is in a sense dealing here with an exoticism which Forsdick describes “as a process of relation to otherness” in which the “fragmentation of understandings of the self as well as of the vocal self-articulation of the other have led to a basic disintegration of the basic units essential to any traditional grasp of exoticism” (Forsdick, 2000:56). In *Christmas in Ceylon* we can see that very “fragmentation of the understanding of the self” at work, and Gozzano’s text already alludes to a disenchantment, not only with the exotic, but with the traditional modes of viewing the exotic, as the stark juxtaposition between the self and the other: “from the Renaissance to Romanticism, the exotic had always referred to a central self. The severing of this self from such a centre, however, led to what Célestin, (quoted by Forsdick), casts in the conclusion to his study, as a break in the previously smooth and systematic opposition of (Western) self and (exotic) other” (Forsdick, 2000:57). In Gozzano’s text here, we see that the relationship to the exotic is indeed reflective of an anguished interior life, and his being in Ceylon – which he did in fact visit, though not on the dates he indicated – served as a catalyst for a confrontation with the self, and as a consequence emphasised the difference between himself and the other, inasmuch as that difference was obvious enough and did not require further exploration.

Gozzano is a modernist orientalist, not a romantic one, in the classic sense of someone merely writing about the Orient in order to dazzle a home readership, even though the obvious elements of classic exoticism are there – such as we may find it in the classic, “entry-level” exoticist writings of say, Francesco Algarotti⁴ to mention an

⁴ Francesco Algarotti (1712-1764) provides a perfect example of the kind of entry level” exoticist writing in Italian, much in vogue in the 18th Century, and in which the object of study had not necessarily been visited by the author. That said, Algarotti did write *Viaggio in Russia*, (Giulio Einaudi, Torino, 1979) which he had in fact visited. This kind of fashionable exoticist writing – destined most likely for the literary salons of Europe’s aristocracy – is not to be confused with the earlier writings in Italian by priests and explorers who were more concerned with keeping a record of the known world. A good

Italian example. The images of parrots, monkeys and the rainforest serve rather to reinforce his alienation and disillusionment, almost ironising the classically exotic imagery that now comes reflect the author's sense of exclusion.

Far from being an "appropriation of the Orient" such as we might find in Somerset Maugham's short stories – and especially those set in colonial Malaya, where the presence of British authority is taken as a given, albeit severely ironised – Gozzano in his imagery harks back to an earlier period of exoticist writing, but the intent is modernist, reflects what some would call a "transition to modernity". While it could be asserted that this is in itself a kind of appropriation, an author inevitably appropriates the world around him or her for their specific purpose, whether the "reality" being appropriated is the author's home country or class, or not.

In other words, just because a work is set in the Orient, doesn't necessarily make the author guilty of the some of the sins committed "in the name of" Orientalism, i.e. the aesthetic element being subsumed to an imperialist or political realm. Cautioning against too reductive an approach, either in respect of Gozzano or noted cultural historians and theoreticians, the service to which Gozzano puts his oriental experience is not, for example: "[...] an arch conspiracy against [...]. all non-Western cultures" (Sardar, 1999:56) or, more extreme, even if justified invectives against Orientalism and certain Orientalists:

Orientalism is not a dispassionate objective study of
Islam and its culture by the erudite faithful in the best

example of the latter would be Matteo Ricci, the Jesuit who travelled in China, from his base in Macao. His writings are published by Quodlibet of Macerata, and include *Della entrata della Compagnia di Gesù e Cristianità nella Cina*, (2000), *Lettere 1580-1609*, (2001) and *Dell'Amicizia* (2005).

traditions of scholarship.’ Rather it is ‘an organised conspiracy’ based on social Darwinism designed ‘to incite our youth to revolt against their faith [...]’⁵.

or in terms of one of Edward Said’s explanations:

For the Orient idioms became frequent, and these idioms took firm hold in the European discourse. Beneath the idioms there was a layer of doctrine about the Orient; this doctrine was fashioned out of the experiences of many Europeans, all of them converging upon such essential aspects of the Orient as the Oriental character, Oriental despotism, Oriental sensuality, and the like. [...] Orientalism was such a system of truths. (Said, 2003:204)

In Gozzano’s case the aesthetic element is rather subsumed to an entirely personal, intimate goal and his choice of locale is in fact to use Forsdick’s word the “backcloth” to the greater drama of his life and what he sees as his diminished role and function as a poet in the world, whether it be in Italy or the East.

The standard questions out of the colonial discourse which can apply to Gozzano’s text would be: is there a power structure discourse in this text of Gozzano? What are the devices of collusion he employs and if indeed he wants the reader to collude with him, to what end, (bearing in mind the element of collusion can be seen as a *sine qua non* of any reading exercise)? Does Gozzano want to enforce an

⁵ Sardar, Ziauddin, *Orientalism*. Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1999: 56. Here Sardar quotes from Jameelah, Maryam, *Islam and Orientalism* (Lahore: Yusuf Kahn, 1971) p.105 and he uses the quote to illustrate that her views express a particular mode of Orientalist critique: “Not surprisingly, she presents Islam as the binary opposite of her own perception of Orientalism: as unchanging, fixed in history and obscurantist. An innately hostile orientalism is pitted against a puritan Islam inimical to the West in totality. Fortunately, most Muslim and Arab critique of Orientalism was on a much higher plane.”

imperialist principle? Does he want to share his state of suspension between the West and the exotic Orient, with the attendant psychological impasse that this represents for him?

Gozzano's text follows on:

I wake up. I am in Ceylon. My eyes wide open. Through the white netting I see the furniture in my room. Patrick is standing, waiting with a pot of tea. I am wide awake; yet, through the forest, the faint sound of bells continues. I pull aside the mosquito bar and leap from my bed with a look of surprise so intense that the elderly Singhalese boy grows worried. 'What is the matter with you, master?'

'Nothing, my dear fellow. I feel fine. But whatever is that sound?'

'Christmas. It's the six o' clock service at the Kandy Mission.'

Kandy, six hours off in the depths of the valley, can be heard all the way up here. (Marinelli, 1996: 13,14)

Mi sveglio. Sono a Ceylon. Ho gli occhi bene aperti; vedo attraverso il velo bianco gli arredi della stanza, la figura di Patrick, in piedi, che attende col vassoio del the; son ben desto; ma attraverso il coro della foresta, continua il clangore fioco delle campane; scosto la zanzaria, balzo dal letto con tale volto sorpreso che il vecchio boy cingalese s'inquieta:

What's the matter with you, master?

Niente caro. Sto benissimo, ma che cosa è questo suono?

The Christmas! Il Natale! È la messa delle sei, alle Missini di Kandy.

Fin quassù giunge, nell'aria immobile, il suono di Kandy, lontana sei ore, in fondo alla valle... (Gozzano, 1984: 44)

For a start we note that certain passages were written in English, one suspects in an effort to maintain the fiction of authenticity, as English would most likely be the language Gozzano would have used with his “boy”. The English word is kept as well in the original, that being the term used for servants, bearing no relation to the fact that the “boy” was probably old enough to be Gozzano’s father, but again used in deference to an attempted authenticity.

To a modern reader, Gozzano’s use of the word “boy” appears not only offensive, but may seem to discredit the author as being typical of his generation and, what is more, that he seems to be emulating the colonial culture and ambiance in which he finds himself, appearing quite uncritical of the social milieu engendered by the British colonial establishment. As to power relations – this use of the word “boy” would also seem to be a rather obvious example of power relations being exercised.

All the other elements of an exotic discourse are there again – the forest, the author’s ignorance of the sounds, the mosquito nets etc, that evoke a far-off locale. We see in this passage too the exuberance of the author encountering a new world and experiencing himself in the exotic clime, rather than engaging with it for what it is and to those whose home it is, that is until Gozzano subsequently goes into a detailed description of Patrick’s attire:

Patrick is a Christian. He wears his thin gray hair wound up in curls beneath a curved tortoiseshell comb, wears only a woman’s checked shirt; on his bare chest, a scapular of celluloid and a small silver cross hang between amulets against poisons, cobras, and witchcraft; yet he is a Christian. He is pure Aryan, with a noble Socratic face that very much reminds me of a frightfully distinguished instructor at the university – so much so

that I still hesitate when I order him to prepare my bath or polish my boots. (Marinelli, 1996:14)

Patrick è cristiano. Benché porti i radi capelli grigi avvolti in trecciuole sotto il pettine cingalese di trataruga ricurva, benché non abbia altro veste che il gonnellino muliebre a scacchi rossi ed azzurri, egli ha sul petto ignudo, appesi tra gli amuleti contro i veleni, i cobra, i malefizi, uno scapolare di celluloido e una crocetta d'argento. È un puro ariano, dalla nobile faccia socratica che mi ricorda terribilmente un mio illustre insegnante di Università, tanto che ancora non riesco a vincere una certa esitanza, quando devo ordinargli di prepararmi il bagno o di lucidarmi i gambali. (Gozzano, 1984: 44, 45)

This passage is wide ranging in its implications in that we have the Westerner giving us a detailed description of the indigenous person, with whom he is in a relationship, albeit temporary, of domination. Yet, despite this we are confronted with an ambiguity: the description of Patrick is on the one level, one such as one might expect a Western author to give readers back home. He is presented in all his difference, at least as far as appearance goes. He is not the type of man one would in Gozzano's era find walking the streets of Rome, let's assume. Patrick is to a certain extent objectified by Gozzano, perhaps even inevitably so, bearing in mind the times we are talking of. However, there's an attempt on the part of the author to try and understand, who sees the apparent contradiction between the "pagan" amulets and Patrick's Christianity. He does not inveigh against it, rather Gozzano sees these apparently conflicting elements as in a sense reflective of his own contradictoriness. What is more, the discomfort is evident, and more subtly conveyed in the Italian than in the English translation, when the author has to give instructions to Patrick, having refashioned Patrick in the reader's mind as an icon and a reminder of authority figures in Gozzano's past, authority figures of a recognisable Western type. This passage is not imperialist, it is rather a hesitant

appropriation of power, despite the lip service paid to the role of underling played by the indigenous person in relation to the author. The assumption of that power by the author is not loaded with an imperialist view of the world as we might find it later in Somerset Maugham, where the indigenous character is seldom given a voice and is more often than not circumscribed by silence in deference to the “Europeans’ enactment of their own drama” (Yahya, 2003: 122).

More obviously, Gozzano is not a member of the ruling élite, though he might adopt their attitudes, in part, because like the ruling élite, he is white. But his situation is nonetheless ambiguous, insecure *vis á vis* the ruling élite and *vis á vis* Patrick and all that he represents.

Enter another member of the local population, namely Matthew:

Matthew, the other boy, enters rejoicing, his brilliant white teeth gleaming in his bronzed face. Matthew is only twenty and speaks seven languages. He is a good hunter and an excellent cook – no one can tenderize and fry the wood of the traveler palm or cook the meat of the scaly anteater or fruit bat better than he. (Marinelli, 1996: 13-14)

È Matthew, l’altro boy che entra esultando, con tutti i suoi denti bianchi abbaglianti nel bronzo del viso. È giovanissimo Matthew, ha vent’anni e parla sette lingue; è un buon cacciatore ed è un ottimo cuoco; nessuno sa meglio di lui rammollire e frigere il legno del traveller-palm o cucinare la carne del pagolimo squamoso o del vampiro rossetta. (Gozzano, 1984: 45)

Again we have an ambiguous situation in which on the one hand we have the older man’s admiration for youthfulness as such. Matthew is presented as the epitome of health, in contrast also to the author who went out to the East to minimise the symptoms of his tuberculosis.

Matthew is represented again in terms of the author's needs, but also independently of them. He is a good hunter, Gozzano tells us, a further indication of an earthiness, of manly, prelapsarian qualities that have fallen into disuse, that have atrophied in the West. This kind of description of Matthew conforms to the noble savage cliché that harks back to an earlier type of exoticist writing. Yet, Matthew is also a good cook, combining again the qualities to which a Westerner can attach intrinsic value with those that remind the Western reader of a lost heritage that has become cluttered and rendered worthless with the trappings of an industrial, capitalist "civilisation". This echoes Gozzano's own sense of uselessness as a poet, who is out of kilter with his own civilisation and seeks solace in the exotic. Yes, the exotic is used to serve the needs of the alienated Westerner, and in recognition of this salutary function, Gozzano subsequently speaks of Matthew and Patrick being his "two companions". The relationship has a personal element to it. He does not see them as politically subjugated to a greater imperial order in front of whom appearances must be maintained in order to maintain the dignity of an empire. Rather his relationship to them is one of natural companionship, even though the power dynamics would seem to favour the author. But, by the same token, he represents them as having power in their own right, powers which he, the effete Westerner, does not possess. If we compare this description of the representation of indigenous people to say an extract from Somerset Maugham, we see how Gozzano's representation is more felicitous:

A Chinese clerk, very neat in his white ducks, opened it.

'Mr Crosbie is here, sir.'

He spoke beautiful English, accenting each word with precision, and Mr Joyce had often wondered at the extent of his vocabulary. Ong Chi Seng was a Cantonese, and he had studied law at Gray's Inn...He was industrious, obliging and of exemplary character. (Maugham, 2000:1-2)

While obviously Somerset Maugham's text – set in Singapore and Malaya – is dense with allusions to an imperialist world-view and his intentions with the well-known text of *The Letter* are anything but a smug endorsement of the imperial enterprise, he reveals a subcutaneous attitude of appropriation in that the Chinese clerk has all the qualities to make him a useful extension of the imperial enterprise, qualities, it is implied, which he acquired because of his exposure to the English world. He has become as English as is possible, by implication, for a Chinese to become. Maugham says he is “a Cantonese” not simply “Cantonese”, further hinting at a kind of ethnic peculiarity, rather than as a matter-of-fact statement: Ong Chi Seng is one among many ethnic groupings in the imperial panoply. It is true that Maugham's intent is essentially different to Gozzano's in that it is circumscribed by the need to write a good story, whereas Gozzano is clearly much less *au fait* than is Maugham with the East and his textual intention is an account of a day and hence much simpler, intimate and more personal. He can see Patrick and Matthew as companions, which in the rigidly stratified world of Maugham is unthinkable, other than in the illicit liaisons for example, between planters and local Malay women. That a Malay or Chinese man can be deemed a companion as we have it in Gozzano is beyond the realms of possibility for a similarly refined sensibility as we have it in Maugham, whose story was written a decade or so after Gozzano's – 1924 as opposed to 1912. Hence it is clear that the cultural and political milieux of the two writers is reflected in the way they write about the East. This is in itself not surprising, but points to the fissures in the discourse on Orientalism, where there may be a tendency to uniformly describe the Western writer as necessarily imperialist and patronising.

Christmas in Ceylon is an example of how much more nuanced the Western approach to the East can be. Western writing on the East is not a monolithic appropriation and domination of the subject or

simply a panacea for Western ills, it also enters the realm in Gozzano of being an intrinsically meaningful exposure to the greater wealth of human experience and the relativising effect this has on the individual writer such as Gozzano. Gozzano's approach to the East seems to be more readily circumscribed by a certain humility when confronting the East and a recognition of the East as functioning along lines that have been endorsed by the centuries. This humility also would seem to have its origins in the insecure psychological state in which the author finds himself at the time.

In Maugham's text the implication is that salvation and acceptability in British eyes of Ong Chi Seng depends on conformity to a British ideal that in turn sustains and justifies the entire imperial enterprise. Compare Maugham's text to Gozzano's:

With these two companions and the bungalow caretaker – a staff barely adequate in this land where labour is divided according to age and caste – I have been living for almost a month in the last rest house which admirable British foresight has provided to the visitor. (Marinelli, 1996: 14)

Con questi due compagni e il guardiano del bungalow – appena sufficienti in questi climi dove il lavoro è frazionato per età e per caste – abito da quasi un mese l'ultimo rest-house offerta al viaggiatore dalla mirabile previdenza britannica. (Gozzano, 1984: 45)

True, the use of the word "companions" may be incidental and in the same passage Gozzano reveals a kind of hauteur in his reference to labour "problems" which could identify him as an arch-colonial, but in spite of this, he refers to the locals as "companions", not merely servants. It is unlikely that such a description of "staff" would be referred to in such terms by a Somerset Maugham, for example. And even in an anti-imperialist such as Leonard Woolf, (Woolf, 1980:

141), who served the Empire in Ceylon seven years prior to Gozzano's sojourn there, we seldom find such an intimacy alluded to, even though he spent much more time in Ceylon than did Gozzano. Woolf, as a highly observant and educated colonial official, the hierarchy of which he was a part would have made it difficult to cultivate intimate links with the locals. He is too much part of an established order which it is his task to maintain to have the free-wheeling approach we see in Gozzano, where the emphasis is more on how he is personally enriched by his exposure to the exotic.

While Gozzano appropriates much of the colonial discourse of his times – servants and descriptions of the exotic – his relationship with the exotic is not governed by an “imperial self” in that he is at odds with the imperial world in cultivating a level of familiarity with his companions, who are effectively his servants.

Absent in Gozzano's text too is, for want of a better word, the “manliness” we associate with the writings of say Kipling, Maugham or Woolf, for whom imperialism is an extension of masculinity as prescribed by elite British institutions which educated the male youth for service in the Empire. Woolf sums up his sojourn in Ceylon thus:

For seven years, I watched myself playing a part in an exiting play on a brightly coloured stage or dreaming a wonderfully vivid and exiting dream. (Woolf, 1980:141)

Compare this to Gozzano:

For the first time since I have been away from home I feel the faint pang of homesickness, barely perceptible but as gnawing and vexing as the earliest announcement of a toothache. I who had boasted of being immune to it! Alas, you can pretend to be Robinson Crusoe or a Buddhist monk, but you cannot break away from your essence, which is not only what it is but what has been,

and your psyche is helpless to dispel thousands and thousands of years of European evolution and twenty centuries of Christianity. Homesickness – the formidable, indescribable malady compounded of vague feelings much like fear and regret. (Marinelli, 1996: 16)

E per la prima volta, dacchè sono lontano dalla patria, sento in cuore una trafittura leggera appena percettibile, ma insistente e importuna come il primo rodio del dentecariato: è da nostalgia! Ed io mi vantavo d'esserne immune! Ohimé, ci si può illudere d'essere un Robinson e un cenobita buddista, ma non si può scomporre la nostra sostanza prima, la quale non è soltanto per ciò che è, ma per ciò che è stata; e non si eliminano dal mistero della nostra psyche millenni e millenni di evoluzione europea e venti secoli di cristianesimo... La nostalgia, il male tremendo ed indescribibile fatto di sentimenti indefiniti simili all'ansia ed al rimorso! (Gozzano, 1984: 47)

Gone in Gozzano is any hint of triumph over the exotic, whereas in Woolf, with all the apparel of empire behind him, domination of adversity is not only expected of him, given his culture and education, he turns it into something “fun”. Of course a psychoanalytic approach to these texts would be most useful, but on face value – bearing in mind two very different individual's words – they do reflect a strikingly different attitude to their similar environments. Their respective attitudes, besides reflecting their different psychological make-ups, also are destined as texts to different audiences. The masculinity expected of Woolf is not the same as the masculinity which Gozzano feels free to express, namely a masculinity which is quite happy to display weakness and the sense of being overwhelmed by the foreignness of his environment. Gozzano yearns to return to a parochial familiarity of his native Italy, whereas Woolf carries with him an imperial *forma mentis* which doesn't allow weakness and even

though he is critical of empire, he conforms to the sense of duty and personal sacrifice that empire requires of him.

For a more literary explanation we can see Gozzano in the context of literary and cultural precedents in terms of which Italy has been described as “being devoid of the widespread and unbridled romanticism which informs much of English, German and French literature” (Binni, 1968: 45) and which in turn informs much of the myth surrounding exoticism and by extension, empire, or at least a familiarity with and appropriation of alterity.

D'altra parte nella letteratura italiana era tenacissima una tradizione secolare, riportabile a quel letterato superiore che fu il Petrarca, che il romanticismo non riuscì ancora a spezzare...

Manca di uno sfogo romantico, di una tradizione di avventura e di rivolta, di cui i nuovi poeti potessero valersi. (Binni, 1968, 45)

So it is not only the fact that there is a lack of an empire which informs – though not necessarily determines – Gozzano’s stance, but also a paucity of literary precedents and values which enshrine a masculinist spirit of adventure, a masculinist spirit of conquest and subordination of alterity. A Leonard Woolf could hardly have adopted Gozzano’s attitude as it would be deemed weak, effete and ultimately subversive. Woolf did not go to Ceylon to be overwhelmed by the experience, whereas Gozzano can reveal his anxieties and his sense of being overwhelmed by the exotic, by alterity and his readership would arguably have been sympathetic to his ordeals, otherwise he would not have revealed himself so readily.

In another revelatory passage Gozzano tells us:

In Europa gli uomini mettono le tigri in gabbia, qui sono le tigri che costringono in gabbia gli uomini. (Gozzano, 1984: 47)

This sentence reveals a resignation to the inevitability of being an outsider, of being overwhelmed, of alienation. This prelapsarian environment accentuates Gozzano's isolation, whereas for a Woolf or many an imperial author, the environment represents a challenge to be overcome and subordinated and that could, and more often than not, did, include the indigenous population.

Whereas Woolf equates being in Ceylon with a "wonderfully vivid and exiting dream", we have seen that dreaming has a more lugubrious significance for Gozzano who approaches his experience in an overtly philosophical, modernist way, revealing as well his Positivist philosophical inclination:

This beauty, coupled with the unchanging season, adds a further gnawing perplexity to my homesickness – a bewildering thought that the summers, autumns, and winters immortalized in masterpieces of European poetry, painting, and music are nothing more than the product of a given latitude; sadness at the relativity of all things, even those we worship as divine and immortal; still deeper sadness at the thought that this perpetually green earth is nothing more than a narrow zone of everlasting summer which, in the beginning, once covered the entire globe; a childish consternation that Italy is already plunged deep in the downward curve of earth's dying, that winter is the image that foretells the eternal Arctic night that will draw ever nearer with time, overtaking the last specimens of doomed humanity in this privileged tropical zone. (Marinelli, 1996: 17)

[...] e questa bellezza e questa stagione che non mutano, aggiungono alla mia nostalgia d'oggi un altro sgomento

fatto di pensieri indefinibili: le primavera, dunque, le estati, gli autunni, gl'inverni immortalati nei capolavori della poesia, della pittura, della musica europea, non sono che il prodotto d'una latitudine – tristezza, relatività di tutte le cose, anche quelle che veneriamo come divine ed immortali – tristezza ancora più profonda al pensiero che questa terra perennemente verde non è che la sottile zona d'un estate eterna che copriva, all'inizio, tutto il nostro globo – sgomento puerile, ma invincibile al pensiero che la nostra patria è già immersa nella curva della terra che si spegne, che l'inverno, la notte glaciale nevosa che l'avvolge in questo mio chiaro mattino è già l'immagine della notte glaciale eternal che s'avanzerà nei tempi e guadagnerà i tropici e raggiungerà fin su questa zona privilegiata l'ultimo esemplare dell'umanità moribonda... (Gozzano, 1984: 49)

This passage reveals a modernist's disenchantment with the European world, a man's search for an unobtainable refuge and a view of a doomed humanity, of which the inhabitants of a blessed tropical isle are in Gozzano's view the lucky ones who will survive the longest. The pessimism expressed here reveals too the author's dilemma in being at once homesick for a place that he feels is doomed, further augmenting his sense of isolation and of not being part of this world. His sensibility is what gnaws at him and makes him unfit for survival. And in so viewing the world, alterity, the exotic, Ceylon – all acquire a significance bound up in his state of mind. Absent is the confidence in a strident, overpowering empire as we see in both Woolf and Maugham, for whom empire almost has an ontological significance, either in compliance or defiance, which it could never have had for Gozzano. He is his own ontological enterprise – there is no external structure upon which he can project signification, something which Woolf and Maugham (to mention but two examples) can do with alacrity.

This sense of *Entfremdung*, as the Germans describe alienation, is further emphasised in another passage:

My Christmas is not a cheerful one and the flora on all sides provides no consolation. I am constantly reminded of the terrible distance from home. Not even by lowering one's eyes to the ground can the illusion be sustained – my feet move through moss and monstrous lichens resembling polyps or masses of mother-of-pearl, then I tread on the ash-gray carpet of the blue Singhalese mimosa, my steps leaving a strange footprint that broadens almost instantly with the painful convulsion of an injured mollusk.... Everything is the same as when time began, a time before man and his sufferings. (Marinelli, 1996: 17, 18)

Non è gaio il mio Natale, e la flora che mi circonda non è consolatrice, mi ricorda di continuo la spaventosa distanza dalla patria; l'illusione non è possibile nemmeno limitando lo sguardo in terra; il piede s'avanza ora fra muschi, I licheni mostruosi, simili a polipi o a masse madreporiche, ora passa sul tappeto cinerino della mimosa azzurra cingalese e il passo lascia una strana impronta che s'allarga in pochi secondi, con la contrazione dolorosa del molusco offeso...e tutto è immutato, come ai tempi delle origini, quando non era l'uomo e non era il dolore. (Gozzano, 1984: 49-50)

The introspective tone is clear as is the sense of non-belonging, of being frightened by the sense of primordiality that the author himself imposes on this environment, one which he knows he cannot, nor wants to, master. Again the exotic fuels his sense of doom and he retreats into a private realm of his own making that leaves little room for the awe and exuberance which introduced the tale. Disenchantment has set in as he begins to appreciate that the new

environment cannot give the hoped for solace and that his yearning for the exotic has been a misplaced, wasted emotion.

Some semblance of revival is introduced by references to his faithful companions/servants, Matthew and Patrick, providing him with witnesses to his otherwise solitary and disconsolate existence and human contact:

Patrick and Matthew come and go silently, watching my every gesture with the marvellous zealous devotion of Indian servants that surprises every traveller. On the centre of the table, behind a tin, Matthew has placed a great bouquet of orchids, picked this morning in the jungle and a plate of huge mangoes... Patrick and Matthew have stopped bustling about. They are lying on the floor with their backs to the wall, sleeping and singing. Their indolent dream flows through their closed mouths as bizarre, somnolent music: action reflected, commentary on reality, paraphrase of solitude and exile, heat and silence. (Marinelli, 1996: 20-21)

Patrick e Matthew vengono e vanno silenziosi, vigilando ogni mio gesto con quello zelo devoto che è la grande virtù dei servi indiani e la meraviglia di tutti viaggiatori. Matthew ha posto in mezzo al tavolo, dentro una latta per conserve, un fascio enorme d'orchidee, raccolte nella gita di stamane, e un piatto di manghi enormi... Patrick e Matthew no sfaccendano più. Sono distesi in terra con le spalle al muro, dormono e cantano. Il loro sogno indolente si traduce per sé stesso, attraverso i denti chiusi, in una musica sonnolenta e bizzarra: azione riflessa, commento delle cose, parafrasi della solitudine e dell'esilio, del caldo e del silenzio. (Gozzano, 1984: 51-52)

Besides the references to the merits of Indian servants – a clear indication of the times and Gozzano’s sense of entitlement regarding their function for him, he is cognizant of their value and their sense of the aesthetic with which he can identify. He portrays them as being as visually aware and sensitive as he himself is. He implicitly appreciates the gesture of the orchids and the mangoes as he does the wisdom with which they imbibe their reality, their Ceylon in contrast to his own inability to find a harmony for himself there, or in Italy, or with life itself. The only harmony he senses is a funeral march for humanity, as he knows it, for Western man. In Gozzano there’s none of the idealism, entitlement and sense of mission which may be said to lie at the heart of the British Empire – and which sustained many an English writer – nor the serene acceptance of the world as he sees it manifested in Patrick and Matthew. Gozzano is ill at ease, ontologically, and the Orient functions as a catalyst to this sense of alienation and bewilderment.

It is in this sense that Gozzano represents what has been referred to by various authors as the “crisis of modernity”. Obviously, a term such as this is fraught and so open-ended as to be virtually meaningless. But let’s suspend our judgment on this for a while and make certain assumptions. Let us say that modernity refers to that transition from what Ernest Gellner would call “the great transition between the old, as it were, non epistemic worlds, in which the principles of cognition are subject to the pervasive constitutive principles of a given vision and thus have little to fear, and a world in which this is no longer possible” (Macfarlane, 1992: 122). Macfarlane in choosing this quote from Gellner’s *Legitimation* adds that ‘the attainment of a rational, non-magical, non-enchanted world is a much more fundamental transition than the jump from one scientific vision to another’. The modern world according to Macfarlane has two central features: “coherence and consistency and efficiency”. “Coherence” means, in Gellner’s words, quoted by Macfarlane ‘that there is no special, privileged, insulated facts or realms’.

“Efficiency” means ‘the cool rational selection of the best available means to a given, clearly formulated and isolated ends’. This is ‘the separation,’ Macfarlane asserts, ‘of all separables... breaking up of all complexes into their constituent parts...’; it creates ‘a common measure of fact. A universal conceptual currency... all facts are located within a single logical space...one single language describes the world...’. This freedom of thought Macfarlane asserts using Gellner, comes at a price in that rationality means that spheres have become sufficiently disentangled, for the mind to move without constantly bumping into wider obstacles created by impenetrable barriers whether of religion, kinship or politics.

The modern world ‘provides no cosy habitat for man [...] the impersonality and regularity, which make it knowable are also at the same time the very features which makes it almost [...] uninhabitable’.

Macfarlane quotes Gellner further by saying that “Our world is ‘notoriously a cold morally indifferent world’” (Macfarlane, 1992: 122). The question one then poses in relation to Gozzano, does his writing, and specifically *Natale a Ceylon* not provide a superb illustration of this crisis?

Taking the “Gellnerian” position further, one can see that the tensions inherent in Gozzano's text have been appropriately paralleled by Gellner's observations of enchantment, in the philosophical sense - enchantment as a mystical, non empiricist view of the world and the positivist faith in the powers of rational investigation:

...[it is] the establishment of an impersonal, symmetrical world, subject to general explanations, which makes “disenchantment” so acute. The problem of the validity of science and its vision is largely the problem of

establishing reasons for *accepting* that impersonal picture; whereas the problem of enchantment is getting out of it once again, of finding limits to it which would enable us to retain a little humanity and *escape* impersonality [...] (Gellner, 1979:25)

Gozzano's text aptly illustrates Gellner's observations, made as a critique of Wittgenstein. Gozzano is torn between the search for that enchantment, for the escape of which Gellner speaks, yet at the same time his rationalism brings him down to earth as it were, reminds him of his entrapment in a world which "is not cosy", which is hostile to his quest for enchantment, which he was hoping to find in the exotic clime that Ceylon represents.

Gozzano's text also provides us with an example which illustrates Dennis Porter's critique of Said's *Orientalism*: Porter says for example that

[...] discourse theory prevents him from seeing any evidence of alternatives [to Orientalism]. In fact because he does not reflect on the significance of hegemony as process, he ignores in both Western scholarly and creative writing all manifestations of counter hegemonic thought. (Porter, 1993:152)

Gozzano, as we've established is counter hegemonic, if we take D'Annunzianesimo as hegemonic in Italy at the time. Porter suggests that Said is eager to confront Western hegemonic discourse head-on, and in had ignored the warning that cultural process must always include "the efforts and contributions of those who are in one way or another outside or at the edge of specific hegemony". Porter also aptly describes what is in effect going on in the Gozzano text when he refers to a "self-interrogating density of verbal texture" as opposed to texts that offer "no internal resistance to the ideologies they reproduce". I hope to have shown that Gozzano does indeed provide

an internal resistance to the ideology he may be deemed to reproduce and therefore provides a further example of the pitfalls inherent in sweeping analyses of culture which ultimately want to make a political point at the expense of the spontaneity of the creative process.

(University of Cape Town)

Bibliography

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------|---|
| Algarotti, Francesco | 1987 | <i>Saggio sopra l'Imperio degl'Incas</i> , Palermo: Salerio Editore. |
| Binni, Walter | 1968 | <i>La poetica del decadentismo</i> , Firenze: Sansoni. |
| Forsdick, Charles | 2000 | <i>Victor Segalen and the Aesthetics of Diversity, Journeys Between Cultures</i> , Oxford: Oxford University Press. |
| Gellner, Ernst | 1979 | <i>Words and Things</i> , London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. |
| Gozzano, Guido | 1984 | <i>Natale a Ceylon e altri racconti Indiani</i> , Milano: Garzanti. |
| Gozzano, Guido | 2005 | <i>Tutte le poesie</i> , Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori. |
| Gozzano, Guido | 1998 | <i>Verso la cuna del mondo</i> , Torino: Edizioni di Torino. |
| Guglielminetti, Marziano | 1994 | “Guido Gozzano” in <i>Letteratura Italiana del Novecento, III, I poeti crepuscolari: estetismo e prodotti</i> |

- di consumo*. Ed. Grana, G. Milano: Marzorati.
- Marzot, Giulio 1979 *D'Annunzio e Gozzano*, Bologna: Edizioni Italiane Moderne.
- Yahya, Zawiah 2003 *Resisting Colonialist Discourse*, Bangi (Malaysia): Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan.
- Macfarlane, Alan 1992 "Ernest Gellner and the escape to modernity" in: *Transition to Modernity: Essays on power, wealth and belief*. Ed. John A. Hall and I.C. Jarvie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Marchiori, Claudio 1992 *Esoterismo ed essoterismo di Gozzano nelle lettere dall'India*, Genova: Tilgher.
- Marinelli, David 1996 (Trans.) *Journey Toward the Cradle of Mankind*, Evanston: The Marlboro Press.
- Maugham, Somerset W 2000 "The Letter" in *More Far Eastern Tales*, London: Vintage.
- Palma, Michael 1981 *The Man I used to be. The Colloquies and Selected Poems of Guido Gozzano*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Porter, Dennis 1992 "Orientalism and its Problems" in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Patrick Williams & Laura

- Chrisman. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Said, Edward 2003 *Orientalism*, London: Penguin Books.
- Sardar, Ziauddin 1999 *Orientalism*. Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press
- Spagnoletti, G. 1994 *Letteratura del Novecento, III, I Crepuscolari*, Milano: Marzorati.
- Surdich, Luigi 1992 *Guido Gozzano. L'avventura esotica*, Modena: Mucchi Editore
- Stäuble, Antonio 1972 *Sincerità e artificio in Gozzano*, Ravenna: Longo Editore.
- Woolf, Leonard 1980 *An Autobiography. Volume I; 1880-1911*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Further reading**
- Asor Rosa, Alberto 1992 *Fuori dall' Occidente, ovvero Ragionamento sull'Apocalissi*, Torino: Einaudi.
- Buruma, Ian & Margalit, Avishai 2004 *Occidentalism – The West in the Eyes of its Enemies*, London: Penguin Books.
- Holden, Philip 2000 *Hugh Clifford and the Discipline of English Literature in the Straits Settlements and Malaya 1895-1907*, Greenboro: University of North Carolina.

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------|---|
| Holden, Philip | 1996 | <i>Oriental Masculinity, Orienting Nation – W. Somerset Maugham's Exotic Fiction</i> , London: Greenwood Press. |
| Quayson, A. | 2000 | <i>Postcolonialism – Theory, Practice or Process</i> , Cambridge: Polity Press. |
| Segalen, Victor | 2002 | <i>Essays on Exoticism – An Aesthetics of Diversity</i> , Durham & London: Duke University Press. |
| Singh J.G. | 1996 | <i>Colonial Narratives – Cultural Dialogues</i> , London, New York: Routledge. |
| Thumboo, E & Kandiah, T. | 1995 | <i>The Writer as Historical Witness - Studies in Commonwealth Literature</i> . Singapore: National University of Singapore Press. |
| Wee, C.J.W. | 2003 | <i>Culture, Empire, and the Question of Being Modern</i> , London, Oxford: Lexington University Press. |