**Crossing of Hostile Borders:**

**Displacement and Borders in the artwork of Tanja Ostojić and Bern O'Donoghue**

**Elena Marchevska**

**September 04, 2017**

**Abstract:**

This article will explore how art can help audiences to think and feel about migration differently, by focusing on two political art projects: Tanja Ostojić’s *Misplaced women*? (2009-present) and Bern O'Donoghue’s *Dead Reckoning* (2015- present). These projects are based on experiences of crossing hostile borders. Both artists’ work explores personal, social and political aspects of displacement.

**Key Words:** border violence; borders and art; migration; institutional response; privilege of movement;

All the world seems to be on the move. Asylum seekers, international students, terrorists, members of diasporas, holidaymakers, businesspeople, sports stars, refugees, backpackers, commuters, the early retired, young mobile professionals, prostitutes, armed forces-these and many others fill the world's airports, buses, ships, and trains.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Introduction**

Borders exist as lines of division, as the line between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The border structures space and consequently positions people and objects in relation to itself. Borders keep communities together or force them apart. As noted by Shahram Khosravi in his compelling book *“Illegal” traveller: an auto-ethnography of borders*, based on his illegal journey between Iraq and Sweden:

Ours is a time of the triumph of borders, an epoch of border fetishism. Borders determine how the world looks. The map represents the world as a mosaic of unities, of nations, with clear outlines and distinct in different colours. Borders are constructed to designate difference.[[2]](#footnote-2)

According to Alexander C. Diener and Joshua Hagen “the world has become crisscrossed with such a variety of geographic boundaries that they often appear natural and timeless.”[[3]](#footnote-3) However, the reality of physical, national borders is far more complicated and certain border crossings are reflecting changing political, social, and economic contexts. Precisely what we see in the current debates about borders in Europe is driven by populist politics of fear. This is partially due to the fact that the European ‘migration crisis’ that started in 2015 is showing no signs of abating. As people on the move continue to make the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea, fears of a European Union ‘flooded’ with desperate refugees and migrants seeking a better life continue to abound. A key assumption driving this fear is that Europe will serve as a destination for large swathes of displaced populations. These people on the move are often viewed as an unwanted burden on ‘host’ communities. There are a range of self-organised activists who support refugees in Europe and research is emerging that precisely traces the journeys and reasons underpinning the movement. As an example, the project ‘[Crossing the Mediterranean Sea by Boat](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/research/researchcentres/irs/crossingthemed/)’ subverts the assumption that most of the migrants leave willingly their countries of origin in order to reach ‘destination Europe’. Written by researchers from the Universities of Warwick and Malta and the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy, the report is based on 257 in-depth qualitative interviews conducted across two periods and two migratory routes in 2015-2016. The project has gathered these stories in order to enhance understanding of the migratory journey and experience. Mainly because despite the fact that the people on the move experience various dangers, not only in countries of origin, but also throughout the migratory journey, the general public is not sensitive enough to the dangers these migrants face.

This article will explore how art and interactive installations can help audiences to think and feel about migration differently. The article will focus on two political art projects: Tanja Ostojić’s *Misplaced women?* (2009-present) and Bern O'Donoghue *Dead Reckoning* (2015- present). These two projects are an aesthetic exploration of experiences of crossing hostile borders. Both artists’ work explores personal, social and political aspects of displacement. The projects use interaction as a powerful tool to explore the idea of the Other, the Foreigner and to imagine a place outside strictly defined border categories and state identities.[[4]](#footnote-4) Both projects are interdisciplinary in nature; they combine objects, photographs, writing, and online documentation.

This article will work with Reece Jones’ argument that the violence of borders today is emblematic of a broader system that seeks to preserve privilege and opportunity for some by restricting access to resources and movement for others[[5]](#footnote-5). The aim of this article is to analyse current contested discussions around the concepts of borders and border crossing in Europe and to seek how artists’ approach this phenomena.

**Borders as divisions: The phenomena of ‘Fortress Europe’**

In the face of the 2015 refugee crisis in Europe, anxieties about national identities have surfaced with a vengeance. Despite the prolific “Refugees welcome” rhetoric, racial and ethnic profiling in train stations, airports, and on European cities’ streets has escalated. However, this was not always the story associated with borders in the EU. Throughout the 1990s, the dominant narrative in the European Parliament was the removal of borders and the expansion of the European Union. Reece Jones explains the historical development of these ideas:

In 1995, the Schengen Area, named for the small town in Luxembourg where the agreement was signed, was established, with visa-free movement through internal borders in Europe. By 2014, twenty-six countries were participating, including EU nonmembers Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland. These changes in Europe seemed to symbolize the possibility that globalization might create a borderless world.[[6]](#footnote-6)

However, although internal borders were removed, harsher processes were imposed on the external borders to strengthen the Schengen Zone. With this, according to Petra Gümplová, the EU makes it impossible for refugees to traverse its borders. This creates the phenomena known as Fortress Europe. Gümplová explains how paradoxically impenetrable Fortress Europe is:

In order to get to the EU legally from outside of the Schengen Zone, a person needs a visa which, for obvious reasons (fees, invitations, return ticket, medical insurance, affidavit of support etc.), refugees have no chance of obtaining. No European law creates a mechanism for the legal arrival of a refugee. The Dublin system rules are applicable only after a refugee arrives at the border, in territorial waters or in transitional zones.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Between 2013 and 2015, Fortress Europe’s problem with its external borders burst into international news through a series of shocking stories.[[8]](#footnote-8) The Mediterranean became a particularly visible external border. It became the centre of the refugee crisis due to its natural volatility. It is a dangerous crossing and according to the International Organization for Migration, an estimated 5000 people died attempting to cross the Mediterranean sea in 2015. According to Jones, ‘these are not military deaths, but civilians losing their lives as they attempt to move from one place to another’[[9]](#footnote-9). Jones criticises the EU military response[[10]](#footnote-10) as a both incredibly expensive and dysfunctional solution to a bigger problem:

The European Union’s response to deaths in the Mediterranean demonstrates [ ] that the problem can be solved by using military force against human traffickers, destroying their boats, and attacking their camps. This strategy is based on the assumption that the refugee situation is driven primarily by traffickers, not by conditions in the migrants’ home countries or the restrictive immigration policies of states that do not provide safe and orderly systems for refugee and asylum claims.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The problem with the military approach is that it completely dehumanises the refugees. The use of force, supposedly to prevent further deaths of migrants and refugees, didn’t achieve the goal of stopping illegal crossing. As some routes closed, migrants continued to look for alternative routes into Europe. This crisis at the European Union’s borders resulted in substantial debate about who bears responsibility for the increasing numbers of migrants and the high numbers of deaths.

The artworks analysed in this article derive from the artists’ examination of the growing tension between human experience of the external borders of Europe, and the security protocols that guard these borders. The artists focus mainly on the implications that this tension brings for those who are crossing the borders, those who do not even have the ‘right to have rights’. To be precise, this means that refugees, asylum seekers and ‘illegal’ migrants, due to their lack of legal and political status, are anony­mous, nameless, faceless, and they wait, in many cases for years, while their fate is determined by EU governments and tribunals. As argued by Lechte and Newman, stateless people seem to constitute a certain blindspot for nation-states and public opinion, which fail to acknowledge the full catastrophe that is currently taking place[[12]](#footnote-12)

**Misplaced Women?: The privilege of mobility**

*Misplaced* Women*?* is an art project run by Tanja Ostojić that consists of performances and workshops; it has been running since 2009, incorporating contributions by international artists, students and people from diverse backgrounds. Within the project Tanja Ostojić embodies and enacts an everyday life activity that signifies a displacement common to transients, migrants, war and disaster refugees. The performance instructions are simple: In a public space unpack your bag/suitcase/luggage and take out all of your possessions. Allow the audience and the passers-by to see the contents. Pack your possessions back into the bag.

The work of Yugoslavian-born artist Tanja Ostojić draws inspiration from her own experience as a non-European Union citizen, a traveller and female artist. Ostojić herself experienced the volatility of European external borders and visa regimes during the Yugoslavian wars. In her work she draws on her personal experience of crossing borders, queuing in front of embassies and consulates; filing out numerous questionnaires and applications and being interviewed by immigration officers. In an interview for the Berlin Art Link, conducted byXandra Popescu, she states her feelings about border crossing:

It is here that the disdain of the European Union becomes evident and how power relations function. Upon entering Fortress Europe, there is a range of safety procedures you have to go through: the bag searching, scanning, questioning and other indiscretions.[[13]](#footnote-13)

In her work she deliberately blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction, in order to discuss social exclusion and inclusion. This informs the choice of locations for performances of *Misplaced Women?*;locations vary but have so far mainly included migration-specific places - train stations, airports, borders, subway stations, police stations, refugee camps, specific parks, prisons, etc. These are places where security and control is performed on an everyday basis. Ostojić’s performances and contributions from others are posted on the project’s blog in the form of images, notes, stories or videos. All of the posted performance documentation explores the themes of migration, desired mobility, and relations of power and vulnerability in regard to the body on the move. The piece addresses fears and concerns about security, and makes us recognise the biopolitical horizon of statelessness. Stateless people are subjected to an array of demeaning and intrusive examinations and surveillance, such as fingerprinting and medical inspections. Ostojić’s piece points to this and highlights the biopolitical management of migra­nts in the interest of security: the body of the stateless person becomes the site of state surveillance and control.

I saw Tanja Ostojić perform this piece in Zagreb during the PSi conference, in Zagreb Youth Theatre, on June 27, 2009. What still resonates strongly with me is the simplicity of the story unfolding in front of you - and the irony that the actions of packing and unpacking in public are considered dangerous by the authorities. Ostojić has been approached numerous times by security guards and border authorities, while performing her piece in public. As an example, in a recent iteration of *Misplaced Women?*, performed by the artist Theresa Albor in London, December 2016, she was approached by shopping mall security, who were increasingly concerned by the action of unpacking in a public space. Albor reflects on this encounter for the *Misplaced Women?* blog:

I feel vulnerable sitting on the cement paving stone outside the Omega watch store.  Someone else has the power.  A man with a vest that says “security”.  Calling out names: Amena, Yana, Ola, Liliane, Nour, Kamar, Lamma Dayoub, Qamar, Haya, Zeinah, Aya, Nooda, Ranim, Reem, Asil. Please be safe.  What is the worst that can happen to me?  What is the best thing that can happen to you?[[14]](#footnote-14)

It seems that Ostojić’s unpacking is an action that actualizes the border by occupying a zone that exists between departure (formerly here and soon to be there) and arrival (formerly there and soon to be here).[[15]](#footnote-15)

*Misplaced Women?* is also addressing the issues surrounding the privilege of movement. According to Jones, “in the twentieth century, state bureaucracies such as border patrols, customs agents, and naturalization services used new technologies such as photographs, fingerprints, and bar codes for more intensive monitoring of the population”[[16]](#footnote-16). This technologies are now integral part of the state systems that guard the EU borders. Although this technological surveillance can be justified in some cases, there is lack of understanding of how a person can be wronged by being placed under constant monitoring. According to sociologist John Urry “issues of movement, of too little movement for some or too much for others or of the wrong sort or at the wrong time, are, it seems, central to many people's lives and to the operations of many small and large public, private and non-governmental organizations.”[[17]](#footnote-17) (2007:6) The privilege of free movement doesn’t start when refugees and illegal migrants enter European Union. Monitoring by the state continues and the migrants are left in a limbo of waiting, their suitcases packed and unpacked numerous times. Khosravi in his recent study of young Iranian asylum seekers in EU underlines the issues associated with the lack of privilege of mobility within EU:

Young Iranians describe themselves as being stuck in purposelessness and forced to endure endless waiting, and they are also aware that they are perceived as unproductive and a burden on the society. Despite the aspirations and inspiration they possess, they find themselves forced into petrifying social and spatial immobility. (2017:i)

*Misplaced Women?* is a project that asks its participants and the audience to reflect on how borders become everyday obstacles that are encountered within daily life. Although Ostojić based the project on her own experience during the Yugoslavian Wars, the project is pertinent to the current refugee crisis: the EU’s focus has not changed and border defence, not the protection of life, remains the priority at Europe’s frontiers. The performers’ unpacking thus resonates on a personal scale as much as it reflects broader themes of geopolitical mass displacements.

**Border spectatorship: Humanizing the people on the move**

Bern O'Donoghue’s *Dead Reckoning* is an installation composed of multicoloured paper boats, each of which represents a person who was recorded as drowned in the Mediterranean during 2016. She is using twelve different colour combinations to marble the paper, that respond to twelve months of the year. This helps her to highlight the ways in which changes in the weather, season or policies surrounding migration in Europe can affect the number of people who have died. In a recent talk delivered at Tate Exchange, in April 2017, O’Donoghue talked about the moment when she first heard about the news of boats sinking in the Mediterranean. She couldn’t comprehend how the British public could just silently spectate, while actual human beings were losing their lives in pursuit of peace and safety[[18]](#footnote-18). By handwriting titles on the boats, such as “mother”, “friend”, “baby”, O’Donoghue seeks to humanise people on the move rather than rendering them inhuman as ‘numbers’[[19]](#footnote-19). O’Donoghue draws on data on the deceased collected by the IOM ‘Missing Migrants Project’, yet importantly seeks to emphasise the people behind the statistics. She [explains](https://www.opendemocracy.net/vicki-squire-bern-o-donoghue/5083-boats-dead-reckoning) that “every one of the 5,083 paper boats symbolises a loss of someone significant: a daughter, son, neighbour or friend.”[[20]](#footnote-20) (2017) O’Donoghue collaborated on this project with Professor Vicki Square, who established the project *Crossing the Med*. This project provides a new perspective on the journeys and experiences of people seeking to cross the Mediterranean sea by boat. While the projects are independent from one another, the academic and the artist worked together[[21]](#footnote-21) to bring different tools through which people can reflect upon and have dialogue about the migration crisis that is characterised by many deaths at sea.

*Dead Reckoning* is also characterised by the process of collectively creating the installation. O’Donoghue enlists help from members of the public to build the installation and as she works with them creating boats from marbled paper, she asks participants about their experience of and thoughts on migration. She says in an interview that:

Many of the negative things I hear come from people quoting incorrect or misleading articles, which reinforce their own worldview. Politicians are both role models and set the tone for the electorate, so if they choose to reinforce borders and be economical with the truth about migration as opposed to presenting a balanced picture or defending the rights of refugees, it’s hardly surprising that public opinion hardens too.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Through politico–juridical discourse and regulation, the current political systems in most Western European countries create a politicized human being (a citizen of a nation-state) but also a by-product, a politically unidentifiable ‘leftover’, a ‘no-longer-human being’.[[23]](#footnote-23) In most cases those political ‘leftovers’ are illegal migrants and refugees. As argued by Khosravi, they are: “Sent back and forth between sovereign states, humiliated, and represented as polluted and polluting bodies, stateless asylum seekers and irregular migrants are excluded and become the detritus of humanity, leading wasted lives”[[24]](#footnote-24).

*Dead Reckoning* highlights the violent crossing and works on understanding the hostility behind the refugee crisis. The project offers a platform to share migrants’ stories in a way that counters the dehumanising treatment they faced during the journey and on arrival. It is a poetic response to the violence done to numerous disposable lives[[25]](#footnote-25).

**Hostile borders as subject in art**

The phenomenon of hostile EU bordersis increasingly becoming a subject of many art projects. Some of those attempted to represent the issue of violent borders through monumental scale installations, like Ai Weiwei’s high-profile life jacket installations in Berlin and Vienna. However, Ostojić and O’Donoghue deal with this in a more subtle way, by using the participation of the audience to discuss the way forward.

Ostojić deals with the phenomenon of Europe as an inaccessible fortress in *Misplaced Women?* by exposing the bureaucratic processes through a simple act of unpacking a suitcase. One of the performance participants, Marta Nitecka Barche, describes how the piece speaks to issues like expired visas, border control and invisibility of migrants:

*Misplaced Women?* does not ask about nationality or political status. It performs and reaffirms the right of individual people to exist and to occupy space as human beings, whatever their identity. It calls attention to their presence, to their present existence; an existence often unrecognised or denied by political and national modes of identification (especially in the case of undocumented immigrants). *Misplaced Women?* lets individuals be present without asking about their place of belonging. [[26]](#footnote-26)

Ostojić is European, but her place of birth prevents her from claiming a legitimate European identity that will allow her to work or travel to what is currently defined as the European Union. Rosi Braidotti argues that people from the Balkans are not yet perceived as ‘good Europeans’[[27]](#footnote-27), since she argues that the passage through a passport office for non-EU Europeans requires many kinds of identification, proof and guarantees of identity. Alexandrova and Lyon highlight the process of justification requested from East European migrants, who need to outline the reasons and explain their decision to cross the EU border[[28]](#footnote-28). By drawing attention to the autobiographical, Ostojić questions the border politics in the EU. As described by Milevska:

Her (Ostojić’s) reflection on gender issues is focused on the economic and political phenomena that accompany the phantasm of European Community that is shared by many Eastern European countries. [ ] the economy of gendering is inevitably the economy of power over the body. [[29]](#footnote-29)

Bern O’Donoghue acknowledges the dangerous of the crossing and how some journeys are very difficult for migrants and refugees. The same journeys though can be pleasant experiences for people with EU passports. This contradiction of privilege of movement that EU citizenship and passport can bring, is explored in depth in the book ‘The Optician of Lampedusa’ by Emma Jane Kirby. Carmine Menna, local optician on the Italian island of [Lampedusa](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/apr/20/lampedusa-refugee-fleeing-libya-boats-italy), his wife and their friends rescued 47 desperate people from the water in October 2013, pulling them aboard their yacht made for ten. To their enduring anguish, they could do nothing to save the 360 who drowned, including a mother, whose body was later discovered, her newborn baby still attached to her by its umbilical cord. Similarly to the case of Menna, O’Donoghue is questioning her own privileged position as a citizen of UK. O’Donoghue asks the participants in ‘Dead Reckoning’ to think about the routes that the migrants are taking and what it means to travel clandestinely, while they are making colourful paper boats. As audience members later reflected in a survey carried by Tate Exchange, they immediately become aware of their privileged position.

Bauman suggests that the world is now characterised by two classes of people: tourist-consumers, those with agency who are free to consume and move; and vagabonds, disposable populations who get stuck and whose lives are often wasted. What separates these two classes is mobility, the relative freedom to move across borders. As Abby Peterson summarises, for the tourists “distances are easily bridged [...] and borders are easily crossed”[[30]](#footnote-30). By way of contrast, when vagabonds attempt to cross borders:

they travel surreptitiously, often illegally, sometimes paying more for the crowded steerage of a stinking unseaworthy boat than others pay for business-class gilded luxuries and are frowned upon, and if unlucky, arrested and promptly deported, when they arrive.[[31]](#footnote-31)

For that reason O’Donoghue’s art installation, [*Dead Reckoning*](http://www.bernodonoghue.com/dead-reckoning/), was done in dialogue with Vicky Squire’s story map, [*Crossing the Med*](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/research/researchcentres/irs/crossingthemed/). The installation was designed to provide opportunities to explore how different creative mediums and tools of interaction can enable a transformation in the ways that people respond to migration. Specifically, they explore the power of creativity to produce dialogue. O’Donoghue uses story-sharing to open up new ways for host communities to relate to people on the move in precarious situations. The installation questions what the academic Lilie Chouliaraki called ‘border spectatorship’.

Chouliaraki argues that humanitarianism today has been reduced to a mere [spectatorship](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/44959/) of the victimhood of others. She argues that we see the emergence of a new, uneasy relationship between the spectators in the countries of the West, and distant sufferers on their television screens. O’Donoghue installation asks the audience to be pro-active politically and to talk about how the EU countries can host refugees.

Both Ostojić and O’Donoghue invite audiences to become more familiar with the stories of people who make risky journeys across the Mediterreanean Sea and via the Balkan route. The audience involvement in these art projects requires audiences to rethink their response to the crisis. Both artists are challenging binary categorisation by refusing to be compliant and to simply watch the crisis. They open the complexity of in-between transitional states, which remain untouched by strict border policies and passport classifications.

**Witnessing The Other**

Ostojić and O’Donoghue use the personal within the violent state discourse on borders. On every level, they both challenge the privilege and entitlement that comes only with an EU citizenship. Their work tells stories about human beings who have found themselves contained by lines on a map that restrict their ability to move and that protect the wealth and privilege of others. The 2013 tragedy at Lampedusa[[32]](#footnote-32), began to raise awareness. But this was just a singlepublic manifestation of an ongoing issue: thousands of migrants die at the European Union’s borders. It is vital for us to remain vigilant and to question these violent borders, as both Ostojić and O’Donoghue are doing in their ongoing projects. Their work bears witness to the untold stories of bodies on the move.

And instead of an end or a comprehensive conclusion, I want to share with the reader the poem “Home” by British Somali poet Warsan Shire. While we still comprehend strategies on how to welcome the migrants and refugees coming to EU, we need to be reminded that human beings are suffering, while we are merely watching:

you have to understand, that no one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land […]

no one leaves home until home is a sweaty voice in your ear saying- leave, run away from me now

I don’t know what I’ve become, but I know that anywhere is safer than here.[[33]](#footnote-33)

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   [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. As most notable: numerous shipwrecks in 2013 near Lampedusa, a small Italian island that is the closest EU island to the coast of Africa and in 2015, the Hungarian governments attempt to stop The Balkan Route by building a razor-wire fence on its border. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid, 13 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. In reaction to recurrent tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea, the EU has adopted a series of measures seeking to improve the protection of migrants trying to reach the borders of the EU by sea, by strengthening. The biggest measure was establishment of a new European Border and Coast Guard with the aim of reinforcing the management and security of the EU's external borders and supporting national border guards. However, human rights activists criticesed this decision, because it meant even more dangereous journeies to avoid the cost guard. Also, EU border politics was criticised after the March 2016 EU-Turkey deal to return all irregular migrants coming to Greece via Turkey. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid, 16 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
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16. . Ibid, 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
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18. .According to Prof Vicky Squire , European Union approach needs to focus on measures to address the ‘root causes’ of migration. Although this has been a focus of recent policy debates, such measures are set to fail where they are rooted in A European Agenda onMigration that remains tied to an agenda of deterring migration to the EU. This is because for people on the move the drivers of migration (war, famine etc) are often more pressing than deterrence. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Big emphasis of the EU conversation about the ‘migration crisis’ has shifted from a humanitarian crisis to a *migration management crisis*. The focus is increasingly on the so-called “mixed flows” of migrants and refugees reaching Europe and on potential terrorists allegedly embedded among boatpeople. So, countries accept only a certain number of refugees from Syria, while refuse entry to ‘migrants’ from other countries. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Vicki, Squire. Interview with [Bern O’Donoghue](https://www.opendemocracy.net/author/bern-o-donoghue). 5,083 boats: a dead reckoning. Last modified: 17 March 2017 <https://www.opendemocracy.net/vicki-squire-bern-o-donoghue/5083-boats-dead-reckoning> [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Their collaboration was shown as part of the project ‘Who are we?’ that was co-produced by Counterpoint Arts and Tate Exchange in April 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Schütz, Anton. Thinking the law with and against Luhmann, Legendreand Agamben, Law and Critique 11(2) pp:107–136. 2000. 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Shahram, Khosravi. *"Illegal" traveller an auto-ethnography of borders.*(New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2010).3. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Achille Mbembe has argued that life in many postcolonial states has been rendered 'disposable' by global capitalism, neo-colonial exploitation, despotic national governments, environmental degradation and borderless, perpetually mutating civil wars. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Tanja, Ostojić. Marta´s Story. Last modified 26 May 2016. <https://misplacedwomen.wordpress.com/2015/06/01/may-festival-aberdeen/> [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
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31. Ibid, 16 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. More than 500 migrants, mostly from Eritrea, Ghana, and Somalia, had boarded a smuggler’s small fishing boat and set out from the coast of Libya toward Europe. After two days at sea, on the third of October 2013, when it was less than half a kilometer off the Lampedusa coastline, the boat encountered engine trouble. They tried to signal for help bysetting fire to a blanket. However, the fire spread and in panic the passengers moved to a safe section of the boat, but the weight on one side capsized it. The people on the deck mostly survived, but those below, including many children, died. The final count of people that died is close to 350. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. The full poem is reprinted in A. Zimet, “No One Leaves Home Unless Home Is the Mouth of a Shark,” Common Dreams, September 4, 2015, commondreams.org/further/2015/09/04/no-one-leaves-home-unless-home-mouth-shark [↑](#footnote-ref-33)