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*Social Research* 2016

**Special Issue: Borders and The Politics of Mourning**

*Alexandra Délano and Benjamin Nienass (eds.)*

**Missing Migrants and the Politics of Naming:  
Names Without Bodies, Bodies Without Names**

*Jenny Edkins*

**Introduction**

Practices of tracing, identifying and memorialising missing people or unidentified remains can reveal the forms of personhood that inhabit contemporary politics and how such notions of personhood are challenged. When someone is missing, it is not the abstract, separate, documented individual of state bureaucracy that is sought by family members and friends, but the singular irreplaceable person, embedded in relations (Edkins 2011). There is a disjuncture between the responses of relatives and those of the authorities. The case of missing migrants in particular highlights contested responses to those who move across borders, unauthorised by states or governments. Persons displaced from where they are supposed to be in any case challenge state authorities, whose records of individuals rely on coordinating name, residence, citizenship and date of birth. They call in question a state's control of population and territory. The unidentified bodies of dead migrants can amplify this challenge, and, in addition, highlight the contrast between official responses and the responses of ordinary people in everyday encounters.

Under usual circumstances, a death is officially documented and commemorated according to the practices and traditions of that time and place. A death certificate is issued, recording the fact of the death and its cause, and lodged, in parallel with records of births and marriages, in government archives. The body is buried or cremated and a headstone may be erected on the grave or a page in a memorial volume opened, bearing the name, an inscription and often the dates of birth and death. Local records detail the exact place of burial, so that the grave can be located, even in the absence of a headstone. With a certain amount of persistence, anyone, whether a relative or not, can find out from the records when, where and how someone died and where they are buried. As in life, so in death: name and body are firmly linked and practices of memorialisation and naming go hand in hand.

However, when people go missing after wars, conflicts and terrorist attacks, after state terrorism and disappearances, and after or during migration, particularly undocumented migration or trafficking, name and body can become disconnected. Official records no longer tie birth and death, name and address: state authorities' role in the control of their population—and the authority of the state itself as political form—is challenged. In these cases too, there is an interruption of the everyday processes of death, mourning and commemoration. Memorials and remains can no longer be side-by-side. Moreover, relatives cannot mourn a death. On the contrary, they feel a need to remain hopeful that the missing person may return one fine day. Pauline Boss calls this “ambiguous loss” (Boss 1999). Names without bodies and bodies without names disrupt and challenge the usual practices

and demand something else. Memory and memorialisation are in any case contested, as is well known. Examining what happens where what is remembered is an uncertain and ambiguous loss highlights the politics of mourning, and draws out not only how memory practices can reproduce and reinforce existing forms of authority or, alternatively, challenge them, but also how forms of personhood are connected with particular political forms. Practices that maintain openness can be described as encircling the trauma, and they take place in a form of time I have called trauma time: a time that opposes and destabilises the reinstatement of the linear time of the contemporary nation-state (Edkins 2003). This chapter explores how practices of identification and naming reflect or close down ambiguity: on the one hand there is a pressure for closure—for both relatives and the authorities—and on the other a desire for an openness that reflects the uncertainty and trauma of loss rather than concealing it.

Importantly, there is “a measure of ambiguity even in an expected and timely death” (Boss 1999: 140). Death is not a well-defined event, with a clear border between presence and absence; moreover, it is rarely instantaneous. It is often a process of gradual withdrawal. There were “shades of grey,” Boss notes, describing her father’s death, “nothing was clear” (Boss 1999: 140). Furthermore, when it comes to remembering an irreplaceable person, the person is always more than the formal name can encompass. The memories of a person are multifaceted and diverse too. As Eric Stener Carlson notes in his book *I Remember Julia*:

As with any personality, full of contradictions and complexities, Julia cannot be seen in her entirety. ... Each person who knew Julia saw a different side to her, had different fears for her, held different hopes. Who she was is gone. Who she is now depends on who remembers her (Carlson 1996: 181).

Whilst authorities mark a death under the official name of the deceased and assign a clear date, place and cause with finality, for relatives what has happened may be accepted and contested at the same time: the person lives on in memory, and multiple memories at that. In death, as in life, a person is ultimately unnameable and unknowable, even to themselves.

Given this fundamental ambiguity and uncertainty, memorials that carry the names of the dead and missing—ubiquitous these days—need to be re-examined. They have been challenged by those whose relatives are commemorated, as also have processes of identification. It may seem obvious that bodies should be identified and relatives informed of a death, and that memorials should bear the names of those commemorated, but it is important to think through what naming a body does, politically. Why is there great, sometimes even excessive, attention paid to identification? Does attaching a name to a body or body part produce closure, and if so, what type of closure, and for whom? Or is its main function to reincorporate the individual, as body that no longer disturbs, into the body of the nation-state? To co-opt it into narratives of heroism, sacrifice or national pride? Why does ambiguity and openness seem intolerable when it is in any case perhaps inevitable, and what does this reveal about dominant conceptions of political personhood and the boundaries between death and life, inside and outside? Does contesting naming prevent one

sort of co-option but entail another: the co-option into alternative, oppositional narratives?

The chapter begins by examining what happens to practices of memory when people are missing after wars or terrorist attacks, or after disappearances. Memorialising missing or disappeared people—names without bodies—is contested and their incorporation into national scripts opposed. I then turn to the case of migrant bodies: bodies displaced from their established location, without documentation or recognition by governments, and often, of necessity, unacknowledged by their families. When those who are already missing meet their deaths, they become unidentified decedents—bodies without names—undocumented dead who are doubly disappeared. The responses to these bodies, and the processes and practices of their identification and return, reveal a tension between the care and concern they arouse and the exclusionary politics they reflect. This tension in turn shows how the objectified individual produced by and productive of contemporary politics contrasts with a form of personhood that cannot be counted or accounted for neatly and that challenges current political structures.

### **Names without bodies**

When soldiers are missing in action, there is often first of all an attempt to establish what happened: to enable relatives to be informed, on the one hand, and, on the other, to establish that the person concerned is not a deserter. In some cases, such as the MIAs in Vietnam, extraordinary effort and expense is put into the search for remains to verify death (Hawley 2005). The same diligence and seeming disregard of cost was evident in attempts to identify traces of the missing after 9/11 (Shaler 2005). In contrast, it took a change of regime and campaigns by relatives before the authorities in Argentina began to exhume and identify the disappeared of the Dirty War. In all three of these cases, memorials to the missing, which incorporate names, in lieu of bodies, have generated controversy, ambiguity and contestation between relatives and state authorities. In this section, I discuss these uses of names as stand-ins for missing bodies, and the alternative practices that were evident.

In the UK, military personnel missing in war are memorialised alongside those identified as killed. Their bodies, and information about their fate, belong to the military authorities and they are treated according to the procedures of the time. The bodies of those who died during the First and Second World Wars in the service of Britain were not allowed to be repatriated, but were left buried where they fell, or exhumed to be reinterred alongside each other in cemeteries close to the battlefields.<sup>1</sup> The decision to refuse repatriation was controversial, as was the manner in which the dead and missing were commemorated. An outburst in the House of Commons on 4 May 1920 by Viscount Wolmer exemplifies the anger people felt:

By all means have memorials. Make them out of Government stone if you like. Make them uniform. But you have no right to employ, in making those memorials, the bodies of other people's relatives (House of Commons 1920).

Each body that was recovered intact was given an individual grave, with a headstone carrying the inscription 'A Soldier of the Great War: Known unto God', composed by Rudyard Kipling (Summers 2001: 21). The stone carries a cross, and sometimes the name and badge of the soldier's regiment, where this is known. These stones are a common sight in war cemeteries of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, where they stand in well-kept formal rows, each stone identical, interspersed among the graves of those whose names are known and whose relatives were permitted to add a short personal inscription. A small building where a register of graves can be consulted was built in each cemetery. For Winston Churchill, the purpose of these ranks of uniform stones was that "even if our language, our institutions, and our Empire all have faded from the memory of man, these great stones will still preserve the memory of a common purpose pursued by a great nation in the distant past." The relatives who disagreed were, he said, being called upon to "make only one further sacrifice" (House of Commons 1920: 1971). In other words, they were being asked to sacrifice the bodies of their sons, as well as their lives, in the service of the nation.

The names of the missing—those whose bodies had not been found or identified, and there were 517,773 of them after the First World War—were inscribed on monuments such as the Menin Gate at Ypres and the Thiepval Memorial to the missing of the Somme (Stamp 2007: 101).<sup>2</sup> These memorials did not seem to portray triumphalism but rather were "an embodiment of nothingness" (Winter 1995: 105). For Daniel Sherman, it is the use of names that makes this form of memorialisation distinctive: "names constitute signs of mourning, expressing an individual and communal grief indifferent, if not actively hostile, to the ideology of patriotism and military glory" (Sherman 1998: 443-444). Thomas Laqueur argues that the use of names represents a democratization of death: the practice only became general with the First World War and its conscript armies. It reflected, he argues, both the fact that the soldiers retained their civilian ties and, more importantly, given that previous patriotic symbolism was no longer acceptable, that "a solution is to eschew representation and the production of meaning as far as possible and to resort to a sort of commemorative hyper-nominalism" (Laqueur 1994: 160).

However, there is an ambiguity in the use of names. The objectification inherent in registration and documentation inscribes us all into the records, and places us under the control of government authorities: "the use of names both distinguishes individuals as equal and of value and, at the same time, in a sense reduces each person to bare life" (Edkins 2011: 32).<sup>3</sup> Treated in this way, the bodies and the names are available to be co-opted into the political schemes of others: Churchill's desire for a permanent memorial to a "great nation," for example. On the other hand, when the last post is sounded every day at the Menin Gate, the people there to listen are surrounded not by symbolism of nation, but by the names of other people like them: their predecessors.<sup>4</sup>

The 9/11 National Memorial in New York uses names in a similar way. The names of those killed in the events of September 11, 2001 are cut out of bronze plates

surrounding the reflecting pools and form “an absence in the smooth surface that recalls the absent bodies” (Hess and Herbig 2013: 2212). Their arrangement is determined by three levels of “meaningful adjacencies” that reflect “where victims were, their affiliations (e.g., companies or groups attending a conference together), and their personal relationships” (9/11 Memorial 2014b).<sup>5</sup> As part of a process that also resulted in the “verification” of 80% of the names, next of kin were invited to nominate affinities. The original plan had been for a random arrangement, and it was mainly through the intervention of Edith Lutnick, the executive director of the Cantor Fitzgerald Relief Fund, representing the 658 of their employees who were lost, that the arrangement by affinities was adopted.<sup>6</sup> An algorithm was created to realise the 1,200 requests received for names to be adjacent to other names (Matson 2011; Edelman 2013).

Like those missing in the Somme, the people named in the 9/11 Memorial were not professional soldiers. The 9/11 missing were civilians—including police or fire fighters—caught up in what would later be called a war. Their names would be co-opted as victims who fell before war was even declared, by a president and a federal government determined on military action (Edkins 2003). Those that opposed this co-option, like widow Amber Amundson or the ‘Not In My Name’ campaign, were brushed aside or even vilified (Edkins 2011: 32-33).

The memorialisation of those disappeared in South America under authoritarian military regimes of the 1970s and 1980s is widely discussed in the literature (Jelin 2003; Taylor 2003; Drunen 2010; Hite 2012; Page 2013). In Argentina, it is only now, decades after the events, that memorial parks are being built and sites where interrogations took place being opened as museums. As in the instances discussed so far, the Monument to the Victims of State Terrorism in the *Parque de la Memoria* in Buenos Aires records the names of some 12,000 of those disappeared. According to Brigitte Sion, it is an example where “the state creates a self-indicting memorial to the victims of state-sponsored mass murder in the absence of their bodies” (Sion 2008: vi). The monument carries the names of the “officially recognised” disappeared, arranged in alphabetical order under the date of disappearance. The inscription translates as “The list of people in this monument encompasses the victims of State terrorism, detained-disappeared and murdered, and those who died fighting for the same ideals of justice and equity” (Friedrich 2011: 183).

The inclusion of names was controversial (Page 2013: 162-164). One objection came from the same branch of the Madres of the Plaza de Mayo that had opposed exhumation and identification of the bodies of the disappeared, and for much the same reason: to memorialise the disappeared without a proper acknowledgement of their political struggle or prosecution of those responsible for their deaths was unacceptable (Edkins 2011: 155-174). They threatened to erase all the names, refusing to have their children commemorated on a monument erected by those who had denied them justice. The monumentalisation represented closure (Friedrich 2011: 184).<sup>7</sup>

There are alternatives to this use of names. The most well-known representation of the disappeared in Argentina is not through names but through faces, from the initial protests of the Madres to the use of images of the face in exhibitions and installations many years later (Strejilevich 2010; Druliolle 2009; Hite 2012; Taylor 2003; Brodsky 2006). One of the most moving photographic exhibitions is Gustavo Germano's *Ausencias*. He restages family photographs in the same spot in which they were taken some thirty years ago, this time with the aged (or grown up) survivors in place and a gap for the missing person (Dembroucke 2010a; Bietti 2011). In part it is the everyday innocence of the original images juxtaposed with the yawning void in the present day that makes these images so powerful. Like the images in the New York missing posters that appeared all over Manhattan after 9/11, they speak of the everyday life of the city or country rendered suddenly both vulnerable and exposed. Bodies so naturally present, and carrying not the slightest foretaste of tragedy, are rubbed out, erased. The persistent display of the missing posters on the streets of New York for years afterwards contested official memorials and made the bare life of the city present and political (Edkins 2011: 33-37). The posters juxtaposed relaxed family photographs with ante-mortem details of scars, tattoos and identifying features. Germano's photographs do something similar, emphasising at one and the same time embodiment, attachment, vulnerability and ambiguous loss, and holding on to the disappeared as missing, not dead.

A little studied memorial practice that takes place in Argentina is the insertion of memorial advertisements in the newspaper *Página/12* (Dembroucke 2010b). Called *Recordatorios*, these small announcements are even more reminiscent of the missing posters in New York than Germano's photographs. Their survival is reflective of the continuing political contestation that surrounds the disappearances, as was the much briefer survival of the New York posters. The announcements include pictures, often very bad quality, sometimes resembling ID pictures that would have been used originally as legal evidence or in the initial search for the person (Dembroucke 2010b: 77). They occasionally include details of where and when someone disappeared and ask for information. Unlike the New York posters, they sometimes contain explicit demands: "we don't forgive, we don't forget, we demand justice." (Dembroucke 2010b: 85). But like the New York posters, they present the immediacy of loss, rather than the closure that a name listed on a monument reflects.

This similarity points to the way in which alternative, more political, paths of reflection were available to the Manhattan missing. Those caught up in the events of September 11 were in some sense disappeared as much as the disappeared of South America. Those who piloted the planes might not have known that the bodies of their victims would not be found, but their deaths were, I assume, designed to produce terror. The US authorities spent enormous sums of money in the attempt to provide identifications, but at the same time they incorporated the names in the service of political aims. The 9/11 National Memorial portrays the victims as ordinary, apolitical, and installs their names in a memorial plaza surrounded by towers rebuilt even higher to the glorification of country and capital. The translation from missing person poster to anonymous name, devoid of emotion, is complete in the official

memorialisation that has been chosen in both New York and Buenos Aires. The case is closed. Names are acknowledged and listed: what more could you want?

### **Migrant Bodies**

Someone is only missing or disappeared if they are reported as such: if their family is aware that they are no longer where they are supposed to be, and if relatives are willing and able to report what has happened. In the case of the disappeared in Argentina, reporting disappearance was fraught with danger. In the case of migrants who go missing there may be the same unwillingness to report: the family may not wish to risk their relative's safety by alerting the authorities to their presence, or may well be unaware that the migrant—who is in any case no longer where they are supposed to be—is missing. In this section, I explore what re-attaching names to bodies can mean in the case of migrants missing after 9/11, the displaced after war and conflict, and contemporary migrants lost at sea in the Mediterranean.

It is unlikely that every person who died on September 11 2001 is included in the 9/11 memorial: there is an inherent uncertainty in counting the dead in such an event. The memorial web site states the reverse, simultaneously incorporating those lost into a particular nationalist narrative:

The names of every person who died in the 2001 and 1993 attacks are inscribed into bronze panels edging the Memorial pools, a powerful reminder of the largest loss of life resulting from a foreign attack on American soil and the greatest single loss of rescue personnel in American history (9/11 Memorial 2014a).<sup>8</sup>

There are a number of people whose inclusion is ambiguous. Panel 66 on the South Pool contains names that do not quite fit or that point to a more complicated story: Sneha Anne Philip, who disappeared on 10 September and whose inclusion is controversial; Felicia Dunn-Jones and David Bernard, who died some time after September 11; Mohammad Salman Hamdani, a Muslim police cadet originally treated as a suspect; and two people about whom little seems to be known: Raymond Sanchez and Jose Espinal.

Those who died in the Twin Towers included hundreds who were not supposed to be there in the first place: undocumented workers who had been in the towers at the time of the collapse. These are cases where those who disappear are already missing, displaced from their established location and without documentation or recognition by the authorities: they might be described as the missing missing, or the doubly disappeared (Taylor 2003: 247-248). Many undocumented workers in New York worked as messengers delivering to the World Trade Center, and it seemed that the only memorial to those who were caught in the collapse was their abandoned bicycles. Joel Magallan commented, "They were invisible then, they are invisible now and they will be invisible for ever" (Magallan 2014). Though the thousands of immigrant workers were important contributors to the downtown economy, their existence was unacknowledged; they were off the payroll, with no records (Gonzales 2001). Their names did not appear in the original lists of missing after 9/11, despite



efforts to encourage their relatives to come forward, but thanks to the campaigns of organisations like Asociación Tepeyac, some of these names do appear on the memorial, without place of birth or residence (Edkins 2011: 22-26).<sup>9</sup>

Migration or displacement often takes place in the aftermath of conflict. After the Second World War in Europe, for example, 40 million people were on the move. In the present, some 232 million people live outside their country of birth (Brian and Laczko 2014: 5), and labour migration and refugee movements, including migrants in transit to somewhere else, lead to fractured families and missing people. Boss notes the ambiguity that is an inevitable part of immigrant families. She remembers a childhood marked by the way her family mourned for other family members left behind in Europe. These beloved relatives were alive, but would never be seen again, parted as they were by distance and poverty. Their losses were “never resolved,” and the family “experienced the ambiguity of absence and presence” (Boss 1999: 2). In the immigrant community in the US Midwest that she grew up amongst, “this unnamed loss and the melancholy that never went away” was all around her. Although for Boss, finding a way of resolving the loss that this and other smaller moves in search of work or education produce is important, I am not so sure. There is a politics in a way of life that entails such disruption, and protest may be more appropriate than acceptance. Displacements such as these may not strictly speaking be ‘enforced’ but they are nevertheless required in the contemporary world.

For contemporary migrants, there is not only the loss entailed by separation from family members, but also the risks inherent in movement itself. Frequent deaths take place in the hostile environments people are forced to cross to arrive in Europe and the US: the desert regions of the US-Mexico border or the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>10</sup> These are not the only destinations or routes: similar deaths occur for people trying to reach Australia, Thailand or other parts of Asia and the Pacific, for example (Pugh 2004). In the twenty years from 1988 to 2007, it is estimated that some 7,367 people were dead or missing on maritime routes to the EU from the Middle East and North Africa, with 3,325 of those being in 2006 and 2007 alone (Fargues 2009: 567).<sup>11</sup> The numbers have risen drastically since. In a recent report for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Tara Brian and Frank Laczko highlight the need for accurate data; they report a calculated figure of 3,072 deaths in the Mediterranean between January and September 2014 (Brian and Laczko 2014). In April 2015, the figure of 1,780 deaths was 30 times that in the same period the previous year, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM 2015).

Of course, many of the dead will be unidentified—and remain missing to their families and friends. Spain collects figures for irregular migrants; from 2001 to 2007, 165,236 were recorded as detained and 3,344 as dead and missing (Fargues 2009: 568). In 2007 the Italian Ministry of Interior compiled figures for missing persons in Italy. Of 24,912 people reported missing at December 2011, 15,632 were of foreign nationalities. There were 832 cases of unidentified bodies since 1964. These were buried after an autopsy to establish cause of death, but forensics was not used to collect data for future identification (Nuzzolese 2012). There appear to be no protocols at present for preserving evidence of identity in such cases (Grant 2011).

According to VU University Amsterdam (2015), fewer than half of dead migrants are identified.

Migrant bodies in Lesbos, Greece, are denied the procedures accorded to citizens: although living migrants are subject to intense surveillance, as non-citizens they are ignored when dead (Kovras and Robins 2014). On the Italian island of Lampedusa the position is similar:

While the living that arrive to Lampedusa are instantly engulfed within the governmentally run, and international organization influenced, judicial and medical matrix, from which they can only emerge under the labels of either economic migrants, refugees or expellable persons, the dead that make it to Lampedusa ... are dealt with by local municipalities and people, and, unless identified and repatriated, are granted indefinite leave to remain (Zagaria 2012 cited in Kovras and Robins, 2014: 6).

On a visit to a local cemetery in Lesbos where the remains of immigrants who die during the sea crossing are buried, Iosif Kovras and Simon Robins found a graveyard that was “shocking and disturbing, with bodies covered with earth without a proper grave.” Graves are unmarked, and there is no systematic recording of who was buried where. Identification of bodies is not mandated, and repatriation by families, should they discover what has happened, is difficult if not impossible. Burial depends on benevolence: local authorities have no funds for this purpose (Kovras and Robins 2014: 18).

Kovras and Robins point to “the divergence between the state-led discourse of migration as threat...and the humanitarian response of the people of Lesbos” (Kovras and Robins 2014: 3). A small but effective voluntary group has been set up to help migrants, and to deal with the problem of the dead. Such activism operates through personal contacts in a society where everyone knows everyone else. In 2012 they set up a welcome centre—not a detention facility—to provide hospitality for newly arrived migrants (Kovras and Robins 2014: 24).

### **Bodies without names**

To examine in more depth what happens to unidentified bodies—particularly those of migrants—I turn now to the detail of two cases, both in the UK: the story of José Matada and that of the Morecambe Bay cockle pickers. I trace not only the implications and the politics of attaching names to bodies, but how these practices, at least in these two cases, could be seen to be ambiguous. They reflect not only the impetus by the authorities to re-assert control over populations but the attention paid by local people who encounter these migrant bodies to the stories that led to the migrants’ predicament and the empathy that this appears to elicit.

In the UK, “HM Coroner is responsible for any bodies lying within their district and ... the police carry out investigations to identify the dead on behalf of the coroner,” under the 2009 Coroners Act, which came fully into effect in July 2013:

As part of any case of an unidentified body, it is usually necessary to identify the person in order to find the circumstances of their death, which may then

lead to a criminal case or identify that there are no suspicious circumstances. Even when there are no suspicious circumstances the police and HM Coroner take their responsibility to identify the dead seriously. ... The INTERPOL resolution of course states that each person has a right to be identified. All Interpol members sign up to that (Oliver 2014).

In cases of criminal investigations, identifications to a criminal standard are required. The UK police seem to go to great lengths, and part of this effort is the UK Missing Persons Bureau database, which records around one thousand unidentified remains, most cases going back a number of years or even many decades, and contains photographs of clothing and reconstructions of faces that can be examined by the public. Senior Investigating Officer Mark Oliver gave an example of feet that were found washed up on the East coast. Major incident teams were deployed to collect information on UK missing persons and full DNA profiles were obtained that led to the identification of the feet and the reconciliation of body parts from the UK and the Netherlands (Oliver 2014). This approach seems to be at variance with practices in other parts of Europe. The story of José Matada and the tragedy of the Morecambe Bay cockle pickers exemplify the processes involved and the care that is taken in identification. These two stories also reveal an apparent contradiction between the responses of local people to such events and the supposed antipathy towards immigrants in Britain.

In suburban London, in the early morning of a Sunday in September 2012, two pedestrians reported a body found on the street.<sup>12</sup> Other residents had heard a loud thud and looked out of their windows to see what had happened. Police found Angolan currency and a mobile phone in the pockets, but no identity on the body. They checked, and at the same time that the body had been found a BA flight from Luanda in Angola had passed over on its way to Heathrow airport, opening its undercarriage in preparation for landing. The face, which had been very badly injured, was reconstructed and photographed, as was a distinctive tattoo on the arm. The man was carrying no documents, but DNA and dental records were available, together with the mobile phone and another sim card. Local people put flowers at the spot where the body had been found. They wanted to know why someone would take such a risk—what would make them do such a thing to escape their country. One local is quoted as saying:

No one saw him fall because it was early on a Sunday morning. There was a lot of CID and police and they established the fact he was probably a stowaway. I just felt sorry for the guy. Whatever he was trying to escape from must have been horrendous to do that (Brittan 2012).

Another commented: “Poor chap must have been desperate” (Kelly 2012). The local coroner, Alison Thompson, who has dealt with several similar cases, spoke of the impact on everyone of such a death (Rob Walker 2013).<sup>13</sup>

The UK police authorities went to great lengths to try to identify the body. If it had not been possible, they would have to hand the body to the local authority to arrange a funeral.<sup>14</sup> The phone was locked, but the spare sim card carried the number of a woman in Switzerland called Jessica who recognised the stowaway as

someone her family had employed as a gardener when they were living in South Africa. She was able to talk about him and his family: she had known him well, and in fact their relationship appeared to have been very close. She identified him as José Matada, from Mozambique. A BBC radio programme traces the story (Rob Walker 2013). She had given him money to get a visa—but getting one legally wasn't possible, and he was tricked when he attempted to do so. He then travelled back through South Africa to Angola. Shortly after he had spoken to Jessica on the phone to ask for more money, he boarded the plane for London. His family eventually found out what had happened when they saw details in a local newspaper in Mozambique (Walker 2014).

By that time he had been buried in a London cemetery. Six local Muslims attended his funeral, with the Imam of Hounslow Mosque leading the prayers (Peachey 2013). "We had no clue whatsoever who this person was and where he came from," funeral director Abdul Rahman said, "But as Muslims, it was our duty" (Peachey 2013). His family would have liked him to be buried in his village, next to his relatives: as his mother, Eugenia Ndazwedjua, said, "He should have been buried in our village, next to his father, next to his great-uncles and aunts, and my other two children who died—but we have no money to bring his body back home." They were told it would cost £7,000 (\$11,500) to repatriate José's body (quoted in Walker 2014). His grave in Twickenham carries no marker. If one were to be erected, it would serve other purposes: it would not benefit his family, who wouldn't be able to visit it. They have his personal belongings, their memories, and a few photographs.<sup>15</sup>

This story reflects a disjunction between, on the one hand, the responses of the people in London who witnessed the discovery of the body and responded with concern to the tragic circumstances, alongside the determination of the police to identify the body and find his family, and, on the other hand, the restrictions on people's freedom of movement which meant that, whatever the personal motivations that led to Matada stowing away, he saw no other means to reach Europe. The care and concern—and the attempt to produce a coherent story—that was shown once Matada was dead, contrasts starkly with the lack of compassion in UK and global immigration law, supposedly supported by public opinion, that restricts immigration.<sup>16</sup> Once a body arrives on their doorstep, people feel obliged to trace the missing person's relatives and put a name to the body. But when those bodies are at a distance, they are already missing as far as Europeans are concerned.

A second story reveals similar tensions. In Morecambe Bay on 5 February 2004, 23 Chinese migrants died as they were caught by the tide when working as cocklers, digging for cockles (small edible salt-water clams) in the dangerous sands (Brunskill and Mallett 2011). The work was controlled by gang masters and made huge profits for the seafood industry. Working conditions were appalling, and as elsewhere, the workers could be exploited because of their status as "failed asylum seekers, destitute asylum seekers waiting for Home Office decisions, and migrants who were never known to the immigration authorities" (Pai 2006). They would end up taking these jobs for a variety of reasons: "In some cases they were looking for better-paid jobs to send money home; some moved from job to job because of the casual,

seasonal nature of work demanded by multinational retailers; others were driven out of urban centres into higher-risk occupations by fear of police raids as a result of their vulnerable immigration status” (Pai 2006).

The forty cockle pickers working that night should have been told to return from the sands two hours earlier, as the tides turned, but they became stranded as the tide rose. Some called their families as they realised they were trapped and in danger, others called the emergency services (Pai 2012). Some thirteen survivors made it to shore, with maybe others who avoided the attention of the rescue services.

Only 21 bodies were recovered at the time. A skull was found in 2010, and one body has never been found. Full disaster identification procedures were put in place immediately, a criminal investigation launched, and Interpol DVI forms completed. Survivors were interviewed, but they had little personal information about their co-workers, despite the fact that twenty of the 23 cocklers lost came from the same area of Fujian Province in Southern China (Pai 2006). However, through co-operation with the Chinese Ministry of Public Security, 18 of the 20 victims recovered were identified provisionally by early March, and in April, police teams from the UK visited China and met with all 23 families. The DVI process was “a genuine compassionate service” (Brunskill and Mallett 2011: 221). All bodies were repatriated, and around half a million pounds was raised by the public for the families, enough to pay part of the debts owed to the traffickers who had brought their relatives to the UK (Sudworth 2014). Families were still struggling to pay off the rest when reporter Hsiao-Hung Pai met them eight years later. She found an impoverished community, depleted as many thousands have left to escape poor wages and conditions at home (Pai 2012). People were still leaving in an attempt to find a better income to support their families, despite the Morecambe Bay tragedy.

A plaque commemorates the victims in a memorial garden near the lifeboat station, but there is a call for a more permanent memorial (The Visitor 2014b). In 2014, the remains of the cockle bags and the vehicle the Chinese cocklers had been using emerged from the sands as the tides shifted following severe storms that spring, a poignant reminder of the tragedy (The Visitor 2014a). A permanent memorial, like a headstone on Matada’s grave, would be more for the benefit of people in the UK than the relatives of the cockle pickers. It would perhaps be more likely to assuage their guilt than prompt action to change immigration and labour laws.<sup>17</sup> Giving a name to the bodies could be seen as serving the same purpose: order is restored, and blame shifted from immigration laws to hardship and happenstance.

As with José Matada, it is notable how public sympathy emerges in incidents like these. People are impressed with the dangers others are prepared to countenance in order to provide for their families back home or for their own future. There is recognition of the irreplaceability and vulnerability of persons and the complexity of lives. These same people who express sympathy are part of a general public who supposedly (Philo, Briant and Donald 2013: 35-36) support the increasingly severe immigration controls in the UK, which prohibit those like the cockle-pickers gaining legal work permits and oblige them to work under appalling conditions subject to the

whims of gang-masters with no care for their safety. Erecting memorials or responding to appeals is not the only way of reacting. An alternative would be to call for an amnesty for undocumented workers rather than increasingly stringent enforcement (Casciani 2005). In parallel to calls for mechanisms to hold governments to their responsibilities, either under toughened international law, or through the use of various technologies to track and document ships at risk in the Mediterranean and elsewhere, a shift in public opinion or the stronger expression of existing views could augment domestic pressure for policy change.<sup>18</sup> However, it seems that a process of identification and notification of relatives is sufficient to restore or reconfirm administrative regulation. The missing person or the migrant body is no longer a danger to government control, but is re-incorporated as passive object—an individual with name, place of birth and death—into the political system.

### **Conclusion**

Both names and bodies of the missing can be co-opted into other purposes, but this co-option can be and is contested. Those objecting to the use of name of the fallen and their bodies in mass cemeteries after the wars in Europe were challenging the nationalist narrative of glory and sacrifice, as was widow Amber Amundson's opposition to the use of her husband's name after 9/11. The Madres of the Plaza de Mayo were insistent that memory should focus on lives—and specifically political lives at that, not deaths or disappearances. In the case of the disappeared in Argentina, faces seem more uncompromising than names: names appear on tombstones, in records of births and deaths, whereas faces demand the return alive or at the very least the memory of a life lived. In New York after 9/11 the faces on the posters were eventually replaced by names surrounding reflecting pools—flanked by towers built even taller.

Memorials can be seen as a palliative—incorporating missing, disappeared and displaced people into larger narratives and responding to the symptoms of war, disappearances or migration. Too often, they strengthen the political status quo and reproduce a personhood that takes the form of an abstract, separate, disconnected individual, the individual of neo-liberal economics, represented by an individual moniker. Identification can be seen in the same way.

When undocumented migrants go missing or are caught up in tragic events and their unidentified remains found, it is clearly important that all possible efforts are made to identify them—to reunite body and name—and to notify their families and friends of what has happened. However, a focus on identification and reparations could obscure the larger factors that lead to these people going missing, on their dangerous journeys or during their exploitation as undocumented workers. Like the memorialisation of war dead it can lead to closure—and a continuation of the political formation that led to the problem in the first place. The sympathies aroused by these shocking stories open the possibility of other ways of addressing the issue. Responses to missing migrants' unidentified remains highlight not only the migrant's relation to their grieving family, but the connection between ordinary people who witness what has happened to other ordinary people. The witnesses try to grasp,

person-to-person, what may have impelled those who end up dead on an ordinary suburban street or on the pleasure beaches of Europe to take those risks.

There is a synergy between databases and techniques that allow remains to be identified and those that permit even greater surveillance of unwelcome migrants (Broeders 2009). To use rights language for a moment, as well as a right to be identified and the right of families to know what has happened to their relative, there is also the right, or at least there was, for people to disappear. In the UK at least, it is recognised that adults have the right to leave their families and friends and start a new life without those connections. Organisations helping families trace missing relatives all recognise this right, and will not force people to re-establish contact and certainly not to return to the situation they have chosen to escape. It is their right to choose. Other rules seem to apply to those who are undocumented. They can be detained, deported, and returned to the very persecution they have so recently escaped.

The form of personhood produced by and productive of contemporary political institutions contrasts with a form of personhood that cannot be counted or accounted for neatly or at all, and that challenges current political structures. The identification of the body of an undocumented migrant allows that migrant to be entered as a distinct individual into official records. The government's control over its population is reaffirmed; despite the fact that the migrant shouldn't be there, as a dead body it can be reincorporated in this way. Yet, at the same time, identification and the potential return of the remains to the family reinstate another form of personhood, one that survives physical death: being (or non-being) in relation to other beings. Government administration generally likes to take the person one by one—ruling, for example, when it will and when it will not allow a particular relative to rejoin immigrant family members—but in doing so it has to deny the inevitable relationality of personhood. When an administration identifies the missing it cannot but recognise that relationality at the same time as it asserts its own administrative power and writes the missing migrant into its bureaucracy. The fantasy of the separate neoliberal subject is disturbed, and along with it the political structure that fantasy enables.

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## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Things were different elsewhere; for example, some 70% of US dead were repatriated (Sherman 1998; Laqueur 1994: 162).
- <sup>2</sup> According to records, by 1938 there were 557,520 people buried in named graves, 180,861 buried in unnamed graves, and 336,912 missing bodies (Laqueur 1994: 153-154).
- <sup>3</sup> 'Bare life' is Giorgio Agamben's term (Agamben 1998). Peter Hawkins argues that the Aids quilt is different from other uses of names in that the 'names', and their individual patches, make explicitly political statements (Hawkins 1993: 774). For another interesting discussion of the role of names in memorials, see the discussion of the Bergen-Belsen Memorial Museum in Thaler (2008).
- <sup>4</sup> However, the names at Ypres are arranged according to rank, not democratically.
- <sup>5</sup> On Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington the names are arranged by day of death or disappearance, so those who went missing together remain together on the wall. The missing have a small cross carved before their name; for the dead, the ends of the cross are joined to form a diamond.
- <sup>6</sup> Lutnik's argument was that "family members should not be made to search for their relatives and that the memorial should tell the story itself, without the need for guides, maps, Web sites, interpretive text or smartphone apps" (Dunlap 2011). However, visitors to the site nowadays do have access to digital apps that give biographical information—sometimes detailed, sometimes not—of the names. Using the apps may connect users with those who died, but it disconnects them from the other people at the memorial (Hess and Herbig 2013: 2220). See also Shell (2011).
- <sup>7</sup> For an interesting analysis of the Madres see also Sosa (2011).
- <sup>8</sup> The grammar here is interesting: each person seems to have several names, and the loss of life is seen in singular terms. An episode has a particular scale of 'loss of (singular) life' rather than a particular number of (plural) lives lost.
- <sup>9</sup> Since this was written, some of these details have been added to the database. The records for the five Mexicans listed (Antonio Melendez, Juan Ortega-Campos, Antonio Javier Alvarez, Leobardo Lopez Pascual and Martin Morales

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Zempoaltecati) now show their Mexican place of birth. I am grateful to Alexandra Délano for alerting me to this change.

- <sup>10</sup> There is an extensive literature on US-Mexico border deaths. See, for example, Caminero-Santangelo (2009); Hinkes (2008); Kirchbichler (2010). On attempts at identification, see, for example, Anderson and Parks (2008); Baker and Baker (2008).
- <sup>11</sup> See also Spijkerboer (2012). For a review of strategies and rhetorics of control adopted in Europe, see Carling and Hernández-Carretero (2011).
- <sup>12</sup> Among various newspaper reports see Peter Walker (2013); Topham, Redvers and Morgan-Griffiths (2012).
- <sup>13</sup> A short film, produced, directed and edited by Jim Smith, contains interviews with police, the pathologist and residents involved who make similar comments (Smith 2013). See also <https://www.facebook.com/TheManWhoFellFromTheSky?fref=nf>
- <sup>14</sup> Some 2,900 Welfare or 'Public Health Act' funerals took place in England and Wales in 2009-10 (UK Local Government Association 2011).
- <sup>15</sup> Later unconfirmed reporting, prompted by the death of a stowaway near Heathrow on 19 June 2015 the discovery at the airport of another in a critical condition, noted that "In November 2014, Matada's body was exhumed from an unmarked grave in Twickenham and flown home to his family in Mozambique" (Siddique 2015).
- <sup>16</sup> For the role of the media, see Philo, Briant and Donald (2013).
- <sup>17</sup> As James Young notes, "the motives of memory are never pure," and "expiations of guilt" are present alongside the desire to educate or explain (Young 1993: 2)
- <sup>18</sup> Thomas Spijkerboer, of the Migration Law research programme at VU University Amsterdam (<http://www.rechten.vu.nl/en/research/kooijmans-institute/law-politics-and-justice-in-a-connected-world/migration-law/index.asp>), argues that international law requires states to recognise their humanitarian responsibilities (Spijkerboer 2007). Charles Heller and Lorenzo Pezzani at the Goldsmiths University Forensic Architecture project are working on methods of detecting and recording migrant boats at sea (<http://www.forensic-architecture.org/investigations/forensic-oceanography/>)