

The economic crisis in Greece and Spain is fuelling a brain drain, finds Marie de Vergès

Provided that they survive the experience – which unfortunately many do not – those attacked by sharks present us with a rather surprising account of what it is to face imminent annihilation in the jaws of a predator. Some describe feeling anger at the creature attacking them – understandable, perhaps, in the circumstances; others describe a feeling of calm verging on acceptance; yet others speak of an overwhelming determination to survive at all costs. This last reaction is perhaps the best response, as it can spur people on to heroic efforts to repel the shark with blows and kicks. And if these are directed at the sensitive part of the shark – the nose, which contains the shark's navigation and sensory organs – then such blows can be successful in persuading the shark to desist. After all, it is thought that we do not taste all that agreeable to sharks, and while they might go to more effort with a succulent seal, a surfer in a wet suit may be a less attractive proposition.

Not that Matthew was wearing a wet suit. He was clad only in the clothes in which he had gone for dinner at the restaurant on Cottesloe Beach, minus his shoes, of course, which he had dropped on the sand before he started to paddle. When he felt the shark brush against him, though, he felt the sleeve of his shirt rip, exposing more flesh to the sea. He was calm enough to know that this was not a good development: an exposed arm was a more tempting target than one that was clothed.

He thought that, at least. Beyond that, his reaction was neither to fight off his attacker nor to spend his remaining seconds on this earth in the contemplation of the life that he had led; in thoughts of his new bride, his gallery, his family, Edinburgh, his flat in India Street, and so on. He thought of none of these, because he lost consciousness. The human mind, faced with its end, can simply blot out the unacceptable; refuse to believe what seems to be the inevitable. Matthew's mind did that. But just before that happened, he opened his eyes wide to the sight of the creature approaching him in the water; to its fin, which was rather floppy,

Unemployment rates continue to break records in the eurozone, and there is little chance of an improvement this year. The crisis in the jobs market across Europe is hitting young people hardest, setting in motion new migratory patterns between Mediterranean countries and the north.

Germany stands out as an exception. Despite sluggish growth in the EU's largest economy, unemployment is steady: good news that won't fall on deaf ears. In the past two years, the net number of people entering Germany rose from 128,000 to 340,000. German businesses are drawing on a fresh source of cheap, qualified labour from Greece and Spain.

After five years in higher education, Páschalis Lampridis, 25, left Greece – and its labour market devastated by recession and austerity – and headed for Frankfurt, the business capital of a country where companies are still producing, investing and, above all, hiring. That was a year ago. Now, working as a computer programmer for the tyre firm Continental, Lampridis refuses to indulge in nostalgia. Obviously, he sometimes dreams of sea and sun. The winter in Frankfurt has been overcast and persistently cold, but, he says, "There was no future for me at home."

The statistics endorse this view. Unemployment is soaring in Greece and Spain, with more than one in four out of work. Youth is bearing the brunt of the downturn, with more than half the active population under 25 jobless. Meanwhile, the German labour market is buoyant. According to figures published by the federal employment agency in February, unemployment is steady at 6.9%.

Tens of thousands of young people from southern Europe have followed the same path as Lampridis. In the first nine months of 2012, 27,000 Spaniards, 26,300 Greeks and almost 10,000 Portuguese moved to Germany. The Germans have already found a name for them: *neue Gastarbeiter* (new guest workers), a throwback to the immigrants who flocked to West Germany in the 1960s, leaving their homes in Turkey and southern Europe to staff the machines of the economic miracle.