

## Chapter 2.1 Crossings, Bodies, Behaviours<sup>1</sup>

A good deal of the recent academic work on refugees approaches the topic as a matter of biopolitics. Within this the understanding of biopolitics that is most commonly employed is that set out by Giorgio Agamben in his conception of *homo sacer*. According to Agamben, the state's capacity to create an exception, that is to place some object beyond the law as a means of establishing its ability to govern, produces 'a biopolitical body' as 'the original activity of sovereign power' (Agamben 1998: 6 italics original). In such terms, Agamben concludes that the concentration camps of the Second World War are the 'biopolitical paradigm of the modern' (119-80) because they totally transformed politics into biopolitics. From here, he argues that the refugee becomes the 'limit concept' that integrates bare life with the 'state order' and with the concept of human rights (134). Agamben's insights into the nature of state power have been readily used to account for contemporary refugeeeness in influential work such as Peter Nyers' *Rethinking Refugees* (2006), Vicki Squires' *The Exclusionary Politics of Asylum* (2009) and Imogen Tyler's *Revolting Subjects* (2013). This has been matched in the area of literary and film studies where prominent work such as David Farrier's *Postcolonial Asylum* (2011), Agnes Woolley's *Contemporary Asylum Narratives* (2014) and Emma Cox's *Performing Noncitizenship* (2015) have all looked to Agamben to offer a theoretical frame for reading the textual representations of asylum or refugeeeness. While Agamben's philosophical account of sovereignty is undoubtedly valuable as a means of opening up a discussion of the technologies of exclusion that frame refugees as apart from citizens, its emphasis upon exception as the enduring component of sovereign power may limit its capacity to account for the embodied refugee as a subject of politics rather than merely subject to the regimes of biopolitics. As Judith

Butler has recently noted, Agamben's concept of bare life relies upon a particular, classical, conception of the polis in which only certain kinds of action are allowed to count as political. The risk of Agamben's emphasis upon the exception is that it suggests that, 'once excluded,' refugees 'lack appearance or "reality" in political terms, that they have no social or political standing or are cast out and reduced to mere being' (Butler 2015: 78-80).<sup>2</sup>

This chapter takes its cue from Butler's assertion that verbalization is not the only form of 'expressive political action' and that 'certain kinds of bodily enactments' can operate as a kind of speech act that is not precisely discursive (18). In response to this provocation, I offer readings of two films, Marc Foster's *World War Z* (2013) and Philippe Lioret's *Welcome* (2009) in order to explore what happens when the biopolitical body of the refugee is read through the depiction of the somatic body of refugees within the narrative text. In making this claim it is useful to recall Sophie Nield's distinction between the natural body and the political body as a repository of citizenship and of rights. For Nield, these two bodies are disaggregated by the founding of the rights within the frame of citizenship and by the contemporary technologized border that demands the representation of the body, rather than the body itself, as the prerequisite of ingress (Nield 2008: 140-41). Nield argues that theatrical work can draw attention to the disparity between the body's material presence and its capacity to represent, and she suggests that the border constitutes a kind of theatrical space whereby bodies must act out a representation of themselves in a bid for rights (138-39). This resonates with Butler's assertion that the fact of assembly constitutes a performative act designed to claim an eligibility to rights (Butler 2015: 50). Building on these observations, I want to suggest a distinction between the representation of the body that speaks and the body that appears in order to think about the capacity of the refugee's body to bridge the representational gap between

the natural and the political body. While the body of the refugee is framed by the technologies of the polis in a bid to constitute the sovereign authority of the state, and while this act aspires to separate the natural and the political body, the body that appears is also capable of a kind of testimony. As such, beyond the linguistic, the fact of appearance can open up a space for politics in the ways that Butler describes.

The distinction I'm proposing serves to qualify some of the accepted versions of the refugee's mode of appearance within the representational forms through which refugeeness is constituted. If, as Liisa H. Malkki has suggested, refugees are frequently 'speechless emissaries' whose visual representation takes the place of a verbal record of their experience in order to accommodate their predicament within a 'mobile' discourse of humanitarianism (Malkki 1996), it is possible to counter that the refugee's body is also asked to perform an evidentiary role in legitimating or disproving the validity of the claim to asylum. The form of the refugee's body is commonly subject to scrutiny, such as in the recent cases of UK politicians advocating the use of dental x-rays as a means of determining the age of children claiming asylum ('Asylum Youths Face X-Ray Checks' 2007; 'Calais Child Migrants' 2016). Likewise, evidence of injury can be used as the basis to grant asylum, allowing the body to testify to the veracity of the claims of persecution. A well-documented instance of this in the UK is the case of the Iranian Kurd, Abas Amini, who sewed together his lips and eyes when the Home Office appealed against the immigration court's granting of asylum (Farrier 2011: 14-15; Tyler 2013: 76-79). While Amini's body formed the stage upon and through which a somatic protest was articulated, it also comprised evidence which the UK Border Agency, the Appeal Judge and the Home Office used to determine proof of torture ('Protester's Tortured Past' 2003). Amini's body achieved a double significance and alertness to this double signification can work as an important strategy for critics trying to analyse the representation of refugees within cultural texts. This is to extend

the critical work that notes the significance of refugees' bodies for the performance of asylum aesthetics and as a component of refugees' protests against the authoritarian disciplining of asylum applicants (Borcliă et al. 2014; Farrier and Tuitt 2013; Jestrovic 2008). In light of the demonstrable capacity of the body to testify, it is possible to regard the body as constitutive of the refugee as a category. For instance, if the asylum claim is an inaugural speech act that brings the refugee into being (Farrier 2011: 6), it is important to recognise that the speech act is not purely an act of verbalisation. It requires a bodily presence that has performed some act of crossing in advance of the speech act itself. Moreover, speaking may rely upon 'bodily enactments' that are not purely discursive. In order to think about what this might offer to textual analysis I want to consider two simple fictional examples that will serve to illustrate the expressive potential of the refugee's body, in order to open up my more extensive readings of the films below.

The first of these occurs at the beginning of UK-based Tanzanian writer Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel *By the Sea* (2002), which describes the Tanzanian refugee Saleh Omar's arrival in Britain. Although Omar's first-person narration declares that he is 'a refugee, an asylum-seeker' (Gurnah 2002: 4) and while he voices the words refugee and asylum when being interviewed by an immigration officer at Gatwick Airport (9), he has been advised to pretend not to speak English. Consequently he must act out a role that involves gestures and looks, that involves 'suppressing a sigh of relief' or restraining his desire to lean forward and inspect the writing on an official's notepad (7). While Gurnah's narrative might signal the disparity between the citizen's body and the refugee's 'body without words' that is uncoupled from representation (Agamben 2004; Nield 2008: 141-42), Butler's notion of *appearance* offers a different reading of the scene in which Omar's embodied presence acts to confirm the vocalised claims to asylum. Butler's discussion of the idea of appearance plays with the

homonymic status of this word as a way of linking individual performativity to 'forms of coordinated action' through which precarious or excluded groups enter "the public sphere" in order to demand the right to rights (7-9). Accordingly, Butler deploys the term 'appearance' as a way of describing both a visible façade *and* the act of emergence as a form of politics (32). At the textual level, unpicking Butler's homonym involves an interpretive practice that reads the textual description of the body in writing, or its visual framing in film, as carrying political content. That is to say that the representation of the body's physicality orientates the body's capacity to enter the realms of the civic. The visual appearance of the body is not a neutral manifestation of the body but rather a performative response to the state's attempt to circumscribe the forms of political action.

*By the Sea* speaks to this double sense of appearance through its focus on the somatic qualities of body, such as the circulation of the breath or the rotation of the eye, which Gurnah suggests are components in the claim to asylum. So, for instance, when Omar describes his passage through the airport and towards the passport desk he suggests that the airport's architecture funnels the arrived towards the securitized frontier and records his response to this as a kind of somatic dialogue with 'signs and instructions' that form the tokens of state authority. Omar explains that he 'walked slowly so that [he] would not miss a turning or misread a sign, so that [he] would not attract attention too early by getting into a flutter of confusion' (Gurnah 2002: 5). This dialogue is repeated in Omar's interrogation by the immigration official. For much of this Omar acts the part of the resigned object of the securitized state, 'shutting' his 'eyes now and then to suggest distress' (7), but at other times his gestures indicate a more subjective engagement with the structures of securitization. For instance, he describes matching his breathing to his interrogator (7) or returning his look as a way of pressing his claim to asylum (9). A critical reading of this encounter that frames it

only through the notion of exception would struggle to account for the obvious agency that sits alongside the structures of securitized objectification. By narrating his subjective experience of the border as a largely mute but somatic encounter, Omar stakes his 'right to have rights' which Butler identifies as an alternative model of the political to the one that she finds in Agamben (Butler 2015: 80).

The second example, from Bangladeshi-born British writer Monica Ali's novel *In the Kitchen* (2009), offers a slightly different sense of the body by underlining the expressive potential of the refugee's somatic appearance. Through a depiction of the protagonist's engagement with a Liberian refugee, *In the Kitchen* draws the reader's attention to the different testimonial value of the refugee's voice and body. Ali's novel is set mainly in a hotel kitchen and revolves around the exploitation of migrant labour in Britain's agricultural and catering economies. At its centre is a liberal British protagonist, Gabe, the kitchen's head chef who negotiates his growing feelings of sympathy and obligation towards his 'United Nations' of kitchen staff (Ali 2009: 129). Gabe's curiosity is pricked by the 'jagged scar' running across the face of his chef de partie, Benny, and he considers asking Benny about his history of exclusion, wondering 'which country he had left behind' (78). Although the scar implies violence, which may relate to Benny's status as refugee, the questions that it prompts remain largely unanswered. However, this is not the result of the body's failure to articulate but rather a result of Benny's verbal reticence that resembles Omar's mute encounter with immigration officials in *By the Sea*. When Gabe invites Benny to join him for a drink, he coyly tries to find out where his chef is from by asking him about other workers in the kitchen. This tactic is matched by Benny himself so that, when Gabe asks him directly about where he calls 'home', Benny answers by sharing illustrative stories of his friends, other refugees whose histories he feels able to recount. Significantly, in telling stories Benny is clear that the measure of testimony is not

whether it is 'true' but whether it is 'credible'. As he tells Gabe, 'if you worry that your own suffering is not enough to gain permission to stay in this country, you can buy a story and take it with you to this government office in Croydon' (151-54). Benny's account of verbal unreliability does not indicate that persecution has not taken place; it does not, for instance, equate falsity with fraudulence or with an unwarranted claim to asylum. Instead it stresses that verbal testimony is subject to interpretation and that the claim to asylum is not judged against the evidentiary proof of the applicant but against the affective response of the auditor. In light of this, the somatic testimony of Benny's scar takes on a different significance. The body appears and has an appearance that speaks of violence. While Benny's body cannot tell his story with any more certainty than his voice may do, it nevertheless stands as evidence that something has happened if not evidence of precisely what. The body's appearance makes 'credible' whatever story Benny's voice chooses to tell.

Literary renderings of the body's materiality such as these can be interpreted as descriptions of a kind of speech act that is not immediately discursive but which nevertheless involves a non-verbalised dialogue with the institutional gatekeepers of the state. However, I want to turn my attention to the visual framing of the body in two contemporary examples of the cinematic representations of refugees. The shift from literary fiction to film is prompted by the body's prominence in the visual aesthetics of narrative film, where bodily spectacle is typically apparent across a wide range of cinematic genre. Film theory has long recognised that cinema's form relies upon the framing and manipulation of the actor's body. For instance, in *The Photoplay* (1916), Hugo Münsterberg linked many of film's aesthetic properties to the form of the body, including silent acting's 'heightening of the gestures and of the facial play'; the use of close-up to enlarge the face, hand or feet to convey the impression of emotion; or the selection of 'ready-made' body types to credibly or naturally perform character

(Langdale 2002: 100-03). More recently, in his account of the racial coding of film technologies Richard Dyer has argued that 'to represent people is to represent bodies' (Dyer 1997: 14) and that the physical properties of the human body have led 'innovation in the photographic media' which 'has generally taken the human face as its touchstone' (90). Perhaps the landmark work in this direction is Laura Mulvey's seminal account of the psychoanalysis of spectatorship. While her approach has undergone considerable refinement (Clover 1992; Doane 1988; Silverman 1988) and even a radical repudiation (Shaviro 1993), this has focused primarily upon her reading of the spectator's desire. However, for my purpose it is significant that Mulvey also identified aesthetic tendencies that follow from the role of spectatorship that place the body at the centre of film. Arguing that 'the conventions of mainstream film focus [the spectator's] attention on the human form' she noted that narrative cinema is composed of 'the human face, the human body, the relationship between the human form and its surroundings, [and] the visible presence of the person in the world' (Mulvey [1975] 1999: 807).

Mindful of this tradition, I want to set Butler's notion of appearance (in the double sense of a façade and of an emergence) into the context of these cinematic representations of the body. I propose that the representation of the body of the refugee is a political movement in so far as this representation constitutes a demand for rights. In both *World War Z* and *Welcome*, the figure of the refugee is caught within official structures of exclusion that are intended to render refugees objects of state power. The forms of exclusion propel the narrative so that the visual capture of the body within film mirrors the securitized state border that serves the ends of a biopolitics. Nonetheless, in both films the represented bodies of refugees seem to appear as subjective eruptions into the narrative by way of a set of somatic demands for shelter, food, sanitation or burial. In line with Butler, I propose that the depiction



of these demands constitutes a form of appearance (emergence) that speaks beyond the immediately somatic wants to form a demand for rights. Tentatively, I suggest that this subjective demand exceeds the diegetic articulations of the refugee on screen especially where the somatic needs are enacted by, for example, eating rather than a request for food. To that end the representation of the somatic body stands as a political intervention that is not immediately or solely routed in discourse and constitutes a non-verbal speech act of the kind that Butler theorises.

### ***World War Z***

*World War Z* is a recognisable zombie apocalypse movie, which narrates the travels of United Nations investigator, Gerry Lane, as he attempts to find a cure to a global zombie plague. Although on the surface its generic form might appear to distance the text from what is normally understood to be a refugee film, it contains a representation of refugeeness that exploits the conventions of its genre. Transplanting components of the post-Romero zombie film such as infection and fortification onto a global scale, *World War Z* encourages a geopolitical reading of the zombie phenomenon and permits an interpretation of the film's zombies as the spectral double of human refugees, who are made monstrous by the requirement of the state to constitute itself as an organic whole. Following Adriana Cavarero's analysis of the organic metaphor for the state in *Stately Bodies* (2002), I suggest that the demonization of this outer threat is a necessary camouflage for the state's own monstrosity in defending its borders. In the film's world, state governments have largely collapsed and the UN now has executive authority. Due to the zombie threat, this world government must oversee a kind of global levelling in which populations from high-income and low-income nations alike are subject to comparable conditions of deprivation. The manner in which this global levelling manifests itself is through the forced migration of the human survivors who find themselves relocated to refugee

camps, a language that the film uses explicitly and which originates in Max Brooks' source novel (Brooks [2006] 2013). The language of refugeeness marks out Forster's film from earlier cinematic depictions of a global zombie pandemic and invites a reading of the politics of migration and citizenship as the film's subtext.

The most important scenes for this element of *World War Z* comprise a pivotal section in Jerusalem. Although most national governments have disappeared in the world of the film, Israel has preserved its national integrity by acting on advanced intelligence to complete a preventative barrier around the entire state. In Israel, Lane is taken to the 'Jerusalem Salvation Gates' and is surprised to see Israel 'letting people in' when the film shows a procession of refugees crossing the securitized border into the state. In keeping with the formulaic conventions of the zombie movie, *World War Z* depicts various forms of fortification throughout, but the scenes in Israel provide the only depiction of a securitized national boundary.<sup>3</sup> In retaining the national frame these scenes emphasise a connection between refugees and the idea of hospitality by depicting a process of asylum. The presentation of Israeli humanitarianism has obvious resonance with modern and contemporary politics and this episode has provoked commentary on the allegorical significance of the depiction. Some Arab viewers argued that the film portrays 'Israel as a moral power that protects human beings' and that 'justifies the [West Bank] wall' constructed between 2002 and 2012 ('World War Z's Wall Scene' 2013). Even the *Times of Israel* described the scenes as 'the greatest piece of cinematic propaganda for Israel since Otto Preminger's "Exodus"' (Hoffman 2013). Certainly, the film presents Israel as a compassionate state and, by panning out to contrast a zombie-occupied desert beyond its borders, portrays Israel as an oasis of peace within a hostile environment. At an allegorical level this implies Israel's exceptionalism in the Middle East, stressing its secular credentials as distinct from its monstrous neighbours. The Israel of the film appears to offer no preference to Arab or

Jew and both Muslim and Jewish refugees celebrate their survival in a crowd waving both Israeli and Palestinian flags. At the centre of this, two young women, one wearing a hijab and the other dressed secularly in a casual vest-top, lead an ecumenical choir singing Mosh Ben Ari's 'Salaam' a peace song that mixes Hebrew and Arabic. However, these very celebrations serve as a lure to the walled-off zombie hordes who then breach fortified Israel so that it too falls to infection.

In reading these scenes, Mary Bloodsworth-Lugo and Carmen Lugo-Lugo have suggested that it appears as if the refugees "bring Jerusalem down", and that the resulting zombie incursion challenges 'the original idea that saving humans was the right thing to do' (Bloodsworth-Lugo and Lugo-Lugo 2014: 172). Such a reading partly works by imagining some kind of correspondence between zombies and humans and this is supported both by the textual presentation within *World War Z* and by the extra-textual conflation of refugees with other threatening kinds of migration. *World War Z*'s Israeli scenes intercut images of human refugees inside the wall with images of the zombies beyond the border. Notably, when the zombies are drawn to scale the wall, the figure of one particular female zombie is picked out turning towards the sound of celebrations and then running to join the insatiable host. Her clothing, in particular her vest top, contains a visual echo of the secular refugee inside the wall and creates an uncanny resemblance that serves to connect the monstrous enemy with the living survivor.<sup>4</sup> Of course, as viewers of zombie movies well know, a survivor is always a potential zombie; as Steven Shapiro remarks, 'the high point of shock' in George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* comes 'when the little girl, turned into a zombie cannibalistically consumes her parents' (Romero 1968; Shaviro 1993: 90-91). What distinguishes the zombie movie from films about global epidemics such as Steven Soderbergh's *Contagion* (2011) is the manner in which the disease is embodied. In Soderbergh's film, other people are to be shunned as the source of infection and at

times the disease is discussed in anthropomorphic terms, such as when a virologist describes the mutations of the virus as a thought process. However, when operatives from US Homeland Security visit the Centre for Disease Control suspicious that the disease is a terrorist attack, they hypothesise a human agent who will 'weaponise the bird flu'. In contrast, in *World War Z*, the zombie represents the deceased transformed into the disease, which takes on an anthropomorphic shape in order to infect further victims. Accordingly, when the female zombie is drawn to the sound of survivors it is not only her clothes that resemble that of her human counterparts but it is also her appetites that embody infection as a kind of somatic want. The tilt of her head and her pelt towards the wall are monstrous but also recognisably humanlike.

The film's representation of refugees and zombies as congruent, marries with recent political discourse that has undermined the rights to asylum by linking refugees to threats to civic integrity and indeed health. For instance, the state's obligation to refugees is often cited as its own justification for refusing hospitality to so-called 'bogus' asylum seekers (Tyler 2013: 83-87). For Didier Bigo the 'humanitarian discourse' is itself 'a by-product of the securitization process' since the desire to help 'genuine asylum seekers' emerges only because it allows the state to condemn 'illegal migrants' as a way of 'justifying border controls' (Bigo 2002: 79). Most relevantly, David Farrier interprets the refugee and the terrorist as competing but twinned tropes that link the refugee to a 'spectral double' such as the terrorist (Farrier and Tuitt 2013: 262) and legitimize or mitigate acts of violence towards non-citizens (266). The most obvious and brutish recent example of this double representation have been the pronouncements of the 45th US President whose repeated demand for a sectarian immigration policy has literalised his rhetorical conflation of migration, Islam and terrorism. During his election campaign this took the form of a refusal to respect the right of Syrian refugees to enter the United States because of the risk that they would

represent a 'Trojan horse' for ISIS. It is easy to see this as a form of contagion narrative that resembles the zombie incursions of Forster's text. Images of disease suffused the political discussion of migration and terrorism during the 2015-2016 primary campaign. In the edition of ABC's *This Week* in which the future president made his remarks, his challenger Ben Carson repeatedly raised the spectre of radicalisation and likened the vetting of refugees to protecting your family from a rabid dog. Likewise, when interviewed about President Obama's handling of the threat from ISIS Republican Congresswoman, Martha McSally, described the group as a 'metastasized' form of 'militant Islam'. In the same vein, the Democratic challenger Martin O'Malley likened the fight against Isis to 'an immune system' that requires coordination to defeat the 'bad germs of this world' (ABC News 2015).

If the idea of terrorists as a kind of disease that is capable of infecting the hospitable state is evocative of the zombie film, it is appropriate that the future president's justification for his fears turned on the somatic form of the refugee. Responding to George Stephanopoulos he explained that, 'when I look at the migration and the lines and I see all strong, very powerful looking men, they're men, and I see very few women, I see very few children' (ABC News 2015). While there is an implicit xenophobia in his fear of foreign men, the key to the future president's comments is his use of corporeality to identify adult masculinity as a threatening form of embodiment. There is, of course, an irony in the fact that the 45th President has compulsively reiterated the need for (masculine) strength as the main virtue required for politics. In the same interview he defended the use of torture for interrogation saying, 'we have to be strong' and questioned Hillary Clinton's suitability for the office of president claiming that, 'we're dealing with very, very strong people. And you need strength and you need stamina' (ABC News 2015). Again, the comparison with *World War Z* is suggestive since Brad Pitt, its star and producer, exemplifies the physically

strong action hero who might be thought capable of defending the civic against this vicious external threat. Although in his escape from Jerusalem, Lane is escorted by a troop of Israeli soldiers that contains several women, it is only because of his physical decisiveness – including the abrupt amputation of an arm to prevent infection – that the group escapes. In this, it might be possible to find a further correspondence between the human survivors and the threatening zombies whose strength and ferocity is their chief advantage.

The history of contamination as a form of political metaphor is a long one and one that is clearly linked to a masculine conception of the state. As Adriana Cavarero records, the association between disease and political imbalance dates to the classical era in the work of Plato (Cavarero 2002). Where the concept of the body politic elaborates the healthy body as the hierarchical ordering of people, it becomes possible to imagine the exclusion of certain bodies from the bounds of the state as a way to maintain political health. The logic of the body politic as an organic metaphor for the healthy state is self-evidently useful as a way of justifying or normalising state power. The securitized border becomes the epidermis that ensures the social space remains an ‘unmarked’ body by allowing only unmarked bodies ingress (Ahmed 2000: 46). However, as Cavarero’s work records, the anxious desire of Greek culture to suppress the body in defence of ‘logos, techne, and the polis’ (Cavarero 2002: 34) sees the ‘expelled’ body ‘stubbornly return’ so that the organic metaphor ‘binds the body to politics’ (viii). This ‘return’ seems particularly amenable for thinking about the zombie movie as a kind of political allegory and it is telling that Cavarero’s language takes on a language of horror when she accounts for the re-emergence of the body in classical Greek culture. Through a reading of Sophocles’ *Antigone*, Cavarero explains that the effort of the polis to expel the body of Polynices ends with the corpse emerging victorious by initiating a ‘dark vortex of death’ and securing the ‘desired burial’ that

Creon has denied it and that is the objective of Antigone's rebellion (Cavarero 2002: 16). This account of Polynices as a cadaverous combatant reads like a ghost story and is echoed in Cavarero's language when writing about the failure of Greek philosophy to elevate the psyche over the somatic. Here she sees the body become the 'disquieting and nocturnal matter' (57) or 'the nightmare of nocturnal impulses' (103). Most tellingly, perhaps, in detailing Aristotle's attempt to construct the body politic as 'a perfect, static, and adult male body' Cavarero argues that this body 'is more like the corpse lying on the dissecting table than a living thing that passes through the cycles of aging' (96-97).<sup>5</sup>

Beyond any generic similarity, it is this account of Aristotle that encourages me to read Cavarero's zombie-version of Greek political philosophy alongside *World War Z's* double representation of refugees. If the film's zombies can be read as the spectral double of the refugee made monstrous, Cavarero's depiction of the state's body as equally monstrous usefully reveals the cost to the polis in defending its integrity. In the film's denouement, Lane finds a way of hiding from the zombie plague, devising a form of 'camouflage' by infecting the healthy human body with a fatal disease. This renders the human prey invisible to the zombies presumably because the body has become, like the zombies themselves, the walking dead. Reading this solution back into the Israeli scenes, an episode that is crucial in helping Lane to this conclusion, it is possible to reimagine these scenes as a form of critique of the political discourses of asylum and the double representation that these employ. Rather than simply highlighting the folly of humanitarian hospitality, it becomes possible to see these scenes as an indictment of authoritarian politics. The logic of Lane's solution is that the only way to keep the threatening other at bay is to become, or to appear to be, the very thing that is debarred. Tellingly, the film ends with a montage of the human 'push back' against the zombie plague, involving scenes of carnal military brutality in which

human soldiers display an appetite for violence that has marked the zombies throughout. To echo current political discourse, the fight against the zombies is to be fought by 'strong, very powerful looking men'. Lane's solution means that the body politic can only be protected by inflicting damage onto the bodies of its citizen. Moreover, this becomes an instrument of violence, allowing the polis to inflict damage onto the somatic bodies of the other. In so far as the term *sōma* originates as a description of the corpse rather than the living body (Agamben 1998: 66; Cavarero 2002: 203 n.3) Lane's inoculation, which leads the human survivor to resemble the zombie, may establish the zombie as the perfect instantiation of the somatic body. Consequently, although the zombie's appearance in the nominal sense distinguishes them from humans, their appearance as a vehicle for appetites establishes much clearer parallels between the violence of the zombies and of the state.

### ***Welcome***

If the different kinds of bodies that populate Foster's *World War Z* indict the technologies of exclusion that are used by the state to regulate refugees, a similar technique might be found in other films. While much of the force of Forster's film derives from the viewer's generic expectations of the zombie movie, Phillippe Lioret's politically-engaged romance utilises the conventions of social realism to similar effect. In its political mode the plot of *Welcome* pivots upon the conflict between refugees and liberal French citizens on the one hand, and the state as represented by magistrates and police officers on the other. It dramatizes the enforcing of Article L622-1 of French law, which forbids direct or indirect assistance of illegal migrants (*séjour irréguliers*) in France ('Code De L'entrée' 2013), by recording the prosecution of Simon, a Calais resident and local swimming instructor who tries to offer shelter to Kurdish refugees attempting to cross the English Channel (*La Manche*) to reach the UK.<sup>6</sup> At the level of the script Lioret makes obvious allusions to the discriminatory



biopolitics of the Nazi Party as well as to the collaboration of French citizens under German occupation during World War Two. Through these devices he appears to suggest that the state's desire to exclude '*clandestins*' leads it to become increasingly draconian in regards to its own citizens. As with *World War Z*, the act of exclusion is shown to make the state resemble the monstrous states from which refugees might flee.

As a romance, the film is driven by the twin stories of Simon and Bilal, the Iraqi Kurd whom Simon tries to help. Simon initially offers Bilal help in a bid to win back his estranged wife, Marion, who runs a soup kitchen providing aid to the refugees in Calais' Jungle.<sup>7</sup> However as he comes to know Bilal he responds to Bilal's own hope for reunion with his girlfriend, Mina, the sister of a friend from Iraq who now lives in London. Entranced by Bilal's story, Simon compares Bilal's 4000Km walk from Mosul to Calais with his own failure to fight for his marriage. Lioret has inferred a similar feeling among viewers arguing that these love stories attracted viewers to the film, and Will Higbee argues that it is chiefly this which 'humanized' Bilal for French audiences (2014: 35). The sentimental presumption here is of a kind of universalism whereby the common experience of romantic love nudges audiences to imagine that refugees are 'just like us'. *Welcome* consistently exploits this notion, with both plot and visual presentation pointing to similarities between the men while drawing attention to material differences between the citizen and the refugees. At its conclusion, for instance, when Simon visits Mina in London after Bilal has drowned trying to swim across the Channel to England, he offers her Marion's engagement ring as a token of Bilal's love. Mina is immune to Simon's sentimentality, however, and refuses the ring on the grounds that she 'never could wear it.' Mina's refusal inserts a political reality into the romantic element, obliquely referencing her arranged marriage to her father's cousin and disrupting the implied equivalences between Simon/Marion and

Bilal/Mina. What is more, the ease with which Simon is able to make the journey to London when this had been so fatally impossible for Bilal also serves to highlight the fact that any universal aspirations must confront the inequalities of rights that attach to citizens and to refugees.

Arguably, the film's conclusion reminds the viewer that the real subject of the film is the act of exception. Nevertheless, the sense of correspondence between Simon and Bilal cannot fully be undone, not least because Simon's movement is also curtailed by the French State: having been charged with aiding refugees he is confined to the department of Pas-de-Calais pending trial and so his journey to London breaches the conditions of his bail. By tethering Simon to Calais, the state enacts a curtailment of rights that causes him to resemble the refugee whose journey to the United Kingdom is obstructed by the Anglo-French border. As in *World War Z*, the actions of the state transform the citizen into a replica of the excepted refugees, though in keeping with its genre, this takes a less sensational form.

At the visual level this replication is supported by strong parallels in the presentation of the two characters throughout the film. For instance, many of the scenes that Bilal and Simon share occur in tight interior spaces such as Simon's flat or car. In the latter of these, especially, the conventional shot/counter-shot of conversational exchange produces an effect of visual mirroring between the two faces. More commonly, however, the use of visual resemblance also points toward meaningful contrasts. The film includes many scenes where either Bilal stares wistfully at the Calais coastline or where Simon sits alone in sombre meditation staring into space. Although there are clear echoes in the presentation of the two characters here, the setting and filming indicates a substantial difference. Where Simon is routinely shown indoors, shot predominantly with a static camera within his flat or in the local bar eating and drinking, Bilal is more often filmed with a tracking shot, outside

wandering the streets or beach. The contrast here has obvious symbolic purpose and positioning Bilal outside has the implication that the refugee represents a form of excess that sits outside of the civic with no visible function or purpose. Related scenes in which he queues with other refugees for the soup kitchen or where he huddles with other refugees in the Jungle's undergrowth seeking warmth from a small fire exaggerate this suggestion. The refugees, here, are outside the social infrastructure of civil society as an obvious metaphor for their exclusion from the economy of rights. In this way the filming suggests that the human bond between the men is undermined by the politics of exception, which operates through the variable bestowal of rights.

This pattern is repeated in numerous other scenes where certain kinds of visual similarity are used to underline radical differences between the two men. For example, late in the film when Bilal is detained in a refugee retention centre, a slow zoom and pan left shows him staring out of a barred window that fills a substantial portion of the shot. This then cuts to a similar shot of a barred window that continues the leftward movement of the camera to reveal Simon in a cell also staring outwards. However, while Bilal's stare continues throughout the whole shot, Simon's gaze is drawn back inside by the entrance of a police officer, who lists the conditions of his bail and orders him out of detention and back into the world of the civic. After he is charged Simon appears to become deeply insular, uttering few lines of dialogue and continually staring ahead with a look of perplexed intensity. Although Simon has a depressed demeanour throughout the film, the intensification of his introspection suggests that once he is denied the opportunity to be hospitable he retreats from social interactions of any kind. It seems significant then, that this sequence contains a final, striking, instance of visual resemblance in a scene in which Simon dives into the local swimming pool and begins to swim lengths. This scene closely mirrors a number of earlier episodes where Bilal is shown shuttling back and forward through the

swimming pool in preparation for his Channel crossing. In these scenes the film often uses long-takes to linger on Bilal's bodily effort, placing his semi-naked body at the centre of the visual field. This depiction of the body invites a reading that is attentive to the different significance of the body as a biopolitical and as a natural entity. Across the film Bilal appears to perfect his stroke, moving from a mixture of breaststroke and clumsy freestyle to an accomplished front-crawl. As such the film suggests that he acts out a somatic response to the authoritarian state by adapting his body to evade the structures of exclusion. Although Bilal's biopolitical body cannot become unmarked (indeed, one of these scenes draws attention to his refugee registration number written prominently on his hand), he may train his somatic body to find a route through the cracks of the securitized frontier. Because the viewer has become accustomed to seeing Bilal in this way, when Simon dives into the pool it is initially unclear that it is Simon rather than Bilal and the experience of watching the scene involves a jolt of disassociation once the viewer realises that it is Simon rather than the young Kurd. At the visual level, then, Simon has become or *appears to be* Bilal. Yet, once again, the film insists that this resemblance is only partial because it immediately cuts to a parallel image of Bilal swimming the Channel as he makes his fatal attempt to cross.

Despite Bilal's unfortunate fate, I want to reassert the value of addressing the somatic quality of the body as a means of appearance in the sense of emergence. *Welcome* is extremely attentive to the needs of the body and the need for food, shelter, hygiene, and for air dominate much of the early part of the film. In the opening scenes that depict Marion's charitable soup kitchen, the focus upon the need for sustenance offered to refugees is aided by the cinematography that uses extreme close up of food and bottled water. A running trope in the film is the need for breath. As a counter narrative to Bilal's swim training, which includes learning to properly breathe while

swimming front-crawl, Bilal tries to train himself to breathe inside a plastic bag so that he might evade the carbon-monoxide sensors used to police the border. In an early scene when he attempts to cross the border inside a lorry his failure to remain inside the plastic covering leads to his detection. This scene provides a dramatic enactment of the need to breathe since it involves a vivid struggle between Bilal and his friend Zoran who tries to keep the plastic bag in place. Once they are discovered by French border police their travelling companion Eyaz is found to have suffocated.<sup>8</sup> Eyaz' death demonstrates the consequence of Bilal's tussle with Zoran since Zoran's victory might have been fatal to Bilal.

Reading back on *World War Z*, Bilal's desire to train his body to make it more efficient at illicit border crossings immediately seems to contrast with the image of the refugee as an infected body. Nevertheless, there is clearly a degree of correspondence in that Bilal's desire to circumvent the structures of exclusion requires him to become the very form of strong masculinity that constitutes the fearful representation that is used to rationalise the state's inhospitality towards refugees. To this degree, the securitized border is shown to be self-justifying because it appears to produce the very threat that it is intended to repulse. Appropriately, while the demand for the basic needs of the body is a constant feature of Lioret's film, he also repeatedly depicts refugees being denied access to sustenance by the state. After his failed attempt to cross the Channel by truck Bilal appears in a French court and is sentenced for trying to cross illegally. Although the law mandates that he is entitled to a bed in a hostel, the prosecuting judge denies him this right because his attempt to reach England is taken as evidence that he 'has no desire to go to a hostel'. This is one of many instances where refugees are shown being denied their corporeal needs. For instance, a group of refugees provokes a minor disturbance when they attempt to take a shower in the local swimming pool and are turned away by Simon because it is 'forbidden' for them to pay

to shower there. Shortly afterwards Marion confronts a supermarket security guard who bars two refugees from shopping because it upsets other customers. Through the device of Simon's hospitality the trope of shelter is a constant motif but Simon's humanitarianism is repeatedly counterposed against images of the state's violent and authoritarian refusal of hospitality. At one point Simon remorsefully seeks out Bilal after an argument at the swimming pool. When he arrives at the port he finds that police with tear gas have cleared Marion's soup kitchen 'just to stop [refugees] eating'. Once he finds Bilal in the Jungle and drives him home to his flat, they pass refugees running along the portside chased by gendarmerie wielding batons and kicks. The needs of the somatic body, then, provide Lioret with a structure of differentiation, which distinguishes not between the genuine and the illegal migrant but between the humanitarian citizen and the authoritarian state.

This feature of the film depends extensively upon the corporeal presence of the refugee and it seems plausible that this presence can be read as a form of Butler's appearance-as-politics. If the association of the refugee with basic human need seems to speak of life as *zoē*, which Agamben glosses as 'the simple fact of living', rather than the political life of *bios*, which Agamben defines as 'the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group' (Agamben 1998: 1), the demand that these needs should be met by the French State stands as the political claim to have rights. To that end, those episodes in *Welcome* where refugees present themselves to the eye in order to express this demand can be read as instance of appearance (in the sense of the emergence). The scene at the swimming pool, in particular, where a group of refugees collectively request access to clean water ties the somatic need to a form of embodied appearance that contains a non-discursive articulation. As a result of the complicated multilingual character of the film this exceeds the strictly verbal content of the film's dialogue. *Welcome* includes dialogue in English, French and Kurdish, all of which are subtitled

and also speech in languages other than French and English that is part of the diegetic soundtrack but not subtitled.<sup>9</sup> The words used by refugee characters when they try to shower at the swimming pool are divided between untranslated hubbub and a few lines in English. Verbally the demand for basic needs is limited and much work is done by sheer weight of numbers and the physical performance of clamour with men reaching over one another eager to offer their money to the pool's cashier.

The representation of Bilal's body might do similar work. Though his character is given ample dialogue and can speak about his desire to reach the UK, the demands of the body are often acted physically through, for instance, shivering at the cold. This is perhaps best exemplified when, after he drowns in the Channel, his body is returned to France where, like Polynices, it demands burial. As Cavarero records, this demand drives Sophocles' *Antigone*. Burial is the final somatic gesture and the one that marks out the human difference from animals as proof of *techne*. The act of burial protects the human body from becoming the 'horrible meal' of some other animal predator but the granting of burial also symbolises the founding of the polis as a mark of human superiority (Cavarero 2002: 36). The viewer does not see Bilal's body, only a casket lowered into a grave and a wreath that bears his nickname Bazda (The Runner). Nevertheless, the viewer infers the somatic content of the coffin and, through the ritual of burial, allows Bilal to *appear* as human in a way that demands rights or at the very least rites. The conclusion to the film marries with the growing recognition that Europe's borders have become necropolises housing the bodies of illegalized migrants who were unable to transverse the securitized borders. Attempts to memorialise these deaths have become sites of dissent for those wishing to oppose the policies of their governments which can be seen to have rendered the national border so perilous (Horsti and Neumann 2017; Musarò 2017). In line with such attempts, the presentation of Bilal as a somatic being, just as much as his presentation as a thinking subject,

opens up a space for politics in the film. To that end *Welcome* offers a model for critical practice that uses an attention to the corporeal fact of the refugee as a way to critique the politics of exception that are used to govern asylum in the contemporary moment.

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Emma Cox for her thoughtful editing of this work and to the participants of the *Troubling Globalization* workshop at Nottingham Trent University, 22nd April 2017.

<sup>2</sup> For a further critique of Agamben's position see (Owens 2009).

<sup>3</sup> While some of the boundaries in the film resemble the militarised fortification of the contemporary border, they seem closer to the concept of the stockade than the geopolitical boundary. There is, no doubt, a line of continuity between the fortified citadel and the contemporary nation and in the present context it is worth noting the archaeology of fortification in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* ([2001] 2002) and Arne De Boever's attempt to link this to Agamben's state of exception (De Boever 2014).

<sup>4</sup> In a sign that the filmmakers were aware of the potential for controversy it is notable that when the zombies encroach into Israel none conspicuously wears religious clothing. This is in contrast to the visible appearance of *kufi* hats or *kippah* on the heads of fleeing humans.

<sup>5</sup> I have argued elsewhere that the visual technologies of border securitization, which capture images of illegalized migrants secreted into the infrastructures of global logistics where the embodied migrant is supposed to be debarred, leads the migrating body to appear as a form of revenant that demands recognition (Connell 2012). Reading across from that argument to this, there seems some scope for a further study on the hauntological aesthetics of refugees.

<sup>6</sup> Laura Rascaroli explains the relevant history of the law (2013: 28) and Will Higbee records Lioret's ambivalent co-operation with the French Socialist Party in their attempt to repeal L622-1 (2014: 33-34).

<sup>7</sup> The 'Jungle' is the colloquial but semi-official name for the large migrant encampment in the vicinity of the Calais ferry port that developed when the Red Cross centre at nearby Sangatte was closed in 2002 (Martinetti 2016).

<sup>8</sup> This is a common trope in refugee films and both Michael Winterbottom's *In This World* (2002) and Gianfranco Rosi's documentary *Fire at Sea* (2016) depict death by suffocation as a consequence of illegalized crossings.

<sup>9</sup> The French edition of the DVD subtitles Kurdish and English dialogue whereas the English edition subtitles French and Kurdish.