

The Lampedusa Tragedy

Chronicles of Absent and Emerging Ritual Repertoires

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1. Introduction

A tragedy of unprecedented dimensions has been occurring on the borders of 'Fortress Europe' for more than a decade.¹ This tragedy scarcely receives the attention its size and duration demands. Incidents, boats capsizing in the water and shipwrecks, and dramatic rescue operations constantly remind us of this tragedy through their reports in the daily news. The European Schengen Agreement of June 1985 especially – which stipulated open borders within the EU and that only outside borders would have border controls – together with a series of constantly fluctuating political, ideological, humanitarian, and religious crisis, became the occasion for a large and constant flow of refugees from Africa in particular.² This flow is increasing every year and is largely in the hands of human traffickers who, in return for huge sums of money, use a complex network of routes involving all kinds of hubs and probably work closely with European organized crime (the Mafia). There are various numbers in circulation, both with respect to the total number of people who succeed in getting across borders and the number of border deaths. In this contribution we will devote a separate section to the discussion of at least four documentation projects that maintain databases on border deaths. It will suffice for now to briefly report some figures: at the end of last year (2014) the UNHCR made a tally of sea cross-

¹ This contribution is an elaboration of a lecture at the symposium 'The Future of Ritual: Spots and Shapes', on 18 February 2015 in Amsterdam (Protestant Theological University) on the occasion of the transition of the Institute for Ritual and Liturgical Studies from Tilburg to Amsterdam. I would like to thank Dr. Martin Hoondert for his critical comments on an earlier version.

² Cf. the documentation in the article 'Asielzoekers en illegale immigratie op Lampedusa,' in *Wikipedia* NL 10p.

http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asielzoekers_en_illegale_immigratie_op_Lampedusa (accessed 20-10-2014); M. VAN REISEN, M. ESTEFANOS & C. RIJKEN: *The human trafficking cycle. Sinai and beyond* (Oisterwijk 2014) Ch. 7 on Lampedusa, pp. 122-125; this book also provides the relevant legal frameworks such as the *Dublin Regulation*, *Refugee Convention* and *UNHCR Guidelines*; IDEM: *Human trafficking in the Sinai. Refugees between life and death* (Oisterwijk 2014); O. LAMBERT: 'Italy's Lampedusa left in crisis after Arab Spring', www.bbc.co.uk/news/mobile/world-europe-13747558 (accessed 21-1-2015); cf. also in general: NRC *Weekend* (3 January 2015) 4-5; 'Migrantenkerkhof', in *Brabants Dagblad* (19 September 2014) 12-13; 'Vluchtelingenstroom', in *De Volkskrant* (16 September 2014) 4-5; 'Veel doden op zee worden niet geteld', in *Brabants Dagblad* (17 September 2014).

ings for refugees over the whole world. The majority were attempted in the Mediterranean Sea, with 207,000 crossings and 3,419 deaths between 1 January and 8 December.³

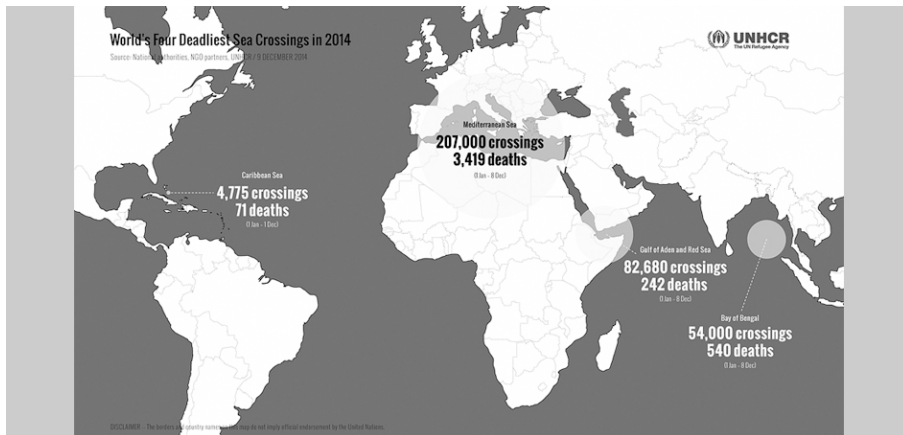


Illustration 1: World's four deadliest sea crossings 2014 (map: UNHCR, Dec. 2014)

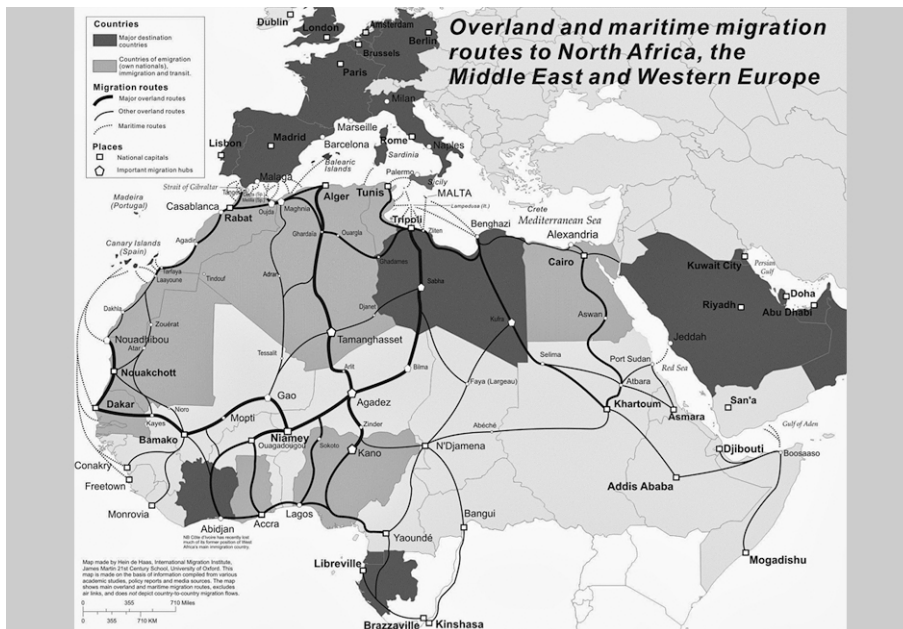


Illustration 2: Overland and maritime migration routes, <http://one-europe.info/the-lampedusa-tragedy-calls-for-a-pan-european-reaction> (accessed 6-03-2014)

³ Cf. website of UNHCR map: <http://tracks.unhcr.org/2014/12/danger-on-the-deep-blue-sea/> (accessed 02-2015).

The 4,000-kilometre journey

This is a common route for Eritreans making the arduous migration to Europe

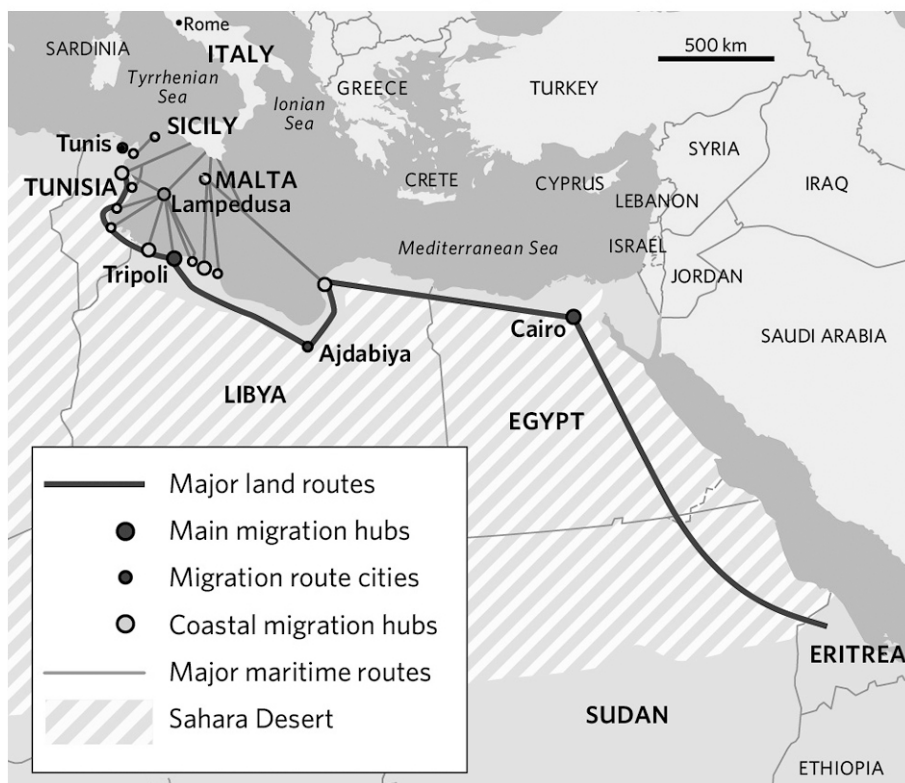


Illustration 3: Common migration route for Eritreans, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-24617419> (accessed 6-03-2015)

The small island of Lampedusa, which belongs to Italy as a municipality of the province of Sicily has, unintentionally, become a dominant link in this flow of refugees. The island, with no more than 5,500 inhabitants is situated in an extremely strategic position at the edge of Fortress Europe, just off the Libyan and Tunisian coast. If the weather is good, sometimes 10 boats and smaller craft arrive per day in the harbor or on the beaches of the island, carrying in total about 1,000 refugees. Here are some more figures to help give us a picture. In 2008 36,000 migrants reached Italy, and 32,000 of those did so via Lampedusa. In January and February 2015 there were even days on which more than 2,000 people arrived in rubber boats from Libya and Syria. Ships and boats are regularly shipwrecked on this route, and bodies washed ashore are a normal sight on Lampedusa. There is a separate detention camp (since 1998) on the island where the refugees are first processed. Constant tension exists between the inhabitants and those in the camp, and in the camp itself. The survivors are impatient: they all want to get going and usually have a very good idea of where

they want to go. Most of the young, well-educated men are on their way to join communities of their compatriots who settled earlier in the large cities of Europe, of which the favorites are cities in Scandinavia, the UK, and Germany. Milan is a favorite destination for those wanting to stay in Italy.

The tragedy of a large number of so-called 'border deaths' is, in essence, a process, a chain of disasters and accidents of varying degrees. Refugee organizations like UNHCR, national and primarily European governments' bodies, political organizations, and academic try to chart the developments around the boat refugees in the Mediterranean Sea area and to keep it up to date. The business of the human traffickers is also the subject of constant attention. But the process of the tragedy is very uneven because it is directly connected with various developments that influence the flow of refugees: constantly changing crises in Africa (after the Arab springs, government crises in Libya and Syria, the rise of the is, the chronic instability in countries like Ethiopia, Somalia, and Eritrea) as well as the political and legal developments within the EU. And, in addition, present in the modern network society is the incalculable influence of narratives and rumors that are passed on on the refugee routes, regulations for taking in refugees and asylum seekers. Some routes are 4,000 kilometers long. In recent years the flow has come primarily from Eritrea, Somalia, and Ethiopia, but the numbers from Iraq, Libya, and Syria are increasing. The routes with vans and boats are largely controlled by Nigerians, Libyans, and Ghanaians. Contributions to the journey to Europe can be as high as 5,000 dollars.

In this contribution I will focus on the Mediterranean Sea border deaths and explore how rituals play a role there, particularly memorial rituals. I have been very interested in disaster ritual as an exponent of ritual dynamics in the public domain for a long time. In an earlier project, with a multidisciplinary team, I researched this ritual repertoire after a disaster or tragedy first in the Netherlands and later internationally.⁴ Memorial rituals continued to be a research topic in a general sense, and our Tilburg research group Ritual in Society recently started looking at ritual practices following atrocities. We submitted an application for an ERC Marie Curie fellowship with a large international group of researchers on that topic.⁵ We are also exploring that theme with the University of Erfurt.

In this contribution I will make some preliminary steps in a research project into ritual practices related to border deaths. In the main I will limit myself to mapping the field, exploring which repertoires are present, as well as – and that is an important lesson in memorial culture in general and disaster ritual in particular – which ritual repertoires are absent, suppressed and discouraged, or

⁴ P. POST, A. NUGTEREN & H.J. ZONDAG: *Rituelen na rampen. Verkenning van een opkomend repertoire* (= Meander 3) (Kampen 2002); P. POST, et al.: *Disaster ritual. Explorations of an emerging ritual repertoire* (= Liturgia condenda 15) (Leuven 2003).

⁵ Application PRACMEM: *Practices of memorialization and the process of social reconstruction after atrocities* (2015).

emerge later ('postponed ritual'⁶). This 'economy' or 'politics' of ritual practices plays a central role in, for example, the work of the cultural geographer Ken Foote, which is still an model I try to follow.⁷ I am concerned with the broad process of ritualization, from the grassroots rituals that are performed immediately after the tragedy to the later phases of commemoration via monuments, including the dynamics of contested rituals and amnesia (intended or unintended forgetting).

With Lampedusa as a symbolic and actual junction I will take stock of rituals in the ongoing tragedy of border deaths. I will use the year 2013 as a gauge. At the end of this contribution I will formulate a few more analytical notions from my explorations. This mapping of the field is based on desk research in which internet sources are used.⁸ The full emphasis lies, as stated, on the descriptive exploration of the terrain. In later publications I will focus more on the ritual dynamics and theoretical and conceptual aspects.

Here I will use an open (working) definition of ritual. For me, ritual is a more or less repeatable sequence of action units that take on a symbolic dimension through formalization, stylization and their situation in place and time. On the one hand, individuals and groups express their ideas and ideals, their mentalities

⁶ After grassroots rituals (cf. P.J. MARGRY & C. SÁNCHEZ-CARRETERO (eds.): *Grassroots memorials. The politics of memorializing traumatic death* (New York / Oxford 2011)) postponed monuments and rituals are also receiving attention now: L. FARO: *Postponed monuments in the Netherlands. Manifestation, context, and meaning* (dissertation Tilburg University 2015) (Tilburg 2015).

⁷ K. FOOTE: *Shadowed ground. America's landscapes of violence and tragedy* (Austin 1997, rev. ed. 2003); cf. IDEM: 'Shadowed ground, sacred place. Reflections on violence, tragedy, memorials and public commemoration rituals', in P. POST, A.L. MOLENDIJK & J. KROESEN (eds.): *Holy ground. Re-inventing ritual space in modern Western culture* (= Liturgia condenda 24) (Leuven etc. 2010) 93-118; for memorial politics, see also MARGRY & SÁNCHEZ-CARRETERO (eds.): *Grassroots memorials*.

⁸ I thus entered the terrain of 'net(h)nography': J. BLOMMAERT & J. DONG: *Ethnographic fieldwork. A beginner's guide* (Bristol 2010); A. MARKHAM & N. BAUM (eds.): *Internet inquiry. Conversations about method* (Los Angeles 2008); J. BURRELL: 'The field site as a network. A strategy for locating ethnographic research,' in *Field methods* 21 (2009) 181-199; A.C. GARCIA, A.I. STANDLEE, J. BECHKOFF & Y. CUI: 'Ethnographic approaches to the Internet and computer-mediated communication', in *Journal of contemporary research* 38/1 (2009) 52-84; M. GUIMAREAS Jr.: 'Doing anthropology in cyberspace. Fieldwork boundaries and social environment', in C. HINE (ed.): *Virtual methods. Issues in social research on the internet* (Oxford 2005) 141-156; C. HINE: *Virtual ethnography* (London 2000); R. KOZINETS: *Netnography. Doing ethnography research online* (London 2010); D. MILLER & D. SLATER: *The internet. An ethnographic approach* (Oxford 2000); L. SADEBECK: 'Internet ethnography. Online and offline,' in *International journal of qualitative methods* 3 (2004) 45-51 (with thanks to my colleague in culture studies Dr. Piia Varis).

and identities through these rituals, on the other hand the ritual actions shape, foster, and transform these ideas, mentalities and identities.⁹

By ritual repertoire I mean rituals that are connected to one another through situation, time, place, actors, or occasions, etc.¹⁰ As we will see, a ritual or ritual repertoire can also refer to a ritual dimension or ritualization of cultural practices. This brings the ‘modes’ of rituality into view that are central in Ronald Grimes theory of rites¹¹ as well as the explorations of cultural practices and repertoires as representations of memorial culture within cultural memory studies.¹² We will come back to this in our analytical remarks below.

Moreover, I will concentrate not on individual rituals, on private devotional practices that are widely present within the framework of this tragedy, such as singing and praying, the use of the Bible and the Qur’an, sacred objects, exorcisms and incantations, amulets, and blessings. Rather, I will focus on memorial repertoires that are collective and situated in the public domain. That concerns both what I simply call disaster ritual (cherishing the spot, grassroots ritual, wakes, and silent marches, memorial services, funerals, monuments) and, more broadly – but not to be strictly distinguished from the former – general memorial rituals.

As we will see, the Lampedusa tragedy is thus far atypical in that it is not linked to a disaster that is connected to a specific moment and event. As we have indicated, it is a chain of disaster moments, namely, shipwrecks, and drownings. This point comes sharply into focus when the great shipwreck of October 2013 suddenly becomes an occasion for disaster and commemoration rituals – or the suppression of them – whereby one is forced to see the tragedy as part of a broader process as well.

A final limitation of this contribution is that I do not discuss the perspective of justice, responsibility, and guilt, of repair and reconciliation that plays such an important role in the social and cultural sciences, and especially in law studies, practical philosophy and ethics, and the interdisciplinary platform of victimology. I will state explicitly here that ritual and cultural practices are a valuable starting point for this approach. Conversely, these practices should also be viewed from these perspectives.¹³

⁹ P. POST: *Voorbij het kerkgebouw. Over een ander sacraal domein* (Heeswijk 2010) 24-25; IDEM: ‘Fields of the sacred,’ in P. POST, A.L. MOLENDIJK & J. KROESEN (eds.): *Sacred places in modern western culture* (Leuven etc. 2011) 18-19; see also: P. POST: ‘Ritual studies’ in *Oxford research encyclopedia of religion* (New York / Oxford 2015) [forthcoming].

¹⁰ POST: *Voorbij het kerkgebouw* 23.

¹¹ R.L. GRIMES: *The craft of ritual studies* (Oxford 2014) passim, see especially 192-193.

¹² A. ERLI & A. NÜNNING (eds.): *A companion to cultural memory studies* (Berlin / New York 2008); IDEM: *Cultural memory studies. An international and interdisciplinary handbook* (= Media and cultural memory 8) (Berlin / New York 2008).

¹³ J. BARSALOU & V. BAXTER: *The urge to remember. The role of memorials in social reconstruction and transitional justice* (= Stabilization and reconstruction series 5, January 2007) (Washington DC 2007).

2. Mapping the field

2.1. Absent ritual

The first thing that strikes one when looking at rituals concerning border deaths is the absence of specific rituals. That seems to have to do primarily with the fact that it is not so much a disaster or tragedy that is linked to a moment but is, as stated, an ongoing tragedy that consists of a constant series of individual catastrophes. There is a suppression of attention for the tragedy on several levels. The term amnesia is used here in studies on commemoration and remembrance culture.¹⁴ A structural presence of, for example, funerary and commemoration rituals on the island of Lampedusa would not only have turned the island into one large cemetery but would also have burdened life there with a continuum of funerary and commemoration rituals.

Since the mid-1990s we have seen increasing shame and protest not only about the continuing tragedy of the border deaths but also about how victims and survivors are treated. The absence of basic funeral rites evokes indignation among the inhabitants as well as elsewhere in Italy and Europe. In addition to this, the whole discussion in Italy and the rest of Europe in general on the flow of refugees is very much politicized.

I will now focus primarily on the year 2013 as a kind of ‘key year for ritual’ because the process of the ongoing tragedy of the border deaths came fully into view through the visit of the new pope and a major shipwreck in October of that year.

2.2. The ‘pilgrimage’ of pope Francis

The inhabitants of Lampedusa seized on the election of the new pope, Pope Francis (13 March 2013), to draw attention to the tragedy that the small island of Lampedusa had unintentionally become the center and symbol of.¹⁵ They repeatedly asked the new pope to come to the island on ‘pilgrimage’ to commemorate the dead, to support the population, and to make the world aware of the forgotten disaster. Indirectly, they thus presented their island as Holy ground. The pope was asked to make ‘a pilgrimage to this shrine of the creation where hope for a tomorrow is reborn for thousands of migrants without a fatherland and without a name in the friendly certainty of today.’¹⁶

¹⁴ A. HUYSSSEN: *Twilight memories. Making time and the culture of amnesia* (London / New York 1995); M. AUGÉ: *Les forms de l’oubli* (Paris 2001); Chr. MEIER: *Das Gebot zu vergessen und die Unabweisbarkeit des Erinnerns. Vom öffentlichen Umgang mit schlimmerer Vergangenheit* (Munich 2010); O. DIMBATH & P. WEHLING (Hrsg.): *Soziologie des Vergessens. Theoretische Zugänge und empirische Forschungsfelder* (Konstanz 2011).

¹⁵ Cf. the description in J. DE VOLDER: *Een wonderbaarlijk tweepausenjaar* (Tiel 2013) 211-235.

¹⁶ So cited by DE VOLDER: *Een wonderbaarlijk tweepausenjaar* 213.

On 8 July 2013 the new pope did indeed visit the island; he went on the requested pilgrimage, to which he devoted a morning. The pope wanted an unpretentious, subdued visit. Only the bishop of Agrigento, the diocese to which Lampedusa belonged, and the mayor of the island accompanied him directly. The morning began with a boat trip from Cala Piscana to the harbour of Lampedusa. The pope sat on a white yacht owned by the Guardia Costiera and was followed in the procession by dozens of boats, a boat procession, in which islanders could register to partake (*In barca al seguito di papa Francesco*). Such boat processions are a traditional procession form in the Mediterranean area. Many coastal towns hold a similar sea procession every year, often with a local statue of the Virgin. The pope threw a garland (yellow/white) into the sea after a short prayer, spoke with a few refugees via interpreters, and went to the sports area of the village Salina for an outdoor mass for about 10,000 people. The altar was set up on a boat, and the lectern was constructed from old boat lumber, the front was decorated with a rudder.

It was the sermon during the celebration that drew the most attention, also in the media worldwide. The pope referred to Islam by pointing out that that day precisely was the beginning of Ramadan and also raised the issue of responsibility for the tragedy of the flow of refugees and deaths. He asserted that we are all responsible – politicians in Italy and in Europe. We cannot escape our responsibility. He thus criticized indifference to this tragedy and cited two Bible passages in this context in which God calls human beings to account: ‘Adam, where are you?’ (Gen. 3:9-12), and ‘Cain, where is your brother?’ (Gen. 4:9).¹⁷

After the mass, which began around 10:00 a.m., the pope traveled back to Rome by plane. The pope’s actions during this pilgrimage were discussed very much, especially in the Italian media. In addition to praise and applause, there was also criticism, particularly from conservative Catholic circles. That had everything to do with the fact that the whole migrant discussion in Italy, as well as more broadly in Europe, is extremely politicized, as we stated above. On the one hand, the pope was praised for his ‘liturgia della liberazione’ while, on the other hand people reproached him for a progressive simplification of the migrant issue (expressed by, among others, the conservative Pius Brotherhood).¹⁸

¹⁷ www.huffingtonpost.it/2013/07/08/papa-francesco-inventa-la-liturgia-della-liberazione_n_3559679.html (accessed 30-10-2014); www.raadvankerken.nl/pagina/2530/paus_franciscus_in_lampedusa (accessed 30-10-2014).

¹⁸ www.katholisches.info/2013/07/17/piusbruderschaft-und-papst-franziskus-lampedusa-war-schrag-progressive-simplifizierung-einer-komplexen-frage (accessed 31-10-2014).



Illustration 4: Eritrean poster distributed via the internet, October 2013 [photo <http://eastafro.com/2013/10/10/thanks-to-the-eritrean-government-for-providing-expenses-to-return-lampedusa-victims-home/> (accessed 6-03-2015)]

2.3. The shipwreck of 3 October 2013

On 3 October 2013 there was a shipwreck near the coast of Lampedusa.¹⁹ An overcrowded boat caught fire and sank almost immediately. Although there was a rescue attempt by the Italian coast guard, the sad tally was 366 dead and 155 survivors. In the chain of boat refugee deaths, this disaster was an occasion to bring the ongoing tragedy into public awareness via the media once again. There was great indignation regarding the mostly young dead from primarily Eritrea and Ethiopia. Governments and politicians felt compelled to express their horror and pity. The Italian government immediately promised that all the deceased would receive a state funeral.²⁰ With the world press present, the prime minister of Italy,

Letta, and the leaders of the EU (Barosso) visited the hangar of the Lampedusa airport where the numbered coffins were lined up in rows.²¹

What happened after that is a striking example of what I call absent ritual. The state funeral never took place – that promise was later toned down to a ‘solemn funeral’. But the reality was heart-rending. The plan to identify all victims was quickly abandoned. The governments came up with various reasons for that. For hygienic reasons, the bodies had to be buried quickly since there was no place to keep the bodies cool. The required DNA research was too complex and especially too expensive. Another problem was the country of origin. Most had fled their home countries and were seen as traitors in those home countries. Eritrea and Ethiopia initially denied that the victims were citizens of their countries; they spoke consistently in official statements of African victims. That could not be maintained and a campaign was started to bring the bodies home, to return them to their families.

¹⁹ See the description in: VAN REISEN, et al: *The human trafficking cycle* 122-125.

²⁰ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-24456058> (accessed 25-02-2015); <http://www.worldcrunch.com/world-affairs/lampedusa-already-forgotten-victims-buried-in-obscurity-after-vows-of-state-funerals/lampedusa-immigrants-giusy-nicolini-funerals-burial/c1s13789/> (accessed 25-02-2015); <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2461672/Lampedusa-boat-tragedy-victims-buried-anonymous-vaults.html> (accessed 25-02-2015); <http://eastafro.com/2013/10/10/thanks-to-the-eritrean-government-for-providing-expenses-to-return-lampedusa-victims-home/> (accessed 25-02-2015).

²¹ Coffins in the hangar at Lampedusa airport; photo: <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/lampedusa-tragedy-anniversary-year-italian-submarine-aids-arrest-16-human-traffickers-1468352> (accessed 6-03-2015).



Illustration 5: Notification of a dead mother [photo: http://assenna.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Helen_andKids-500x281.jpg (accessed 6-03-2015)]

But most family members remained quiet and kept a low profile. A small number were returned to their home countries for burial.²² Complete cooperation on the home front was necessary for DNA identification. The Italian government bluntly chose anonymous and decentralized burials. A few of the deceased were buried from a mosque on Malta. 11 of the 18 children who died received a burial ritual in Mazzarino whereby a few representatives of their people were present (on 20 October). The majority of the rest were buried in Sicily, where a number of larger and smaller cemeteries were selected, and the dead were buried in groups by number, without any planned rituals. The coffins were transported to the cemeteries in open trucks and placed in the ground.

Sometimes, local priests or laypeople took the initiative in putting together improvised funeral rites, such as, for example, in the village Valledolmo on Thursday 17 October 2013.²³ But most of the coffins were buried without any kind of ritual whatsoever.

A memorial service was organized by the Italian government in Agrigento on 21 October in memory of the victims as a kind of concession after calling off the state funeral promised earlier:²⁴ a ceremony without the dead, without the survivors, without the next of kin. This ceremony was a blend of various religious repertoires: Roman Catholic, Orthodox Christian, and Islamic (36.5% of

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRYeXzW8sdM> (accessed 02-2015).

²³ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/18/lampedusa-boat-disaster-victims-state-funeral> (accessed 25-02-2015).

²⁴ There are various photograph and film reports of the ceremony: <http://www.raimoq.com/photo-reportage-memorial-service-for-the-lampadusa-tragedy-in-agrigento/> (accessed 25-02-2015).

the population of Eritrea are Muslims, and 62.9% Orthodox). And there were all kinds of Italian civil rituals such as wreaths and an honor guard composed of the army and police. Various media described the service as a ‘farce’. They pointed not only to the broken promise of a state funeral and to the disposal of the bodies without proper rituals but also to the absence of those directly involved, such as the survivors of the shipwreck and family members. Websites of especially Eritrean communities in Europe were used to call people to attend the ceremony.²⁵ Candle vigils had already been organized everywhere via social media in major European cities in public areas, in squares or shopping centers.²⁶ It was primarily the Eritrean community that was active here. Candle light services were held in Örebro, Jöngköping, Bergen, Lund, Copenhagen, Älmhult, Trondheim, Malmö, Gotenburg, Kassel, Hamburg, Manchester, Toronto, Tel Aviv, Giessen, and many other cities in the UK, Germany, Scandinavia, Israel, the USA, Italy (Milan), France, and Egypt. The meetings that were held between 6:00 and 7:00 p.m. were a mixture of memorial and protest, calling for a different migration policy in the EU. The slogan ‘We are staying!’ was often heard.

And, on a modest scale, there were traditional disaster rituals, such as throwing garlands into the sea as a sign of tribute at the place of the disaster. A strange variant was placing in the water, from a rubber boat, a painting in which a white hand grasped a black hand in an attempt to rescue the black individual from the waves. This tribute was made one year after the disaster by members of the coast guard who had participated in the rescue and salvage operation.²⁷

Immediately after the disaster, some silent marches were held on Lampedusa and elsewhere in Italian cities, with torches and speeches. There was also a great deal of protest with and without ritual dimensions. Banners, flags, and cartoons pointed to the situation in which thousands of people risked their lives to reach Europe.²⁸ And there was the initiative to have the ‘cemetery’ of 50 stranded boats next to the harbor of Lampedusa declared a monument and untouched.

²⁵ Important websites were: www.eritrea-chat.com; www.alenalki.com, www.LaCamomille.com.

²⁶ <http://hmongbot.com/bFpaUWhubENER0E0> (accessed 25-02-2015).

²⁷ www.wsj.com/articles/a-year-after-lampedusa-shipwreck-italian-officials-still-struggle-to-identify-the-victims-1412351197 (accessed 25-02-2015).

²⁸ Cf. cartoon by Carlos Sêco;

photo: www.toonpool.com/cartoons/Tragedy%20in%20Lampedusa_210277 (accessed 6-03-2015);

cartoon by Habib Haddad; photo: www.voxeurop.eu/nl/content/article/4271241-pak-armoede-landen-van-herkomst-aan (accessed 6-03-2015); protest signs at the Lampedusa harbor: ‘If we truly want no deaths at sea, then open a passenger ship line between Libya and Rome’; photo: www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/09/us-italy-migrants-eu-idUSBRE9980UJ20131009 (accessed 6-03-2015); flag with the word ‘Shame’ in the Lampedusa harbour; photo: www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2013/10/04/parish-

2.4. Some disaster ritual

A monument for the border deaths had already been erected five years before the disaster of October 2013: a gate in the tradition of triumph and memorial arches. The monument is one of the initiatives by a group of artists on Lampedusa who wanted to show involvement via their work with the ongoing tragedy of the migrants. They organize expositions, put on theater performances, make films, and compose poetry. The gate is a 2008 work by Mimmo Paladino and is called *Porta di Lampedusa – Porta d'Europa*. The remains of various possessions of migrants are fastened to the ceramic material out of which the gate is fashioned.²⁹

Another well-known element from the repertoire of the memorial ritual after a disaster or tragedy is planting trees in memory of the deceased migrants. In November 2014 the inhabitants of Lampedusa, together with some migrants, planted 40 trees in a nature reserve. The intention was (is?) to plant 366 trees and thus create a *Giardino della memoria per non dimenticare* (so as not to forget). As far I have been able to trace, it has remained at the original 40. This initiative was picked up by various Eritrean media.³⁰

priest-in-%EF%BF%BC%EF%BF%BClampedusa-speaks-of-heartbreak-over-shipwreck-deaths/ (accessed 6-03-2015).

²⁹ www.spiegel.de/international/europe/africans-remembered-a-memorial-for-europe-s-lost-migrants-a-560218.html (accessed 9-1-2014). See also Google depictions via the 'Lampedusa monument'. S. SANTINELLI: 'Lampedusa. The Gate of Europe,' in *One Europe* (24 October 2013) via <http://one-europe.info/lampedusa-the-gate-of-europe> (accessed 21-10-2014); P. STOCKMANS: 'Lampedusa. Van Heuvel van de Schande naar de Poort van Europa,' in *MO mondiaal nieuws* (8 August 2011) via www.mo.be/wereldblog/pieter-stockmans-op-lampedusa/ (accessed 21-10-2014); www.ancorassieme.net/partecipazione/portadilampedusa.htm (accessed 30-10-2014).

³⁰ On planting trees as a memorial act see www.ambienteambienti.com/riflettiamo-sul-sociale/2013/11/news/a-lampedusa-il-giardino-della-memoria-106277.html (accessed 25-02-2015); article 'Italy. 366-Tree Memorial Park for Lampedusa victims inaugurated', in *Eritrea Daily*, via www.eritreadaily.net/News2013/article201311041.htm (accessed 21-1-2015); J. TONNAER: *Bomen voor het leven. Een studie naar een bedendaags collectief herdenkingsritueel voor overleden kankerpatiënten* (dissertation Tilburg University 2010) (= Netherlands studies in ritual and liturgy 11) (Groningen / Tilburg 2010); P. POST: 'The Trees for Life Day in the Netherlands and the ritual reference of pilgrimage', in *Mortality* 10/4 (2005) 251-261; IDEM: 'The "Tree for Life" Day. A new ritual for memorial and reconciliation. Some ritual-liturgical observations on an emerging ritual to commemorate victims of cancer in the Netherlands', in *Studia liturgica* 36 (2006) 94-108; IDEM: 'The pilgrimage to the 'Cancer Forest' on the 'Trees for Life Day' in Flevoland', in P.J. MARGRY (ed.): *Shrines and pilgrimage in the modern world. New itineraries into the sacred* (Amsterdam 2008) 281-297; P. POST: 'De 'Bomen voor het leven'-dag en de rituele referentie van de bedevaart/pilgrimage', in *Jaarboek voor liturgie-onderzoek* 21 (2005) 195-212.

3. Striking an interim balance

In our exploration of the key year of 2013 we saw absent ritual – no burial rituals for most of the victims. We saw traditional rituals after a tragedy or disaster: silent marches and candle vigils in the public space with a mixture of remembrance and protest, meetings, official memorial services, flowers at the spot of the disaster, the planting of trees.

In addition to these well-known rituals, I also came across all kinds of new emerging repertoires, which were often a matter of adding a ritual dimension to or a ritual appropriation of cultural practices. I will now explore those repertoires. I will distinguish between literature and book projects, photo projects, film, video, documentary projects, and documentation projects. What they all have in common is that the makers see and present their projects explicitly as ‘monuments’ to the victims of the migrant flow from Africa.

4. Emerging ritualizations

4.1. Book and literature projects

A striking example of a book project that can be seen as a ritualization and a form of memorial ritual is the *Bibbia e Corano a Lampedusa* project that, as the compilers state, is intended to present ‘a migrant liturgy’.³¹ It was published a year after the October 2013 disaster. The remains of possessions of boat refugees are central in this work, such as underlined passages from the Bible and the Qur’an, prayers from the Coptic Orthodox tradition, love letters. There is also a collection of various texts: sermons, reflections and ponderings, testimonies, and letters. The book is divided into five parts: (1) texts (underlined) from two Bibles found on a sunken boat (8 May 2011); (2) texts from a Qur’an that had been found, (3) a diary of an Ethiopian deacon; (4) a ‘glossary of survival’ of a migrant from Bangladesh, (5) voices and stories from some migrants who arrived in Italy. The compilers of the volume offered a copy of the book to the pope on 11 April 2014, together with a cross made of wood from the migrants’ boats.³²

So-called migrant literature is also intended as a monument to the victims of the trip from Africa to Europe. Authors describe the exodus via a mixture of fiction and non-fiction. A well-known example is *An African Odyssey* by Klaus

³¹ A. MOSCA MONDADORI, A. CACCIATORE, A. TRIULZI (eds.): *Bibbia e Corano a Lampedusa. Il lamento e la lode. Liturgie migranti* (Brescia 2014).

³² <http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/recensioni/dettaglio-articolo/articolo/migranti-migrants-33411/> (accessed 2-03-2015).

Brinkbäumer.³³ In Italy, Milan has become a center for this genre. A prominent representative is the Senegalese refugee Pap Khouma (Dakar 1957), with best-sellers like *Io, venditore di elefanti* (1990), *Nonno Dio e gli spiriti danzanti* (2005), and *Noi italiani neri* (2010).³⁴ This genre has an unmistakable ritual dimension in the sense that it is presented by authors and appropriated by readers as a practice of remembrance and commemoration, as an exponent, in other words, of memorial culture. In the meantime, a great deal of research into this literary representation of remembrance and commemoration has been done, especially in cultural memory studies. Here particularly 'life-writing' comes into view. This perspective of commemoration has been extended into journalism, film, and photography.³⁵ And they are the very same fields that I see returning in commemorative practices with respect to the Lampedusa tragedy.

4.2. Photo, film, video, and documentary projects³⁶

Another tribute paid to the migrants who died and another form of ritualized cultural expression is the photo project 'Dramatic stories of immigration told through objects left behind' (2014) by Marco Pavan.³⁷ He took photographs of various possessions of the refugees – water bottles, a toothbrush, and a tube of toothpaste, a teapot, paper money. They became, as it were, 'sacred objects' in the project, set apart and made special, referring to the absent shipwrecked individuals, relics, just as the relics have been worked into the gate to Europe mentioned above.

Another repertoire with a ritual dimension of remembrance consists of videos and documentary films. Impressive videos have been made from material of refugees themselves,³⁸ but professional film- and documentary makers took the flow of immigrants as points of departure. They often explicitly dedicate their work to the victims of the African exodus. Examples are the documentary

³³ K. BRINKBÄUMER: *Der Traum vom Leben. Eine Afrikanische Odyssee* (Frankfurt aM 2006); cf. www.goethe.de/ins/za/prj/sua/gen/rei/wer/tvl/enindez.htm (accessed 21-10-2014).

³⁴ P. KHOUMA: http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pap_Khouma (accessed 17-10-2014).

³⁵ ERLI & NÜNNING (eds.): *A companion to cultural memory studies*; B. NEUMANN: 'The literary representation of memory', in ERLI & NÜNNING (eds.): *Cultural memory studies* 333-343; M. SAUNDERS: 'Life-writing, cultural memory, and literary studies', *Ibidem* 321-331; A. RIGNEY: 'The dynamics of remembrance. Texts between monumentality and morphing', *Ibidem* 345-353 (on complexity of literature as cultural memory and literature as 'monuments').

³⁶ Cf. B. ZELIZER: 'Journalism's memory work', in ERLI & NÜNNING (eds.): *Cultural memory studies* 379-387; J. RUCHATZ: 'The photograph as externalization and trace', *Ibidem* 367-378; A. ERLI: 'Literature, film, and the mediality of cultural memory', *Ibidem* 389-398.

³⁷ www.wired.com/2014/05/marc-pavan/ (accessed 31-10-2014) 14 photo's.

³⁸ <http://religionresearch.org/closer/2014/10/21/death-at-sea-syrian-migrants-film-their-perilous-voyage-to-europe/> (accessed 28-02-2015).

Closed sea by Andrea Segre and Stefano Liberti (2012, a ZaLab production)³⁹ and documentaries by the Dutch filmmaker Morgan Knibbe. Knibbe was working with material on Lampedusa for his debut film, *Those who feel the fire burning* (2014), on illegal immigrants in southern Europe when the 3 October (2013) disaster occurred.⁴⁰ He made a short film about it called *Schipbreuk* (Shipwreck) (2013). This mini-documentary won the silver Cupid at the film festival of Locarno. The website of the UNHCR still offers a selection of films.⁴¹

4.3. Documentation projects

A final ritualized repertoire is the documenting of the tragedy, as carefully and accurately as possible tracing and determining the facts about the victims. When did they die? How and where did they die? Where did they come from? How old were they? Where are they buried, etc.?

A *List of deaths* has been compiled by United against Racism, a network of international ngos. On 15 January, the list had a total of 18,759 deaths.⁴²

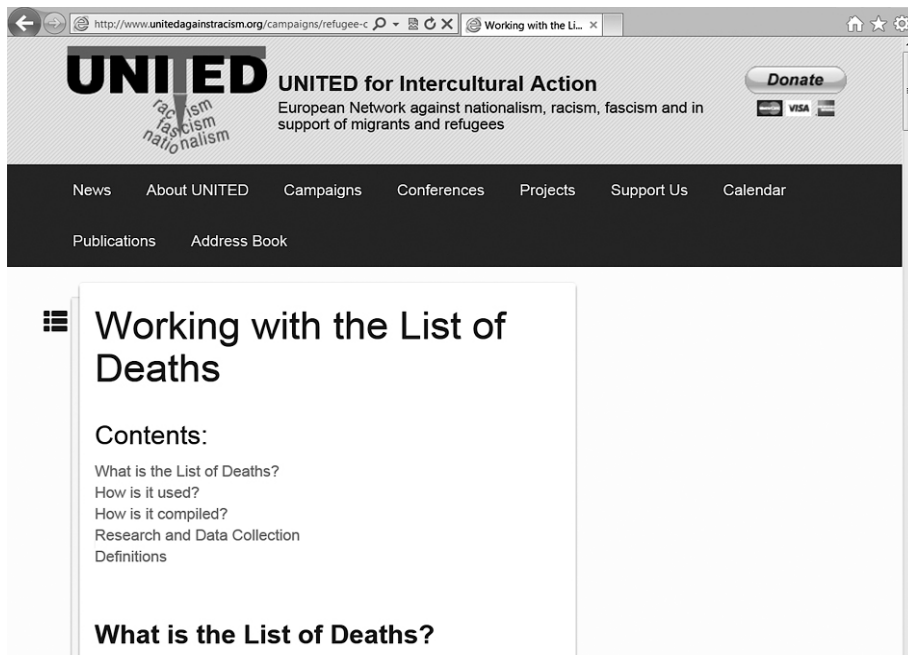


Illustration 6: Opening page of the *List of deaths*

³⁹ www.zalab.org/project-en/14 (accessed 28-02-2015).

⁴⁰ www.idfa.nl/nl/dagkrant/dagkant-archieff/2014/idfa-reports/morgan-knibbe-over-those-who-feel-the-fire-burning.aspx (accessed 28-02-2015).

⁴¹ www.unhcr.nl/fileadmin/user_upload/images/pages/educatief/material/films.pdf (accessed 28-02-2015).

⁴² www.unitedagainstracism.org/pdfs/listofdeaths.pdf (accessed 28-02-2015).

http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/wp-content/uploads/201... Fortress Europe | UNIT... unitedagainstracism... x

List of 18759 documented refugee deaths through Fortress Europe 03/10/2014

Documentation on 09-12-2013 by UNITED
 UNITED for Intercultural Action, European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants and refugees
 Postbus 413 NL-1000 AK Amsterdam phone +31-20-6834778, fax 31-20-6834582, info@unitedagainstracism.org, www.unitedagainstracism.org

found dead	number	name	country of origin	cause of death	source
09/12/13	1	N.N.	Syria	Drowned, after boat of 36 migrants sank off Izmir coast (TR) on way to island Chios (GR)	Adnk/TodZam
09/12/13	1	N.N.	Myanmar	Drowned, after boat of 36 migrants sank off Izmir coast (TR) on way to island Chios (GR)	Adnk/TodZam
09/12/13	1	N.N.	Alghbanstan	Drowned, after boat of 36 migrants sank off Izmir coast (TR) on way to island Chios (GR)	Adnk/TodZam
09/12/13	4	N.N.	unknown	Missing, after boat of 36 migrants sank off Izmir coast (TR) on way to island Chios (GR)	Adnk/TodZam
09/12/13	1	Yemane Gaberanguse (22, man)	Ethrea	Died while trying to cross to England, had not been given medical treatment before leaving	CMS/Wordpress
09/12/13	1	Kalou A.Hassan (43, man)	China	Died due to a delayed response to urgent medical care in refugee centre (D)	Karawane/Wiester
29/11/13	5	N.N. (2 adults, 3 children)	Syria	Drowned, after boat of 14 migrants sank off Turkey in Aegean Sea (TR-GR)	TodZam/NewsD/Xinhua/Adnk/MNS
21/11/13	1	Karhan al Omar (35, man)	Syria	Died of heart attack in refugee camp, chest pain complaints were ignored	MNS
15/11/13	12	N.N. (8 adults, 4 children)	Syria	Drowned, when boat capsized of Lefkada island (GR), believed to be on way to Italy	Guardian/ Xinhua Adnk/CBC/MNS
05/11/13	1	N.N.	Africa	Fell from border fence, trying to cross from Morocco to Spanish enclave city Melilla	MNS/Tabaret
04/11/13	1	Robiel (man)	Ethrea	Found dead in waters at Calais port, after trying to swim to ferry to England on 9th October	CMS/Wordpress
11/10/13	268	N.N. (168 adults, 100 children)	Africa	Drowned, boat sank after being chased and shot at by libanese, emergency call was ignored	Repubblica/ Vki Borderline/Eui/Asy in Noaf/G
11/10/13	12	N.N.	Syria/ Palestine/ Egypt	Drowned, after boat capsized near Egyptian port of Alexandria, 12 drowned	LR/ BBC/ Alj Nu
11/10/13	22	N.N.	Syria/ Palestine/ Egypt	Missing, after boat of 150 capsized near Egyptian port of Alexandria, 12 drowned	LR/ BBC/ Alj Nu
03/10/13	373	N.N.	Africa	Drowned, when boat on way from Libya to Italy caught fire and sank, some 155 rescued (I)	VKI/ NRKG/ ANP / A/ANI/ Presse/ NYTimes/ BBC/
30/09/13	13	N.N. (adult man)	Ethrea/ unknown	Drowned, when being forced to disembark the stranded vessel just off coast of Sicily (I)	Adnk/ Reuters/ TimesM/ EPI/ VK
17/09/13	1	Fadwa Taha Ali (50, woman)	Syria	Shot when boat carrying 200 refugees was shot at by Egyptian navy	AU/ LR
17/09/13	1	Amy Dabool (30, man)	Syria	Shot when boat carrying 200 refugees was shot at by Egyptian navy (EVI)	AU/ LR
16/09/13	12	N.N.	Sub-Saharan Africa	Reportedly missing, boat of 42 capsized off Spanish Ceuta, 30 were rescued	MNS/ EP
10/09/13	6	N.N.	Egypt	Drowned, boat hit sandbank, they believed to have reached shore but water was still deep (I)	AFP/ SPT/ Euronews/ 24News/ MN
10/09/13	1	Moustapha Anaki (31, man)	Morocco	Died, unknown reason in detention centre near Ceuta (I), after which protest erupted, and cannel LR	
04/08/13	3	N.N. (women)	Africa	Died during voyage in rubber dinghy to Europe, bodies were thrown overboard	GlobalPost
in Aug 2013	1	N.N. (man)	India	Suicide, in refugee centre in Harbke (D)	Karawane
in Aug 2013	1	Lamis Abounahs (woman)	Syria	Died on Samos island after being abandoned by trafficker and neglected by Greek authorities	MNS/ Informa/ Roamag
in Aug 2013	1	Uday Abounahs (4, boy)	Syria	Died on Samos island after being abandoned by trafficker and neglected by Greek authorities	MNS/ Informa/ Roamag
in Aug 2013	1	Layan Abounahs (9 months, girl)	Syria	Died on Samos island after being abandoned by trafficker and neglected by Greek authorities	MNS/ Informa/ Roamag
01/08/13	1	N.N.	Morocco	Died, in poor health condition, died despite medical care during rescue operation (E)	ABC
31/07/13	24	N.N. (adults, children)	Iran/Pakistan/Syria/Afghan	Drowned, after boat capsized and sank in Aegean sea (TR), 12 others were saved	TodZam/ Vki Informa/ AD/ GreekReporter/ P
27/07/13	1	Mohammad Hassan (man)	Alghbanstan	Died from lung infection that his detention guards ignored for months (GR)	Wordpress/ Kuwait Times
26/07/13	31	N.N.	West Africa	Drowned when boat capsized, on way to Lampedusa (I) from Libya, 22 others saved	Guardian/ UN/ Reuters/ allAfrica
25/07/13	1	N.N. (25-30, man)	unknown	Drowned, after boat capsized off Greek island Chios (GR), other 46 persons rescued	Xinhua/ Karawane
25/07/13	1	N.N. (25, man)	Syria	Drowned, body found on coast of Kos (GR), assumed from sinking boat with 13 migrants	Xinhua/ GR/ TodZam
25/07/13	1	N.N. (20, woman)	Syria	Drowned, body found on coast of Kos (GR), assumed from sinking boat with 13 migrants	Xinhua/ GR/ TodZam
25/07/13	1	N.N. (40, woman)	Syria	Drowned, body found on coast of Kos (GR), assumed from sinking boat with 13 migrants	Xinhua/ GR/ TodZam
25/07/13	1	N.N. (13, girl)	Syria	Drowned, body found on coast of Kos (GR), assumed from sinking boat with 13 migrants	Xinhua/ GR/ TodZam
25/07/13	1	N.N. (5, boy)	Syria	Drowned, body found on coast of Kos (GR), assumed from sinking boat with 13 migrants	Xinhua/ GR/ TodZam
25/07/13	4	N.N. (8, boys)	unknown	Drowned, body found on coast of Kos (GR), assumed from sinking boat with 13 migrants	Xinhua/ GR/ TodZam

Illustration 7: A screenshot of the list

The Italian journalist Gabriele del Grande keeps his own list via his blog *Fortress Europe*, which totaled 21,439 deaths in January 2015.⁴³

http://fortresseurope.blogspot.nl/2006/02/immigrants-dead... Fortress Europe: For... x

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Fortress Europe

Il blog di Gabriele Del Grande. Sei anni di viaggi nel Mediterraneo lungo i confini dell'Europa. Alla ri storia. La storia che studieranno i nostri figli, quando nei testi di scuola si leggerà che negli anni due d'Italia e a migliaia vennero arrestati e deportati dalle nostre città. Mentre tutti fingevano di non vede

Home La strage La fortezza Reportage Inchieste Video Musica CIE Cara Foto

01 MAY 2014

Fortress Europe. English edition

Illustration 8: Opening page of Gabriele del Grande's *Fortress Europe*

⁴³ <http://fortresseurope.blogspot.nl/> (accessed 28-02-2015).

A third project is *The migrants files* by a pan-European consortium in which journalists and universities have been keeping a list via data journalism and data mining since 2013. It includes the other two projects just mentioned.⁴⁴

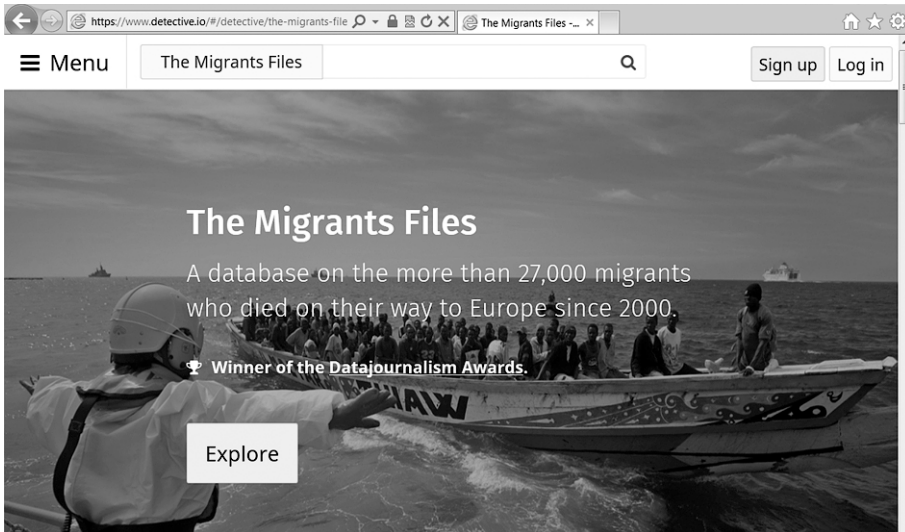


Illustration 9: Opening page of *The migrants files*

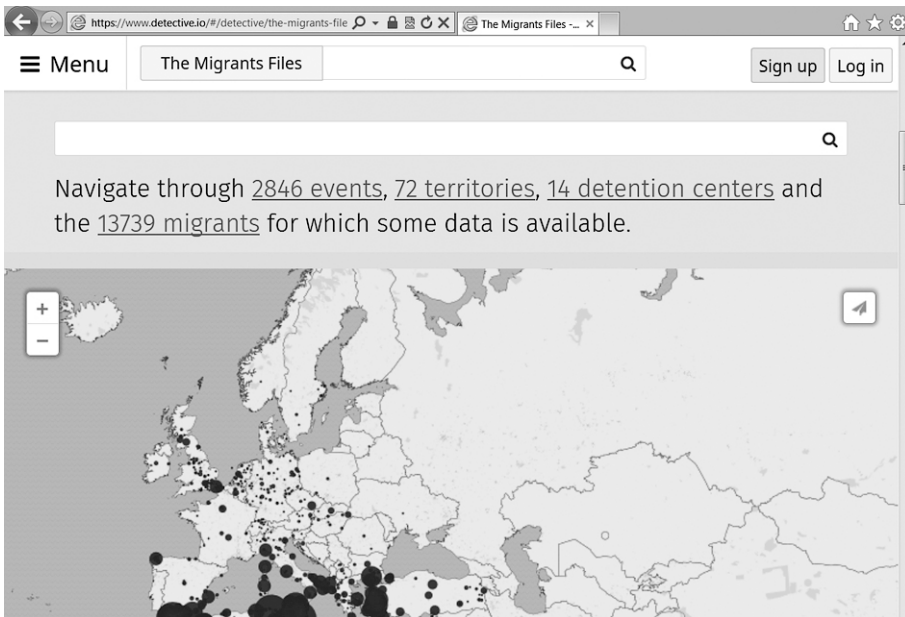


Illustration 10: Menu page of *The migrants files*

⁴⁴ www.detective.io/#/detective/the-migrants-files/ (accessed 28-02-2015).

A fourth project is the border death database, a Dutch project carried out by *vu* University Amsterdam.⁴⁵ Prof. Spijkerboer there is researching migrant law and, as part of his research with a team of 11 people, making an inventory of so-called border deaths between 1990 and 2013. For this project the team tours the borders of Europe in search of data on the deaths, such as death certificates and data in municipal registers. This border death database was published in May 2015.⁴⁶

Spijkerboer relates in interviews that, in addition to being relevant for migration law studies, setting up this database is also a way of saying a final goodbye the dead; they remain nameless and faceless but at least their existence and deaths are noted and set down. Spijkerboer talks about this in an article in the *vu* University newspaper: there were both legal and humanitarian reasons behind Spijkerboer's wish to study border deaths. 'If an airplane explodes over Ukraine, the prime minister demands that we want our people back so that we can say good-bye in a worthy way.' He showed a stone in a field with a number on it: 'Under this number someone is lying who died on the Mediterranean Sea. Most likely, his family doesn't know he lies there.'⁴⁷

Human dignity is the most important factor for him. That is why he argued not only for a thorough investigation in an 'observatorium,' an official body and place where border victims can be documented, but also that border policy be adapted if research shows that another policy will result in fewer border deaths.

That seems to obtain for the other projects as well. The fact that several groups do the same thing in parallel confirms, in my view, the ritual dimension of these projects. This documentation work is strongly ritualized.

This genre of ritualization is part of a long tradition. The Holocaust was commemorated in numerous ways by the careful documentation of the dead. There are countless registers of names, documentation of the deportations, and the monuments and museums that are also documentation projects. A striking example is the digital *joodsmonument.nl* (Jewish monument), a digital monument containing a huge database of all Dutch victims of the Holocaust.⁴⁸ The

⁴⁵ Cf. *De Volkskrant*, *Edmund* supplement (10 January 2015) 36-39 (interview with Tamara Last); <http://rechten.vu.nl/nl/organisatie/bureau/staats-en-bestuursrecht/spijkerboer-t-p/vici> (accessed 1-03-2015).

⁴⁶ www.borderdeaths.org/ (accessed 17-06-2015).

⁴⁷ *Ad valvas* (14 February 2014).

⁴⁸ www.joodsmonument.nl; the monument also has its own community; cf. C. POST: *Memorial culture in a virtual world. The digital monument to the Jewish community in the Netherlands* (= dissertation submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Masters of Cultural History in the Faculty of Humanities 2010); P. POST: 'Living memory tussen Zivielreligiös herdenken, kunst, healing en attractie. Over de meervoudige identiteit van een Holocaustmonument', in *Jaarboek voor liturgieonderzoek / Yearbook for liturgical and ritual studies* 27 (2011) 87-111; C. POST: 'From site to site. The digital monument to the Jewish community in the Netherlands,' in P. POST, W. VAN BEEK & Ph. NEL

project started by Harvard University with respect to the genocide in Rwanda is well known: *Through a glass darkly*.⁴⁹ Data on the victims is found in the database on all monuments in Rwanda.

5. Concluding remarks

I will conclude with a few more analytical remarks that I hope to work out more thoroughly elsewhere. As stated above, the focus here lies on mapping the field.

5.1. Ritual out of place

A first important observation is that the core elements of ritual are pushed out of place, as it were, through the specific setting of the tragedy as an ongoing process. This concerns in particular the idea of place and persons/actors. Even more than is the case in situations of superdiversity, i.e., for example, major European cities where people live in a superdiverse context of nationalities, languages, religions, customs, etc., here we find a fundamental complexity and a diversity that affect the very heart of ritual acts. There is the situation in the home country that continues to have an influence, the family members left behind, the trip over land and sea, people with different backgrounds suddenly traveling together on a life-threatening journey, people of various nationalities, ages, education, religions, customs. Then there is the hub, the island of Lampedusa where the migrants reach the European border dead or alive. But for them this is not their destination: the dead are buried elsewhere, the survivors want to move on as quickly as possible. The flow just happens to the islanders. The memorial rituals that they organize occur largely without the presence of the immigrants in question. And, there is the place the people want to get to, the communities of compatriots and fellow sufferers in the large cities of Europe, especially the UK, Germany, and Scandinavia. The same complexity and diversity is found in persons, the actors in the ritual. These actors have very different aims, interests and priorities. The immigrants themselves, the local population of Lampedusa, the politicians, the legislators, the officials, religions, the families at home, the migrant communities in the European cities: they all have different agendas.

The same complexity and diversity can be found in the groups of immigrants themselves. There is an amalgam of different countries, religions, and customs. The organizers of the trip are often Nigerian or Ghanaian.

(eds.): *Sacred spaces and contested identities. Space and ritual dynamics in Europe and Africa* (Trenton 2014) 345-359; FARO: *Postponed monuments in the Netherlands* 115-171; IDEM: 'Digital monument to the Jewish community in the Netherlands and the Jewish monument community: commemoration and meaning,' in *Thanatos* 3/1 (2014) 69-80.

⁴⁹ www.genocidememorials.cga.harvard.edu/ (accessed 28-02-2015).

Rituals are usually carried out by communities with a certain coherence and shape. These can be stable group cultures with a shared residential area and religion or, rather, ‘affinity groups’ made up of those who find one another in a shared passion or interest.⁵⁰ Groups can also be temporary in nature, but then too there is – although only for a certain time and place – a certain stability to them.⁵¹ That is different in the case of the Lampedusa tragedy. Sometimes, rituals find sufficient foundation qua place and actors. That obtains for memorial repertoires on Lampedusa by the local population and the wakes and gatherings in cities by communities of migrants. And, for some, this also obtains for the memorial service on the national level, as the Agrigento ceremony of 21 October 2013 (although others called the service a ‘farce’ because those who should have formed the community performing the ritual were absent: the victims of the shipwreck, the survivors, next of kin).

The most important coherence comes via the migrant communities in European cities. The social media play an important role here. One could conclude here that the most important possession for migrants is perhaps the cell phone. These phones allow them to keep in touch with home, the human traffickers use them to arrange the complex trip, and the refugees are able to contact their destinations, the communities in Fortress Europe.

5.2. Contested space

But there is more going on here than the complex situation cited above because of the strongly vacillating relations between actors and the place. This is contested space. Through diverging ownership and appropriation of the island by the island inhabitants, migrants in the detention center, Italian politics, European politics with direct influence on border policy, there is continuous tension and contestation regarding each initiative in relation to the flow of refugees. Lampedusa is a classic exponent of contested space whereby ritual practices are both a medium for the contestation as well as its occasion and subject. Conversely, present and absent ritual practices can also be approached as expressions of contested space.⁵²

I will explicitly mention one element here, a contextually historical space and place element. This concerns the historical colonial relationship between Italy and some important countries of origin here: Ethiopia, Somalia, Libya. It is interesting to see that the relation is seldom spoken about but is present in the background. Although Italy was not really a colonial power, it was active in North and Northeast Africa at the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. Libya was conquered between 1911 and 1912. What we now call Somalia was captured by the Italians in 1905 and in 1950 became a un

⁵⁰ Cf. J.P. GEE: *Situated language and learning. A critique of traditional schooling* (= Literacies) (New York 2004) 70-81.

⁵¹ POST: ‘The Trees for Life Day in the Netherlands’.

⁵² See in general: POST, NEL & VAN BEEK (eds.): *Sacred spaces and contested identities*.

trust territory and was governed for another 10 years by Italy as a un mandate. Already in 1882 Italy claimed an area, which is still not precisely defined, in Eritrea as a colony. Ethiopia was made an Italian protectorate (as Abyssinia). Italy attempted later to occupy Ethiopia via military means but lost the Battle of Adoua in 1896. Ethiopia then became independent. Mussolini occupied the country again in 1935/36, and in 1941 the allies captured it. A final colonial possession was the Dodokanese, a group of islands surrounding Rhodes, which was Isole dell'Egeo for the Italians between 1924 and 1947.

It is distressing that precisely Eritrea, Somalia, and Ethiopia as well as Libya are the main players in the migration flow to and via Italy. In political and official pieces and discussions, the past is seldom or never referred to – in contrast to discussions on human rights and the responsibility of countries like Italy. With respect to border controls and rescue operations, echoes of the national and historical reference can be heard in the designation ‘Mare nostrum’ for the operation that was carried out from October 2013 to November 2014.⁵³

5.3. Double dynamics

A third remark concerns the double dynamics with respect to rituals and ritual repertoires that appears from our exploration. There is ritual that spontaneously arises or is organized immediately after the tragedy or later, whether it is absent, concealed, or postponed or suppressed or declared marginal. To a great extent, these dynamics converge with the distinctions regarding agency in the sense of top-down and bottom-up management. One can think here primarily of funerary rituals.

And there are various kinds of ritual emerging that are intended precisely to provide a counterbalance with respect to absent ritual. Here it often concerns ritualizations of cultural practices such as art projects, films and videos, and database documentation projects.

Before I explore the emerging replacement (?) practices, I wish to make one remark in connection with absent rites. The question has been posed from different angles – given the boom in commemoration practices (the so-called ‘memorial boom’) of various kinds and extents (memorial museums, monuments, ceremonies and celebrations, lectures, conferences, etc.) – as to whether there is no presupposition that should be questioned.⁵⁴ Namely, should there

⁵³ www.eurasia-rivista.org/loperazione-mare-nostrum/20335/ (accessed 3-03-2015); http://marenostrumproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/SPNI_MNN_Survey_Report_Jan_15_Final.pdf (accessed 3-03-2015).

⁵⁴ N. HEWITT: “‘Anything but monuments?’ The changing nature of Second World War commemoration in Britain 1945-2000’ (Paper conference *The Re-siting of memory: remembering WW2 in the New Europe*, University of Portsmouth, 12-13 November 1999; with thanks to Tony Walter (Bath)); W. FRIJHOFF: ‘Traumatische herinnering. Bij wijze van inleiding’, in *Leidschrift* 28/3 (2013) 7-24; J. BARSALOU & V. BAXTER: *The urge to remember. The role of memorials in social reconstruction and transitional justice* (= Stabilization and

always be some kind of commemoration after a disaster, a tragedy? I am now talking about commemoration rituals, not just about funerary rites. Many research projects into memorial culture seem to assume that commemoration is a must, that it is always good and that absent commemoration repertoires are both undesirable and inappropriate. But we should ask if we can and must endorse this presupposition in general. With this question we find ourselves in the area of ritual criticism.⁵⁵ Dissenting opinions can be heard from not only psychologists and trauma experts (in some cases forgetting is beneficial and remembering and marking the tragedy not the best action) but also scholars working in the interdisciplinary platform of memorial studies. The undeniable fact that rituals happen after accidents, disasters, and cases of sudden, undeserved death does not mean that rituals should always follow, that it is a 'law', a kind of cultural code. I will leave it at this and simply remark that, with respect to caring for the dead, there does appear to be wide consensus across cultures and time: people care for their dead, that has been a basic Christian virtue for centuries, one of the works of mercy. That caused great friction in the current areas in Africa affected by ebola where not being allowed to touch the dead made traditional care for the dead impossible and led to great frustration.

5.4. Ritualizations under discussion

The emerging ritual patterns we traced demand closer examination. How should we view these ritualizations? Are they 'complete' ritual acts? Or are they forms of ritual transfer?⁵⁶ Can the ritual dimension of cultural practices be connected to the 'fields of the sacred' that I developed as a heuristic tool?⁵⁷ Or should we speak of cultural memory practices and place conceptual reflections more in this field than in ritual studies? Or can we use the concept of appropriation here? Alternatively, can we connect the ritualizations with the modes of ritual that Grimes distinguishes in his theory about ritual (ritualizing, ritualization)?⁵⁸ And then there is also the question of compensation and replacement.

reconstruction series no. 5, Jan. 2007) (Washington, DC 2007). See also the studies on forgetting in our note 14.

⁵⁵ P. POST: 'Ritual criticism. Een actuele verkenning van kritische reflectie ten aanzien van ritueel, met bijzondere aandacht voor e-ritueel en *cyberpilgrimage*', in *Jaarboek voor liturgieonderzoek / Yearbook for liturgical and ritual studies* 29 (2013) 173-199 (open access).

⁵⁶ P. POST: 'Ritual transfer als "re-inventing ritual". Liturgische 'Bewegungen' und rituell-liturgische Referenz', in *Liturgisches Jahrbuch* 58/2-3 (2008) 149-164.

⁵⁷ 'The fields of the sacred' were earlier presented in a number of publications: POST: *Voorbij het kerkgebouw* 114-198; IDEM: 'Fields of the sacred. Reframing identities of sacred places', in POST, MOLENDIJK & KROESEN (eds.): *Sacred places* 13-59.

⁵⁸ Cf. Grimes: *The craft of ritual studies* 192-193; cf. also IDEM: *Reading, writing, and ritualizing. Ritual in fictive, liturgical, and public places* (Washington, DC 2003) esp. 153ss.; T. SWINKELS & P. POST: 'Beginnings in ritual studies according to Ronald Grimes', in *Jaarboek voor liturgie-onderzoek* 19 (2003) 215-238.

Is there a direct relation to absent ritual? Is a vacuum felt that this repertoire is intended to fill? I will, as stated, leave it at raising these questions.

5.5. Relics

Another thing that is striking in the repertoire is the use of ‘relics’. Through the absence of names and faces, of bodies often buried anonymously under a number, people are left with the tangible remains of migrants, objects that represent the migrants before their journey and fate. These objects approach the status of religious relics, as it were, as happens literally in Pavan’s photo project. We see these relics in the gate monument of 2008 and in the Bible and Qur’an book project.

5.6. Lampedusa as heterotopia?

We indicated that Lampedusa has a diffuse position as a place of tragedy. On the one hand, many feel that the island has a special status because of the many deaths. The pope went there on a pilgrimage as if it was holy ground. All kinds of markings confirm this status: a monument, not to forget initiatives such as the commemoration garden. On the other hand, however, there is great restraint against declaring Lampedusa a ‘shrine’.

The same ambivalence can be seen around the concept ‘heterotopia’ coined by Foucault. Particularly in certain theological circles, this concept is also used for places where tragedies and massacres occurred, such as concentration camps. Places where many migrants meet their death are thus explicitly mentioned and included in this. ‘Crisis heterotopias’ and ‘border zones of the dead’ are thus cited outside theological circles.⁵⁹ Five years ago I became caught up in this in a study on sacral places.⁶⁰ I took the inaugural lecture of my colleague Erik Borgman as my starting point.⁶¹ Foucault’s concept of heterotopia is used by some theologians as a ‘topology of God’ in which an approach to places of a different order is central and places of tragedies and massacres are explicitly included. I cited at the time Aurica Nutt’s dissertation in which the places where African refugees wash ashore are called heterotopia with ‘admonishing

⁵⁹ Cf. J. PUGLIESE: ‘Crisis heterotopias and border zones of the dead,’ in *Continuum. Journal of media & culture studies* 23/5 (2009) 663-679.

⁶⁰ POST: *Voorbij het kerkegebouw* 82-111. For Foucault and heterotopia I refer to the literature cited in *Ibidem* 110-111.

⁶¹ E. BORGMAN: *Want de plaats waarop je staat is heilige grond. God als onderzoeksprogramma* (inaugural lecture Tilburg University 2008) (Amsterdam 2008) especially 111ss.; vgl. J. INGE: *A Christian theology of place. Explorations in practical, pastoral and empirical theology* (Hampshire 2003); P. SHELDRAKE: ‘Placing the sacred. Transcendence and the city,’ in *Literature and theology* 21/3 (2007) 243-258; IDEM: *Spaces for the sacred. Place, memory and identity* (London 2001).

power' following Hans-Joachim Sander.⁶² Lampedusa fits that completely. I will quote the passage once more:⁶³

Nun gilt es, zumindest zu auf die Frage einer 'Topologie Gottes' einzugehen. Das Bild eines anwesenden Gottes kann den Schwerpunkt auf die 'Wo-Identität' Gottes legen. Im Anschluss an Michel Foucaults Begriff der 'Heterotopie' entwickelt Hans-Joachim Sander das Konzept einer 'Topologie Gottes. Gott wird an solchen Orten in den Landschaften der eigenen Zeit zu einem prekären Thema, aber an diesen Orten werden zugleich Alternativen zu herrschenden Ordnung der Dingen sichtbar. Sie muten Menschen zu, dem nicht auszuweichen, was sie zu überfordern droht, aber sie geben auch den Mut, neue Wege zu suchen und zu geben.'

Sander zählt solche Heterotopien auf wie 'Auschwitz', 'Srebrenica', 'die spanischen Enklaven von Melilla und Ceuta' und die Anlauforte afrikanischer Flüchtlinge 'an den Stränden der Kanarischen Inseln', die 'Synagogen und Moscheen', die 'muslimisch geprägte Türkei'. Als Beispiel für 'aufbauend-positive Heterotopien' nennt Sander die 'Jakobswallfahrt', 'Autobahnkirchen', oder 'Klöster'.

I have some objections here. Foucault does not, in my view, give any basis for this, at most it would be a derivative use of his concept, a kind of focusing concept. The concept is used here for a theological program that is detached from Foucault's setting for it. Rather than an inherent or 'substantivistic' form of sacred place I see Lampedusa as a 'sacred place' connected to the cited situational dynamics of coming and going immigrants and the inhabitants who stay.

5.7. Memorial ritual?

A next remark is also conceptual and theoretical in nature and scope. It is the question of the extent to which memorial culture is the correct label for the ritual and ritualizations that we explored here. We explored the field from that perspective, but while various practices and repertoires were thus brought into

⁶² H.-J. SANDER: *Einführung in die Gotteslehre* (Darmstadt 2006) 31-37.

⁶³ A. NUTT: *Geschlecht und Leiden. Die feministische Theologie Elizabeth A. Johnsons im Vergleich mit den Theologien David Tracys und Mary Dalys* (dissertation Tilburg University, Tilburg 2008) 212s., also based on a not published paper by Sander read in Leuven 2007: 'Europas Heterotopien. Die Zumutung von Gottes Orten in den Zeichen der Zeit'. Translation: 'It now obtains to take the question at least of a "topology of God". The concept of a present God can lay the emphasis on the "Where identity" of God. Using Michel Foucault's concept of "heterotopia", Hans-Joachim Sander developed the concept of a "topology of God: God becomes a precarious topic at such places in the landscapes of our time, but other alternatives to the prevailing order can be seen at the same time at these places. They ask people not to avoid them, which is in danger of asking too much, but they also give the courage to find and follow new ways." Sander lists such heterotopias as "Auschwitz", "Srebrenica", "the Spanish enclaves of Melilla und Ceuta", and the entry points of African refugees "on the beaches of the Canary Islands", the "synagogues and mosques", the "Islamically stamped Turkey". As examples of "positive building heterotopias", Sander mentions the "pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella", "expressway churches", or "monasteries".'

view, closer examination shows it is also very much a question of very layered practices. There is much more than commemoration going on: anger, protest, grief, solidarity, despair, hope, identities are expressed. And maybe there is an even deeper and more basic tone – that of the abjuration of doom and evil, of healing and coping.⁶⁴ And this raises the question if the memorial ritual is the proper term for these practices. But here as well I will simply just ask the question for now.

5.8. Online - offline

A final brief remark concerns the cyber or online dimension of ritual in the Lampedusa context. The majority of the emerging repertoires that I mapped here have an online dimension. There is a far-reaching interaction between offline and online settings. This has to do first of all with communication about the rituals via blogs, websites, communities.⁶⁵ There is also, as we saw, a great deal of ritual online, the papal visit (the pilgrimage), the memorial service, the tree planting, these rituals can, just like the ritualizations of books, videos and documentaries, be found in cyberspace (cf. *YouTube*). And there is also online ritual, although there is much less of that. Thus the databases cited are only online. I will explore these ideas and questions in further research in progress.

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⁶⁴ Traces of explicit abjuration rites can be found repeatedly. One can think here also of the cited relics like Bibles, Qur'ans, prayer books, mascots, amulets. Rituals of exorcism are also used by human traffickers, who often come from Nigeria and Ghana. The reports of human sacrifices told by surviving eyewitnesses are heart-rending. Performing black magic and voodoo ritual when the sea is rough or the engine cuts out, refugees, often women, are thrown overboard and offered to the spirits of the sea or the devil 'to calm the sea'.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2068606/Human-sacrifices-flung-Italy-bound-boat-voodoo-ritual.html> (accessed 28-02-2015);

<http://www.palermoprotocol.com/index.php/blog/item/1047-people-traffickers-flung-12-human-sacrifices-from-italy-bound-boat-in-voodoo-ritual-to-calm-stormy-seas/1047-people-traffickers-flung-12-human-sacrifices-from-italy-bound-boat-in-voodoo-ritual-to-calm-stormy-seas> (accessed 28-02-2015);

<http://vnnforum.com/showthread.php?t=136350> (accessed 28-02-2015);

see A. Dols García: *Voodoo, witchcraft and human trafficking in Europe* (= New issues in refugee research. Research paper no. 263) (UNHCR Geneva, October 2013).

⁶⁵ Cf. for ritual online / offline interference: P. POST & S. VAN DER BEEK: *Doing ritual criticism in a network society* (in preparation).

