

## Exile's rejection puts the intimate in danger

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In his little book "To Recognise Fascism" – extract from *Cinque scritti morali* – Umberto Eco exposes the wide variety of what can legitimately be placed under this characteristic term of right-wing dictatorships. Faced with the return of "a nebula of obscure instincts and unfathomable impulses", he specifies a series of characteristics of which "it is sufficient that only one of them be present to coagulate a fascist nebula". Among these traits we find "the fear of difference", which is at the root of all the measures taken against "intruders", and "the obsession of plots", the simplest of which founds xenophobia.

The refusal to welcome foreigners, whether refugees or simply exiles, is already a sign of danger to our society. Lacan distinguishes fear, that causes the unknown, from anxiety, the signal of danger. The fear felt by certain categories of the population in the face of the arrival of migrants should therefore in itself be generating greater anxiety about the coagulation that occurs before our eyes with a possible "fascist nebula".

The Belgian government recently let one of its ministers send Sudanese asylum seekers to a country where torture is practised. As the well-known film directors Dardenne brothers, pointed out in an open letter, there is "a principle that every State of the law must respect: asylum seekers cannot be repatriated to the State practising torture". The scandal of this decision was reported even in *The Washington Post*, which presents the Belgian decision as extreme in the general European effort to get rid of immigrants: "In an era of closing borders, European leaders are increasingly willing to go to extreme lengths to deport people. But a Belgian effort to partner with the Sudanese government has backfired after two alleged they were tortured after being sent home, and the top Belgian migration official involved is facing pressure to resign". This government associating Flemish liberals and nationalists, some of whom are explicitly from the far right, thus flirts dangerously with the limits of the rule of law. It should be noted, however, that in reaction to this obscene position of the master, an important movement of solidarity is developing in one part of the population.

The fear of the foreigner is often the consequence of an obsession of the invasion by the other, sometimes independently of the actual presence of the foreigner on the ground. Globalization makes the other close. But Lacan predicted that "Our future of common markets will be balanced of an increasingly hard-line extension of the process of segregation"[1]. We are there. But this proximity of the other is first that of the other that we are ourselves, for us. The mirror allowed us to constitute our image in a constitutive alienation.

To want to eject the foreigner – is it not a part of ourselves that we want to amputate? This link between the intimate and the other is fractured when the migrant is rejected. In Belgium, again, a project of the Bill is currently being discussed which should allow the arrest of a person staying illegally at the place of residence whether its home or that of someone who houses the person. Such a project attacks citizens' solidarity with foreigners. It also attacks the intimacy of everyone, the home as deemed inviolable.

From this point of view, the proposed Bill is considered unconstitutional by the magistrates' union since it contradicts Article 15 of the Constitution, which stipulates that home is inviolable – with the sole exception of the search procedure as specified by the law. Here again, respect for the principles of the rule of law gives way to the excesses of the law of the State.

The problem of welcoming people on exile arises throughout Europe today, and there is sometimes a tendency to put more blame on some countries in the eastern part of the European Union. As we see in these examples, the problem is just as much in the West. Would Belgium become a model of development of primary fascism [Ur-fascisme] denounced by Umberto Eco? Not yet. But its rulers already play the rule of law with dangerous nonchalance.

Translated by Bogdan Wolf

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[1] J. Lacan, Proposition of 9 October 1967 of the Analyst of the School, trans. R. Grigg, *Analysis* No 6, 1995.

