Racism and "the Ungrateful Other" in the Netherlands

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In the June 2009 elections for the European parliament, the extreme rightist movement in the Netherlands, Partij voor Vrijheid (Party for Freedom, PVV), was the big winner, and in 2010, in a unique political construction, the party became an informal participant in the government. Despite this, it is the rare voice in the Netherlands that would openly suggest that we are witnessing a growth in racist sentiments (Riemen).[1] Interviews in the media with the supporters of the PVV show that the reasons for their support are quite diverse, yet the anti-Islam rhetoric of the party seems to dominate. Here is a statement from one of the supporters referring to migrants: "Yes, I have had it. I understand that people take the chances we give them but we accept too much from them" (van Been 2).

A large number among the Dutch population are supportive of the harsh language used by politicians and others against Islamic migrants in the Netherlands. There seems to be resistance to use of the term *racism* to describe the clear expression of discriminatory sentiments. Instead, there are various types of reactions to recent developments. The first reaction is discomfort with the developments and leads to a kind of self-imposed ignorance (position of the innocent). The second reaction can be described as one of panic in which political and public discussions are mainly focused on the supporters of Geert Wilders, leader of the PVV. In the case of political parties, this panic has an extra edge to it: the loss of votes. This has led various parties to the partial adoption of Wilder's approach to migration and integration. The third reaction is criticism of the harsh tone used by Wilders, while showing sympathy for his supporters by focusing on the growing discomfort and insecurity among the "native" Dutch. In this chapter, I would like to show that all these reactions only touch

upon the surface of the situation and do not go deeply enough to uncover the basic assumptions underlying the developments described above. The main focus of my argument is on the Dutch approach to new migrants of (perceived) Islamic backgrounds as opposed to other categories of "migrants" who came to the Netherlands in the earlier decades, such as the Indo-Dutch and Surinamese.

The assumption underlying the reactions portrayed above is that Dutch society belongs to the native Dutch and that they have the right to feel discomfort about the growing "threat" caused by certain groups of migrants. A quite telling example is the statement of Prime Minister Mark Rutte in March 2011, after the results of the state elections, when he said, "We will make sure, ladies and gentlemen, that we give this beautiful country back to the Dutch, because this is our project."[2] Also, most of the studies on migrants presented in the media support this assumption. Take, for example, the same newspaper that reported the election results of PVV as its cover story juxtaposed with a story on "schrikbarende misdaadcijfers" (shocking crime statistics) based on data presented by professor of criminology Frank Bovenkerk. His data show that 55 percent of Moroccan-Dutch men in Rotterdam between 18 and 24 have had contact with the police at least once. He goes on to report that the chance of a repeat offence is 90 percent (van Been 4).[3]

The recent discussions on integration in the Netherlands are informed by feelings of discomfort and fear of the growing influence of migrants from Islamic countries on society.

In addition, we see increasing insistence that migrants distance themselves from "backward" elements of their own culture, which are assumed to be in contrast with Dutch culture. This is particularly true regarding gender equality and space for homosexuality. Public discussion implies that this distance will lead to cultural adaptation to Dutch society. Every reaction that acknowledges the insecure feelings of the "native Dutch" justifies the critique of migrant culture as well. Here we can observe a clear double standard: It is OK for the "native Dutch" to feel defensive and to protect their culture, but migrants are criticized for defending theirs. Migrants are seen as the ones who need to adopt or even assimilate into the new culture. Not many people would consider this asymmetric approach racist, since it is believed that the discussion is about culture and not about race (see also Schinkel on this). This begs the question of why the discussion of the culture of migrants focuses on how it needs to change, yet discussion of the culture of the "native Dutch" recognizes the reasons for a defensive attitude. This double standard has two dimensions. One, it is founded in a deeply rooted notion of the superiority of cultures. Although this idea of superiority of Dutch culture does not yet enjoy broad and open public support, it has become increasingly and openly acknowledged by certain politicians. In 2004, VVD-politician Bolkestein spoke at the Humboldt University in Germany about the advantages of embracing a Leitkultur in the Netherlands. This was part of a more

general, severe attack on "cultural relativism." Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Rita Verdonk both proposed that Dutch culture was better because of its equality and openness, as opposed to Islamic culture, which is defined as oppressive and violent. In other publications, I have elaborated specifically on gender related notions of this homo-genized presentation of cultures (Ghorashi, "From Absolute"). Second, it is taken for granted that the natives of the country have the right to claim their culture, because they were here first, while the newcomers have to change their culture and assimilate into a new one. Verena Stolcke has referred to this culturist presence as "cultural fundamentalism," a term that she explains as a new form of exclusion rhetoric in the West based on a homogeneous, static, coherent, and rooted notion of culture. This time, it is not the race that needs to be protected, but the assumed historically rooted homogeneity of the nation: "racism without race" (Stolcke). In addition, a broader definition of racism (such as that of Philomena Essed, "Everyday Racism") could also provide a framework to grasp this new exclusionary rhetoric. No matter which choice is made, it seems that any reference to racism in the Dutch context elicits either an exaggerated and dismissive reaction in the public arena or complete silence.[4]

Fear or Outrage?

The spread of exclusionary rhetoric about migrants is often explained as fear of change attributed to growing diversity and insecurity in a global world believed to be heading towards a "clash of civilizations." I have followed this line of argumentation in my earlier work, as well (Ghorashi, *Paradoxen*). Fear freezes people and makes them reactive. It encourages them to protect their boundaries rather than open them up. This fear of change has been strengthened by a growth in violence in various residential areas and on the streets. Because these incidents of violence are exten-sively reported in the media (van Dijk, Vliegenthart) even people who have not faced any violence personally become fearful that it may happen to them in the future. In addition to the effects of negative media coverage of migrants, there have been several global and national incidents which have deepened the tensions within Dutch society. Conflicts in the Middle East along with various violent attacks, beginning with September 11, 2001, have contributed to a changing image of Muslims as danger-ous representatives of an aggressive world power. The 2004 murder of Theo van Gogh corroborated that view. These changing global and domestic situations partly explain the growing tension and negativity toward Islamic migrants within Dutch society. But why do people who hate migrants—even if they hate some more than others—because they are fearful and defensive—not want to be accused of racism? Why is racism so adamantly denied in the Netherlands? To find an answer to this question, we need a different line of reasoning.

Paradoxically, it was the logic of one of the rightist opinion leaders appearing in a television interview that brought me closer to answering this question. He explained

that people like him are not afraid of the migrants, but outraged. The pundit claimed that the Dutch had done their best for different groups of migrants and had made efforts to accept them into society but that those efforts had been met with ingratitude by migrants who had taken advantage of Dutch hospitality. This illuminates the quote at the beginning of this paper in which one of the supporters of Wilders mentions that he has "had enough." The oft-heard voice in rightist discourse is that there will be no more special treatment for migrants. Migrants, they tell us, will no longer be coddled (referring to the word *knuffelen* in Dutch), as they supposedly had been in the 1980s. They see migrants as ungrateful of the tolerance and openness of Dutch society. As Essed and Nimako put it: the Dutch feel victims of their own tolerance now that ethnic minorities are so ungrateful. It is the general belief that the condition of openness and tolerance that is presumed to have existed in the 1980s did not lead to integration—read assimilation—of migrants into society. Additionally, the claim is that migrants are not doing their best to make something of their lives. They are, in fact, asking too much from society. Departing from this line of reasoning, it makes sense that none would want to hear that their arguments are racist. They see themselves as simply reclaiming their country. They are furious and they are only defending what is theirs: what's wrong with that?

In this paper, I analyze this line of argumentation in two different ways. First, I counter the assumption that migrants were coddled during the 1980s and that society has already done enough for them. Second, I analyze the grounds for the assumption that migrants should be grateful for all of the things they have received from Dutch society. By doing so, I will show that the whole notion of hospitality and coddling is connected to a categorical approach to migrants in which they have always been considered deviant from the Dutch norm and in need of special attention because of their inherent shortcomings. This approach presumes that Dutch society is a generous patron of poor, needy migrants.

In the following sections, I begin with a short description of Dutch history on migration issues. By doing so, I show that the claim of openness, generosity and tolerance toward migrants is situated within this specific history. After that, I use the work of scholars such as Harrel-Bond to explore the relationship between gift and gratitude. I end by connecting these elements in order to explain why the term racism, and scholars on critical studies of racism, have rarely been given a voice in the Netherlands.[5]

The Foundation of Migration Policy[6]
Until 1980, Dutch state policy toward new migrants (as opposed to the migrations from Dutch ex-colonies) was formed with the idea that the present migrants would one day return to their home countries. Historically, this had to do with the migration of so-called guest workers to the Netherlands at the end of the 1950s when there was a great shortage in the labor market. With the migrants' return in the back of

policymakers' minds, until 1980 policy was mainly aimed at maintaining the cultural identity of migrants rather than their integration into Dutch society. In the 1980s, the Dutch government shifted its policy regarding guest workers when it realized that migration, once viewed as temporary, had gained a more permanent character. The status of this group changed to "(im)migrant" (Lutz 99) and the focus of the policy changed toward integration. The disadvantaged position of the migrants in the Netherlands formed the main basis of the new Minority Note of 1983. The concept of "guest workers" no longer applied and the term "minority" was introduced as the official label for newcomers in the Netherlands. The Minority Note focused on creating an equal position for minorities in Dutch society. The new slogan was: "integrating while preserving one's own identity." The policymakers believed that minorities should be provided with insights, attitudes and skills to enable them to function in Dutch society.

At the end of the 1980s, this minority policy came under severe pressure. More attention had to be given to integration, with less attention to cultural background. This criticism formed the foundation of the report on *allochthonous* (non-native Dutch citizens) policy, in which the WRR (Dutch Council on Governmental Policy) advised the government in 1989 to put more emphasis on integration. In 1994, again advised by the WRR, the minority policy was replaced with an integration policy. In the report, allochthonous were again defined as "problem categories." On top of that, the focus shifted from groups that shared the same cultural background ("ethnic minorities") to individual representatives of the super category: "non-native" ("allochthonous"). The contradiction here is that the term allochthonous is not connected to any particular cultural background and hence individualizes, while categorizing at the same time. In the 1990s, the concepts of naturalization and integration were on everyone's lips, replacing the (partially) accepted notion of "preservation of own cultural background" in the two preceding decades. In 1998, the Law on the Naturalization of Newcomers came into effect. The focus on naturalization was instigated by the relatively new idea that migrants were here to stay. The mandatory character of this new law, however, gave rise to criticism, because it harkened back to forced assimilation (Entzinger).

Policymakers discussed and decided; papers and terminology were changed, yet the essence remained the same: whether people were labelled as guest workers, migrants, minorities, or allochtonous, they were, and remained, problem categories with a deviant culture. When looking at these developments around the issue of migration, we can conclude that categorical thinking, with its powerful socio-cultural and socio-economic components, has remained a crucial feature of thinking on migrant issues in the Netherlands. This means that the various policy shifts have never called into question or exposed the basic assumptions (that is, the socio-cultural and socio-economic non-conformity of migrants) underlying these policies.

"Allochtonization," Pillarization, and the Welfare State

In order to understand the present "allochtonization"—or culturalization—as a dominant discourse in Dutch society, it needs to be situated in the context of two historical phenomena: pillarization and the welfare state.

The construction of pillars—"own worlds"—along lines of religious denominations and political ideologies has long been the dominant framework for dealing with differences in the Netherlands. Studies about the pillar system are so diverse that it is impossible to include an all-encompassing overview of them in this paper. Still, a short outline is necessary for my further argumentation. Political scientist Pennings calls pillars "separated institutional complexes of religiously or ideologically motivated institutions and members, which are marked along the same boundaries in different social sectors" (21). He describes pillarization as "the process in which after 1880 Catholics, orthodox Protestants and social democrats have gradually institutionalized their mutual differences" (21). Despite the variation within the pillars, the "own worlds" concept persuaded the members that the boundaries of the pillars were clear. In addition, most social activities were organized within individual pillars. This dichotomy between "us" and "them" stems from an essentialist approach toward one's own group and that of others, something which has latently shaped the way in which new migrants have been approached in the Netherlands.

It is very likely that the habitus of pillarization continued when the new migrants came to the Netherlands, which contributed to the assumption that their cultures were entirely different from that of the Dutch. Sociologist Koopmans holds that the relationship between Dutch society and its migrants is strongly rooted in the pillarized tradition. The pillarized system, which in the early twentieth century was a successful pacifying element in the conflicts between local religious and political groups, has been reintroduced as an instrument of integration (Koopmans 166, 167). The influence of this pillarized history on migrants is most clearly witnessed in migrants from Islamic countries. Policymakers and academics considered this group to be a new kind of pillar. Here we encounter contrary processes: after the welfare state had made pillars redundant by taking on roles once held by the community, a new discourse started to grow about the creation of a new pillar in the relatively de-pillarized Netherlands. Logically it seems misplaced to think of a new pillar in a country that has struggled to prove that it is a de-pillarized society in which the emphasis is on individual autonomy against pressure by a group. In actuality, however, the influence of pillarization did not suddenly disappear due to the realization that it was no longer necessary: the effects of pillarization on various social fields continued, albeit in a less explicit form. Thus, the forms and patterns of pillarization were present and could enable, or even stimulate, the development of a new pillar. Yet, the field of tension sketched earlier shows the confusing situation that recent migrants from Islamic background faced. The habitus of pillarization translated into minority

thinking. It left—and even created—space for these migrants to preserve their own culture, especially when it was still generally assumed that they would return to their home countries. At the same time, this space for group formation on a cultural or religious basis formed a foundation of uneasiness and discomfort for the Dutch majority population. At a time when the majority was believed to be freed from the limitations and pressures of the group, there is a new group in the society which claims its rights: a group believed to be traditional in many ways. The increasing aversion to the existence of this new pillar (with predominantly traditional ideas) focused on the suppression of the individual freedom of members of the group.

Thinking in terms of pillars affects more than Islamic migrants alone. To a certain extent, it has demarcated thinking about cultural differences and ethnic boundaries. This has led to the increase of cultural contrasts that make it virtually impossible to consider the individual migrant as separate from his or her cultural or ethnic category. Categories are indispensable for providing an insight into the world, but as soon as these categories change into dichotomies, they have a limiting effect. Constructing and dealing with differences vis-à-vis migrants has been done in various ways throughout history. Consistently, however, migrants—even those with a non-Islamic background—have been considered a deviation from the Dutch standard.[7] This demonstrated that the obstinacy of the pillarized habitus has both shaped and preserved the culturalization component of categorical thinking.

Another development, which informed the deficit-component of categorical thinking, was the rise of the welfare state. The basis of this development was an increasing tendency toward the principle of equality, resulting in discontent about existing inequality. In its early stage, this dissatisfaction regarding the "unsociables"[8] went hand in hand with a tendency to isolate these groups in order to restyle them into decent citizens (Lucassen). As a result, all citizens were entitled to equal opportunities, but in some cases it was more important to first liberate them from their socially disadvantaged position. It had become the essence of the welfare state to worry about disadvantaged groups and to see to it that their disadvantaged positions were eliminated. This need caused an increase in the number of welfare organizations in the Netherlands. Apart from that, the rise of the welfare state in the Netherlands reduced the need for individuals to become part of a group in order to survive. This resulted in more space for the individual to develop and demand autonomy. Simultaneously, these developments contributed to the creation of government-dependent categories of people that needed to be helped out of a disadvantaged position. The regulating effect of striving for equality has been a growing uneasiness toward those who are considered social deficits or as a kind of lower class, as well as a fixation on reshaping this disadvantaged category (Lucassen). The often-unintended result is that even active and capable people are easily reduced to helpless creatures.[9] Moreover, striving for equality can, at times, quickly change

into uneasiness, not only about inequality but also about difference. That which is different is looked upon with distrust and is sometimes too easily placed into the "disadvantaged" category. Despite the positive effect of the welfare state on personal space and the struggle against the social divide, it has also been an important breeding ground for categorical thinking about migrants as groups that are in a socially disadvantaged position.

Clearly, this combination of deficit-thinking—stimulated by the welfare state—and the tendency toward culturalization—fuelled by the history of pillarization—have been persistent factors of categorical thinking in the Netherlands. Even if the cultural background of migrants was seen as positive in the 1980s, thinking about that background remained categorical because migrant cultures were primarily considered as something completely different, or as deviating from the standard. The paradox here, though, is that the rise of anti-migrant hostility at this moment coincides with the dismantling of the welfare state, and the rising insecurity brought about by neo-liberalist reforms.

So What Has Changed?

In the era that is now commonly called the "post-Fortuyn" period, we have seen new modes of categorical thinking arise. We see, for instance, that the emphasis on the negative consequences of cultural contrasts or culturalization has gained much greater prominence and is now much in evidence in the "Islamization" of the discourse. The Dutch public sphere is filled with a wide range of utterances from politicians and public figures showing their disgust or discomfort with Islam and Islamic migrants. Examples of this are the film *Fitna* (in 2008 with anti-Koran passages) made by Geert Wilders, then a member of parliament and an informal part of the government from 2010–2012, and the launch of the new political movement Trots Op Nederland (Proud of Netherlands) in 2007 by the former minister of integration, Rita Verdonk, who warns us against the loss of Dutch norms and values. Even the proclaimed high quality media do not hesitate to join the crowd in this tirade against Islam. Hardly a day goes by without discussion or some presentation in the Dutch media concerning Islam. But what is different now compared to previous decades, other than the increased attention to Islam in the public sphere? What has changed considerably since 2000 is a shift in tone, demanding, "We should be able to say what we think." Baukje Prins calls this period the era of "the new realism." The new realist is someone with guts; someone who dares to call a spade a spade; someone who sets himself up as the mouthpiece of the common people and then puts up a vigorous fight against the so-called left-wing, "politically correct" views of cultural relativism.

In retrospect, the culturalist statements made by Frits Bolkestein in the early 1990s can be seen as the start of the period of new realism. Pim Fortuyn took it to the next level by radicalizing new realism into a kind of hyperrealism in which "the

guts to tell the truth" became an end in itself, irrespective of the consequences (Prins). Once a scholar and publicist, Fortuyn's impact was remarkable when he was chosen as the leader of the newly established party, Leefbaar Nederland (Liveable Netherlands), and succeeded in greatly increasing the party's popularity among the Dutch. This, together with the prominence he gained in the media, shocked old-school politicians. His success with the Dutch public was greatly enhanced by the events of September 11, 2001. In the minds of many, the potential enmity of Islamic migrants that Bolkestein discussed in the 1990s changed from speculation to fact. This made it easier for Fortuyn to say things that had been implied earlier, but had never been made explicit. In a February 9, 2002 interview in *de Volkskrant*, Fortuyn used phrases such as "Islam is a backward culture" or "the real refugees do not reach Holland"—comments that unsettled the foundation of Dutch politics.

The dominance of this hyperrealism, when combined with the September 11 attacks and the assassinations of Fortuyn in 2002 and Van Gogh in 2004, has caused thinking in terms of cultural contrasts to be linked to feelings of fear and discontent. As a consequence, migrants and, hence, migrant cultures, in particular those with an Islamic background, are now viewed with aversion and mistrust. These views are being translated into policy and public debate. Ayaan Hirsi Ali deepened the gender component of this new realist discourse. Ayaan Hirsi Ali is probably one of the time's most controversial politicians. In her public appearances, she chose to be confrontational, referring to Islam as fundamentally women-unfriendly. In the film *Submission,* she again chose a tack of confrontation by showing the verses of the Koran written on the naked body of a molested woman. Many prominent—mainly white Dutch—figures in the Netherlands supported Hirsi Ali and the media gave her fame. Primarily white mainstream feminists and middle and upper middle class white males supported Ayaan's position, calling her the pioneer of the third feminist wave in the Netherlands.

This line of approach has grown and hardened in the public sphere in the Netherlands. The dominant pattern in these debates is strongly rooted in the supposed superiority of European culture, which rates migrant cultures as inferior. Yet, in spite of a clear distance from past discourses, I argue that the assimilative, hard approach of new realism would never have acquired such a following if the basic assumptions of categorical thinking had not already been present in the dominant discourse on migrants. What happened, in fact, was that the hitherto silent negative feelings with respect to migrants could finally be expressed in public. In the following section, I will elaborate on the differences between the soft and hard approaches.

The Building Blocks of the Soft Approach
Since the 1970s, categorical thinking combined with an essentialist approach to culture has become characteristic of public discourse in the Netherlands. Until the new

realist discourse began dominating public space, migrants were seen as groups with a completely different culture who needed to be tolerated. The main objective of the resigned regime of tolerance was pacification. The idea was to accept the fact that the other is different, but to refrain from establishing an intrinsic connection. This type of tolerance was typical of the era of pillarization. The pillars tolerated the existence of one another, but in general did not look for interaction. During pillarization, respect for the "walls" between the pillars had become more important than respect for the content of the pillars (Ghorashi, *Ways to Survive*). This form of tolerance was also applied to the so-called new Islamic pillar. People who were believed to belong to this pillar were tolerated out of custom because earlier cases had shown that this attitude would result in pacification. However, what had been successful during pillarization would not work for this new group of migrants. The problem revolved around their connection to Dutch identity, which had not been a point of discussion during the time of pillarization, but which would have to be created for the new Dutch. Tolerance without involvement and interaction could not create enough opportunities for the new migrants to establish an emotional interaction with Dutch identity, and therefore, social pacification.

Simultaneously, a different sort of tolerance was present during this period, which was based on a simplified definition of cultural-relativism. The other culture was different by definition, but all cultures were equal in principle. Departing from this idea, everything the other said or did was accepted because it was different, whereas all deviating behavior was explained as originating from this cultural otherness. At first, this approach may seem to have been a positive one, but its most noteworthy characteristics appear to be indifference and passivity. This type of multiculturalism, defined by McLaren as leftist-liberal multiculturalism, defines otherness as essential and as something interesting and exotic.[10] In that sense, this approach is an essentialist one as well, and can be defined as categorical thinking. As a result, "allochthonous" people are often extolled in practice, mainly because they are allochthonous. If migrants are largely seen as completely different, this does not result in an increasing trans-ethnic involvement and interaction, but rather in a blind spot toward the manifold possibilities and talents of migrants.

Categorical thinking (incorporating the essentialist approach toward migrant culture and the belief in their disadvantaged position) in the era of the so-called soft approach has resulted in a lack of discussion surrounding the basic assumptions concerning the role and position of migrants in Dutch society. This implies that migrants have never been approached and treated as full members of society. It has resulted in both an increase in negative feelings regarding migrants and in a weak or even non-existent emotional connection between migrants and Dutch society. This source of uneasiness and mutual misunderstanding has been a powerful breeding ground for the rise of today's hard approach. Despite strong criticism in the past with

respect to integration, the origin of "hyperrealism" is to be situated historically within the era of so-called political correctness.

Both the hard and soft approach are rooted in terms of cultural contrasts and in the conviction that migrants have shortcomings that they need to overcome. There have been shifts in tone (from soft to harsh), in focus (from socio-economic to socio-cultural), and in outlook (from optimistic to pessimistic). These shifts, however, have had little bearing on the substance of the approach to migrants, since what remained consistent in both the positive and negative approaches was the assumption that migrants are completely different from the Dutch (they have not been considered as full citizens) with particular cultural characteristics that are incompatible with Western society. Those characteristics are seen as deficits that must be countered as clearly and strongly as possible. It is this basic understanding of the position and the situation of migrants within Dutch society that informs the justification of the present outrage of the dominant group toward migrants. This attitude fits perfectly within the historically rooted categorical thinking on migration that I elaborated on earlier.

Migrants as Dependants of the State
The deficit component of the categorical approach to migrants related to the effects of the welfare state created a tacit understanding of the position of migrants in the Netherlands. It has been assumed that they need help in order to participate fully in Dutch society. This construction of categories in society that are in need of help is countered by categories of people who provide help. This kind of category construction leads to a hierarchical relationship between the giver and the receiver. It also develops a strong sense of expectation of gratitude from migrants. Those not seen to be appropriately grateful are considered manipulative. This line of argument is especially developed in refugee studies. Leading figure in the field of refugees Barbara Harrell-Bond's study of aid organizations, for example, describes some of the images related to refugees. "The documents I obtained from agencies emphasized images of helpless, starving masses who depend on agents of compassion to keep them alive" (Harrell-Bond 147). This image "of helpless refugees, desperately in need, reinforces the view that outsiders are needed to help them. [. . .] The standard image of the helpless refugee also reinforces the view of their incapability, motivating people from all walks of life to offer their services" (150). Refugees and many migrants become a category of people who are dependent on governments and organizations, and who are thus a burden on their host societies. These studies of the hierarchical foundation of providing help base their analysis on Marcel Mauss's work on gift-giving (1925). In his work, he shows that there is always a notion of reciprocity attached to any gift. He shows "that the act of giving is not simply mechanical; the gift defines the status and power relationships which exist between

the giver and the one who receives it" (Mauss in Harrell-Bond 149). Thus, even if there is no direct expectation of something in return, gratitude is always expected.

I have often experienced this sense of expectation in terms of gratitude during my life in the Netherlands. I came to the Netherlands in 1988 as an asylum seeker, but gained citizenship in 1994. Since my academic work has been on migration and integration issues, I have been an active participant in Dutch public debates since the end of 1990s. These public activities accelerated when it was announced that I would occupy the chair of Managing Diversity and Integration in 2005. Since then, I have made many public appearances on the issue both in the media and from various public podia. As a result of my somewhat critical analysis of Dutch society, on various occasions I have been confronted by complete strangers who write to tell me that I should be more grateful for the opportunities that Dutch society has given me. By saying that, these people create a hierarchical position between me as a grateful receiver of help opposed to Dutch society as the provider of that help. In addition, they also use this hierarchical condition to de-legitimize both my position as a scholar and my critical analysis of the society. Any claim on my part to be considered a full citizen and not a second class-citizen who always has to be careful about what she says because she needs to be grateful backfires. This claim can again be used as another example of what I am accused of: as ungrateful for the help I have received. There is no way out of this vicious circle as long as the assumption of help provided related to gratefulness remains intact. The migrant or any other recipient of help remains the loser.

I use this personal anecdote to show the visibility of the dominant pattern of the new negative and exclusionary rhetoric against migrants. The supporters of this hard line exclusionary rhetoric think of themselves as victims rather than aggressors. They are believed to be victims of the physical, spatial, and cultural violence of the migrants. They only defend what is theirs, goes the argument. From this line of reasoning, they will not accept being called racist because they consider themselves to be people who are of good will and intention. Dutch society has an international reputation for being generous in charity based on its available budget for development issues. They also believe themselves to have been charitable toward migrants, since it is their tax money that has been used to support the dependent groups in the society, which are mainly considered to be migrants. However, various studies show that over-subsidizing has a way of *making* people dependent where they could have been entrepreneurial and responsible for their own lives (Harrell-Bond, Ghorashi "Refugees"). Yet, this does not impact the assumptions informing the Dutch feeling of outrage when all "their" charitable efforts toward migrants remain not only unanswered in the form of gratitude, but answered in the form of growing assertiveness and violence. The only thing happening now is that they (the Dutch majority) *are not taking it anymore*. Thus, the framework through which discriminatory acts toward

migrants are justified is not defined as racist but as a natural attitude of defence. Using the term "racism" is then seen as a weapon that is used by those ungrateful, spoiled migrants and their supporters to silence their opponents.

Through this analysis I have tried to show that the categorical foundation of the discourse toward migrants in the 1980s—even that with a positive connotation—was the breeding ground for the growing negative discourse toward migrants. The culturalist approach of viewing migrants as being absolutely other in society, combined with the deficit approach of seeing migrants as dependents of the welfare state, has served as a strong foundation. In the 1980s, migrants were tolerated as absolute others because they were not seen as a threat to the state and were not assertive enough to claim equal citizenship. When the culture and religion of migrants transitioned from being viewed as not only different but also dangerous after 2001, we observe how thin the boundary has been between the charity-like positive approach and the protective negative approach toward the same migrants now. This explains why so many well-intentioned and highly educated Dutch citizens have chosen to blame migrants themselves for the dominant negative discourse in the society. The fact remains, that both in the times of positive and negative rhetoric, new Dutch citizens have always been considered absolute others in the society, to be tolerated as long as they do not pose a threat, in which case they are threatened with expulsion. What remains consistent is that migrants are responsible for the positions taken by the dominant majority. The irony here is that migrants are considered (fully) responsible for the actions of the majority, yet are not considered full participants in Dutch society. It is this justification process rooted in the historical past which allows the majority to shirk responsibility for their actions and refuse to acknowledge their exclusionary rhetoric as racist. This is exactly how majorities end up being right all the time; in addition to having numbers in their favor, they also have the means and access to the public space to provide, reinforce, and dominate the image of the other which suits them the most.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown the main reason for the allergy toward the concept of racism in the Netherlands. I started by showing the historical rootedness of the present harshness toward migrants. To do that, I focused on the categorical approach to migration in the 1980s as the foundation for the present Islamization of the discourse. In addition, I showed that the idea of the superiority of Dutch culture is linked to the notion of helping the needy and its connection to the idea of gratefulness. I argued that this specific attitude toward charity is connected to the basic assumptions of a welfare state and so seems to fit quite well within the thinking that categorizes migrants as people in need. The conclusion of my paper is that there is not a disruption but rather a connection between the present hard and negative rhetoric

and that of previous decades. The source of the connection is in the manner through which culture has served as an absolute category of otherness. In addition, categorical thinking within the context of the welfare state provides the foundation for the Dutch image as charitable and open: an image that justifies the present outrage against migrants as being so ungrateful. It is this process of justification linked to the self-image of the Dutch which makes it almost impossible to accept the notion of racism as part of their image. This resistance will stay intact as long as this historically rooted categorical grounding is not challenged. As long as the superiority of Dutch culture is unquestioned and unexamined as the foundation of the dominant discourse concerning migrants—even those who are second and third generation and have Dutch nationality—there can be no space to acknowledge racism in the Netherlands. Without that, the society is not able to prepare itself for the consequences of growing racism. Even more problematic in the long run is that, as long as there is no acknowledgement of racism in the Netherlands, there can be no strong movement against racism.

Notes

1. Interesting also is the controversy around the planned lecture of Von der Dunk in the province house of North Holland. The lecture was cancelled because of the link which was made between PVV and World War II: http://opinie. volkskrant.nl/artikel/show/id/8356/Het_nieuwe _taboe_op_de_oorlog, last visited 28 Apr. 2011.

2. "We gaan er gewoon voor zorgen, dames en heren, dat we dat prachtige land weer teruggeven aan de Nederlanders, want dat is ons project." http://sargasso.nl/archief/2011/03/03/rutte-dat-prachtige-land-weer-teruggeven-aan-de-nederlanders/, last visited 28 Apr. 2011.

3. For more on negative representation and criminalization of migrants in the media, see van Dijk.

4. For an example of this, see the piece by Meindert Fennema in the Dutch newspaper, *de Volkskrant*, 3 Dec. 2008 entitled, "Racisme zonder ras is gevaarlijke onzin": http:// religionresearch.org/martijn/2008/03/13/

de-volkskrant-fennema-racisme-zonder-ras-is-gevaarlijke-onzin/, last visited 27 July 2009.

5. For an extensive analysis on this, see Essed and Nimako.

6. Parts of the arguments presented in the following four paragraphs were first published in Ghorashi, *Paradoxen*.

7. For more on this see Lutz, Schuster and Willems, Cottaar and Van Aken.

8. See Rath.

9. For a specific analysis of the impact of the Dutch welfare state on refugees, see Ghorashi, "Refugees" and Hollands.

10. It is important to note that McLaren's analysis is not a critique of all forms of multiculturalism but a critique of essentialist forms of multiculturalism. He does identify a critical form of multiculturalism.

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