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Entangled or 'Extruded' Histories? Displacement, National Refugees, and Repatriation after the Second World War

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This article uses 'national refugees' in Italy after 1945 as a starting point for broader reflections on the classifications of displaced persons (DPs) employed in both international refugee law and historical accounts of the refugee in the postwar world. After 1945, Italy became temporary home to many persons displaced by the war and the consolidation of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe. At the same time, Italy had its own refugees forced to leave territories (including African colonies) lost with the collapse of fascism. Scholarship on flows resulting from decolonization (including settler returns) has remained distinct from that on post-war DPs. The analysis demonstrates the productiveness of conceptualizing these various experiences of displacement as 'entangled histories' marked by asymmetries of various types. In addition to reconsidering these global population movements as 'entangled', scholars might reframe the histories of imperial displacements as 'extruded'. The notion of extrusion highlights the ways in which these histories and their bearers (particularly colonial repatriates) often prove uncomfortable, as in the Italian case.

Keywords: colonial repatriation, Italy, refugees, 1951 Refugee Convention

Reflecting on the task of aiding those displaced during and in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, Holborn concluded: 'It is evident how difficult a task it was to select genuine refugees and displaced persons among the huge mass of uprooted humanity' (1956: 210). Scholars have also struggled with this question of just what—and who—constitutes the proper object of refugee studies. Although historical work on the emergence of the refugee as an object of international humanitarianism has documented the complex ways in which contests over eligibility shaped the refugee concept through a series of inclusions and exclusions, some scholars have mistaken the legal exclusion of most non-European refugees from the 1951 Geneva

Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees for an empirical reality. In a review of the history of the international refugee system, for example, Gallagher expresses a common view: 'By 1960 the European refugee problem was greatly reduced in scale.' He adds, 'However, refugee problems were burgeoning in other parts of the globe and new approaches were needed to address them' (1989: 583). An official UNHCR publication makes a similar argument: 'Initially, the 1951 Convention was more or less limited to protecting European refugees in the aftermath of the Second World War, but a 1967 Protocol expanded its scope as the problem of displacement spread around the world' (UNHCR 2007: 5). Such statements imply that the globalization of the refugee crisis occurred only *after* its successful resolution in postwar Europe, with the necessity for new instruments of protection in changed circumstances.¹

The articles collected in this special issue present a very different picture, evidencing the already global nature of the refugee question in the early postwar period (well before the 1967 Protocol). Indeed, the cartography of displacement stretched from Europe to Palestine to India to eastern Asia and beyond. This article critically examines the definition of the refugee and its postwar boundaries—in geographic, conceptual, and temporal terms—in order to probe the systematic exclusions of certain experiences from 'refugee history' and to think about useful new frames for analysis. In doing so, it draws on the histories of repatriates from the territories Italy lost after the Second World War, a group that has rarely figured (if at all), even in recent rethinkings of the refugee experience.

After 1945, Italian nationals migrated from a wide range of territories in Africa and the Balkans that Italy lost in the aftermath of fascism's defeat. These ex-territories ranged from colonies of direct dominion (Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia) to departments (Libya, the Dodecanese Islands) to protectorates (Albania) to areas formerly integrated into the Italian state (parts of Venezia Giulia and the Valle d'Aosta). While the depth of integration and rootedness among 'Italians' within these diverse territories proved quite heterogeneous, as did the motivations and mechanisms for migration, individuals coming from these areas shared common experiences as 'national refugees' (*profughi nazionali*) united by the privileges of Italian citizenship (or at least the *claim* to citizenship, which at times had to be verified). In addition, they received assistance from the same statal and para-statal entities, which included the Ente Comunale per l'Assistenza (ECA), Amministrazione per gli Aiuti Internazionali (AAI), and Opera per l'Assistenza ai Profughi Giuliani Dalmati Rimpatriati (OAPGDR).

At first glance, the Italian example may seem an odd choice to illuminate the complexities of the construction of the international refugee regime and the subsequent emergence of refugee studies. For many observers at the time and even scholars today, such mobile individuals proved different in kind (and often scale) from *bona fide* refugees. Though recognized as part of that 'huge mass of uprooted humanity' cited by Holborn, such repatriates

and ‘national refugees’ figured as distinct from other peoples on the move, such as the refugees streaming into Italy from Central and Eastern Europe in search of shelter and assistance in camps administered by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and, later, the International Refugee Organization (IRO). As Goodwin-Gill notes, after the Second World War, ‘[a]part from those countries actually having to deal with large populations of “national refugees,” a consensus emerged that such refugees were not “an international problem,” and did not require international protection’ (1990: 28). Yet this consensus was only forged over time through painstaking and practical consideration of actual cases that came before the new bodies of international refugee relief, a reality that emerges clearly though analysis of the Italian situation after the Second World War. The consequences of this consensus remain profound, both for displaced persons in the contemporary world and for scholarly understandings of refugees.

The complicated ways in which displaced persons such as the Italian ‘returnees’ or ‘national refugees’ became excluded over time from both formal and scholarly understandings of refugees thus prove highly instructive. The question of how to classify these displacees arose repeatedly and came before a wide range of actors, including personnel at UNRRA, the IRO, the Ponteficia Opera per l’Assistenza (POA, the Vatican’s relief body), the Italian government, and the British Military Administrations (BMA) that temporarily governed many of the former Italian territories (those in Africa and the Dodecanese islands). In the decade following the Second World War, international legal definitions of the refugee grew narrower, a reality demonstrated by examination of the Italian case. What is more surprising, perhaps, is that even critical scholarship has tended to accept this exclusion. Before turning to examine the Italian case in detail, I first situate ‘national refugees’ and colonial repatriates—two categories that overlap but do not prove entirely coterminous in the Italian example—within a diverse range of scholarly literatures.

Refugees, Repatriates or Return Migrants?

Settler returns from European overseas colonies in the wake of decolonization have received little mention in the literature on the postwar European refugee question. This lacuna reflects the conceptual divisions that have demarcated ‘national’ refugees from *bona fide* refugees (according to the terms of the 1951 Convention), as well as a periodization of decolonization that treats it as kicking into high gear around the time that World Refugee Year (1959–1960) marked the imminent ‘resolution’ of Europe’s massive post-war DP crisis (for a notable exception, see Gatrell 2010). The Italian case, however, demonstrates the temporal and geographic intersection of the European DP crisis during and after the Second World War with the displacements of decolonization, two processes that have typically been treated

as separate and distinct. In the Italian example, these histories not only run on parallel tracks but cross and entangle at many points.

Nor is the Italian case unique, given the decolonization processes in Dutch possessions that began during the Second World War.² Some scholars have emphasized the anomalous nature of these decolonization processes, deeming them ‘precocious’ (Dubois 1993) or examples of ‘third-party decolonization’ (Watt 2009). These labels work, however, to affirm the teleological narrative of decolonization that underwrites many histories of the rise of the global refugee. By locating the global refugee primarily in the era of decolonization and by writing colonial repatriates out of the refugee story altogether, such accounts obscure ongoing linkages between projects of political humanitarianism and Western imperialism (Chimni 2009). As noted earlier, these accounts also risk confusing historical reality with the legal categories put forward in the 1951 Convention on Refugees. In a trenchant critique of refugee studies, Chimni reminds us, ‘life and epistemology do not imitate legal categories. Instead, legal categories most often seek to “discipline” life and knowledge to realize dominant interests in society’ (2009: 12).

As is well known, the terms of the Convention restricted the definition of refugees to those affected by ‘events occurring before 1 January 1951,’ ‘events’ here largely meaning those in Europe or involving European subjects (such as European refugees in China). The definition of the refugee employed in the Convention, therefore, proved highly particularistic even as it paradoxically claimed normativity in its status as international law.³ This definition not only excluded European colonial returnees, such as the Dutch and Italians, but also the *hikiagesha* or Japanese colonial repatriates who arrived in the homeland as refugees from Manchuria, Korea, and Taiwan as the consequence of mandatory repatriation carried out by Allied forces.⁴ In addition, this omitted from eligibility non-European refugees produced by decolonization in South Asia (the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947), by the end of the British mandate in Palestine and the creation of Israel in 1948, and the influx of persons fleeing communist China in 1949 into the British colony of Hong Kong, as well as other cases of displacement occurring before the 1951 cutoff.⁵ As one result of such exclusions, in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War there arose a wide range of *ad hoc* solutions to the problem of displaced persons together with a series of regional regimes of refugee protection,⁶ only one of which (that comprising the Convention and UNHCR) acquired normative status.⁷

Many of the Italian repatriates technically fell within the geographic and temporal definitions of the Convention. As I will explore in detail in the following section, however, the movement from former Italian territories to homeland appeared to most international observers as a movement *within* national borders, even though it was precisely changes in those borders that had prompted migration to the Italian peninsula. At issue, too, was the status of Italians as former enemies or co-belligerents, as well as the motivations for and circumstances of their migrations.

In general, observers have assumed that in 'coming home' these colonial repatriates remained within their own country as an inevitable (yet voluntary) consequence of colonialism's end. This therefore rendered such migrants ineligible for consideration as formal refugees who crossed an international border as the result of violence and persecution or the well-founded fear of it and who could not avail themselves of the protection of the country of their nationality (to paraphrase article 1 of the 1951 Refugee Convention). Such an assumption downplays the motivations of intimidation and pressure prompting many such migrations, as well as the fact that many such individuals had never even set foot in their putative country of ethnic or national origin prior to their 'return'. In light of this, most of the vocabulary applied to describe such migrants—'returnees,' 'repatriates,' or 'population refluxes'—proves inadequate.⁸

At issue for many scholars is whether these repatriates constitute an example of forced migration that would allow us to consider them refugees of a particular sort, even if they do fall outside the legal categories of the Convention. Take, for example, the dramatic flight of *pieds noirs* (settlers of European origin) from Algeria following the violence of the Independence War and civil war (1954–1962). In terms of the Convention the *pieds noirs* did not constitute refugees in the formal sense. In migrating from Algeria (a French department) to metropolitan France, these individuals were not considered to have crossed an international border nor did they need to acquire a new citizenship. This contrasted with the non-European Algerians who fled to Morocco and Tunisia after the outbreak of civil war and received UNHCR assistance, although even these displaced individuals also technically remained outside the Convention definition. In addition, these various population movements occurred after 1951; the massive exodus of *pieds noirs*, for example, took place between 1962 and 1964. Even in critical scholarly accounts like those contained in this special issue, periodization remains complicated. The question of just when the 'postwar' started and ended remains contested among scholars,⁹ leaving in question whether the displacements attendant to decolonization in Algeria should be considered as of a piece with those of the former Italian territories or India, for example.

Specialists on the *pieds noirs* have devoted considerable attention to the question of whether scholars should consider such post-colonial returns as examples of forced movements. Smith asks, 'Can we classify the population transfers associated with the decolonization of settler and other colonies as forced removals?' (2009: 412). In answering this, Smith examines degrees of choice in migrant decision-making upon departure and arrival, as well as state involvement. She concludes that examples of 'free,' 'coerced' and 'forced' migrations characterized the various European 'reverse migrations of decolonization,' what she describes as migration flows 'comprised of highly diverse populations' (2009: 407). This more elaborate differentiation of degrees of constraint into 'forced' or 'coerced' versus free, however, does

not resolve the key tension that plagues migration studies generally and discussions of refugees specifically: how to distinguish so-called forced from voluntary migration or 'political' from 'economic' migrants, given the complex calculus of coercion, constraint, and choice that underwrites many acts of migration? Smith's refinement of terms leaves in place a framework that has worked to render many displaced persons invisible in legal terms, as well as in scholarship on refugees.

As this brief discussion has hopefully made clear, the exclusion of colonial and national repatriates from accounts of refugees does not prove surprising, given the ways in which scholarship on post-1945 refugees has relied heavily on assumptions built into the 1951 Convention. The fact that specialists on *colonialism* have demonstrated relatively little interest in the processes whereby former colonial settlers came home proves a more puzzling and enduring exclusion. Smith (2003) has gone so far as to characterize such repatriates as 'Europe's invisible migrants,' contrasting their invisibility to the intense interest in and visibility of the immigration of former colonial subjects to the metropole.¹⁰ The irony, of course, is that these population movements were highly (if selectively) visible at the time—both in the metropolises to which repatriates migrated and at the international level, where the question immediately arose as to who bore responsibility for assisting them.

Politics provide one obvious explanation for this disparity, as repatriated colonials were often stigmatized in the metropole. Such 'returned' settlers serve as uncomfortable reminders of repudiated and often painful histories. As a result, former repatriates may nurture a sense of alienation from the putative home countries to which they returned. In conducting fieldwork among communities of *pieds noirs* of Maltese origin who migrated to France, for example, Smith often encountered puzzled or even hostile reactions when she explained her research project to metropolitan French. One person even exclaimed, 'Oh, *them*, I really *really* hate those people!' (2006: 179). I have experienced similar responses to my work with Italian refugees from Italy's lost territories. When I was giving a talk in 2008 in Miami, the historian introducing me (a specialist on Italy) ended her comments with, 'And what's amazing, is that she went and talked to and spent time with *those people*.' *Those people*, then, seem to arouse repulsion among many of their fellow citizens and even some scholars, who presume them to be colonial nostalgics at best and racist apologists or (in the Italian case) fascists at worst—certainly not 'refugees' deserving of pity and assistance.

The relative disinterest in, if not outright dislike of, such repatriates both underlies and results from deeper conceptual dilemmas. Colonial settlers fit uneasily into a whole range of conceptual paradigms: those of refugees and displacement, forced migration, and diaspora. If displacement implies forced or involuntary movement and diaspora by definition entails notions of dispersal, 'scattered seeds' and hence kinship and originary points of departure (Helmreich 1992; Safran 1991), how do we classify national/colonial repatriates? Do their experiences within the colony constitute diasporic ones or is it

rather their existence in the postcolonial metropole that underwrites the condition of diaspora and an experience of displacement? If some colonial settlers remain in the former colony and others leave, does this suggest that repatriation was not coerced, even when colonials might remain not through their choice but rather as a result of what Lubkemann (2008) calls 'involuntary immobility'? Given that these various conceptual frameworks all rely on assumptions about places of origin from which groups become uprooted, colonial settlers—often portrayed (rightly or wrongly) as opportunistic adventurers with shallow attachments to the place of colonial settlement—remain apart. Because of the relative brevity (80 years) of Italy's colonial experiment, for example, scholars tend to describe both the empire and its colonizers as transient and impermanent. Taddia gives voice to a common sentiment when she contends, 'settlers of the [fascist] Empire did not put down roots in Africa; instead, they took advantage of particular contingencies to emigrate, and repatriated quickly' (2005: 212).

Unlike their Dutch or Algerian counterparts, Italian repatriates bore the burden not only of a repudiated history of colonialism but also that of fascism. Both non-Italian populations in the former possessions and metropolitan Italians tended to view the repatriates as enthusiastic agents of fascism. In contrast to the *pieds noirs*, however, whose bureaucratic classification as *rapatrié* marked out their difference, the Italian term *rimpatriato* used to designate these settlers fails to acknowledge their specificity. In Italian, the category of *rimpatriato* describes individuals from the former colonies together with those voluntary migrants who came back to the peninsula in the return migrations that typified Italy's nineteenth and twentieth century mass migrations (see e.g. Caroli 1973; Cinel 2002). The Italian term *rimpatriato* or return migrant thus overlaps with academic terminology that describes such settler flows to the metropole as 'refluxes' or 'reverse migrations'.

Among the many histories of Italian return migration, almost none highlight colonial repatriation as something specific or even deal with it at all. This reflects a pervasive belief in Italy and abroad that Italian decolonization proved quick and relatively unproblematic; that it lacked the trauma associated with events like the Algerian or Indochina wars. (In reality, the multiple traumas wrought by fascism and the Second World War subsumed those of decolonization.) Seton-Watson even goes so far as to declare that Italy's 'imperial hangover' was 'less severe than those of other ex-imperial powers' (1980: 169). Although depicting Italian decolonization as relatively painless, Seton-Watson's choice of language hints at the bias that continues to mark scholarship on colonialism's aftermaths. Gastric imagery of 'hangovers' or refluxes implies that with decolonization, settlers were regurgitated into the homeland, leaving a bilious aftertaste.

The following section explores the circumstances of Italian repatriation after the war, inquiring into whether their 'return' to the homeland really required nothing more than the political and social equivalent of an antacid. How did various actors categorize these highly visible remnants of Italian

colonialism and fascism, coming as they did into a country marked by large-scale flows of refugees?

Making 'National Refugees'

By the end of the Second World War, Italy had lost effective control over its empire, which at its height included Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Libya, as well as the Dodecanese islands and Albania. With the 1947 Peace Treaty, Italy renounced its claims to its African colonies and the Aegean islands. It also ceded the southern portion of Venezia Giulia (which had been an integral part of the Italian state) to Yugoslavia and parts of the Valle d'Aosta to France. Another area of the contested Venezia Giulia region was awarded to Yugoslavia in 1954. Italy administered a United Nations trusteeship in its former colony of Somalia, which achieved full independence in 1960.

Changes in Italy's political borders occasioned widespread migration by Italian nationals to the Italian peninsula from these lost territories. A unitary history of these movements has yet to be written. The reasons for this absent history include the fragmentary nature of the relevant documentation, the highly selective remembrance of the colonial past in Italy, and the political and conceptual blinders that reject discussion of the commonalities between Italians coming from Italy's lost eastern territories (Venezia Giulia) and Italians from the colonies and departments. In addition, figures for these flows remain contested and incomplete; numbers for migrants from Venezia Giulia range from 200,000 to 350,000, whereas those for repatriates from other territories run as high as 450,000.¹¹ Smith underlines the challenges in quantifying such reverse migrations, given 'that statistically invisible citizens were usually involved' (2009: 398) and that the migrations of many such individuals would not have been recorded or distinguished from other types of movements. In the Italian case, as well, such flows were not exclusively unidirectional and often took place over many years (in some cases, decades), further raising complicated questions of how to periodize processes of decolonization and reverse migrations.

Whereas scholars often question whether colonial repatriates experienced forced or coerced migration, the Italian government took as largely axiomatic the severe constraints on Italians remaining in the former possessions. At the same time, however, Italian authorities themselves sought at various moments to deter or slow down repatriation flows to the peninsula for both political and economic reasons. In all the former Italian possessions there occurred some highly publicized episodes of violence and intimidation towards Italians and isolated expulsions of individuals or groups of individuals. During the years immediately following the Second World War, for example, we find a confusing scenario with some Italian nationals fleeing or expelled from former Italian territories, some remaining, some trying to get back to the former territories after having been evacuated to the metropole during the war or interned by the Allied forces, and yet others detained in the former

possessions or blocked from migrating by metropolitan authorities. While colonial repatriates in general have proven difficult to classify, then, the migrants from the former Italian possessions present an extreme case in ambiguity.

Individuals could and did try to exploit that ambiguity, requesting assistance from multiple sources. Top down efforts to classify displaced persons into the categories of 'national' and 'foreign' reflected the desire to halt such slippage by clearly parcelling out responsibility for the displaced in Italy and beyond. Eligible foreign displaced were the concern of the international bodies, which cooperated with the Italian government. This division of labour did not always work out so neatly in practice, however. From one direction, Italian authorities sought to exert greater control over aliens on their territory (including those maintained by United Nations agencies) through means such as censuses and expulsions.¹² From the other, personnel in both UNRRA and the IRO continued to debate the status of various categories of Italians from the former possessions, as individuals from these territories and their advocates continued to request assistance from the UN agencies.

Initially, as UNRRA came into being, strong opposition existed to even extending relief of any sort to Italy.¹³ UNRRA's mandate permitted its Displaced Persons Operation only to engage in repatriation of refugees, rather than direct resettlement. UNRRA's constitution also explicitly permitted assistance to nationals from 'united nations' (i.e. Allied) countries forced by war to flee their home or transported by Germans for slave labour, as well as prisoners of war from Allied countries. After much debate, UNRRA was also empowered to provide assistance to Italy (a former enemy turned co-belligerent after the establishment of the Badoglio government in the South in 1943) and thus some Italians displaced *within* the Italian peninsula (the so-called *sfollati* and *sinistrati*, bomb-damaged persons) also came within UNRRA's mandate.¹⁴ A decision at UNRRA's Second Council session in 1944 also allowed for the return (in some cases) of so-called 'intruded' enemy nationals, i.e. individuals from the enemy nations who had intruded into foreign territory and remained there after hostilities ended. The primary group repatriated under this provision consisted of those Italians leaving Hoxha's Albania (Woodbridge 1950b: 479).

Very quickly, UNRRA personnel faced practical dilemmas in the field as a consequence of the differential statuses of Italians from the former possessions. In February 1946, for example, an urgent cable went out from the UNRRA Office in Tirana to UNRRA Headquarters in London warning that in Albania, 'large numbers Italians now being prepared for expulsion... under present exceptional circumstances all Italians here fall within Category DPs.'¹⁵ Yet just one week later, D. R. Oakley-Hill, Chief of Albania's UNRRA Mission, wrote to UNRRA's Director of Finance complaining about the Albanian authorities having stopped their trucks at a roadblock because of the presence of Italian nationals in the UN lorries. 'London advises us that we may only assist the repatriation of those

Italians who entered Albania after the Italian occupation, i.e. April 7th, 1939.' Requesting clarification on this policy regarding eligibility for UNRRA assistance for Italians in Albania (one that had presumably been suspended just a week previously in light of the humanitarian crisis that was emerging), Oakley-Hill acknowledged, 'as it stands it places us in an absurd position, having to distinguish between one Italian and another in this arbitrary fashion.' He concluded, 'The best plan therefore will be to refuse to carry any Italians at all.'¹⁶ In this instance, ambiguity led to a categorical rejection that embraced clarity and political expediency over nuance or humanitarian concerns.

In that same month (April 1946), UNRRA officials received entreaties from Fernando Baldelli, a priest and founding member of the Vatican's Assistance Commission (Pontificia Opera di Assistenza or POA), asking UNRRA to serve as an intermediary with the British Military Administration in Libya.¹⁷ Although as early as September of 1945 some settler children who had been evacuated to the Italian peninsula during the war had begun to rejoin their families in Libya, in April 1946 re-entry not just of children but of all Italian 'refugees' had been suspended. At the same time, Italians desiring to leave the former colony also encountered obstacles. Baldelli asked UNRRA officials for advice and, more pointedly, to use their influence to speed up the operation of repatriation both to and from Tripolitania. Likewise, UNRRA officials received numerous applications from Italians seeking to return to Italy or to return to their homes in other territories, including Ethiopia and the Dodecanese islands.¹⁸

Even after UNRRA officials had determined that 'there are many ITALIANS being repatriated to their native country, but these are not an UNRRA responsibility,'¹⁹ the question nonetheless refused to go away. In August 1946, Philip Hoel-Baker of the British Foreign Office complained in a letter to UNRRA that its General-Director Fiorello LaGuardia mistakenly assumed that the ex-Italian colonies would be returned to Italy. Hoel-Baker urged,

I hope you will be able to explain the position to your Director-General... You may also wish to inform him that I find it difficult to accept his definition of Italians in Italy as 'displaced persons.' They are surely the responsibility of the Italian Government rather than of U.N.R.R.A.²⁰

As UNRRA ceded operations to the IRO, an organization focused on resettlement rather than repatriation, the circle of inclusion narrowed, given that Italian nationals who migrated to the Italian peninsula were considered as being within their home country and thus not in need of resettlement as *bona fide* refugees. Yet the status of Italians displaced from the former territories continued to irrupt into consciousness, demanding time and resources as the IRO personnel grappled with the question. A 1948 report from the IRO's eligibility division in Italy, for example, labelled as one of the most

pressing problems 'refugees from Italian territory ceded to Yugoslavia as a result of the [1947] Peace Treaty.'²¹ Article 19 of the treaty decreed that individuals in the ceded territories of Venezia Giulia, the Dodecanese Islands, and parts of the Valle d'Aosta who had been resident there on or before Italy's entry into the Second World War (on June 10, 1940) and with Italian as their customary language (*lingua d'uso*) could opt for Italian citizenship. The option required leaving the ceded territory and relocating to Italy. Initially, IRO staff treated all those who opted as both Italian citizens and ethnically Italian (and thus ineligible for IRO aid) whereas Slavic speaking non-optants who migrated to Italy were deemed to fall within the IRO's mandate; in order to be considered eligible for IRO assistance, the latter also had to demonstrate political or religious motivations for migrating.

Not surprisingly, given Venezia Giulia's long history of cultural and linguistic intermixture and its more recent history of forcible Italianization during the fascist era, IRO staff soon encountered frequent divergences in language, nationality or ethnicity, and citizenship. In addition, they also confronted a confusing array of statuses: individuals in Italy from the ceded territory who had not opted for Italian citizenship but were of Italian customary language; Slovene and Croatian speakers, some of whom had not opted for Italian citizenship and others who had, who made their way to Italy and now requested IRO assistance to emigrate; prospective optants whose applications for Italian citizenship had been rejected by the Yugoslav authorities but who had come to Italy as clandestine migrants; and so on. Over the next four years, IRO personnel in Italy and Geneva debated back and forth about how to classify and sort out these migrants to Italy from the areas of Venezia Giulia ceded to Yugoslavia, seeking to determine who counted as 'Italian' and thus proved ineligible for IRO aid (but likely eligible for Italian state help). This task ultimately entailed several reversals of policy and various exemptions. In recognition of the complexities involved, IRO staff adopted the classification 'undetermined Venezia Giulia[n]' for the most ambiguous of these cases.²²

The allowances made for some 'Italian' and undetermined Venezia Giulians initially classified as ineligible and later given IRO aid to immigrate overseas, however, remained the exception that proved the rule. In 1949, for example, a memorandum sent from Prince Del Drago at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs urged the IRO to reconsider the status of individuals from the Dodecanese islands who had migrated to Italy after opting for Italian citizenship by the terms of the 1947 Peace Treaty. Del Drago argued the case on several grounds. First, he sought to demonstrate that such migrants really were *bona fide* refugees in the terms that would later be codified in the 1951 Convention:

Taking for granted that there are legal justifications for the request of the Italian Government for IRO assistance to these refugees, it would be appreciated if this question could be reconsidered. Particular consideration should be

given to the situation of the majority of these refugees, which would be summarized as follows:

- a. They have been persecuted, at a determinate period, on account of their religion and political ideas;
- b. They have been obliged to leave the country of their habitual residence and were transferred to Italy, for the most part, by the Allied Authorities;
- c. They are a strain on the very limited Italian assistance budget, in as much as they have neither financial resources nor relations in Italy;
- d. These refugees have been born or have been living for a long time in a foreign country and they could therefore find a better final resettlement in other countries.²³

Although Del Drago did not specify the grounds of the political or religious persecution, he presumably referred to the hostility expressed by some local Greeks towards their former occupiers.²⁴ He also highlighted problems created by the Greek Government's promulgation of Law No. 517 of January 1949, which stipulated that options for Italian citizenship be declared before competent Greek consular officials. It appears that to Del Drago, the problem of migrants to Italy from the Dodecanese whose option applications had been rejected by the Greek government proved analogous to that of the Venezia Giulians, which he cited as a precedent. Del Drago urged that the Dodecanese 'refugees' in Italy 'be considered, from the legal point of view, in a position of undetermined nationality like the refugees from Venezia Giulia.' Finally, he reminded the IRO of the burden that national refugees placed on Italy's still fragile post-war economy and of the comparatively abundant resources available to the IRO. 'Even if these refugees constitute a serious problem for the Italian Government, which has already to assist many of its own refugees,' contended Del Drago, 'they would not be a heavy burden for IRO either because of their limited number (approximately 2,000) or because of their professional ability which will permit ready acceptance by the immigration countries.'²⁵

Del Drago's request echoed one made two months earlier to his IRO superiors by G. Chiavari, Special Advisor on Italian Affairs at the IRO headquarters in Geneva. In response to Chiavari's inquiry, L. M. Hacking, the IRO's Chief Historian, acknowledged that he and Zone Eligibility Officer Thomas agreed 'that the problem was in many respects similar to the problems raised by Venezia Giulians refugees [*sic*].'²⁶ Yet Chiavari's request, like that of Del Drago, would be categorically rejected in the most literal sense.

In a letter to the head of the Italian IRO, Mayer Cohen (Assistant Director-General of the IRO's Health, Care and Maintenance Department) concluded that the IRO could not accept the position taken by the Italian government on these Dodecanese optants:

The Italian Government has a sovereign right to regard as Italian citizens whomsoever it chooses. However, this right is subject to the provisions of

international instruments, in particular, the Peace Treaty, which is binding on the Italian Government, and IRO is not competent to agree to a position clearly contrary to its terms.

The policy to be followed is, therefore, that the IRO should consider as Italian citizens all persons who have duly opted within the terms of the Peace Treaty and the appropriate implementary legislation to retain Italian citizenship. Persons who have not so opted should be considered as Greek citizens.

Mayer Cohen added that eligibility had 'to be determined as an individual matter in each case,' for IRO policy ran counter to 'taking a decision on the group as a whole though of course the identical circumstances of different individuals will lead to similar decision.'²⁷ This focus on individual cases signalled a break with earlier forms of assistance to refugees, such as the Nansen passports issued by the League of Nations for some categories of stateless persons. In the aftermath of the Second World War, by contrast, 'the individual evaluation of personal narratives became a predominant aspect of refugee selection' (Cohen 2008: 447).

Reconstructing the evaluation of such requests and narratives highlights the extensive debate and lobbying by various actors (including the displaced persons themselves) that fed into, as well as challenged, the emerging refugee eligibility mandates for the international UN bodies. The articles contained in this special issue sketch out 'a set of cultural, political, and ideological struggles' (Mazower 2004: 380) within which unfolded the complex negotiations that resulted in the 1951 Geneva Convention. The Italian example further complicates the picture, revealing the ways in which the evaluation of individual narratives nonetheless proved part and parcel of the constitution of collective categories (such as national versus foreign refugees) employed by states and relief agencies in order to clarify who was entitled to assistance, from whom, and on what grounds.²⁸ Analysis of debates within UNRRA and the IRO about how to interpret the identity of DPs coming from former Italian territories after 1945 points to a still nascent consensus about who counted as a *bona fide* international refugee. Initial inclusion of some Italians gave way to categoric exclusions, followed by partial exceptions, succeeded by a reopening of the larger question of status (as with the correspondence on the Dodecanese optants). The final outcome, however, was categoric exclusion. By the time of the IRO's operation, then, we see a sharper yet not altogether crystalline differentiation of national refugees from so-called *bona fide* or formal refugees. Even as questions remained for the IRO about the specific identities and statuses of some individuals from Venezia Giulia and the Dodecanese, for instance, the status of DPs from Italy's former African colonies had already been largely settled from a legal standpoint. The articulation of the Convention and the UNHCR statute would codify such distinctions and exclusions, including the exclusion of many non-European refugees produced by decolonization in the same historical moment.

Conclusion

Just as the act of being displaced involves a series of exclusions, the process of defining who counts as a refugee likewise entails a complex series of exclusions that works to distinguish 'genuine' refugees from other types of migrants. Critical for the history of the refugee in the postwar world and the emerging field of refugee history more generally is the production of detailed accounts of the complex debates over eligibility in a wide range of contexts. Such debates need to be analysed together with their operationalization in practice and the consequences of such decisions for displaced individuals. Historians of refugee flows must remain on continual guard not to mistake the object of their analysis—the codification of legal definitions of the refugee—with their unit of analysis. Conflating legal definitions with scholarly concepts of the refugee risks perpetuating the exclusions of the early postwar period, exclusions that have had serious consequences for the scholarship on refugees. Writing in 2009, Chimni pointed out that the 'attempt by some scholars to attach a special salience to legal categories is somewhat odd... The legal definitions of "refugee" have always been partial and designed to serve State policy' (2009: 16). He added,

The failure of academia to address the definition issue (despite the expanded definition in the 1969 OAU Convention) ironically meant that it was left to the 'practitioner', in particular UNHCR, to devise ways to overcome this closure (*ibid.*).

Furthermore, many scholars have failed to address adequately the asymmetric power relations that led to only one of the regional refugee regimes in the early postwar period—that which developed to help European displaced persons—acquiring normative and international status. Scholarly work that neatly bounds the 'European' refugee crisis after 1945 in geographical and conceptual terms, as well as overly legalistic ones, runs the risk of downplaying these struggles and replicating these exclusions.

As I have argued here, the persistent demands for help for and by national refugees coming from former Italian possessions in the aftermath of the Second World War (together with other problematic cases like the 'Balts') helped bring into focus for personnel and decision makers in the relevant UN organizations the issue of who exactly belonged to the internationally sanctioned refugee category and on what grounds. At the same time, it prompted the development of alternative definitions of refugees and relief schemes within the Italian state, a history that still remains to be written. The little-studied history of Italy's national refugees should prove instructive for scholars, despite—or, perhaps, precisely because of—its marginality. In *No Enchanted Palace*, Mazower urges that the 'ambiguities' of the UN's foundational texts 'should not be ignored' (2009: 8). Nor should we ignore the classificatory ambiguities like those constituted by the Italian 'reverse' refugees.

It is an anthropological truism that liminal or ambiguous categories are 'good to think' (Douglas 1966; Leach 1964; Lévi-Strauss 1963, 1966). Embodying matter out of place, the refugee (Malkki 1995: 1–11) has thus proven good to think on a wide range of topics, from national identity to human rights. Yet, as Tambiah famously added, such liminal categories also prove 'good to prohibit' (1969). Given that national refugees, including colonial repatriates, occupy an ambiguous space within the already liminal category of refugee and have been the object of various prohibitions, it becomes evident that these national refugees are *especially* good to think with. In their qualities as the most liminal of the liminal,²⁹ national refugees thus attune us to the contradictions and tensions in political-legal definitions of refugees. They also help us to think critically about scholarly classifications of the displaced, as well as temporal and geographic mappings of the postwar refugee.

In conclusion, a few thoughts on how to re-situate these displacement experiences that have remained largely invisible within histories of the postwar refugee. One possibility consists in simply doing good comparative history. Remaining at the level of comparison, however, neglects the fact that these population flows did not just operate on parallel tracks but rather unfolded within a common matrix constituted by war and its end, a globe still dominated by empire, and the involvement of citizens of the victorious powers (whether as military occupation forces or international aid workers) in remaking population maps around the world. In her study of Japanese colonial repatriates, Watt identified both 'connective, as well as comparative, aspects' (2009: 203) in the multiple unmixings of people that took place in Japan and Eastern Europe after the war; in both cases, Allied personnel facilitated processes of national homogenization. Watt's comments remind us of the obvious fact that we are dealing with what historians refer to as 'entangled' or 'crossed' histories (Werner and Zimmerman 2002, 2006). For the cases discussed here, however, the notion of entanglement does not go far enough.

The histories of imperial and post-imperial displacements that fall within the temporal limits of the 'postwar' period have quite frequently been uncomfortable ones for both scholars and home societies. Such histories are, after all, usually stories of defeat. They often force themselves into public consciousness and debate at inopportune moments, fitting uneasily into national narratives and scholarly conceptual frameworks alike. Whereas the Allies employed the term 'intruded ex-enemy alien' for those enemy DPs found outside their home territories after the war, we might instead think of the histories around such ambiguous DPs as *extruded histories*. 'Extrusion' brings to mind volcanic magma and the way it forces itself up through cracks, as well as the process of making shaped objects by forcing them into a mould.³⁰ Breaking the old moulds of scholarship on refugees, the extruded histories of the colonial displaced suggest new possibilities for

thinking about how and when the so-called 'European' refugee problem became a global one and just who constituted the refugee in the postwar world.

1. Some scholars describe non-European refugees in charged terms, depicting these 'masses' as threatening in ways that earlier displaced persons apparently were not. Take, for instance, Marrus' assessment: 'The situation, it is often said, is unprecedented. And it is all the more fearsome because, unlike previous experiences of refugee waves, there appears to be no end in sight to the increase of refugee masses' (1988: 1). At the same time that refugees from the global South have become increasingly visible as a result of rhetoric that characterizes them as posing a threat, however, they have become increasingly invisible in terms of access by scholars (Harrell-Bond and Voutira 2007).
2. Smith (2009) provides a useful summary of the Dutch repatriations from the East Indies during and after the Second World War, first during the Japanese occupation of the colonies and then with the war to establish Indonesian sovereignty (achieved in 1949). The approximately 50,000 Dutch who remained in Indonesia were expelled in 1957.
3. The Convention has produced an extensive body of commentary and exegesis. For a sampling of this literature, consult Melander (1988), von Sternberg (2002), Feller *et al.* (2003).
4. For studies on repatriation with the end of Japan's empire, see Caprio (2009a), Tamanoi (2009), and Watt (2009). Caprio (2009b) reviews the recent outpouring of memoirs by Japanese repatriated from Korea after the war. Torsello (2000) examines the post-war agricultural settlement of Mikazuki, where almost three quarters of the original settlers had repatriated from Manchuria, North Korea, and Sakhalin. Some estimates place the number of Japanese citizens who repatriated from various Asian countries between 1945 and 1985 as high as 6.2 million (Smith 2009: 398).
5. For critical re-readings of these cases, see the articles by Feldman, Madokoro, Peterson, and DeBergh Robinson (this volume).
6. My thinking here is indebted to the work of DeBergh Robinson (2011) on the emergence of what she calls the South Asian refugee regime in response to the Partition of India. She notes, 'Scholarly studies of the Partition have largely taken for granted legalist explanations for the international community's purported lack of involvement with Partition refugees.' She makes a powerful case that the creation of relief funds in India and Pakistan must be read in dialogue with the contemporaneous redefinitions of humanitarianism in the West.
7. The 1967 Protocol aimed to render the Convention a truly universal instrument for recognizing and protecting refugees. In the wake of the protocol, there developed in Africa and Latin America specific regional instruments for protection devised as complementary to those of UNHCR. In *Legitimising Rejection: International Refugee Law in Southeast Asia*, Davies states that, in contrast, there 'has been no concerted attempt in Asia to develop regional instruments that would oblige states to respond uniformly to refugee crises' (2008: 3).
8. On terminology, see Peach (1997) and Smith (2009: 398). Smith labels these population movements 'reverse migrations of decolonization' (*ibid.*).

9. Naimark (2010) offers a useful introduction to recent historiographic debates about rethinking the nature and boundaries of the European postwar, a topic of growing interest following the publication of Judt's *Postwar* (2005). Judt's volume signalled a new attention to the postwar as something distinct from the Cold War and the bipolar vision built into much scholarship on that era. Naimark maintains, 'Most historians agree that the transition from the state of warfare to the institutionalization of peace, even in those countries where there was no civil war, took much longer than traditionally assumed. Some historians would suggest that the postwar in fact concluded in the late 1960s, with the emergence of a new generation of Europeans untouched, at least directly, by the war and its memory' (2010: 14). Study of the postwar period in the Soviet Union has also developed recently (Qualls 2009: 3). For Italy, the years of the 'economic miracle' and boom (1958–1963) are typically seen to mark a key break with the first postwar decade. For a critique of this view, at least for cultural histories, see Forgacs and Gundle (2007: 3–5).
10. Within the disciplines of history and anthropology, there now exist ample literatures that reject monolithic views of the colonizers and settler societies and instead treat them as 'unique cultural configurations' (Stoler 1989: 136). Unfortunately, work that 'traces the fate of dispossessed émigrés into colonial settings' (Smith 1994: 388)—or out of them—remains relatively sparse.
11. The UN's *Preliminary Report of a Survey of the Refugee Problem* gives a number of 400,000 repatriates from Italy's African colonies (United Nations 1951). According to a recent publication commemorating the work of the OAPGD, 1,089,516 national refugees from Venezia Giulia and the former colonies received assistance in the 50-year period between 1947 and 1997 (IRCI 1997: 5). The number of national refugees coming from each of the lost possessions is, not surprisingly, the object of considerable debate, particularly in the Giulian case. The precise number of migrants from Venezia Giulia, as well as their ethnic composition (Italian, Slovene or Croat) remains contested. The standard statistical study endorsed by Istrian Italian exiles gives a figure of 350,000 ethnic Italians (see Colella 1958). Drawing on Mileta's work, Pupo (2008) has recently estimated 188,000 autochthonous Venetophone (i.e. speakers of a Venetian variant of Italian) migrants to Italy after the redrawing of the eastern border following the Second World War.
12. In 1947 the Italian government, alarmed at problems associated with 'infiltrates' and foreign refugees living outside of camps, organized a census of all aliens in Italy. On this, see UNRRA Archive, New York, S-0527-0848 PAG-4/3-0-14-0-2:6, UNRRA Subject Files 1944-1949, Special Assistant to the Chief of Mission, Special File on Displaced Persons; letter from P. Contini, 'Policy on "Infiltrates,"' 9 January 1947. The efforts of the Italian government reflected the consolidation of the Italian state and the assertion of its sovereignty. After the arrest of Mussolini and the armistice with the Allies in 1943, the Italian state in the South headed by King Vittorio Emanuele III and Marshal Pietro Badoglio held the status of co-belligerent on the side of the Allies. The partnership was, nonetheless, a highly asymmetrical one and the capacities of this Italian state and the one that succeeded it following the end of the war were highly constrained.
13. Woodbridge (1950a: 259–260). Although the relief activities of UNRRA extended far beyond that of repatriation, its Displaced Persons Operation remains the best

- remembered of its activities. For a comprehensive (if official) overview of UNRRA's activities (1943–1947), see Woodbridge (1950a,b,c).
14. UNRRA, S-520, Box 295, Memo from A.A. Sorieri to Thomas Cooley, 31 December 1944.
 15. UNRRA, S-0527 Box 848, Cable no. 01787.
 16. UNRRA, S-1010, Box 8, File 7, UNRRA-Albania-Bureau of Finance and Admin-Personnel-Repatriation of DPS-Gerson, Frank. J. 31 Oct 1945–19 Dec 1946.
 17. Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Rome, Affari Politici 1946-50 Italia Ex Possedimenti, Libia b. 10.
 18. On Ethiopia, go to UNRRA, S-0527-0475, PAG- 4/3.0.8.0:1, UNRRA Subject Files 1944–1949, Displaced Persons 18-5-46 to 26-5-47; Letter to Raffaella E. Munera from DP Division, 9 January 1947. See also, UNRRA, S-0527-0475, PAG- 4/3.0.8.0:1, UNRRA Subject Files 1944–1949, Displaced Persons 18-5-46 to 26-5-47; letter from Tullio Fiori to Mr. Willard Z. Park, 3 October 1946. For a sample of requests by Italians to UNRRA to repatriate to and from the Dodecanese islands, go to UNRRA, S-0527-0470 UNRRA Subject Files, PAG-4/3.0.7.0.:10.
 19. This comment took place in an extended discussion on the eligibility for UNRRA aid of Italians repatriating from the Dodecanese islands. See UNRRA, S-0527-0469, PAG-4/3.0.7.9.9, UNRRA Subject Files 1944-1949, Report on Repatriation of Dodecanese refugees, 9 November 1946.
 20. S-527-0998, PAG-4/3.0.14.3.1.1.2, UNRRA Subject Files 1944–1949 Various Correspondence; Letter from Philip Hoel-Baker to UNRRA, 8 August 1946.
 21. IRO Archives, Paris Fond AJ 43/1037, 'Report on operations of the Eligibility Division covering the three months period Sept Oct November 1948.'
 22. IRO, AJ 43/1036 Italie; 'Classification of Venezia Giulians,' 3 October 1949.
 23. IRO, AJ 43/1036 Italie; Memorandum from Ministry of Foreign Affairs Italian Delegation to G.G. Chiavari, Special Adviser on Italian Affairs, IRO, 10 December 1949.
 24. An internal message sent in October 1949 within the IRO noted the problem of individuals from the Dodecanese with option requests 'NOT REGULARLY APPROVED BY GREEK GOVERNMENT.' As a result, these individuals were 'EVACUATED TO ITALY AFTER WORLD WAR II BY ALLIES OR ITALIAN NAVY FEARING PERSECUTION AND HOSTILITY OF GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL GREEK POPULATION.' The cable added, 'APPLICANTS NOT FIRMLY ESTABLISHED IN ITALY STILL LIVING IN ITALIAN CAMPS HAVE NO RELATIVES IN ITALY REESTABLISHMENT HERE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT.' The recipient of this message expressed scepticism, however, penning various shorthand notes on the bottom of the document:

this doesn't help much
customary language
valid objection to returning to Greece—pol grounds?
 persnl or pol grounds?
pol opinion not in conflict with U.N.?
approved option?

- For details, see IRO, AJ 43/ 1036, INOREFUG ROME to INOREFUG GENEVA 963 cable, 11 October 1949.
25. IRO, AJ 43/1036, memorandum from Del Drago to G. G. Chiavari, 10 December 1949.
 26. IRO, AJ 43/457, letter from L. M. Hacking to G. G. Kullman, 14 October 1949.
 27. IRO AJ 43/1036, letter from Mayer Cohen to Admiral Mentz, 26 January 1950. See also the nearly identical letter of 13 January 1950 from Cohen to J. Donald Kingsley contained in IRO, AJ 43/417.
 28. In her analysis of how humanitarian relief for displaced persons privileged collective categories such as women and children, Zahra (2011) similarly complicates a standard narrative about the reframing of human rights in individual terms after the Second World War.
 29. I intend liminality here to refer to the degree to which such national refugees do not fit easily into clear-cut categories, instead remaining between or straddling them. I am not making judgments as to the liminality or severity of living conditions experienced by national refugees in comparison to other types of displaced persons.
 30. With its geological associations, the metaphor of extrusion also highlights the realities of emplacement, displacement's counterpart. Emplacement may refer variously to those who do not leave but rather remain fixed in place (whether by choice or lack thereof) or the experience of making home *after* displacement. Löfving details how notions of emplacement derive from geological accounts of 'the intrusion of igneous rocks into particular positions, or the development of an ore deposit in a particular place' (2009: 157). Once they extrude into consciousness, difficult histories of repatriate displacements and (re)emplacements may hold on stubbornly, resisting efforts to ignore or eradicate them.
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