

Chapter One – Calais in Constant Crossroads

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Abstract

This chapter traces the turbulent and transient history of Calais. Calais is about footprints – ancient and recent, guarded and transient. It's been traversed and crossed over by the desperate and the routine. Filled with hope and tarnished through violence – it speaks of the conflicted and unsettled nature of the border and border tensions. Calais-Dover has practical significance as a major route in and out of Britain for people and goods. The constant sprouting of refugee camps in Calais and the invocation to act by both charities and ult-right anti-immigrant groups to the growing numbers in Calais demonstrated a Britain wary of people sneaking into its borders. Calais' border politics is rooted in a historicized spatiality dating to the premodern era where it was a s a gateway for refugees in search of sanctuary in Britain. Equally, it retains a violent past of expulsion and de-racination

Introduction

This book is about the constant eruptions produced by the so-called 'migrant' crisis at the Anglo-French borders of Calais. It's about the stories of Jungles that sprout in the White suburbia. Jungles which seem to be virulent in reducing carefully planned suburbs into swamp lands. Order into chaos. The sort of turbulence which warrants armed intervention and demolition. These refugee camps labelled the Jungle are wholly inconvenient for they turn neighbouring states into turf wars with blazing accusations of the other not being resolute in attending to the 'migrant' problem. These constant skirmishes, name calling and cries of irresponsibility is part of the 'madness' that the Jungle produces, beyond the madness the Jungle inflicts on its own inhabitants. The constant resurgence of the Jungle and the quest to make these makeshift settlements disappear become recurring tropes in modern and contemporary history of Calais, invoking a spiral of violence on the Other and against the Other.

The 20-mile stretch between Calais and Dover is the narrowest point in the English Channel between Great Britain and the European mainland. Calais-Dover has practical significance as a major route in and out of Britain for people and goods (Readman 2014). With the opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1994 Calais became the major transit hub with migrants congregating there in the hope that they could hide on trucks heading across to Britain to breakthrough border controls. The imposing of juxtaposed controls¹ means that Calais is variously represented as a 'bottleneck, barrier, border and breakthrough point' (Oxford Migration Observatory 2014). **[Insert Figure 1.1 here] Figure 1.1 TGV TMST n ° 3011/2**

at the exit of the Channel Tunnel at Coquelles, French side. 2014. Billy69150. CC BY-SA 4.0 International license]

The movement of the refugees in Calais and their treatment reflects Britain's reticent attitude to EU migrant and asylum policies where it has been neither 'wholly in or wholly out', signing up to a little over half of the measures introduced by the EU such that engagement has been 'conditional and differential' (Geddes 2005: 732) with a particular emphasis on security and border controls at the external frontiers of Britain. In July 2002, UK and France reached an agreement to close the Sangatte refugee camp as it was attracting migrants and had become a constant source of contention between the two countries. With the closure of Sangatte, asylum seekers and migrants in Calais became relatively low profile. However, growing numbers fleeing Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan set up informal camps known as 'the Jungle' which attracted media attention in 2009, as did the subsequent demolition of the camps. The Calais crisis came back into media scrutiny due to bigger events in the Mediterranean, where unprecedented numbers of refugees were risking their lives in overcrowded and rickety boats. On 2 September 2015 the tragic image of Alan Kurdi dead on the beach ignited further interest in the refugee and humanitarian crisis and this led to a surge in photo coverage of both the Mediterranean and Calais crisis. The forced migration in Syria and parts of Africa converged with anxieties about opening up the UK to new members such as Romania and Bulgaria between 2010 and 2016.

The irregular migration into the EU during the Balkans conflagration in the late 1990s was a precursor of what was to come two decades later. In 2014 political instability around the world escalated prompting the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to warn that the world was facing its biggest 'forced migration crisis' since the Second World War' (Gower & Smith 2015). The scale of displacement has required more co-ordination between states than before (Papademetriou, 2015). Ongoing instability across its borders with the Middle East and North Africa as well as Sub-Saharan Africa and Afghanistan have contributed to Europe's 'migrant crisis' reaching a crescendo in 2015. The crisis had been building since the 'Arab Spring' in 2011, but in 2015 Frontex estimated that twice as many asylum seekers and migrants or some 859,000 people had arrived on Greek and Italian shores in the first 11 months of the year than in the previous five years combined, culminating to 4,000 arrivals a day at one point in the Greek islands with 3695 dead or missing while crossing the Mediterranean in 2015 (cited in Papademetriou, 2015).

Contemporary refugee crisis – Calais and its significance

The crisis in Calais and the Mediterranean became a testing ground for UK in terms of its humanitarian response particularly the provision of sanctuary. In the case of Calais, it became a long running battle with the French with both sides claiming each other's inadequacy in managing the crisis. The constant sprouting of refugee camps in Calais and the invocation to act by both charities and ultra-right anti-immigrant groups to the growing numbers in Calais

demonstrated a Britain wary of people sneaking into its borders. The inhabitants of the camps were often portrayed by ministers and right wing media as economic opportunist seeking to take advantage of the welfare system in the UK (Howarth and Ibrahim, 2012). Equally, shipwrecks in the Mediterranean were seen as people being trafficked or being irresponsible in taking huge risks to cross the seas through unsafe passage where there was risks of drowning. The response to the Mediterranean demonstrated Britain's existing arrangement to externalise border controls, managing the influx and in processing of applications. It outsourced these to third or other European countries such as Turkey and Greece and in vetting refugees in the UN camps in Syria rather than in Europe. The slippage in discourse between the refugee and the migrant also meant that the 'displaced' were often pressed through the lens of the suspect body where humanitarianism ideal can be suspended or denied.

In contrast to the crisis in the Mediterranean, Calais has always been a point of contention between the British and French. By the late 1990s, Calais had attracted growing political, public and media attention as growing numbers of migrants and refugees fleeing from the Balkan Wars and conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq congregated (Geddes, 2005; Rygiel, 2011). In 1999, the French government concerned by the visible signs of humanitarian distress in which thousands of refugees, including pregnant women and children, were forced to sleep on the streets and in the parks of Calais and neighbouring towns asked the Red Cross to open a refugee camp in Sangatte, a giant warehouse half a mile from the entrance to the Tunnel (Fassin, 2012). Originally intended to house 600 people, by 2002 over 2000 people were seeking nightly shelter in increasing squalor as the Red Cross struggled to manage overcrowding. By 2002, companies had spent millions shoring up defences around key railway stations, Eurotunnel and the port and greater running costs of more security guards.² The companies began to lobby both governments to close Sangatte, claiming that it served as a magnet for illegal migrants. Only after they had taken their campaign to the media and rumors had begun to circulate that Al-Qaeda had infiltrated Sangatte and posed an imminent security threat did the French and British governments agree to close the shelter (Hills, 2002). The interweaving of a security threat with a humanitarian crisis in Calais demarcated the notion of refuge as a symbol of danger and a fault line in British immigration policies. Calais became the 'frontline' in the fight against migration (Keyes, 2004) and in securing Britain from an 'invasion' of migrants.

Between 2002 and 2015, the French authorities allowed humanitarian relief in the form of basic medical care, food and blankets to be provided by local charities, Doctors of the World and the Catholic Church. It nevertheless imposed a de facto ban on any semi-permanent shelters in Calais on the grounds that it attracted illegal migrants. The migrants and refugees, out of necessity, set up informal shelters and tents which gradually grew into sprawling camps, labelled the 'Jungle' and which were periodically demolished by the French authorities often citing 'humanitarian' reasons. Notably, the British and French governments have consistently labelled this transient population at Calais as 'illegal migrants' rather than refugees to avoid having to provide for them or to process requests for asylum. The acute nature of the situation resulted in the UN opening its first-ever office to deal with the humanitarian crisis of forced displacement in 2009.

Britain has over time focused on securing the border at Calais and the Channel Tunnel where an estimated 1% of all the refugees in the EU had congregated. It prompted the government to

announce it would enhance security at the access points to the Channel Tunnel by spending millions of pounds (Hall and Allen, 2015) including the installation of razor wire around the access points to the Channel Tunnel and the roads leading to it. UK's hard line response underscored the need assuage hostile anti-immigration attitudes in the Britain. Calais is a repository of a long convoluted history of entanglement with passage, invasion, closure and border control.

Calais has a long history of creating refugees through expulsion and as a gateway for those seeking sanctuary in Britain. Calais is about footprints – ancient and recent, guarded and transient. It's been traversed and crossed over by the desperate and the routine. Filled with hope and tarnished through violence – it speaks of the conflicted and unsettled nature of the border and border tensions. Tensions that never resolve yet are constantly pulled into the spotlight by bodies which are exiated from its guarded boundary. It speaks of new forms of vigilance and sordid discoveries of cold immobile bodies concealed in container vehicles. Frozen with desire for new life yet inscribed through their flight in defying the futility of their label as the economically dispossessed. Seen as opportunistic bodies which will impregnate and leach the benefit system of the UK, Calais throws up a body politic of the 'unwanted'.

This book is an attempt to assemble and disassemble Calais through the lens of the Jungle. These refugee camps dubbed the Jungle in everyday discourse and media terminology are symbolic of the enormity of the refugee crisis that Europe faces today. The metaphor of the Jungle is emblematic. It captures the 'opportunistic migrant' through a discourse of reductionism. Reduction into the animalistic. Reduction into the uncouth. Reduction into the inhumane. The Jungle is not one you cultivate for it has the potential to grow and take over. The association of the 'migrant' with the untamed Jungle is not incidental but becomes ideologically and instrumentally vital in rationalising its decimation. This book is an attempt to look into the Jungle and relocate its humanity. This book is an attempt to relocate the human in the border politics of depletion. And death.

Calais and its Situated Geography

The politics of the Anglo-French borderlands have been shaped over centuries by its cartography. Positioned at the narrowest point of the English Channel and emerging as a natural crossing point of the sea barrier, the geo-location of Calais is both about its natural defence against invasion (i.e. surrounded by sea) and mobility as a route for passage. Its dual renderings of defence and mobility is captured by William Shakespeare's John of Gaunt who says of Britain;

*'This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war ...
This precious stone set in the silver sea
Which serves in the office of a wall
Or as a moat defensive to a house*

Against the envy of less happier lands' (Richard II)

The dominant and foremost notion of the Channel as a 'moat defensive' has been constantly invoked through time. From the sinking of the Spanish Armada in 1588 to Hitler's aborted plans to invade provides a leitmotif of Calais. This sense of UK as an Island nation and its insularity located through its geography is a key part of the British imaginary and in tandem there has been resistance to acknowledging Calais as a tunnel on the sea-bed which would inextricably link it spatially with the rest of continent into an European bloc for more than a century (Darian-Smith, 1999). Even after the opening of Eurotunnel in May 1994, Britain has remained deeply conflicted and tightly welded to the neoliberal commitment to trade yet wary of anything that might compromise or be seen by the public to compromise defense and sovereignty through closer links with Europe.

Another primary imagining of the Channel beyond the defensive moat is that of a 'roadway' (Wallace, 2008). The idea of Calais as a 'gateway' to Europe dates from the Middle Ages and specifically the capture of Calais by Edward III after an 11 month siege from 1346-1347 with the intention of using the town as a safe port of disembarkation for future invasions (Lambert, 2011, p. 245). The Kingdom of England held Calais till 1558 and when the French recaptured Calais, the loss of the gateway in France made the English retreat back across the Channel turning. The British nation turned inwards re-constructing nationhood around the insularity and exceptionalism of an island nation, and outward beyond Europe to the sea lanes and maritime empire that later supported colonization (Wallace, 2008; Readman, 2014). In the social imaginary of Englishmen like William Hogarth, Calais became a place 'where the English (where England) used to be' and 'where the foreign begins' (Wallace, 2008, p. 2) or as popularised by British MP, George Wigg in 1949, it was 'where the wog begins' (Hansard 1949). 'Wog' being a an offensive racial slur to refer to Black, Middle Eastern, South Asian or Southeast Asian peoples as well as Jews and Israelis.

The retreat in 1558 nevertheless was not total. After the Napoleonic wars, lace workers from Nottingham set up businesses in Calais so they could sell directly to the lucrative European market for luxury goods and bypass English customs duties on exports. Their survival and proved precarious after the 1848 revolution with the surge of French nationalism. Unable to return to Britain during recession, many of the workers fled to the colonies in particular Australia (Bensimon, 2016; Alderman, 2017).³

The oppositional notions of 'moat defensive' and 'gateway', were again cast into sharp relief in the 20th century. In the First World War, the ports of Calais and Dunkirk facilitated the offloading of men and munitions from Britain for the frontline mainly by Chinese, Egyptians, Indians and South Africans brought in from the colonies as cheap labour to free up British soldiers for fighting (Griffin, 1976).⁴ Calais remained a source of anxiety in Second World War with the German High Command fearing invasion near the port. After world war II and with the loss of empire, Britain turned back to Europe for trade and sought re-integration with the emerging economic trading block of Western Europe. Twenty years after the erection of the Atlantic Wall, the politics of Europe had shifted from conflict to cooperation, Britain having lost its colonies was keen on cultivating new markets and it placed its priority on minimizing

the barriers to crossing. A channel tunnel connecting Calais and Folkestone at this juncture was crafted as a symbol of co-operation and interconnectedness, seeking to negate the natural barrier of the sea. Since the opening of Eurotunnel, Calais has become one of the busiest transit hubs in the world (see Schuster, 2003). Nord-Pas-De-Calais has over time been adversely affected by globalization, the collapse of the lace industry as well as the rise of National Front and resurgence of xenophobia particularly with its re-invention as a commercial transit hub (Sparks, 2015; Alderman, 2017).

A historicized spatiality: the figure of the refugee in Calais

The figure of the refugee is a deeply rooted figure in the history of Calais dating from pre-modern times. Not only has Calais been a gateway to sanctuary in England (or vice versa), it has also been a space in which the refugee has been created through periodic expulsions. King Edward III having captured the town in 1347 adopted a policy of colonization and repopulation or 'deracination' in which existing residents were expelled. In their place 'uncontaminated Englishness', or 'purs Engles' were brought in (Wallace, 2008: 39) and for six generations Calais was an "English town" in France (Rose, 2008). The French retook Calais in 1558 and expelled the Huguenots who had worked for the English draining ditches and marshes. This expulsion was a precursor to their later purge from the rest of northern France after 1685 when Protestantism was declared illegal. The purge created England's first 'modern' refugees (Gwynn, 1985; Hintermaier, 2000) and the term *réfugié* meaning 'to take shelter, protect' entered into the English language as refugee in the 1680s was used to specifically refer to the Huguenots. It was not until the First World War that the term expanded in scope to mean 'one fleeing' (Online Etymology Dictionary).

During the 18th and 19th centuries Calais continued to be imagined and used as a gateway to sanctuary in Britain particularly during the wave of revolutions, nationalism and xenophobia that periodically convulsed Europe.⁵ Refugees particularly in the Victorian era were attracted by a popular imaginery of Britain as a space of religious and political toleration where public opinion would not countenance the extradition of those who had sought refuge (Shaw, 2015). This began to change with first mass refugee movement of the modern era in the flight of the Ashkenazi Jews from the Russian pogroms of the 1880s through the seaports on the west coast of Europe including Calais. The exodus of the Ashkenazi Jews was a precursor of the mass displacement that was to reshape the European politics of the 20th century. The Jews who arrived in Britain were met with an escalating anti-semitism that culminated in the 1905 Aliens Act which not only reinstated border controls after a hiatus of 80 years, but also for the first time introduced asylum as a legal concept and distinguished the 'unwanted' refugee in the destitute, the diseased or the criminal (Bashford and McAdam, 2014)

The 20th century has been defined by two interweaving but distinct phenomena and have prompted historians to call it the 'century of refugees' in which forced displacement reached unprecedented levels (Marrus, 1985). Zygmunt Bauman (1995) terms it as the 'the age of the camp' where these spatial formations were not only unimaginable in their dehumanizing qualities and cruelty but also became the organizing and structuring principles of society.

Michael Marrus (1985) conceptualizes the ‘century of refugees’ in terms of the unprecedented scale of forced displacement that started with the First World War that forced displacement reached a hitherto unprecedented scale and even greater levels with the Second World War when civilians became the targets of warring armies (Panikos, 2011).⁶ The ‘century of refugees’ was not only about large scale refugee movements but also the struggle of recipient states to cope with it, adding a new dynamic to international border politics and inter-state tensions. During the course of the century the concept of refugee became codified and expanded in international treaties that attempted to institutionalize the Kantian moral imperative of cosmopolitan law to offer hospitality to those fleeing persecution and conflict (see Kleingeld, 1998). Regardless of these broader shifts in moral sentiment, states have continued to respond with ‘apathy and antipathy’ towards the ‘huge refugee inundations’, the ‘unwanted’ of twentieth century (Marrus, 1985). Notwithstanding the ideals encapsulated in international treaties, the refugee in the 20th century came to be seen as a ‘liminal figure who threatened social stability’ in new ways (Gatrell, 2014, p. 2). In the First World War, the refugee could not readily be situated within the class structure (Gatrell, 2014, p. 8) and in the Second World War Britain and other European countries demonstrated a resistance to refugee through the figure of the Jewish refugee (London, 2000). During the Balkans conflict and the aftermath of the Arab Spring the resistance has been towards Muslims.

The notion of the 20th century as the ‘age of camp’ refers not only to their proliferation but also the way in which the nation state and society in Nazi Germany and Soviet Union was organized and structured around an ‘archipelago of camps’ intended to control mobility and govern life through coercion and violence (see Bauman, 1995; Minca, 2015; Stone, 2017). The political geographer Claudio Minca (2015) has drawn chilling cartographic links between the proliferation of the camps of the Nazi and Soviet eras and the contemporary network of detention centres which structure and organize asylum across Europe. Minca has suggested that the 21st century thus far is one when the camp as a ‘spatial political technology’ is found everywhere and ‘camp thinking’ has assumed new pervasive forms in politics and culture (Minca, 2015; p. 76).

Beyond refugee camps, Nord-Pas-De-Calais shares a connection with labour camps. In a grim foretaste of what was to come later, 17 camps housed nearly 140,000 of the Chinese Labour Corps in Northern France during the First World War. An estimated 20,000 Chinese died on the voyage out and in France from enemy attacks, disease and exhaustion but their contribution to the war effort was marginalized and all but erased until the turn of the millennium (Kennedy, 2014).⁷ In the Second World War, there were 15 permanent and temporary forced labour camps in the prefecture under the control of a militarised construction organization tasked with building the Atlantic Wall between 1942-1944 (Roberts, 2010). The camps included not only Belgian Jews (the ones from Calais having been deported to Auschwitz) but also prisoners of war and press ganged Russian labour including children as young as 12 years old and Spanish Republicans. Many of the slave labourers in the camps died within three months from beatings, hunger or harsh working conditions.

Calais as a palimpsest of routes and passage is evident south of Calais where there are the remnants of the concrete ‘Jews Road’ built along with the Atlantic Wall by forced labour in

1942 as part of the defenses of the Third Reich against Allied invasion (see Roberts, 2010). The Wall stretched from Norway to Spain but some of its strongest fortifications were in Nord Pas de Calais, the narrowest part of the English Channel where the German High Command expected the Allied attack to come. The labour camps that housed the Belgian Jews and conscripted labour that built the defenses have long since gone but their footprints embedded in the concrete are still visible in the remnants of the road they built (Roberts, 2010). The outputs of their labour, the ‘architectural relics’ of blockhouses, bunkers and bits of the original razor wire lie half submerged in dunes and sea (Roberts, 2010; Vanfleteren, 2014).

The erasure of the Chinese contribution, the concrete footprints and wartime relics are visible reminders of unimaginable brutality and the dehumanizing of the racialized Other. The context and the nature of the camps are too dissimilar to those of the Jungle but the trauma of the displaced other and their incarceration through inhumane conditions forms an inextricable connection between the past and present binding Calais into a repository of human suffering. Not only are landscapes of Nord Pas de Calais imbued with ‘ghostly’ reminders (Vanfleteren, 2014) but the temporal frames of the past and present co-mingle through a materiality where migrants expelled from demolished Jungles create makeshift shelters in the bunkers and blockhouse remnants of the wall from the past (Allen, 2009). The coalescing of the past and present are also resonated in political discourse and popular culture.

Political and media discourses of successive Jungles in Calais have implicitly evoked history, some centuries old, in accounts of ‘illegal migrants’ laying ‘siege’ to Calais, (Bracchi, 2009; Thornhill, 2014) ‘breaching’ the security of the Eurotunnel (*The Guardian*, 2002; *The Times*, 2015) or the ‘fortress Calais’ surrounded by razor wire fencing (Stothard, 2015). A more explicit evoking of the past has come from Britain’s Jewish community, some of whom were rescued from the extermination camps of Nazi Germany, in their call for ‘kindertransport’ type scheme to save the unaccompanied children in the Jungle before it was demolished in October 2016 (Janner-Klausner, 2015). The UN equally evoked the past in cautioning Europe that it faced its biggest refugee crisis since the end of World War 2 and its criticisms of the inhumane conditions in the Jungles of Calais as an ‘indictment’ on society and Britain’s response to the current crisis a ‘failure of leadership’ the implication was that neither country had learnt from the past.

Calais and the Transient

Calais as a multi-modal transport hub has renewed its appeal as a gateway on the refugee trails for those keen to seek asylum in Britain. While Britain embraced the neoliberal benefits of enhanced trade with Europe, it has remained profoundly distrustful of the willingness of its European neighbours to adequately police the external borders of the European Union (EU). This distrust was bolstered through time as British public and political sentiment hardened against immigration (Ibrahim and Howarth, 2016). This led to the UK opting out from the Schengen Agreement on free movement within the EU in order to retain its sovereign power to determine who may or may not enter its territory. The French seaboard, already the border

between the continent and Britain, became the border between free movement and the reinstatement of hard controls. These controls were moved back to Calais after the opening of Eurotunnel. Large-scale incursions into the tunnel and onto the roads leading to the port prompted increasing securitization and Calais became a bottleneck for refugees and migrants whose presence in and around the border ebbed and flowed depending on the conflict and oppression in states beyond the borders of the EU. Unable to return to their country of origin for fear of persecution and war, feeling unwanted in France yet obstructed from moving on by border controls, the refugees and migrants became trapped in growing numbers in the liminal spaces of the Calais.

Sixty years after the post-war crisis⁸ the refugee in Calais has become an abject figure, largely abandoned by both states (i.e. UK and France). Beyond the odd token of ‘humanitarianism’, the precarity of the migrants is visibly demonstrated through the periodic demolitions of informal camps through military and police interventions. Such acts of erasure are potent political tools to impress the unlimited power of the sovereign states. All that remains of the 2016 demolition of the Jungle are fragmented bits of barbed wire, broken bottles and a warning sign to ‘keep out’ (McGuinness, 2017). Despite the brutal demolitions, Calais is constantly inscribed with the figure of the refugee as they return at a rate of about a 100 a week. With no Jungle to return to they are forming ‘secret’ camps away from the gaze of the police while they continue their attempts to cross to Britain (Sheldrick, 2017). Away from the monitoring gaze of volunteers and aid groups in and near the camps, refugees and in particular unaccompanied children are vulnerable to attacks from fascist or ult-right groups and ‘endemic police brutality’ (Bulman, 2017).

Today’s refugees, the racialized ‘other’ from the former colonies, are highly visible and vulnerable as targets for the police and right wing groups. The assumed insularity and isolation evoked in Shakespeare’s moat defensive seems ‘archaic’ in an age of globalization where the “carriers of infection and invasion are no longer the French – or, for that matter, the Jews, but instead refugees from failed states that France and Britain had a hand in creating’ (Zaretsky, 2015).

The media have tapped into these historically rooted and latent fears in their accounts of ‘migrants’ using Sangatte (see Boswell, 2012) or the Jungles as launchpads to cross the Channel (Robinson, 2016), as ‘incursions’ onto trucks (Powley and Stacey, 2015) or ‘migrant invasion’ of the tunnel where its defences are repeatedly ‘breached’ (Campbell *et al.*, 2015). The history and context of Calais becomes intertextual today as the medieval defense tactic of constructing a moat against these ‘invaders’ or ‘marauders’ is invoked through the erection of razor wire fencing and wall around the entrance of Eurotunnel to prevent stowaways heading across the Channel.

The refugee in Calais, as with many gateway or frontier towns, is a common but marginalized figure whose precarity was captured in Hogarth’s 1748 painting, *The Gate of Calais*.⁹ The Franco-phobe painting, lampooned the decadence of the French clergy vis-à-vis the impoverished French soldiers but also captures the figure of a Jacobite refugee slumped in the shadows too exhausted to eat the onion next to him, the only food he has (Davidson, 2000). [Insert Figure 1.2 here] **Figure 1.2 O the Roast Beef of Old England (‘The Gate of**

Calais’) by William Hogarth and Charles Mosley. 1749. CC-BY-NC-NC (3.0 Unported). Photo © Tate]. Contemporary Graffiti artist Banksy painted a new artwork outside the French embassy in London¹⁰ in which he criticized the use of teargas in the Jungle camp. The work depicted a young girl from the film and musical *Les Miserables* with tears in her eyes as CS gas billowed towards her. The work was interactive and included a QR code beneath and if viewers held their phone over the code it linked them to an online video of a police raid. Another mural on the wall of an underpass near the Jungle camp includes one of Steve Jobs, Apple founder and son of Syrian migrants, and in a short statement the artist notes that Apple only existed because ‘they allowed in a young man from Homs’. Another one painted on a wall near Calais beach, depicts a child refugee from the Jungle gazing longingly through a telescope across the Channel towards Britain with a vulture perched on top of the instrument. And a fourth one near the town’s immigration office comprises a reproduced version of ‘The Raft of the Medusa’, a painting of shipwreck survivors by 19th century French painter Theodore Gericault. In Banksy’s re-imagining of the work, survivors on a raft desperately wave to catch the attention of an ostentatious modern yacht on the horizon (UFunk, 2015; News Desk, 2016; Riotta, 2016). These depictions capture the horror of the refugee’s predicament in raw brutality.

The historicized spatiality of Calais continues to shape Anglo-French border politics today. Calais’ border politics is rooted in a historicized spatiality dating to the premodern era where it was a s a gateway for refugees in search of sanctuary in Britain. Equally, it retains a violent past of expulsion and de-racination. In more recent history, the ‘century of refugees’ (Marrus, 1985) was marked by unprecedented levels of forced displacement during the First World War. Equally the ‘century of camps’ organized and structured the Nazi and Soviet politics and society (Bauman, 1995). Sixty years after the liberation of Auschwitz, razor wire is being rolled out across Europe in a bid to control movement across space where the refugee and camps still predominate through a biopolitics of border control.

For Paul Gilroy (2004) the notion of camps operates on multiple levels as material description, a political technology that can mutate for instance between different types of camps and a metaphor for pathologies of ‘race’ and nation that underpin a form of thinking which is everywhere. He argues that forms of nationalism invoke a particular ‘mode of belonging [that] exemplify camp thinking’ with a common approach to collective solidarity with shared patterns of thinking which work through appeals to national or ethnic purity and in which politics is reconceptualized and reconstuted as ‘dualistic conflict’ between friends and enemies, them and us clearly articulated in European political debates about immigration which construct intrusions of blacks, Muslims and others as ‘invasion’ (Gilroy, 2004, p. 83). Razor wire fences, walls and moats become technologies for controlling movement across space. These very technologies which facilitated the protection of property also underpinned the expansion of capitalism (see Netz, 2004 on the historical ecology of barbed wire). In the process, these also manifest expressions of the fear of the stranger at our doors (Bauman, 2016) . More specifically a primal fear invasion not by foreign armies but the racialized refugee reconstituted as the ‘illegal migrant, a trespasser and disruptor of legitimate traffic of neoliberal economy (see Agier, 2016).

About this Book

This chapter traced the chequered history of Calais and sought to highlight the town as a space inscribed through migrant and refugee politics over time. The second chapter reviews the history of camps in Calais both in terms of the contemporary politics of forced migration and through its historical trajectory. The jungles of Calais acquire a politicized and spatialised meaning in the contemporary landscape where the jungle co-produces a lesser humanity, both in the denial of sanctuary and in the re-coding of these entities as economic opportunist seeking to plunder the coffers in the UK. These readings as such set the premise and the measure of whether or when pity or humanity can be accorded to the inhabitants of the jungle. Chapter three reviews the management of migrants and refugee through the analysis of policy within the UK and EU, and how issues of sovereignty and security become dual platforms to distance themselves from the humanitarian crises at the border. The imaging and visualisation of the refugee and jungle is reviewed in chapter four and the increased scrutiny into their environment becomes a resonant theme in the newspaper prior to the demolition of the camps in 2016. This abundance of the media gaze, produces the jungle inhabitants as objects of curiosity within precarious setting taking extraordinary risks with their bodies and their progeny. The chapter five looks at the plight of children in the jungle and particularly the lack of a concerted humanitarian initiative towards unaccompanied children in the camps. Their plight is mapped against the reticent and lukewarm stance of the British government. The last chapter looks at the recurrent demolition of the camps describing these as impotent and ineffective measures which becomes tools of self-gratification to assuage the public. In real terms, the current demolitions reveal the lack of a concerted policy towards the displaced in Calais. In the process, they highlight the brutality of neoliberal politics where periodic erasure seeks to affirm sovereign power and the production of bare life through the border politics of control and expulsion.

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Endnotes

¹ Juxtaposed controls are an arrangement between Belgium, France and the United Kingdom whereby immigration checks on cross-Channel routes take place before boarding the train or ferry, rather than on arrival.

² By June 2002, the French railways and Port of Calais had spent euro 13.6 million upgrading security and euro 3 million a year on on running costs (Schuster, 2003). Eurotunnel had spent £3 million on security measures including fences, razor wire, cameras and £3 million a year on security guards around the terminal site to prevent migrants and refugees boarding passing vehicles (Schuster, 2003).

³ Over the course of the 19th century, lace became a flourishing industry and as regular sea crossings began large numbers of Britons settled in Calais. Globalization has since “silenced the historic looms of Calais” and blue-collar voters now “represent the forces powering the far right” and support for Le Pen’s anti-immigration National Front (Alderman, 2017)

⁴ An estimated 140,000 Chinese workers served on Western Front, mostly in the British Chinese Labour Corp, and after Armistice, about 5000-7000 stayed in France, forming what was later to become the Chinese community in Paris (Fawcett, 2000).

⁵ Particularly during the Age of Revolutions that convulsed Europe between 1774 to 1848 Calais continued to be one of the gateways to sanctuary in Britain for nationalists and exiles from as far afield as Russia, Hungary Italy and France. British artisans who had smuggled giant looms into Calais to get around restrictions on selling lace after the end of the Napoleonic war found themselves the targets of xenophobic attacks after the resurgence of French nationalism after the 1848 revolution. Ostracized, marginalized and financially distressed the British lace makers at one point sought refuge on Channel ferries, were forced to emigrate to Australia (Bensimon, 2016; Alderman, 2017).

⁶ The contemporary refugee crisis in Europe needs to be seen in the context of an estimated 10 million displaced internally or across borders in the First World War (Gatrell, 2008) and 60 million during and after the Second World War (Zampano, Moloney and Juan, 2015). The contemporary refugee crisis in Europe peaked in 2015 when 1 million displaced people crossed Mediterranean in search of sanctuary in Europe and before the phased demolition of the Jungle in 2016, it had an estimated 10,000 occupants.

⁷ They worked digging trenches, building transport infrastructure and after the end of the war clearing live ordnance, exhuming decomposing bodies and removing them to new war cemeteries. The work was arduous, based on 10-hour days, seven days a week and with three holidays (Kennedy, 2014). When Britain distributed 6 million commemorative medals to those who participated in the war, those handed out to the Chinese bore only their numbers not their names and were bronze not silver. Originally painted into a giant canvas depicting a victorious France surrounded by her allies, they were wiped out to create space for the Americans who entered the war in 1917 (Kennedy, 2014).

⁸ Estimated 10 million were displaced internally or across borders in the First World War (Gatrell, 2008; Panikos, 2011) and 60 million during and after the Second World War (Zampano, Moloney and Juan, 2015). The contemporary refugee crisis in Europe peaked in 2015 when 1 million displaced people crossed Mediterranean in search of sanctuary in Europe and before the phased demolition of the Jungle in 2016, it had an estimated 10,000 occupants.

⁹ Also known as *O, the Roast Beef of Old England* was reproduced as a print from an engraving the following year and then circulated widely. Hogarth completed the painting after his return from France where he had been arrested as a spy whilst sketching the gate of Calais. The scene depicts a side of beef being carried from the harbour to an English tavern in the port while a group of under-nourished French soldiers and fat friar look on hungrily

¹⁰ The interactive mural was added to Google’s digital archive, the Cultural Institute’s Banksy site, moments before it was removed (McGoogan, 2016).