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IN THE JUNGLE OF AMSTERDAM

On the Re-Invention of Dutch Identity

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PREFACE

The goal of this series is to foster scholarship on campus by providing new faculty members with the opportunity to share their research interests with their colleagues and students. We see the role of an academic library not only as a place where bibliographic materials are acquired, stored, and made accessible to the intellectual community, but also as an institution that is an active participant in the generation of knowledge.

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IN THE JUNGLE OF AMSTERDAM:

On the Re-Invention of Dutch Identity

"Amsterdam, die grote stad, / is gebouwd op palen. / Als die stad eens ommeviel, / wie zou dat betalen?" [Amsterdam, the big city, / it was built on piles. / If this city would fall over, / who would pay for that?]

(Popular Dutch nursery rhyme)

If a sudden tremor of the earth's crust were to strike the Low Countries and upturn the capital city of Amsterdam in its destructive magnitude, a dense forest would rise from under the ground, because Amsterdam is, in fact, sustained by millions of tree-trunks. We know that for the building of the Beurs van Berlage, the old stock exchange, over 5,000 trunks were needed to form a secure pillar-foundation, and for the Royal Palace on the Dam even 13,000 trunks had to be piled into the ground. The density of all those trees rising up to the daylight would transform Amsterdam into an almost impenetrable jungle. Perhaps the large number of tulips cropping up near the convergence of two canals would tell us we are nearby the one-time flower market on the Muntplein and a long row of suspicious mushrooms and marijuana plants might help us to identify the former Warmoes-Straat; but in any event, one would feel pretty lost in this Amsterdam jungle.

The risk of a real earthquake in the Netherlands is virtually nil, yet looking back at its history in the last fifty years, one is somehow under the impression that an earthquake-like shock has actually upturned Dutch society twice. The first turn came in the late 1960s, the second one occurred after the killings of the politician Pim Fortuyn and the film-maker Theo van Gogh at the beginning of this century. It is my intention in this article to show that both "shocks" are actually closely related to each other and that each was the beginning of a sometimes painful, but in the end undoubtedly fruitful interpretation of what it means to be Dutch.

Although in the sixties, profound cultural and political changes took place in all Western European nations, the Netherlands was certainly among those countries where these changes were most radical. The Netherlands had remained neutral during World War I and consequently many of the ideas and values of the 19th century had never been questioned. When the Jewish author Konrad Merz fled from Germany to Amsterdam in 1933, he describes in his autobiography *Ein Mensch fällt aus Deutschland* his arrival in Holland as a flight into past decades. At that time, the Netherlands was, indeed, still a deeply conservative and profoundly religious country. It was exceptional not to be part of a church and some in the Dutch Bible Belt would go so far as to demand that their believers — literally — separated the cocks from the hens on Sundays. This conservative Christian mentality was reflected in Dutch morality and social life: nakedness was taboo (even in museums), a woman could not open a bank account without permission from her father or husband, Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* could not be shown to children because it was considered a suspect movie, and as for Dutch homosexuals, even Morocco seemed a paradise of male sexual liberty in comparison to Holland.[1]

The dramatic events during the German occupation of the Netherlands in World War II did not have an immediate effect on the Dutch way of life. Respect for authority remained unchallenged, whether towards the father in the family, the teacher in the classroom, the boss at work, or the queen on the throne. In the 1950s, churches, labor unions and politicians were still able to successfully launch a joint campaign to reinforce public morals after the "moral decay" of the Dutch population during the occupation and particularly during the celebrations after the liberation.

It is against this backdrop that one should interpret the profound changes that happened during the sixties. In a short period, this deeply religious and conservative country became predominantly secular and liberal. However, as the Dutch-British journalist Ian Buruma observes in *Murder in Amsterdam* (2006), the habit of preaching still comes naturally to the Dutch (cf. Buruma 2006, 230). It was, in fact, with zeal comparable to religious converts that the generation of the sixties slashed traditional morality and values. So the Netherlands not only adopted one of the most progressive pro-abortion laws, but also, with their organization "Women on Waves" and the "Abortion-Boat", feminists spread the word of Dutch progressiveness around Europe as if they were called to a mission. For the same reason, there was little understanding of different views. According to James Kennedy, an American sociologist of Dutch descent, the assumed success of progressiveness prevented the Dutch from interpreting criticisms of their progressive policies as anything but ignorant and reactionary – or at the very least, as a misunderstanding (Kennedy 1999, 223).

It is a well-known fact that the Netherlands was far more radical than any other European country in applying the progressive philosophy of the sixties to political practice. Whether in the case of gay marriage, abortion, the legalization of soft drugs or euthanasia, Dutch legislators were not only frontrunners, but often had a tendency to consider the Netherlands as a country of guidance and seemed convinced that sooner or later, the sun of Dutch progressiveness would shed its light on even the darkest corners of this world.

What is perhaps less known internationally is that the same radicalism could be detected in the Dutch way of dealing with national identity. In less than a decade, the Netherlands transformed itself from a colonial empire with a provincial

mentality into a small nation with an international mentality. The generation of the sixties proved to be talented in deconstructing Dutch national myths: the former heroes of colonial expansion were exposed as cruel murderers, the shine of the Golden Age was tarnished by studies focusing on Dutch involvement in the international slave trade, and the same country that had once proudly presented itself as the cradle of tolerance was accused of having permitted the transport of a higher percentage of its Jewish citizens to the Nazi death camps than any other nation besides Poland. These studies not only aimed at a critical interpretation of historical consciousness and national identity, they often questioned the utility of a national identity as such.[2] They were what British historian Jonathan Israel would later label as "the beginning of the Dutch cultural suicide".[3] There seemed to be a consensus among intellectuals that Dutch identity was nothing but a fantasy, a dangerous invention of the 19th century,[4] or to borrow the words of literary critic and columnist Elsbeth Etty: "Whenever I read the words 'national identity', I'm hearing the sound of boots running up the stairs" (cf. Heijne 2003, 16). Flemish author and journalist Geert van Istendael even called the destruction of tradition in the Netherlands a "national sport" and was particularly critical of the way the Dutch neglected their national language (Istendael 2005, 37). In Belgium, where the Flemings had to fight for decades to have Dutch recognized as an official language, there is, indeed, a much stronger awareness of the cultural importance of Dutch language than in the Netherlands. It is not by chance that foreigners visiting the Netherlands would often be surprised to see how people seemed willing to speak every possible language with them, except Dutch. Holland might in fact be the worst possible place on earth for a foreigner to learn Dutch. It is significant that in 1989, the Dutch Minister of Education, Jo Ritzen, was convinced that all European universities would eventually teach courses in English and he therefore seriously considered

introducing English as the only language of instruction at all Dutch universities. The author Harry Mulisch, an icon of the revolutionary sixties, made even more provocative predictions regarding the future of Dutch language. In 1995, when he was distinguished by the *Nederlandse Taalunie*, a Belgian-Dutch association that promotes the study of Dutch language abroad, he saw fit to actually discourage foreigners from learning Dutch because the language would soon disappear: "75 years from now, we will all be speaking English and Dutch will only be our second language, just like Frisian nowadays for the Frisians" (Mulisch 1995, 122).[5] In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the Netherlands was, in fact, characterized by a strange contradiction: the Dutch were showing a keen interest in all kind of cultures, but at the same time seemed to emphasize this interest by rejecting, neglecting or ridiculing their own culture.

The original Dutch policy of integration of immigrants who had entered the country as "guest workers" in the 1960s followed a similar line of reasoning. The basic idea of this policy was that integration should permit the preservation of one's original culture. This policy reflected the traditional "pillarization" concept; the division of Dutch society into different "pillars", interest groups along religious and political lines, that in the 19th century had led to the successful integration of the Catholic minority. In the 1960s, however, this policy did not stimulate the integration of immigrants in any form. Social mobility and secularism had made the traditional "pillarization" a useless concept. Moreover, neither Dutch politicians nor the immigrants of the first generation themselves assumed that they would ever consider permanent residency in the Netherlands. And, after all, why should there be such a thing as integration, since national identity was seen as a mere fantasy, a conservative and dangerous relic from the 19th century?[6]

Yet a large majority of these immigrants did eventually decide to stay. The government decided to accept them as permanent residents, granting these immigrants the right to become Dutch citizens and to be joined by family members from their country of origin. The Dutch population generally applauded this decision and many even had strong hopes that thanks to the steady increase of immigrants, the Netherlands would become irreversibly multicultural, so that the conservative and deeply religious society of their childhoods would definitively become something of the past.

This idea of a colorful, multicultural society acquired a face in the year 1975 with the construction of the prestigious Bijlmer-project, a social district in Amsterdam, inspired by the "functional city" ideas of Swiss architect Le Corbusier and designed by Dutch urban developer Siegfried Nassuth. The Bijlmer was seen as the future face of the Netherlands, a place where both the Dutch and the immigrants would build a new, multicultural society together. It is, however, illustrative that the residents in the Bijlmer were provided with myriads of facilities, except one: there was not a single room provided for religious services, simply because nobody had thought that religion would play a role in this idealistic multicultural society.

Yet, while God was slowly dying in the Netherlands, he was still very much alive in the countries of origin of most of these immigrants, particularly those coming from Morocco and Turkey. Together with their families, they brought a much more traditional conception of society, a conception that in many cases was surprisingly similar to the one the generation of the sixties had so desperately tried to destroy: a strong respect for the father as head of the family, a more traditional role for women in society, a limitation of sexual liberty, and above all, a society in which religion played a key role.

It was not until the turn of the century that these cultural and social differences became a topic of debate. The discussion was launched by Pim Fortuyn, a columnist and prominent member of the gay community, who had been professor of sociology at the University of Rotterdam before he founded his own political party – the "Lijst Pim Fortuyn". Whereas multiculturalism had been traditionally viewed as part of Dutch progressiveness, Fortuyn claimed that exactly the opposite was true: the more multicultural Dutch society became, the less progressive its future would be. His irritation with the way that accomplishments of Dutch progressiveness were challenged because of immigration was reflected in his continuous use of words such as "retarded" and "backward" in regards to the Muslim community, or as he put it in one of his speeches: "I want to stop the multicultural society because I don't want to go back fifty years in history [...] and to go through the emancipation of women and homosexuals all over again."[7]

After Fortuyn's murder in 2002, a few days before the elections that probably would have made him the new Prime Minister, and after the murder of film-maker Theo van Gogh two years later, the Netherlands was deeply shocked. The tragic events eventually led to a catharsis in Dutch society. Some, like the right-wing politician Geert Wilders, had the ambition to continue and even to radicalize Pim Fortuyn's confrontational approach with proposals such as the prohibition of the Koran or the making of the deliberately provocative movie *Fitna* about Islam. In general, however, people longed for tranquility and order. For many, the values of the past seemed to represent the best way out of the crisis. In recent years, many Dutch did, in fact, abandon the dreams of the sixties and replaced them with the nostalgic glorification of traditional Dutch society from the 1950s. It was not a coincidence that the conservative Christian Democrat Party

benefited most from the crisis, lead by its deeply religious, Eurosceptic and openly patriotic leader Jan Peter Balkenende, whose campaign platform appealed to the recovery of the values and merits of the former colonial East India Company and openly criticized gay marriage and other progressive legacies of the sixties.

This nostalgic and neo-nationalistic trend is also noticeable at the left of the political spectrum. In the Social Democratic Party, for instance, people like sociologist Paul Scheffer insist that a transnational conception of identity is incompatible with the Dutch democratic system and social welfare state that are still based on territorial principles. Scheffer therefore wants to stimulate immigrants to identify more with their country of arrival than with their country of origin, but recognizes that there will be no successful integration of immigrants as long as the Dutch continue to neglect their own national identity. He therefore makes a strong appeal to Dutch intellectuals to reflect on what it means to be Dutch and to identify the core values of the Netherlands:

> The Dutch are afraid to identify what unites their society. We need to speak more about our borders because we lost connection to our own history and we have been careless about our own language. A society that renounces itself has nothing to offer to newcomers.[8]

A similar reaction can be found in the work of prominent intellectuals like the columnist Bas Heijne, who calls the Netherlands a "spiritual no man's land, where there is no vision on national identity, on Dutch culture and on what it means to be Dutch in times of migration and globalization."[9] Or Dutch historian Geert Mak, who rediscovered the benefits of Dutch society in the 1950s, when the Netherlands was still

orderly, with clear values and norms; a society in which, according to Mak, the integration of Muslim immigrants would be much easier, because:

> Everything was still clear. Everyone went to his own church on Sundays, roles were clearly defined. If you drove through a red light, you got a ticket, if you didn't pay attention at school, you got a slap. It was a recognizable society for everyone, also for Moroccans from a small village. Compared to the rest of the world, The Netherlands, and Amsterdam in particular, has become too exotic after the sixties. (Mak, 2006)

In recent years, a surprising U-turn in Dutch society has indeed taken place, which in its radical nature is reminiscent of the dramatic changes that occurred in the 1960s. The same society that had disparaged its own language for so long now demands that all new immigrants pass a difficult Dutch language exam. Whereas national history used to be considered a relic of the past, in 2004, the *Week of Dutch History* was organized under the slogan *Typically Dutch*. In 2005, the main Dutch book fair chose *Our History* as its central theme. The *Canon of Dutch History* has recently been introduced as a compulsory course in Dutch high schools. The latest exhibition in the Rijksmuseum was dedicated to former naval hero Michiel de Ruyter and the latest political party has chosen the name *Proud of the Netherlands*.[10] Ironically, the same country that for decades denied the existence of Dutch national identity even prepared a compulsory citizenship test, with questions such as: "What do the Dutch eat with kale? Is it bacon, sausages or eggs?"[11] These examples indicate that there is a present tendency to re-essentialize Dutch identity. It is not a coincidence that Filip Dewinter, leader of the extreme-right party in Belgium, has cynically observed that the Dutch

dream of being a country of guidance for the rest of Europe finally seems to becoming true. (cf. Dirks/Lanting, 2005)[12]

Whereas concern about national identity in Europe had, for decades, been almost exclusively associated with shady rightwing political movements, it has now become fashionable even among politicians at the political left.[13] An interesting case of this phenomenon is illustrated through the ideas of Job Cohen, a prominent member of the Social Democratic Party and mayor of Amsterdam, who in his *Van Randwijk Lecture* in 2007 suggested the construction of a new Dutch identity:

> What will the new Dutch identity look like? Will this identity be inclusive or exclusive with regard to individuals and groups that are living in the Netherlands? Will the society have a place for minorities who are either unwilling or unable to join with the 'majority' or for minorities who are unwilling or unable to subscribe to the mono-identity? Will there be a place for them as minorities, but with equal rights and duties, along with respect for the fact that they are different? Alternatively, are we to develop into a society in which minorities have no place – and in which they therefore do not have equal rights? [...] My choice is for an inclusive society, a society that includes rather than excludes. This is fitting for the current era of globalization, in which we can no longer pretend to be unaffected by events that occur far away and in which we will continue to abide in our own country alongside people who have come from nearly every country in the world. [...] In addition, there are unmistakable elements that can be understood as the collective Dutch identity. These elements are characterized by several matters that

> have manifested themselves in various ways among our people throughout the ages. These elements include the following: s sense of liberty; openness to new things, people, ideas, places; an orientation to the outside: trade, travel, discovery; live and let live; being wealthy while acting as if resources are few; an endless tendency to complain about the other without taking these complaints too seriously. (Cohen, 2007)

It would be an oversight to underestimate the important role that immigrants have played in the recent discussion on identity in the Netherlands. People like Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Nahed Selim, Afshin Ellian, Anil Ramdas, Mohammed Benzakour or Ahmed Aboutaleb have forced Dutch society to reflect upon its historical legacy and to once again consider the foundations upon which the Netherlands rests.

This can be illustrated by examples from contemporary Dutch literature. Not long ago, dealing with Dutch topics in literature was considered suspect. In 1997, Dutch scholar Joseph Leerssen even suggested that it would be better to stop using the expression "Dutch literature", because there was no Dutch culture any more (Leerssen, 1997). This has now dramatically changed; the markets are inundated with Dutch "historical novels" (by P.F. Thomése, Thomas Rosenboom and Arthur Japin among others), all reflecting on the essence of Dutch identity. Yet there is a striking difference between this type of literature and the work of several Dutch authors of foreign ethnic background. Whereas the former tend to look back at Dutch identity in the past, the latter look to the future.

An interesting case is Hafid Bouazza, whose parents emigrated from Morocco in 1977 when he was seven years old. It is illustrative of the Dutch cultural climate in the 1990s

that when critics praised the language of Bouazza's first short stories for being so exotically Arab, he referred them to the *Tachtigers*, a Dutch poetic movement from the 19th century, and to Dutch medieval literature, a literature, he added, which he had to study on his own because his teachers in high school didn't teach medieval literature any longer (cf. Bouazza 2004, 100). And indeed, a more profound study revealed that words and expressions Dutch critics had originally labeled as exotic turned out to be archaic Dutch.

As Henriette Louwerse, Professor of Dutch at the University of Sheffield, has convincingly demonstrated, this re-invention of Dutch cultural and historical legacy is a prominent characteristic of Bouazza's work. For example, in his short story *Apollien*, about a love affair between a Moroccan immigrant and a Dutch girl, the couple lives in the Egelantiers-Straat in Amsterdam. The "egelantier" or, in English "sweet briar" (*Rosa rubiginosa*), was a popular symbol of sensual love in medieval literature. Yet, the connection is even more profound: it was also the symbol chosen by the Chamber of Rhetoric after the Spanish troops were definitively expelled from Amsterdam in 1578. The Chamber saw it as its task to promote reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants and therefore chose "In Liefde Bloeiende" (blooming in love) as its motto. Intercultural and interreligious love is, in fact, an important topic not only in Bouazza's literature, but also in his columns. He is critical of "import-marriages", whereby the large majority of his fellow Moroccan immigrants tend to prefer marriage with a partner from their country of origin. He strongly believes that the multicultural society will only be successful when intercultural love is no longer an exception.[14]

A similar message is transmitted in Bouazza's novel *Solomon* (2001). One of the main characters is named P. Schnabber,

a psychologist who lives in the Vossiusstraat in Amsterdam. It is not difficult to recognize in the name P. Schnabber an allusion to the sociologists Paul Schnabel and Paul Scheffer, who both published critical studies on the Dutch multicultural society, based on impressive evidence about criminality and unemployment among second and third generation descendents of immigrants.[15] Schnabel called his study the "Dutch multicultural illusion" (2000) and Scheffer even used the expression "the multicultural drama" (2000). Bouazza himself is known to be critical regarding those immigrants who prefer the ghetto of their own community over participation in Dutch society, because, as he put it in his book *A Bear with a Fur Coat* (2001): "It is hard to walk with a clog on one foot and a mule on the other."[16] Yet, although he defends compulsory Dutch language courses for new immigrants, he disagrees with Schnabel and Scheffer that the focus on integration or assimilation is the best strategy. According to Bouazza, the main deficit in immigrant communities is the lack of individualization. Both the Dutch government and their own representatives uphold the preservation of a group identity, whereas Bouazza insists on the importance of building a critical, individual identity. He encourages Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands to think critically about both Moroccan and Dutch traditions and writes:

> No heart can beat in two places at the same time. If you decide to live in a different country and expect everything to remain the same, then you have not understood what immigration means. Moroccans in the Netherlands are told that they must emancipate themselves as a community. I do not agree, I think they should individualize themselves. Because putting together people based on their ethnic origin is a form of racism.[17]

This also explains the importance of the street name mentioned in the novel *Salomon*, the Vossiusstraat. Gerhard Vossius was an important Dutch humanist, one of the first to critically examine theological dogmas in both Christianity and in non-Christian religions from a historical point of view. Like Vossius, Bouazza seems to indicate that he wants immigrants to think for themselves and not as a group or as part of a tradition. Identity does indeed play a key role in Bouazza's work; however, it is not presented as something you can simply adopt or inherit, but rather as the consequence of an individual and critical reflection.[18] It corresponds to his polemical statement that Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands need good schools rather than big mosques.[19]

Another prominent voice of foreign origin in contemporary Dutch literature is Kader Abdolah, who came to the Netherlands in 1988 as a political refugee from Iran. He was then 34 years old and did not speak a single word of Dutch. In *The Journey of the Empty Bottles* (1997), he described his original confusion regarding the Dutch way of life, comparing Iran as a culture where everything happens behind the curtains to the Netherlands, a society without curtains, where everything is done in a half-naked way. Abdolah started writing simple stories about being a foreigner in the Netherlands and has in the meantime become one of the most celebrated novelists in Dutch literature. His pen-name is a compilation of the names of two friends: one of them — Kader — was killed by the army of the Shah, the other — Abdolah — by Ayatollah Khomeini's secret police. Abdolah's struggle with the Dutch language is metaphorically reflected in his autobiographical novel *My Father's Notebook* (2000). It tells the story of the political dissident Ishmael, who, in his new home in the Netherlands, attempts to translate his father's notebook into Dutch. In this process of translating and deciphering, he narrates his father's story, his own story, and the story of

twentieth-century Iran. This task is complicated by the fact that his mute and illiterate father wrote the notebook in a self-invented cuneiform script. Whereas Ishmael's writing in Dutch represents the construction of a new homeland, the process of translation brings back memories and mysteries of his native Persia. His search for a new identity in the Netherlands entails a complicated deciphering of the past, which results in his rewriting the history of his father's land in the literature of his new language. Like his father, who was a carpet-mender, Ishmael interweaves both traditional and new elements into his tapestry of words.

In *My Father's Notebook*, Abdolah evokes life on new soil by literally setting the scene of the Dutch part of the novel in Flevoland, the province on land reclaimed from the former Zuiderzee bay. Other powerful metaphors of traditional Dutch identity occur in the novel, such as the characterization of the dunes as a natural barrier against the threatening sea. Whereas symbols like dunes and reclaimed land in an entirely Dutch context would almost inevitably dilute into clichés, the interaction with the memories of a refugee from Iran gives them a refreshing meaningfulness. This duality of reinventing tradition on new land extends itself to literature. *My Father's Notebook* is full of references to both Persian and Dutch literature. Sometimes Dutch authors are named, and in the case of Multatuli, P.N. van Eyck and Rutger Kopland they are even quoted. On other occasions references to Dutch literature can be deduced such as in the chapter *A wife*, which begins with the words: "All the birds had started making their nests, all except Aga Akbar" (Abdolah 2007, 41), a clear reference to the oldest poem in Dutch literature, dating from the 12th century.

Abdolah clearly frames his literature in a Dutch tradition. Yet, as in the case of Bouazza, this tradition is deliberately reinvented and re-contexualized on an individual basis: "Just

as Holland invented this ground, this landscape, I can use my father's cuneiform writings to invent something new" (Abdolah 2007, 100). In their reflection on cultural identity, authors such as Bouzza and Abdolah confirm the importance of Dutch tradition, but at the same time, they indicate that traditions can only survive in a multicultural society based on a flexible interpretation. In fact, after the word identity, they do not put one final dot, they put three.

By doing so, they represent an alternative to the unrealistic rebirth of the orderly, conservative Holland of the 1950s, when the essentialist, uniform interpretation of Dutch identity was still unchallenged. Instead of asking immigrants what the Dutch eat together with kale, they seem to suggest that a more intelligent question might be: "How would you integrate Dutch kale in one of your own recipes?"

This essay began with the image of tree-trunks in Amsterdam, rising from underground, transforming Amsterdam into a jungle. For those who can only imagine national identity in an essentialist, monocultural form, it might be wise to point out that the pilings upon which Amsterdam is built are not Dutch at all. The trunks were actually imported from Scandinavia. They should remind us that when we reflect on the future of Dutch identity, nationalist essentialism is not an option, because the very foundations of our nation are of foreign origin.

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ENDNOTES

[1] A case in point is the poetry of Jef Last about Morocco in *De bevrijde eros, Een ketter in Moorenland en andere gedichten* (1936).

[2] According to Jan Marijnissen, president of the extreme-left SP-Party, one of the main reasons why the integration of immigrants in the Netherlands failed is the Dutch habit of ridiculing and neglecting national history and identity (cf. Derksen 2005, 43).

[3] See Jonathan Israel: "Culturele zelfmoord" (2005). According to Geert Mak, the generation of the sixties made a big mistake in neglecting and ridiculing national identity (cf. Derksen 2005, 347). According to James C. Kennedy, the obsession with "innovation" in Dutch culture has prevented the creative and fruitful use of Dutch history and meaningful Dutch traditions (cf. Kennedy 2005, 30).

[4] A typical case is Joseph Theodor Leerssen, Dutch professor of modern European literature at the University of Amsterdam, according to whom traditional Dutch identity is nothing but a

mirage, based on the idea that the contemporary Netherlands is a direct and unproblematic continuation of the old Republic of the United Provinces (Leerssen 2006, 9). A similar idea can be found in the work *Vergankelijkheid en Continuïteit* (1995) by the famous Dutch historian E.H. Kossmann, in which he expresses his doubts that the Netherlands would actually need a national identity and national heritage.

[5] Similar ideas can be found in the work of author Carry van Bruggen or essayist Peter van der Veer, who actually encouraged Dutch authors to stop writing in Dutch and to start writing in English (cf. Scheffer 2007, 158).

[6] In *Gedwongen tot Weerbaarheid* (2005), French journalist and columnist Sylvain Ephimenco argues that the Dutch were naïve to expect that newcomers would identify themselves with their norms and values, whereas at the same time the Dutch themselves were so enthusiastically denying the existence of a Dutch identity.

[7] Cf. Pim Fortuyn: "Ik wil de multiculturele maatschappij stoppen omdat ik niet vijftig jaar in de geschiedenis terug wil gaan. (…) Ik heb geen zin de emancipatie van vrouwen en homoseksuelen nog eens over te doen. (...) Ik haat de islam niet. Ik vind het een achterlijke cultuur" (Poorthuis/Wansink, 2002).

[8] Cf. Scheffer: "Nederlanders zijn bang om aan te geven wat onze samenleving bijeenhoudt. We zeggen te weinig over onze grenzen, koesteren geen verhouding tegenover het eigen verleden en bejegenen de taal op een nonchalante manier. Een samenleving die zichzelf verloochent, heeft nieuwkomers niets te bieden" (Scheffer, 2000).

[9] Cf. Heijne: "Ons land is een geestelijk niemandsland, er is geen visie meer op de nationale identiteit, op de Nederlandse cultuur, op wat het eigenlijk betekent om Nederlander te zijn in tijden van migratie en globalisatie" (Heijne, 2003: 13).

[10] "Proud of the Netherlands" (Dutch: *Trots op Nederland*, ToN) is the name of the political party founded by Dutch independent MP Rita Verdonk on 17 October 2007.

[11] For more information on this "Nationale Inburgering Test", see: www.teleac.nl/nationaleinburgeringtest/over.html. In "Radicale Bekering" (2005), James C. Kennedy explains this radical change in Dutch society based on the Dutch tendency to seek consensus with the opinion of the majority.

[12] Geert Mak considers the present Dutch policy towards immigrants "the least tolerant in Europe" and reminds us that in the last five years, the European Court of Justice convicted the Netherlands two times of human rights violations (cf. Derksen 2005, 43).

[13] According to Bas Heijne, the main reason for the current European malaise regarding immigration is the disappearance, somewhere in the late 1970s, of a vision on national identity and culture, on what it means to be Dutch, German or French in times of migration and globalization. In *Het verloren land. Opmerkingen over Nederland* (2003), he considers that too many of these ideas were taboo subjects, which explains why they eventually could so easily be monopolized by extreme right parties all over Europe (Heijne 2003, 13).

[14] Many descendents of immigrants in the Netherlands, particularly from the Moslem community, continued to marry with someone from his or her country of origin. Over 60% of the Moroccans and Turks in the Netherlands used to "import" a bride from their country of origin. In 2004, the Dutch government decided to impose stricter rules on the import of brides. The minimum age was increased from 18 to 21 and the minimum income had to be at least 120% of the Dutch minimum salary. As a consequence, the percentage of 'import-brides' has dropped to 25%.

[15] According to Paul Scheffer, 60% of all Moroccan and Turkish men over 40 in Amsterdam live on welfare (Scheffer 2007, 39).

[16] Cf. Hafid Bouzza: "Zij loopt tegelijkertijd op muil en klomp – en dat loopt verdomd moeilijk" (Bouzza 2004, 15).

[17] Cf. Hafid Bouzza: "Geen hart kan kloppen in twee oorden tegelijk. Wie in een ander land gaat wonen en verwacht dat alles bij hetzelfde kan blijven, heeft werkelijk niet begrepen wat immigratie is. Ik hoor [. . .] zeggen dat de Marokkanen in Nederland zich

moeten emanciperen. Nee, ze moeten individualiseren. Racisme is: mensen over één kam scheren of met elkaar verbinden vanwege hun afkomst" (Bouazza 2003, 26).

[18] Cf. Hafid Bouzza: "Out of all the elements of the cultures into which I have lived, I produce my own culture with the imagination as my sole instrument" (Bouazza 2001, 50).

[19] Cf. Hafid Bouzza: "Ik zou zo dolgraag hebben dat er eindelijk eens een einde kwam aan de bouw van al die moskeeën in Nederland. De liefdadigheidsinstellingen van de moskeeën sturen geld naar de Palestijnen, maar denk maar niet dat ze hun deur openzetten voor dakloze Marokkaanse verslaafden" (Bouzza 2003, 24). [I would love to put an end to the construction of mosques in the Netherlands. The charity organizations of theses mosques do indeed send money to the Palestinians, but do not think that they would ever open their doors to homeless Moroccan drug-addicts.]