

## Ambiguous Loss

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Pauline Boss, who introduced the term into literature, differentiates two basic kinds of ambiguous loss. "In the first type, people are perceived by family members as *physically absent* but psychologically present, because it's unclear whether they are dead or alive. Missing soldiers and kidnapped children illustrate this type of loss in its catastrophic form. More everyday occurrences include losses within divorced and adoptive families, where a parent or child is viewed as absent or missing. In the second type of ambiguous loss, a person is perceived as physically present but psychologically absent. This condition is illustrated in the extreme by people with Alzheimer's disease, addictions, and other chronic mental illnesses" (Boss 2000: 8-9). Research into **irregularized migration** usually addresses the first type of ambiguous loss (De León 2015: 274-279; Mirto et al. 2020). In this context, ambiguous loss refers to the incomplete or uncertain loss of a loved one accompanied by feelings of hope and sadness. Torn between these ambivalent feelings, families and other loved ones, especially when it comes to persons **dissapeared** in migration, wait for news and dread receiving it, often also experiencing administrative agony related to matters of inheritance, adoption of children and other issues (Mirto et al. 2020: 109).

The other type of loss that Boss discusses, when a person is physically present, but psychologically absent, is becoming increasingly visible on the **Balkan route** as well. It is rooted in border violence and the generally difficult living conditions of people on the move, as is the case with Khomeib Ben Khoder, a thirty-two-year-old from Tunisia whom everyone "called Ali". According to the words of activist Nawal Soufi reported by journalist Ivana Perić, the Croatian police intercepted Ali during one of his attempts to cross Croatian territory, "and took off his shoes. It was winter. He was barefooted and they banished him. He walked for hours in the snow, and when he arrived back in Bosnia, doctors concluded that both of his legs should be amputated. From that moment on, he suffered a lot, he spent months by himself, in the migrant camp. He didn't want to talk to anyone. He didn't even eat". Even his mother, who came to Bosnia and Herzegovina to try to convince him to undergo amputation, which in his case was the only way to avoid death, was unsuccessful. Ali did not hear her nor anyone else. Those who knew him say that *he only thought about how he would go to the game again and finally succeed* (see **game**). After months of psychological and physical agony, Ali died on 24 September 2019, in a hospital in Bihać. The official cause of death was gangrene, but in reality he died of **pushback**.

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### Literature

Boss, Pauline. 2000. *Ambiguous Loss. Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

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