

# Boat People

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Delia Sinni

My mother

is not a *boat* person.

The

gentlest sway of

a wave

underfoot

sends her

greenly rushing

for

a vessel to embrace. But some say she belongs to that race. Tell them to turn back. Go on, try to tell her to turn around in a boat. See-Sick-People, hell, tell all the 'boat people' to turn back. Run back inside a burning house. Swim deeper down when you're drowning. That's what you tell

them now. But back then, a small, white, Italian Mary-Jane, *Maria-Gianna*,

stepped on to *terra Australiana* in 1963 from a boat. People waved at her

and smiled as she walked ashore. She was not a *boat* person. But now,

we see a floating mesh of wood and foreign limbs, beaten against

the rocks of life, begetting a collective grimace on the faces

of your shores. Smile and wave at them while

you're safe on *this* shore. Or.

Throw them a raft. No?

They're '*Boat People*'.