

What's in an image?

An analysis of visual representations of Muslim refugees in Dutch media

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Introduction

It seems the so-called 'Refugee Crisis'¹ barely needs an introduction. Even people not completely familiar with the background of the crisis, the reason all these people need to flee, and the political debates surrounding their arrival in Europe, will have seen images of refugees in the media in the past few years. Images of large groups of people on boats, in tent camps, behind fences. The most well-known example of an image of a refugee is perhaps the photo of the young Aylan Kurdi, lying face-down on the beach. These images of refugees and their context are the point of focus of this thesis.

The Refugee Crisis has intensified the controversy that surrounds Islam in the secular public domain. Looking at the Netherlands, it becomes obvious that there is a growing opposition to these asylum seekers, as well as opposition to Muslims in general. Examples of assaults on refugee centers, but also cases of anti-refugee graffiti and even attacks on mosques are (unfortunately) becoming more and more common in the Netherlands.² It should be noted that the rising islamophobia is not necessarily connected to the rising opposition to asylum seekers. It is entirely possible that these are two different processes, happening at more or less the same time, although the similarities between the assaults on mosques on the one hand and refugee centers on the other, are striking. This trend is receiving significant attention from

¹ While 'refugee crisis' is the commonly accepted and most often used way to refer to the arrival of large numbers of refugees to Europe, the name is somewhat problematic. Among other things, it suggests a crisis for the countries receiving the refugees. The name seems to emphasize the negative, and in this way it corresponds to the growing opposition to the refugees throughout Europe. Several others, including UNHCR spokesperson Melissa Fleming, agree on the problematics of the name. See, for example: Melissa Fleming, "Put the Refugee 'Crisis' in Context — UNHCR," Devex, March 29, 2016, <https://www.devex.com/news/put-the-refugee-crisis-in-context-unhcr-87942>; Erin K. Wilson and Luca Mavelli, "The Refugee Crisis and Religion: Beyond Conceptual and Physical Boundaries," in *The Refugee Crisis and Religion: Secularism, Security and Hospitality in Question*, ed. Luca Mavelli and Erin K. Wilson, 2017, 3.

² See, for example: Brenda Stoter, "Netherlands Mosque Attacks and Rising Islamophobia," *Al Jazeera*, March 16, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/03/netherlands-mosque-attacks-rising-islamophobia-160308101155120.html>; Thomas Borst, "Weerstand Tegen Asielzoekers Uit Zich in Bekladde Panden," *Elsevier*, October 5, 2015, <http://www.elsevier.nl/nederland/article/2015/10/weerstand-tegen-asielzoekers-uit-zich-in-bekladde-panden-2697072W/>.

different scholars, but there are some aspects which are still underexposed. It seems that, despite the so-called 'visual turn' in academia, visual analysis is still often undervalued.³ However, images are among the most powerful ways to transfer information and because of this they are a valuable source for research.

One of the main reasons why there is so much opposition to the Muslim refugees in Western European countries seems to be the thought that Islam is inherently anti-secular.⁴ Looking at Western European discourses on Islam, it seems that this opinion is widely supported.⁵ This anti-secular discourse is closely connected to Western media. Many images featured in news articles are pictures of refugees with their eyes towards the sky, their arms in the air, and their palms facing up.⁶ This pose has strong religious associations, and it is typical that this is heavily featured in refugee imagery, because it appears to reinforce the anti-secular image of Islam.

This thesis seeks to determine the role of the visual representations in the Dutch media in constructing a discourse on refugees in the Netherlands, focusing on particular dynamics around Islam and secularism. In this way, it aims to contribute to existing research on the way refugees are perceived, by answering the following research question: *What does a visual analysis of Dutch media reporting on (Muslim) refugees contribute to our understanding of how refugees and Muslims are constructed in contemporary Dutch public discourse?* By formulating an answer to this question, this thesis will explore alternative approaches for issues

³ The visual turn will be elaborated on in the second chapter of this thesis. See also: W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images* (University of Chicago Press, 2005), 7.

⁴ See, among others: Carolina Ivanescu, *Islam and Secular Citizenship in the Netherlands, United Kingdom, and France*, Religion and Global Migrations (Houndmills New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Olivier Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

⁵ This discourse will be elaborated on in the first chapter of this thesis.

⁶ See, for example: "A Perpignan, le Visa d'or à Aris Messinis pour son travail sur les migrants," *Le Monde.fr*, September 4, 2016, http://www.lemonde.fr/photo/article/2016/09/04/a-perpignan-le-visa-d-or-au-photographe-aris-messinis-pour-son-travail-sur-les-migrants_4992259_4789037.html; "The Turmoil of Today's World: Leading Writers Respond to the Refugee Crisis," *The Guardian*, September 12, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/sep/12/the-turmoil-of-todays-world-leading-writers-respond-to-the-refugee-crisis>; Clifford May, "The Refugee Crisis Is Going to Get Worse," *The Daily Signal*, September 23, 2015, <http://dailysignal.com/2015/09/23/the-refugee-crisis-is-going-to-get-worse/>.

that exist in Western Europe that are closely related to the unfamiliarity of Islam and the misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the ways of life of Muslims. The way Islam is perceived in the Netherlands will be analyzed through the lens of Edward Said's theory of orientalism. While the focus of this thesis is on the Netherlands, the discourse on Islam within the Netherlands cannot be separated from its broader Western European context.

The research question is addressed through four chapters, each addressing one of the four sub-questions. The first chapter explores the sub-question *Which factors are important to understand in the European context regarding responses to (Muslim) refugees?* This chapter explores Western European discourses on Islam as being anti-secular which was already briefly mentioned above. In addition, this chapter focuses on the current situation of Islam in the Netherlands and the arrival of refugees within this situation. Finally, this chapter turns towards the theory of orientalism, which can be considered to be a frame in which to place the way Islam is thought of and dealt with in Western Europe.

The second chapter engages the sub-question *What can an analysis of images contribute to our understanding of social and political issues such as responses to the European Refugee Crisis?* This chapter argues that images are an important source for research analysis because images have a different way of conveying messages than (for example) written text. In addition, visual analysis appears to be somewhat neglected within academia. This chapter will also present an example of a visual representation of refugees. This particular image has been the reason behind the interest in visual representations displayed in this thesis. In addition, the visual methodologies that are used throughout this thesis are introduced and substantiated in this chapter.

The third and fourth chapters deal with the sub-question *How can a visual analysis of images from the European Refugee Crisis be carried out?* In the third chapter, the content analysis of a set of images of refugees from the Dutch media is the point of focus. 35 images are coded and analyzed in order to identify trends and patterns in the ways (Muslim) refugees are portrayed in the Dutch media.

Subsequently, several of these images will be singled out for further analysis in the fourth chapter. In order to study these images adequately, the method of discourse analysis is utilized. These images will be looked at in relation to the different news articles they are featured in.

This is particularly relevant considering that one image is shown in several contexts. Studying pictures in relation to the texts they belong to provides clarity as to how contexts also shape how messages are conveyed.

The concluding chapter addresses the final sub-question *What does a visual analysis of Dutch media reporting on (Muslim) refugees contribute to our understanding of how refugees and Muslims are constructed in contemporary Dutch public discourse?* The chapter ties together the discourse on Islam in Western Europe and the trends that are visible in the images, showing that orientalist styles of thought play a large role in the images as well as the public and political debate.

Refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants

Though the media often mix the terms refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants up, the differences between these terms are important and should therefore be explained. Refugees are, of course, the point of focus in this thesis. In order to be awarded official refugee status, there is a strict set of conditions that must be met. Refugee status can only be awarded to a person who,

[...] owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.⁷

When a refugee arrives in a foreign country and asks for asylum there, they become an asylum seeker. This does not mean, however, that they are no longer refugees. By requesting asylum, refugees ask for the right to be recognized as a refugee and receive legal and material

⁷ "Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees," Treaty Series (Geneva: UN General Assembly, July 28, 1951), 152.

assistance.⁸ At the same time, there are also asylum seekers who are not officially refugees. So while the terms can, to some extent, be used interchangeably, this is not always the case.

A migrant, finally, is anyone who has chosen to leave their home country for any reason. This reason can be that there is no longer enough food in their home country, but it could also be because they are going to study or work abroad. The difference is mostly in the rights a person has as either a refugee or a migrant. Because of the necessity of their situation, refugees are protected by international law, whereas countries can choose individually how to deal with migrants.⁹ Again, this term is to some extent interchangeable with the term refugee, since any refugee is technically a migrant. The people crossing the Mediterranean Sea in boats to reach Europe are both refugees and migrants.

But there is more to it than just the legal definitions. For example, the news site Al Jazeera made the decision to no longer use the term 'migrant'. This is explained by editor Barry Malone in the following way:

The umbrella term migrant is no longer fit for purpose when it comes to describing the horror unfolding in the Mediterranean. It has evolved from its dictionary definitions into a tool that dehumanises and distances, a blunt pejorative. [...] Migrant is a word that strips suffering people of voice. Substituting refugee for it is – in the smallest way – an attempt to give some back.¹⁰

At the same time, there are other (news) agencies, including UNHCR, that value the term migrant, because of the distinction between migrants and refugees and the different

⁸ "What Is a Refugee? Definition and Meaning," *UNHCR*, accessed July 20, 2017, <http://www.unrefugees.org/what-is-a-refugee/>.

⁹ Adrian Edwards, "UNHCR Viewpoint: 'Refugee' or 'Migrant' – Which Is Right?," *UNHCR*, July 11, 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/7/55df0e556/unhcr-viewpoint-refugee-migrant-right.html>.

¹⁰ Barry Malone, "Why Al Jazeera Will Not Say Mediterranean 'Migrants,'" *Al Jazeera*, August 20, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/editors-blog/2015/08/al-jazeera-mediterranean-migrants-150820082226309.html>.

international rights they have.¹¹ Nevertheless, the terms migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers appear to be used more or less random in the media.

This thesis will follow Al Jazeera's approach and use the term refugee to refer to all people crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe, because it is arguably a more humane term than migrant. At the same time, it is acknowledged that not all these people are in fact recognized as refugees according to the UNHCR definition. However, the term refugee is also the term that is used most often in scholarly literature on the Refugee Crisis, which is why it is adopted here as well. In addition, some sections discuss migration movements on a much more general level than just within the context of the Refugee Crisis. In these sections, the term immigrants will be used to indicate the much broader scope of international human movements.

Religion and secularism

Other terms that are important in this thesis are religion and secularism. Essentially, these terms are interpreted in a constructivist way throughout this thesis. This means that it is assumed that the concepts of religion and secularism are contextually embedded.¹² In other words, within a particular time and place, these concepts have a certain meaning for certain people. Although this makes a comprehensive definition of these concepts almost impossible, some important observations can and should still be made.

The term religion, at least in the context of this thesis, refers mostly to Islam. This term is especially important in discussing refugees in the European context, since 'Muslim' and 'refugee' are often conflated in Western Europe, particularly in the media.¹³ To some extent, a

¹¹ Marc Leijendekker, "Vluchteling, Asielzoeker of Migrant: Een Beladen Keuze," *NRC*, September 2, 2015, <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2015/09/02/vluchteling-asielzoeker-of-migrant-een-belade-1530993-a868928>.

¹² Jeremy Menchik, "The Constructivist Approach to Religion and World Politics," *Comparative Politics* 49, no. 4 (July 1, 2017): 596–99.

¹³ See, among others: José Casanova, "Religion, European Secular Identities, and European Integration," in *Religion in Expanding Europe*, ed. Timothy A. Byrnes and Peter J. Katzenstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 76; "Dit Is Wat Je Moet Weten Om de Vluchtelingencrisis Te Begrijpen," *nrc.nl*, September 14, 2015,

similar conflation can be observed in this thesis. However, it should be noted that this conflation solely utilized for reflection purposes in the context of Dutch (visual) media discourse(s) on refugees.

Of course, Islam is an umbrella term, which encompasses many different worldviews and rituals. A precise definition, however, will not be given within this thesis. There are several reasons for this. First of all, in the context of this thesis, the word Islam does not refer to the religion itself, but rather to the preconceptions about this religion that are predominant in Western European media. These preconceptions will be elaborated on in the first chapter. Secondly, any definition of Islam that will fit within this chapter will necessarily not do justice to the wide variety of people, rituals, beliefs, practices, and worldviews contained within it.

However, there are differences in emphasis across the different chapters. In the first and second chapter, Islam is used in opposition or in conjunction with secularism. However, in the third and fourth chapter the term 'religious' or any word referring to 'Islam' (including Islamic, Muslim, etc.) is necessarily much more narrow, and based solely on those aspects which are visible in the images. In the case of Islam, this is predominantly the hijab.¹⁴ This will be discussed in more detail in chapter three.

The term secularism is also utilized in multiple ways in this thesis. As will become clear from the first chapter, secularism is another umbrella term, one that is often placed opposite religion and especially opposite Islam. There are many different definitions of and ways of looking at secularism, but what is most important in this thesis is that secularism involves, or should involve, a separation of politics and religion.¹⁵

<https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2015/09/14/dit-is-wat-je-moet-weten-om-de-vluchtelingencrisis-te-begrijpen-a1413244>.

¹⁴ Other aspects often associated with Islam, such as bearded men, prayer mats, or djellabas, do not occur in the images analyzed in this thesis. For this reason, they will not be considered here.

¹⁵ Mieke Maliepaard and Mérove Gijsberts, "Moslim in Nederland 2012" (Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, November 2012), 85.

Similarly, in the last two chapters the concept of secularism is necessarily narrowed, because these chapters focus on visual aspects. Visible aspects of secularism are, at least in this set of images, limited to the presence of (military) police. This will be further elaborated on in chapter three.

Of course, this is only a very short introduction of the most important terms and concepts in this thesis, including refugees, migrants, Islam and secularism. The first chapter considers the ways in which these concepts play out in the Netherlands, particularly in the context of the Refugee Crisis.

1. Constructions of secularism and Islam

The arrival of Syrian and other refugees in the Netherlands has been met with varying attitudes, much like in other European countries. On the one hand, there are those who argue that these people deserve a safe place. On the other hand, there seems to be the fear that the lifestyle of these refugees is not compatible with the Dutch culture. This chapter seeks to provide an answer to the following question: *Which factors are important to understand in the European context regarding responses to (Muslim) refugees?*

This chapter will focus first on the belief that Islam is incompatible with the Dutch secular way of life, showing whether or not there is any ground for it. The second section focuses on the Refugee Crisis in the Netherlands, especially in light of the preconceptions about Islam that are so persistent in public debates. Finally, Said's theory of orientalism will be discussed, as it provides a useful framework for the misconceptions of Islam in the Netherlands. In addition, the theory of orientalism will provide a link to the next chapter, which focuses on these preconceptions in images of (Muslim) refugees and the importance of studying them.

1.1 The (in)compatibility of secularism and Islam

Many scholars have written about Islam and secularism in general or in Western Europe specifically. A notable contribution is from Sam Cherribi. He compares the dynamics with regard to Islam in Europe to an ideological bullfight:

In this bullfight, Islam is the bull, goaded and provoked by politicians and pundits who want to make themselves famous matadors by exaggerating the fierceness of the bull against whom they have chosen to pit themselves. He can be dangerous; he is, after all, a bull. He is also no match for their intellect; he is, after all, a bull, and this is their arena, their game, about which he knows little and appreciates less. That is not to say that Islam or its adherents are without guile, but Islam is only a religion, just as a bull is only a bull. By focusing so much on this religion, and indeed religion in general, we lose sight of our

responsibilities as individual human beings, while the matadors make their reputations on a beast of their own creation.¹⁶

Cherribi's comparison is not without flaws. For example, in a bullfight the bull is brought to the arena with the purpose of fighting and defeating him, whereas Islam could be seen as a bull that happened to wander into the arena, after which the politicians decided they should fight it. Still, it is a useful analogy, especially because it explains the way in which Islam is constructed: as a dumb and dangerous bull. But it also explains that, while Islam (or the bull) can be dangerous, it is *made* dangerous in this situation by the politicians and experts who are provoking and pushing the bull/Islam. Something that should be added to this is the fact that the politicians/toreros can be at least as dangerous as the bull, but this is easily overlooked in comparison with the bull.

This quote from Cherribi points out several important aspects of the way Islam is regarded in Western Europe. This includes the fact that Islam is seen as a monolithic entity or group, disregarding the differences within this group. At the same time, Cherribi shows how Islam is thought of as both irrational and violent.

This section will explain this attitude through the relationship between Islam and secularism, a topic that has received much scholarly attention in recent years. As has become clear in the introduction, the (in)compatibility of Islam and secularism is a matter of definition. Depending on the way secularism and Islam are defined, they are more or less (in)compatible.

What is most important about secularism, is the realization that secularism should not be understood as a 'neutral' separation of state and church. Rather, as Saba Mahmood argues, secularism should be considered as "[...] the kind of subjectivity that a secular culture authorizes, the practice it redeems as truly (versus superficially) spiritual, and the particular relationship to history that it prescribes."¹⁷ In other words, secularism is not (just) about a separation of state and religion, but about what is *considered* religious and what is not.

¹⁶ Sam Cherribi, *In the House of War: Dutch Islam Observed* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 21, <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199734115.001.0001/acprof-9780199734115>.

¹⁷ Saba Mahmood, "Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation," *Public Culture* 18, 2 (2006): 328.

An argument that is closely related to this is the argument that secularism or 'the secular' is a framework that shapes the Western European way of thinking. This argument is quite similar to the argument from Saba Mahmood that secularism is not neutral, though it goes further. For example, Luca Mavelli argues that:

Overall, the very crystallization of the secular as an epistemic framework that, whether we want it or not, contributes to shaping our understandings of autonomy and knowledge, raises questions on the extent to which this idea remains the expression of a critical reason primarily concerned to promote autonomy and pluralism, rather than the embodiment of a power/knowledge formation that contributes to forms of marginalization and exclusion – a formation that constructs Muslims as others in order to guarantee the stability and certainty of Europe's identity.¹⁸

Instead of posing the question whether Islam is anti-secular, Mavelli turns the situation around and wonders to what extent secularism is anti-Islamic. At the same time, this Western European way of thinking automatically creates an opposition between Europeans and Muslims, as Talal Asad argues:

Europe (and the nation-states of which it is constituted) is ideologically constructed in such a way that Muslim immigrants cannot be satisfactorily represented in it. I argue that they are included within and excluded from Europe at one and the same time in a special way, and that this has less to do with the 'absolutist Faith' of Muslims living in a secular environment and more with European notions of 'culture' and 'civilization' and 'the secular state' [...].¹⁹

This raises questions about the relationship between Islam and the secular state. It can be argued that a secular state is a state "[...] that facilitates the possibility of religious piety out of honest conviction."²⁰ In this view, citizens can adhere to whichever religion they want, because the (secular) state provides them with this freedom. This means that their convictions are (or

¹⁸ Luca Mavelli, *Europe's Encounter with Islam: The Secular and the Postsecular* (Routledge, 2013), 143.

¹⁹ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 159.

²⁰ 'Abd Allāh Aḥmad Na'īm, *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Sharī'a* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008), 1.

rather: can be) 'honest', as for example 'Abd Allāh Aḥmad Na'īm argues. At the same time, the state should make sure that policy reflects the values of all citizens. The way to achieve this is through civic reason, or "[...] the sort of reasoning that most citizens can accept or reject."²¹ In other words, in a secular state policy is based on a universal kind of logic which respects the different (religious) values of its citizens. In this way, secularism can be an incentive for honest religious conviction.

This view is an interesting one, because it seems that religion and secularism are often placed at opposite sides in the debate. Other scholars have also remarked on this false contradiction between 'religious' on the one hand and 'secular' on the other.²² According to Martijn de Koning, the relationship between religion and the secular is not just one of contradiction, because the secular encompasses the religious. In the case of the Netherlands, it is the secular state that defines the boundaries of religion, and thus causes religion to adapt to the secular domain.²³

With this statement, De Koning does not distinguish between different religions. One important question in relation to this is formulated by Olivier Roy: "[...] if Christianity has been able to recast itself as one religion among others in a secular space, why would this be impossible for Islam?"²⁴ Roy's formulation of this question is relevant, because it shows the assumptions about Islam that are prominent in the European discourse in general. Most prominent among these is the assumption that it would indeed be impossible for Islam to take its place among other religions in a secular space.

²¹ Ibid., 7. Na'im's idea of civic reason is closely related to several other theories, such as the concept of public reason by John Rawls. See for example: John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 64, no. 3 (1997): 765–807.

²² See, for example: "Moslims Tellen. Reflectie Op Onderzoek Naar Islam, Moslims En Secularisering in Nederland.," in *Moslim in Nederland 2012*, by Mieke Maliepaard and Mérove Gijsberts (Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2012), 165; Cora Schuh, Marian Burchardt, and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, "Contested Secularities: Religious Minorities and Secular Progressivism in the Netherlands," *Journal of Religion in Europe* 5, no. 3 (January 1, 2012): 357; Olivier Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), vii–ix.

²³ de Koning, "Moslims Tellen," 165.

²⁴ Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam*, ix.

Roy argues that the different answers to the question can be divided among two categories: theological and cultural. Either it is argued that the separation between religion and politics is foreign to Islam, or it is said that Islam is more than a religion; it is a culture.²⁵ One more category should be added here: the argument that Islam is not a religion, but a political ideology.²⁶ Unfortunately, such arguments “[...] hardly reflect the real practices of Muslims.”²⁷ This statement addresses one of the main issues: the debate about Islam in Western Europe is dominated by misunderstanding, misrepresentation, and fear of Islam.

The blurring of the boundaries between religion and culture, especially in the case of Islam, can also be identified in the Dutch context. A striking example of this is the so-called Islam Debates (*islam debatten*) that arose as a part of the ‘Islam and integration’ program in Rotterdam in the years 2003-2005.²⁸ Carolina Ivanescu describes that “[e]ven though not all of the participants [...] identified themselves as Muslim believers – but rather as having links with Islam as an ethnicity, a culture or a tradition – their voices were still perceived as Muslim voices.”²⁹ Immediately after this, Ivanescu argues that this means that Islam, although rather reluctantly, had finally been given a place in the secular public debate.³⁰ Even though she acknowledges that the Muslim community is far from homogenous, she places all the members of this group of representatives of the Muslim population in the category ‘religion’. A few pages later, however, she says that “[...] Muslim participants deplored the excessive attention on cultural and religious differences. Muslims in Rotterdam, instead of equating religion with culture, try to differentiate between the two [...]”³¹ This raises some questions, because Ivanescu is apparently aware that Muslims themselves find it important to differentiate

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Michael Schulson, “Why Do so Many Americans Believe That Islam Is a Political Ideology, Not a Religion?,” *Washington Post*, February 3, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/02/03/why-do-so-many-americans-believe-that-islam-is-a-political-ideology-not-a-religion/>.

²⁷ Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam*, ix.

²⁸ Ivanescu, *Islam and Secular Citizenship in the Netherlands, United Kingdom, and France*, 92–93.

²⁹ Ibid., 93.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 95.

between religion and culture, but she still brushes aside this distinction when discussing the Islam Debates.

According to Sam Cherribi, Islam has been very influential on European ideology, despite the fact that it is perceived as illiberal and theocratically oriented. In his words: "The idea of Europe is one of openness, tolerance, and secularism that is open to and tolerates religion while resolutely denying it the power of government."³² But considering the recent developments in for example the Netherlands in response to Islam, it can be doubted whether this is still the case. Cherribi asks: "Has not the European fear of Islam and its obsession with Muslims driven it to impersonate the very culture it despises?"³³ Compare, for example, the banning of headscarves by a secular government to the religious authority (Islam) dictating the wearing of hijabs. While the first is apparently acceptable in Europe, the second is easily written off as backwards or old-fashioned.³⁴ In reality, however, banning or prescribing the wearing of hijabs is not that different.

Joan Wallach Scott argues that, in France, the visibility of hijabs in the public domain raises fundamental questions about French republicanism. In a way, the (different) sexuality of both men and women is acknowledged by the wearing of a hijab, since its purpose is to prevent sexual excitement of men. But France, like many other Western European countries, prides itself on gender equality. And this is exactly where the problem arises: "[...] if we are all the same, why has sexual difference been such an obstacle to real equality?"³⁵ Chapter three of this thesis will show that the gender dimensions also play an important role in (the images of) the Refugee Crisis.

³² Cherribi, *In the House of War*, 18.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Interesting in this regard is also the comparison between the 'tyranny of fashion' and the wearing of a hijab. See, for example: Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?," *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (n.d.): 785–86.

³⁵ Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil*, The Public Square Book Series (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 154.

On a much more general level, the paradox described above is also observed by Olivier Roy, who says that “[c]ritics of Islam and Muslim fundamentalists are mirrors of each other, and each corroborates the other in the view of Islam that they share, merely with the signs reversed.”³⁶ Of course, there are many different positions between a critic of Islam and a Muslim fundamentalist, which is also acknowledged by Roy. But it is interesting that the actual differences between secular Western Europe and the perceivably incompatible Islam may not be as large as assumed.

1.2 Secularism and Islam in the Netherlands

When focusing on the Netherlands, it is important to realize that secularism as an ideology is closely related to the process of de-pillarization (*ontzuiling*) of Dutch society and consequent the movement of religion to the private domain. Until the 1960’s, Dutch society was highly ‘pillarized’ along confessional lines; this so-called *verzuiling* created a Catholic, a Protestant, a liberal, and a socialist pillar in Dutch culture. With the disappearance of these pillars, religion moved to the private domain, making it more or less invisible in the Dutch public space.³⁷ One of the reasons that Islam causes such controversy in the Dutch public domain is the fact that it is a visible religious presence. According to Peter van der Veer, the values of Islam remind the Dutch people of their own strict (religious) rules that they have only relatively recently left behind.³⁸ The visibility of Islam in combination with this remembrance is problematic because it might feel like a step back from the relatively recent de-pillarization of Dutch society.

In 2008, the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) estimated that there is a total of 825.000 Muslims in the Netherlands, about 5% of the entire population. The majority of the Muslims in the Netherlands, approximately 70%, is of Turkish or Moroccan origin.³⁹ The Netherlands

³⁶ Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam*, 43.

³⁷ For more information on the pillarization of Dutch society at this time, see for example: Arend Lijphart, *Verzuiling, Pacificatie En Kentering in de Nederlandse Politiek*. (Haarlem: Becht, 1990).

³⁸ Peter van der Veer, “Pim Fortuyn, Theo van Gogh, and the Politics of Tolerance in the Netherlands,” *Public Culture* 18, 1 (2006): 111–124.

³⁹ “Religie Aan Het Begin van de 21ste Eeuw” (Den Haag/Heerlen: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2009), 35, 38. Unfortunately, these are the most recent data available on this subject.

Institute for Social Research (*Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, SCP*) has researched the relation between religion and politics in the eyes of the Turkish and Moroccan Muslims in the Netherlands. For this research, several statements were submitted to Dutch Muslims of Turkish and Moroccan background. **Table 1** shows the percentages of the respondents who agreed to the statement.⁴⁰

	Turkish	Moroccan
Religion should play an important part in politics	12	21
Religion is a private matter between a religious person and God	93	89
Religion and politics should have nothing to do with each other	78	66

Table 1 Views on the role of religion and politics among Dutch Muslims of Turkish and Moroccan background (in percentages of respondents who (completely) agree).

Looking at the percentages in this table, it can only be concluded that by far the majority of Dutch Muslims of Turkish and Moroccan background support the (Dutch) secular principles. The support for secularism appears to be slightly higher among Dutch Muslims of Turkish background, which is likely linked to the difference in political systems in Turkey and Morocco. It is interesting that these questions were asked, because apparently these three statements are seen as the core of Dutch secularism. In addition, the fact that these questions were asked to Dutch Muslims in particular implies that their acceptance of these statements is not a given. This implication is even enforced by the fact that the SCP has not collected data of the responses to this statement from other (religious) groups in the Netherlands. Not only does this make it impossible to properly compare the support for secularism among Dutch citizens with different (religious) backgrounds, but, more importantly it also shows that the support for secularism among the other Dutch (religious) groups is not questioned or at least questioned much less.

However, even with the availability of these data, there is a firm belief in the Netherlands among other Western European countries that there is an inherent incompatibility between Islam and Dutch culture. As formulated in a report of the European Network Against Racism (ENAR), “[t]hese views are reinforced by some influential European intellectuals and politicians

⁴⁰ This table is a translated version of the one found in Maliepaard and Gijssberts, “Moslim in Nederland 2012,” 85.

who, by declaring a lack of compatibility of some expressions of Islam with 'European values' (i.e. fundamental rights and the rule of law, women's rights, LGBTI people's rights and rights of Jews), contribute (in) directly and/or (un)willingly to reinforcing stereotypical representations of Muslims [...]."⁴¹ An example of this can be observed in the media attention surrounding the 'burqini', a swimsuit covering the body and hair of the woman wearing it, in the summer of 2016. In August that year, this type of swimwear was banned on the beach in Cannes among other French cities, because it was considered incompatible with the secular values of France.⁴² Although this calls into question exactly which secular values this is about (the secular value of dressing indecently?), the point is that certain aspects of Islam are often said to be incompatible with fundamental values of contemporary Western society. Security also played a role in the burqini ban, as it occurred in a heightened security environment following the attack in Nice in July 2016.⁴³ The association of Islam with issues of security will be discussed more thoroughly in the third chapter of this thesis, since it is also very much present in the images of Dutch refugees in the Dutch media.

A few months later, in November 2016, the Dutch House of Representatives agreed on a ban of face covering clothing (most notably including the niqab) in certain public spaces.⁴⁴ Interestingly enough, the discussion surrounding this ban did not include the arguments that face-covering clothing goes against the liberal values of the West. On the contrary, several

⁴¹ Đermana Šeta, "Forgotten Women: The Impact of Islamophobia on Muslim Women" (European Network Against Racism (ENAR), 2016), 15, http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/forgottenwomenpublication_lr_final_with_latest_corrections.pdf.

⁴² "Boerkini Verboden Op Strand van Cannes," *NOS*, <http://nos.nl/artikel/2124987-boerkini-verboden-op-strand-van-cannes.html>.

⁴³ Ben Quinn, "French Police Make Woman Remove Clothing on Nice Beach Following Burkini Ban," *The Guardian*, August 23, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/24/french-police-make-woman-remove-burkini-on-nice-beach>.

⁴⁴ "Tweede Kamer Voor Gedeeltelijk Boerkaverbod," *NOS*, November 23, 2016, <http://nos.nl/artikel/2144670-tweede-kamer-voor-gedeeltelijk-boerkaverbod.html>.

politicians, academics, as well as niqab wearing women expressed their concern that the freedom of religion should be upheld.⁴⁵

Carolina Ivanescu argues that the events of 9/11 have placed religion back at the center of interest after years of public indifference in the Netherlands.⁴⁶ She goes on to say that “[t]he solution to the perceived problem was deemed simple: once the migrants would integrate into the Dutch culture, once they would fully accept the nationally defined values, their social, cultural, and economic problems would disappear.”⁴⁷ Ivanescu’s use of the word integration here is noteworthy, because it shows a common misconception in the Dutch public debate, where integration is often equated to assimilation. John Berry explains the difference between the two by placing the concept of integration among four acculturation strategies that can be adopted by immigrants: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. He defines integration as follows:

When there is an interest in both maintaining ones original culture, while in daily interactions with other groups, *Integration* is the option. In this case, there is some degree of cultural integrity maintained, while at the same time seeking, as a member of an ethnocultural group, to participate as an integral part of the larger society.⁴⁸

The other three acculturation strategies are all described as less desirable by Berry. Assimilation means the immigrants completely abandon their own culture and adopt that of the host country. When immigrants seek to maintain their own culture and avoid interaction with people from other cultures, it is called separation. Marginalization, finally, is when “there is little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance [...], and little interest in having relations

⁴⁵ See for example: “Nikab-Draagster: Door Boerkaverbod Kan Ik Niet Zijn Wie Ik Wil Zijn,” *NOS*, November 23, 2016, <http://nos.nl/artikel/2144709-nikab-draagster-door-boerkaverbod-kan-ik-niet-zijn-wie-ik-wil-zijn.html>; “Weinig Bijval Voor Boerka-Plan,” *NOS*, (May 21, 2015), <http://nos.nl/artikel/2037001-weinig-bijval-voor-boerka-plan.html>.

⁴⁶ Ivanescu, *Islam and Secular Citizenship in the Netherlands, United Kingdom, and France*, 75–76.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁴⁸ John Berry, “Integration and Multiculturalism: Ways towards Social Solidarity,” *Papers on Social Representations* 20 (2011): 2.6.

with others [...]."⁴⁹ In a multicultural society, integration is the only possible strategy, because it allows both the culture of the immigrants and that of the host country to exist simultaneously.

In the previous section, it was mentioned that the main issues in the debate about Islam in Western Europe are misunderstanding, misrepresentation, and fear of Islam. Sophie van Bijsterveld claims that the anxieties that are caused by the presence of Islam in the Dutch public domain "[...] focus on the basic values of Dutch society which people fear are under pressure."⁵⁰ According to Van Bijsterveld, these anxieties exist because Islam is unfamiliar.

Before Islam first appeared in the Netherlands, there had been a period in which all religious groups and the government had reached a balance. In the words of Van Bijsterveld: "[...] the appearance of Islam in the Netherlands challenged the existing equilibrium of mutual familiarity for the first time in a long period."⁵¹ But the issues that arose from the appearance of Islam are not necessarily related to Islam itself. In other words, if any other unfamiliar religious group had appeared in the Netherlands in a similar period of stability, it might have caused very similar problems. It follows that the controversies concerning Islam in the Dutch public domain are certainly not over yet, because these controversies are necessary in the process of familiarization. This has also been the case with other religions in Dutch history. The lengthy conflicts between Catholicism and Protestantism are a case in point.⁵² Eventually, however, these groups have indeed reached a point of balance.

The unfamiliarity of Islam is a significant problem, because it means that Dutch citizens have no real way of knowing which statement made about this religion is true or false. The fear of Islam stems from the unfamiliarity, which causes people to believe the negative statements, which are common, just as easily as the positive ones, which are much less common. This in

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Sophie van Bijsterveld, "Controversies over Islam in the Dutch Public Domain: Deep Structures in Church and State Relationships," in *Religion, Migration and Conflict*. (Zürich: Lit Verlag, 2015), 39.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² See for example *ibid.*, 35.

turn reinforces the fear of Islam, thus creating a self-reinforcing process. The heightened security environment is both a symptom of this process as well as a trigger.

1.3 Orientalism

When discussing the theme of Islam in the west, particularly within the context of this thesis, it is important to look at Edward Said's theory of orientalism. The well-known and often used theory of orientalism refers, in Said's words, to "[...] a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident.'"⁵³ A central component of this theory is the construction of a distinction or opposition between the orient and the occident. This opposition is a binary one; neither of these concepts can exist without the other, and therefore they can only be understood in relation to each other.

Richard King offers a relevant addition to the theory of binary opposition in this context. He argues that in binary oppositions "[d]ifference is perceived in oppositional rather than pluralistic terms, and differences between cultures become fetishized at the same time as internal heterogeneities within each culture are effaced."⁵⁴ In other words, a binary opposition between Western Europe and, in the case of the Refugee Crisis, mostly the Middle East, creates a common enemy that unites Western Europeans. At the same time, it makes the internal differences within Western Europe less visible. This is not necessarily a good thing:

Simple oppositions not only blind us to the realities of the lives and beliefs of others but create alternative realities that affect our own self-understanding. [...] It leaves no room for self-criticism, no way to think about change, no way to open ourselves to others. By refusing to accept and respect the difference of these others we turn them into enemies, producing that which we most feared about them in the first place.⁵⁵

In terms of Western European thought on non-western refugees, the theory of Orientalism means that there are several preconceptions which play a role in the debate. Some of these

⁵³ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2014), 2.

⁵⁴ Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and "the Mystic East"* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), 188.

⁵⁵ Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil*, 18–19.

preconceptions are inherent to secularism, as argued by Joan Wallach Scott: "Religion is associated with the past; the secular state with the present and future."⁵⁶ Wallach Scott also elaborates on the preconceptions about Muslims specifically: "[...] 'Muslim' evokes associations of both inferiority and menace that go beyond the objective definition of the word itself: 'Muslims' are 'immigrants', foreigners who will not give up the signs of their culture and/or religion."⁵⁷ Put together, this points towards a preconception of Europeans as being secular and modern, whereas Muslims are by definition immigrants and backward.

Similar negative preconceptions towards Islam are visible in political debates. The Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn is among the most noted for his dislike of Islam. He called Islam a backward culture.⁵⁸ After he was murdered in 2002, other politicians have adopted similar arguments. Geert Wilders has even adopted Fortuyn's words literally.⁵⁹

As Liam Kennedy and Caitlin Patrick explain, photojournalism is closely connected to orientalism:

In concert with other news media, photojournalism has played a significant role in mediating the relationship between national and international affairs, shaping perceptions of the relations between the domestic and the foreign. It conventionally frames worlds of conflict and violence beyond the nation state, thereby shaping the composition of different norms – such as humanity and otherness – that are crucial to understanding ethical and political relations in international affairs.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Ibid., 95.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁸ Frank Poorthuis and Hans Wansink, "Pim Fortuyn Op Herhaling: 'De Islam Is Een Achterlijke Cultuur,'" *De Volkskrant*, May 5, 2012, <http://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/pim-fortuyn-op-herhaling-de-islam-is-een-achterlijke-cultuur~a611698/>.

⁵⁹ Frans van Deijl, "'Ik Lust Ze Rauw,'" *HP/De Tijd*, November 13, 2009, <http://www.hpdetijd.nl/2009-11-13/ik-lust-ze-rauw/>.

⁶⁰ Liam Kennedy and Caitlin Patrick, eds., *The Violence of the Image: Photography and International Conflict*, International Library of Visual Culture 15 (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 10.

What Kennedy and Patrick talk about here is very much a distinction, in this case not explicitly between east and west, but rather between the domestic and the foreign. Their use of the words 'foreign' and 'otherness' point to the key of orientalism, especially in the context of this thesis: 'they' are not like 'us'.

But there are also oppositions on another, much more basic level. Most Europeans will associate going to the beach with summer, vacation, and generally happy things. The images and messages of refugees arriving on Greek and Italian beaches are very conflicting with this feeling.⁶¹ Instead of a happy vacation destination, these beaches are now the terrain of refugees and the several different agencies aimed at helping them. A very strong example of this is the widely circulated image of Aylan Kurdi, lying face-down on the beach. More than many other images, this one sparked strong emotions and (political) debate all across Europe.

One of the main criticisms of Said's orientalism is that he describes it as something the West imposes on the Orient. In the words of Jean-Claude Vatin and François Pouillon, this understanding of orientalism "[...] implies that the Orient, or rather Orients in the plural, did not have recourse to any agency or intervention in the global movement for the production of self-knowledge, not to mention power."⁶² This leaves the Orient as the permanent victim, without the agency or power to change their fate. The victimization of the 'other' is indeed a part of orientalism, and while it is criticized, arguments can be made to appreciate this aspect instead. Because even though it is certainly not something positive, it does reflect that the victimization of the other is a widespread phenomenon. In chapter three the 'good refugee, bad refugee' narrative will be discussed, which is closely connected to this victimization.

The perceived opposition between, in the case of the Refugee Crisis, 'Islam' and 'the West' is also the reason for the opposition against Muslims in Europe in general, but also specifically

⁶¹ It is interesting to note that one of the arguments against the acceptance of refugees is that it is believed that they are merely here to 'seek fortune', while at the same time they bring such scenes of sorrow and pain to Europe's sunny (and happy) beaches.

⁶² François Pouillon and Jean-Claude Vatin, eds., *After Orientalism: Critical Perspectives on Western Agency and Eastern Re-Appropriations*, Leiden Studies in Islam and Society, v. 2 (Boston ; Leiden: Brill, 2015), XI.

against the acceptance of refugees. The perceived incompatibility of Islam and secularism is one of these assumptions.

1.4 The Refugee Crisis in the Netherlands

The negative preconceptions about Islam that have been described in this chapter so far, should be seen as the context in which the Syrian refugees were arriving in Europe in general and the Netherlands specifically from 2015 onwards.

According to the UNHCR, approximately 114.106 refugees/asylum seekers were in the Netherlands at the end of 2016. Globally, this number was 20.013.966.⁶³ In comparison, the most refugees/asylum seekers the Netherlands have ever hosted was 230.646 at the end of 2000, when the global number was 13.077.498.⁶⁴ It would seem, then, that the number of people arriving in the Netherlands is not the most significant issue.

Economic aspects play a large role in the attitude of Western European citizens, politicians, and nations towards refugees. In the 1990's, most European countries were doing well economically. At that time, there were fewer concerns about the arrival of refugees, who were then coming mostly from Iraq and later from former Yugoslavia.⁶⁵ Comparing the parliamentary debates from 1992 and 2015 on the topic of refugees shows an interesting shift in politics. Where in 1992 the main concern was with the interests of the refugees themselves, the focus in 2015 is much more on the preservation of the Dutch welfare state.⁶⁶

⁶³ "UNHCR Population Statistics," *UNHCR*, 2017, <http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview>.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ "Dit Is Wat Je Moet Weten Om de Vluchtelingencrisis Te Begrijpen."

⁶⁶ Mette Vreeken, "Toelaten of Weigeren? Parlementaire Argumentatie Inzake Het Vluchtelingenbeleid in 1992 En 2015" (Universiteit Utrecht, 2016), 30.

Aside from politics, a large percentage of Dutch citizens seem to agree with this shift in focus. **Table 2** shows the responses of Dutch citizens to two statements made concerning the presence of immigrants and different cultures in the Netherlands.⁶⁷

(completely) agree with 'the Netherlands would be a more pleasant country if there were fewer immigrants'	39
(completely) disagree with 'the presence of different cultures is an asset for our society'	27

Table 2 Political dissatisfaction, 2016-2017 (in percentages)

Other researchers have also observed similar trends. For example, a report from October 2015 indicates that 77 percent of the Dutch expect very little economic salvation from the refugees, they think the refugees are all lowly educated and that they are all economic migrants rather than refugees.⁶⁸ Similar attitudes towards refugees and Islam can be observed in other European countries as well.⁶⁹

1.5 Conclusion

In order to formulate an answer to the question *What factors are important to understand in the European context regarding responses to (Muslim) refugees?*, several aspects are important to mention. The first is the stubborn public belief that Islam and secularism are incompatible, even though there is no real evidence of this incompatibility, at least in the Netherlands. Rather,

⁶⁷ Paul Dekker, Josje den Ridder, and Pepijn van Houwelingen, "Burgerperspectieven 2017|1." (Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2017), 42, https://www.scp.nl/Publicaties/Alle_publicaties/Publicaties_2017/Burgerperspectieven_2017_1.

⁶⁸ Jérôme Fourquet, "Les Européens Face À La Crise Des Migrants" (Fondation Jean Jaurès, Fondation européenne d'études progressistes, October 27, 2015), <https://jean-jaures.org/nos-productions/les-europeens-face-a-la-crise-des-migrants>.

⁶⁹ See, for example: Jacob Poushter, "European Opinions of the Refugee Crisis in 5 Charts," *Pew Research Center*, September 16, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/16/european-opinions-of-the-refugee-crisis-in-5-charts/>; Richard Wike, Bruce Stokes, and Katie Simmons, "Negative Views of Minorities, Refugees Common in EU," *Pew Research Center*, July 11, 2016, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/07/11/negative-views-of-minorities-refugees-common-in-eu/>.

what is at stake here is the unfamiliarity of Islam. Aside from the belief that Islam is not compatible with secularism, there are other equally stubborn and mainly negative preconceptions about it. These preconceptions include the belief that Islam is backward and inferior, and that all Muslims are unwilling or incapable of changing their beliefs. It is in this negative context that refugees, who are believed to be Muslims, are entering the Netherlands. These preconceptions are important to keep in mind throughout the rest of the thesis, since they play a part in all the aspects and images of the Refugee Crisis that will be discussed.

The next chapter will explain the added value of visual analysis in understanding these political and social issues, as well as the ways in which these negative preconceptions can play a part in the circulation and interpretation of images.

2. A picture is worth a thousand words: the contribution of visual analysis

Before beginning the analysis of the images of the Refugee Crisis in the Netherlands, it is important to provide some background information on the study of images. This is done by answering the following question: *What can an analysis of images contribute to our understanding of social and political issues such as responses to the European Refugee Crisis?* The first section focuses on the importance of images and the value in studying them. Subsequently, the attention shifts towards the power of images and the messages they convey. In the third section, an example of an image of the Refugee Crisis is presented and analyzed. This section also links back to the previous chapter on Islam and secularism.

2.1 The importance of images

According to W.J.T. Mitchell, people attribute certain characteristics of animation and vitality to images.⁷⁰ In his words, people “[...] behave as if pictures were alive, as if works of art had minds of their own, as if images had a power to influence human beings [...]”⁷¹ At the same time, Mitchell notices a certain ‘double consciousness’ toward images, because the same people who attribute these characteristics and powers to images continue to insist that pictures are not in fact alive.⁷² A comparable double consciousness toward images can be seen in academia. On the one hand, there is a shared belief that visual images are well on their way to replace words as the primary means of expression (the visual or, in Mitchell’s words, the ‘pictorial turn’). A clear example of this is of course the popularity of social media, which is largely based on images. On the other hand, many scholars remain highly skeptical of the value of (analyzing) these images.

It seems that social media plays a significant role in both these attitudes. Social media is highly visualized, meaning that a large part of the communication is done through images.

⁷⁰ Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?*, 6.

⁷¹ Ibid., 7.

⁷² Ibid.

While this is a significant development, many scholars are skeptical of the value of social media as a whole and of the images used in particular.

Despite the controversy of studying images, Roland Bleiker claims that aesthetic approaches “[...] highlight how we understand and construct the world we live in.”⁷³ This is especially true for photography the medium that is central to this thesis. A photograph captures a glimpse of the world as it is, not as we would want it to be. Because of this, it seems like an objective representation of the world. However, as Bleiker points out, this is not true for several reasons. Firstly, photographs “[...] result from artistic and inevitably subjective decisions taken by the photographer – decisions that have nothing to do with the actual object that is photographed.”⁷⁴ And secondly, a photograph needs to be seen and interpreted in order to convey a message. In other words, the message a photograph carries depends on who sees it and in what context.⁷⁵ For these reasons, photographs should be seen as representations of the way the world is constructed and understood, rather than as representations of the world as it is. In this way, photography is as much a way of constructing and understanding the world as secularism is (as was discussed in the first chapter of this thesis on constructions of Islam and secularism).

Mitchell argues that the very ‘magical attitude’ toward images, which attributes characteristics of animation and vitality to them, is in fact one of the reasons why images are so important, though he is aware that many are skeptical of this attitude as well as its importance: “[...] when students scoff at the idea of a magical relation between a picture and what it represents, ask them to take a photograph of their mother and cut out the eyes.”⁷⁶ Even in our supposed ‘de-mystified’ society, there is a strong connection between images, the people or objects they represent, and the people looking at them.

Gillian Rose also acknowledges the importance of images in academia, but she ties this importance not to the power of the images themselves, but rather to the research methods

⁷³ Roland Bleiker, *Aesthetics and World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 8.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?*, 9.

used to analyze them. Visual research methods are as diverse as the visual materials, and it follows that an image becomes more important or relevant the more thoroughly it is analyzed.⁷⁷ This is a different view from Mitchell, who argues that the magical attitude (and consequent double consciousness) toward images is also found among scholars.

For the methodology of this thesis, the points of view from Bleiker, Mitchell, and Rose will be combined, because each of them proposes a different but important aspect when it comes to the study of images. From Mitchell, the notion of the power and the characteristics of animation and vitality of images will be adopted. But, following Bleiker, this power will be considered as a direct effect of the choices the photographer has made, rather than as characteristics inherent to the image itself. In other words, the photographs analyzed in this thesis will not be seen as neutral representations of the world, but as constructions of the way the photographer experiences and wishes to portray this world. This means that the photographers of the images analyzed in this thesis have a very powerful position. Their background, education, norms, and values will greatly influence their photographs. Although many of these factors may remain unknown when analyzing an image, it is important to realize that they do play a role in the message that is carried by the image. Rose's notion that images derive their value from the research methods used to analyze them, is also assumed here.

Something that is not mentioned by any of these researchers, but that is nonetheless important to consider in the context of this thesis, is the role of editors in selecting images to accompany a certain article, as well as the placement of these images within the articles. The decisions made by the editors influence the context in which an image is seen, even within this thesis, because both the image itself as well as the title of the article displayed directly underneath it are considered.

For this reason, an extensive methodology has been formulated, which combines content analysis and discourse analysis. This combination of methods allows for both the image itself and what it portrays, as well as the context of the image, such as the place in which it is used

⁷⁷ Gillian Rose, "On the Relation between 'visual Research Methods' and Contemporary Visual Culture," *The Sociological Review* 62, no. 1 (February 2014): 25, doi:10.1111/1467-954X.12109.

and the intended audience, to be taken into consideration. A more detailed explanation of both content and discourse analysis will be given at the beginning of the third chapter.

2.2 The power of images

Contemporary Western society is highly visual; many different kinds of images, both moving and static, surround people in daily life.⁷⁸ Think for example of the media, both news media and social media, but also commercials and of course art, all of which rely heavily on images. In this context, Gillian Rose distinguishes between vision and visuality: "Vision is what the human eye is physiologically capable of seeing [...]. Visuality, on the other hand, refers to how vision is constructed in various ways [...]."⁷⁹ Visuality is about interpreting the vision, giving meaning to it, and relating it to the reality of the viewer.

Images are important because they have the ability to convey a message to the viewer in a single glance, much faster than a text carrying a message. Cartoons are an especially clear example of this, because they are exaggerated and simplified in order to carry their (controversial) message as quickly as possible.⁸⁰ However, the messages that photographs carry are perhaps even more powerful. People often believe photographs to be neutral representations of the world. As a result, their messages will often be accepted without question.⁸¹ So while cartoons may carry a stronger and more simplified message, a message carried by a photograph will have a greater impact.

As is the case with a text, an image will need proper interpretation to be understood completely. Of course, the context is also very important for the message an image conveys. For cartoons, small amounts of text are often implemented in the image itself, which will steer the interpretation of the viewer. Photographs, however, must rely on the caption and the article

⁷⁸ Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies : An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials* (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 2.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

⁸⁰ An example of the powerful messages carried by cartoons is the well-known Danish cartoon controversy of 2005-2006. This controversy centered around 12 cartoons of the prophet Muhammad in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*. The cartoons triggered a wave of protests that reached far beyond the Danish borders.

⁸¹ Bleiker, *Aesthetics and World Politics*, 6.

in which it is used to explain its message. In this way, a single photograph can have different meanings in different contexts.

2.3 Islam and secularism in images

To illustrate both the importance of images in the Western-European debate on the Refugee Crisis, as well as the attitude towards images adopted from Mitchell, Bleiker, and Rose, let us consider **Figure 1**.⁸² This image is one of the most striking examples of visual representations of refugees in Western media. It was shown at the top of the web page of an article from the Guardian, which comprises a collection of several leading writers responding to the Refugee Crisis. The picture and the article it was featured in were widely circulated and often referenced in discussions on the Refugee Crisis.



Figure 1 The image featured in the Guardian article.

The picture shows two men wearing life jackets, both sitting on their knees on a beach. The man in the front has both arms extended toward the sky, his palms facing upwards. His face

⁸² "The Turmoil of Today's World: Leading Writers Respond to the Refugee Crisis," *The Guardian*, September 12, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/sep/12/the-turmoil-of-todays-world-leading-writers-respond-to-the-refugee-crisis>.

and gaze are also directed upwards. The man behind him has one hand placed on the shoulder of the man in front, while he extends his other arm toward the sky. His eyes are closed and his face is somewhat contorted.

It is not exactly clear what these refugees are doing. Are they crying? If so, their tears could be tears of pain, but also tears of gratitude or joy over a safe arrival. Or perhaps they are expressing gratitude for their safe arrival by singing. There is physical contact between the two men, which implies they are somehow connected. Are they family, friends or are they related by their shared experience of the crossing? Even more uncertain from this picture is their background. Where did these men come from? There are strong assumptions in Western Europe that all refugees traveling to Europe by sea are Syrian and therefore assumed to be Muslim. After all, as José Casanova explains:

[...] in Europe, immigration and Islam are almost synonymous. The overwhelming majority of immigrants in most European countries [...] are Muslims and the overwhelming majority of Western European Muslims are immigrants. [...] This entails a superimposition of different dimensions of 'otherness' that exacerbates issues of boundaries, accommodation and incorporation. The immigrant, the religious, the racial, and the socio-economic disprivileged "other" all tend to coincide.⁸³

What Casanova relates to Said's theory on orientalism, which was introduced in the previous chapter. This citation is another example of the strong and predominantly negative preconceptions about Islam that exist in Western Europe. These preconceptions, however, ignore the fact that "[...] refugees are very diverse and often defy the usual media stereotypes employed to represent them."⁸⁴

According Said's notion of orientalism, all images of non-westerners (which includes groups such as Muslims and refugees) that are made and used in or by 'the occident' will reflect these preconceptions to some extent. In **Figure 1**, the orientalist assumptions are not immediately

⁸³ Casanova, "Religion, European Secular Identities, and European Integration," 76.

⁸⁴ Terence Wright, "The Media and Representations of Refugees and Other Forced Migrants," in *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*, ed. Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 461.

clear from the image itself. As was mentioned above, there is a strong assumption that all refugees are from Syria, and that all refugees are Muslim. In the previous chapter it has been explained that the term 'Muslim' has very negative connotations in Western Europe. In addition to the preconceptions already mentioned, some attention should be paid to the fact that the men in the center of the image are on their knees. This is arguably quite a vulnerable, perhaps even weak position. It makes them look as if they are desperate, in need of (European) assistance.⁸⁵ This topic of agency and the 'need' refugees have to be 'saved' will be addressed in more detail in the third chapter.

This image is certainly not unique within the context of the Refugee Crisis; many similar images have been shown in the media. What makes this image so striking is the caption, which reads: "Refugees from Syria pray on the shores of the Greek island of Lesbos after crossing the Aegean from Turkey in an inflatable dinghy."⁸⁶ While the body language and stance of these men certainly has religious connotations, the use of the word 'pray' is interesting in this situation.

Of course, the body language of the man in the front, especially the fact that his body is directed upwards, may be connected to some form of contact with God. This man has spent hours in an unreliable and unstable boat while crossing the Aegean Sea. When the boat reaches the shore of Lesbos, the man gets out of the boat, falls on his knees, and expresses gratitude for arriving safely. Because this gratitude may, in fact, be directed towards God; the man may actually be praying.

However, by choosing to use this image and to give the image this particular caption, these uncertainties are pushed aside. The editor assumes that the first thing refugees do after reaching the European shores, is praying. And while this is a logical and perhaps even correct assumption, it does emphasize the supposed religiousness of the refugees. Because of the

⁸⁵ The discussion on the position and power of the photographer is closely related to discussions on the ethics of photojournalism. For more information on this discussion, see for example Frank Möller, "Reflections on Photojournalism," in *Visual Peace: Images, Spectatorship, and the Politics of Violence*, Rethinking Peace and Conflict Studies (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013), 56–74, doi:10.1057/9781137020406_4.

⁸⁶ "The Turmoil of Today's World."

caption, the image does not show refugees, but religious refugees. This is where orientalism comes into play; while Western Europe is thought of as ultimately 'modern' and 'secular', religion (and Islam in particular) is positioned as inferior. Images such as these that emphasize the differences between the religious (and thus 'un-secular') refugees, seem to exacerbate the divide between the Western Europeans and the refugees.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that images are powerful as well as very present and influential in contemporary society, which is why it is so worthwhile to analyze them. The example of **Figure 1** in the third section has been integral in answering the question *What can an analysis of images contribute to our understanding of social and political issues such as responses to the European Refugee Crisis?*, which was central in this chapter. The analysis of this image has shown how Western European preconceptions about Islam play a role in the images of the Refugee Crisis. Especially orientalism is important in the analysis of this image, since there are strong and negative assumptions about Islam hidden in this image and specifically its caption. In this way, the image also ties back to the theme of orientalism which was introduced in the first chapter. After having examined a first example of a visual representation of (Muslim) refugees, it is time to turn to the images found in the Dutch media. It is important to keep the orientalist assumptions about both Islam and the west in mind throughout the next chapter.

3. Images of Muslim refugees in the Dutch media

Keeping in mind the preconceptions about refugees and Muslims that exist in the Dutch public sphere, this chapter will look at a set of 35 images from the NOS, a popular Dutch news source.⁸⁷ As mentioned in the previous chapter, images derive their value in academia from the way they are analyzed. For this reason, both this chapter and the following will focus on the following question: *How can a visual analysis of images from the European Refugee Crisis be carried out?* Each of the two chapters will discuss a different and complementary methodology. In this chapter, the images will be analyzed using coding categories that focus on the title of the article, the number of people in the photo, the presence of religious or secular elements, and finally gender. The aim of this analysis is to improve the understanding of the preconceptions on refugees and Islam that are conveyed by these images. In what way are the Muslim refugees depicted, and how does that match the orientalist preconceptions from the first chapter?

3.1 Methodology

The focus in this chapter is on the first 35 images from the search results for the keywords *vluchteling Nederland* [refugee Netherlands] on the website of the most popular news source in the Netherlands, the NOS (*Nederlandse Omroep Stichting*, or Dutch Broadcasting Foundation).⁸⁸ Adding 'Netherlands' to the keywords is consistent with the focus on the

⁸⁷ Ideally, the research of this chapter would have included all images from the NOS site, as well as from other sites. In addition, it would have been relevant to compare the popularity of the images; how often have they been used in other articles? How often is the article featuring this image used in comparison to articles featuring other images? All of these are valuable questions, but unfortunately answering them is outside the scope of this thesis.

⁸⁸ While it is difficult to compare the popularity of an internet and broadcasting source like the NOS to 'traditional' newspapers, there are several numbers to support the claim that the NOS is the most popular. The 20.00h news broadcast is viewed by some 1.300.000 to 2.500.000 people each night

(<http://www.broadcastmagazine.nl/kijkcijfer-overzicht/> accessed 14-09-2016). By comparison, the most popular newspaper in the Netherlands, De Telegraaf, distributes less than 550.000 copies per day (<http://www.oplagen-dagbladen.nl/> accessed 14-09-2016). In addition, there are sites such as nu.nl that are also popular. However, numbers of visitors on sites such as nu.nl and nos.nl are not publicly available. Looking at the number of likes on Facebook and the number of followers on Twitter shows that nu.nl is more popular on Twitter (a little over

relationship between Islam and secular democracy in the Netherlands in the first chapter of the thesis, because it narrows the search results to articles about refugees in the Netherlands.

Content analysis focuses on the underlying messages of, in this case, images, by looking at the patterns and recurring themes in the images. Content analysis addresses these patterns through coding categories. The coding categories focus on different aspects of the images, assigning each a particular value, making it possible to not only analyze the trends per category, but also to compare the data between different categories, offering a unique insight into the social construction displayed in the images. This is very useful for this research, since the aim is to explore the way Muslim refugees are portrayed throughout these images.

Content analysis was developed as a method to analyze large numbers of images.⁸⁹ Because it is methodologically explicit, it allows “[...] discovery of patterns that are too subtle to be visible on casual inspection and protection against an unconscious search through the magazine for only those which confirm one’s initial sense of what the photos say or do.”⁹⁰ This is especially important, because there are often strong preconceptions about images of (Muslim) refugees at play. Using content analysis on the images places these preconceptions at the background.

There are, however, several downsides to content analysis. For example, the coding of the images does not include any indication of the extent to which a certain category is present in the photo, which makes it difficult to properly compare two images with the same codes. In addition, content analysis does not include any information on the context of the image, or the different sources where the same image can be found.⁹¹ This last issue is solved by including the titles of the articles in which the images appear to the analysis. In addition, this is the reason why the fourth chapter of this thesis focuses on the some of the NOS images in different

1.316.000 followers, compared to 732.000 followers for NOS), but the NOS is more popular on Facebook (500.000 likes, compared to 395.000 for nu.nl). However, because the NOS also broadcasts their news on television, it can be assumed that it is the more popular news source.

⁸⁹ Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 85–86.

⁹⁰ Catherine Lutz and Jane Lou Collins, *Reading National Geographic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 89.

⁹¹ Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 102–3.

contexts. Despite its difficulties, content analysis is the most suited research method for this thesis, because it allows a focus on several different aspects of the images.

As was mentioned above, content analysis was developed as a tool to analyze large numbers of images. Although there are many more images available that would have been very well suited to analyze in the context of this thesis, the number had to be limited because of the limited time and resources available. For this reason, only 35 images are analyzed in this thesis.

The coding categories for these images will not only refer to the images themselves and the people or things displayed, but they will also pay attention to the accompanying text. This text is the title from the article to which the image is connected. In addition, the coding categories will include the sensory or affective experience of the images. The coding categories that will be used are the following:

1. Title
2. Number of people depicted
3. Religious/secular elements
4. Gender

These categories have been selected after a combination of careful observation of the images as well as a thorough consideration of the theoretical frame presented in the first two chapters of this thesis. They correspond to the most significant visual aspects that can be identified in these images and the most prominent characteristics that are used to describe refugees and Muslims in public discourse. Other categories, including the activity of the people in the photo, the location in which the picture was taken, the visual characteristics of the people depicted, and the sensory experience of the image, have also been considered for this chapter. However, most images do not depict people engaging in a particular activity, but rather walking, sitting, or standing. In addition, the coding of the location was mainly to determine whether the people depicted were refugees or not, which was also included in the category of visual characteristics. The category of visual characteristics was meant to show how many of the images showed refugees. However, this is impossible to determine based on visual analysis alone. After all, what does a refugee look like? The coding of sensory experience proved to be too subjective and did not provide relevant information on the images. For these reasons, these coding categories have not been included.

The coding categories above will provide substantial information on the way refugees are depicted. For example, the categories will help determine whether the focus of the NOS is on the refugees themselves, or rather on members of the host society. They will also show how the refugees are focused on: as individuals or as an (impersonal) group. The importance of this distinction will be elaborated on in the fourth section of this chapter. The second section of this chapter addresses the coding categories one by one, explaining the precise definition of each category in more detail, and analyzing the results of the coding per category. The third and fourth sections connect these results to academic literature on the related subjects. These sections will also make connections between the different coding categories, showing more extensively how they are interrelated and why these categories are important.

Partially because these codes are based on the search results using the word 'refugee', they do not focus on the distinctions between refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants. Most of the images probably depict asylum seekers rather than refugees, but the difference cannot be found out by looking at these images alone. For this reason, the decision is made to leave out these distinctions all together, despite the awareness that they exist and are important in the imaging of 'refugees' as well.

3.2 Coding results

1. Title

The focus here is on the way refugees are referred to, on a scale from 1 (very negative about refugees) to 5 (very positive about refugees). In this scale, 2 refers to titles that are somewhat negative about refugees. Images (and titles) coded with a 3 are neutral about refugees, and images coded with a 4 are somewhat positive. In some titles, refugees are not mentioned at all. In that case, the images are coded with a 0 (does not mention refugees). The numerical codes are used primarily for the sake of brevity and clarity during the coding process itself.

The majority of the titles, 11 or about 31%, are neutral about refugees. Most of these titles talk about numbers of refugees in a very factual way. In three titles (almost 9%), refugees are not even mentioned. Ten of the titles, almost 29%, are negative or even very negative about refugees. This negativity is apparent from the use of certain words. A strong example is the word 'flow' to refer to the refugees. Such words are important, because they attribute non-human characteristics to the refugees, thereby presenting them as less than human.⁹² In addition, the word 'flow' suggests a large amount which is difficult to control. Variations of this word are used in the titles of image 8 (**Figure 2**), image 9 (**Figure 3**), and image 18 (**Figure 8**, page 46). Other negative titles are about how difficult it is for the Netherlands to accommodate these refugees, or how their arrival causes division among the Dutch population.



Stroom vluchtelingen naar Nederland daalt opnieuw

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Figure 2 Image 8 – Flow refugees to the Netherlands decreases again



Instroom vluchtelingen is grootste kopzorg in Nederland

© 30-12-2015 IN BINNENLAND

Figure 3 Image 9 – Inflow of refugees is biggest worry in the Netherlands

⁹² See, for example: Steve Kirkwood, "The Humanisation of Refugees: A Discourse Analysis of UK Parliamentary Debates on the European Refugee 'Crisis,'" *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 27, no. 2 (March 1, 2017): 116.

The same percentage of titles, almost 29%, are somewhat positive about refugees. In all 35 images, only one has been coded with a 5 (very positive about refugees): image 21 (**Figure 4**). The title states that the Netherlands wants to help Slovenia with the accommodation of refugees. While this is not directly positive or negative about refugees, the title is very positive in that it mentions the Netherlands *wants* to help.



Nederland wil Slovenië helpen bij opvang vluchtelingen

© 25-10-2015 IN BUITENLAND

Figure 4 Image 21 - The Netherlands wants to help Slovenia with the accommodation of refugees

In this title, refugees are not presented as a threat or an imposition, but rather as an opportunity to do the right thing. On the other hand, it can be argued that the title means that the Dutch state wants to help the Slovenian state, rather than the (individual) refugees. However, the refugees are not presented as a problem for the Netherlands, and the title shows the willingness of the Dutch state to help, so the title can still be considered as very positive about refugees.

2. Number of people depicted

The coding in this category focuses on a combination of two important factors. On the one hand, there is the size of the group depicted, ranging from individuals (1-3) to large groups (≥ 20 people). On the other hand, there is the question of visibility of faces. The visibility of faces, as well as the group size depicted on the images, are important for the same reasons that words like 'flow' are important when describing refugees. Refugees depicted without visible facial characteristics are much harder to relate to or sympathize with.⁹³ This subject will be elaborated on in the fourth section of this chapter. The combination of these two factors means there are two possibilities for each group size: most faces visible and most faces not visible.



lets meer vluchtelingen naar Nederland

🕒 02-11-2015 IN POLITIEK

Figure 5 Image 4 – Slightly more refugees to the Netherlands

These are all possible codes in this category:

- 0 = no people depicted
- 1 = large group (≥ 20 people), most faces not visible
- 2 = medium group (10-20 people), most faces not visible
- 3 = small group (≤ 10 people), most faces not visible

⁹³ See, for example: Steve Kirkwood, "The Humanisation of Refugees: A Discourse Analysis of UK Parliamentary Debates on the European Refugee 'Crisis,'" *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 27, no. 2 (March 1, 2017): 116.

- 4 = individual (1-3 people), most faces not visible
- 5 = large group (≥ 20 people), most faces visible
- 6 = medium group (10-20 people), most faces visible
- 7 = small group (≤ 10 people), most faces visible
- 8 = individual (1-3 people), most faces visible

In around 48% of the images most faces are not visible against almost 43% of the images in which most faces are visible. There are three images (almost 9%) in which no people are depicted. In the images with visible faces, by far the most (ten images, almost 29%) depict individuals (1-3 people). Only one image, image 4 (**Figure 5**), shows a large group of more than 20 people with visible faces. In the images in which most faces are not visible, there is much more distribution in depicted group size.

3. Religious/secular elements

The image from the Guardian article that was used in the previous chapter is quite obviously related to the debate on religious and secular elements in images, as was explained in the previous chapter. In the case of that image, the specifically religious element was in the caption: the word 'pray'. However, it is not always this simple. Which elements in the NOS images should be considered as specifically religious or secular?

The only identifiable element in the NOS images which can be considered religious, are hijabs. Not only does this imply there is only one identifiable religion referred to in these images, it is done in a very specific way. A bearded man wearing a robe would also imply a religious (Islamic) element, but in a very different way from a woman wearing a hijab. In the words of Joan Wallach Scott:

[...] veils are not the only visible sign of difference that attaches to religious Muslims, not the only way a religious/political identity can be declared. Men often have distinctive appearances (beards, loose clothing) and behavior (prayers, food preferences, aggressive assertions of religious identity tied to activist politics), yet these are not considered to be as threatening as the veil [...].⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil*, 4.

So while the veil is clearly seen as a religious symbol, it is important to remember that it is (unjustly) seen as a sign of the oppression of women, as well as a sign of and lack of agency and freedom of women.⁹⁵ The wearing of a veil is “[...] regarded as a total rejection of the Dutch way of life.”⁹⁶ This is threatening, because this ‘Dutch way of life’ is still quite young, and the Muslim women’s “[...] strict sexual morals remind the Dutch too much of what they have so recently left behind.”⁹⁷ This topic was also briefly touched upon in the first chapter of this thesis.

In the NOS images, policemen represent the secular elements, because they represent the secular values of the state. However, this does not apply to the Dutch King and Queen, for example. Although they are the heads of a secular state, they do have their own religious convictions and also act on them, even when they are in function. Policemen, on the other hand, are supposed to check that the (secular) law is respected, regardless of their own religious convictions. The distinction between the Dutch King and Queen and policemen in this regard is a very subtle one. The important part is the fact that the King and Queen are religious and will attend religious ceremonies and perform religious rituals while they are in function. Policemen may also be religious, but will not attend a religious ceremony as a policeman in function. Of course, there may be policemen in function present at religious ceremonies, for example when they are required to be there for security reasons. In that case, however, the policemen do not attend the religious ceremony for the sake of the religious ceremony. In that case they are doing their job, which simply happens to be at a religious ceremony.

⁹⁵ Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?,” 786; Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil*, 3–4.

⁹⁶ van der Veer, “Pim Fortuyn, Theo van Gogh, and the Politics of Tolerance in the Netherlands,” 120.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 119.



Nederland verwacht morgen eerste 34 Syrische vluchtelingen uit Turkije

🕒 04-04-2016 IN BINNENLAND

Figure 6 Image 6 – Tomorrow the Netherlands expects first 34 Syrian refugees from Turkey

The fact that policemen are the only identifiable symbols of secularism in this set of images carries strong connotations on the relation between religion and secularism as a whole, since policemen are of course also strongly associated with issues of (in)security and power.⁹⁸ This association is even amplified because religion is only represented by women wearing hijabs.⁹⁹ In a way, (European) state-centric secularism is in these images opposed to (non-European) individual religion. However, the opposition between the policemen and the women wearing hijabs is never explained. Are they opposed because the women ('religion') are dangerous and the policemen ('secular state') provide safety? Are they opposed because the women ('religion') are not capable of protecting themselves, and the policemen ('secular state') can protect them? Even though none of these questions are answered, they are important to keep in mind because of the implications they have for the perceived relationship between religion and secularism.

Almost 63% of the images do not contain any explicit religious or secular elements. There are three images (almost 9%) that show (military) police and eight (almost 23%) show women

⁹⁸ Luca Mavelli, "Security and Secularization in International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations* 18, no. 1 (March 2012): 177–99.

⁹⁹ This issue will be elaborated on in section three of this chapter on identity and gender.

wearing hijabs. Only one image, image 6 (**Figure 6**), (almost 3%) shows both women wearing hijabs and policemen. In total, about a quarter of the images show women wearing hijabs.

In all images showing (military) police, the policemen do not have recognizable facial characteristics. They are not depicted as individual people, but rather as anonymous representatives of the (secular) nation state. This is of course contrasted with the women wearing hijabs, who, although also sometimes depicted without recognizable facial characteristics, are still depicted as individuals with different styles of clothing and often surrounded by family members or friends.

4. Gender

This last category focuses on three distinct elements: the presence of men in the images, the presence of women in the images, and the presence of children in the images. Combined, this means the following codes are possible:

- 0 = no people depicted
- 1 = only men, without children
- 2 = only men, with children
- 3 = mostly men, without children
- 4 = mostly men, with children
- 5 = mixed, without children
- 6 = mixed, with children
- 7 = mostly women, without children
- 8 = mostly women, with children
- 9 = only women, without children
- 10 = only women, with children
- 11 = only children

Clearly, this category focuses not only on gender but also on age (to some extent). This is mostly because there are strong assumptions about refugees and whether or not they are

'good' or 'bad'.¹⁰⁰ This distinction focuses on men (as 'bad refugees') on the one hand and women and children (as 'good refugees') on the other hand. This narrative will be elaborated on in the next section. However, the NOS images also include images of men with children.¹⁰¹ Because of this inconsistency, this category also looks at the children in the photos.

Ten images (about 28%) show only men, without children. The largest category after that is 6 with five images (about 14%). Furthermore, there are four images (about 11%) showing only children. Strikingly, the coding numbers 8, 9, and 10 each only have one image. 25 images show mostly or only men, which is about 71%. Only three images, or 8% show only women. This means that the representations of refugees in these images is very unequal; almost three quarters of the images show men.

3.3 Identity and gender

Of these 35 images, only about 24 show refugees or asylum seekers. On about half of those images, the people are unidentifiable, either because their backs are turned towards the camera, because they are not in focus, or because their faces are not entirely visible. In other words, from the most popular search results for the words 'refugee Netherlands', only a third of the images show recognizable refugees. This 'lack of identity' can be tied to the gendered portrayal of refugees.

As pointed out by Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, among others, there seems to be a trend in the (visual) representation of refugees, where the refugee women are shown as "[...] apolitical, non-agentic innocents in need of protection [...]".¹⁰² Refugee men, on the other hand, "[...] have tended to be framed as undifferentiated masses, which are often interpreted as being used in

¹⁰⁰ Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, "The Faith-Gender-Asylum Nexus: An Intersectionalist Analysis of Representations of the 'Refugee Crisis,'" in *The Refugee Crisis and Religion: Secularism, Security and Hospitality in Question*, ed. Luca Mavelli and Erin K. Wilson, 2017, 210.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 212.

¹⁰² Ibid., 211.

the media to reinforce public feelings of fear and invoked to justify the need to control mass movements."¹⁰³

This is particularly visible in image 21 (**Figure 4**, page 39), and to a lesser extent also in image 26 (**Figure 11**, page 48). Both images show a large group of people, unidentifiable and undifferentiated. These public feelings of fear are even further reinforced by the presence of policemen in image 21, because it shows that the group is clearly perceived as a threat. However, it is impossible to see whether there are only men in the group.



Wat krijgt een vluchteling in Nederland eigenlijk?

© 24-11-2015 IN BINNENLAND

Figure 7 Image 5 – What does a refugee in the Netherlands actually receive?



Nederland worstelt met stroom vluchtelingen

© 08-10-2015 IN BINNENLAND

Figure 8 Image 18 – Netherlands struggles with flow refugees

There are also images that do clearly show men and women, in some cases even children as well, but depict them as an unidentifiable group. This can be seen in image 5 (**Figure 7**), image 6 (**Figure 6**, page 43), and image 18 (**Figure 8**). While these images do look less 'threatening' than image 21 (**Figure 4**, page 39), for example, they are not positive images. Especially image 18, which has the caption "Netherlands struggles with flow refugees" is clearly negative.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 212.

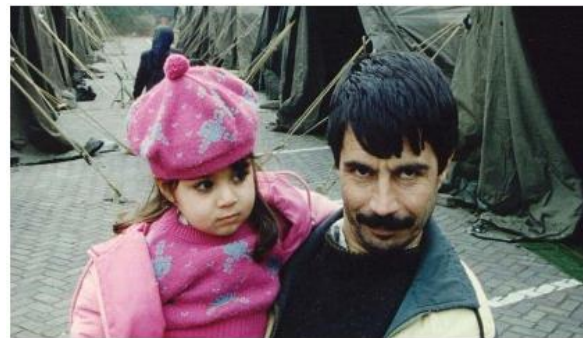
At the same time, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh notes another trend in the portrayal of refugee men, namely as refugee fathers. “This depiction of these men as vulnerable and caring fathers emerges as a significant counter-narrative to the securitisation of refugee men, with the vulnerability of these men having in many ways offered a corrective to the figure of the ‘threatening Muslim refugee man’ populating European, North American and Australian media and popular imaginaries.”¹⁰⁴ In the set of images from the NOS, number 17 (**Figure 10**) is an example of a father and child image. Image 7 (**Figure 9**) also shows a refugee father, though this is a different category because there is also a mother; this is a family, rather than one parent with child.



'Geluk met zwart randje' voor Syrische vluchtelingen in Nederland

© 08-12-2015 IN BINNENLAND, BUITENLAND

Figure 9 Image 7 – ‘Happiness with a dark edge’ for Syrian refugees in the Netherlands



Al vaker tijdelijke kampen voor vluchtelingen in Nederland

© 16-09-2015 IN BINNENLAND

Figure 10 Image 17 - More often temporary camps for refugees in the Netherlands

This is all connected to the ‘good refugee, bad refugee’ narrative, and by extension the ‘good Muslim, bad Muslim’ narrative. The narrative on ‘good Muslims’ and ‘bad Muslims’ originated after 9/11 and has been picked up in the aftermath of many other terrorist attacks around the world. The narrative focuses on the distinction between ‘bad Muslims’, those carrying out the attacks, and the ‘good Muslims’, who are repeatedly asked to distance themselves openly from extremist violence.¹⁰⁵ As an example, Erin K. Wilson and Luca Mavelli point to statements made by Tony Blair after the 7/7 London Bombings:

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 213.

¹⁰⁵ Wilson and Mavelli, “The Refugee Crisis and Religion,” 6.

While these statements could be cast as attempts to de-essentialize Islam by emphasizing that violence is not an endemic feature of Islam, but only the product of some 'bad Muslims', this 'good Muslim, bad Muslim' narrative has also contributed to constructing 'good Muslims' as devoid of agency, victims of a growing 'radicalised and politicised view of Islam' that they are clearly unable to resist.¹⁰⁶

This same distinction applies to 'bad refugees' and 'good refugees'. The 'good refugees' are those without agency, the women and children patiently waiting in the refugee camps until they are rescued by the Europeans. On the other hand, the 'bad refugees' actively pursue their own rescue, crossing large stretches of land and the Mediterranean Sea to seek refuge in Europe.¹⁰⁷ In this discourse, refugee women are almost automatically 'good refugees', since they are depicted as devoid of the agency necessary to do anything else than waiting in the camps to be rescued. On the other hand, it means that male refugees traveling to Europe, such as depicted on image 26 (**Figure 11**) most prominently, are automatically 'bad refugees'.



Brussel: Nederland moet ruim 4% vluchtelingen opvangen

🕒 13-05-2015 IN BUITENLAND

Figure 11 Image 26 – Brussels: Netherlands has to accommodate over 4% of refugees

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 7.

Of the NOS images, almost three quarters show only men. Combined with the discourse on 'good refugees' and 'bad refugees', this is very telling for the way refugees are perceived by the Dutch media.

Interesting in this context is image 6 (**Figure 6**, page 43), which shows a group of people in a European airport, including men, women wearing hijabs, children, and a policeman. These people are refugees from Syria, who traveled to Germany from Turkey after the EU-Turkey refugee deal. This places them in the category of 'good refugees', though there is still a policeman present. As was already mentioned in the section on religious and secular elements in the images, there is no explanation where the threat comes from. Is the policeman protecting the refugees against others, or is he protecting others against the refugees?

3.4 Dehumanization of refugees

In 2013, Roland Bleiker, David Campbell, Emma Hutchison, and Xzarina Nicholson conducted research into the visual representations of refugees in Australian media. About their findings, they say:

Particularly striking was the small number of images that depict individual asylum seekers with clearly recognizable facial features (only 2 per cent of all images). This is politically significant because social-psychological studies have revealed that such close-up portraits are the type of images most likely to evoke compassion in viewers. Images of groups, by contrast, tended to create emotional distance between viewers and the subjects being depicted.¹⁰⁸

While this type of image is also clearly present in the NOS images, the amount of images showing individual refugees with recognizable facial features was much higher: 20%. Looking only at images depicting refugees, this percentage is even higher: almost 37%. These differences in percentages are related to the fact Bleiker et al. analyzed a much larger number of images. Despite these differences, the results presented by Bleiker et al. are still valuable in this context. In addition to the images showing individual refugees with recognizable facial

¹⁰⁸ Roland Bleiker et al., "The Visual Dehumanisation of Refugees," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 48, no. 4 (December 1, 2013): 399.

features, about 47% of the images do not show recognizable facial features. Of the images showing refugees the percentage is again higher: almost 53%. The importance of recognizable facial features is not only tied to compassionate responses in the viewers. It goes beyond that: "Putting a human face to suffering is seen as a key factor in gaining viewers' attention which is, in turn, essential to trigger not only some form of empathetic affective response but also a willingness to act."¹⁰⁹

This issue is also tied to gender. In the words of Bleiker et al.: "A large group of mostly young men on a boat presents a different representation of asylum seekers than a close-up portrait of a female refugee: the former is far less likely to suggest victimhood and to generate sympathy in viewers."¹¹⁰ Though, as the previous section has shown, a close-up portrait of a male refugee, especially when he is holding a child as is the case in image 17 (**Figure 10**, page 47), can also evoke emotions of pity and empathy.

Steve Kirkwood describes dehumanization as follows: "'Dehumanisation' is a [...] process whereby people are portrayed as lacking human qualities. This can be overt, in terms of describing people using non-human categories, such as 'cockroaches', 'swarms' or 'rats', which presents them as threats that need to be defended against or associates them with 'dirt' that needs to be removed."¹¹¹ All of these aspects are also visible in the NOS images. As was mentioned in the first section of this chapter, in three images (namely image 8 (**Figure 2**, page 38), 9 (**Figure 3**, page 38), and 18 (**Figure 8**, page 46)), the word 'flow' is used in the title to refer to the refugees. In addition, image 21 (**Figure 4**, page 39) seems to imply the refugees are something 'dirty', as shown by the covered nose and mouth of the policeman in the foreground of the image. All these images contribute to the process of dehumanization of refugees in one way or another.

The process of dehumanization of refugees seems to be closely related to the orientalist styles of thought, which were introduced in the first chapter of this thesis. This way of thinking revolves around homogenization: all refugees are Muslim; all Muslims are backward and less

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 408.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Kirkwood, "The Humanisation of Refugees," 116.

than human. Not depicting recognizable facial features appears to endorse this kind of thinking.

Another side to this debate on dehumanization is privacy or anonymity of the people depicted in the images. As Laura J. Shepherd points out, “[t]he issue of anonymity is a ‘core problem’ in visual research.”¹¹² The issue is in finding the balance between protecting the identity of those people who have not given or have not been able to give their consent for the use of the image, and safeguarding the unique strengths of a ‘raw’ image. In the words of Luc Pauwels: “The ‘irreducible nature’ of the camera image means that it forfeits much of its communicative strength when converted to an alternative medium, such as words or numbers, or if parts, such as a subject’s face, are made ‘illegible’ to protect anonymity.”¹¹³ As a compromise, it might be possible that the photographers of the images used by the NOS have chosen not to photograph faces of people, or leave their faces out of focus. However, all of this is merely speculation, since it is impossible to find out the motives of the photographers, as well as whether or not the people depicted have even been asked to consent to the usage and distribution of the image. What is interesting in this discussion of privacy and dehumanization is the contradiction between the choices. Because by depicting people without recognizable facial features, their human right to privacy is acknowledged, while at the same time this way of depicting them dehumanizes these same people.

Jill Walker Rettberg and Radhika Gajjala point out in their research that the context or location of the image as well as the way the ‘refugees’ are dressed also plays a large part in the emotions they evoke. They compared the images of an undressed and starving child in an African refugee camp to an image much like image 26, showing men on a boat. The accompanying text makes a distinction between ‘real refugees’ (like the starving child) and ‘soldiers of Islam’ (like the men on the boat):

The photograph of the African child is familiar to Western eyes from charity campaigns and calls for compassion. Such images contribute to the homogenizing imagery of third-

¹¹² Laura J. Shepherd, “Aesthetics, Ethics, and Visual Research in the Digital Age: ‘Undone in the Face of the Otter,’” *Millennium* 45, no. 2 (January 2017): 219.

¹¹³ Luc Pauwels, “Taking and Using,” *Visual Communication Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (November 7, 2008): 244.

world poverty that helps create sufficient distance. Compassion becomes easy. The dry dirt and the starving people, naked or wrapped in blankets, could never be confused for an image of Europe. The men on the boat, on the other hand, are dressed as Europeans dress and look much like Europeans.¹¹⁴

In a way, then, images such as image 26 (**Figure 11**, page 48) create similar emotional distance and dehumanization as other images mentioned in this section. However, the NOS images do not contain any such strong references to, as Walker Rettberg and Gajjala call it, 'the homogenizing imagery of third-world poverty.' There are no images of naked, starving, or ill-looking people. Image 17 (**Figure 10**, page 47), of a father holding his child amidst the tents where they are most likely housed, most closely resembles this category, though both father and child are dressed well (the girl even wearing a matching sweater and hat), and neither of them look to be starving, though it is possible or even likely that they are ill, cold, and underfed.

3.5 Conclusion

How can a visual analysis of images from the European Refugee Crisis be carried out? One example of a visual analysis is content analysis, which was the focus of this chapter. Through content analysis, several trends from these images have been made apparent. The percentages of the titles of these images that are either negative or positive about refugees are the same. The majority of titles are neutral about refugees. The majority of images depicting people do not show recognizable visual characteristics. This trend contributes to the dehumanization of refugees, which creates an emotional distance between the people depicted and the people viewing the image.

Religious and secular elements are difficult to identify in these images. By far the most do not show any elements that can be considered religious or secular, but almost a quarter of the images show women wearing hijabs. Because of the associations of security attached to the hijab, this is a clear perception on the threat of the refugees arriving in the Netherlands. This perception is made stronger by the fact that policemen represent the secular state. The final coding category demonstrates that three quarters of the images show only or mostly men.

¹¹⁴ Jill Walker Rettberg and Radhika Gajjala, "Terrorists or Cowards: Negative Portrayals of Male Syrian Refugees in Social Media," *Feminist Media Studies* 16, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 179, doi:10.1080/14680777.2016.1120493.

While women wearing hijabs are associated with security, the male refugees are very much thought of as threatening Europe as well. In other words, all images of refugees are associated with danger in one way or another.

Both the association with security, as well as the dehumanization of refugees should be seen in light of the orientalist style of thought explained in the first chapter of this thesis. A way of thinking about refugees as a dangerous and monolithic group, that is both very different from and inferior to 'us' Europeans.

4. Analyzing the discourse on Muslim refugees in Dutch media

In the previous chapter, a set of 35 images from the NOS was analyzed regarding the titles, the number of people depicted, religious or secular elements in the photos, and finally gender. For this chapter, several of these images will be selected and analyzed again in the context of the news articles they are featured in.¹¹⁵ Similar to the previous chapter, the question that will be answered here is: *How can a visual analysis of images from the European Refugee Crisis be carried out?* The focus of this chapter is on discourse analysis, or more specifically on the use of positive or negative language concerning (Muslim) refugees. What and how many sources are used here is determined mostly by the search results on Google Images. Google's reverse image search organizes search results according to both popularity and relevance. For each image, the first three search results were selected in addition to the NOS articles the images were found in initially.

It would have been immensely valuable for this research to apply this method to all 35 images analyzed in the previous chapter in order to gain a full understanding of the interplay between these images and their contexts. However, this will have to be postponed until a future research, since there is unfortunately not enough space in this thesis. Interestingly enough, most of the NOS images are not used in many other articles. Some are not even recognized as related to refugees or asylum seekers by Google Images, but are labeled as 'community'. This chapter only analyzes two images and the different articles they are used in, because both images are used in (at least) four different articles, and they are visibly related to refugees/asylum seekers rather than community.

¹¹⁵ The preferred image to analyze in this chapter was image 21 (**Figure 4**, page 39) since it contained so many remarkable visual aspects mentioned in the previous chapter. However, the search yielded only one result, an article in Italian. Unfortunately, this meant that the decision had to be made to focus on other images instead.

4.1 Methodology

Discourse analysis is, in short, “[...] the study of how to do things with words.”¹¹⁶ In previous chapters, both the concepts of secularism as well as the concept of photography have been presented as ways in which the world is constructed. The concept of discourse should be placed in this same category, because it is “[...] a way of speaking that does not simply reflect or represent things ‘out there’, but ‘constructs’ or ‘constitutes’ them.”¹¹⁷ In other words, using the definition of Kocku von Stuckrad,

[d]iscourses are practices that organize knowledge in a given community; they establish, stabilize, and legitimize systems of meaning and provide collectively shared orders of knowledge in an institutionalized social ensemble. Statements, utterances, and opinions about a specific topic, systematically organized and repeatedly observable, form a discourse.¹¹⁸

In this chapter, the statements, utterances, and opinions that will be analyzed are in the form of news articles. The focus in analyzing these articles will be on any mention of refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, or other words that are used to describe these groups of people. In addition, it is important to look at how positive the articles are, not only about the refugees, but also in general.

One of the biggest disadvantages of discourse analysis is that it is a time consuming method.¹¹⁹ For this reason, unfortunately, only two different images can be taken into consideration in this chapter. Both images are featured in three different articles, which will all be analyzed. Another issue is the ‘discourse-loop’ or, in the words of Titus Hjelm, “relativization.”¹²⁰ Everything is discourse: the results of the analysis of the discourse of the

¹¹⁶ Titus Hjelm, “Discourse Analysis,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Steven Engler and Michael Stausberg (London: Routledge, 2011), 134.

¹¹⁷ Hjelm, 135.

¹¹⁸ Kocku von Stuckrad, “Discursive Study of Religion: Approaches, Definitions, Implications,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 25 (2013): 15.

¹¹⁹ Hjelm, “Discourse Analysis,” 145.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 144.

news articles are presented within the discourse of this thesis. While this loop is inescapable, it helps to keep in mind the social context of the different discourses.¹²¹

4.2 Heumensoord

The first image that will be considered here is image 18 (**Figure 8**, shown again in **Figure 12**). The photo shows a group of people walking away from the camera, carrying bags and suitcases. The women wear hijabs and the men have dark hair. This image is chosen because it is one of several very similar images within the set of images from the NOS, showing people walking away from the camera, carrying luggage (for the similarities of these images, compare for example image 18 to image 5, **Figure 7**, page 46, and image 6, **Figure 6**, page 43).



Figure 12 Image 18 – Netherlands struggles with flow refugees

For this image, four articles from different news sites will be compared. The first is the article from the NOS, where the image was found initially.¹²² Secondly, an article on the news site nu.nl

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² "Nederland Worstelt Met Stroom Vluchtelingen," *NOS*, October 8, 2015, <http://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2061990-nederland-worstelt-met-stroom-vluchtelingen.html>.

will be included.¹²³ The next articles are found on the websites of the Dutch newspapers *De Telegraaf* and *De Volkskrant*, respectively.¹²⁴ All articles were published in October 2015.

The news site nu.nl and its popularity have already been mentioned at the beginning of chapter three. However, the newspapers *De Telegraaf* and *De Volkskrant* require some introduction. Up until the 1960s, *De Volkskrant* was the Catholic newspaper. In 1965 the 'depillarization' (*ontzuiling*) of Dutch society had set in and *De Volkskrant* chose a more progressive course.¹²⁵ It is considered one of the quality newspapers in The Netherlands, generally read by the higher educated.¹²⁶ *De Telegraaf*, on the other hand, is a popular right-wing newspaper. From the beginning, it has been a fairly conservative newspaper.¹²⁷ The history and orientation of the newspapers will have influence on the way they report on topics such as Muslim refugees, so it is important to keep in mind.

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the NOS article is very negatively captioned "Netherlands struggles with flow refugees." The article itself, however, is much less negative. Although the article discusses in what way the Netherlands, particularly the municipalities of Oranje and Bunschoten-Spakenburg, 'struggles' with the arrival of refugees, the emphasis seems to be on positive approaches and proposed solutions. For example, the article mentions how 150 refugees were accommodated in an emergency shelter at a sports hall in the municipality of Bunschoten-Spakenburg. Some residents are said to be very critical of the current policy and they want the borders to close so no more refugees will enter the country. However, the mayor of the municipality is quoted saying that he tries to offer a warm welcome to all the refugees. He says many residents have volunteered to help organize activities for

¹²³ "Deel Vluchtelingen Ontevreden over Opvang Heumensoord in Nijmegen," *NU*, October 13, 2015, <http://www.nu.nl/binnenland/4144444/deel-vluchtelingen-ontevreden-opvang-heumensoord-in-nijmegen.html>.

¹²⁴ "Deel Vluchtelingen Ontevreden over Tentenkamp," *Telegraaf.nl*, accessed July 17, 2017, http://www.telegraaf.nl/binnenland/24568796/_Vluchtelingen_boos_weg_.html; Silke Spierings, "Ontevreden Asielzoekers Uit Heumensoord de Straat Op," *De Volkskrant*, October 13, 2015, <https://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/ontevreden-asielzoekers-uit-heumensoord-de-sstraat-op~a4162329/>.

¹²⁵ Nico Kussendrager and Dick van der Lugt, *Basisboek journalistiek: achtergronden, genres, vaardigheden* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 2007), 26–27.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 27, 33.

them. The mayor does recognize that the accommodation in the sports hall is an emergency provision, and he expresses hope that the COA (*Centraal Orgaan opvang Asielzoekers* or Central Organization for the accommodation of Asylum seekers) will find better accommodation for the refugees soon.¹²⁸ Especially the fact that the mayor expresses this hope is a positive note in this article.

In comparison with the other three articles, the NOS article is very different. As mentioned above, the NOS article discusses the situation in two Dutch municipalities, namely Oranje and Bunschoten-Spakenburg. However, the photo was taken near a refugee emergency camp at Heumensoord, near Nijmegen. Understandably, the other three articles focus on the situation at Heumensoord rather than at Oranje or Bunschoten-Spakenburg. But why was this image used in the NOS article? Was there no visual material available on refugees in Oranje or Bunschoten? Did the editors assume that there is no difference between refugees in one location or another? Were they even aware that the photo was taken in Heumensoord? Or does this specific image carry a certain message or feeling that images from Heumensoord did not display?

Unfortunately, these questions are difficult to answer. It is one of the most significant problems with discourse analysis, that it focuses more on questions of *how* rather than questions of *why*.¹²⁹ And although it is outside of the scope of this thesis to answer all of these questions here, it is important to realize that they are out there. Of course, it is also important to consider the context of the photo taken at Heumensoord, which is explained in the three other articles using this image. The situation at Heumensoord according to the three different sources will be explained below.

The image which is featured in all four articles, was taken at October 2nd, 2015, when a group of "refugees",¹³⁰ "people"¹³¹ or "asylum seekers"¹³² left camp Heumensoord shortly after

¹²⁸ "Nederland Worstelt Met Stroom Vluchtelingen."

¹²⁹ Hjelm, "Discourse Analysis," 145.

¹³⁰ "Deel Vluchtelingen Ontevreden over Tentenkamp."

¹³¹ Spierings, "Ontevreden Asielzoekers Uit Heumensoord de Straat Op."

¹³² "Deel Vluchtelingen Ontevreden over Opvang Heumensoord in Nijmegen."

arriving there. They were dissatisfied with the limited services at the emergency. There is not much consensus about the return of these people in the articles: "by that evening, half of the group had returned to Heumensoord. It is unclear where the other half of the group went."¹³³ "Within 24 hours, everyone had returned to Heumensoord."¹³⁴ "In the days that followed, the group returned."¹³⁵

The articles from *De Volkskrant* and nu.nl are both from October 13th, 2015, on which date there was a similar incident at Heumensoord. The articles describe how a group of "about 70 refugees"¹³⁶ or "around 100 asylum seekers"¹³⁷ have demonstrated against the "poor"¹³⁸ or "primitive"¹³⁹ living conditions at the tent camp of Heumensoord. The complaints mostly focused on the low temperatures in the tents at night, the poor hygiene in the tents, and the meals. Only *De Volkskrant* also mentions some asylum seekers at Heumensoord who are annoyed by the protesters, because they are grateful for the accommodation, even if it is primitive.

Of these three articles, only *De Telegraaf* talks about refugees throughout the article. The one time they are not referred to as refugees they are mentioned as men and women. *De Volkskrant*, on the other hand, refers mostly to asylum seekers, people, or demonstrators throughout the article, though they use the word refugee twice in this article. The first time is in the summary at the beginning of the article. The second time is in the very last sentence, where the mayor of Nijmegen is quoted saying that the protest shows that the flow of refugees through the Netherlands must be improved.¹⁴⁰ This is also the case in the article on nu.nl; they

¹³³ "Deel Vluchtelingen Ontevreden over Tentenkamp."

¹³⁴ Spierings, "Ontevreden Asielzoekers Uit Heumensoord de Straat Op."

¹³⁵ "Deel Vluchtelingen Ontevreden over Opvang Heumensoord in Nijmegen."

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Spierings, "Ontevreden Asielzoekers Uit Heumensoord de Straat Op."

¹³⁸ "Deel Vluchtelingen Ontevreden over Opvang Heumensoord in Nijmegen."

¹³⁹ Spierings, "Ontevreden Asielzoekers Uit Heumensoord de Straat Op."

¹⁴⁰ While this statement made by the mayor of Nijmegen can be considered to be intended positively (he is, after all, pointing out that the current system needs to be improved), his use of the word 'flow' is important here. As was argued in the previous chapter, words like this attribute non-human or perhaps even less than human

mention refugees only twice, at the very beginning and the very end of the article, where they quote the same statement from the same mayor. Throughout the rest of the article they refer to asylum seekers, people, or (temporary) residents.



Figure 13 The image from *De Volkskrant*, captioned 'a refugee at shelter Heumensoord'

There is one more use of the word 'refugees' in the article from *De Volkskrant* that should be mentioned. The word refugee is also used in the caption of the second image of this article (the first being image 18 of the set of NOS images). This image is displayed in **Figure 13**.¹⁴¹ This image shows a woman, wearing a hijab, walking towards the left side of the photo. She is carrying two bags. Walking behind her, looking at the camera, is a little boy with dark hair. He has a bouquet of flowers in his hand.

While image 18 shows people leaving because they are not satisfied with the accommodation offered to them, this image shows a happy child. This reflects the article, which not only describes the demonstrations of the unsatisfied asylum seekers, but also focuses on those asylum seekers at Heumensoord who are content with the services there.

characteristics to the refugees, thereby contributing to the process of dehumanization of refugees. Therefore this statement can also be argued to be negative towards refugees.

¹⁴¹ Spierings, "Ontevreden Asielzoekers Uit Heumensoord de Straat Op."

Refugees or asylum seekers?

The significance of the use of different terms like asylum seekers and refugees was already briefly mentioned in the introduction. The choices made by these different news agencies to call the people they are describing asylum seekers, migrants, or refugees and especially their motivations behind these choices, can be telling for the kind of message they are sending about these people. Of the four news agencies analyzed in this section, only the NOS has a page about the journalistic accountability concerning the Refugee Crisis.¹⁴² On this page, the editorial staff explains the difficulties in coverage of the Refugee Crisis, including the difficulty of choosing the correct terminology. Interestingly enough, the NOS explains that they are increasingly using the term migrant as an umbrella term, although the word migrant is never mentioned in the article that was analyzed in this section. In addition, the NOS continues to use the word refugee throughout the explanation of their journalistic accountability.¹⁴³

Calling someone either a refugee or an asylum seeker comes with a set of mostly negative preconceptions about these people. Asylum seekers are thought to be criminals, who steal not only money but also jobs, and cause all sorts of problems.¹⁴⁴ Refugees, as was already discussed in the first chapter, are associated with terrorism, considered to be lowly educated and mostly thought to be economic migrants rather than refugees.¹⁴⁵ The prejudices towards refugees on the one hand and asylum seekers on the other are often impossible to separate, but it is clear that they are often negative. Nevertheless, these terms are still the most commonly used in the media, as the rest of the articles cited in this chapter will also show. Refreshing in this regard is

¹⁴² "2015: De Vluchtelingencrisis," NOS, April 30, 2016, <https://over.nos.nl/journalistieke-verantwoording/512/2015-de-vluchtelingencrisis>.

¹⁴³ "2015: De Vluchtelingencrisis"; "Nederland Worstelt Met Stroom Vluchtelingen."

¹⁴⁴ Robert Larruina and Halleh Ghorashi, "The Normality and Materiality of the Dominant Discourse: Voluntary Work Inside a Dutch Asylum Seeker Center," *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 14, no. 2 (2016): 228–29.

¹⁴⁵ See, for example: Fourquet, "Les Européens Face À La Crise Des Migrants"; Poushter, "European Opinions of the Refugee Crisis in 5 Charts."

De Volkskrant, where the terms refugee and asylum seeker are alternated with words like 'people' and 'humans', providing a more human and personal tone.

4.3 Mediterranean Sea

While image 18 was used, at least in the majority of articles, to refer to the same location and to some extent also occasion, this is not the case for many other images. The next image that will be analyzed on the basis of the different articles it is used in, is image 26 (**Figure 11**, shown again in **Figure 14**). This image was chosen because it is an almost archetypal image of the Refugee Crisis: a large group of people on a boat that is too small. In contrast to image 18, which was discussed in the previous section, image 26 is used in a variety of articles on different subjects, though they are all related to the Mediterranean Sea where the photo was taken. For this section, three of these articles have been selected in addition to the NOS article in which the image was found initially.



Brussel: Nederland moet ruim 4% vluchtelingen opvangen

© 13-05-2015 IN BUITENLAND

Figure 14 Image 26 – Brussels: Netherlands has to accommodate over 4% of refugees

The first article is posted on the website of 7Days, a Dutch news platform for young people between the ages of 12 and 18, offering not only news, but also background information and explanations.¹⁴⁶ The second article is from a website called *Welingelichte Kringen* (well-

¹⁴⁶ "Wat Is 7Days?," *7Days - Dé Weekkrant Voor Jongeren*, January 6, 2016, <http://www.sevendays.nl/wat-7days>.

informed circles), whose journalists essentially read, select, and rewrite news from a variety of international sources to make it more accessible to the Dutch public.¹⁴⁷ Finally, the third article is from *RTL Nieuws*. RTL is a large Dutch media company, with a focus on entertainment. *RTL Nieuws* is the news branch of this organization.¹⁴⁸

NOS

This article describes the 'new' (the article was written in May 2015) key for distributing refugees among EU member states. For the Netherlands, this means that 4,35% of refugees that arrive in Italy, Malta, or Greece, will be sent through to the Netherlands.¹⁴⁹ This explains why the title so negatively mentions the Netherlands having to accommodate a certain percentage of refugees, as was explained in the previous chapter. The article then continues to explain that the percentage of refugees a country has to accommodate is calculated based on the country's population, national product, and the number of refugees they are already accommodating. The rest of the article is mostly about the commission who made this decision, as well as its members. One paragraph explains that this is the first emergency system to help the member states dealing with a sudden influx of refugees, and that there are plans to make a more permanent system. The article ends by explaining the different initiatives to improve border control and stop human trafficking organizations in Libya.¹⁵⁰

The trend of dehumanizing refugees that has been identified before is very much present in this article, though in a different way than before. In this article, refugees are only referred to as either percentages (which completely ignores any human characteristics they might have) or as something that has to be dealt with (which is perhaps less dehumanizing and more negative, though it also ignores their human characteristics).

¹⁴⁷ "Over Ons," *Welingelichte Kringen*, accessed July 18, 2017, <http://www.welingelichtekringen.nl/over-ons-colofon>.

¹⁴⁸ "Over RTL," *RTL*, accessed July 18, 2017, www.rtl.nl/over/.en-ontdek/WEggaCcAABI3JRF9.

¹⁴⁹ "Brussel: Nederland Moet Ruim 4% Vluchtelingen Opvangen," *NOS*, May 13, 2015, <http://nos.nl/artikel/2035486-brussel-nederland-moet-ruim-4-vluchtelingen-opvangen.html>.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Also interesting is that this is the first article in which the term 'economic refugee' is used. The term is used in relation to the British minister of Foreign Affairs, who claims that the distribution key will encourage economic refugees to travel to Europe.¹⁵¹ This term is contradictory in itself, since official refugee status has nothing to do with one's economic position. It seems to imply that there are people fleeing poverty, rather than war or persecution. In a way, this diminishes the strength or perhaps the worth of the term refugee since it adds the association that not all of them are fleeing for the 'legitimate' reasons of war and persecution, but for an illegitimate one (according to the official definition of a refugee) such as poverty.

7Days

The article on 7Days is titled 'At every wave it could go wrong' and it describes the story of 14-year-old Ayuba who has reached the shores of Sicily after a journey of several months from Ivory Coast. The article describes some of the things that Ayuba has had to endure on his way to Libya and after that on the boat. Ayuba describes how they were put on a small boat for 6 people with 105 people, and that the captains deliberately cause engine trouble so that the coastguard will have to come rescue them. The article ends with Ayuba telling about his ambition to get a good diploma and then a successful job.¹⁵²



Figure 15 The photo of Ayuba displayed at the top of the 7Days article.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Tako Rietveld, "Bij Elke Golf Kan Het Misgaan," *7Days*, May 15, 2015, <http://www.sevendays.nl/nieuws/%E2%80%98bij-elke-golf-kan-het-misgaan%E2%80%99>.

This article is about one refugee, whose picture is shown at the top of the article (see **Figure 15**) and whose name is given. This image shows Ayuba with several other children on a beach. The children in the background are playing soccer, which is also reflected in the interview. The photo shows Ayuba in a context that is relatable for children, rather than a context that is necessarily related to refugees.

Where many images in the previous chapter, as well as the use of some words in the articles in the previous section, contributed to the dehumanization of refugees, this article does the complete opposite. The article, as well as the image showing Ayuba, is clearly meant to be relatable, especially to the youth, which is the target audience for this article. Ayuba is painted as an ambitious boy who has had to endure a lot to get here. There is no mention of him being a fortune seeker or even of any kind of cultural difference between him and European boys of the same age.

Welingelichte Kringen

The third article strikes a completely different tone. This article argues that there are IS militants among the refugees on the boats reaching European shores. These militants are coming here to carry out terrorist attacks. This is based on what a Libyan security advisor has said in an interview with the BBC. The article explains that the IS warriors and migrants are separated on the boats, but once they are rescued by the coastguard and brought to European shores, the distinction between the two is impossible to determine.¹⁵³

This article does not express a value judgement on refugees, because they make a clear distinction between refugees and IS warriors. However, messages such as this increased the unwillingness to accept refugees in Europe. Especially politicians such as Geert Wilders used this and similar messages as ammunition to increase opposition against refugees in the Netherlands, despite later assurances from the Dutch AIVD (General Information and Security

¹⁵³ "IS-Vechters Op Vluchtelingenboten Naar Europa," *Welingelichte Kringen*, May 17, 2017, <http://www.welingelichtekringen.nl/samenleving/454151/is-vechters-op-vluchtelingenboten-naar-europa.html>.

Services) and NCTV (National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security) that they were false.¹⁵⁴

The use of words in this article to refer to refugees is also interesting. Throughout the short article, they are referred to as refugees or boat refugees, but in one sentence they are referred to as migrants.¹⁵⁵ This is relevant because the word 'refugee', referring to people fleeing violence or persecution, has a very different connotation than the word 'migrant', which refers to people moving to another country for a variety of reasons, including work or education. The UNHCR acknowledges that both categories of people are present on most boats crossing the Mediterranean Sea, but they stress the importance of using the proper names, which would mean that they should be referred to as refugees and migrants, rather than using the terms interchangeably.¹⁵⁶ This is the first article analyzed so far which uses these two words to refer to the same group of people, although it is common, as the previous section has shown, to use the terms refugees and asylum seekers to refer to the same group of people.

RTL Nieuws

The fourth article is again very different. This article is based on several UNHCR reports on a total of about 700 refugees who drowned on their way from Libya to Italy. The article mentions three separate boats capsized in a few days. The Italian coastguard has rescued most of the refugees on the boats, but there are also large numbers of refugees unaccounted for. The last paragraph explains that the survivors have been brought to Italy, and that Italy's southern islands are the destination of a continuing flow of refugees trying to reach Europe from Libya. The article ends with the statement that the crossing is life-threatening.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Huib Modderkolk, "AIVD: Geen Signalen Voor Golf van IS-Strijders in Nederland," *De Volkskrant*, September 24, 2015, <https://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/aivd-geen-signalen-voor-golf-van-is-strijders-in-nederland~a4148490/>.

¹⁵⁵ "IS-Vechters Op Vluchtelingenboten Naar Europa."

¹⁵⁶ Edwards, "UNHCR Viewpoint."

¹⁵⁷ "VN: 700 Vluchtelingen Verdrongen in Middellandse Zee," *RTL Nieuws*, accessed July 19, 2017, <https://www.rtlnieuws.nl/node/2030861>.

It seems most of this article is very much written in the words of the UNHCR, because it keeps referring to their spokespersons and reports. The refugees are called either refugees or passengers in this article. The last paragraph describes the context of these shipping disasters and does not refer to the UNHCR at all. This is also the only time in the article where the refugees are referred to as a 'flow'.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how two images have completely different messages, depending on the articles they are featured in. For the articles involving image 18, the differences were relatively small. The NOS article has a negative title, but the content of the article also focuses on positive aspects. The image, however, does not appear to be connected to the article, since the article mentions refugees in Oranje and Bunschoten-Spakenburg, while the image was taken near Heumensoord. Two of the other articles, from *De Telegraaf* and nu.nl, show similarities in the way they referred to the refugees and in the kind of news they cover. *De Volkskrant* article covers the same news, but with a very different emphasis. Instead of focusing on the discontented and demonstrating asylum seekers, their article also considers the asylum seekers who were grateful for the accommodation they receive at Heumensoord.

For image 26, there are greater differences between the articles and thus the messages of the image. First, there is the NOS article, which speaks in a detached and statistical way about refugees. Combined with the negativity in the title, the fact that the Netherlands has to accommodate a certain percentage of refugees, this places the picture in quite a negative light.

The second article, from 7Days, however, was personal to the extreme, describing the journey, sufferings, and ambitions of one young refugee. In this article, the image gains a context of empathy, because the article describes the fear of the boat trip portrayed in the image.

The third article (*Welingelichte Kringen*) is less impersonal than the NOS article, though it is very negative in a different way. It focuses on the threat supposedly posed by refugees, by stating that IS militants are hidden among the refugees. Messages such as this one serve as ammunition for anyone opposed to accommodating refugees.

Finally, the *RTL Nieuws* article focuses on the dangers of crossing the Mediterranean Sea, describing several shipping disasters and the numbers of refugees who were and were not saved by the coastguard. In contrast to the second article, which focused on a similar topic, this article is much more impersonal, referring to the refugees only in terms of numbers. In this context, the image is also seen as very impersonal, which makes the refugees depicted seem less human.

As this discourse analysis has shown, there are striking similarities in the visual representation of refugees on the one hand and the written representations that accompany these images, though unfortunately most of these similarities are quite negative. The trend of visual dehumanization of refugees can be extended to a general dehumanization of refugees, which would include not only their visual representation without recognizable facial features, but also by referring to them as numbers or percentages, or by using words like 'flow of refugees' which attributes non-human characteristics to them. While Al Jazeera has decided to no longer use the term migrant to refer to the Mediterranean refugees, as they believe it to be a dehumanizing and generalizing umbrella term, these articles have shown that this is also happening with the terms refugee and asylum seekers. The articles from *De Volkskrant* and *7Days* are exceptions to this, though they also use these contaminated terms.

Conclusion

This is the moment to return to the research question, which was put forward in the introduction of this thesis: *What does a visual analysis of Dutch media reporting on (Muslim) refugees contribute to our understanding of how refugees and Muslims are constructed in contemporary Dutch public discourse?*

In this question, the visual representations are the main point of focus. A particular way of regarding images has been adopted in this thesis, combining the views from three different scholars. Drawing from Mitchell, the notion of the power and the characteristics of animation and vitality of images were adopted. However, following Bleiker, this power is considered as a direct effect of the choices the photographer has made, rather than as characteristics inherent to the image itself. In addition, the photographs analyzed in this thesis are not seen as neutral representations of the world, but as constructions of the way the photographer experiences and wishes to portray this world. Finally Rose's notion that images derive their value from the research methods used to analyze them, has also been adopted.

While keeping these notions in mind, the 35 images of the NOS have been analyzed in this thesis according to four coding categories: the title of the article the image is used in, the number of people portrayed in the image, the religious and secular elements in the images, and finally the gender (and age) of the people depicted.

The most important features of the visual representation of Muslim refugees that are visible in the NOS images are connected to the trend of dehumanizing refugees. This is not only visible in the images, where refugees are most often portrayed in large groups without recognizable facial characteristics, but also in the titles and text of the articles, where refugees are referred to as a 'flow', a word that attributes non-human characteristics to the refugees. There are, of course, also examples of images that do not follow this trend (for example image 17 (**Figure 10**, page 47), however these are by far the minority and can therefore only reasonably be considered to be exceptions.

Another important feature in these images is the theme of security. This theme plays out in several ways. First, there is the contradiction that is made between the women wearing hijabs and the policemen. As was discussed in chapter three, the veil or hijab is strongly associated

with security. At the same time, however, women are often represented as people who have no agency and are in need of protection. This causes questions about the images that depict both women wearing hijabs as well as policemen; who are the police protecting? The second way in which the Refugee Crisis is associated with security is the way in which refugee men are perceived (and portrayed) as a threat to Europe.

The distinction between 'good' and 'bad' refugees is important when discussing the theme of security. The 'good' refugees are the ones, mostly women and children, waiting in the emergency shelters and camps in mostly Middle Eastern countries until they are rescued by the Europeans. The 'bad' refugees are those crossing the Mediterranean Sea on their own initiative. However, this does not mean that all female refugees are good and all male refugees are bad. After all, veiled women are also seen as a form of threat. The difference is that the threat of veiled women is more ideological: the veil is seen as a rejection of the Dutch (secular) way of life. The threat posed by the men is of a different nature: the fear is that they are disguised IS warriors.

The process of (visual) dehumanization of refugees is closely related to the discourse on Islam in Western Europe. In particular, what is at play here is the orientalist style of thought which was introduced in the first chapter of this thesis. This way of thinking revolves around opposition and homogenization: all refugees are Muslim, all Muslims are different from 'us', all Muslims are dangerous, and all Muslims are backward. Not depicting recognizable facial features appears to ratify this kind of thinking.

This orientalist style of thought is characterized by stubborn and negative preconceptions of Islam and refugees. These preconceptions include the belief that all refugees arriving in the Netherlands are Muslims, which was already mentioned above, but also the belief that they are all unschooled and unskilled, and that they are economic migrants rather than refugees. Despite evidence to the contrary, there are also prejudices about Islam being inherently anti-secular, and thus incompatible with the Dutch political system. Politicians such as Geert Wilders use and enforce these preconceptions to paint a negative image of Islam.

Despite the power of images to construct and help us understand the world we live in, it is important to take the context of an image into account. This is why, in the fourth chapter, two images are analyzed in the context of the different articles they are used in. However, it is also

important to keep in mind that the context of an image is not only the website on which they are found or the article they are used in, but also, or perhaps especially, the public domain and debate surrounding the image. Not only do the ways of thinking about Muslims and about refugees recur in the images, the images reinforce these ways of thinking to some extent. However, as the fourth chapter has shown, there are exceptions to this. Especially the articles from *De Volkskrant* and *7Days* countered the trend of dehumanization of refugees with positive and personal stories about refugees.

The article in which an image is used, makes a big difference in the interpretation of said image. This is particularly true for image 26 (**Figure 14**, page 62). The image shows a large group of people on a small boat on the Mediterranean Sea. This thesis has shown that there are associations of threat connected to images such as this one. However, one of the articles in which this image was included managed to leave these associations behind and take a completely different approach. Instead of focusing on an intimidating group of men, the article tells the story of the horrific journey made by a young refugee. However, as mentioned above, this article is an exception. In other words, the human side of the refugees is still present in the debate, but unfortunately it is also rare.

The analysis in this thesis has been limited to 35 images. In order to formulate a more extensive and comprehensive answer to the research question, further research is required. However, based on the data analyzed in this thesis, it is clear that orientalist styles of thought are quite common, indicated by the strong and negative preconceptions surrounding Muslims, refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers, as well as the fact that these categories are often merged in public debate. Moreover, this thesis has also shown that images can be a valuable source of information, thereby improving the *image* of visual analysis in academia.

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