

Dawn of an old era

Istanbul, February 21 2023. We begin our journey at 7 a.m. toward Smirne. The hours pass, we're let out in Cesme, it's 9 p.m., we walk along the coastline until we reach our boat, the Luxury 2; an ironic name considering how much we were paying for this journey... 8 thousand euros each; as expected from those who give in easily the boat is an unkept promise, the engine fails and we are moved to a gulet after only three hours sailing. Our new mean of transportation is bigger, but is made out of wood and it's worse for wear, Summer Love... and I also hate summer. We are a lot and from different countries: Afghanistan, Syria, Palestine, Iran... I believe two of them are Somalis.

Steccato di Cutro, February 26 2023. At dawn we finally spot the Italian coast. I've been seasick for 3 days... I haven't eaten in two... but who can stomach eating, we're cramped together... babies cry, scream, women are torn between their anxiety and that of their children... men are folded onto themselves, they can't use their phone, orders from the traffickers to avoid localization and everybody knows that nobody can be without his phone... we're almost there, 100 meters to the shore... the sea rages more and more and it's not safe on the deck... better go back to the hold with mum.

Sunday morning, I turned on the Tv and I saw corpses at sea.

I did something I regretted immediately, I tuned the Tv off; an automatic gesture. I couldn't think about that on Sunday: a day of rest, of mental pause, of relax. Mine was an instinctive gesture, a calculated avoidance; luckily it lasted for only five minutes. I turned the Tv back on and I see what can't be ignored; while I'm watching I can't help but think of the similarities with any dramatic film, while watching Tv it's almost inevitable, it alienates you: it's a new "safety measure". It's been minutes, hours, days. I listened to everybody, I listened a lot; I've been annoyed by those who judged parental decisions on inexistent data, unknowable and unobservable data, I've read the interviews of the victims' relatives, of the survivors. I'm baffled by how, in a society like ours, there is no time for silence, for thought, and even less for pain and grief. Any silence must be broken, shattered, soiled. It's better to make a fuss about it, it's better to find someone to blame (smugglers, cost guards, Europe), judge the victims and the perpetrators. Of course, we can do it. It's a way to handle death... we get upset when there's nothing more to be done "how could the be so reckless, risking their lives like that? Couldn't they just stay home?"

The interesting thing about those questions is that sometimes it's possible to have the answer, if you have the patience and courage to get them, leaving our comfort zone of alleged knowledge to get in touch with the Other, his or her life, his or her story, his or her grievance.

As living beings we can ask why... I did, I'm human... and I think I found an answer in the words of Warsan Shire, young British poet of Somali origin who, with her parents, found refuge in London from the civil war in her country of origin. One of her most notorious poem, Home, reads: "no one leaves home unless home chases you fire under feet hot blood in your bellyshark [...] you have to understand, that no one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land [...] no one would leave home unless home chased you to the shore unless home told you to quicken your legs leave your clothes behind crawl through the desert wade through the oceans drown save be hunger beg forget pride your survival is more important no one leaves home until home is a sweaty voice in your ear saying- leave, run away from me now i dont know what i've become but i know that anywhere is safer than here"

Warsan Shire