

The Image of the Refugee: Forced Migrations and Visual Culture in the Early Modern Low Countries

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Abstract

This essay examines how growing numbers of displaced men and women in the early modern Low Countries were incorporated into contemporary visual culture. It argues that evolving representations of the refugee were built on biblical and classical tropes, and shaped by the interests of stakeholders, notably religious minorities. Mapping this visual landscape, it proposes a typology of five, partly overlapping refugee types. Each drew on pictorial models and confessional scripts aligned with the sensibilities of target audiences. The iconographic development of the early modern refugee would have dramatic consequences for displaced groups who did not fit into such categories.

Keywords: migration history, visual culture, religious history, iconography, refugees

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How to depict a refugee?¹ The Cologne goldsmith Gilles Sibricht must have pondered this question when a group of Netherlandish exiles commissioned him to craft two silver-gilded cups to memorialise their asylum in the town of Wesel. The group was part of larger migration movement of about sixty thousand men and women who had fled religious persecution and civil war in the Habsburg Netherlands. Wesel, strategically located in the Rhineland duchy of Cleves, had become one of the largest hubs for these predominantly Protestant displaced communities. By 1570, about half of Wesel's inhabitants were said to be exiles from the Low Countries.² When the shifting course of the war in the Netherlands allowed many exiles to return home, they thanked their hosts for the years of hospitality by a gift of two precious objects, produced by the Sibricht workshop. The Dutch-speaking exile community in Wesel paid for one of the ornate gilded cups, while its Walloon, or French-speaking, counterpart paid for the other one. On 24 February 1578 both vessels were presented to Wesel's municipal fathers (fig. 1).³

The Sibricht commission yielded an exquisite pair that blended conventional and innovative design. Following the latest Renaissance fashions, the cups were lavishly carved with cartouches, festoons, masks, and three elaborate reliefs that depicted biblical stories of flight and hospitality. Explanatory texts inscribed on the cups' lid aptly included 'Hospes fui et collegistis me' ('I was a stranger, and you took me in'), from Matthew 25:35. Other inscriptions paid tribute to the commissioners' current provision of asylum: 'Vesalia hospitalis' ('Hospitable Wesel'). To the date 1578, the inscription was added: 'anno exilii xi' ('in the eleventh year of exile').⁴

For early modern scholars, the Wesel cups are at once a recognisable gesture and a puzzling historical document. Gilded vessels are familiar products of Renaissance decorative

¹ This essay is an expanded version of a keynote lecture, delivered at the Historians of Netherlandish Art Conference in 2022. It is part of the nwo-project 'The Invention of the Refugee in Early Modern Europe' (016.Vici.185.020).

² Spohnholz, *Tactics of Toleration*, 28.

³ Stempel, *Weseler Prunkpokale*; Spohnholz, 'Calvinism and Religious Exile', 236; Suhr, 'Stichtag'.

⁴ Van der Ham, *80 jaar oorlog*, 55-56. Compare similar gifts from Netherlandish exiles in Norwich in 1578, as well as earlier examples from English exiles in Frankfurt. Oldenburg, *Alien Albion*, 49-51; Cleland and Eaker, *The Tudors*, 90-91.



Fig. 1 Giles Sibricht, Wesel Cups ('Geusenbecher'), 1578, gilded silver, 68,5 × 15,5 cm, Wesel, Städtisches Museum.

craftsmanship, typically adorning the *kunstkammers* of princely houses or serving as stylish tableware for urban patricians.⁵ Yet the opulence of the two Wesel examples sits uneasily with the image of refugees that casts them as bereaved victims of war and marginalised outsiders in premodern societies.⁶ What is more, the piece's decorative programme prompts questions about the representation of flight and forced migration in early modern art, the motivations behind this imagery, and the agency of patrons, purchasers and other stakeholders in its construction. This essay addresses these questions by arguing that the Wesel vessels were not eccentric outliers but part of a much broader early modern effort to frame 'the refugee' as a particular type and social category in society. More specifically, it will map how the figure gradually emerged in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century visual culture and will explain its iconography. A typology of five evolving refugee models will be proposed and elaborated upon.

Terms, concepts and visual representation

The visual representation of early modern refugees has been little studied. This is partly the outcome of the figure's apparent conceptual absence in premodern Europe, and of confusion about terminology. To be sure, forced migration was a widespread phenomenon in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but 'refugee' only gradually became a term that was used to categorise (some of) those involved. As a politicised and contested concept, refugee long lacked a common definition, let alone an established legal framework.⁷ Some historians have therefore preferred to use different terms to describe early modern victims of forced migration. Others have tried to distinguish between the refugee as a modern analytical category and premodern conceptualisations of mobility.⁸ This article seeks to contribute to our understanding of the gradual emergence of the figure, by examining how early modern visual media conceived of contemporary forced migrations and experimented with iconographic models to represent its subjects. The refugee – today generally defined as a person forced to flee due to persecution, war, violence, or public disorder – was a malleable entity in early modern Europe and, as a discursive figure, framed according to political, religious, and social preferences.

Despite these empiric and conceptual challenges, there is broad scholarly consensus about the growing numbers of displaced people as such. Inspired by the pioneering work of Robert I. Moore, David Nirenberg and others, historians have mapped how the bureaucratisation of states, changing economic structures, and, above all, increasing religious tensions fostered anxieties about uniformity across late-medieval Europe.⁹ The divisions

5 Impey and MacGregor, *The Origins of Museums*; Tebbe, *Nürnberger Goldschmiedekunst*.

6 Roberts, 'Marginals and Deviants', 73–74; Ther, *The Outsiders*, 7–13.

7 Burke, *Exiles*, 2–4, 39–81; Janssen, 'The Legacy of Exile', 228–230; Kaplan, 'The Legal Rights', 87.

8 On concepts and terminology: Corens, *Confessional Mobility*, 2–4, 24–29, 191–195; Di Crescenzo and Fisher, 'Exile and Imprisonment', 1–21; Marfleet, 'Refugees and History', 138–143; Scholz, 'The Expanding Definition', 296–307; Schunka, 'Konfession und Migrationsregime', 32–44; Spohnholz and Van Veen, *Dutch Reformed Protestants*, 12–15.

9 Moore, *The Formation*; Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*; Terpstra, *Religious Refugees*.

propagated by the Reformation of the sixteenth century served only to fuel such developments. The migration of religious minorities, either voluntary or enforced, thus became widespread within post-Reformation European societies.¹⁰ The surge in numbers of displaced men and women also contributed to new discourses on migration. Some displaced religious minorities, for example, experimented with terms to justify their social position, to distinguish themselves from other types of migrants, and to mobilise support for their cause. In forging a more respectable group identity, they regularly adopted the rhetoric of exile, inspired by biblical and classical precursors. Often applied after the event, such argumentative strategies underpinned the construction of confessional diasporic cultures. In this fomenting, politicised climate, the term 'refugee' also made its first known appearance. A flexible neologism, '*refugie*' in its infant conception referred to religious migrants who had been victims of repression and, therefore, deserved solidarity from co-religionists elsewhere.¹¹

If the linguistic concept of the early modern refugee involves an analysis of argumentative strategies, then the same applies to its visual representation. This graphic sphere has received less scrutiny than its semantic counterpart, but we should acknowledge the burgeoning field of scholarship about refugees in contemporary art and media studies, which has demonstrated, amongst other things, how pictorial expectations, implicit stereotypes, and gender codes have conditioned modern images of refugees.¹² Scholars have also highlighted the role of interest groups who influence the selection of the types of refugees to be depicted, and how exactly and for what purposes such portrayals are created. How can these insights help us examine early modern refugee imagery?

Mapping a potentially vast repertoire, this essay takes the early modern Low Countries as its focal point, for several reasons. First, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Netherlandish provinces served as a hub of international migration movements in northern Europe. A relatively literate and highly urbanised society, it possessed a sophisticated printing industry and a vibrant market for painting and decorative arts. Netherlandish visual culture has long been known for its engagement with (seeming) realism. Second, starting in the 1560s, the Habsburg-controlled Low Countries were racked by the devastating civil war commonly known as the Dutch Revolt, a decades-long military conflict that was accompanied by unprecedented levels of migration. Estimates suggest that more than 250,000 men and women left their homes during the war – in a country with a population of about 2.5 million. In the seventeenth century, the northern provinces that constituted the Dutch Republic continued to be shaped by forced migrations as their relatively tolerant religious policies and economic opportunities attracted repressed minorities from elsewhere in Europe.¹³

10 Lachenicht, 'Refugees', 262-276; Terpstra, *Religious Refugees*, 241-242; Ther, *The Outsiders*, 22-37; Monge and Muchnik, *L'Europe des diasporas*.

11 Janssen, 'The Legacy of Exile', 226-242.

12 Binder and Jaworsky, 'Refugees as Icons', 1-14; Clark, 'Understanding Contemporary Images', 111-124; Wright, 'Moving Images', 53-66; Olier and Spadavecchia, 'Stereotypes, Disproportions, and Power Asymmetries'.

13 Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 158-165, 328-332; Lucassen and Lucassen, *Winnaars en verliezers*, 189-219; Parker, *The Dutch Revolt*, 118-126.

This essay draws on a selection of visual media (drawings, prints, paintings, and material objects) produced in the context of the Low Countries between c. 1550 and 1700. It does not claim to offer a comprehensive, or even representative, overview; rather, it analyses selected examples that elucidate the genealogy of different visual refugee types. This typology, in which the categories are structured according to their intended messages, serves as an organising and interpretative tool. By foregrounding patterns of visual language, the proposed typology necessarily leaves out those forms of migration which were not included in pictorial schemes at the time. What is more, the proposed types overlapped and evolved over time, mirroring changes in the character of forced migration in the Low Countries during the sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The selected cases derive from a larger corpus of surviving material assembled in online databases (using keywords, pictorial themes, and Iconclass codes).¹⁴ The outcomes were compared and expanded with examples from museum catalogues. Sensitive to the different origins, purposes, and audiences of these artifacts, we use cultural historical analysis to map and explain their visual expressions.¹⁵

Worrying about the present, thinking about the past

At first glance, there appears to be surprisingly little visual evidence of the ‘refugee crisis’ that began to grip the Habsburg Netherlands from the 1560s. For sure, scholars have pointed to a growing demand for depictions of contemporary war events.¹⁶ Images of soldiers and military combat even became the basis of popular new painting genres.¹⁷ The visualisation of violence through prints, paintings and objects was furthered by the conflict’s antagonists, each of whom would, in later decades, have an interest in consolidating collective memories of the war.¹⁸ Still, an overview of recent scholarship suggests that flight – whether personified in the figure of the exile, fugitive, or refugee – was little represented, let alone thematised, in this rich visual war culture. Forced migrations may have transformed the demographic landscape of the Low Countries between 1560 and 1650, but there does not seem to have been a great appetite for images of flight or representations of the refugee as a distinct type.

¹⁴ Consulted online image repositories include: RKD (<https://research.rkd.nl/>); Arkyves (<https://www.arkyves.org/>); Rijksmuseum (<https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie>); Getty Research Institute (<https://www.getty.edu/research/collections/>); Metropolitan Museum of Art (<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection>); British Museum (<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/>). Used key words: exile, fugitive, refugee, migrant, flight, expulsion, displacement, exodus. Associated iconclass codes include 33B9 (flight, running away), 44G38 (banishment, exile), 44F631 (political refugee, ‘émigré’), 71E1 (Exodus), 71E3 (wandering in the wilderness), 73B65 (rest on the flight into Egypt), 96B113 (Pius Aeneas), 11P164 (the Roman Catholic Church vs. Protestantism).

¹⁵ The essay builds on insights from Bevilacqua, ‘Race-Making Festivities’, 3–56; Burke, *Eyewitnessing*; Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 54–68; Barget, de Boer, and Griesse, ‘Introduction’, 1–12; Korsten et al., *Marketing Violence*.

¹⁶ Horst, *De opstand*; Klinkert, *Nassau in het nieuws*.

¹⁷ Van Maarseveen, Hilkhuijsen, and Dane, *Beelden van een strijd*; Borger, *De Hollandse kortegaard*; Kunzle, *From Criminal to Courtier*.

¹⁸ *Ketters en papen*, 125–183; Pollmann, *Memory*, 159–185; Eekhout, *Memorabilia*, 7–11.



Fig. 2 Raphael and workshop, *Fire in the Borgo*, 1514-1517, fresco, 610 cm (base), Rome, Vatican Museums.

To understand this paradox, we need to consider how contemporaries conceived of migration, mobility, and refuge. In early modern Europe, thinking about the present was generally informed by ideas about the past.¹⁹ Interpretations of contemporary events were typically shaped by historical analogies, or *exempla*, often taken from classical antiquity or the Bible. These two heritages also channelled the visual literacy of artists. In the context of migration, scholars have noted how classical and biblical frames of reference conditioned how sixteenth-century women and men negotiated and expressed the refuge they were experiencing. In their search for meaning, displaced minorities regularly looked for parallels in Scripture, which enabled them to present their experience as heir to a centuries-long Christian tradition.²⁰ What precisely did these ancient sources offer concerning the (visual) notion of flight?

A rich repertoire of venerable stories presented positive interpretations of flight. Think of Aeneas and his courageous escape from Troy as the city was burned by the Greeks. His heroic flight was claimed to have led to the founding of Rome. Powerful and instantly recognisable, this Virgilian flight narrative was depicted numerous times in sixteenth-century art, especially in a composition in which Aeneas carries his father, made famous by Raphael and Giulio Romano (fig. 2).²¹ Less epically heroic but also classical in reference

19 Pollmann, *Memory*, 5-8, 48-51.

20 Janssen, *The Dutch Revolt*, 37-44, 48-55; Müller, *Exile Memories*, 27-58; Terpstra, *Religious Refugees*, 289-305.

21 Gnann and Plomp, *Rafaël*, 97-99.



Fig. 3 Albrecht Dürer, *The Flight into Egypt*, 1502-1506, engraving, 29,4 × 21 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

was the exile experience of the Roman poet Ovid, whose *Metamorphoses* served as a popular resource for painters and printmakers alike. The Old Testament provided another rich catalogue of respected, even sacred flight narratives. Indeed, some of its most well-known stories, such as Abraham's wanderings, Moses and the exodus, and the Babylonian exile, all centred on stories of forced displacement. The New Testament added some edifying examples to this repertoire, including Mary and Joseph's flight into Egypt, a story frequently represented in sixteenth-century art (fig. 3).

And yet Scripture also contained negative readings of flight. Adam and Eve's shameful expulsion from Paradise was an ominous episode. The apocryphal 'Quo Vadis' account of the Apostle Paul, which criticised his dubious flight from persecution in Rome, was hardly an exemplary tale. These examples, unlike the positive stories mentioned above, cast flight

as an act of cowardice and displacement as God's punishment. To escape persecution through flight was, by this line of thinking, to act against divine providence. Other biblical stories – for example Lot's escape from the sinful city of Sodom, a subject often treated by sixteenth-century artists (fig. 4) – were at best ambivalent towards flight. Taken together, such ancient *exempla* offered both strengthening and confusing messages, depending on one's perspective.²²

The same ambivalence towards flight can be found in contemporary manuals such as Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*. Ripa included the figure of the exile, noting that there were two main types. The first, he argued, concerns a person sentenced of a crime and banished by the government – hardly an edifying role model. The second exile type, Ripa noted, was a person who voluntarily flees because of repression and harassment, a predicament offering greater room for positive identification.²³ Based on designs by Enea Vico and Francesco Salviati, the ambiguous exile figure also included elements of the pilgrim (fig. 5). Some other emblem books mentioned Fuga, or flight, as personified by the figure of a woman with a torch.²⁴

Sixteenth-century artists drew on these different resources, but not to the same extent. Examples collected from the RKD, Getty, and Arkyves databases suggest that the story of Abraham's wanderings, the Israelite exodus led by Moses, and Mary and Joseph's flight into Egypt were regularly chosen, but perhaps Ovid's exile and Paul's escape from Rome less so. Ripa's ambiguous exile type also seems to have had few direct followers. This mixed reception is not so surprising when we consider the demands of potential patrons who would have been interested in representations of the war's forced migrations. First, it is clear that the discursive invention of exile and refugee figures originated from circles of displaced religious minorities. These stakeholders looked for positive role models, ideally those having unequivocal biblical resonances. Second, there appears to have been a market for flight depictions in the context of patriotic war stories. As we will see, these representations likewise tapped specific yet contrasting repertoires. Third, the topic of refuge received attention amongst humanist circles who favoured Neo-Stoic contemplations to the growing divisions in the Netherlands. Demands from these different interest groups resulted in the gradual emergence and development of five, partly overlapping refugee types over the course the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Based on ancient blueprints, they offered different perspectives to the experience of forced migration in Netherlandish society.

The suffering refugee

The first, and earliest discernible type concerns portrayals of escaping victims of violence and war. From the mid-sixteenth century onwards, we encounter this 'suffering refugee'

²² Schunka, 'Constantia im Martyrium', 175–200; Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution*; Wright, 'Marian Exiles', 220–243; Janssen, *The Dutch Revolt*, 39–44.

²³ Ripa's manual was first published in 1593. I have used the Dutch edition: Ripa, *Iconologia*, 28.

²⁴ Henkel and Schöne, *Emblemata*, 1674: 'Fugis ut Vincas'. For examples in Ripa see Ripa, *Iconologia*, 557: 'Fuga.Vlucht', 'Fuga.Vlucht', 'Fuga popolare. De geene Vlucht'.



Fig. 4 Anonymous, Lot Escapes Sodom, 1550-1570, engraving, 20,5 × 25,3 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 5 Enea Vico, Exilium, 1533-1567, engraving, 7,4 × 7,6 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 6 Baptista van Doetecum, I am not alone ('Ick bints alleen niet'), 1601, engraving and etching, 28,5 × 36,3 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

in engravings of burning villages and besieged cities. Fleeing women and men are typically portrayed as a group, running or carrying commodities. Set in the distant background, they are not the main topic of the composition but a dramatic side-effect of the disaster on centre stage. Some of these representations take the form of an emblem. In Baptista van Doetecum's *Ick bins alleen niet* ('I am not alone') we see escaping villagers in the corner of a scene that underscores a generic moral message (fig. 6). In *Bona fortunae sapiens in bonis non ponit* an image of fleeing townspeople provides evidence that 'a wise man does not set the good things of fortune amongst material goods' (fig. 7). The latter composition, published by the internationally oriented firm of De Bry, is reminiscent of images of the burning city of Troy, and of biblical Sodom and Gomorrah in the midst of their destruction.

The act of fleeing, however, is not thematised explicitly in these works and one could argue they are unsuited to an iconographic analysis of the refugee as a distinct figure. Still, some elements would later return in prints about the war in the Netherlands and its displaced victims.

More specifically, the figure of the 'suffering refugee' graced several newsprints composed by the Frans Hogenberg firm in Cologne (fig. 8). As Ramon Voges has shown, Hogenberg and his team offered visual storytelling about the war in the Low Countries that helped viewers understand the tumultuous conflict. Produced in large quantities and in many variants, the engravings were pitched at a broad audience and often avoided readings of events in explicitly confessional terms. Presumably for this reason, displaced communities hardly ever feature as the leading topic of Hogenberg's sheets. In images



Fig. 7 Denis Lebey de Batilly, *Bona fortunae sapiens in bonis non ponit*, 1596, engraving, 7,5 × 8,5 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

of battlefields and captured towns, escaping men and women are plentiful but remain unidentified; they are pictured as an anonymous group, not as recognisable individuals. It is telling that the same engravings were sometimes used to illustrate different events. To keep his output steady and production costs low, Hogenberg tended to re-cycle or update compositions.²⁵

Seditio, by Dirck Volckertsz Coornhert and Adriaan van Weerdt from the later 1570s, provides a more specific reference to the suffering of war victims (fig. 9). This famous print laments civil discord in the Netherlands, personified by a two-bodied figure. In the background are religious violence and iconoclasm, as well as a group of fleeing clerics. Thus, in Coornhert's and Van Weerdt's design, displaced war victims are portrayed as Catholic men while aggression is associated with the rebellious Protestant party. This original pictorial choice seems illustrative of Coornhert's idiosyncratic intellectual position and his tendency to criticise what he regarded as Calvinist radicalism within the rebel movement. In any case, he and De Weerdt knew from personal experience what flight meant: both men had escaped the war-ridden Netherlands in the later 1560s and probably met each other in Cologne.²⁶

²⁵ Voges, *Das Auge der Geschichte*, 15–37. See also Klinkert, *Nassau in het nieuws*, 57–68; Horst, *De opstand*, 19–20.

²⁶ Van der Ham, *80 jaar oorlog*, 64–67; Müller, *Exile Memories*, 31–32; Horst, *De opstand*, 170–171. Compare Veltman, 'Keulen als toevluchtsoord', 34–59.



Fig. 8 Frans Hogenberg, Battle at Jemmingen, 1568, etching, 21 × 28 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

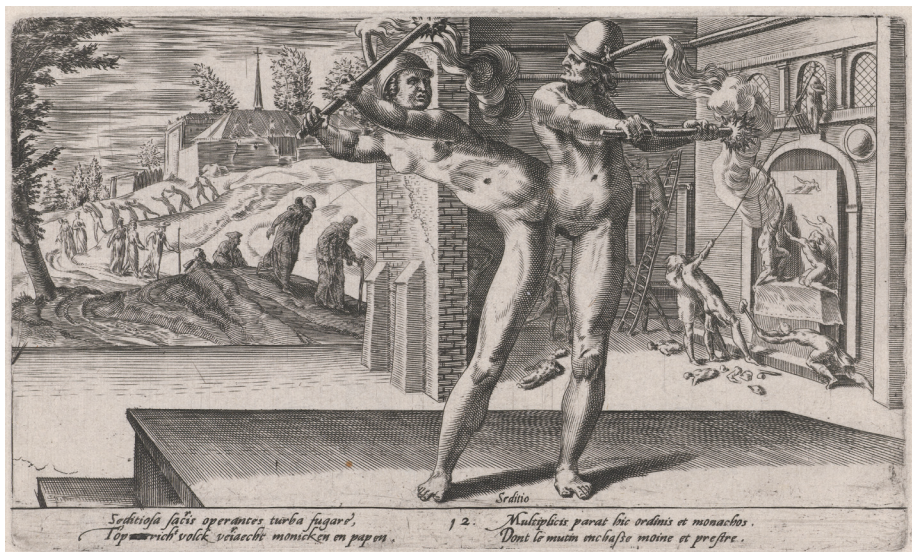


Fig. 9 Dirck Volckertsz Coornhert and Adriaan van Weerdt, Seditio, 1570s, etching, 20,6 × 12,1 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 10 Georg Keller, *The Expulsion of Jews from Frankfurt, after 1614*, etching, *Frankfurt am Main*, Historisches Museum.

The guilty refugee

A seemingly opposite pictorial format presents us with fleeing men and women framed as social outcasts or deviants who have rightly been expelled from a godly community. Visual representations of this second type have a long history that stretches beyond the Low Countries. Infamous examples include images of expulsions of Jewish minorities, for example from Frankfurt in 1614 (fig. 10).²⁷

Jews had not been the only victims of a growing quest for confessional uniformity in Europe. In Habsburg Spain, Morisco minorities suspected of allegiance to Islam faced large-scale expulsions, too. These latter deportations, carried out from port cities such as Valencia in the early seventeenth century, were later commemorated in a series of

²⁷ Terpstra, *Religious Refugees*, 107, 110, 130; Teller, *Rescue the Surviving Souls*.



Fig. 11 Pere Oromig, *The Expulsion of Moriscos from Valencia* ('Embarco moriscos en el Grao de Valencia'), 1616, oil on canvas, 110 × 174 cm, Valencia, Colección Bancaja.

celebratory paintings commissioned by Catholic authorities (fig. 11).²⁸ Highly normative in their visual account, these depictions encourage the viewer to identify with the perspective of the perpetrators who initiated the expulsions to purify a supposedly polluted Christian community.

This victorious, discriminating genre had its Netherlandish equivalent. Consider, for example, Claes Jansz Visscher's *D'Arminiaensche uyt-vaert* (The Arminian funeral), which depicts the ousting of Remonstrant ministers from The Hague in 1619 (fig. 12). Visscher pictures a long train of carriages leaving town in a composition that echoed depictions of expelled minorities elsewhere in Europe. The much-copied print *D'Arminiaensche dreckwagen* (The Arminian shit-car) adopts a similar format and in a satirical text below applauds the removal of Arminians (fig. 13).²⁹

The image of the 'guilty refugee' also featured in paintings and engravings that illustrated the forced leave-taking of Catholic clerics from towns recently captured by Dutch forces during the war with Spain. In Breda in 1637, the town's surrender was publicised by prints that celebrated the ousting of Habsburg soldiers, magistrates

²⁸ Kaplan, *Divided by Faith*, 294–332. For the Morisco diaspora see García-Arenal and Wiegers, *The Expulsion*.

²⁹ Compare Zandvliet, *Maurits*, 383–435.



Fig. 12 Claes Jansz Visscher, The Arminian Funeral ('D'arminiaensche uytvaert'), 1619, etching, 33,6 × 28,3 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 13 Anonymous, The Arminian Shit Car ('D'arminiaensche dreckwaghen'), 1618, etching, 38,2 × 43 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 14 Anonymous, The Spanish Garrison and Catholic Clerics Leave Breda, 1637, etching, 20,8 × 98,6 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

and priests (fig. 14).³⁰ In contrast to the ‘suffering refugee’, the ‘guilty refugee’ type is thus not anonymous but a representative of a clearly identifiable group. In addition, the pictorial language used invites the viewer to align with the victors and regard the depicted migrants not as victims of conflict but as dangerous elements who are rightfully expelled from society.

The resilient refugee

Despite their opposing messages, the stylised figures of the ‘suffering’ and the ‘guilty refugee’ hold their framing as ‘the Other’ in common. In a number of cases, this visual othering seems intended to reinforce the confessional worldview of potential purchasers. Yet the widespread experience of forced migration during the Dutch Revolt also inspired the victims themselves to experiment with a different iconography, one that sought to kindle empathy, promote compassion, and foster identification. A first set of examples concern emblematic images of resilience, a concept that gained traction in humanist circles in the second half of the sixteenth century.

Joris Hoefnagel’s powerful *Patientia* of 1569 is a case in point (fig. 15).³¹ Being himself in exile in London, Hoefnagel composed a set of highly realistic drawings that recall the repression of the Duke of Alva’s regime. In one example, *Patientighe veriaeghde* (The patient expelled one), we encounter a family about to leave their home. A woman is sitting in front of the house, crying, with two small children at her feet. In the background, officials are recording the possessions of escaped urban dwellers, their property now being confiscated by the Habsburg government. By putting the weeping mother and her children centre stage, the fate of exile is visualised through a gendered script of maternal innocence, injustice and domestic loss.

Hoefnagel’s accompanying advice, to be patient and endure such misfortune, drew from a Neo-Stoic philosophical discourse about how one should deal with turmoil and conflict. The scholar Justus Lipsius was one of its most well-known advocates. In his *De Constantia*, published in 1583, Lipsius offered his readers consolations for calamities

³⁰ Compare a painting with a similar scene by Hendrick de Meyer, *Uittocht van de Spaanse bezetting van Breda, 10 oktober 1637*, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, inv. SK-A-1511. Maarsenveen, Hilkhuijsen and Dane, *Beelden van een strijd*, 288–289, 293–294.

³¹ Van der Ham, *80 jaar oorlog*, 59–61; Vignau-Wilberg, *Joris and Jacob Hoefnagel*, 202–223.



Fig. 15 Joris Hoefnagel, *Patientia*, 1569, drawing, 44 × 52 cm, Rouen, Bibliothèque Municipale.

and chaos by encouraging constancy and steadfastness, which translated as a voluntary, uncomplaining endurance of all human contingencies. We find elements of this Neo-Stoic reading in Coornhert's work and that of Florentius Schoonhoven.³² In an emblem from 1580, Theodore Beza (de Bèze) in likewise advises displaced Protestants in Geneva: 'Why therefore do you grieve [...] you whom love of your faith drove from your country? If you tend towards heaven wherever you go, you see heaven at the same distance in all directions'.³³ Hoefnagel's drawings, dedicated to fellow exile Johan Rademacher, were probably intended to be published as an emblem book, but his design never made it into print.

A confessionally neutral, Neo-Stoic agenda also informed Gillis Mostaert's drawing, which depicts the allegorical female figure of Patientia (fig. 16).³⁴ Here, Patientia is surrounded by victims of plunder and violence as they make their escape. Like Hoefnagel's set of drawings, Mostaert's richly detailed and coloured image will not have reached far beyond an audience of connoisseurs. Its dissemination may also have been limited by its contemplative humanist message. Mostaert's figure encourages empathy with war victims, but its Neo-Stoic stance of resigned acceptance and passivity would not have convinced the conflict's more militant parties. Indeed, as the war in the Netherlands grew more destructive over the 1580s, and mentalities on both sides hardened, so did the visual language of flight.

³² Enenkel, 'Florentius Schoonhoven'.

³³ Beza, *Icones*, emblem II.

³⁴ Van der Ham, *80 jaar oorlog*, 61. Compare more examples of Patientia allegories from the 1570s in Horst, *De opstand*, 157-160, 178, 209-211.



Fig. 16 Gilles Mostaert (I), *Patientia*, 1585, drawing, 24,4 × 36 cm, Antwerp, Museum Plantin-Moretus.

The honourable refugee

Religious divisions drove many of the Dutch Revolt's forced migrations. Scholars have remarked upon the equal importance of economic motivations behind many of these movements, noting however that those involved preferred to use the language of religion to legitimise their decision afterwards.³⁵ Surviving diaries and correspondence confirm that displaced minorities eagerly looked for historical analogies in the Bible to find spiritual consolation, religious identification, and moral justification. The story of the exodus led by Moses, for example, proved a fitting model that allowed dispersed communities – of different denominations – to identify with a key narrative of the Christian tradition. It confirmed that flight from persecution was not necessarily an act of cowardice but could be regarded as an honourable experience.³⁶

Recent scholarship into the mental world of religious refugees goes a long way in explaining some of the period's most striking visual expressions of refuge. The dispersed Panhuys family from Antwerp, for example, commissioned a large painting from Maerten de Vos in 1574 (fig. 17).³⁷

³⁵ Briels, *De Zuidnederlandse*, 23–32; Müller, *Exile Memories*, 27–58.

³⁶ Grell, *Brethren*, 127; Janssen, *The Dutch Revolt*, 39–44, 48–55; Terpstra, *Religious Refugees*, 289–297.

³⁷ Interpretations of this painting in: Dijkstra, Dirkse, and Smits, *De schilderijen*, 90–92; Müller, *Exile Memories*, 56–58, 141–142; Hanou, 'Mozes, muiters en munten', 61–78; Hanou, 'Wetten, wijsvingers en wrekters', 25–28; Willmott, *Antwerp and the Golden Age*. For wider context also: Van Leeuwen, 'De Panhuys-zuil', 159–163.



Fig. 17 Maerten de Vos, *Moses Showing the Tablets of the Law to the Israelites, with Portraits of Members of the Panhuys Family, their Relatives and Friends*, 1574-1575, oil on panel, 153 × 237,5 cm, *The Hague, Mauritshuis*.

Building on the biblical blueprint of Moses's exodus, it shows an imaginary group portrait, in which the scattered relatives and friends of the family (some lived in Antwerp at the time the painting was made, others were in exile in London or in German refugee towns) were reunited and portrayed as ancient Israelites on their way from Egypt to the Promised land. Moses himself is included in the centre of this evocative *portrait historié*. By placing themselves in a biblical tradition of exile and imagining their own migration as a kind of repetition of the Israelites' fate in the book of Exodus, the Panhuys siblings reinvented themselves as proud re-enactors of a venerable Christian type.

De Vos's pictorial language concurred more broadly with the rise of a new discourse about forced migration in the late-sixteenth-century Netherlands. To distinguish themselves from 'normal' migrants, displaced Protestants increasingly presented themselves as exiles and self-styled martyrs of the faith deserving of a special status in society. Apart from Moses's exodus narrative, the story of Abraham proved highly suitable for this campaign. Johannes Müller has demonstrated that the figure of Abraham, who was commanded by God to leave his home, became immensely popular in what he calls diasporic cultures, in which families with migratory backgrounds fashioned themselves after the biblical patriarch. Representations of Abraham's travels to Canaan, such as



Fig. 18 Anonymous printmaker after a design by Hans Bol, Abraham on His Way to Canaan, c. 1560-1570, etching, 17,5 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

those by Hans Bol, are anachronistically yet typically set in a contemporary landscape (fig. 18).³⁸

The heroic role model of Abraham also featured on the cups that Netherlandish exiles in Wesel commissioned in 1578 (fig. 19).³⁹ More specifically, Abraham is shown offering hospitality to the three angels in a design probably modelled after drawings or prints that circulated in Cologne, where the vessels were made. The carved depiction resembles a composition that Raphael and his assistants had used for the papal loggia in Rome around 1518, and whose design quickly became known through prints and emblem books. A mirrored drawing of the scene by Hans Bol from 1567, or a print version from Cologne-based Simon Novelanus, may have served as a direct model (fig. 20).⁴⁰

³⁹ The other sides of the cup depicted the prophet Elia's stay with the widow of Sarefat and Jesus' welcome in the house of Zacchaeus.

⁴⁰ Dacos, *The Loggia of Raphael*, 153, 226-228. For contemporary variants of Raphael's depiction see Hans Bol, *Landscape with Abraham and Angels*, 1567, Art Institute Chicago, inv.1922.3705; Hans Holbein, *Abraham and the Three Angels*, 1538, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, inv.RP-P-OB-4511B(R); Simon Novelanus, *Abraham and the Three Angels*, c. 1577, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, inv.RP-P-1886-A-11031.



Fig. 19 Giles Sibricht, Wesel Cups ('Geusenbecher'), detail, 1578, gilded silver, 68,5 × 15,5 cm, Wesel, Städtisches Museum.



Fig. 20 Simon Novelanus, Abraham and the Three Angels, c. 1577, etching, 21,2 × 28,3 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

The emergence of the 'honourable refugee' type exercised a profound impact on the remembrance of the Dutch Revolt that proliferated in the following century. As Johannes Müller and others have shown, families with exile credentials (real or imagined) were keen to capitalise on their respectable religious migration past.⁴¹ A striking case in point is a series of paintings that Ferdinand Bol made in the 1660s, supposedly for the house of Jacoba Lampsins or perhaps her son Carel. Margriet van Eikema Hommes has pointed out that all five of Bol's paintings, all of which were hung in a single room, represent classical and biblical narratives of flight and diaspora, thus alluding to the family's own migratory past.⁴²

The enduring popularity of the 'honourable refugee' figure, which fused contemporary flight memories with ancient precedents, can also be explained by the fact that it fit two of the founding myths of the burgeoning Dutch Republic. The first concerned the Batavian uprising: a story that cast the revolt against Habsburg Spain as a repetition of the Batavian people's rebellion against Roman rule in 70 CE. Made popular by humanist authors in the early seventeenth century, the account had as one of its main protagonists the epic Batavian leader Bato (famously described by the poet Pieter Cornelisz Hooft), who was styled as a heroic war exile. In a second historical analogy that resonated with contemporary flight narratives, the young Dutch Republic was regarded as a New Israel: the Dutch had been chosen and tested by God just as Moses and the Israelites had been. The exodus led by Moses thus foretold migratory patterns during the Dutch Revolt, a parallel that rendered exile a venerable experience and a diasporic past something quintessentially 'Dutch'.⁴³

While the notion of New Israel became widespread in Protestant Reformed circles, the Batavian myth offered a broader, non-confessional model of identification. Indeed, the exile cult that developed in the seventeenth-century Netherlands was far from an exclusively Calvinist phenomenon. Recent scholarship has demonstrated that all religious communities championed their respective forebears as heroes of the faith, which allowed them to remember religious refuge as a token of pride.⁴⁴ In Catholic circles, for example, a parallel yet contrasting cult emerged in which displaced victims of 'Protestant aggression' were cherished as quasi-martyrs of an embattled Church of Rome. Texts by, or about, fleeing Catholics, such as Wouter Jacobsz' diary and the Frisian *Conscriptio Exulum*, were transformed into devotional objects and tools of confessionalised spirituality. In Antwerp Cathedral around 1590, a monument was erected to memorialise the Catholic exile experience during the dark days of Protestant government. It featured a large triptych with references to Cologne, the primary centre of Catholic asylum during the early 1580s.⁴⁵

41 Müller, *Exile Memories*; Eekhout, *Memorabilia*, 26-44; Pollmann, 'Met grootvaders bloed bezegeld', 154-175.

42 Van Eikema Hommes, *Art and Allegiance*, 105-133, 138-154. Jonathan Bikker has challenged some of Van Eikema Hommes's interpretations: Bikker, 'Ferdinand Bol'. But see Müller, *Exile Memories*, 135-137 for references to handwritten chronicles of the family that similarly recall their relatives' proud migration past.

43 Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 51-125; Groenhuis, *De predikanten*, 77-107; Ihalainen, *Protestant Nations Redefined*, 121-132; De Bruin, 'Het begrip vaderland', 143-162; Spies, 'Vrijheid, vrijheid', 71-98.

44 Janssen, 'Republic of the Refugees', 233-252; Müller, *Exile Memories*, 27-58; Pollmann, 'Met grootvaders bloed bezegeld', 154-175.

45 Janssen, *The Dutch Revolt*, 131-134, 164-170, 176-179. For the Antwerp triptych see also Deschryver, *Revolt-ing Bodies*, 395-397.



Fig. 21 Anonymous, Persecution of the Waldensians, 1655-1663, etching and engraving, 36,3 × 36,8 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

The deserving refugee

The popularity of the ‘honourable refugee’ template gave rise to the development of a fifth type over the course of the seventeenth century. As the military conflict had sealed the division of the country into two different Netherlands by 1609 (a predominantly Protestant republic in the north and a Catholic monarchy in the south), parties on both sides were keen to style their respective displaced communities as exemplary victims who deserved support. It followed that solidarity with repressed co-religionists abroad became an accepted tool of religious activism. Indeed, the Dutch Republic appears to be among the first regions in Europe where charity to persecuted minorities in distant lands became a well-organised, highly publicised activity.⁴⁶

Soliciting aid for foreign victims required a distinctive visual grammar. As David de Boer has shown, stories of humanitarian disasters abroad were skilfully tweaked to meet the expectations of Dutch audiences.⁴⁷ The broadsheet that addressed the ‘Waldensian tragedy’ of the 1650s and 1660s serves as an example here (fig. 21). It depicts the repression

⁴⁶ De Boer, *The Early Modern Dutch Press*, 2-9; Boersma, *Noodhulp zonder natiestaat*; Grell, *Brethren*, 229-273.

⁴⁷ De Boer, *The Early Modern Dutch Press*, 9-19.



Fig. 22 Anonymous, *Persecution of the Waldensians*, detail, 1655-1663, etching and engraving, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

and flight of the Waldensian Protestant minority in Piedmont (Savoy), a widely publicised event that was used to spur fundraising in Dutch communities. The print includes a vivid catalogue of atrocities allegedly committed against the Waldensians. The printmaker knew that his portrayal of the Piedmontese crisis as a story of successive persecution, victimhood, and exile would resonate with Dutch sensibilities. The pictorial design mingled contemporary events in Savoy with Dutch patriotic storytelling and well-known biblical scripts, including the hiding of Waldensians in a grotto (reminiscent of Mary and Joseph's stay in Bethlehem), the depiction of Waldensians tortured and burnt alive (echoing memories of the 'Spanish Inquisition' in the Netherlands), and the desperate flight of surviving Waldensians.⁴⁸

This visual strategy is most conspicuous in the horrific image of a pregnant woman hanging by her wrists in a doorway (fig. 22) – a highly disturbing, if troublingly familiar, image for Dutch viewers. Its iconography seems to have been based on pictures of the massacre

⁴⁸ De Boer, 'Strategies', 94-111. Compare Boersma, 'Supporting', 206-214; Vogel, 'Piemontesische Ostern', 74-92; Van Duijnen, *A Violent Imagination*.



Fig. 23 Anonymous, Atrocities at Oudewater 1575, 1618-1624, etching, 17,5 × 13,5 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

carried out in the town of Oudewater by Spanish soldiers in 1575 during the Dutch Revolt (fig. 23). Erika Kuijpers has pointed to the ubiquity of the Oudewater image, which indeed became iconic in seventeenth-century Dutch schoolbooks. The Oudewater composition drew on images of alleged Spanish atrocities in the Americas, which were featured in Dutch editions of Bartholomew de las Casas's account of the Black Legend (fig. 24).

The maternal female body foregrounds a distinctly gendered form of violence: what is at stake is not merely the suffering of an innocent individual, but the destruction of future life. Such recycled images of 'Catholic barbarity' may also have been inspired by older, biblical iconographies such as the Massacre of the Innocents, ubiquitous in sixteenth-century Netherlandish painting.⁴⁹ By invoking compassion with innocent victims of religious terror, the *Waldensian Tragedy* broadsheet served to spur financial aid campaigns for displaced Waldensians in the United Provinces.

⁴⁹ Kuijpers, 'The Creation and Development', 191-201; Kuijpers and Pollmann, 'Why Remember Terror', 176-196; Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad*, 116-122.



Fig. 24 Bartholomeus de las Casas and Joos van Winghe, *Narratio regionum Indicarum per Hispanos quosdam devastatarum*, 1598, engraving, 14,5 × 18 cm, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Such affective media strategies were fine-tuned thirty years later during the Huguenot diaspora of the 1680s. Of all persecuted groups in early modern Europe, Huguenots were arguably most successful in shaping a recognisable image of their migration by re-using Protestant tropes. Connected favourably to Europe's printing industries, Huguenot publicists skilfully adapted confessional scripts of exile to frame their move from France. In a popular newsprint by one of their Dutch spin doctors, Romeyn de Hooghe, we see unfortunate Huguenots arriving in the Dutch Republic, graciously welcomed by stadholder William III (fig. 25).⁵⁰ The wretched men and women receive bags of food, clothing, and money.

De Hooghe's emotive imagery of flight, exile, and protection complemented charitable campaigns organised for Huguenots across the Netherlands. Their call made effective use of common anti-French sentiments that had engulfed Dutch public discourse after 1672. In this polarising climate, Huguenot publicists also claimed the term '*refugié/refugee*' as exclusive to displaced French Protestants.⁵¹ The public engagement

⁵⁰ The print is discussed in Van der Linden, *Experiencing Exile*, 225–228. See also Haks, *Vaderland & vrede*, 21–57; Van Nierop, 'Profijt en propaganda', 66–85.

⁵¹ Its etymology in Janssen, 'The Legacy of Exile', 229–230.



Fig. 25 Romeyn de Hooghe, Tyranny Against the Reformed in France ('Tirannien tegen de gereformeerden in Vrankryk'), 1686, etching, 42 × 52 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

with French '*refugiés*', then, was as much an act of charity as an exercise in Protestant self-fashioning and patriotic self-interest. De Hooghe's competitor Jan Luycken would later cement the image of the Huguenot *refugiés* as mere passive victims worthy of international support through images that by now have long coloured our understanding of the conflict (fig. 26).

These carefully constructed depictions set a pictorial norm that would remain influential throughout the eighteenth century. When, for example, the Lutheran minority of Salzburg was expelled by the prince-archbishop in 1732, foreign publishers seized this opportunity to add a new chapter to a long story of heroic Protestant refuge. The '*exodus*' of Salzburg Lutherans was routinely compared to the ancient Israelites' wanderings. Readers were duly reminded that Protestants had been victims of similar forced migrations since the sixteenth century. By fusing the recent sufferings of Lutherans into established Protestant (visual) categories, international charity campaigners reinforced



Fig. 26 Jan Luyken, *The Flight of the Reformed from France* ('Het weg vlugten der Gereformeerde uyt Frankryk'), 1696, etching, 29,4 × 36,4 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

the image of the 'deserving refugee' as a recognisable type (fig. 27).⁵² By the mid-eighteenth century, the figure of the '*refugie*' or '*emigrant*' commonly referred to a victim of religious repression, deserving of solidarity from co-religionists elsewhere. It is significant that the language of exile, refuge, and asylum long held its confessional connotations. Visual representations would only include other categories of forced migrants towards the end of the eighteenth century.⁵³

Conclusion

Like any typology, the proposed structuring of five, developing and partly overlapping pictorial refugee types is stylised. The rubric is not exhaustive. Selected according to

⁵² Van Hasselt, *Deserving Refugees*, 155-190; Walker, *The Salzburg Transaction*, 197-205.

⁵³ Grijzenhout, 'Ballingschap in beeld', 133-146; De Boer and Janssen, 'Introduction', 1-11.



TER GEDAGTENISSE EN LOF, Der Evangelische om de Godtsdienst verdrevene **SALTZBURGERS.**

Saltzburgers u zy Lof, dat gy zoo'n groot verdriet,
Verdrukking, ballingschap, hebt liever aangenomen,
Als 't vette van der aard te hebben, fonder fchromen,
En blijven leven onder 't Antichriit gebiet.

Gy liet liever uw vec, uw haven en gebouw,
Dan waar Geloof, Godtsdienst, in Papery verkeerren,
Als Afsaaf, Biegt en Mis, en brood als Godt te eeten,
Op Vagevuur of Heilig te stellen uw betrouwen.

Uw zielen walgde van de Antichristen Leer,
Daarom verliet gy dien, en zocht en beeter Jeyen,
Hebt alle Papery en Bygeloof verdreven,
Om in opregtigheid te dienen Godt den Heer.

g'Ontzag geen druk nog smart, nog andere overlafst,
Van in gevangenis aan hand en voet gelooten,
En honger, dorst en kouw, verdryven, flagen, stoorten
Te lyden om Godts Naam, 't welk een waar Christen pafst.

Weg dan gelchoore hoop, Weg Antichriit gebroer,
Want uwen tyranny heest op Godts volk geen kragten,
Zy willen liever dan van ongemak vermagten,
Als by uw Afgodsdienst te hebben overvloet.

Voor dees verlossing dank en prys de Heer verbleid,
Wilt dan te zamen op den waare Hoeksteen bouwen,
En stelt op zyn verdienst alleing uw betrouwen,
Dan schenkt de Heer u uit gena de Zaligheid.

OP DE ZILVERE GEDENK-PENNING.

Wegens de Uittogt der Evangelise Saltzburgers.
Door MARTINUS HOLTZHEY te Amfeland gemaakt.

Op de voorzyde:
Wt om de Godtsdienst woord verdreven,
En Huis en Erf verlaten moet,
En nauw tot nootdrift van dit Ieyen
Met Brood en Water werd geoot,
En in Geloofe zal volbreeden
Die Iyde gewis den goeden Iyde,
En zal eens overwinnaar werden,
En ehoon zy door vervolgung Iyd,
Vertrouwt nog Iap, nog Kreit, nog Hallie,
Betrout op Godt, so xyt gy veilig.

Op de andere zyde:
Wt zal xyt gy, die op aenden,
Om Christus werd vervolg, vermaad,
En lood xyn diehardaard Woord in waarden,
En ehoon de menichen alle quaden
Met Ieyen van waarden van u hegen,
Zy vrolyk en in Godt vermagt
Godt laat xyt door geen tong bedriegen.
Hy zal 't Geloof en salve doegd
Der xalken in den berel loonen,
En met xyn Heerlykheid bekoonen.

OP DE ZILVERE GEDENK-PENNING.

Ter Gedagtenisse dat de Algemeene Staaten der Vereenigde Nederlanden,
agtknoert om de Godtsdienst verdrevene Saltzburgers, in liefcherming hebben aangenomen.
Door MARTINUS HOLTZHEY te Amfeland met Privilegie van Haar
Ed. Groot Mogt. de Heeren Staaten van Holland en West-Vriesland gemaakt.

Op de voorzyde:
DUs prealt de Maagd der reze Staat,
Die door O'Onze Einigste band
Verknogt xyn, en de wreethed haaten
Der Antichriit, en Dwingeland.
Dort Kommen om een Keikvoogd vegen
Voor hun vervloekten afgods kerk,
Zy heeft het mondig afgelaten,
En doemt voor eenwig xalk en werk.
Laat Kommen op haar Dagen brullen,
Hy zal voor d'Alke Godts neffvalen.

Op de andere zyde:
DUs prealt de Maagd der vrye Landen,
Die xyn verluft van 't verdrukte volk,
Dat xyn opregt van hert en handen
Onfangt, en met haar Schild en Dolk
Bejoern, voor wreede kerke dieranen.
Zy bidt hun Geld en Vryheid aan.
Laat xyn de het haar magt inspannen,
Godt val de Waerheid doen belaan,
Terwyl de Godsdienst opgetogen,
Godt dankt, en krent op Godts vermogen.

Fig. 27 Anonymous, The Salzburg Emigrants ("Ter Gedagtenisse en Lof, Der Evangelische om de Godtsdienst verdrevene Saltzburgers"), 1733, etching, 44,5 × 32,8 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

their intended message, these types stand apart from considerations of whether this imagery was generative or representative, and of how far their societal reach might have extended. Other organising tools, based on iconographic criteria, material characteristics, or geographical origin, might reveal different patterns. Nonetheless, two general conclusions can be drawn from tracing the visual genealogy of forced migration in the Low Countries. First, we have seen that evolving representations were built on biblical and classical tropes but were also shaped by the communication strategies of migrant communities themselves. The Wesel vessels, with which this article began, reveal the guiding role of such stakeholders, who had an interest in promoting a distinct version of their exilic past. It follows that images of early modern refugees privileged specific groups and particular forms of (gendered) suffering that resonated with the sensibilities of target audiences. Some of these images were explicitly confessional in their narrative – such as the ‘honourable’ and ‘deserving refugee’ types – while others, such as the ‘resilient refugee’ figure, were less so. The emergence of the ‘deserving refugee’ template in the seventeenth century consciously built on the popularity of the ‘honourable refugee’ type, at the same time as other models (notably the ‘resilient refugee’) seemed to lose their appeal.

From a chronological perspective, scholars have noted the growing use of religiously neutral, ‘humanitarian’ discourses in petitions of minorities from the mid-seventeenth century onwards.⁵⁴ In the material examined here, however, this development is not directly apparent, perhaps because a visual repertoire capable of accompanying such humanitarian rhetoric was lacking. In any case, the enduring popularity of confessionalised refugee models throughout the eighteenth century reminds us of the argumentative power of established pictorial formats, even in a period when new discourses of humanity were emerging.⁵⁵

Second, the proposed typology shows that attempts to define the figure of the refugee involved the (implicit) exclusion of groups who did *not* meet these criteria. If organised groups of migrants contributed to their own visualisations, they also served as gatekeepers, deciding who was and who was not to be regarded as an honourable or deserving representative of their group. This drive for exclusivity would have dramatic consequences for displaced communities whose migrations did not match confessional scripts, and for those who lacked access to media infrastructures. Common villagers who escaped military violence during the wars in the Low Countries, peasants who migrated because of epidemics and climate disaster, men and women who fled slavery in Dutch colonies: these people were rarely included in visual refugee categories, and they did not make it into fundraising publicity, let alone fancy artworks. The Wesel cups bring out the implications of this visual exclusivity. Both vessels were commissioned by two well-organised, wealthy Protestant congregations. For all their splendour, these memorial pieces overlook, perhaps even silence the voices of those dispersed men and women in sixteenth-century Wesel who did not belong to this privileged church

⁵⁴ De Boer, *The Early Modern Dutch Press*, 167–172; Fradkin, ‘Christian Hospitality’, 51–85; Pert, ‘The Great’, 552–571; Trim, ‘If a Prince’, 29–66.

⁵⁵ Compare Kaplan, *Divided by Faith*, 333–358; Shaw, *Britannia’s Embrace*.

network and could not afford to bankroll a set of gilded silver cups. The visualization of the early modern refugee was a quest for recognition, but the very demand for visibility relegated other migrants to historical oblivion.

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