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“The photographs used in the manifesto ‘For Migrants’ were taken over a period ranging from 1990 with the first arrivals of Albanian refugees on the coasts of Puglia to the most recent shipwrecks on the shores of the Greek islands in 2023. These photographs are part of reportages made in Albania, Italy, Greece, Bosnia, Libya, Serbia, Somalia, Turkey, and Zaire”

Enrico Dagnino

We asked Enrico Dagnino for access to his photographic archives because this manifesto written in 2023 tells about a reality he’s witnessing for 33 years. He left us free to order the images which we chose. They do not reflect a unity of place, time and action, but bear witness to a continuum of horror whose sources alone vary-in the wake of tragedies from which it is legitimate to flee. This is the crime which is committed all around the Mediterranean sea by those who deny this continuity, dismember the tragedy by dissociating its origins, and who summon fate… This crime is also ours, we who listen, remain silent and forget.

**To the shipwrecked, the drowned and the survivors** in times past from Procida or Napoli; today from Libya, Syria and so many other countries further afield.

**To the Mediterranean Sea,** to these orphans who will never know where they were born.

**To the Mediterranean Sea,** to these orphans who will remain foreigners wherever they are washed ashore; and have nothing better to hope for than vicious currents and ill winds which will blow them back home.

To the Mediterranean Sea, **to this mother in the middle, shedding her last salty tears into the middle sea.** To her grief which no language could ever name.

T**o the migrants**.

**To the seafarers** who rescue and welcome them. To those who care and console. **To those few who have not forgotten what is right and who resist** the perils of our shameful laws.

**To the drifting bodies,** this strange driftwood which nobody would pick up.

**To these bodies,** devoid of life, fleetingly animated by scavenging appetites without even imitating the perseverance of the ripple which gives these bright-colored corps-morts no rest (nb: double meaning, the word corps-mort literally bodies-dead is the French word for mooring buoys). The very mooring buoys which ensure yachtsmen peaceful lunches.

**To the migrants, to the thoughts which haunt their crossing, to the endless hours, to their fears, to the cold of winter nights, to the thirst, to the heat of the supposedly beautiful summer weather, to the salt which burns deep into the most intimate recesses of their dispossessed bodies.** To these areas, void of hope, which they leave behind, to the shores which strip them of their belongings before chasing them away, to the coasts which reject them as soon as they catch sight of them.

**To the child whom we believed was asleep somewhere between sea and sand.** To the shame which should never have left us since that image invaded our screens.

And I say “we” because I have not done better myself, I should not have let another image chase this one away before it is chased away by another, and another…

**To History,** which is bound to be harsh on us and legitimately so. For our closed eyes, **for the shame** we ignore unremittingly. Since that is what almost all of us do, including me, first and foremost, here: we “swallow our shame” (as the French say) again and again, pretending to give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, to mime life-saving gestures, to write decisive and useful words.

**We who will persist in doing it for a long time, even if we are caught red-handed.** As if to avoid admitting it. As if to instill it in those who will come after us.

As if to ensure that they are kinder to us than this often peaceful water is **to the friends they will never know, to the loves they will never marry, to the smiles they will never return, the tears they will never share.**

We … since I am not doing any better here myself.

**To the Mediterranean Sea,** to those men and women who cross it without knowing any better than we do whether it is “more humiliating to be” a migrant than an immigrant. And… “Next!” (NB: “more humiliating to be“ and “Next!” translate an excerpt of the lyrics and the title of a song by Jacques Brel “Au suivant!”).

**To all those, all too many, stranded, dead and anonymous,** but finally emigrated, and that’s probably what we call a twist of fate.

**To those who clean their bodies washed away** by the sea and adorned with a crust of salt, to those who give them a name despite the numbers imposed on them and greet them with no hope of a reply.

**And to them,** who inhabited these bodies and would have liked to thank the human beings who last took care of them, rather than let their decaying, devoured remains haunt them.

**But above all, to all those whom we will never be able to count or name, swept into the middle of the middle sea and hidden by the wall of silence all around us.** The wall which we have erected by colluding with those we claim to be protecting ourselves from. This wall of silence is much higher and more robust, much more implacable than those made of concrete, wood, or iron which we point to…

**And again, what a bad habit, we accept to ignore our own shame.**

With or without faith, **we can understand** what all religions have to say, with or without introspection, **we can question** all philosophies, in the same way as with or without belief, we can confront all ideologies which still relate to common sense. And what we hear, the answer, which is offered to us, the argument which is put forward is that **every destiny has a meaning, be it personal or social.**

**And the destiny of these bodies decaying in locked holds, of these tens of thousands drowned by infamy after having been starved to death, the destiny of each one of them will be, sooner or later, to denounce and provide evidence.**

Despite their frightful common fate, **the fate of each of them will bring our crimes to light, our silence locks the door just as much as the criminal who turns it in the lock.**

**Atlantis will be our courthouse and these mass graves in the abyss our harsh prosecutors.** We will deserve all of this, just as we will deserve the gaze of our children shunning our own imploring eyes. **All the motives in the world will never justify abandoning any child, any woman, any man in quest of a new life to these maritime depths which we would like to be silent.**

Swallowed, drowned and frozen, the last cry of one of them is enough to have the gentlest of dolphins as well as the fiercest of killer whales run aground with grief.

But the heaviest sentence will represent nothing. Nothing compared to what we have already inflicted on ourselves, unaware of its reality, its meaning, its scope, or consequences in time. **The transformation of the Mediterranean Sea into a sea deprived of horizon already means the obliteration of hope on all coasts. Be the tide coming in or going out … the sea will nonetheless be dead: we turn the cradle of our civilization into its inescapable tomb.**

And since we are left with carelessness and superstition, I want to address some words to the regular summer bathers and to the children who, fortunately, are still laughing at the cusp of a global warming which promises to be icy… My thoughts go out to them as an invitation: **“Keep your fingers crossed and keep your fingers crossed often, and cross them for a long time, cross them tightly and even more tightly and for a longer time still. It is totally pointless even when accompanied by the most sincere wishes… It is totally pointless except that while you are accomplishing this innocent ritual, you won’t be doing anything wrong with your fingers.”**

To the immigrants

(To be continued… Alas!)

Sébastien Moreu

Descendant of immigrants

This publication results from a private initiative of the publishers. It is not the idea of an association, an NGO, an institution or a company, but a simple initiative. As such, it has no legitimacy to raise funds or take any action other than to revive the debate and reawaken the memory and awareness of a tragedy which has been lasting for thirty years now. Nor is it supported by any association, NGO, political or religious organization.

Besides, the NGOs and associations listed below for the appeal for donations have been selected solely on the basis of research by the editorial team. There has been no exchange or communication with those selected. Before making any payment, the editorial team advises readers to find out about the development of each organization’s actions and the validity of the links, and to do their own research into other organizations whose needs and specific forms of action are closer to their own convictions. The links point to websites providing information on actions and needs, as well as to donation forms requested directly by their recipients.

Other bilingual versions are available: Spanish/Portuguese (SPA-POR/POR/SPA), Italian/Greek (ITA-ELL/ELL-ITA), German/Turkish (DEU-TUR/TUR-DEU), Arabic/Farsi (ARA-FAR/FAR-ARA), Hebrew/Arabic (HEB-ARA/ARA-HEB). Some will only be available online or on our networks:

[www.**themanifestooftheabyss**.com](http://www.themanifestooftheabyss.com)

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\* Aylan, washed up drowned in 2005 on a beach in Turkey, photo © Nilüfer Demir / Doğan News Agency, screenshot on our request on his laptop by Enrico Dagnino in 2023.

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