



ARTICLE

Elusive Refugees: Revisiting Terms of Exile and Asylum in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

Jan C. Jansen

History Department, University of Tübingen, Germany
Email: jan.jansen@uni-tuebingen.de

Abstract

This article discusses key tenets from the conceptual history of exile and asylum during the half-century around 1800. During this transformative period, political refugees took shape as a recognizable mass phenomenon, although they remained closely intertwined with other forms of migration and mobility, both free and unfree. Their often-tortuous itineraries occasioned manifold interactions with societies and states of origin, transit, and destination, remodeling preexisting concepts of exile, or generating new ones. As state bureaucracies, host societies, and mobile actors used these categories to negotiate status, access to protection, relief, compensation, and various layers of belonging, the contours of a transformative period in the conceptual history of refuge become apparent. This period was marked by a hybrid vocabulary, informed by both historical notions of (religious) asylum and by emerging concepts of politicized mobility and state membership; it was the period in which ancien régime ideas of deservingness were refracted by the prism of political loyalty, and in which relief practices could give way to large-scale reparation schemes; and a period in which a fuzzy vocabulary of asylum and alienness sustained, and complicated, the lines between insiders and outsiders in a world marked by an uneasy coexistence of empires and nation-states.

The articles in this special issue start from a paradox. While there was, in the late eighteenth and early-nineteenth century world, no clearly defined category and legal status of “refugee,” as was enshrined in international law during the second half of the twentieth century, the world was full of individuals seeking refuge and brimming with words to designate these individuals and define their status. By looking into how state officials, legal institutions, civil society actors, and mobile individuals shaped and negotiated the terms of refuge and asylum in a variety of distinct yet related settings, the case studies assembled here intervene in the conceptual history of exile and refuge. They thus participate in a larger scholarly debate about the vocabulary in which societies – present and past – talk and argue about mobility and people on the move. Such debate has grown into a vibrant scholarly field of its own, owing to a number of different impulses from within and without academia: reflections on the political, bureaucratic, legal, and journalistic framing of migration in the wake of Europe’s 2015 “refugee crisis” and US border policies; research into the historical origins of humanitarian politics and refugee status prior to the advent of the mid-twentieth-century international refugee regime; a reflexive turn in migration and refugee studies that has also been taken up by historians; and comparative scholarship on

the dynamics of classification, registration, and labelling of people, mobile and immobile alike, to name but a few.¹

In case studies from the Atlantic and (Eastern) Mediterranean worlds, the special issue puts the spotlight on an era that is slowly becoming recognised as a crucial moment in the longer history of refugees and exile: the “Age of Revolutions.” Between the second half of the eighteenth century and the mid-nineteenth century, decades of global warfare, social and political upheaval, and imperial crises and breakdowns generated a virtual explosion of all kinds of coerced mobilities, both old and new.² Amidst the movements of convicts, soldiers and prisoners of war, enslaved persons, and Indigenous population groups displaced by colonial expansion, hundreds of thousands of people were also on the move as a result of political conflicts and the civil-war and interstate-war violence that accompanied them. During this period of profound transformation – including of our modern socio-political vocabulary – political refugees thus took shape as a recognisable mass phenomenon, although they remained closely intertwined with other forms of migration and mobility, both free and unfree.³ Their often tortuous itineraries occasioned manifold interactions with societies and states of origin, transit, and (temporary) destination, as well as with other involuntary border crossers, reactivating and remodelling preexisting concepts of exile, or generating new ones. Was the Age of Revolutions also the crucible of new and decidedly “modern” notions of exile and asylum as is often stated for other basic socio-political concepts such as revolution, progress, state membership, and history?⁴

¹ See, e.g., Michel Agier and Anne-Virginie Madeira, eds., *Définir les réfugiés* (Paris: PUF, 2017); Delphine Diaz and Alexandre Dupont, eds., “Les mots de l’exil dans l’Europe du XIXe siècle,” *Hommes & migrations* 1321 (2018); Anne Friedrichs and Bettina Severin-Barboutie, “Mobilités, catégorisation et appartenance: Un défi de réflexivité,” *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 76:3 (2021), 445–55; Inken Bartels et al., eds., *Umkämpfte Begriffe der Migration: Ein Inventar* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2023); *Inventar der Migrationsbegriffe*, <https://www.migrationsbegriffe.de>; Christiane Reinecke and Isabella Löhr, “Beyond the Present, the Nation, and Europe: Three Different Uses of History in Reflexive Migration Studies,” *Migration Studies* 12:3 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnae023>; Anne Friedrichs, “The Re-Making of a Europe of Differences: Mobile Lives and the Globalization of Categories in Revolutionary and Post-Imperial Times (c.1770–1970),” *European Review of History* 32:1 (2025): 20–44.

² Jan C. Jansen and Kirsten McKenzie, eds., *Mobility and Coercion in an Age of Wars and Revolutions: A Global History, c. 1750–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024).

³ Maya Jasanoff, “Revolutionary Exiles: The American Loyalist and French Émigré Diasporas,” in *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760–1840*, ed. David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 37–58; Jan C. Jansen, “Flucht und Exil im Zeitalter der Revolutionen: Perspektiven einer atlantischen Flüchtlingsgeschichte (1770er–1820er Jahre),” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 44:4 (2018), 495–525; Friedemann Pestel, “The Age of Emigrations: French Émigrés and Global Entanglements of Political Exile,” in *French Emigrants in Revolutionised Europe: Connected Histories and Memories*, ed. Laure Philip and Juliette Reboul (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 205–31; Delphine Diaz, *En exil: Les réfugiés en Europe de la fin du XVIII^e siècle à nos jours* (Paris: Gallimard, 2021), 33–76. Recent larger panoramas in modern refugee history that touch on the transitional character of this period include Sylvie Aprile, *Le siècle des exilés: Bannis et proscrits de 1789 à la Commune* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2010); Philipp Ther, *The Outsiders: Refugees in Europe since 1492* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2019); Sylvie Aprile and Delphine Diaz, eds., *Banished: Traveling the Roads of Exile in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021); Jesse Spohnholz, *Ruptured Lives: Refugee Crises in Historical Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); David de Boer and Gert Janssen, eds., *Refugee Politics in Early Modern Europe* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024). For an overview over the existing historiography in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century refugee history, see also González Quintero and Mareite’s introduction to this special issue.

⁴ Reinhart Koselleck, *Begriffsgeschichten: Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen und sozialen Sprache* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1986); Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, 8 vols. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972–97); Rolf Reichardt, Hans Jürgen Lüsebrink, and Jörn Leonhard, eds., *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich, 1680–1820*, 22 vols. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1985–2021).

Putting Conventional Concepts, Chronologies, and Geographies to the Test

The case studies assembled here avoid getting entangled in any form of teleological vision that would reduce the period between the late eighteenth and the late nineteenth century to a mere prehistory of the emergence of the twentieth-century international refugee regime.⁵ While they do not skirt the important question of continuity and change at all costs, they first and foremost provide deeply contextualised analyses of the varying meanings of refuge and exile during the period itself. In doing so, they carve out the character of a moment familiar enough to retrace genealogies of “modernity,” but strange enough to serve as a contrasting mirror to the twentieth century and our present time. They thus not only show how inextricably the notions of exile and asylum were connected with other core transformations of the period, such as changing concepts of belonging to a state. At the same time, they also, in turn, urge us to challenge understandings and assumptions about refuge, migration, and their history, both within and outside of academia, informed by post-1945 history alone.

Such productive challenges of deeply engrained concepts already start with the object of study. At the centre of this special issue are places and cases, which, albeit crucial for that period, have been at the margins of scholarship in historical refugee studies. Instead of the famous European capitals of nineteenth-century exile such as London, Paris, Geneva, or Brussels, the case studies lead us into the multi-imperial war zone of the revolutionary Greater Caribbean, where tens of thousands of refugees moved between islands and American and European seaboard; to Central European Hamburg, a destination for escapees of Atlantic slavery; to Istanbul and the Ottoman provinces in the Eastern Mediterranean, a primary destination for refugees from European colonial incursions in North Africa and Southeastern Europe. By putting the imperial dimensions of European and non-European refuge and asylum centre stage, the special issue urges us to push the boundaries of pre-twentieth-century refugee history that remains largely centred on Europe.⁶ While the camp would become the epitome of twentieth-century refugee existence,⁷ the articles shed light on other social places where the condition of those seeking and/or receiving refuge – what we may call “refugee-ness” – was negotiated in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century: almshouses and jails, prison hulks and hospitals.

Liminality also looms large among the women, men, and children that are at the centre of the case studies. As refuge and asylum were debated and negotiated in a variety of ill-defined and malleable terms, the articles do not rely on lexicographic positivism to delimit the scope of the comparison. Neither do they restrict their approach by presuppositions that could be drawn from the notion of the bourgeois white male liberal exile (such as Giuseppe Mazzini, Heinrich Heine, or Victor Hugo), which still nurtures the image

⁵ Susanne Lachenicht, “Learning from Past Displacements? The History of Migrations between Historical Specificity, Presentism and Fractured Continuities,” *Humanities* 9:2 (2020), 36, <https://doi.org/10.3390/h7020036>; Lauren Banko, Katarzyna Nowak, Peter Gatrell, “What Is Refugee History, Now?,” *Journal of Global History* 17:1 (2022), 1–19.

⁶ “Exiled: Identity and Identification,” *Age of Revolutions*, Roundtable, 29 May–26 June 2023, <https://ageofrevolutions.com/category/exiled-identity-and-identification>; Caroline Shaw, *Britannia’s Embrace: Modern Humanitarianism and the Imperial Origins of Refugee Relief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). These imperial dimensions persisted into the twentieth century, but have remained, until recently outside the focus of scholarship; see, e.g., Benjamin T. White, “Refugees and the Definition of Syria, 1920–1939,” *Past & Present* 235 (2017), 141–78; Eric T. Jennings, *Escape from Vichy: The Refugee Exodus to the French Caribbean* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2018); Jochen Lingelbach, *On the Edges of Whiteness: Polish Refugees in British Colonial Africa during and after the Second World War* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2020).

⁷ Michel Agier, *Un monde de camps* (Paris: Découverte, 2014); Jordanna Bailkin, *Unsettled: Refugee Camps and the Making of Multicultural Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

of nineteenth-century refuge; nor do they buy into the concept of international cross-border migration at the heart of the twentieth-century refugee regime, which excludes a variety of instances of coerced mass migration as cases *sui generis*: victims of “population exchanges” and ethnic cleansing, internally displaced persons, “repatriates” of decolonisation processes, and so forth.⁸ Instead, the articles define their common object by the act of claiming and/or granting asylum and assistance to people crossing some kind of (emerging) border to escape some kind of a threat.

The resulting panorama shows convincingly that the history of negotiating and defining the terms of refuge and asylum around 1800 was to a large extent populated and driven by people that may appear from a twentieth-century perspective as cases *sui generis*: members of shrinking empires resettling to other colonial territories or to the imperial metropole of the Ottoman, French, and Spanish Empires, thus border crossers yet remaining within the same imperial polity (Hargal, Fourcaud, Mareite); French colonial refugees turned into quasi-subjects of Spanish and British colonies (Mareite, Keindorf); metropolitan-based planters having lost properties overseas but not moved at all (Fourcaud); enslaved border crossers, appearing in a variety of statuses, from “slave” to “runaway,” from pauper to undesired alien (Bärwald, Maruschke, Keindorf, Mareite); political and religious refugees seeking to become citizens of the newly created South American and French nation-states they (or their ancestors) originally hailed from (González Quintero, Banks). As Fourcaud and Banks remind us, individuals officially classified and embraced as “refugees” in revolutionary France, a state proclaiming with some pathos a right to asylum, were *de facto* only in rare cases foreign border crossers. Written from the (alleged) margins and based on (alleged) cases *sui generis*, the contours of a dynamic and deeply entangled history of refugee-ness around 1800 become apparent.

Who Is (in) a Category – and Who Isn’t?

Any historical semantics approach must reckon with the fact that the meanings of “refugee” and related categories come into being in a variety of ways and forms: They are labels as part of bureaucratic classification procedures, they denote a legal or quasi-legal status, they may serve as a form of (self-)identification and intellectual concept, and they enter research as a scholarly category. Depending on the sources used, the outcome can be wildly different. All these dimensions become apparent throughout the special issue, yet with different emphases due to the historical source material used in the case studies. So, what are these sources, who speaks through them, and what silences do they produce? In contrast to some strands in the history of concepts, the case studies assembled here are less concerned with encyclopaedias or elite discourse; rather, they depart from the mundane practice and interactions of bureaucratic registration, and from the narratives produced by those defined in one way or another as refuge seekers.

Refugee-ness thus comes out most clearly as a tool for governance and (self-)identification, which was shaped not only by those wielding the levers of state power but also by the individuals affected, and even third parties.⁹ “Refugee” and related categories stood less for a stable identity, an individual quality, or a clearly defined status, and more for an arena of

⁸ For attempts to include such “liminal” cases in one comparative framework, see Peter Gatrell, *The Unsettling of Europe: The Great Migration, 1945 to the Present* (London: Allen Lane, 2019); Jan C. Jansen and Simone Lässig, eds., *Refugee Crises, 1945–2000: Political and Societal Responses in International Comparison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

⁹ Simon Szreter and Keith Breckenridge, “Recognition and Registration: The Infrastructure of Personhood in World History,” in *Registration and Recognition: Documenting the Person in World History*, ed. Simon Szreter and Keith Breckenridge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1–36; Roger Zetter, “Labelling Refugees: Forming and Transforming a Bureaucratic Identity,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 4:1 (1991), 39–62.

different, sometimes contradictory claims, which may, only under specific conditions, solidify into some sort of (even hereditary) status of entitlement, such as in the case of refugees from the revolution in Saint-Domingue in metropolitan France (Fourcaud), or transgenerational identification, such as in the case of the Huguenot diaspora (Banks). In many other cases, individuals would only count as a “refugee” in particular settings and adopt other categories, or simply vanish from the historical record produced by state bureaucracies. Yet, as the articles also make clear, the myriad interactions of negotiating refuge did not occur in a vacuum. They were reflective of larger societal, economic, political, and cultural structures, and their changes reveal much larger transformations, such as the emergence of new concepts of national or imperial citizenship in France, Spanish America, and the Ottoman Empire, either by revolution or reform (Banks, González Quintero, Hargal).

Given the blurred and malleable political, legal, and bureaucratic semantics at the time, the term *refugee*, and equivalent categories, were highly relational. In fact, as stated by Jannik Keindorf for Jamaica, in many instances the classification as refugees occurred *ex negativo*, by way of exclusion from other categories of border crossers. What were those categories? Jamaican authorities were grappling with keeping French prisoners of war and refugees apart (Keindorf). Across the revolutionary-era Caribbean and in the port cities of Philadelphia and Hamburg, many border crossers of African descent or origin were simply registered as “slaves” or “paupers,” obscuring complex histories of individual or – in the case of Saint-Domingue – collective emancipation (Mareite, Keindorf, Bärwald, Maruschke). Such distinctions did not follow universally applicable patterns: In Spanish America, political emigrants (*emigrados*) were distinguished from traditional forms of (criminal and/or political) removal such as banishment (*destierro*) and exile (*exilio*) (Mareite, González Quintero) – while the “deportees” (*déportés*) expelled from Saint-Domingue and other French Caribbean islands obtained a refugee-like status in revolutionary France (Fourcaud). Here, and in the United States in the 1790s, the category of “refugee” (*réfugié*) was redefined in stark contrast with “emigrant” (*émigré*), which in other territories – such as across the Spanish and British Empires – at the same period functioned as the official term for “political refugee” (Fourcaud, Maruschke, Keindorf, Mareite, González Quintero). The broadest category against which refuge seekers were set against were dangerous aliens, for which authorities across the revolutionary Euro-Atlantic world sought to brace themselves (Bärwald, Maruschke, Keindorf, González Quintero). Significantly, the free labour migrant – which has been turned into the antipode of the refugee post-1945¹⁰ – was not a relevant antonym here; to the contrary, in a long tradition reaching back into the early-modern period, imperial authorities continued to regard refugees as potential settlers (Hargal).¹¹

While there was no consistent terminology for refuge seekers around 1800, bureaucratic practice and general parlance converged towards certain categories. Within many European and overseas territories affected by political migrations triggered by the revolutions in France, the French Caribbean (especially Saint-Domingue/Haiti), and across Spanish America, the French *émigré* and its Spanish and English derivations *emigrado* and

¹⁰ Karen Akoka, *L'asile et l'exil: Une histoire de la distinction réfugiés/migrants* (Paris: Découverte, 2020); Rebecca Hamlin, *Crossing: How We Label and React to People on the Move* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2021); Jan Lucassen, Leo Lucassen, and Patrick Manning, “Migration History: Multidisciplinary Approaches,” in *Migration History in World History: Multidisciplinary Approaches*, ed. Jan Lucassen, Leo Lucassen, and Patrick Manning (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 8–11; Katy Long, “When Refugees Stopped Being Migrants: Movement, Labour and Humanitarian Protection,” *Migration Studies* 1:1 (2013), 4–26; Fabrice Langrognet, “The Refugee-Migrant Distinction and the Need for Bridging Analytical Divides in the Historiography,” *Journal of Migration History* 9:3 (2023), 245–68.

¹¹ On the longer history of imperial refugee settlement, see Susanne Lachenicht, “Refugee ‘Nations’ and Empire-Building in the Early Modern Period,” *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 6:1 (2019), 99–109; Owen Stanwood, *The Global Refuge: Huguenots in an Age of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); de Boer and Janssen, *Refugee Politics*.

emigrant became the prevalent categories for individuals granted asylum and (partly) assistance, a term putting emphasis on the political dimensions of flight and on the expected temporality of asylum (as opposed to permanent exile). Still, differences in the application of this category existed. In the emerging British taxonomy of revolutionary-era refugee movements, “emigrant” was reserved for foreigners (particularly the French), while their own subjects emigrating from the revolting Thirteen Colonies were referred to as “loyalists”; in the Spanish assistance system, *emigrado* would comprise both Spanish subjects and aliens (Mareite).¹²

At the same time, the French term *réfugié* (and refugee, *refugiado*, etc.), a historical category hitherto largely associated with the Huguenots’ religious *refuge*, also underwent renewed usage. As Banks argues, Huguenot activists were increasingly redefining their refugee status in secular terms as part of a French community of citizens as they pushed for their return to a renewed French nation-state. As a means to stress this intimate connection between the state of origin and the individual, some Huguenot writers would shed the time-honoured refugee category and assume the term “fugitive” (*fugitif*), a more elusive term that had some resonance in criminal law and slave codes. Simultaneously, the *réfugié* term became the central category of assistance by the French state for citizens who had fled political and social upheaval in the colonies, or civil war in the metropolitan regions of Vendée and Corsica. *Réfugiés* were defined in sharp contrast to *émigrés*, upon whom the French Republic had imposed the civil death and threatened with capital punishment in case of return, and French municipal, colonial, and consular authorities were tasked with sorting the French diaspora along agency: Who had fled out of fear and was as a refugee entitled to the solidarity of the nation and who was driven by an intent of counterrevolution and thus earned abhorrence and retribution? As Fourcaud explains, the refugee category would largely apply to those hailing from Caribbean colonies, and then increasingly narrow down to those claiming ownership of large colonial plantations, no matter their bona fides vis-à-vis the French Republic nor their place of residence. In fact, quite a number of them had never crossed a border and continued to reside as absentee planters in metropolitan France.

Similar processes of reconceptualisation of long-standing categories took place in the Ottoman Empire under the pressure of increasing immigration from Muslims fleeing European colonial conquest in North Africa (Algeria, Tunisia), the Black Sea (Crimea), and the Balkans. Ottoman administrators would evoke the concept of religious emigration from territories under non-Muslim rule (*hijra*) while hesitantly, and selectively, applying the category of *muhajir* to the arrivals (Hargal). Over the course of the nineteenth century, the meaning of *muhajir* became slowly extended into a general term for migrant/refugee, the original *muhajir* now requiring the qualifier “Muslim.”

Figuring in the historical record as an *émigré* or a *muhajir*, as a refugee, a (fugitive) slave, or a prisoner of war was not due to self-evident or innate qualities, but the result of interpersonal processes of classification.¹³ In the absence of clear-cut definitions and often necessary evidence, authorities and border crossers engaged in ad-hoc negotiations that revolved around a set of practices Banks calls “refugee script”: institutional bureaucratic praxis of registration and identification, normative and legal frameworks, self-narratives,

¹² On the American Loyalists, see Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Knopf, 2012); Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan, eds., *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

¹³ Jan C. Jansen, “Registration and Deportation: Refugees, Regimes of Proof, and the Law in Jamaica, 1791–1828,” in Jansen and McKenzie, *Mobility and Coercion*, 173–93.

and on-the-ground interactions.¹⁴ These “refugee scripts,” it should be added, participated in larger scripts of revolution, counterrevolution, and warfare that took shape during this period, and those inherited from earlier times.¹⁵ Due to their often tortuous itineraries, the social processes of classifying refugees occurred in multiple sites and in multiple stages. They often set in well before migrants crossed into the host territory, during the journey, when individuals were being inscribed on passenger lists of ships or taken over by privateers (Keindorf).¹⁶ In all cases discussed in the special issue, agency fell to actors on the ground: to local state agents – including those receptive to corruption such as the commissary for prisoners in revolutionary-era Jamaica (Keindorf) – and to the individual border crossers.

Even if lost in most of the surviving records, such as lists of names with their pretence of finality and objectivity, the case studies trace moments that highlight how people on the ground sought to negotiate, navigate, and manipulate the existing categorisation systems.¹⁷ Quite often these were moments of conflict or perceived crisis, such as when different actors involved in the governance of the *emigrado* community in Havana disagreed on the status of individuals before them (Mareite). Regularly, state authorities, unsatisfied with the inefficiency of their existing classification regime, sought to take measures, yet their responses and agency diverged widely. At times – such as the French Republic with its duality of *émigré* and *réfugié* in 1794 – they wrestled with solidifying and clarifying their categories to pin down individuals more neatly (Fourcaud); in other moments, they consciously blurred existing category by lumping them together in extensive and vague categories of alienness (Hargal).¹⁸ Legal ambiguity was not always unintentional. Hamburg’s undeclared asylum policies turned enslaved fugitives into “contested refugees,” as Annika Bärwald argues; in spite of a general notion of European free soil, it turned out to be less likely to escape from slavery here than in the slave societies of the Caribbean, where intentional and unintentional loopholes of free soil existed well into the period of abolition.¹⁹

The classification of “refugees” was by far not a one-way street. The case studies assembled here show how mobile actors seized various opportunities to shape their own status and pursue their interests. One important area of their agency was in fact to craft and re-craft concepts: It is this activity that made Huguenot writers, for Banks, central actors in bridging early-modern and late-modern refugee concepts. In many instances, host states even relied on representatives, spokespersons, and internal patronage networks to differentiate and manage refugee assistance (Hargal, Keindorf, Mareite). The articles retrace

¹⁴ See also Peter Gatrell’s important concept of “refugeedom,” derived from the Russian word *bezhenstvo*; Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 7; Peter Gatrell et al., “Reckoning with Refugeedom: Refugee Voices in Modern History,” *Social History* 46:1 (2021), 70–95.

¹⁵ Keith Michael Baker and Dan Edelstein, eds., *Scripting Revolution: A Historical Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolutions* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2015).

¹⁶ See also Rebecca J. Scott, “Paper Thin: Freedom and Re-enslavement in the Diaspora of the Haitian Revolution,” *Law and History Review* 29:4 (2011), 1068; Rebecca J. Scott and Carlos Venegas Fornias, “María Coleta and the Capuchin Friar: Slavery, Salvation, and the Adjudication of Status,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 76:4 (2019), 729–30.

¹⁷ On the unstable character of lists, see also Renaud Morieux, “The Politics of Colonial Lists: Conspiracies, Deportations, and Knowledge in 1790s Pondicherry,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 64:4 (2025), 811–38.

¹⁸ Jan C. Jansen, “Aliens in a Revolutionary World: Refugees, Migration Control and Subjecthood in the British Atlantic, 1790s–1820s,” *Past & Present* 255 (2022), 189–231.

¹⁹ Jan C. Jansen, “‘A Sanctuary to Crime’: Enslaved Fugitives, Antislavery, and the Law in the Caribbean, 1819–1833,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 67:2 (2025), 429–56; in comparative perspective, see Alvin O. Thompson, *Flight to Freedom: African Runaways and Maroons in the Americas* (Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2006); Markus Rediker, Titas Chakraborty, and Matthias van Rossum, eds., *A Global History of Runaways: Workers, Mobility, and Capitalism, 1600–1850* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019).

numerous cases in which individuals turned existing loopholes, grey zones, and confusion about the existing regulations to their advantage. Keindorf describes how refugees from Saint-Domingue successfully passed as prisoners of war in view of the legally guaranteed subsistence money or even managed to tap into two parallel systems of support set up for refugees and prisoners of war. The strategy to pass as war prisoner was especially interesting for people of colour, who tended to be sidelined in a strongly racialised refugee support system. French *emigrados* in Cuba not only actively negotiated the terms of relief but also used their positions as recipients of imperial aid to claim the status of Spanish quasi-subjects, when authorities moved to redraw the lines between who was Spanish and who a deportable French foreigner (Mareite). Spanish emigrants from the insurgent mainland colonies also developed a rather sophisticated strategic use of the *emigrado* category – seeking to shed it (including the implications of loyalty to the Crown) as a precondition to return to independent South America or keeping it intact in view of compensation claims (González Quintero). In Istanbul and Damascus, Algerian emigrants actively used their status as French subjects by conquest to negotiate better terms of resettlement in the Ottoman Empire (Hargal). As Peter Gatrell has put it for all migrants and refugees, the mobile individuals we encounter in this special issue were anything but mere “flotsam and jetsam.”²⁰

Relief, Reparation, and Politics of Difference

Despite the malleable, loose, and changing nature of the categorisation systems, being classified in a particular way had a profound impact on the lives of people. Not always was the contrast as stark as between the treatment of *émigrés* and *réfugiés* by the French state in the 1790s: between state support and death penalty (Fourcaud). Yet, all classification and reception policies discussed in this special issue were marked by a number of similar tensions, the most important one being the tension between access to assistance and protection versus rejection as a threatening outsider. Every concept of refuge discussed in this special issue did include some provisions of material support for those recognised as legitimate refugees, *emigrados*, emigrants, or *muhajirun*, respectively. Such assistance usually did not stem from premeditated policies but came about through piecemeal and ad hoc measures. This does not mean that these measures were devoid of any consistency or logic. The case studies uncover how authorities drew on established early-modern mechanisms of poor relief and assistance, revolving around the idea of differential “deservingness,” while also reflecting more recent experiences of the revolutionary era. Especially in the case of the embattled Spanish and Ottoman Empires, assistance was to symbolise the concept of a benevolent empire (Mareite, Hargal); everywhere, political bona fides – according to the parameters of the host territory – were crucial for being admitted as deserving assistance.

The practices of refugee relief were beset by a tension between two different logics: granting minimal relief to assure survival, on the one hand, and restoring or sustaining a given refugee’s previous social status, on the other. While both logics informed relief on the ground, the latter often guided notions of deservingness according to which access to relief was conditional, uneven, and dependent on social status, race, legal status, and gender. The goal among relief organisers to reflect and sustain social hierarchies within emigrant communities by considering individuals of high social standing as more deserving of assistance was common to all cases discussed, from Istanbul and Paris to Kingston and Havana (Hargal, Mareite, Keindorf, Maruschke). This was not just due to persisting ancien régime notions of deservingness, though. In its relief to Saint-Domingue refugees, republican France increasingly connected deservingness to (plantation) property; the replacement of social estate

²⁰ Peter Gatrell, “Refugees – What’s Wrong with History?,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 30:2 (2017), 175.

with individual property titles reflected the sacralisation of inalienable property rights and the new role of the state in preserving them (Fourcaud).²¹

Ancien régime concepts of relief also intersected with imperial politics of difference. Hence, while assessing deservingness among colonial refugees, authorities explicitly or implicitly considered race a central criterion. In Spanish assistance dossiers, whiteness regularly figured as an argument to buttress claims to assistance (Mareite); in Jamaica, whiteness was more or less explicitly baked into the emigrant category (Keindorf). In revolutionary France, where racial discrimination was officially banned, formerly enslaved and free people of colour among Saint-Domingue refugees were in principle eligible for state relief, but officials treated their claims as rather dubious: They were increasingly marginalised in refugee relief programs, as these gave white property owners pride of place (Fourcaud). Despite the 1793–4 abolition of slavery in Saint-Domingue and across the French Empire, many refugees of African descent or origin were classified as “slaves,” in categories implying unfree status (“French negroes,” “Blacks” etc.), or as “runaways” to be re-enslaved. As relief was usually restricted to free individuals, they were automatically denied access to recognition as deserving refugees (Maruschke, Keindorf, Mareite). Along with race, social, and legal status, gender informed established notions of dependency and deservingness; even if not required by law, Spanish authorities factored womanhood or widowhood into their considerations (Mareite); women and children were at least exempt from most expulsion campaigns in Jamaica and Ottoman territories (Keindorf, Hargal).

Refugees took an active part in negotiating their access to relief. While primarily concerned with their individual plight, their petitions also intervened in larger political processes and debates about state policies and political processes in which they had no formal voice. Many female Saint-Domingue refugees, for example, used their petitions to the French state to express their views and build up pressure on the state as Napoleon was pondering metropolitan France’s options towards Saint-Domingue in the late 1790s and early 1800s (Fourcaud).²² Rooted in early-modern practices of petition writing, the refugees produced narratives of deservingness and victimhood to unforeseen loss and distress; in the Age of Revolutions, these narratives often revolved around tropes of loyalty (to the Crown, to the empire, etc.) and counter-revolutionary beliefs, but also revolution-induced estrangement (Mareite, Keindorf, González Quintero, Hargal). With their strong focus on unwavering allegiance, narratives of deservingness also turned into “narratives of belonging,” as Mareite puts it. Due to the length (often permanence) of their exile, Huguenot writers used the category of *réfugié* to engage in a transgenerational production of narratives and shifting notions of community and belonging. While the sentimentalism used in many of the Huguenots’ and other refugees’ narratives points to the adaptation to literary conventions, their narratives also shed light on very personal trajectories and often traumatising histories of displacement and the emotional registers in which the Age of Revolutions and its conflicts were couched (Banks, González Quintero).²³

²¹ Rafe Blaufarb, *The Great Demarcation: The French Revolution and the Invention of Modern Property* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

²² For a larger argument on this, see R. Darrell Meadows, “The Planters of Saint-Domingue, 1750–1804: Migration and Exile in the French Revolutionary Atlantic” (PhD diss., Carnegie Mellon University, 2004), 203–62.

²³ For the use of history of emotions approaches to the Age of Revolutions, see, e.g., Sarah Knott, *Sensibility and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Richard Godbeer, *The Overflowing of Friendship: Love between Men and the Creation of the American Republic* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Nicole Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Sarah M. S. Pearsall, “‘The Power of Feeling’? Emotion, Sensibility, and the American Revolution,” *Modern Intellectual History* 8:3 (2011), 659–72; Alejandro Gómez, *Le spectre de la révolution noire: L’impact de la révolution haïtienne dans le monde atlantique, 1790–1886* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013); Erica R. Johnson, *Philanthropy and Race in the Haitian Revolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

As revolutions and wars wore on, authorities in the United States and across the Spanish, British, French, and Ottoman Empires were wrestling with how to end assisting an ever-increasing number of refugees, which threatened to become a financial burden. All of them insisted on the necessarily temporary and conditional nature of relief and made efforts to narrow the number of those recognised as deserving (Keindorf, González Quintero, Fourcaud). These efforts could lead, as in Jamaica, to an increasing separation of the status of emigrant and the access to relief or to the definition of a core group of deserving refugees, as in the white property owners in France (Keindorf, Fourcaud). In a long tradition of imperial refugee policies, states also sought to turn refugees into an asset of imperial resettlement.²⁴ In the early 1800s, in the wake of Napoleon's effort to retake control of Saint-Domingue and revivify the plantation system, most colonial refugees were denied relief and repatriated to the colony (Fourcaud). In an effort to strengthen the central state and to fight nomadism in remote areas, Ottoman authorities resettled refugees from the Maghreb and Crimea in imperial buffer zones and underpopulated areas (Hargal).

Emergency relief not only put states, consulates, and benevolent societies to the brink of insolvency. In its wake, even more sweeping forms of compensation and indemnification took shape. Throughout the revolutionary era, *émigré*/emigrant were not just categories of relief and protection in host territories, but also of persecution in the individuals' territories of origin. Either known as a professed political enemy or due to the fact of having migrated, political refugees were subject to repressive measures, most prominently the confiscation of property. As González Quintero shows, being categorised as an *emigrado* was thus not sought after by all border crossers from Spanish America, or even fiercely rejected by some. The extremes were particularly close together in the case of the French exile community that government agents sought to separate into those who would suffer confiscation and persecution (*émigrés*) and those whose property was not only recognised by the French state but who could make claims to assistance based on these titles (*réfugiés*).

Many post-revolutionary states in the early nineteenth century would set up large-scale reparation schemes for (and at the same time sustain) the confiscations, property losses, and changes due to revolution and war.²⁵ How exactly these major post-revolutionary, post-war, and – one should add – post-abolition compensation schemes relate to support provided during exile requires further research. In any case, the restorative dimension in revolutionary-era refugee relief foreshadowed at least some of the compensation programs. The tendency of the French state's relief to limit the category of entitled Saint-Domingue refugees to plantation owners, and the dossiers and narratives produced on this occasion, prefigured core elements of the large-scale indemnification program set up – at the cost of now-independent Haiti – in the mid-1820s. Compensation, however, never entirely superseded relief. Despite indemnification, the French state continued to provide assistance to “refugees” of the Haitian Revolution even a hundred years after Haitian independence in 1804 (Fourcaud).

²⁴ On these traditions, see note 11. Refugees themselves sought to shape these settlement schemes. See Friedemann Pestel, “(Un-)Settling Exile: Imagining Outposts of the French Emigration across the Globe,” in Jansen and McKenzie, *Mobility and Coercion*, 58–82.

²⁵ On particular cases of compensation, see Almut Franke-Postberg, *Le milliard des émigrés: Die Entschädigung der Emigranten im Frankreich der Restauration (1814–1830)* (Bochum, Germany: Winkler, 1999); Jean-François Brière, *Haïti et la France, 1804–1848: Le rêve brisé* (Paris: Karthala, 2008); Nick Draper, *The Price of Emancipation: Slave-Ownership, Compensation and British Society at the End of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Frédérique Beauvois, *Between Blood and Gold: The Debates over Compensation for Slavery in the Americas* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016); as well as the databases for post-abolition compensation schemes in Great Britain and France: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs> and <https://esclavage-indemnitees.fr>.

Belonging, Un-belonging, Re-belonging

Refugee-ness around 1800 was enmeshed with intricate issues of belonging and sovereignty. Along with the rise of new concepts of national citizenship, older concepts of monarchical or imperial subjecthood underwent fundamental changes. These changes had been a long time in the making, but the revolutionary period remains arguably the single most dramatic moment in the modern history of political membership, a period during which members of political communities – citizens or subjects – became more clearly distinguished from non-members – aliens or foreigners – and during which previously porous boundaries became conceived of as more impermeable.²⁶ In many ways, the concepts of refugee-ness uncovered in this special issue are testament not only to these shifts in concepts of belonging; rather, refugee mobilities became an important factor of change on its own as mobility became politicised by actions and words on all sides: by the border crossers themselves, but also by revolutionary and royalist regimes (González Quintero). Even if religious exile identity and sanctuary practices continued to echo and persist throughout the period, a “process of relative de-confessionalisation of refuge,” as González Quintero and Mareite put it in their introduction, set in. Documents produced by actors as different as Huguenot writers and Ottoman bureaucrats did begin to allot a more prominent place to the (secular) relationship between the individual and the state (Banks, Hargal).

Concepts of refuge did not fit easily within the citizen/subject versus alien binary. Rather, the refugees’ status and their movements often further blurred and complicated the shifting boundaries of political belonging. “Refugee” during the French Revolution was a category that encompassed foreigners and citizens (Banks, Fourcaud). In the Spanish Empire, the more malleable concept of residency/neighborliness (*vecindad*) – the widespread notion of early-modern local rights of domicile – became rebranded as a more important proof of loyalty than strict natural subjecthood.²⁷ According to Mareite, emigrant relief further complicated the boundaries between membership through residency (*vecindad*), nativeness (through descentance, birth), and entitlement to imperial assistance, as it “paved the way to a rather inclusive conception of imperial belonging and subjecthood.” For authorities in Havana, the notion of a “French *emigrado*,” foreign-born yet subject to Spanish imperial benevolence, thus belonging by some sort of social privilege available to subjects, was no contradiction. It came under assault, when Spanish authorities moved to expel French subjects from their territory as a response to the 1807–8 Napoleonic invasion in the Iberian Peninsula. Many French *emigrados* were able to turn the fact that they had been entitled to assistance as proof of a status akin to Spanish subjecthood; here, recognition as (quasi-)subjects resulted from imperial assistance, not the other way around.

Under assault by foreign invasion, Ottomans had to navigate further intricacies of belonging and state sovereignty as they grappled with how to deal with emigrants from North Africa. Algerian and Tunisian Muslims had not flocked to Istanbul and the Ottoman provinces in the Levant as a result of national independence movements, but in response to imperial takeover by France. The Ottoman state was wary of extending the *muhajir* category – traditionally designating Muslims emigrating from non-Muslim rule – to them as it implied acceptance of French sovereignty over their former territories (Hargal). In contrast to Spanish *emigrados*, who were often being considered outcasts by the new Latin American

²⁶ Andreas Fahrmeir, *Citizenship: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Concept* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007), 27–55.

²⁷ On the relevance of rights of domicile, also beyond the Spanish case, see Altay Coşkun and Lutz Raphael, “Die Relevanz von Recht und Politik – eine Einführung,” in *Fremd und rechtlos? Zugehörigkeitsrechte Fremder von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Altay Coşkun and Lutz Raphael (Cologne: Böhlau, 2014), 48–53; Miri Rubin, *Cities of Strangers: Making Lives in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

nation-states that now ruled over their former places of residence, Algerians had to reject the French sovereignty that the colonising power had proclaimed over them.

The classificatory responses to revolutionary-era refugee movements impacted on the reconfiguration of belonging in other ways as well. In all cases discussed in this special issue, bureaucratic practice, political discourse, and legislation brought to the fore another ill-defined category: the “alien.” In a period of continued turmoil and war, many territories considered the influx of large numbers of refugees of unclear belonging a potential threat to their social and political order; the measures taken by governments and colonial authorities across the Americas and Europe during this period rang in a peak period of mobility controls and the regulation of alien status.²⁸ In quite a number of cases – as in Great Britain in 1793 in response to French *émigrés* and in the Ottoman Empire in 1856 in response to migrants from Crimea and Algeria – states made their very first statutory efforts to manage and control aliens and/or immigration, at the centre of which stood the ability to register all incoming border crossers, curtail their movement within the territory and remove or reject “dangerous” aliens (Keindorf, Hargal). In many ways, these regulatory regimes were a mirror image of the relief systems, and no less differential and inconsistent, pierced by many intentional or unintentional loopholes.

These alien regulations grew out of a variegated set of preexisting practices, a “wider tapestry of barriers to entry” (Maruschke), many of them with long historical roots in earlier centuries.²⁹ Early-modern anti-vagrancy regimes against mobile poor, racialised mobility controls contained in slave codes, laws targeting fugitive slaves, quarantine, war captivity, and systems of convict transportation provided blueprints for new alien laws or were increasingly weaponised against border crossers not recognised as falling into any category of deserving “refugee.” This use of preexisting mobility controls, in turn, further blurred the lines between refugee seekers and various other kinds of mobile people, resident or alien: sick and poor population, prisoners, runaways, “bachelor” military men, convicts (Maruschke, Bärwald, Keindorf, Hargal). Often set up in moments of perceived urgency, these systems of reinforced mobility control each reveal their own local genealogies. Hamburg, for instance, reinforced its alien laws in view of an uptick of revolutionary-era refugees in the 1790s by tightening its pre-existing pauper legislation; these regulations then served as a precondition to declare the city’s official free-soil policy in the 1830s, as they had served, already in the decades before, to contain the unwanted effect of enslaved fugitives actually taking up residence in the city (Bärwald).³⁰

Thorny issues of belonging and un-belonging also arose out of the temporality of exile and the contentious issue of a possible return. Refugee-ness implied, in all cases discussed in this special issue, a temporary condition that was expected to be removed by the eventual return to the territory or country of origin (or by permanent settlement). In most cases, however, political change or conflict at the origin of emigration did not revert or undo itself. As the new state system born out of revolution stabilised itself, political refugees pondered their options of return, grappling with a situation for which they were lacking models or

²⁸ Jansen, “Aliens in a Revolutionary World”; Jan C. Jansen, “Alien Acts in the Age of Emancipation: Mobility Control and Executive Power in the British Caribbean, 1820s–1830s,” *Law and History Review* 43:4 (2025), 821–45; John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Andreas Fahrmeir, Olivier Faron, and Patrick Weil, eds., *Migration Control in the North Atlantic World: The Evolution of State Practices in Europe and the United States from the French Revolution to the Inter-War Period* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003).

²⁹ Valentin Groebler, *Who Are You? Identification, Deception, and Surveillance in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2007); Luca Scholz, *Borders and Freedom of Movement in the Holy Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

³⁰ On similar dynamics in the abolition-era British Caribbean, see Jansen, “A Sanctuary to Crime,” 452–4; Jansen, “Alien Acts,” 833–43.

precedents to draw on. In previous centuries, a change in sovereignty had usually come about through foreign conquest, frequently coupled with the opportunity (at times the pressure) to emigrate to a territory ruled by the sovereign to which they had been, and wanted to remain, subject.³¹ The Age of Revolutions upended this scenario. Refugees came from territories that had become self-governing under a new and independent political regime that they had opposed, if not fought against, with words and weapons. *Emigrados* from Colombia, as discussed by González Quintero, are a case in point. Their departure had turned them into aliens of the territory they originally hailed from – even into aliens of the most dangerous type: enemies of the nation.

The period of consolidation of the new nation-states across the Americas thus saw fierce debates about status, potential pardon and exemption from sequestration of property, and political rights of potentially returning emigrant communities.³² Such debates mirrored debates about the access to relief; they factored in age, gender, and family status (González Quintero). And they came in waves of suspicion and openness. At times coveted actors for the new political regimes with some bargaining power, Colombian *emigrados* were targeted by increased surveillance and control regulations against aliens in the mid-1820s. Returning refugees, in turn, were acutely aware of the crucial role of categories to overcome these obstacles. Renegotiating, reconceptualising, or rejecting these categories became as much part of their strategies of return as it had been in their way into exile. Colombian *emigrados* thus politicised and depoliticised their mobility, sometimes in quick succession, depending on whom they were dealing with. Towards the new political regime, those interested in returning sought to shed the category of *emigrado* by emphasising that misjudgements out of fear, not counter-revolution, had pushed them into exile – again carefully inscribing emotions into their interactions with authorities. Instead, they claimed the category of “citizen,” mobilising a different political vocabulary of allegiance that included principles they had previously rejected: citizenship rights and the idea of belonging to a nation by choice (González Quintero).

The case studies in this special issue thus navigate through the emerging, unstable, contradictory, and ambiguous semantic fields of “refugees,” *émigrés*, *emigrados*, *muhajirun*, and a variety of related categories. While the blurred and malleable nature of such categories often led to confusion, dead ends, and contingent decisions, they also had sweeping real-life implications. As the articles show how – from Philadelphia to Paris, from Istanbul to Jamaica, from Havana to Hamburg, from Bogotá to Bordeaux – state bureaucracies and mobile actors used these categories to negotiate status, access to protection, relief, and/or compensation, and various layers of belonging and unbelonging, the contours of a transformative period in the conceptual history of refuge become apparent. This was a period in which actors operated with a hybrid vocabulary, informed by both historical notions of (religious) asylum and by emerging, secular notions and legal concepts of politicised mobility and state membership; a period in which ancien régime notions of deservingness and differential relief were refracted by the prism of political loyalty, and in which relief practices could give way to large-scale reparation schemes aimed at bringing closure to

³¹ See, for instance, the case of the Acadians: Christopher Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora: An Eighteenth-Century History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

³² Daniel J. Hulsebosch, “Confiscation Nation: Settler Postcolonialism and the Property Paradox,” *Yale Journal of Law and Human Rights* 33:2 (2022), 227–53; Brett Palfreyman, “The Loyalists and the Federal Constitution: The Origins of the Bill of Attainder Clause,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 35:3 (2015), 451–73; Kelly E. Summers, “The Great Return: Reintegrating Émigrés in Revolutionary France, 1789–1802” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2015).

revolutionary and war-related conflicts and damages; and a period in which a fuzzy vocabulary of asylum and alienness sustained, and complicated, the lines between insiders and outsiders in a state world marked by an uneasy co-existence of empires and nation-states.

No straight and direct line connects this period to the international refugee regime that took shape over a century later. And still, the findings from historical research in this special issue also resonate with the ways in which we conceive refuge and asylum, and migration writ large, today. Quite a number of continuities become apparent and should invite us for further reflection. Hence, the articles demonstrate how state actors, on all levels of power, sought – often successfully – to maintain their prerogative in setting the terms of reception and asylum, even against external or internal normative or legal pressures. They also show that these efforts were not always successful. While they were available to manipulation “from above” and “from below,” the categories also revealed dynamics of their own. Are we dealing here with a transhistorical fact? How does the ability of mobile actors to fashion and define the terms (in the dual sense) of refuge change in the long term? A comparative study of categories thus opens up to further historical inquiry beyond the period and geographic scope at study. Yet, the greatest relevance of the historical perspectives, perhaps, is to be found in the way the case studies help denude these categories of their aura of self-evidence and finality. The crucial importance of context and agency that comes out in every article should prompt us to reflect more on what and who existing categories of refuge – be they societal, bureaucratic, legal, or scholarly – exclude, what ambiguity and room to manoeuvre is built into them, and how they fashion the lives and actions of the people included or excluded in them, and are fashioned by them, in return.

Funding statement. Research for this paper has been supported by the European Research Council under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement no. 849189).

Acknowledgements. For critical feedback and insightful suggestions, I would like to thank Nicolás A. González Quintero, Thomas Mareite, and *Itinerario*’s anonymous reviewers.

Jan C. Jansen is Professor of Modern History (19th–20th century) at the University of Tübingen and Principal Investigator of “Atlantic Exiles: Refugees and Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1770s–1820s,” funded by the European Research Council. He studies refugee mobilities, exile politics, and legal regimes in the Greater Caribbean during the era of revolutions, wars, and abolition. He is currently at work on a monograph, tentatively entitled “Men of a Most Dangerous Description”: Revolution, Refuge, and Belonging in the British Atlantic, 1790s–1830s.

Cite this article: Jansen, Jan C., “Elusive Refugees: Revisiting Terms of Exile and Asylum in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Itinerario* (2026): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0165115326100448>