Impossible Returns, Enduring Legacies: Recent Historiography of Displacement and the Reconstruction of Europe after World War II

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Gerard Daniel Cohen, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 248 pp., $34.95, ISBN 978-0-19-539968-4.

Loring M. Danforth and Riki Van Boeschoten, *Children of the Greek Civil War: Refugees and the Politics of Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 352 pp., $25.00, ISBN 978-0-226-13598-4.

Peter Gatrell, *Free World? The Campaign to Save the World's Refugees 1956–1963* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 278 pp., $93.00, ISBN 978-1-107-00240-1.

Anna Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism: Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 380 pp., $85.00, ISBN 978-0-472-11780-2.

Ben Shephard, *The Long Road Home: The Aftermath of the Second World War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 512 pp., $16.95, ISBN 978-1-4000-4068-1.

Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 2011), 320 pp., $35.00, ISBN 978-0-674-04824-9.

In *Unconditional Surrender*, his semi-autobiographical novel about a British liaison officer serving in Croatia during World War II, Evelyn Waugh describes an urgent cable that arrives during a period of frosty relations between the British

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Contemporary European History, **22**, 1 (2013), pp. 127–138 © Cambridge University Press 2012
doi:10.1017/S0960777312000513

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777312000513 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and their Yugoslav partisan allies. Waugh's protagonist, Guy Crouchback, remains uncomprehending as he reads the message: '*U.N.R.R.A. research team requires particulars displaced persons. Report any your district.* This phrase, which was to be among the keywords of the decade', Waugh reminds us, 'was as yet unfamiliar'. The scene continues:

> 'What are 'displaced persons'?' he [Guy] asked the squadron leader.
>
> 'Aren't we all?'
>
> He replied: *Displaced persons not understood*, and received: *Friendly nationals moved by enemy*. He replied: *One hundred and eight Jews*.
>
> Next day: *Expedite details Jews names nationalities conditions*.[1]

Questioned by partisan leaders about his orders and interest in these Jews (former internees in the Italian camp at Rab), Guy encounters suspicion and hostility. 'Guy attempted an explanation of the aims and organisation of U.N.R.R.A.', writes Waugh. 'He did not know a great deal about them and had no great respect for the members he had met, but he did his best'.[2]

Over half a century later, we know a great deal more about UNRRA's work with displaced persons (DPs) in Europe than did Crouchback or his partisan contacts, or even Waugh. In the last two decades, historical scholarship on the work of international agencies with European refugees during and after the Second World War has acquired critical mass, particularly as time embargoes on crucial documents have expired and new archival collections have become accessible.[3] Just as important for the resurgence of interest in Europe's DP question has been the growth of interest in 'alternative' historiographical frameworks such as those of international, transnational, and global history. The six books reviewed here examine the politics of displacement in Europe (and beyond) in the aftermath of World War II. These publications demonstrate the intellectual rewards of and possibilities offered by the nascent field of 'refugee history' at the same time that they reframe our understanding of the dynamics of reconstruction that transformed European societies and politics after 1945.

Although the studies discussed here approach the story of Europe's displaced populations from different angles, historiographic frameworks and geographical

[1] Evelyn Waugh, *Sword of Honour Trilogy* (London: Penguin Books Limited, 2012), 605.

[2] Ibid., 608.

[3] Several key studies were published even while displacement was still ongoing in Europe. See, for example, Eugene Kulischer, *The Displacement of Population in Europe* (Montreal: International Labour Office, 1943); Kulischer, *Europe on the Move: War and Population Changes, 1917–1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948); Malcolm Proudfoot, *European Refugees, 1939–1952: A Study in Forced Population Movement* (Evanston: North-Western University Press, 1956); Joseph Schechtman, *European Population Transfers, 1939–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946). A new wave of studies appeared in the late 1980s: Anna C. Bramwell, ed., *Refugees in the Age of Total War* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988); Michael Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees from the First World War through the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985); Mark Wyman, *DPs: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945–1951* (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1988).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777312000513 Published online by Cambridge University Press

locations, they largely focus on a relatively brief period of time covering the mandates of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA, 1944–7) and its successor the International Refugee Organisation (IRO, 1947–52). Only the monographs of Gatrell and of Danforth and Van Boeschoten go beyond this key moment in the story of Europe's displaced. Gatrell details the World Refugee Year campaign (1959–60) organised by the United Nations and various NGOs concerned with resolving the fate of the refugee remnant (the 'hard core') still languishing in Europe. Danforth and Van Boeschoten instead analyse efforts to 'rescue' child refugees in the Greek Civil War, particularly those children evacuated to socialist countries, together with contemporary debates over this contested history.

All the studies underline the logistical and humanitarian challenges created by the massive displacements of persons during and after the Second World War. At war's end in 1945, as many as eleven million persons remained displaced in Europe, with close to eight million of those on German territory. The Allied military authorities (SHAEF, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) and (to a lesser extent) UNRRA did a remarkable job, quickly repatriating the vast majority of these individuals in the first few months following the conflict's conclusion. Among those included for repatriation, however, were Soviet and Yugoslav nationals demanded by their home states who faced punishment and even execution upon their (forcible) return. By September 1945, between one and 1.2 million displaced persons still remained far from home, the majority of them in the German occupation zones. The numbers of the so-called 'last million' would soon swell as approximately twelve million ethnic Germans fled or were expelled from various Eastern European countries (an ethnic cleansing sanctioned by the Yalta agreement). Other 'post-hostility' refugees or 'infiltrees' – including opponents of the emerging socialist regimes and Polish Jews who had survived the war only to witness the resurgence of anti-Semitism and pogroms – would also arrive in Germany, and in Austria and Italy, in greater numbers after 1946 and 1947.

UNRRA's remit in regard to displaced persons provided only for repatriation, rather than resettlement, and thus officials found themselves caught between the demands of the Soviet Union and its allies that its nationals be returned home, the insistence of many displaced persons that they could not safely do so, and UNRRA personnel's commitment to avoid forcible repatriations. UNRRA staff had intended their refugee camps to serve merely as temporary 'assembly centres' in which DPs would reside before returning home. As it became clear that the refugee problem would not disappear with UNRRA's cessation in 1947, the IRO was created (again with a fixed mandate) to assume the task of care and maintenance. As relations between the Western Allies and the socialist regimes deteriorated, the IRO became a particular source of contention (with the USSR refusing to participate). The focus now shifted from repatriation to resettlement overseas, a process that required finding countries of immigration willing to accept refugees. The development of various migration and labour programmes (such as Britain's 'Westward Ho!' and the 'French Metropolitan Scheme') and favourable legislation (the Displaced Persons Act of 1948

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777312000513 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in the US) facilitated this migration.[4] This emigration nonetheless did little to solve the long-standing problem of the 'hard core', those elderly and ill DPs who remained in camps for years on end. World Refugee Year was designed to call attention to the fate of these remaining DPs and find permanent homes for them.

Mapping refugees (and refugee studies) after the Second World War

In telling the story of European refugees after 1945, all the authors challenge readers to consider how attention to refugees, the embodiment of marginality and 'matter out of place',[5] might shift our understandings of European reconstruction. Several of the authors make extensive claims for the import of this 'alternative' history.[6] In the opening pages of *The Long Road Home,* for example, Shephard deems the DP story the 'war's most important legacy' (Shephard, 4), citing the role of Jewish DPs in the creation of Israel, the development of novel forms of international law, and shifts in US immigration policies as among the most obvious impacts. Shephard evidences his claims by means of a narrative history that details the challenges faced by and achievements of UNRRA and the IRO in repatriating and resettling millions of individuals after the war. Figures such as Fiorello LaGuardia (UNRRA's second Director General) and relief worker Francesca Wilson come to life on Shephard's pages.

Cohen instead narrows in on the IRO, whose history he treats as a 'seminal case study in post-1945 international history' (Cohen, 8). Cohen goes as far as to contend (in what strikes this reader as an overstatement), 'The "battle of refugees" was indeed the first direct confrontation over political dissidents between the two emerging superpowers: human rights politics did not only hasten the end of the Cold War, as commonly assumed, but also led to its outbreak' (Cohen, 19). In particular, he declares the system of DP camps 'a unique terrain for the rise of new humanitarian practices and ideologies' (Cohen, 59). While neither Shephard nor Cohen altogether ignore the voices and experiences of the displaced, their accounts start from a top-down perspective that highlights the actions and perceptions of military officials, staff at the international agencies, and state actors. Shephard himself admits, 'This tale should ideally be told from many vantage points, from above as well as from below. But the sources available are imbalanced: nearly everything comes from above' (Shephard, 12). Gatrell similarly notes the uneven nature of relevant sources, given that agencies and administrators tended to speak for and about refugees. Gatrell nonetheless

[4] Both Cohen and Zahra emphasise how post-war planners feared that the pressures created by European overpopulation could lead to another global conflict.

[5] This phrasing comes, of course, from Mary Douglas's classic anthropological study of liminality, *Purity and Danger* (New York: Praeger, 1966). Liisa Malkki develops this notion of liminality in relation to refugees in her pioneering and influential ethnography, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

[6] Cohen and Holian are the most explicit in presenting their works as alternative histories. Whereas for Cohen the DP story 'offers an exciting opportunity to revisit the post-war experience from its supposed margins' (Cohen, 9), Holian instead labels it a 'shadow history' (Holian, 3).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777312000513 Published online by Cambridge University Press

considers this a productive 'opportunity to establish the contours of "refugee history"' (Gatrell, 3).

The monographs of Zahra, Danforth and Van Boeschoten, and Holian do, however, succeed in recovering DP voices and agency at the same time that they capture cultural aspects of the displacement story. In *The Lost Children,* Zahra maps out a varied set of debates and practices aimed at rehabilitating war-damaged children (especially but not only displaced and orphaned youths). The larger goal of reconstructing European families and societies underlay these interventions, which simultaneously reflected a new emphasis on the psychological dimensions of dislocation and a long-standing view of the family as the foundation of both society and the nation. In Zahra's estimation, child rescue activists 'institutionalized a gender-specific vision of humanitarianism and human rights: one in which the family, as much as the individual, was the privileged subject and object of human rights activism' (Zahra, 117). The subjects of these interventions often confounded administrators' assumptions of who counted as a child or as a specific national subject, and what constituted the child's 'best interests' in the aftermath of wartime. Young people returned to their 'rightful' or biological families, for example, sometimes ran away to rejoin those foster parents labelled as kidnappers in nationalist rhetoric. Similarly, when Greek children were repatriated from Yugoslavia in the early 1950s, many of them described life under communism in glowing terms, prompting royalists who had agitated so fiercely for the rescue of Greece's 'kidnapped' and innocent children to recast these evacuees as traitors to the nation and to block further repatriations (Danforth and Van Boeschoten, 81).

In *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism*, Holian likewise attends to the frequent divergences between humanitarian and political discourse surrounding refugees and the self-understandings of displaced persons themselves. Holian sets herself the task of recuperating the stories of the four most populous DP groups in the western zones of Germany: the Poles, Ukrainians, Russians and Jews. Where Cohen stresses the innovations that marked the immediate post-war period – for instance, the casting of human rights (and refugee rights) in individual rather than collective terms and the emergence of humanitarian governmentality – Holian instead highlights continuities. Even if those administering displaced populations often employed novel approaches, as Cohen and Shephard demonstrate, the displaced themselves frequently understood and narrated their experiences by means of older political and cultural traditions. Holian arrays a wide range of materials – including novels, DP newspapers, and drawings and paintings by refugees – that demonstrate how DPs (particularly elites) reconstituted identity in exile and debated the merits of repatriation. In particular, Holian analyses how and to what degree various DPs defined themselves and their condition of displacement as the result of persecution by either Nazism or communism.

Holian situates DP self-framings within the wider political and socio-cultural contexts of Allied occupation of Germany and post-war commemorations by 'persecutees', drawing on documents from state and regional archives in Britain, the United States and Germany, as well as those of UNRRA and the IRO. In this,

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her work echoes that of Cohen, who highlights how Cold War politics enshrined persecution as the *sine qua non* of the (legitimate) refugee. Weighing both comparative and entangled histories of the various DPs groups who found themselves 'between the occupiers and the Germans' (Holian, 5), Holian thus locates her subjects within a broader constellation of policies designed to create a so-called 'refugee nation' (a term she picks up from Cohen). Although it is not altogether clear what Cohen means by this term, Holian deploys it to underscore that contemporary observers expected the category of 'displaced person' to create new, cross-cutting identifications and loyalties.

In reality, the machinery of refugee care and relief worked, for the most part, to reinscribe the nation state and national identifications. On the one hand, this reflected the political mobilisations of displaced persons themselves described in detail by Holian, as well as Zahra and Cohen. On the other hand, the reaffirmation of the national idea followed out of the efforts of state actors in Europe who 'viewed post-war reconstruction as an explicitly nationalising project, an effort to recover the national sovereignty and restore the national 'honor' compromised by the Nazi occupation' (Zahra, 119). Zahra in particular illustrates how humanitarian personnel, many of them motivated by New Deal-style internationalist frameworks and the desire to overcome the racialist thinking of Nazism, responded to such national(ist) impulses.

In the case of Jewish DPs, SHAEF and the US military authorities in Germany initially refused to recognise Jews as a distinct or separate national category despite the requests for recognition by the Central Committee of Liberated Jews. It was only after President Truman sent Earl Harrison to investigate claims of mistreatment of non-repatriable Jews, and Harrison issued his scathing report in September 1945, that Jews were housed in separate camps. Cohen attributes great significance to this policy of separation, contending that 'the acknowledgment of Jewish extraterritoriality normalized the idea of Jewish self-determination in international politics' (Cohen, 143). Furthermore, the IRO subsequently contributed nearly twenty million dollars to the Jewish Agency and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee to finance the transport of some 170,000 Jewish DPs to Palestine (Cohen, 145). In the end, humanitarian actors actively participated in a variety of nationalisation and renationalisation projects, ironically reinforcing the homogenising logics of the state-sponsored ethnic cleansings and genocides that reconfigured Europe during and after World War II.

The completeness of this nationalising project should not be overstated, however. Holian, for example, reminds us that commentators at the time (notably Hannah Arendt) downplayed the internationalist sympathies and orientations of some DPs. Holian herself cautions, though, that this internationalism was often limited by the tenuous solidarities of anti-fascist coalitions. Zahra instead excavates Czech reformer Přemsyl Pitter's experiments at forging multicultural reconciliation through collective homes for Jewish, German and Czech children; Pitter's anti-communism and resolutely Christian vision of brotherhood ultimately restricted his project's inclusivity. Whether child welfare experts endorsed collectivist solutions (like that

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of Pitter) or individualist ideals, they nonetheless encountered many difficulties in placing displaced children into neat national categories, particularly in Central and East European areas marked by long histories of pluri-lingualism. As a result, the IRO and other staff frequently denounced the pathological 'indifference' to both parental authority and national identities manifested by some young refugees (Zahra, 209, 226). In the Greek case, by contrast, divisions that fell primarily along the lines of ideological loyalties (support for the Greek Communist Party versus the Greek monarchy) have been increasingly nationalised in post-Cold War memorialisations as embodying ethnic and linguistic differentiations between Greeks and (Macedonian) Slavs. Analysing a monument to Macedonian women who cared for refugee children evacuated to Skopje, Danforth and Van Boeschoten remark on the ways that this memorial weaves the children into the 'master narrative of Macedonian national history' even as it '"forgets" that the Greek Civil War was not a struggle between Macedonians and Greeks, but a struggle between left and right' (Danforth and Van Boeschoten, 290). In the end, such memory work 'transforms what was fundamentally a political conflict into an ethnic or national one' (ibid.).

Although Zahra stresses how national and other political ideologies could compete in some moments and provide mutual reinforcement in others, at times her study runs the risk of privileging national concerns over other political preoccupations of the Cold War. Zahra offers a persuasive and nuanced account of the ways in which apparently opposed theories of child development and welfare converged in the notion that the 'best interests' of the child lay in an unambiguous sense of belonging to a national family. Yet the Cold War stress on (re)constituting the domestic realm as a haven against totalitarianism was also a story about creating specifically *capitalist* subjects and citizens. Admittedly, Zahra does discuss the ways in which rehabilitation schemes for DP children were gendered, with girls trained in domestic pursuits as an antidote to perceived repression of maternal and feminine tendencies. Little remarked upon, however, are the ways in which the individualist assumptions built into such programmes reflected broader efforts to inculcate a new generation of citizen-consumers in post-war Europe. In places such as Italy, for example, reclaiming society from fascism and diminishing the appeal of socialism manifested itself in everything from the rise of supermarkets to the reconfiguration of living spaces. As Paolo Scrivano puts it, 'citizenship was symbolically redefined in terms of domesticity, in a way that signalled a shift in social life from public to private. In this context, kitchens or living rooms increasingly took over from courtyards, streets, or *piazze*.'[7]

In his study of the efforts of the World Refugee Year (WRY) campaign, Gatrell usefully takes up such Cold War linkages between displacement and consumption, just one of several historical 'entanglements' and 'interconnections' he highlights (Gatrell, 1). WRY was the brainchild of a group of British journalists and political figures (including members of the Conservative Party), some of whom had been

[7] Paolo Scrivano, 'Signs of Americanisation in Italian Domestic Life: Italy's Post-war Conversion to Consumerism', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40, 2 (2005), 323–4.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777312000513 Published online by Cambridge University Press

moved to action upon visiting refugee camps in Palestine. The planning for WRY unfolded within a Cold War context shaped both by decolonisation and the unrelenting depiction in the West of state socialism's citizens as 'members' of captive nations. This reflected the privileging of political liberties and freedom of movement in the emerging international human rights regime of the late 1940s and 1950s.

Observers within developed democracies contrasted not just the possibilities for mobility available to their citizens with those of the communist states, however, but also the mobilities of non-refugees and refugees. As Gatrell notes, 'The 1950s witnessed a rapid growth of tourism, including trips to destinations where refugees had gathered or from which migrant workers travelled in search of work' (Gatrell, 7). The sometimes uncomfortable juxtapositions were not lost on observers at the time, who reflected on the responsibilities created by affluence and the freedom to consume. WRY was not just about drawing renewed attention to the plight of the displaced and finding durable solutions for them, then, but also about instilling values of volunteerism and a concern for the common good (to use modern parlance). In particular, 'Young people could learn to be less disaffected and become good citizens by thinking about the needs of displaced persons' (Gatrell, 37). Ironically, WRY created possibilities for such character building through consumption, such as buying goods crafted expressly for the refugee campaign or playing at being refugees in simulated DP camps in places such as Trafalgar Square or the Scottish countryside.

As Gatrell demonstrates, WRY proved global in both its conceptualisation and implementation. The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the ensuing debates over whether Hungarian refugees fell within the remit of UNHCR (despite falling outside the cut-off date established by the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees)[8] provided the immediate impetus for the campaign, as it drew attention to other displaced persons who had not received similar help (Gatrell, 53). Initially, WRY targeted four specific populations of refugees: the 'hard core' remnant in Europe, Chinese refugees in British Hong Kong, White Russian displaced persons in communist China, and Palestinian refugees. By the time the campaign wrapped up, new groups of peoples were on the move from Cuba to sub-Saharan Africa.

Yet, as Gatrell convincingly demonstrates, WRY neither responded to nor represented a 'globalisation' of the refugee problem. Rather, from the outset WRY was conceived of as a global remedy to a displacement crisis that was already global in nature – and whose globality was acknowledged by the campaign's promoters. This point is crucial, since the wider temporal and geographic focus of Gatrell's study puts into question a commonplace in the scholarship that wrongly treats the European DP problem as having preceded the globalisation of the refugee crisis and international refugee regime. According to this view, those UN agencies established

[8] Paul Weis, UNHCR's Legal Advisor, effectively argued for recognition of the Hungarian DPs as 'conventional' refugees. Drawing on the language of the UNHCR Statute, he also made the case for accepting the collectivity of Hungarian DPs as refugees prima facie. This set an important precedent for viewing refugee rights as group rights. 'Fiftieth Anniversary of the Hungarian uprising and refugee crisis', *UNHCR* (23 October 2006), available at www.unhcr.org/453c7adb2.html (last visited 14 July 2012).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777312000513 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to help (mostly) European refugees in the aftermath of World War II operated on the mistaken assumption that the problem was finite. As the European DP question wound down, however, new refugee crises sprang up around the world, necessitating both the expansion of the terms of eligibility laid out by the 1951 Refugee Convention (with the 1967 Protocol) and the establishment of the UNHCR as a permanent body. Although he dates this transformation earlier than do many other scholars, Cohen replicates such a view when he contends that by 1950 'the centre of gravity of international refugee humanitarianism started to shift from Europe to the Middle East and Asia' (Cohen, 151).

Gatrell's research instead challenges readers to consider the refugee problem as inherently global in nature; even if the instruments of international protection initially focused on Europe rather than India or Asia, displacement was occurring simultaneously. Gatrell also highlights the persistence of the European refugee problem well beyond the early 1950s, the point at which Holian and Cohen depict the crisis as having largely receded.[9] Gatrell's conclusions – and his continual attention to the politics of empire and decolonisation, a subject that receives scant attention in the other studies reviewed here – also call into question Cohen's claim that the 'discriminatory' nature of the international refugee regime has been exaggerated. When Cohen argues that 'the convention should not be read as blatantly discriminatory against African or Asian asylum seekers who had not yet knocked at Europe's doors' (Cohen, 154), he ignores the fact that many displaced persons were denied status and attendant rights as 'conventional' refugees in the *non-European* countries in which they had sought refuge.

Although Gatrell goes furthest in realising a global history perspective, all of the studies amply demonstrate the power of a transnational approach that simultaneously highlights the key but not exclusive role played by national states, citizenship regimes, and the national idea in creating and responding to displacement during and after the Second World War. In addition, each of the monographs rises to the methodological challenges posed by 'refugee history', drawing on previously untapped and widely dispersed sources and creatively rereading well-mined document collections and memoirs. In its combination of archival and ethnographic approaches, the work of Danforth and Van Boeschoten proves unique among the monographs reviewed here. The anthropological aspects of the study may explain why it devotes the greatest space to voices of (former) refugees, whose agency the authors aim to restore (a concern shared by Holian and Zahra). For the Greek case, Danforth and Van Boeschoten demonstrate how detailed ethnographic data can help researchers go beyond nationalist historiographies and rethink a contested past and present. From the other direction, Gatrell and Holian make the most explicit case for the value of a historical perspective in a field of refugee studies that has, until recently, been dominated by social scientists. Refugees and the refugee experience have often

[9] Both Holian and Cohen nominate 1951, when the care of 140,000 refugees was transferred from IRO to West German authorities charged with integrating them into German society, as marking a moment of closure in the European DP story.

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remained relatively invisible to mainstream historiography for reasons ranging from the political to the practical.[10] These new studies will make it much harder for historians to ignore the importance of either refugees as an object of inquiry or refugee history as a key arena of innovative historiography.

This emerging field of 'refugee history' also complicates a number of widespread assumptions about the post-war world. Shephard, for instance, explodes the myth that wartime planning for the peace made for a much more orderly transition at the end of the conflict, in contrast to what had occurred in 1918. In reality, operations for civilian relief, notably UNRRA, were frequently marked by incompetence and inefficiency. As Shephard describes it, UNRRA operated by the seat of its pants in a manner not so different from those contemporary humanitarian actors whose management style Elizabeth Dunn has characterised as *adhocracy*.[11] Likewise, careful examination of the emergence of the post-1945 international refugee regime and its recognition of certain categories of groupness (such as gender and family, analysed by Zahra) tempers the assessment – argued most forcefully by Mark Mazower – that the 'strange triumph' of human rights after 1945 meant abandoning the inter-war focus of the League of Nations on collective (minority) rights in favour of rights framed in individual terms.[12] Even Cohen, who echoes Mazower when he stresses the new individualising eligibility screening procedures of the refugee agencies and the focus on individual narratives, devotes considerable space to Jews, who became defined prima facie as refugees by virtue of belonging to a category understood in collective terms. Cohen, Shephard, Holian and Zahra likewise detail the activism of Jewish agencies and others on behalf of Jewish survivors explicitly as victims of genocide. These authors thus question a recent stress on the supposed immediate post-war silence surrounding this genocide. The 'silence' thesis was itself, of course, a necessary (if overstated) response to the anachronistic reading of the Holocaust paradigm back onto the 1940s and 1950s.

In their meticulous analyses, the studies under examination here also complicate the philosophical-theoretical tradition that casts the refugee camp as a site of what Giorgio Agamben has deemed 'bare life'. Drawing on Hannah Arendt, Agamben's reflections on the 'nomos' of the camp as the place of 'bare life' – where Man, stripped of his 'right to have rights' (Arendt's notion) by exclusion from a political community, is reduced to his biological essence – have proved highly influential in

[10] On this, see Philip Marfleet, 'Refugees and History: Why we must Address the Past', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 26, 3 (2007), 136–48. Also, B. S. Chimni, 'The Birth of a 'Discipline': From Refugee to Forced Migration Studies', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 22, 1 (2009), 11–29. For the British case, Tony Kushner, *Remembering Refugees: Then and Now* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

[11] Dunn uses this term to refer to the negative aspects of poor planning and co-ordination, that is, the ways in which humanitarianism 'creates chaos and vulnerability as much as it creates order'. Elizabeth Cullen Dunn, 'The Chaos of Humanitarian Aid: Adhocracy in the Republic of Georgia', *Humanity*, 3, 1 (2012), 2. In doing so, she ignores Henry Mintzberg's use of adhocracy in organisational theory as a positive model.

[12] Mark Mazower, 'The Strange Triumph of Human Rights, 1933–1950', *The Historical Journal*, 47, 2 (2004), 379–98; Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 124.

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refugee studies.[13] Holian and Cohen directly challenge the problematic implications of such notions for understanding refugees in post-1945 Europe. Both point out, for instance, that Arendt's exclusive focus on statelessness ignored the fact that many post-1945 refugees had not actually been denaturalised (even if they were unable to return home). Furthermore, Holian demonstrates the ways that DP camps fostered refugee agency and political mobilisation, even when political organising was expressly forbidden. Cohen thus concludes, 'contrary to what Hannah Arendt so powerfully claimed, European refugees did not just symbolize the end of the "rights of man": they also facilitated their frustrating, often hypocritical, but in many respects revolutionary beginnings' (Cohen, 99).

Primo Levi's work suggests that even at Auschwitz, those without rights but with the ability to communicate retained some qualities of the human. In Levi's account, it is *incommunicability* (rather than exclusion from the polis) that defines the parameters of bare life. Writing of his fellow prisoners at Auschwitz, Levi notes,

> We immediately realized, from our very first contacts with the contemptuous men with the black patches [the SS], that knowing or not knowing German was a watershed. Those who understood them and answered in an articulate manner could establish the semblance of a human relationship. To those who did not understand them the black men reacted in a manner that astonished and frightened us . . . the blows fell, and it was obvious that they were a variant of the same language: use of the word to communicate thought, this necessary and sufficient mechanism for man to be man, had fallen into disuse. This was a signal: for those people we were no longer men.[14]

For Levi, those who became indifferent to the inadequacy of communication and the 'eclipse of the word' characteristic of the camp had already begun the transformation into the *Muselmann*, the exhausted inmate at the borders of life and death (and of whom Agamben makes much).

If we shift our attention to incommunicability as the core of bare life (as Agamben himself did in *Remnants of Auschwitz*), the findings of the studies reviewed here throw into even sharper relief the problems created by conflating the extermination camp with other regimes of internment. For despite frequent mistranslations of both the literal and figurative sort, the DP camps examined by our authors were sites of extreme communicability. As noted previously, the camps became places at

[13] See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (Cambridge: Zone Books, 1999); Agamben, *Means without Ends: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951). One common complaint with Agamben's work is his lack of concern with historical precision. For an example of such a critique, turn to Mark Mazower, 'Foucault, Agamben: Theory and the Nazis', *Boundary*, 2 (Spring 2008), 23–34. Mazower finds Foucault's model of biopolitics more useful for studying Nazism. Cohen similarly cites Foucault's notions of governmentality as more productive than Agamben's 'bare life' concept. For a thoughtful defence of Agamben's strategy of rendering the historical camp of Auschwitz a paradigm, go to Leland De la Durantaye, *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

[14] Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Summit Books, 1989), 91. For a different interpretation of Levi's take on the borders between bare life and non-life, as well as his fascination with the figure of the Muselmann, refer to Charlotte Ross, *Primo Levi's Narratives of Embodiment: Containing the Human* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 53–4.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777312000513 Published online by Cambridge University Press

which refugees and their administrators reconstituted identities (of nation, ethnicity, religion, class and gender). These were also places of linguistic invention. From the top came new vocabulary such as 'displaced person' (that 'keyword' with which Waugh at first proved so unfamiliar) and 'assembly centre', from the bottom up came creolised terms such as 'skryning' (used by Ukrainian refugees to describe UNRRA's 'screening' process; see Shephard, 221).[15] In contrast to Auschwitz and its 'maimed' argot, the linguistic innovations of the DP bureaucracy were intended to facilitate communication in order to rebuild lives and restore humanity, not destroy them (even if things did not always work out in practice as planned). It is telling that some former Greek child refugees describe their education in institutions designed expressly for refugees as places where, 'We became human beings (*anthropoi*); we became people of the twentieth century.' This understanding followed out of the Greek idea that 'the essential quality of human beings is the ability to take responsibility for their own actions, defy their destiny, and change the course of their own lives' (Danforth and Van Boeschoten, 243).

Although in the best of circumstances the experience of being a refugee enabled one to become 'human' rather than the embodiment of 'bare life', it nonetheless profoundly unsettled senses of location and belonging. Danforth and Van Boeschoten write of the 'impossible return' experienced by those displaced Greeks who eventually succeeded in returning to their native villages and houses. Even when the physical 'home' remained and was accessible, it was no longer a social or affective home. The 'long road home' signalled by Shephard's title, then, was not really about a return at all but rather a journey of transformation. At the end of this journey lay a post-war world in which, among other things, refugees and the humanitarian agencies tasked with assisting them would become permanent features of the political and cultural landscape. In Zahra's words, displacement remade 'home and homeland as we know it' (Zahra, 245). These six accomplished studies demonstrate that refugee histories are currently remaking historiography, as well.

[15] The category of 'displaced person' was an invention of the Second World War, the term originally used by the 1944 SHAEF Outline Plan to refer to individuals outside of their home countries. As Holian notes, 'This terminology represented a curious reversal of standard contemporary usage, importing into the category of the displaced person an essential characteristic of the refugee, namely, the fact of being outside one's country of residence' (Holian, 43).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777312000513 Published online by Cambridge University Press