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How to face reality

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Published in:
EPRINTS-BOOK-TITLE

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2007

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Prins, B. (2007). How to face reality: genres of discourse within Dutch minorities research. In *EPRINTS-BOOK-TITLE* s.n..

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How to face reality.

Genres of discourse within Dutch minorities research

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to be published in:

M. Bommers and D. Thränhardt (eds), *National Paradigms of Migration Research*, IMIS, Osnabrueck
2007.

Introduction

Since the early eighties, the Netherlands has pursued an active policy to further the integration of ethnic minority groups in Dutch society. Subsequent governments put scientific experts to work to investigate the history, socio-economic position and cultural background of different minority groups – investments which testified to a strong belief in social engineering and the ‘makeability’ of Dutch society. In this paper, I will discern four significant *genres* of discourse within Dutch minorities studies that use different rhetorical strategies to make their readers ‘face reality’. Among these are the genre of *denunciation* and the genre of *empowerment*. But the dominant genre within Dutch minorities research has been the genre of the *report*. Till the early nineties, most reports represented migrants as members of a particular minority group, i.e. as individuals who are socially and/or economically deprived because of their traditional culture. *Emancipation* was assumed to be the only way out, and Dutch government could help minorities achieve that aim. Recently, however, a new kind of report has come to the fore, in which cultures of minority groups are not so much perceived from the perspective of deprivation, but from the perspective of deviancy. I will argue that this latest trend in Dutch minorities research shows a remarkable affinity with a fourth genre of discourse, that of *new realism*. Since the eighties, against the assumed ‘political correctness’ of the genres of denunciation, empowerment and report, new realism has become ever more dominant in Dutch public and political debates on immigration and ethnic minorities. In the course of my argument it will become clear that the different genres are constituted by different political values and frameworks. Although these differences seem to be of a paradigmatic nature, hence predict the incompatibility of the genres, this appears to be the case neither in theory nor in practice. Across what look like unsurpassable boundaries, unexpected, ‘monstrous’ alliances are nevertheless made.

The theoretical framework of this research project is constituted by a constructivist view of the performativity of language and the inevitable situatedness of all claims to knowledge. For this reason, I will conclude this paper with an attempt to self-reflexivity: if I think it important to lay bare the constitutive values and political perspectives operative in the Dutch discourse on ethnic minorities, what about the values and political perspective underlying my own discourse?

1. The performative power of language

My analysis of the Dutch discourse starts from a constructivist view about language. According to this view, especially our public speech is neither epistemologically nor politically innocent. I will therefore not only focus on the different standpoints taken within the Dutch minorities research, but also on the different genres of discourse, i.e. the different rhetorical strategies which are used to convince readers of the validity of these standpoints. The reason that I use the term ‘genre’, is because I focus on the

performative effects of a particular discourse, i.e. not so much on how it describes reality, as on the ways in which it (co)produces that reality. The way in which terms such as ‘discourse’ and ‘genre’ have come to be used, by Michel Foucault, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and by many discourse analysts who adopted their views, is actually quite vague. Thus, ‘discourse’ may refer to one particular unit of text, to a corpus of specific texts, or to everything that is said and written during a particular period and in a particular place. For Foucault, dominant discourse is constitutive of the everyday lives and experiences of modern individuals. Power and knowledge are inextricably intertwined¹, and we become autonomous subjects only as a result of our submission to dominant modes of discipline and normalization.² Consequently, we are not merely in the sovereign position to make use of our language; our language also makes use of us. Every sentence we utter strikes layers of meaning which may have a serious impact on the social-symbolic world in which we live. According to this constructivist view, language is a form of action with which we construct our selves and our world.³ Lyotard distinguishes between different *genres* of discourse: “a genre of discourse imprints a unique finality onto a multiplicity of heterogeneous phrases by linkings that aim to procure the success proper to that genre”.⁴ There are stakes tied to the genres of discourse. When these stakes are attained, we talk about success: what we as speakers or as listeners perceive as the intentions of a subject, actually are “tensions exerted by genres upon the addressors and addressees of phrases, upon their referents, upon their senses”.⁵ Examples of such genres are the genres of seduction, prescription, and persuasion, but Lyotard also talks about the ethical, the tragic, the technical and the erotic genre.⁶ Sometimes he uses the notion of ‘style’, or the Wittgensteinian concept of ‘language games’ as an equivalent for ‘genre’. And, being the godfather of postmodernism, he puts much emphasis on the heterogeneity or incommensurability of genres of discourse, i.e. on the fact that one genre cannot be reduced to, or translated into another.

The American feminist philosopher Judith Butler has pointed out some striking similarities between such critical (post)structuralist views of language and ‘speech act theory’ as originally elaborated by the British philosopher J.L. Austin.⁷ According to Butler, speech acts such as addressing or naming are paradigmatic for the way in which human individuals are ‘subjected’ through discourse. Like promising, naming and addressing can be seen as acts with so-called illocutionary force: *in* the saying a doing is implied. Thus, *in* expressing a promise, I have made it, and *in* addressing someone, I have assigned her a place in my material-symbolic order. Butler cautions, however, that there is always a

¹ See for instance Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977* (Ed. by Colin Gordon), New York 1980.

² Michel Foucault, *L'ordre du discours*, Paris 1971; *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, Middlesex 1979.

³ John Shotter, *Conversational Realities. Constructing Life through Language*, London 1993.

⁴ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Differend. Phrases in Dispute*, Manchester 1988 (p.129).

⁵ *Ibid.* (p. 137).

⁶ *Ibid.*, (p. 136).

⁷ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative*, New York 1997.

difference between *acting* and *acting upon*. The assessment of the actual performative effects of a particular utterance or discourse cannot be made independent of the context in which it takes place. Any speech act can turn out to be infelicitous - because it was not uttered in the appropriate context, or because listeners somehow resisted its appeal. By emphasizing this potential gap between saying and doing, between discursive practice and discursive effect, Butler convincingly wards off the frequently voiced accusations against Foucauldian constructivism that it leaves no room for resistance against the ubiquitous power of dominant discourse.

2. Genres of discourse

The entire body of Dutch research reports on the socio-economic position and life world of ethnic minority groups, whether scientific or journalistic, can be perceived as practising the *genre of realism*: their aim is to convince readers of the truth of its narratives, i.e. of their faithful representation of the world 'out there'. However, when one takes a closer look, it appears that within the Dutch minorities discourse, different forms of realism can be distinguished. Most accounts practise a form of what I call *oppositional realism*, i.e. in their exposition of reality, the inscribed authors, the 'narrators' of these stories, wish to contradict prejudice, undermine stereotypes and undo the ignorance of their intended audience. But within this oppositional realism, different rhetorical strategies are used to make readers 'face reality', differences which appear to be closely connected to the particular standpoint, the ethical-political framework, from which the narrator perceives and constructs that reality.⁸

2.1 The genre of denunciation

Till the mid eighties, in so far as there existed a public discourse on racism and discrimination in the Netherlands, it mainly originated from left-wing anti-establishment circles. (Neo)marxist action groups and journalists denounced the exploitation of foreign workers or 'guestworkers' by big industries, and criticized Dutch government for its complicity. Protests against discrimination and racism were also strongly motivated by memories of the persecution and mass murder of Jewish citizens during the second World War. One very prominent actor in the struggle against contemporary fascism, anti-semitism and racism, was the Anne Frank Foundation.

Within this genre of *denunciation*, politically conscious white Dutch act as the better articulated spokespersons for the victims of exploitation and discrimination who are assumed to be not (yet) able to speak or fight for themselves. Sometimes, the stories have a dramatic impact, enforced by rhetorical questions in an accusative mode, such as: "Is it a wonder they go to the wall?" or "He had learned

⁸ Note that the analysis presented here focuses exclusively at *qualitative, small-scale* studies. For more extensive analyses of the different genres within the Dutch discourse, see Baukje Prins, The standpoint in question.

hard, but had he done his utmost in school only to become an unskilled labourer?”⁹ These denunciations are brought to the fore by an impersonal, omniscient narrator, who frequently makes use of free indirect speech, a device by which the narrator cites her¹⁰ protagonists indirectly, using the third personal singular and past tense: “Against her father, the man [Amina] had hardly known during her youth, she felt a dull, helpless hate. She was sold, rendered the property of someone else.”¹¹ Thus, the author acts as the spokesperson for the person she portrays: by conveying the humiliating and deteriorating conditions under which foreign guestworkers live, while at the same time reminding the reader that these are human subjects, capable of feeling, thinking and resisting what is done to them. Free indirect speech, however, is also known as an effective literary device in cases (novels, stories of fiction) where the narrator wants to give words to emotions and insights which the character is assumed not (yet) able to articulate. Hence, although the protagonists (whether a Moroccan girl married off to a much older cousin, or an older guestworker who punishes his daughter for not obeying him) is depicted as the *subject* of particular experiences and feelings, they are first and foremost depicted as *subjected* to them. In a sense, the protagonists are put under the ‘narrator’s guardianship’.¹²

Another well-tried narrative strategy within the genre of denunciation is the narrator taking her reader to the netherworld of labour brokers, illegal textile shops, kitchens of starred restaurants, and the insides of oil tankers: trials and tribulations of particular individuals are conveyed in a sober tone, full of details such as the names of people, companies and places, wages, working hours, physical problems, secret contracts and slush money. But the narrator abstains from giving comments, expressions of indignation or direct accusations are absent. The denunciation is expected to work best by merely showing the ‘naked facts’.¹³

In any case, within the genre of denunciation, the narrator poses as the more articulate, more knowledgeable and literate spokesperson for the people (s)he portrays. Her role is like that of the plaintiff in a court of justice. Just like the prosecutor, who as a ‘professional’ accuser, is more skilled in the juridical language game than her clients, the narrator, as a ‘professional’ knower, is more skilled and articulate in the language game of realistic discourse than the guestworkers, illegal residents and other members of ethnic minority groups that she represents. She brings her case before a forum of

Situated knowledges and the Dutch minorities discourse, Utrecht 1997 (Ph.D.dissertation), and: Voorbij de onschuld. Het debat over integratie in Nederland, Amsterdam 2004 (second revised edition).

⁹ Nelly Soetens, *Kinderen van gastarbeiders*, Rotterdam 1980 (p. 26; 44).

¹⁰ For ‘she’ and ‘her’ read also ‘he’ and ‘his’. Still, it is no coincidence, not even (only) a matter of feminist partiality, that I have chosen to use the feminine forms here: a remarkable number of researchers and authors on ethnic minorities in the Netherlands are female.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, (p. 11).

¹² Maaïke Meijer, *In tekst gevat. Inleiding tot een kritiek van representatie*, Amsterdam 1996 (p. 157).

¹³ See for instance Rudie Kagie, *Berichten uit Hollands gastenboek. Over de werkomstandigheden van buitenlandse arbeiders*. Amsterdam 1987, and: Stella Braam, *De blinde vlek van Nederland. Reportages over de onderkant van de arbeidsmarkt*. Amsterdam 1994. In Germany, the work of Günther Walraff (such as *Der Aufmacher*, Köln 1977; and *Ganz unten*, Köln 1985) is exemplary for the genre of denunciation.

right-minded citizens, supposedly capable of putting themselves into an impartial position and assess the reliability of the narrator's accounts and those of the people on whose behalf she is speaking. She appeals to the ethical-political value of *solidarity* with those who are less well-off. From the denunciatory perspective, the conflict between the Dutch majority and ethnic minorities, is, in the words of Lyotard, a *litigation* [Fr. *Litige*]: a conflict in which the plaintiff and the accused use the same 'idiom'; their different perspectives are commensurable.¹⁴ By making use of the same genre of discourse, they recognize each other as belonging to the same species, they recognize that, in the end, 'we are all human'. The harm inflicted by one party upon the other involves no less, but also no more than a *damage* [*dommage*], an injustice which, if brought before an impartial court, can be recognized, repaired, and straightened out.

Initially, the number of countervoices against these denunciatory texts was small, and most of them were immediately put in one box with views from the extreme-right. One of the rare exceptions was Herman Vuijsje, a well-known journalist whose social-democratic sympathies were beyond doubt. In his book *Murdered innocence*¹⁵, Vuijsje argued that Dutch intellectuals and opinion-makers had become overcautious by putting a ban on any mention of ethnic or racial difference, a taboo he traced back to the guilty conscience regarding the Jews which the Dutch developed since the second World War, and which in the course of time had been applied to all ethnic minority groups. Vuijsje thought this a dangerous tendency, as it forbade ordinary people to express their not always unjustified feelings of fear or anger, a form of repression which could very well lead to frustration and more virulent forms of racism.¹⁶

2.2 The genre of empowerment

One of Vuijsje's targets and most outspoken opponents was Dutch-Surinamese anthropologist Philomena Essed. Her assessment of the Dutch situation was exactly the reverse: when it came to interracial relationships, any suggestion that the Dutch people were a racist people, was considered taboo. According to Essed, however, the Netherlands was a country pervaded by (overt and covert forms of) racism.¹⁷ Some welcomed her work on everyday racism because it finally managed to break the silence concerning a racism which they experienced on a daily basis. Others criticized it for its vague accusations and unsubstantiated claims. Whatever its scientific merits, Essed's studies were

¹⁴ See Lyotard, *The Differend*.

¹⁵ Herman Vuijsje, *Vermoorde onschuld. Etnisch verschil als Hollands taboe*, Amsterdam 1986.

¹⁶ For Vuijsje's critique of the 'political correct Netherlands', see also Herman Vuijsje, *The Politically Correct Netherlands*, Westport, Connecticut 2000.

¹⁷ Philomena Essed, *Everyday Racism. Reports of Women from Two Cultures*. Claremont, CA 1990; and: *Understanding Everyday Racism. An Interdisciplinary Theory*, Newbury Park, CA 1991.

among the first in the Netherlands to give public voice to ethnic minority groups themselves. In that sense, they marked the beginning of a gradually emerging genre of discourse, in which allochthone spokespersons entered the public arena to assert the interests of blacks and migrants, i.e. the genre of *empowerment*.

Contrary to the genre of denunciation, in which the inscribed audience consists of the autochthonous Dutch, the genre of empowerment primarily addresses members of ethnic minority groups themselves. These texts attempt to strengthen readers in their struggle to make it in a society which puts many obstacles in their way, such as distrust, prejudice, discrimination and racism. They do so by portraying exemplary individuals, who figure as living proof that, against all odds, you can, with much hard work, perseverance and faith in your own capacities, ‘make it if you try’. Most protagonists are role models, not only because of their individual success, but also because of their belief in political means such as affirmative action and self-organization. In other words, these are the stories of pioneers, who have successfully integrated in Dutch society, but did so on their own terms. They have not turned into ‘bounties’, but remained loyal to their own group. Within the genre of denunciation, the narrator is the one who ‘knows better’ than her protagonists. Within the genre of empowerment, the roles are reversed: the protagonist here is the real expert, very capable of speaking for herself, whereas the narrator has receded in the background (most frequently in the role of interviewer) as the modest mediator between the protagonist and her readership. Moreover, while within the genre of denunciation, people’s privacy is protected by presenting them as anonymous representatives of their group, the genre of empowerment is all about publicity and visibility: protagonists are presented under their own name, and many texts are accompanied by their photographic portraits.

Most significantly, empowerment is not only argued for in terms of group interests and equal rights. The value of *diversity* is considered at least as important. Many protagonists criticize the implicit use of monocultural norms for their exclusive effects. They argue for a screening of selection procedures in schools and at work on ethnocentric bias, and for openness to cultural and ethnic differences. Diversity is to be embraced out of respect for the other. On the other hand, diversity is also applauded because it makes for enrichment. The acceptance of a diverse body of workers, for instance, will prove to be profitable for a company as it would heighten its efficiency, flexibility and creativity.¹⁸

It may be clear already that the genre of empowerment contains many denunciatory elements: the protagonists often strike an accusatory tone against white Dutch society, they had to fight “the delusions of superiority and narrow-minded parochialism”¹⁹, and “prove themselves twice, perhaps

¹⁸ Philomena Essed & Lydia Helwig, *Bij voorbeeld. Multicultureel beleid in de praktijk*, Amsterdam 1992.

¹⁹ E.A. Latham in: Irene van Lippe-Biesterveld, *Van daar. Portretten van buitenlandse vrouwen in Nederland*. Amsterdam 1986, (p. 9).

even three times over.”²⁰ But, contrary to the genre of denunciation, within the genre of empowerment, the conflict between majority and minorities is not perceived as a litigation, as an injustice that, if brought before an impartial court, can be resolved. With a neologism by Lyotard, the conflict is perceived rather as a *differend* (Fr. *différend*): it is assumed that, as everyone is a party in the conflict, there is no neutral position from which a judgement can be made. Moreover, as one of these parties (the autochthonous majority) is placed in a position of hegemony towards the others (minorities), impartiality is not to be expected anyway. The injustice done is not a mere damage, but a *wrong*, i.e. “a damage accompanied by the loss of the means to prove the damage”.²¹ To translate this to everyday racism: the injustice of racism consists of the structural humiliation, discrimination, distrust, negation, etc. of blacks by whites; consequently, whites will not take blacks any more seriously if they would attempt to testify to this injustice. This is precisely the reason why, within this genre, it is only the struggle of minorities themselves, their empowerment, which can undo their structural position of inequality.

The afore mentioned studies by Philomena Essed constitute a remarkable mixture of denunciation and empowerment. On the one hand, they clearly belong to the genre of denunciation: Essed’s interviews with black (Dutch-Surinamese) women in the Netherlands and the US are to prove the objective existence of everyday racism in these countries, and how it systematically marks the experiences and lives of even these higher-educated black women. On the other hand, by giving voice to the ‘subjugated knowledges’ of these women, Esseds studies likewise portray them as courageous individuals, whose stories of anger and resistance might contribute to the empowerment of her black audience. Especially from the perspective of the white reader, such a mixture of genres generates a paradoxical message. On the one hand, readers are summoned to take seriously the accusations of the all-pervasive racism in Dutch society, i.e. they are assumed to be able to take an impartial position, and judge and consequently repair the injustices done to black people. On the other hand, however, they are told that racism is all-pervasive, hence that all whites somehow gain from it, and will show a ‘natural’ reluctance to give up their prejudice and their position as the superior and privileged group. In other words: the conflict between (white) majority and (black) minority is presented by Essed as both a litigation and a differend, as both a conflict to be resolved peacefully because we all belong to the same human ‘genre’ (i.e. share a common language or vocabulary), and as an unresolvable conflict, an unbridgeable gap, between two human ‘genres’, who, due to their radically different positions in society, occupy radically different perspectives (black vs. white, minority vs. majority). Representatives of the white autochthonous Dutch thus receive a paradoxical message, which catches them in a paralyzing double bind. Either you accept the implicit call for solidarity in the genre of denunciation, but then you will be accused of denying your radical partiality as a white, or you accept

²⁰ Mieke Goudt, *In de gemeenteraad! Gesprekken met de eerste zwarte en migranten raadvrouwen in Nederland*. Leiden 1989 (p.10).

²¹ Lyotard, *The Differend* (p.5).

the implicit call for diversity in the genre of empowerment (the irreducible ‘differend’ between black and white), but then you run the risk being accused of withholding solidarity, of indifference or denial of responsibility. Consequently, it is by no means clear how the messages of the genres of denunciation and especially that of empowerment should be translated in terms of policy. On the one hand, governmental initiatives to fight racism and discrimination are to be perceived with distrust because of the ‘white’ interests they might protect. Essed for instance denounced Dutch policy measures aimed at preventing ghettoization and apartheid by forcing whites to accept Surinamese or Moroccan neighbours, as a policy of “dispersion [as] a way to undermine resistance to racial oppression.”²² On the other hand, a policy of non-interference, which leaves housing to the workings of the free market, was to be approached with just as much distrust, because that would boil down to the encouragement of apartheid and ghettoization.

A more recent manifestation of the genre of empowerment can be found in the militant discourse of the Dutch branch of the Arab European League, initiated in 2002 by the Lebanese-Belgian activist Dyab Abou Jahjah who for a short period of time was immensely popular among especially young and well-educated Moroccans. Inspired by the Black muslim leader Malcolm X, Abou Jahjah combined an angry rhetoric of denunciation concerning racism and discrimination with an equally assertive rhetoric of empowerment, in which resistance against cultural assimilation, the preservation of one’s religious (i.e. muslim) identity and the demand for ‘respect’ were some of the prominent claims.²³

2.3 The genre of the report

For want of a more original term, I have called the next genre, which is the most dominant genre within the Dutch minorities research, the genre of the report. Most of the studies that can be subsumed under this genre are carried out at governmental request. They predominantly concentrate on one particular ethnic group (Turks, Moroccans, Hindustani, Moluccans, etc.) or on a particular subgroup, such as Surinamese single mothers, run-away Turkish youngsters, or Moroccan teenage boys. Some convey a picture of the everyday life and perspectives of one group, while others focus on a specific issue, such as people’s position on the labour market, practices of sexuality or practices of birth control. They concentrate on listing the problems these groups face in their integration in society, and conclude with advice for future policy. Inscribed readers are policy makers, politicians, managers, social workers, teachers – in short: everyone professionally engaged in the integration of minority groups in Dutch society.

²² Essed, *Understanding Everyday Racism*, p.22

²³ See for instance: Ed Croonenberg, ‘Wij zijn niet te gast, wij zijn thuis’, in: *HP/De Tijd*, November 29, 2002; Rob Gollin and Martin Sommer, *Held en demon*, in: *De Volkskrant*, December 7, 2002; Yves Desmet, *Malcolm X van de lage landen?* In: *Het Parool*, March 8, 2003.

In line with the scientific genre, reports are conveyed by an impersonal narrator for whom categorization is an important means, both to circumscribe the object of research and to structure the ultimate findings. Consequently, in line with the dominant paradigms within sociology and anthropology, the protagonists in these narratives are first and foremost presented as representatives of a particular group. A characteristic which fits in neatly with the long-standing structure of Dutch policy, which until recently basically relied on categorical distinctions between ethnic minorities as target groups of specific policy measures. However, there is a tension within the genre of the report which betrays an internal critique of the performative effects of categorizations. For, apart from the wish to formulate, from a third person impersonal perspective, general and valid conclusions concerning the group studied, there is also a wish to convey a sense of the uniqueness of each individual case, to do justice to the many differences within the group under investigation. This latter wish is often articulated in terms of wishing the objects to ‘speak for themselves’.

Hence, on the one hand, ‘reporters’ merely convey information from a neutral and distanced perspective, on the other hand they attempt to bring to life particular experiences, personalities and lifeworlds. The genre of the report is thus constituted by an internal tension between a scientific aim on the one hand, and a literary aim on the other. From one perspective, it appeals to the cognitive capacities of the reader, from the other it appeals to capacities such as empathy and imagination. As a consequence, many reports alternate between the impersonal mode of speech, and more personal accounts which are either presented by the author as a first person narrator, or by individual protagonists, who thus literally speak ‘for themselves’. Thus, a narrator may tell extensive individual stories, in order to show the heterogeneity within the research population, and remind readers how each case surpasses the boundary of typification: “Reality appears to be too unruly for sound categories of this kind...”²⁴ But that same report may use individual accounts as examples of certain ‘types’ of individuals, such as the ‘modern’ or the ‘traditional’ Turkish woman. Or, in spite of emphatic statements such as “in reality, pure types do not exist...”, individual protagonists are presented as exemplaries of a particular type.²⁵ This alternation of styles betrays the ways in which the genre of the report grapples with the relation between the general and the particular, between smooth categorizations and untidy realities, and how it hesitates between describing the problems of individual protagonists as either generated by social injustices that can be undone, or as the inevitable tragic effects of living ‘between two cultures’.

Despite the purported neutrality of the report vis-à-vis its object of research, and despite the ways in which it gives ample room to the objects of research to ‘speak for themselves’, in the end the author, and inevitably so, is very much present as the authority who, with the help of particular categories and

²⁴ Marlene de Vries, *Ogen in je rug. Turkse meisjes en jonge vrouwen in Nederland*. Alphen a/d Rijn 1987 (p.16).

typologies, structures reality. These categories and typologies are not politically innocent. Till quite recent, the ‘master’ dichotomy in most Dutch reports was the dichotomy between traditional and modern cultures or ways of life. Thus, one of the first Dutch studies made a distinction between traditional, transitional and modern Moroccan families²⁶, which was adopted in a number of other reports.²⁷ Although the use of the distinction between modern and traditional was quickly criticized for its hierarchical implications, it proved difficult to escape. Thus, a typology of Moroccan families which was meant to replace the dichotomy, relied heavily upon it, insofar as the alternative designations (ambitious, assertive, ambivalent and reluctant) refer to the positive or negative way in which each family related to the values of modern Dutch society.²⁸

The central value in the genre of the report is emancipation. Reports assume that ethnic minority groups will gradually leave behind their traditional values and ways of life, but that, because of social and economic deprivation, they will not be able to manage that painful process on their own. As a substantial part of fighting the social, economic and cultural deprivation of ethnic minority groups, governmental support is needed to foster their emancipation.

Some reports do manage to abstain from categorizations dependent on the traditional-modern divide. Instead, they focus on the heterogeneity of the group portrayed, whether it consists of Creole lower class youngsters²⁹, young Moroccan men³⁰, or ‘ethnic’ schoolboys and –girls³¹. They do so by consistently describing reality as experienced by the subjects themselves, i.e. by using their words, their vocabulary. An issue such as successfulness in life is described relative to the criteria that individuals use themselves, or relative to the social status of their own ethnic group, rather than in relation to the standards of modern, middle class Dutch society. Other studies focus on the way in which not only migrants (‘allochthones’), but also the ‘autochthonous’ Dutch respond to and are affected by the arrival of so many newcomers in society.³² As a consequence these reports pay more systematic attention to experiences of racism and discrimination. The focus is not so much on the extent to which a particular group has not yet succeeded in integrating in Dutch society, but on the

²⁵ Lenie Brouwer, B. Lalmahomed & H. Josias, *Andere tijden, andere meiden. Een onderzoek naar het weglopen van Marokkaanse, Turkse, Hindoestaanse en Creoolse meisjes*, Utrecht 1992 (p.269).

²⁶ Lotty van den Berg-Eldering, *Marokkaanse gezinnen in Nederland*, Alphen a/d Rijn 1978.

²⁷ See for instance: S. Risvanoglu-Bilgin, L. Brouwer & M. Priester, *Verskillend als de vingers van een hand. Een onderzoek naar het integratieproces van Turkse gezinnen in Nederland*, Leiden 1986; and G. Mungra, *Hindoestaanse gezinnen in Nederland*, Leiden 1990.

²⁸ Jannet van der Hoek & Martine Kret, *Marokkaanse tienermeisjes, gezinsinvloeden op keuzen en kansen*, Utrecht 1992.

²⁹ Livio Sansone, *Schitteren in de schaduw. Overlevingsstrategieën, subcultuur en etniciteit van Creoolse jongeren uit de lagere klasse in Amsterdam 1981-1990*, Amsterdam 1992.

³⁰ Frank Buijs, *Leven in een nieuw land. Marokkaanse jongemannen in Nederland*, Utrecht 1993.

³¹ Sawitri Saharso, Jan en alleman. *Etnische jeugd over etnische identiteit, discriminatie en vriendschap*, Utrecht 1992.

³² Dienne Hondius, *Gemengde huwelijken, gemengde gevoelens*, Den Haag 1999; Geertje Mak, *Sporen van verplaatsing*, Kampen 2000; Maaïke Meijer, Rosemarie Buikema et al., *Cultuur en migratie in Nederland (in five parts)*, Den Haag 2003 – 2005.

various ways in which individual migrants fail or succeed in achieving the goals in life they have set for themselves, and on the variety of circumstances that play a part in that. In these studies, the literary aim of evoking the lifeworld of a particular group, of creating a better understanding for the complicated situation they live in and eliciting sympathy for the ways in which they attempt to deal with it, prevails over the (strictly) scientific aim of supplying general conclusions and advice for further policy. One significant characteristic of these reports is their refusal to reduce their accounts to stories of deprivation and the gap between modern and traditional culture.

In the last decade, however, several researchers have challenged this refusal to look at culture. In their view it signifies the existence of a taboo. According to for instance anthropologist Frank van Gemert, many well-meaning Dutch researchers have been reluctant to make a causal connection between culture and criminality, merely because they did not want to lapse into the pitfalls of *blaming the victim* or affirming stereotypes.³³ Whereas previous studies on juvenile delinquency therefore mainly 'blamed' the (social, economic, etc.) environment, in his own study Van Gemert deliberately describes the criminal behaviour of Moroccan youngsters not in terms of deviancy, but as behaviour that fits in with their normal, everyday ways of interaction.³⁴ However, in spite of his announced intention to focus on the complex *interaction* between culture and environment, his diagnosis does seem to lapse into the kind of culturalist reductionism he wants to avoid. Thus he finds that Moroccans, especially Berbers from the Rif area, are used to mutual relationships based on jealousy and distrust, relations which stimulate secrecy and trying out how far one can go without getting caught. Till about the age of eighteen, according to Van Gemert, Moroccan boys lack internal norms and a sense of responsibility because their community does not expect them to behave well on their own accord. When they are caught, they will be punished, but not morally reproached. It is only when they become adults that Moroccan men are expected to show more respectable and responsible behaviour. Most outspoken in breaking the taboo on culture in the Dutch research scene has undoubtedly been another young anthropologist, Marion van San. In her report on the delinquent behaviour of that other infamous Dutch problem group, Antillean youngsters, Van San criticizes the tendency within minorities studies to evade the question whether aspects of 'culture' might promote criminal behaviour.³⁵ She therefore addresses the issue head-on, by investigating whether some forms of delinquent behaviour by boys from Curaçao might be explained by the greater tolerance within the group for particular offences.³⁶ From interviews with delinquent Curaçao boys and their mothers, Van San reconstructs the 'insider' perspective on 'instrumental' and 'expressive' crimes and concludes

³³ Frank van Gemert, *Ieder voor zich. Kansen, cultuur en criminaliteit van Marokkaanse jongens*, Amsterdam 1998 (pp.10-12).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, (p.28).

³⁵ Marion van San, *Stelen & steken. Delinquent gedrag van Curaçaose jongens in Nederland*, Amsterdam 1998.

that, whereas the boys cannot fall back on their cultural background to legitimize an instrumental crime such as stealing, there does exist a shared subculture which legitimizes expressive crimes such as stabbing. The most shocking and controversial element of Van San's findings is the justifying, sometimes even encouraging roles she claims that Curaçao mothers play in tolerating the criminal behaviour of their sons, especially concerning expressive crimes, where 'honour' is at stake. Van San's report met with serious criticisms concerning the negative effects it might have on the public image of Antilleans in Holland. This outburst of political sensitivity, however, must have been peanuts to her compared to the fierce resistance she met when, on request of the Flemish government, she started an investigation into the relationship between ethnicity and criminality in Belgium. When the report was finally published, it was ignored by the intellectual and political establishment, and, to her regret, embraced by the Flemish Block.³⁷

Rather than perceive the 'culture' of ethnic minority groups in terms of simple, rural traditions that will gradually and self-evidently disappear to be replaced by the more complex, modern ways of life, Van Gemert and Van San assume that migrants bring with them a deep-seated traditional way of life, a culture of 'honour and shame' which they pass on entirely intact to their children and which is incompatible with the fundamental values of modern Dutch society. Cultures of minority groups are not so much perceived from the perspective of deprivation, but from the perspective of deviancy. By implication, government is not asked to help members of minority groups with their emancipation, but to press them to take *responsibility*.³⁸

3. New realism

This latest trend in Dutch minorities research shows affinity with a fourth genre of discourse, which takes us away from the realm of research to the realm of public debate, and from the discourses of oppositional realism to what I will call the genre of *new realism*. Since the eighties, against the assumed 'political correctness' of the genres of denunciation, empowerment and report, new realism has become ever more dominant in Dutch public and political debates on immigration and ethnic minorities. It was

³⁶ Van San makes use of the so-called theory of neutralization, according to which deviant behaviour can be explained away by the person himself or by his significant others with the help of strategies of legitimization and justification.

³⁷ Dirk de Smedt, Van San spreekt, in: Vlaams Blok Magazine, vol. 26, nr. 7/8, 2002 (p.21); Hugo Camps, "Ik werd als tweede Filip de Winter neergezet." Marion van San, getergd criminoloog, in: Elsevier, June 6, 2002.

³⁸ Obviously, researchers who adhere to the value of emancipation have responded to these critical assessments of their work. They have done so both by research projects, the outcomes of which prove that rapid (cultural) changes are taking place within ethnic communities (see for instance Trees Pels, Respect van twee kanten, Assen 2003; Trees Pels and Mariette de Haan, Continuity and change in Moroccan socialisation, Utrecht 2004), as well as by engaging in more direct debates with their opponents (Trees Pels, Geef de ouders maar weer de schuld, in: Waterstof, Nieuwsbrief van Waterland nr. 7, 2005, retrieved December 28, 2005 on: www.waterlandstichting.nl/index.php?pid=109).

radicalized most forcefully by politicians such as the late Pim Fortuyn whose *List Pim Fortuyn* after his murder in May 2002 brought about a political landslide, and the Somali-Dutch Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a member of parliament for the conservative-liberals since January 2003, who regularly stirred up public controversy by castigating adherents to multiculturalism for their political naïveté, and by her provocative statements about the ‘true’ meaning of Islam. Hirsi Ali achieved world-wide coverage and admiration when her short film *Submission I* in November 2004 led to the murder of its director, Theo van Gogh. The victory of the genre of new realism has had serious consequences for both the position of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands, and for what in the earlier days new realists scornfully referred to as the Dutch ‘minorities research industry’.

3.1. The national minorities debate

One of the first public expressions of new realism came from the then leader of the conservative liberals (VVD), Frits Bolkestein. In 1991, Bolkestein challenged the dominant Dutch discourse, by stating that from now on the integration of minorities should be handled ‘with guts’.³⁹

Bolkestein’s argument was not so much directed against the goal of emancipation itself, as upon the way in which it could be reached. In its eagerness to help, the attitude of the Dutch government had become too lenient and permissive. Bolkestein’s supporters spoke of “hugging to death”, “treading on eggs” or a “culture of pitifulness”. In their view, this urge to help ethnic minority groups emancipate had made them more rather than less dependent on the welfare state, allowing them to withdraw within their own group rather than stimulate integration into the larger society.

The genre of *new realism* has five distinctive features. First, the author presents himself as someone who dares face the facts, who speaks frankly about ‘truths’ which the dominant discourse has supposedly covered up. Thus Bolkestein spoke firmly about the ‘guts’ and ‘creativity’ needed to solve the problem of integration, and how this would leave no room for ‘compromise’, ‘taboos’ or ‘disengagement’.⁴⁰ His supporters accordingly praised him for his show of ‘civic courage’, for the ‘mature’, ‘civilized’ and ‘plain’ way in which he had placed this thorny issue on the political agenda. Secondly, a new realist sets himself up as the spokesperson of the ‘ordinary people’, i.e. the autochthonous population. Thus Bolkestein observed that “below the surface a widespread informal national debate, which was not held in public, was already going on”⁴¹ and that “the issue of minorities is a problem incessantly discussed in the pub and in the church”.⁴² Why listen to the *vox populi*? On the one hand, ordinary people deserve to be represented because they are realists *par*

³⁹ Frits Bolkestein, Integratie van minderheden moet met lef worden aangepakt, in: De Volkskrant, September 12, 1991.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Frits Bolkestein, with R. Penninx, A. Kruyt, and S.W. Couwenberg, Een discussie over racisme. Interview by H. van Hoorn, In: Het Capitool, Ned 3, NOS television, March 22, 1992.

⁴² Frits Bolkestein, interviewed by D. Eppink, in: NRC Handelsblad, September 12, 1991.

excellence: they know from their daily experience what is really going on, especially in the poor neighbourhoods of big cities, and they are not blinded by politically correct ideas: “Voters find that politicians do not take sufficient notice of their problems.”⁴³ On the other hand, one should take the complaints of the ordinary people seriously, in order to keep their emotions under control and channel them in the right direction: “[S]omeone who ignores the anxiety, nourishes the resentment he intends to combat.”⁴⁴

A third characteristic of new realism is the suggestion that realism is a characteristic feature of national identity: being Dutch equals being frank, straightforward and realistic. This is particularly manifest in the publications of the afore mentioned journalist Herman Vuijsje. In his *Murdered innocence*, Vuijsje testified to his desire to return to an authentic Dutchness, to the pre-war days when “our country distinguished itself for its pre-eminently matter-of-fact like treatment of ethnic difference.”⁴⁵

A fourth feature of new realism is its resistance against the political left. New realists find it is high time to break the power of the progressive elite which for too long has dominated the public realm with its ‘politically correct’ sensibilities regarding fascism, racism and intolerance. This supposedly left-wing censorship of public discourse is also criticized because it is assumed to be accompanied by a relativistic approach to the value of different cultures.

Finally, the discourse of new realism is highly genderized. From the very beginning, when participants in the debate on multiculturalism wanted to prove the practical relevance of the issue at hand, they referred to issues of gender and sexuality, such as the headscarf, arranged or forced marriage, female genital mutilation, honour killing, the cultus of virginity, domestic violence and homophobia. In Bolkestein's initial intervention, for instance, references to the position of women in ‘Islamic cultures’ were quite prominent. When condemning Islam for not living up to the principle of non-discrimination, he stated that the way in which Muslim women were treated ‘cast a slur on the reputation of that civilization’. And he took issue with cultural relativism, because it would extenuate reprehensible practices such as the custom of *suttee*, female circumcision, and polygamy. For new realists, the equality between men and women is an obvious and uncontested part of Western culture in general and Dutch liberal democracy in particular. But it was only with the rise of the voice Ayaan Hirsi Ali, that the position of Muslim women moved from the margin to the center of the new realist concern.

3.2 A ‘multicultural drama’

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Frits Bolkestein, Een discussie over racisme, March 22, 1992.

⁴⁵ Vuijsje, Vermoorde onschuld (p.7).

January 2000, publicist Paul Scheffer gave an impulse to new realism by castigating his fellow countrymen for closing their eyes to the ‘multicultural drama’ that was developing right under their eyes.⁴⁶ Whereas the rates of unemployment, criminality and school drop-out amongst ethnic minorities were extremely high, the Dutch, according to Scheffer, mistakenly held on to their good old strategies of peaceful co-existence through deliberation and compromise. But in doing so, they ignored the fundamental differences between the new situation and the earlier days of pillarized society. Presently, Scheffer argued, there existed fewer sources of solidarity, while Islam, for its refusal to accept the separation between church and state, could not be compared with modernized christianity; finally, allochthone youngsters were accumulating feelings of frustration and resentment. Teaching Dutch language, culture and history should be taken much more seriously. Only then would allochthone residents acquire a clear view of the basic values of Dutch society.

Scheffer’s essay became the intellectual talk of the town. Like Bolkestein’s intervention, it was welcomed because of the courageous way in which it challenged the view of the dominant (political as well as academic) elite which, these supporters suggested, had stubbornly refused to face the serious problems of a multicultural society. Scheffer accused politicians of “looking the other way”, causing “a whole nation to lose sight of reality”. In this fashion, the rhetorics of Scheffer’s article perfectly complied with the genre of new realism. Here, again, was someone who dared to break taboos. Like a decade earlier, several commentators were pleased that it was finally possible to have a ‘frank’ and ‘candid’ conversation without ‘politically correct reflexes’ taking the upper hand.⁴⁷ Scheffer too claimed that what happened to ordinary people, the stories told ‘below the surface’, remained unseen and unheard, even though his reference was not to so much the autochthonous population as to the feelings of anger and frustration among allochthone youngsters. Yet Scheffer showed a similar ambivalence as to why these feelings should be taken seriously: on the one hand, these youngsters were frustrated for a legitimate reason, i.e. for remaining stuck at the bottom of the social ladder; on the other, government should do more to prevent these frustrations from turning into social upheaval. Like Vuijsje, Scheffer also recommended the affirmation of Dutch identity as a remedy against the problems of multicultural society, although his ideal Dutchman was not the romanticized ‘ordinary’ man or woman in the street, but the decent and politically knowledgeable citizen, finely aware of the good as well as the bad sides of Dutch identity.

Nevertheless, Scheffer shared with his predecessors an impatience with the supposed cultural relativism of the progressive elite, which in his view had deteriorated into an attitude of moral indifference. Resisting the growing leniency and laxity regarding the execution of laws and regulations (the typically Dutch culture of toleration - *gedogen*), Scheffer emphasized that it was high time to draw clear lines on what people were allowed and not allowed to do. But what irritated him was not so

⁴⁶ Paul Scheffer, Het multiculturele drama, in: NRC Handelsblad, January 29, 2000.

⁴⁷ B. Soetenhorst, Een multiculti-debat zonder de politiek-correcte reflexen, in: Het Parool, February 22, 2000.

much the toleration of anti-western values and practices (although this surely should be tackled too), but the incomprehensible indifference of left-wing intellectuals to the ever-widening gap between a (mostly autochthonous) majority of the well-off, and (mostly allochthone) minorities which remained stuck in a situation of deprivation. Scheffer's version of new realism, in other words, was more 'politically correct' than that of his predecessors – his was new realism with a social face.

3.3 The El Moumni case

Scheffer's wish for openness and confrontation was complied with quickly and in an unforeseen way. On the 4th of May 2001, the television news program *NOVA* dedicated an item to the attitude of Dutch Muslims toward homosexuality. Young Moroccan guys were shown bragging about their manhood and venting their disdain for homosexuals. One of the more prominent Islamic spokespersons interviewed was Khalil el Moumni, imam of the An-Nasr mosque in Rotterdam. His statements were unequivocal: homosexuality was a contagious disease; if it spread among Dutch youth, it would mean the end of the Netherlands, for "if men marry men and women marry women, who will take care of procreation?"

Public indignation followed instantly, and with it the next episode in the Dutch debate, which came to be known as the El-Moumni case. The significant difference with earlier debates was, that whereas previously the 'clash of cultures' was talked about as happening 'below the surface', the El Moumni case brought that clash out into the open, into the public realm itself.

Prime Minister Kok and Minister Van Boxtel made it very clear that El Moumni had crossed the line. Both therefore adopted the tough talk asked for by new realists. But the familiar Dutch strategy of deliberation and pacification was not discarded entirely. Shortly after the uproar started, Van Boxtel, emphasizing the need for dialogue, organized a meeting with a delegation of Muslims, including El-Moumni himself. Thus, the government adopted Scheffer's style of new realism with a social face - as did Christian Democrat, Progressive Liberal and GreenLeft representatives in Parliament, who rejected the imam's words while at the same time emphasizing that imams should be required to follow a settlement course in order to learn Dutch values and the Dutch language.

Others opted for a tougher approach. Several individuals and organizations filed official complaints against the imam, asking for El Moumni to be convicted on the grounds of discrimination. Some even wanted him sent out of the country. On a website opened by the Gay Paper, 91% of the respondents agreed that "New Dutchmen should tolerate our tolerance, otherwise they don't belong here".⁴⁸ In parliament, Conservative Liberals and Social Democrats took a similar stand. For Herman Vuijsje, the El-Moumni case signified a 'milestone in frankness': unlike ten years ago, when political correctness

⁴⁸ Onderzoek uitspraken imam, in: Trouw, May 10, 2001.

still prevailed, the Dutch, he concluded, “are no longer afraid to say what they think, and people are prepared to act again.”⁴⁹

Finally, the El Moumni case offered the opportunity for a new and more radical version of new realism to emerge. The remarkable thing was that this was practised by both parties in the conflict alike. On the one hand, some used the prerogative of frankness to insult and provoke El Moumni. Theo van Gogh, at the time already a well-known *enfant terrible* of the Dutch media, talked carelessly of Muslims as “goatfuckers” and imams as “pygmies”⁵⁰, whereas French-Dutch columnist Sylvain Ephimenco showed no qualms typifying islam as “a disease” which “infects the mind and distorts reality.”⁵¹ Both defended their blunt talk by referring to the freedom of speech as the highest value. Alluding to the famous words of Voltaire against the detested catholic clergy, Ephimenco assured the imam that he would passionately resist any attempt to prevent him from freely uttering his cocktail of “backward concepts, prohibitions and taboos”.⁵² Theirs was a secular, individualistic defence of new realism.

On the other hand, El Moumni and his adherents equally defended their right to disqualify homosexuality as a disease, and Europeans as “lower than dogs or pigs” - as El-Moumni allegedly said in one of his sermons.⁵³ Ironically though, they invoked the Western values of freedom of religion and the separation of state and church, to defend their radically anti-Western views. And like their secular counterparts, they did so in a strikingly blunt manner. Thus, one imam argued: “We live in a free country. What others do, is up to them”, whereas another indicated that he did not feel obliged to call for tolerance.⁵⁴ El Moumni himself was equally outspoken: “I do not need to justify myself to you [Minister Van Boxtel, bp] with regard to the content of my sermons”⁵⁵, whereas young Muslims assembled some 20.000 signatures to express their anger with the Minister’s “interference with religious matters”.⁵⁶ Thus, although their frame of reference was religious pillarization rather than the motto of the enlightened *philosophe* Voltaire, Dutch fundamentalist Muslims agreed with their atheist enemies that they had every right to say what they wanted to say – without being in any way accountable for the effects their words might have on others, or on society as a whole. Both, as Theo van Gogh phrased it, “shrugged their shoulders in murderous indifference.”⁵⁷

⁴⁹ Bert Wagendorp, “Reactie op imam is mijlpaal in vrijmoedigheid” (interview with Herman Vuijsje), in: De Volkskrant, May 19, 2001.

⁵⁰ Theo van Gogh, Red de muzelman! Maak van imams geen martelaren, in: Vrij Nederland, May 26, 2001 (p.19).

⁵¹ Sylvain Ephimenco, Brief aan imam el-Moumni, in: De Groene Amsterdammer 23, June 9, 2001 (p. 55).

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Harm Ede Botje & Ali Lazrak, Nieuw Staphorst. Het gitzwarte verleden van Khalil el Moumni, in: Vrij Nederland, May 26, 2001.

⁵⁴ Yasha Lange, Imams tegen homo’s, in: NRC Handelsblad, May 9, 2001.

⁵⁵ El Moumni, Moet imam zwijgen over gevoelige kwesties? in: Trouw, June 21, 2001.

⁵⁶ Boze moslims verzamelen 10.000 handtekeningen, in: Trouw, July 3, 2001.

⁵⁷ Van Gogh, Red de muzelman! (p. 19).

3.4 Pim Fortuyn and the turn to hyper-realism

When, in the global atmosphere of crisis since ‘September 11’, Pim Fortuyn suddenly entered the Dutch scene, his rhetorics showed all the characteristics of the genre of new realism. On one occasion, his face appeared on the cover of a magazine, his mouth tied up with his necktie, accompanied by the caption: “Are you allowed to say everything you think? Dutch taboos”.⁵⁸ And, notwithstanding his aristocratic manners and appearance, Fortuyn prided himself on knowing what was going on in the poor neighbourhoods and fully understanding the concerns of the ‘ordinary people’. But, like the new realists before him, Fortuyn’s attitude towards his constituency remained ambiguous. On the one hand, the ordinary Dutchman was a new realist like himself. If people living on welfare illegally take on jobs on the black market, their choice was entirely understandable, for “The poor are not at all the pitiful people the left church wants them to be. Most of them are just like us: emancipated, individualized, independent citizens.”⁵⁹ On the other hand, the Dutch people were in need of a true leader, someone who, like himself, could act as their father and mother at the same time: “the father as the one who lays down the law, the mother as the binding element of the herd.”⁶⁰ The third element of new realism, the affirmation of national identity, came to the fore both in Fortuyn’s insistence on the preservation of national sovereignty against the ever expanding influence of the EU, and in his warnings against the imminent ‘islamization’ of Dutch society. Finally, his contempt of the progressive elite pervaded almost every aspect of his writings, resulting in his last book in which he wiped the floor with the purple governments.⁶¹

But Fortuyn also further radicalized the new realist discourse. In the wake of the debates on El Moumni, he took the same stand as Van Gogh and Ephimenco: freedom of opinion, even for an imam who deemed homosexuals like himself lower than pigs, was more important than legal protection against discrimination. According to the notorious interview which cost him his leadership of *Leefbaar Nederland*, Holland was a ‘full country’, Islam ‘a backward culture’, and it would be better to abolish “that weird article of the constitution: thou shall’t not discriminate.”⁶² Fortuyn assured people that they could rely on him because he was “a man who says what he thinks and does what he says”. In other words: people were asked to put their trust in him more on account of his new realism than on the basis of his actual political program. And so they did, as was evident in the massive outburst of grief and anger after his murder and at his funeral. Without a doubt, one of the main ingredients of Fortuyn’s attractiveness had been his ‘frank’ speech on immigrants. His particular style, this odd mixture of aristocratic appearance and tough talk, turned out to be his strongest political weapon.⁶³ In

⁵⁸ Stan de Jong, *Hollandse taboes*, in: *HP/De Tijd* 39, September 29, 2000 (pp. 32-41).

⁵⁹ Pim Fortuyn, 2001 (p. 105).

⁶⁰ *Het fenomeen Fortuyn*, Amsterdam 2002 (p.40).

⁶¹ Pim Fortuyn, *De puinhopen van acht jaar paars*. Rotterdam 2002.

⁶² *Het fenomeen Fortuyn* (pp.61; 63).

⁶³ See also: Dick Pels, *De geest van Pim. Het gedachtegoed van een politieke dandy*. Amsterdam 2003.

his performance of new realism, which initially was about having the guts to speak freely about problems and how they should be solved, was turned into simply having guts, i.e. giving vent to your gut feelings. Fortuyn thus managed to radicalize the genre of new realism to such an extent that it turned into its very opposite, into a kind of hyper-realism. Frankness was no longer practised for the sake of truth, but for its own sake. References to reality and the facts had become mere indicators of the strong personality of the speaker, proof that a ‘real leader’ had entered the stage who dared migrants to take up their own responsibility rather than wait for help.

3.5 Ayaan Hirsi Ali and ‘Submission Part I’

Not without reason, Ayaan Hirsi Ali has regularly been compared with Pim Fortuyn. Like Fortuyn, she seeks confrontation, shows the new realist gut to provoke, and thereby to imperil her life. And the risks for her are even greater than they were for Fortuyn, as many Muslim women have been killed for lesser sins than those of which Hirsi Ali is deemed guilty. Another significant difference with Fortuyn is, that although Hirsi Ali initially exclusively addressed Dutch leftwing intellectuals and multiculturalists, she quickly turned against her former fellow believers too. Hirsi Ali’s apostasy from Islam took place in a remarkably short period of time. In her first publication, November 2001, her rethorics about Islam had still been inclusive: she had wondered why ‘we muslims’ cannot look at ourselves, only to answer that question with merciless criticism – but it was phrased as self-criticism: “We muslims have lost sight of the balance between religion and reason”.⁶⁴ But already in her first more outspoken feminist essay, she started to distance herself. She no longer spoke as a Muslim, but as someone “with knowledge of and experience with the islamic religion”.⁶⁵ In one of the first television talk-shows she appeared, she referred to herself as a ‘secular Muslim’. During the second, only one evening later, she ‘came out’ as a former Muslim who deemed Islam to be a ‘backward culture’, only to complete her public fall of faith with a newspaper interview in which she put Mohammed to the pillory as a ‘tyrant’ and a ‘perverse man’.⁶⁶ Gender-related issues that had not received much public attention before, like female genital mutilation, forced marriages, honour killing and hymen repair, have become part of the Dutch emancipation policies as a direct result of political motions in parliament submitted by Hirsi Ali.⁶⁷

Hirsi Ali’s trenchant interventions caused much more commotion than similar statements by Pim Fortuyn had ever done. For, this time it was someone who supposedly ‘fouled her own nest’, and behaved like ‘a bounty’. Hirsi Ali was branded as an apostate who made Islam appear in a bad light, and who washed the dirty linen of an already much stigmatized group in public.

⁶⁴ Hirsi Ali, *De zoontjesfabriek*. Amsterdam/Antwerpen 2002 (p. 42).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.47

⁶⁶ Arjan Visser, *Politiek is schadelijk voor mijn ideaal*, in: *Trouw*, January 25, 2003.

⁶⁷ See also: Hirsi Ali, *De maagdenkooi*. Amsterdam/Antwerpen 2004.

Nothing however could make her stop to force both the autochthonous Dutch and Muslim migrants to face the harsh reality of the lives of Muslim women as she perceived it. In the summer of 2004, together with filmmaker Theo van Gogh she made a short movie, *Submission, part I*. The film, lasting no more than eight minutes and first broadcasted on national Dutch television in August 2004, vehemently denounced the (sexual) violence against Muslim women, suggesting that this violence was legitimated by Islam. Because texts from the Koran were inscribed on the naked skin of the female actress, the film was extremely blasphemous in the eyes of Muslims. And it soon showed that to some it had indeed exceeded all bounds. On November 2 2004, Theo van Gogh was brutally slaughtered. His murderer, the 26 year old Dutch-Moroccan Mohammed Bouali, had knived a letter into Van Gogh's body, which made it clear that his deed was actually meant as a warning to Hirsi Ali. She was forced to go underground for a second time in her short career, whereas Dutch government responded with a series of arrests and stricter measures to fight Muslim terrorism. January 2005 Hirsi Ali returned at the Dutch political scene: deeply touched by the murder of her friend, but unbroken. She took up her work as a member of parliament again, announced that she was working on a new book (in English) entitled *Shortcut to Enlightenment*, and determined to make a sequel to the first film, now with an anonymous director, to be titled: *Submission, Part II*. Meanwhile, the news of the murder of Van Gogh had put Hirsi Ali in the spotlights of the international media.⁶⁸ Since then, Hirsi Ali has received numerous awards in different countries, was celebrated by *Time-Magazine* as one of the 100 most influential people of 2005, and her texts are being translated in several languages.⁶⁹

4. 'Monstrous' alliances

Each of the four genres discussed above fits in with a particular ideological or political framework. As may have become clear, the genres of *denunciation* and *empowerment* are structured by the critical frameworks of Marxism, feminism, anti-racism and the Black consciousness movement. They build on assumptions regarding deep-seated relations of domination and exploitation, to be changed through collective strategies of resistance. The central values here are those of *solidarity* and *diversity* respectively. The political framework sustaining the genre of the *report* on the other hand, is that of the social-democratic welfare state, according to which the autonomy of individuals is both the starting point and ultimate aim of democratic government, and the state should create the conditions under which individuals are able to develop their personal capacities. Its central value is *emancipation*. In the Netherlands, this line of thought has been mixed with the heritage of the system of religious pillarization, which led to the conclusion that the best way for a minority group to achieve collective

⁶⁸ Christopher Caldwell, *Daughter of the Enlightenment*, in: *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, April 3, 2005.

⁶⁹ See for instance: Ayaan Hirsi Ali, *Ich klage an*, München 2004; and: *The Caged Virgin*, New York 2006.

emancipation is a 'strengthening of one's own circle' first. Within this perspective, emancipation does not imply assimilation. So long as it does not interfere with their socio-economic integration, ethnic minority groups are allowed to hold on to their own culture or religion. All three genres can be perceived as manifestations of *oppositional realism*: accounts of reality made from a particular standpoint. They are partial insofar as they side with the interests of the minority group at hand. But the genres differ in their interpretation of the kind of marginalization that minority groups suffer. The genre of denunciation presents them as victims of exploitation – *class* being perceived as the main axis of inequality. Within the genre of empowerment the axis of inequality is *race* or *ethnicity*, and minority groups are presented as subjects of resistance. Finally, the genre of the report looks at minorities through the prism of *culture* and consequently speaks of them in terms of deprivation or deviancy.

Emerging at the end of the eighties, the genre of *new realism* challenged each of these genres of discourse. The political framework underlying new realism is an odd, but presently more and more common, combination of (neo-)liberalism and communitarianism. According to a (neo-)liberal outlook, the state should perform no more than a minimal function in assuring the basic (civic and political) rights of its citizens, granting them maximum freedom to live their lives in their own way. But these rights are to be balanced by civic duties and virtues. *Responsibility* for one's own (individual) welfare and well-being is therefore one of the most important values of a neo-liberal outlook. From a communitarian perspective, responsibility is likewise of crucial importance, be it that here the emphasis is not primarily on one's own individual welfare, but on the welfare of others (i.e. the members of one's community). Moreover, it is not merely individual citizens who should take up responsibility, it is also (ethnic, religious, cultural) communities that should take responsibility for the state of the larger (political, national) community. No wonder that current integration- and immigration policies are almost entirely geared at teaching newcomers, with the help of compulsory 'inburgerings' (literally: 'in-citizenshiping') courses, how to become good Dutch citizens.

If we take these differences in political outlook into consideration, there seems to exist a gap between the genres of denunciation and empowerment on the one hand and the genres of the report and new realism on the other. While authors of the first two genres assume that what is needed to get a more just society is collective struggle, the latter are convinced that what is needed is individual development. An outlook on society as determined by class or other collective struggles seems to be incompatible with the perception of society as the sum of individual activities. One might think that such radically different perspectives consequently lead to different assessments of what is wrong, and to different policy measures to improve the situation. Across such a paradigmatic divide, alliances seem to be unthinkable.

Still, if we take a closer look, we can discern sources for some unexpected, ‘monstrous’ alliances. If we compare the four genres with regard to the question *who* is to do the acting, i.e. who is to struggle or who is to develop, some remarkable agreements come to the fore (see also figure 1, p. ..). Thus, new realists criticize the assumptions in the (scientific) reports that the mechanisms of the welfare state and the model of pillarization should *help* ethnic groups in their process of emancipation. But in doing so, they tacitly subscribe to one of the main points brought forward by the genre of empowerment, namely that members of minority groups have to help themselves to be successful. Of course, the appeal to ‘do it yourself!’ has a different ring when expressed by a new realist or by an advocate of empowerment: in the first case it is a call in an accusatory mode to finally take responsibility and stop expecting help, in the latter it is a critical reminder that dominant society will not help you anyway, and an encouragement to rely on your own (individual and collective) power to show them what you’re worth. Thus, although politically spoken the practitioners of the genres of empowerment and new realism are each others’ adversaries, they share a strong aversion to an overcaring or paternalistic attitude by the Dutch or the Dutch state. One example of such an alliance is a publication by new realist Frits Bolkestein, in which he interviews seven key figures from the Dutch muslim world. Entirely in accordance with the rules of the genre of empowerment, in this book Bolkestein introduces his protagonists as ‘successful migrants’ who might function as a ‘rolemodel’ for others. He offers his interlocutors ample space to talk about the way in which they managed to acquire their present position in society. Although they do not agree with Bolkestein’s critical view of Muslim culture, they clearly share his dislike of spokespersons and caretakers (*zaakwaarnemers*), as well as his view of integration as not only a matter of rights, but also of responsibilities.⁷⁰

On the other hand, there is a no less remarkable affinity between the genres of denunciation and report. Although politically far apart, they agree that ethnic minorities are in need of *support* from the Dutch – be it that representatives of the first genre call for support in struggle, while the second genre insists on the importance of support through education. But they find each other in their firm rejection of both the political indifference of new realists, and the too optimistic confidence of the adherents of empowerment that minority groups can manage on their own.

⁷⁰ Frits Bolkestein, *Muslim in de polder*. Frits Bolkestein in gesprek met Nederlandse moslims, Amsterdam 1997.

5. The genre of heterogeneity

The findings of the above analysis can be summarized as follows:

What is to be done?	COLLECTIVE STRUGGLE	INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT
GIVE SUPPORT	genre: denunciation <i>value: solidarity</i>	genre: report <i>value: emancipation</i>
DO IT YOURSELF	genre: empowerment <i>value: diversity</i>	genre: new realism <i>value: responsibility</i>

Figure 1. Genres within the recent Dutch minorities discourse.

This neatly-arranged schedule should not be understood as a (politically) neutral overview of the variety of genres to be found in the Dutch minorities discourse. For one thing, it distinguishes analytically what empirically does not manifest itself along such clear-cut lines at all. This matrix of four genres should rather be perceived as an analytical tool that might be helpful to analyze similar discourses in other countries, as an instrument to be tested for its usefulness in comparative research projects. For another thing, the schedule does not take account of the differences in political impact between the genres. It for instance does not account for the long-standing dominance of the genre of the report (in terms of numbers of publications and actual influence on policies), nor of the marginality of the genres of denunciation and empowerment (while Abou Jahjah initially attracted a huge following and received much attention by the media, in 2005 his movement has become just another social and political organization, whose views can be mainly found on its internet-site www.ael.nl). In other words, my critical remarks on these genres notwithstanding, in the above I have practised a form of discursive ‘affirmative action’ regarding the genres of denunciation and empowerment, while downplaying the considerable influence of the genre of the report.

These remarks touch upon the issue of the normative perspective from which the present research project itself has been undertaken. When taking note of its distinction between different genres, which each promote a particular value and political perspective, a perceptive reader might ask which genre of discourse the analysis itself belongs to. To which extent is it part of, or representative of the Dutch discourse it has studied? Does it first and foremost face its readers with reality (i.e. the reality of the Dutch minorities discourse)? Or has it contributed to the empowerment a particular group, party or

genre? Could it be read as a denunciation of the biased nature or lack of self-reflexivity of the discourses it studied? Or should it, in its urge to divide the (discursive) world into separate categories, be seen as a report which surreptitiously supports the actually 'deprived' genres of denunciation and empowerment? If it is essential to lay bare the values, political ideologies and rhetorical strategies of the discourses studied, why aren't the values, political standpoints and rhetorical moves on which this (re)construction of (discursive) reality itself rests, made more explicit? Doesn't this analysis commit the 'sin' of pseudo-neutrality or crypto-normativity that it implicitly takes issue with?

These questions are at the heart of this project, in so far as it takes seriously the constructivist claim that power and knowledge are intertwined, that all knowledges are situated, and that descriptions of our (social, discursive) world, however objective, if taken seriously will inevitably affect that very same world.⁷¹ If claims to knowledge are never innocent, then neither are the claims defended here.

The position from which the analytical framework elaborated in this paper emerges, i.e. the genre implicitly favoured in and through the above analysis, I will call the genre of heterogeneity.⁷² By concentrating on the complexity of (discourses on) interethnic relationships, a focus on heterogeneity implies the attempt to cut across the binary oppositions that play a constitutive role in the four genres I have distinguished so far. Heterogeneity does not support either collective struggle or individual development exclusively. Texts of the genre of heterogeneity (ideally) do not single out victims of oppression, damages to be repaired, arrears to make up, or causes to fight for. Power is rather conceived as a relational and dynamic category, with which individual subjects, members of minorities and majorities, interact in a variety of ways: sometimes they are subdued to forces beyond their reach, sometimes they know how to bend things to their own will, at times they manage to struggle out, at times they exert power over others. Sometimes these accounts even, in an entirely apolitical way, depict human suffering as tragic rather than unjust, associating it with inevitable fate rather than changeable circumstances. Heterogeneous texts distinguish themselves for not being unambiguously on the side of one or other well-defined party, which does not mean that they are not involved with the subject(s) of their investigation. On the contrary, within the genre of heterogeneity, the narrator positions herself constantly, both vis-à-vis her subject-matter and her audience. Only these positions are shifting all the time: the narrator places herself (and henceforth her readers) in a variety of positions, siding then with one, then with another perspective. In doing so, she does not rely upon categorical divisions, such as oppressor versus oppressed, dominant versus marginal, modern versus traditional, or white versus black - let alone good versus bad. Instead, she shows sensitivity to the impurity and inevitable deficiencies of the world as it is. By staging different actors and a multiplicity of voices, she takes account of the complexities and ambiguities of the world described. Her own perspective in these texts is not transpa-

⁷¹ See Donna Haraway, *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*, in: D. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, London 1991, pp. 183-201.

⁷² In section 2.3, I mentioned some examples of texts that could be perceived as practising the genre of heterogeneity (see notes 29 to 32).

rant and univocal either, but split up between different positions. The genre of heterogeneity is a ‘non-genre’, simultaneously situated outside and constitutive of the matrix of discursive genres as elaborated here.

To be sure, the performative effects that heterogeneous accounts may produce are not very reassuring. Heterogeneous stories do not offer us certainty in the sense that they confront us with reality as it truly is. They are risky because they are located right in the ‘muddle’ of the complexities and ambiguities which make up the lives of the people portrayed, or, in the case of the current project, the genres depicted. Their authors do not pose as neutral mediators, nor as partisan ventriloquists. They realize themselves to be engaged in non-innocent conversations, without being able to entirely control the effects of their own words, accounts, analyses. But an author who speaks from different perspectives appeals to a variety of understandings within the reader, whose possibly unified views may as a consequence fall apart into an assembly of dispersed positions. The dispersal of the narrator’s voice affects her ‘authoritative’ position. It renders it more difficult for a reader to unthinkingly go along with her accounts. S/he might come to realize that clear-cut standpoints cannot be held, that they must make way for more complex and many-sided accounts and for new problems and dilemma’s to think through.

The familiar criticism to this approach is that it does not provide readers with a normative standpoint as to how to proceed further and what is to be done. Because it endows each point of view with equal validity, and not offers one last, overall perspective, it leaves its readers empty-handed.

I think such line of criticism is mistaken. It rests on the assumption that normative universalism and a (epistemological or culturally) relativistic outlook are mutually exclusive. I would argue, however, that the genre of heterogeneity fits in precisely with the normative-political framework that lies at the basis of modern Western societies and that is the framework of liberal democracy.⁷³ Within the political regime of liberal democracy it is of the utmost importance to have an open eye for, as Seyla Benhabib has phrased it “the many subtle epistemic and moral negotiations that take place across cultures, within cultures, among individuals, and even within individuals themselves in dealing with discrepancy, ambiguity, discordancy, and conflict.”⁷⁴ In that sense, the liberal democratic framework differs from (the stronger forms of) cultural relativism, in so far as the latter starts from assumptions concerning the incommensurability of different cultures, and aims to preserve their (presumed) purity. Within a liberal democracy, on the other hand, it is acknowledged and accepted that the political inclusion of new groups will lead to the hybridization of the cultural heritage of the groups concerned as well as of the society that includes them. Benhabib emphasizes the importance of openness in public deliberations to what she calls ‘the standpoint of the concrete other’, i.e. to other people’s specific needs and interests, to the ways in which ‘they’ truly differ from ‘us’, in order to enlarge ‘the

⁷³ Elsewhere, I have given an extensive account of the normative political position underlying my constructivist analysis of the Dutch minorities discourse and my defense of the genre of heterogeneity (see Prins, Voorbij de onschuld, especially chapters 6 and 7).

standpoint of the general other', i.e. the standpoint from which we perceive others as equal bearers of rights and duties.⁷⁵ The ultimate aim of this responsiveness to otherness is to ensure that our institutions and laws live up to their claims of justice and fairness for all, to their liberal claims of universality. In my opinion, the performative effects of texts of the genre of heterogeneity as envisioned above, would be extremely beneficial in fostering democratic forms of life and in enlarging our normative-political standpoint such that it indeed becomes more inclusive and may justifiedly lay claim to universal validity.

⁷⁴ Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture. Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*. Princeton 2002 (p.31).

⁷⁵ Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self. Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*. Cambridge 1992 (pp.148-177).