The relationship between migrancy and human subjectivity remains a fraught one, particularly in contemporary theorizations of globalization. At one extreme, this relation installs a privileged subject of resistance through theorizations of hybridity and liminality. Here, the image of the migrant underlines the importance of mixture, catachresis, and impurity as a necessary critique of racist and exclusivist notions of identity. However, in other circumstances, which become increasingly visible in political discourse, the position of the migrant is one of painful indeterminacy, of a desire for the very stability secured by citizenship. Within this fraught field of multiple theorizations and subjective desires, much attention has been paid recently to the question of ethics, in particular the possibility of establishing an ethical relationship with the Other.

In this essay, I discuss the relationship between migrancy and visuality. I address this relationship through a close reading of Marc Isaacs’ documentary film Calais: The Last Border. By looking at how the film actively produces Calais as the place of the migrant, I emphasize the disjunctive and conjunctive work that words and images perform. The productive doing and undoing of the relationship between word and image reconfigures the place of the migrant, and indeed of Calais. In addition, my analysis of the film will be brought into relation with two influential theoretical formulations of the bond between ethics and aesthetics. The specific place of visuality within the relationship between ethics and the Other will be at stake here. Critiquing one influential argument of the place of ethics in the relationship between migrancy and visuality, the one proposed by Jacques Derrida in Of Hospitality, The Politics of Friendship, and other works, I argue that a reformulation of aesthetics along the lines of Jacques Rancière’s provides a more productive and politically revealing understanding of the stakes that

The Visuality of the Other: the Place of the Migrant between Derrida’s Ethics and Rancière’s Aesthetics in Calais: the Last Border

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are involved. The shift in focus from ethics to aesthetics that I argue for does not imply giving up ethical questions; rather, it redistributes the relationship between ethics and aesthetics by foregrounding the productive power of visuality as practice.

**The Other between Word and Image**

Marc Isaacs’ *Calais: The Last Border*, produced in 2003, is the product of the filmmaker’s desire to make a film about the people interred in the Sangatte refugee camp in Calais. By the time Isaacs made it to the city, however, the camp had already been dissolved after much rancor between the French and British governments, with the latter viewing the camp as a jumping-off point for Dover. The earlier focus on the internment camp transitioned into the broader issue of the emplacement of differentiated forms of migration. The film shows a number of people, whose status is increasingly brought into question by the relations the film sets up between them. Are they inhabitants or visitors in transit? Refugees or unwanted illegals?

Ijaz is a refugee from Kabul, whose desire to enter Britain is interrupted by his internment in Calais. The film also focuses on Tulia, for whom Calais is not a place of transit, either for the UK (her ‘homeland’) or for the continent: it is her home; she and her husband Les are willing residents. Steve, also an Englishman and a fellow resident of Calais, has set up home here with his young French partner and their child, and runs a bar in the city, though his hopes for financial success do not match the social comfort the couple have found in comparison to their experiences in narrow-minded England. For Steve, Calais is a home that has not welcomed him from England as he hoped it might. Peter, the Jamaican man caught between deportation and arrival in a home that has just debarred him—only two days before, Jamaicans did not require visas to enter the UK—and a group of ‘unwanted’ migrants who hang out on a bench by a roadside petrol station together form the fourth focus of the film. The film also includes regular British bus visitors to Calais, there to shop for cheap alcohol and cigarettes. They provide the sharpest perspective on the migrants of Calais, given their position as successful travelers, armed with the right papers, able to cross the border at will.

The relationship between the individuals in the film, and the relationship between words and images, constructs a multi-dimensional picture of the migrant, which includes different histories and motivation for migration as well settlement. They also establish changing intersubjective relations between the filmmaker, the individual on-screen, and the audience, and hence disturb a sharp distinction between us and them, society and its others. The singular Other is pluralized, so that different histories may be connected to each other without being collapsed into a singular figuration. As a result, the issues the subjects of the film struggle with become understandable to us in the audience in their plurality.

Both the content and practice of the film are marked by a process of displacement. Once example: Isaacs follows Tulia, her husband Les, and their son to an