

Chapter 5

New realism: 'I take them seriously, so I quarrel'

1. Murdered innocence

Murdered innocence. Ethnic difference as a Dutch taboo, is the telling title of a collection of essays in which sociologist and journalist Herman Vuijsje argues that Dutch progressive intellectuals, politicians and opinion-makers have become overcautious by putting a ban upon any mention of ethnic or racial differences (Vuijsje 1986). This taboo, according to Vuijsje, has been intensified since the Second World War, when the Dutch began to develop a guilty conscience regarding their lack of participation in the rescue of Dutch Jews from the holocaust. Vuijsje thinks this supposed taboo on ethnic difference is dangerous. It would censure the merely 'human' inclination to "treat people differently because of supposedly different group features" (1986: 25). The suppression of this natural tendency could have contrary effects. Out of frustration people might adopt a more virulent racist attitude. Throughout the book, Vuijsje testifies to his desire for a 'lost origin', a return to former days when "our country distinguished itself for its pre-eminently matter-of-fact like intercourse with ethnic difference" (7). To him, these were the days of Dutch innocence.

The minorities policy of the Dutch welfare state, under construction since the beginning of the 1980s, met with objections from the start. More and more critical voices emerged which took issue with its supposedly too soft approach. Policy makers, opinion leaders and researchers were asked to become more 'realistic'. This happened in the context of economic crisis, growing unemployment, and cutbacks in governmental expenditures. The conditions under which people were entitled to social welfare were questioned, and it was stressed that being a Dutch citizen not only implied rights, but also entailed responsibilities and obligations. Herman Vuijsje came to the fore as one of the first outspoken defenders of such a sense of civic responsibility. His *Murdered innocence* can be seen as an outspoken precursor of what he coined as an approach of 'new realism'. Some years later, politician Frits Bolkestein appeared as another convinced supporter of a more 'realistic' attitude vis-à-vis ethnic minorities. Bolkestein is especially lauded as well as despised as the initiator of a vehement debate about the position of, and policy concerning minority groups in the Netherlands in 1991.¹ The consensus between Vuijsje and Bolkestein is remarkable, in so far as the first is an avowed social-democrat, whose political affinity is closest to the Dutch Labour Party (*PvdA*), whereas the latter is the parliamentary leader of the conservative liberal party for Freedom and Democracy (*VVD*). That the 'new realism' is found appealing across the traditional left versus right division, is manifest in another significant contribution to the debate by Bernadette de Wit, renowned left-wing publicist and radical-liberal feminist. In 1993, one of her columns, 'White in the Bijlmer' (*Blank in de Bijlmer*), written for the (progressive) newspaper *de Volkskrant*, caused quite an uproar. All in all, the issue of ethnic minorities appears to unite and split the Dutch public along unexpected lines.

In this chapter, I will explore some of the ways in which the appeal to become realistic is associated with a politics of representation of the indigenous white Dutch, of 'the common people'. And I will argue why I find the concomitant desire for innocence problematic, both in the epistemic and the political sense. The call for a new realism in the Netherlands can be seen as a response to, on the one hand, a Dutch governmental policy of 'care', motivated and initiated since the 1970s by Christian and social-democratic governments, and, on the other hand, the demands for 'politically correct' representations of social reality from the radical left.² The advocates of new realism think these standpoints are often too soft on members of ethnic minority groups, and put an unjustified taboo on critically questioning their different habits, cultures or beliefs. In my view, their representations of the (ethnic) 'other' involve a specific representation of 'self'. More particularly, I will show that the discourse of new realism involves the (re)construction of a particular Dutch identity with both ethnical and genderized features.

2. Guts versus care

In September 1991, Frits Bolkestein initiated what was later to be called the 'national minorities debate'. The headline of the leading article announced that '[t]he integration of minorities should be taken in hand with guts' (Bolkestein 1991b).³ European civilization, according to Bolkestein, is sustained by the values of rationality, humanism and Christianity. These values bring along a number of fundamental political principles, such as secularization, freedom of speech, tolerance and the principle of non-discrimination. Since liberalism claims universal validity for these values, it finds that a civilization that honours these principles stands higher than a civilization that does not. Next, Bolkestein notes that in 'the world of Islam' these values do not fare well. He illustrates this view by mentioning the Rushdie-case, discrimination of homosexuals in Saudi Arabia, forcing girls into arranged marriages, and an instruction by an imam in Turkey to kill anyone who opposes Islam. He cannot say whether these examples illustrate a rule or must be seen as exceptions. Nevertheless, Bolkestein finds himself entitled to conclude that "it is a fact that the world of Islam lives in a strained relationship with its surroundings". As we, in Europe, are now confronted with an enormous stream of immigrants from Islamic countries, the question arises: "[H]ow should the Islamic minority and the non-Islamic majority relate to one another?" Bolkestein's answer is simple and straightforward, for "one thing is indisputable": bargaining about afore mentioned principles is out of the question. If a compromise is not possible, "we have to defend the achievements of our own culture". For Bolkestein, the boundaries of multicultural society are at stake here, which implies that, though pluralism can be embraced (citizens have the right to choose their own lifestyle, profess their own religion, etc.), cultural relativism should be rejected. What, in this situation, he asks, serves integration best: 'emancipation through pillarization' or 'emancipation through collective development'? Living up to his liberal credentials, Bolkestein doubts the credo of Dutch confessional politics, 'emancipation within one's own circle', for "perhaps the Catholics and members of the Dutch Reformed Church would have emancipated faster under oppression". He concludes that the aim of integration is at daggers drawn with the wish to preserve one's separate identity. Dutch policy therefore should be staked entirely at the integration of minority groups. Integration is a problem that can be solved, but it takes 'guts' and 'creativity'. It leaves no room for 'taboos' or 'noncommitment' (Bolkestein 1991b).

Bolkestein's argument triggered off a debate that kept going for more than a year.⁴ The responses were diverse. Representatives of different minority organizations sharply protested Bolke-

stein's negative stereotyping of so-called 'Muslim-culture' and his lack of knowledge about the actual positions and opinions of members of minority groups in the Netherlands. They accentuated the need for people to hold on to their own culture and identity, as a necessary precondition for integration and emancipation. Bolkestein was accused of rousing public sentiment against members of ethnic and racial minorities, thus blocking the possibilities for interethnic understanding and dialogue.⁵ It was stressed that Bolkestein made a tendentious choice of examples when arguing for the inferiority of 'Muslim-culture' by the opportunistic construction of an opposition between 'good' Western values and 'bad' Islamic practices (Bagci 1991). Several authors notice that the Dutch break their own laws frequently, that there is a Dutch political party which excludes women as members, and a Catholic Church which bars women from religious office. Others, not without sarcasm, wonder which of 'our' values exactly would Bolkestein have immigrants live up to: should they do their prayers on Sunday, or should Muslim women go to nudist beaches? One author lashes out: "But who are 'we'? 'We' are Ludwig von Beethoven, Frits Bolkestein and Jesus Christ. They are Ali Bhaba, Mohammed and the forty robbers. 'We' are not the inquisition, Hitler and Stalin. Does Gandhi belong to 'them' or to 'us'?" (Schreuders 1991) It was also pointed out that there are different branches of Islam, as well as a variety of interpretations of the Koran which give ample room for Muslims to preserve their religious identity and at the same time obey the laws of a secular state (Suudi 1991). Finally, Bolkestein would contradict his liberal position by posing as a 'liberal fundamentalist' in his demand for 'uncompromising assimilation'.⁶

Many of these critical comments refer to the actual *diversity* and *plurality* of immigrant as well as Dutch communities, and the necessity to acknowledge this in one's striving to build a multicultural society. At the same time, Bolkestein's anxiety about fundamental Western values being threatened is countered by the reassurance that, of course, principles such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion and non-discrimination are achievements not to be relinquished. Cultural relativism simply is not an issue for these authors either; none of them embraces the radical relativistic standpoint that Bolkestein so firmly contends. The issue at hand is rather (re)conceived as the problem of how, and to which extent, members of minority groups can be allowed to hold on to their own religious, cultural and ethnic identity within the confines of a modern society such as the Netherlands.

Hence, Bolkestein and his adversaries agree that the overall characteristics of Dutch society are those of a liberal, tolerant and pluralist society. A society which has neither a particular religious, nor cultural or ethnic identity. The essential trait of Dutch identity is assumed to be its non-identity, its fluidity, its openness to 'others'.⁷ The suggestion is that Dutch culture cannot really create a distinct profile for itself in terms of some 'authentic' identity - at the most, it can pride itself on its identity of non-identity.⁸

But the new realist discourse contains a subtext which tells another story. On this secondary level, one can discern the affirmation of a particular Dutch identity after all. For, with the construction of a realistic outlook on Dutch multi-ethnic society comes a particular image of the author as a realistic subject. Thus, in his defense of Western values and liberal political principles, Bolkestein, like Herman Vuijsje, presents himself as a man with the 'guts' to break a taboo, a man who dares to lay down the law, who knows how to make demands, and who values honesty above everything else. Those who applaud his position do not only agree with the adherence to Enlightenment values - many commentators are especially pleased with Bolkestein's show of civic courage. His contribution is welcomed as courageous, true, plain speaking, mature and civilized.⁹ As such, his position is said to stand out against the lenient and all too permissive attitude of present-day Dutch policy regarding minorities. The Bolkestein-supporters talk of hugging to death, a hypocritical attitude, treading on eggs, the culture of pitifulness, armchair talk,

and semi-soft minority organizations.¹⁰ In the interviews, articles and speeches made in the aftermath of his Luzern lecture, Bolkestein consolidates his image of a non-compromising, honest, sober and business-like man.

Most responses to Vuijsje's *Murdered innocence*, some five years before, were of the same tenor. Reviewers seem almost relieved that, finally, they are allowed to point to, for instance, the "actual trouble caused by newcomers" as one author frames it, such as "late and noisy Carribean parties", "cars parked on a footway before a mosque", even "Hindu cremation remainders polluting drinkwater" (Sanders 1986). Another is happy to find that Vuijsje considers jokes about ethnic groups perfectly acceptable, referring to Vuijsje's lament that, today, ethnic difference is allowed to be anything but funny (Moll 1986).¹¹ Vuijsje for instance nostalgically muses: "Where are the professional negroes of yore? It seems like ages, somewhere in a barbaric prehistoric time, that black artists were unconcerned in flirting with their blackness before an audience that became infatuated with them in a likewise unembarrassed way" (1986: 28). In those days, so he argues, no one found anything condescending or improper about that.

Vuijsje does not think of questioning the legitimacy of that consensus. But he might have if he had taken account of the perspective of the 'professional negroes' themselves. One of them was the Dutch-American black entertainer Donald Jones, about whom Vuijsje has especially good memories for "his 'happy-go-lucky' exuberance" (28). When looking back at this period in his life, Jones himself shows indignation about the racist implications of the performances in which he participated and forcefully denies that he was flirting with his skin colour (see Kagie 1989: 101-104).¹²

3. The common people

In their plea to break the assumed taboo on negative remarks about ethnic minorities, new realists such as Vuijsje and Bolkestein set themselves up for the representatives of the Dutch indigenous population. Although they do not use such Foucauldian terms, they regularly suggest that they are giving voice to 'subjugated knowledges', to the common people who otherwise would not be heard. Thus Bolkestein observes that "under the surface a widespread informal national debate, which was not held in public, was already going on" (Bolkestein et al. 1992a). And in the same television broadcast, he remarks that "many people talk about minorities, but few talk about the indigenous minorities in poor neighbourhoods in the big cities, those who live amongst an 'allochthonous' majority." On several occasions, Bolkestein refers to his position as a member of Dutch parliament: "A representative of the people who ignores the mind of the people is not worth a penny" (1991a), and: "Voters find that politicians do not take sufficient note of their problems. The issue of minorities is a problem constantly discussed in the pub and in the church. If that is not reflected in The Hague [seat of parliament and government, bp], then the electors will say: why would I vote?" (Bolkestein 1991c).

Vuijsje likewise presents himself as a spokesman of the autochthonous people, particularly the lower classes. He depicts them as endowed with a matter-of-fact like, open and realistic attitude toward ethnic and/or racial others. Moreover, he defends his constituency against allegations of racism by the left-wing, progressive intelligentsia. Thus, he reports about an incidence back in 1981 in the *Vogeltjesbuurt*, a neighbourhood in Tilburg. A quarrel between a Dutch and a Surinamese family had completely gotten out of hand. Result: four Surinamese wounded, their house half-destroyed. The other party gets away with hardly a scratch. The incidence was enlarged on in the national news media as a serious outburst of racist

violence. Vuijsje, however, is convinced that the label of racism is unjustified. In order to support his standpoint, he reports the analyses of several 'experts', people familiar with the neighbourhood such as the neighbourhood police officer and a social worker (both white), who are very upset about the accusations against 'their' local residents. Scuffles like these happen in this neighbourhood often, so they claim: "Everyone over here carries a knife, the Dutch and the Turks." They tell the reporter (Vuijsje) that the people over here are so close, that they exclude *all* outsiders, including Dutch people from 'decent' neighbourhoods (Vuijsje 1986: 17). For Vuijsje this proves that this is just how the indigenous inhabitants of the *Vogeltjesbuurt* are: the conflict is wholly consonant with this neighbourhood's culture. Its residents do not discriminate on the basis of skin colour - they are merely hostile to every outsider.

On the whole, in Vuijsje's work, three locations can be discerned where the Dutch in his view are (still) innocent in their attitude toward racial and ethnic others. Apart from the period before the Second World War, when the Dutch were not yet burdened with feelings of guilt, Vuijsje sees this innocence with the indigenous lower classes and with children. Notably, his concept of innocence is not to be associated with moral goodness. In Vuijsje's perspective, it rather has a *realist(ic)* connotation. An innocent attitude towards issues of race and ethnicity implies that one takes things for what they are, i.e. one's vision is not obfuscated by (moralistic or 'politically correct') ideas about how one should see things. Vuijsje's innocent subjects are willing to face conflicts, and, like children, they can be quite cruel, especially to strangers. At the end of the last essay, Vuijsje asks: "How can a more normal intercourse with ethnic difference been accomplished? How can something of innocence thrive again?" (188) Partly, the question is a rhetorical exclamation, an expression of a desire rather than a question to be answered. On the other hand, the foregoing essays suggest that the way out would be to be less bothered by historical and political knowledge about racial and ethnic relationships. In that sense, the desire for innocence is a longing for a paradise-like state, a longing for the time that we had not yet eaten from the tree of knowledge, the time we were still ignorant, like children.

In his story about the residents of the *Vogeltjesbuurt*, Vuijsje compares their, what he takes to be 'race-innocent' attitude, with the attitude of children. Children, in his view, are colour blind, but quite able to recognize unjustified generalizations. The difference with guilt-ridden, intellectual adults is that children condemn a prejudice like 'all Surinamese people stink' not for moral or political reasons, but with the same matter-of-fact like argument with which they would reject the preconception that all fathers wish to receive a drill on Father's Day: it simply is not true.

In this respect, it is interesting to quote the only dissonant in the choir of approval of *Murdered innocence*. Publicist Annet Bleich launched a frontal attack on Vuijsje's project, sarcastically sending his words to "the crusaders against the new racism", that, once, "the murdered innocence might strike back" (Bleich 1986). Bleich sees Vuijsje's essay as one masterful 'conjuring trick', which calls into being the taboo on ethnic difference, while at the same time hiding from view Dutch practices of everyday racism. To accomplish this, so Bleich, the scope of meaning of 'racism' is radically narrowed down, whereas 'guilt' is given an extremely broad interpretation.¹³ But, to Bleich, the final sentences of Vuijsje's essay form the crux of the matter. For Vuijsje asks the wrong questions when he wants to know how a more 'normal' intercourse with ethnic difference could be accomplished, or how 'innocence' could thrive again. The actual problem, according to Bleich, is: "What kind of innocence, what counts as normal, that is: what is the norm?"

In the new realist discourse of Vuijsje and Bolkestein, the Dutch, the common people, are ascribed certain characteristic features after all. The typically indigenous Dutch would not be bothered by

political ideologies: they are realistic, sober, honest and straightforward. Taboos do not have a hold on them, their views are not distorted by preconceived ideas, they perceive reality as it is. Therefore, it is worth taking these experiences and opinions into account.

However, Bolkestein and Vuijsje are not unambiguous in the reasons for giving their ear to the common people. Although, on the one hand, they give them credit for their realism and honesty, on the other hand they think the discontent among the autochthonous population should be taken seriously because it could turn into a disruptive force. As Bolkestein states: "It is my experience that if there is one way to see that things go wrong, it is when the official world does not dare to speak of what the semi- or unofficial world talks about" (1992a). And, in looking back and assessing the results of the minorities debate one year later: "[S]omeone who ignores the anxiety, nourishes the resentment he intends to fight" (1992e). Vuijsje likewise believes that a taboo on negative sentiments would only reinforce these feelings. Innocence has a reverse. The suppression of the 'natural' tendency to discriminate ("to treat people differently because of supposedly different group features") might have damaging effects. Eventually, it might lead to outbursts of anger and frustration.¹⁴ Here, in other words, the subjugated knowledges worth taking into account appear to carry with them a dark side of primitive and repressed emotions. From this perspective, one has to take the common people seriously, not because they are realistic, but in order to keep their emotions under control and carefully channel them in the right direction. Hence, where in one mode of speaking, 'the Dutch' are assumed to be led by Enlightenment values and a realistic outlook on the world, here 'the Dutch' are thought to be governed by repressed emotions. What elsewhere is presented as an open-minded and reasonable people, here appears as a mass that will follow its dark instincts if these are not carefully managed by its (political) representatives. Whereas for Vuijsje, this should happen to give room to 'innocent' or 'natural' interethnic relationships, Bolkestein sees it as the only 'civilized' way of dealing with inter-ethnic relationships.

4. Identity and difference

In the discourse of new realism, the representation of 'Dutchness' thus plays a pivotal role. Its understanding of the task of representation, however, is ambivalent. On the one hand, a realist approach of inter-ethnic relationships implies that one has to face and accept the social reality and perspective of the indigenous Dutch. Vuijsje and Bolkestein represent the (perception of) reality of the lower classes - where things can get tough and primitive, where people are not (yet) 'affected' by historical knowledge or a political consciousness, and where one is most 'down to earth', most in touch with the real. In this sense, representing the Dutch means: to serve as a ventriloquist for their perspectives and opinions, to give voice to their experiences because they stand for reality per se. Vuijsje values the knowledges of the Dutch common people because they would be politically innocent, sober and realistic. Whereas Bolkestein thinks the voice of the Dutch lower classes deserves a better public hearing for reasons of justice and democracy: they, after all, are Dutch citizens too, and their perspective has been ignored for too long. Thus, the indigenous population and their spokesmen come to the fore as essentially like-minded: both representatives and represented are realists, endowed with a healthy common sense, and no reverence for taboos. In this respect, Bolkestein and Vuijsje assume a relationship of *identity* between themselves as representatives and the ones they represent. They share a common perception of Dutch multi-ethnic

society.

On the other hand, Vuijsje and Bolkestein at times also dissociate themselves from the ones they represent. For the common people, next to subjects of valuable insights, are also perceived as an important, even potentially dangerous social and political force to be reckoned with. Their opinions are brought to the fore not only as subjugated knowledges, but also as the expressions of suppressed emotions and frustrations. Rather than taking these opinions at their word, the necessity of their careful management is stressed. Here, the indigenous Dutch are not represented as fellow citizens who are entitled to a voice of their own, but as a potential source of destructive forces that could erupt at any time and undermine social order. It therefore must be manipulated and steered in the right direction by its more reasonable and knowledgeable representatives. The perspectives of the indigenous people cannot always be taken for granted: sometimes they have to be countered. Thus, when Bolkestein feels he is going to be attacked for his way of 'speaking for' the Dutch people, he quickly interrupts his opponent: "I am not their spokesman. I represent an opinion of my own" (1992a). In other words, sometimes it is recognized that there is a *difference* or *distance* between representative and represented.

This latter view of representation draws attention to the fact that every representation, whether of a reality 'out there' or of a particular view, opinion or interest, also involves a representation of a self, i.e. of a particular subject who does the representing. In the case of the new realists' representation of Dutchness, for instance, this is not only a self which is like-minded with, or at least on the side of the indigenous lower classes and their supposedly realistic outlook; it is also a courageous self which dares to take a stand in a debate, a self that shows the guts to publicly express and support a bold outlook on interethnic relationships.

Thus, Vuijsje and Bolkestein pose as the staunch defenders of fundamental Western values, who show the guts to break dominant taboos. They willingly face the risk of being accused, wrongly, of ethnocentrism, or even racism. They set their own position against a supposed position of cultural relativism, which they deem a cowardly way of dealing with a multicultural society. Next to this, they also present themselves as publicly daring to doubt some of the values and practices of minority groups. They do not shun the discussion, they do not fear confrontation. Finally, they courageously face the growing feelings of dissatisfaction and unrest among the indigenous inhabitants of poor urban neighbourhoods.

In each case, the new realists' positioning is contrasted with the supposedly lax attitude of their adversaries. Appeals to innocence play a constitutive role in the construction of each of these oppositions. Thus, in the opposition of the defense of modern values versus the embrace of cultural relativism, new realists suggest their *cultural* innocence: as modern subjects, they would not be restricted by commitments to particular cultural values. Secondly, in the opposition of guts versus care, new realists suggest their *moral* innocence: as honest and straightforward subjects, they would tell it as it is, and not let themselves be inhibited by the fear to hurt or insult people. Thirdly, in the opposition of recognizing the common people versus the denial or condemnation of their views, new realists suggest *political* innocence in their speaking for the innocent and marginalized, for the 'silent majority'.

5. The power of representation

In the discourse of new realism, assumptions concerning Dutch identity play a pivotal role. And although the new realists' conception of Dutchness is multi-layered, each layer carries its own connotation of

innocence. In this section, I will challenge these subsequent appeals to Dutchness by focusing on the possible performative effects of the new realist discourse.¹⁵ That is: what, in its speaking *about* Dutch multi-ethnic society, may this discourse actually *do* to that same society? For instance, how might a discourse which constructs two parties who are warring over their common (Dutch) identity by disputing the treatment of their most proximate strangers, act upon interethnic relationships within Dutch society?¹⁶ What kind of power relationships are brought into being through such a discursive constellation?

As indicated, the image of Dutch society as a typically modern society in which values of Western civilization such as rationality, tolerance and non-discrimination are generally accepted, is shared by new realists and their supposedly relativist opponents alike. As a particular cultural identity, 'Dutchness' is taken to be non-existent. At first glance, this appears quite a humble assessment of one's position - and participants in the debate often present it as such.

However, this modest mode of speech has a reverse. For by assuming that Dutchness is an unmarked category, a subject position that does not strike the eye because it does not differ from modern culture in general, it turns out to coincide with what is considered the norm or normal. Hence, everything not-Dutch gets marked as 'other', as different from that norm. This assumed invisibility of one's own subject position, feminist and other critical thinkers have argued, is typical for the kind of discourse produced from culturally and socially dominant positions. This representation of Dutch identity as a non-identity can be seen as a particular example of Western or white discourse that contrasts its unmarked (but actually Western, Dutch, white, etc.) self with its culturally and racially marked 'others'. Its civilized and modern outlook, constituted by supposedly *universal* principles, is contrasted with so-called 'traditional' cultures with their supposedly *particular* customs, habits and values. The hierarchy tacitly inscribed in the subject's identification with an unmarked category precludes the mutuality which at the same time is praised as the necessary precondition for intercultural dialogue. Instead, the problem of how to organize life in a multicultural society becomes a problem of the limits of tolerance: to what extent can ethnic minorities be allowed to hold on to their own beliefs and practices? Talking about the limits of one's tolerance, however, puts one inevitably into, and reinforces a more powerful position. As such, its reputation as the ethical panacea for problems of social and cultural interaction is difficult to maintain. As one moral philosopher, in his analysis of the minorities debate, phrases it: "[Tolerance] is the privilege of the powerful in society who are in the position to connive at the bizarre. It is frustrating for the less powerful to be tolerated rather than accepted or seriously contradicted" (Procee 1992: 331). Another intervention in the debate likewise points to the paradoxical and therefore limited value of the principle of tolerance, because it is "a form of one-way traffic, both from a majority regarding a minority, as from a tolerant attitude regarding an intolerant attitude. To learn to live with this one-sidedness is a form of tolerance" (Maneschijn 1992).¹⁷

Secondly, from a new realist perspective, the public debate is one *among* Dutch citizens. As they address the question what kind of a society 'we' actually want to be, they further social cohesion. Though parties will disagree as to what is at stake - whereas from the perspective of the new realists the difference is one of guts versus care, their opponents may depict it as a matter of indifference versus solidarity, or harshness versus sensitivity -, the debate itself is assumed to be an encounter between equals. It creates and sustains bonds of friendship and enmity, it brings them together as adversaries over a matter of common interest.

This strengthening of social bonds *within* Dutch society builds on the exclusion of the voice of ethnic and racial minority groups. Especially in the new realist discourse, members of the minority groups

are *under* discussion, rather than perceived as participants *in* the discussion. They neither appear as friends, nor as outspoken opponents. The fact that many representatives of minority groups actually do take the floor is to little avail. In the new realists' contributions, (the perspectives and values of) members of ethnic minorities remain the *object* of deliberation - seldom are they *addressed* as (potential) contributors.¹⁸ In quite a literal sense then, the position of minorities within the new realist approach is a position of strangers. Its rhetoric of firmness and clarity serves the Dutch autochthonous majority to take a stand, while it endows ethnic minorities with the status of, in Zygmunt Bauman's terms, *undecidables*: neither friends, nor enemies, neither inside, nor outside, but strange, unclassifiable, and hardly controllable.¹⁹

Finally, the new realists' practice of representation involves speaking on behalf of the autochthonous common people. It shows especially committed to the indigenous residents of old city quarters. The voicing of the interests of this constituency, however, may have unforeseen (and, as I assume, also undesired) performative effects. On the one hand, new realism construes the spoken for as a 'silent majority', as subjects who cannot speak for themselves and who need articulate representatives in order to prevent emotional outbursts of frustration, i.e. racism. To use Haraway's terminology, it reduces them to a category of nature: unpredictable and in need of good governance. On the other hand, new realism turns the ones with whom these indigenous residents (have to) live most closely together, their Surinamese, Turkish and/or Moroccan neighbours, into, to use another of Haraway's terms, an 'antagonistic environment'. In my reading, the Dutch new realist discourse thus confirms Haraway's suspicion of practices of representation. Her proposal to practice 'articulation' would instead invite opinion makers and politicians to perceive the residents of a multi-ethnic neighbourhood as one community, a community which faces shared problems such as low incomes, high rates of unemployment, neglect of houses and high rents.

6. Gender and sexuality

So far, I focused on the construction of subject positions along *ethnic* or *cultural* lines. However, the different positions assigned within the new realist discourse carry *gendered* connotations as well.

Thus, the opposition between a policy of care and a policy of guts shows much similarity with the difference between a nurturing mother who covers the misdoings of her children with the cloak of charity, and a demanding father who asks his children to grow up, obey the laws, and become responsible fellow citizens. In other words: from the perspective of new realists, their opponents in the minorities debate advocate a weak, effeminate, overcaring and ultimately inefficient state.²⁰ In this respect, it is interesting to recall that the Dutch word for welfare state since the 1960s is *verzorgingsstaat*: the 'caring' state. According to Annemarie Mol, during the seventies and eighties, the Dutch welfare state was often depicted as a mothering state. Whether conceived of as a loving, an overfeeding, or a disciplining mother, it was assumed to be able to function only under the protection of 'Father State': the constitutional state which lays down the laws.²¹

Moreover, in these disputations, *women* are of focal interest. In Bolkestein's initial plea for 'guts', for instance, references to the position of women in 'Islamic cultures' are prominent. When condemning Islam for not living up to the principle of non-discrimination, he states: "The way women are treated in the world of Islam casts a slur on the reputation of that civilization", after which he refers to a recent and

popular book in which a Turkish theologian approves of beating women (Bolkestein 1991b). Other issues mentioned are: marrying off girls against their will, 20% of Turkish and Moroccan girls of school age not attending school, mothers needing permission from their husbands to participate in educational support programs for their children, and girls wearing headscarves. Though the latter is not forbidden in the Netherlands, it must be reminded, so Bolkestein suggestively writes, that “the scarf stands for a lot more than covering one’s hair” (1991b). In a separate column to the article, Bolkestein is quoted from an earlier speech in which he made a like statement about the position of women blotting the reputation of Islam, adding the assumption that most Dutch women would therefore share his opinion that Islamic culture does not equal Western culture. When he later elaborates his point against cultural relativism, Bolkestein enumerates five possible consequences, four of which involve the position of women: the burning alive of widows, female circumcision, polygamy, and withholding girls education (see Bolkestein 1992b and 1992d).

Bolkestein’s remarks on the position of women within Islam elicited a variety of reactions, many of which objected, again, to his oversimplifying matters in favour of Western culture. In reality, so it was stated, the socio-economic and legal position of women in the Middle East and the Maghreb differs from country to country: in some it leaves much to be desired, in others matters have improved significantly (Suudi 1991). The situation in the Netherlands is even more differentiated. On the one hand, Muslim communities in the Netherlands are perceived to be more conservative regarding women than in most countries of origin. On the other hand, the percentage of 20% of Muslim girls not attending school is corrected to be 6% or 7%, there is mention of a Dutch Islamic women’s movement, of Islamic runaway shelters for girls, and of imams willing to help in preventing forced marriage (De Raat 1991; Holthausen 1991; Van Koningsveld 1991).²²

Despite, or perhaps thanks to this differentiation, the problematic of women’s position, especially concerning issues of sexuality, seems to offer appealing material for illustrating one’s standpoint concerning the more general issue at stake in the minorities debate, i.e. the extent to which the integration of immigrants bears with the preservation of identity. Remarkably, this appears to be the case, no matter what the standpoint to be defended is. Apart from Bolkestein’s strategy to use the issue of women to contrast the backwardness of Islamic cultures with the supposed superiority of Western values,²³ it, for instance, is also used to *relativize* assumed differences: why, for instance, put a ban on headscarves when there are also many Dutch women who wear scarves, caps, or hats (look at the queen’s outfit!)? And does Bolkestein actually have a leg to stand on, as long as he goes along with the Christian churches being exempted from the Law of Equal Treatment, which allows them to bar women from religious offices? It can also be used to *contest* features of modern Dutch society, as one author does by asking what gets to count as Dutch norms and values: the ‘repulsive individualism’ of the women’s movement, or the conservative Political Dutch-Reformed Party’s (*SGP*) stand against abortion and euthanasia? (Cordia 1991).²⁴ Witness also the cynical rhetorical questions, asked by a member of a society for Egyptians in Europe: should Muslim women perhaps be obliged to go to nudist beaches, should Muslim couples join in partner-swapping? Next to this, issues of gender and sexuality are brought to the fore in order to *challenge Muslim values*, as with the question “how much respect is cultivated on Islamic schools for unmarried mothers, lesbians, or non-Muslim women in general?” Or they are used to argue that immigrants should adjust, because they are *guests* in Dutch society: “[O]r does your wife sunbathe topless when you visit an Arab country?”²⁵ Finally, the position of women is used to prove the *superiority of Islam*. Thus it is argued

that Christianity cannot take credit for the freedom Western women now enjoy (if this may be considered real freedom, so the author adds), because Islam granted women all rights already fourteen hundred years ago, and “makes clear that the responsibilities of man and woman are equally important, yet not exactly the same” (Akmal 1991).

In other words, both adherents to Western values and to Islam try to prove the superiority of their belief system by parading with the supposedly better position of their women. My way of speaking here, about ‘their’ women, as if they were the *possession* of (‘their’!) men, is not just an ironic, figurative play with words. For the use of words by some of these authors in my view belies their stated feminist, or at least emancipatory, creed. Thus Bolkestein talks of expecting “people who obtained a permanent staying permit” to follow courses in Dutch language, “in particular also of *their* women” (Bolkestein 1991d [my emphasis, bp]). And a columnist, in his exposition on ‘Musselmen’, asks: “Why would we tolerate on *our* territory that some women and children are driven to despair and worse, by pious heads of the family, while we are trying to protect *our own* women and children against that?” (Joeke 1991 [my emphasis, bp]) Another discussant argues against Bolkestein’s cultural intolerance by stating that it is already difficult enough to keep immigrants to our laws: “Not only for the persons concerned, who have to accept that they are not allowed to marry off girls under age and that they are not allowed to force their legally of age daughters into marrying the man their father has selected for them” (Snijders 1991). Note that ‘the persons concerned’ are not the girls and women who would be forced into marriage, but the ones who force them, i.e. the men! The same author proceeds this implicit denial of subject status to women when he states that “[t]hough it is absolutely none of our business whether girls from a certain age have to walk with headscarves [...] it is not exactly a laugh to distinguish oneself in that way from one’s peers.” Snijders here assumes that the girls in question are forced to wear a headscarf, and that they would never do this out of their free will, because, of course (the author has no doubt about this), they would not want to distinguish themselves from others. Which is contradicted by young Muslim women such as Farida Pattisahusiwa, voluntary worker with the Muslim Information Centre in The Hague, who states that it is her own choice to wear a scarf, and that she really does not need to be ‘saved’: “And certainly not by the political leader of the VVD. I do not feel pressured by Islam or Muslims, but the pressure by Jan, Piet and Klaas, by Stien and by Mien, sometimes gets too much for me” (Pattisahusiwa 1992).²⁶

7. Feminist chivalry

Whether these statements should be seen as innocent slips of the pen or as subconscious denials of a seemingly feminist consciousness is an intriguing question. But what I find more important is that issues of women and (hetero)sexuality are brought to the fore in order to show the advanced and civilized character of one’s own society and culture, and, moreover, that this is done by (mostly) men who hitherto did not really create a distinct profile for themselves as feminists. In this sense, the Dutch public debate, and, in this particular case, the discussion about the religious minority of Muslims, echoes late 19th century Western discourse on the Orient. The issue of women has always been quite prominent in European colonizers’ views of Arab countries. On the one hand, the Oriental woman has long been the object of Western masculine erotic fascination: she was considered mysterious, sensual and an expert in the art of seduction (see for instance Ahmed 1982; Alloula 1986). On the other hand, 19th century

Western colonial discourse also drew extensively on the language of (newly emerging) feminism in order to emphasize the backward and totally dependent position of Eastern women, i.e. to prove the inferiority and uncivilized status of Oriental culture (Moors 1995; Boer 1996). Within the context of one's own (European) society, the political endeavours of the women's movement were rejected. Victorian ideas about female chastity and domesticity had to remind British women of their 'natural' place in the family and at home. When it came to describing the position of women in the Middle East, however, these very same ideas were taken to be the signs of a superior civilization that payed women due respect. Thus, issues of women and culture were brought together in a discourse of what Leila Ahmed labels 'colonial feminism'. As she pointedly remarks: "The idea that Other men, men in colonized societies or societies beyond the border of the civilized West, oppressed women was to be used, in the rhetoric of colonialism, to render morally justifiable its project of undermining or eradicating the cultures of colonized people" (Ahmed 1992: 151).

Historically, as Helma Lutz notes, with the migration of Eastern women to Western countries, the myth of the beautiful and mysterious harem lady 'Sheherazade', was soon replaced by the myth of the poor migrant woman 'Fatma' (Lutz 1989). A simple piece of cloth plays a significant role in both these images. Even its name, at least in the Dutch discourse, differs according to context. Whereas the 'veil' [*sluier*] evokes images of erotic seduction, mystery and play, the 'headscarf' [*hoofddoek*] stands for the suppression of female sexuality and men's control over women.

The discourse of Dutch new realism likewise uses the language of Western feminism to challenge the values of 'Muslim culture'. For one thing, when Moroccan and Turkish immigrants are under discussion, often implicit distinctions are made between men and women. In cases where immigrants are called for to leave behind their cultural and religious inheritance, and submit to the laws and customs of Dutch society, the examples given indicate that it is first and foremost *male* immigrants who are addressed. The assumption is that Dutch laws and customs particularly conflict with the privileges of Turkish and Moroccan men. Turkish and Moroccan *women*, on the other hand, are depicted as victims of their 'own' culture, and as having a self-evident interest in integration into Dutch society. Thus, under the insinuating headline 'Polygamy is imminent', a newspaper of right-wing signature relates the story of two women, Ineke in the Netherlands and Fatima in Morocco, who were left a widow to the same man. After indicating that they now have problems over the inheritance, the journalist proceeds by informing his readers that at this moment at least 800 men in Amsterdam are "committing bigamy" (Jongedijk 1991). Thus, the image of Moroccan men as polygamous, *hence* mistreating women, and of women as their innocent victims is reinforced. The article does not say a word about how the women handled the situation, does not give a clue to their status as actors - they are suggested to be mere will- and powerless victims.

Hence, the supposed problematic of Muslim immigrants is a gendered problematic. As is (unintentionally) confirmed in a critical summary of the new realist perspective: "A Turk is someone with a Turkish passport. In the eyes of Bolkestein it is someone who wears certain clothes (headscarves which 'stand for a lot more'), who beats his wife, or gets beaten; who stands outside 'western culture', and who refuses to send his daughter to elementary school" (Stuurman 1991).²⁷

This more or less explicit genderization of members of minority groups brings along a further, more implicit, differentiation along genderized lines, namely in the new realist representation of the relation between self and others. In defending Western values, the new realist subject does not merely demonstrate civic courage to his fellow citizens. By urging Muslim men to go along with Dutch values, he

also shows guts to men who might oppose him. He challenges them in order to protect ('their') women against them - thus adding to his civic courage a traditional masculine connotation of chivalry. The subject position of the new realist changes according to the subjects he relates to: regarding male immigrants he poses as the man with guts who dares to speak out, whereas regarding female immigrants he appears as the chivalrous protector of their safety and happiness. Moroccan and Turkish women are taken to be potential victims of sexual assault and exploitation, who need the safe environment of Dutch-modern society to be able to emancipate. Turkish and Moroccan men, on the other hand, are spoken to as potential equals: their voices may come to count as legitimate contributions to the public debate. They merely need some discipline and man-to-man talk to gain that status.

The latter is illustrated nicely by the way the participants in the debate talk about 'taking people seriously'. New realists, as already explained, are convinced that one should take seriously the frustrations of the indigenous population, of the common people: acknowledge their repressed feelings in order to render them less explosive. Their adversaries reply that this strategy does not help to put the pressure off, but rather stirs up and legitimizes slumbering feelings of discontent.²⁸ They, for their part, demand that one take members of minority groups seriously by respecting their views, listening to their opinions and representing their point of view. Talk of taking minority groups seriously, however, can also be heard from new realists. But they use the expression in a different mode. Thus, in a radio broadcast shortly after a meeting with members of the Dutch Islamic Council, Bolkestein states that "we are grown-ups and so are they. We take them seriously. Perhaps we take them more seriously than the race of social workers. We are the last who would want to tutor or patronize. We consider them as adult people, with whom we hold an adult and robust conversation" (Bolkestein 1992c). And in a comparable vein, a high official at the Ministry of Home Affairs, introduced by Vuijsje as a new realist, proclaims: "I take them seriously, so I quarrel" (Vuijsje 1986: 59). Thus, for new realists, to approach members of minority groups on equal terms and with respect, implies that one will contradict rather than acknowledge their views. Or acknowledge their views as worth contradicting. That equality and respect might also imply a willingness to listen to the other party's opinions, is not an option. One simply does not reckon with the possibility that one might be convinced by the other. The quick and closed-off inference 'I take them seriously, so I quarrel', thus consolidates the virile perspective of new realism: for 'real' men, to take each other seriously means that one compels one another's respect by acting as a worthy and courageous opponent.

8. 'White in the Bijlmer'

In the foregoing sections, I focused on the intersections of gender, sexuality and ethnicity in the Dutch new realist discourse. The minorities issue here got narrowed down to the assumed problem of 'Muslim culture' which would clash with modern Western values. When it comes to the position of that other significant group of 'allochthones' in the Netherlands, the Surinamese and Antilleans, issues of gender, sexuality and ethnicity intersect in quite a different manner. Rather than a *cultural* clash between Western and Muslim values, they get constructed within a discourse of *racialization*, in which the dominant opposition is one of 'black' versus 'white'. To give an indication of this different configuration, in the present section I will take a closer look at another 'realistic' intervention in the Dutch minorities debate.

Bernadette de Wit, free-lance writer and publicist as well as professed radical-liberal feminist, is never

averse to shock an audience that she deems narrow-minded, prudish or too timid - especially when they are her feminist sisters or her left-wing comrades.

Initially, De Wit welcomed Bolkestein's initiative to shake up the dominant Dutch discourse on minorities. In a column, titled 'Civilized discontent', she notes that 'we' are now past the first phase of emancipation, during which 'allochthones' were attributed moral superiority because of their position as victims.²⁹ This perspective, according to De Wit, merely led to a new variant of everyday racism, namely "hypocrisy, the familiar by-product of the Christian management of the soul". She is quite happy that this phase of 'hugging to death' is over. Bolkestein's use of his freedom of speech indicates that the Netherlands are now becoming a 'mature migration country', capable of "expressing [be it in a civilized way, bp] its discontents about changes which are experienced as threatening, in order to be able to become a multicultural society" (De Wit 1991).

However, watching the minorities debate evolve during the following year, De Wit becomes more sceptical about the virtues of civilization. She discovers that room has been made for an attitude of 'Civilized racism', as the heading of this column goes. She is angry with people in responsible positions who now apparently feel free to make public statements about, for instance, the correctness of the stereotypical image of the Amsterdam Bijlmer neighbourhood as 'black, unemployed and criminal'. De Wit is "dumbfounded that people of whom one might expect that they understand something about racial, socio-economic inequality, are putting forward the same obtuse prejudices as frustrated, not very well educated whites in badly maintained neighbourhoods" (De Wit 1992a).

De Wit now clearly is shocked about what came out in public after Bolkestein's 'break of the taboo'. Only half a year later, however, she publishes a column which evoked exactly the kind of accusations of racist talk which she herself had vented before at others. 'White in the Bijlmer'³⁰ brought to the floor Pamela, a white inhabitant of the Amsterdam neighbourhood the Bijlmer, where many residents are from Surinamese and Antillean descent (De Wit 1993a). In an extensive citation, filling most of the text, the author allows Pamela to vent her gall on her Surinamese neighbours, whereby it is suggested that Pamela is quoted from an everyday conversation. A whole series of negative stereotypes of Surinamese people, especially of Creole women, pass in review: laziness, sexual promiscuity, bad parenthood, racial prejudice, authoritarianism, abuse of social securities. Pamela's proposed remedies consist of strict policing, severe sanctions and regulations. But: "I am not a racist. I do not feel at home with my own people either, because of my coloured kids..." At the end, De Wit's own voice takes over: "To well-meaning readers [...] I would like to suggest this. The requirement of political correct language sounds quite empty to the ears of people who have been living in the 'old working class neighbourhoods', or in areas such as the Bijlmer for most of their lives." What actually should be worked at, she claims, is the improvement of the situation of the economically deprived in general, of both 'autochthonous' and 'allochthonous' groups. The author concludes with a cynical salute: "Do by all means continue your demonstration" - a reference to the massive national anti-racist demonstration, about to happen a week later in Amsterdam.³¹

De Wit's essay received a host of comments. Some thought it inappropriate and erroneous, and were particularly outraged about the apparent racism of the text. Others expressed relief and consent about what they considered the author's honesty and straightforwardness concerning the 'problem' of ethnic minorities. Like Vuijsje and Bolkestein, De Wit had shown guts. One positive response came from a social scientist, Wim Willems, co-author of a study about the way members of minority groups perceive the Dutch (see Cottaar and Willems 1989). He compliments De Wit as someone who gives voice to what

she comes across in society: “When in the Netherlands one writes about minorities, one has to be extremely cautious. Before you know it, you are placed on one of the dominating sides: black or white.” Speaking with the authority of the scientist, Willems reports it is common to all people to be ethnocentric, “to distinguish between what they experience as their own and what they experience as strange.” Therefore, it is better to ‘really know’ how people live together and think about each other (Willems 1992).

In my reading, however, ‘White in the Bijlmer’ evokes different realities at once. On the one hand, its author wishes to confront progressive intellectuals with the harsh facts, the difficult reality of everyday life in the Bijlmer.³² One of these harsh facts is the emergence of white racism, due to the neglect by official ‘politics’ of the deteriorating socio-economic situation of many Bijlmer inhabitants, black and white. Hence, on this level, the person of Pamela represents a reality in the *epistemological* sense of the term: she *stands for* the reality of white racism. On the other hand, Pamela *speaks for* a particular group of people, i.e. the indigenous, white Dutch who live in the multi-ethnic neighbourhood of the Bijlmer. On this level, Pamela is not the object but the subject of representation. Whereas in the first case Pamela *is* a reality, i.e. De Wit’s reality of white racism, in the second case she *describes* a reality, i.e. her own reality of profiteering Surinamese women. On this second level then, Pamela is represented in the *political* sense of the term. However, De Wit’s choice to give the floor to Pamela’s feelings of frustration, at the same time gives ample space to represent another than the reality of white racism, i.e. a reality of Surinamese women who are lazy, etc. etc. This picture, moreover, is sketched by someone who lives in the Bijlmer, and who is intimately related to members of the Surinamese community because of her former relationship with a Surinamese man and her coloured children. In other words, the picture is given by an authoritative subject, an ‘outsider within’, to (mis)use Collin’s term, who is suggested to know what she is talking about.

The problem with De Wit’s text, it seems to me, is that it treats these different realities asymmetrically. On the one hand, Pamela’s racism is not taken for granted: it is problematical, something that needs explanation. De Wit’s explanation refers to bad social and economic conditions, suggesting that it is poverty that causes even well-meaning people like Pamela to vent racist opinions. Were she in a better situation, Pamela would not rage against her black neighbours like this. On the other hand, the negative picture of Surinamese women, i.e. Pamela’s white racist perspective, is not problematized at all. No causes are sought to explain, hence relativize, Pamela’s depiction of Surinamese-Creole women. Hence, whereas De Wit’s text shows the constructed, consequently the *changeable* nature of white racism, it leaves the reality of profiteering Surinamese wholly *intact*.

Although she would reckon herself to neither the social-democratic side of the one, nor the conservative-liberal side of the other, De Wit’s ‘realistic’ representation of Dutch multi-ethnic society shows remarkable similarities with the new realist discourse of Vuijsje and Bolkestein. First of all, it shares their presentation of a sober, straightforward and honest self. Secondly, De Wit also chooses to represent the perspective of the indigenous, lower class Dutch. Thirdly, De Wit’s view of representation is likewise double-sided. On the one hand, Pamela (standing for the Dutch lower classes) is full of frustrations which obfuscate her views and cause her to vent racist feelings - from this perspective, she is in need of representatives who can articulate her interests better than she could do herself. Here, the practice of representation involves a *difference* between representative and represented. On the other hand, De Wit suggests that Pamela knows more and better about multi-ethnic society, because it constitutes her everyday

reality. From this perspective, Pamela's accounts are perceived as instances of 'subjugated knowledges' that have been ignored for too long. Pamela's views are not criticized, they are simply passed on, thus suggesting an *identity* between representative and represented.

9. Ventriloquism

It may come as no surprise that many criticisms were levelled at this latter part of the message of 'White in the Bijlmer'. Whereas De Wit wished to be read as someone who merely passed on reality as it immediately presented itself to her, the critical comments make clear that there is no (one) reality that can be spoken for immediately. Realities get construed from particular perspectives. Or, to put it differently, each epistemological representation involves a political representation as well, and vice versa. Concerning the represented reality of white racism, De Wit explicitly takes a stand: it is caused by socio-economic factors, and when the situation of both Pamela and her Surinamese neighbours would improve, Pamela would not be so angry and hostile. On this level, De Wit poses as the better anti-racist than the supposedly estranged, middle-class, would-be progressives, for whom, she suggests, it is easy enough to join behind trendy banners celebrating a colourful Holland. But concerning the other reality represented, i.e. that of profiteering Surinamese women, De Wit's essay remains ambivalent, to put it mildly. To a trusting reader, Pamela's outcry could raise the question whether, apart from what *causes* her frustration, she also has *reason* to be angry. The author of the column remains silent on this question. Thus, her text tends to become accessory to Pamela's words and judgements. While De Wit criticizes policy makers for maintaining situations in which white racism might prosper (thereby implying that racism is wrong), her text is not critical of the racism presented. Which, in my view, would not have been too difficult: is Pamela right, for instance, in pointing her finger at Surinamese people abusing social securities, so long as so many white Dutch are doing exactly the same? Or: what is wrong with bisexuality? And: isn't the assessment that "they always cover up for each other" just a negative way of noticing that Surinamese women have strong mutual bonds? But De Wit does not deny, nor relativizes or tones down Pamela's findings.

To sum up my argument so far, the author of 'White in the Bijlmer' misrecognizes that her epistemological representation, of a Pamela who *stands for* (the dangerous reality of) white racism, also involves a political representation, namely of a Pamela who *speaks for* (the truth of) white racism. As a consequence, her text might repeat the performative effect of the new realist discourse: it renders the indigenous and the Surinamese Dutch, the 'white' and the 'black' residents of the Bijlmer into each other's antagonistic environment.³³

Moreover, the focus on the figure of Pamela ignores the text's complicated representational structure, which ultimately appears to undermine its initial aim. For De Wit's anti-racist stand impels her to present the person of Pamela as *standing for* white racism, who then gets the floor to *speak for* frustrated whites, for whom their Surinamese neighbours *stand for* the reprehensible character and conduct of people of colour. Thus, putting the figure of Pamela centre stage happens at the cost of both the author's own anti-racist position and of the Surinamese Bijlmer-residents. De Wit's wish to be straightforwardly 'realistic' boils down to highlighting (some)one('s) particular construction of reality at the detriment of other(s') constructions of realities.

Thus, De Wit's intervention in the minorities debate proved open to interpretations she afterwards resisted. One of the comments her article received illustrates this quite well. Two parliamentary assistants to the (liberal conservative) *VVD* party argued that the "tirade from the Bijlmer was misunderstood" (Hoogervorst and Wilders 1993). According to them, De Wit had not listened carefully enough to Pamela. For, whereas De Wit "comes to the fore with stale propositions stemming from the social welfare culture of the seventies", Pamela, as they understand her, clearly calls for a severe policy of governmental control and sanctions, such as forcing Surinamese people to look for a job, and cutting their unemployment benefits if they do not try hard enough. Hoogervorst and Wilders appropriate and subscribe to Pamela's words by interpreting them as the bold version of their own point of view. Almost triumphantly, they suggest that De Wit's Pamela actually propagates exactly the *VVD* standpoint on how to deal with issues of cultural difference, social inequality and social welfare. Thus they make a stooge of the figure of Pamela, who used more outspoken terms than they would ever dare to use in public: "In spite of her not very well-considered words, they expressed a clear message: allochthonous people should take up a more responsible position, and exert themselves more in striving for integration." Thus, De Wit's personage is cleverly played off against De Wit's own point of view.³⁴

De Wit does not leave it at this. She returns criticisms like these, as well as comments on the racist views expressed in her essay, by claiming that there has been a 'Misunderstanding': Pamela, she assures the readers of *de Volkskrant*, does not vote for the right-wing, racist *Centrum Democraten*, but for a 'decent' political party. Pamela is merely "anxious about the Centre Democrats getting more members in parliament with the coming elections because of the discontent among citizens" (De Wit 1993b). In this short letter to the editor of *de Volkskrant*, De Wit attempts to set out her entire argument through the voice of Pamela, suggesting that there is only one coherent story to tell and that there is no difference between Pamela and De Wit as subjects of these accounts. However, as outlined above, 'White in the Bijlmer' construes different realities. Her reply therefore gets De Wit entangled in the knots of her own practice of representation, which is less coherent and unitary than she suggests. For whereas, on the one hand, the figure of Pamela is taken to represent a discontented, angry and racially prejudiced white woman - prone to vote for the *Centrum Democraten*, I would think -, on the other hand, in the subsequent letter to the editor, De Wit also has Pamela represent concern about discontented people voting for this racist party. In other words, Pamela's *racist outcry* would express her *concern about racism*. De Wit's Pamela thus comes to carry too much of the burden of representation: there is too much contradiction in Pamela's position for her to remain a convincing character. Because of the author's misrecognition of the multi-layeredness of her representational practice, she does not manage to undo the performative effect of 'White in the Bijlmer', namely its 'merely' realistic representation of a racist reality turning out as a racist representation of that same (?) reality as well.

In the turmoil that 'White in the Bijlmer' brought about, issues of race and racism were focal. What, however, went unnoticed was the gendered subtext of de Wit's column. Thus, Gloria Wekker pointed out how Pamela's racist outcry repeats a set of familiar stereotypes about black female sexuality, such as the image of the sexually available 'Jezebel'.³⁵ Moreover, Wekker indicated how De Wit's text construes different positions, i.e. those of 'Bernadette, Pamela and the others', that involve particular relationships between black and white women. Thus, Pamela's railing at Surinamese women, especially at their sexual mores, is also motivated by frustration over the fact that her former Surinamese lover now prefers a

Surinamese woman to her. To Pamela, black women are her sexual rivals. In other words, De Wit's text construes a relationship among white and black women who are only able to relate to one another as (stereotypical) heterosexual women, namely through their relationships with men (Wekker 1993).

10. Multicultural feminism

With the foregoing readings of some fragments of the Dutch minorities debate, I have clarified how, their commitment to 'reality as it is' notwithstanding, the discourse of new realists is constituted through particular ethnical (i.e. white, indigenous Dutch) and genderized (i.e. masculine) positionings. Further, I pointed to the way that someone like Bolkestein suddenly presents himself as more 'feminist' than many a recognized member of the Dutch women's movement, because he dares to plead the emancipatory cause of Muslim women. De Wit's 'realistic' intervention in the debate addresses the position of another significant category of 'allochthonous' women, i.e. of Surinamese and Antillean women. Her column lacks Bolkestein's chivalrous feminist pretensions. On the contrary, it is consistent with De Wit's radical-liberal feminist view that women, no matter their colour, are no victims, and that they certainly need no one else to rescue them.³⁶ But this lack of feminist care is also due to the stereotypical Western image of black women, which de Wit's column, through the voice of Pamela, reinforces. Whereas the stereotypical Oriental woman would need the help of the Dutch welfare state, the stereotypical black woman would take advantage of that welfare state.

As indicated, according to new realists, Dutch progressives, feminists included, suffer from an overdose of cultural relativism and care, and refuse to face the less likeable aspects of 'other' cultures. In spite of my critical assessments, new realists do appear to touch a sore spot here. For how come that 'the left', always so distrustful regarding religious institutions, especially if they propagated capital punishment, or discriminated against women, homosexuals and people of different beliefs, remains silent or even defends adherents of Islam when they are accused of such things? (Van der List 1992) And don't we, as Dutch feminists, use a double standard when we, on the one hand, are always ready to scold Dutch society for still not being friendly enough to women, while on the other hand we are among the first to draw attention to the woman-friendly aspects of cultures that seem much more sexist and patriarchal than our own?

Indeed, if one goes along with the self-evident equation of feminism with women's striving for individual autonomy, free choice and independence, i.e. with a typically Western value system, and combines this with the often likewise self-evident opposition of Western culture to the culture of Islam, it becomes quite complicated to speak as a feminist and not straightforwardly reject this 'other culture'. Or, to put this point in a racial rather than a cultural perspective: if one goes along with the often self-evident equation of feminism with *white* or *Western* feminism, it becomes quite complicated to speak about issues of sexism and racism simultaneously. Hence, the new realists are right in their observation that a clear-cut feminist voice, a standpoint that unambiguously speaks for (all) women, is missing in the Dutch debate.³⁷

However, there are some very good reasons for that. To begin with, the position of cultural relativism is often misunderstood. As anthropologist Clifford Geertz notes, "whatever cultural relativism may originally have been (and there is not one of its critics in a hundred who has got that right), it serves these days largely as a specter to scare us away from certain ways of thinking and toward others" (Geertz 1984: 263). According to Geertz, 'so-called' relativism is often, and wrongly, identified with a nihilist

position, according to which ‘anything goes’ and *tout comprendre, c’est tout pardonner*. In his eyes, this is nothing more than a figure-head, concocted by absolutist thinkers who are “afraid reality is going to go away unless we believe very hard in it” (264). But these assumed relativists (such as Geertz himself) actually do have a certain ethical worry, namely about “provincialism - the danger that our perceptions will be dulled, our intellects constricted, and our sympathies narrowed by the overlearned and overvalued acceptances of our own society” (265).

Since the 1980s, especially white Dutch feminists have been challenged by feminist women from other cultural and ethnic descent for their self-evident assumption of feminism as a white and Western movement, and for the presumption that they were entitled to speak in the name of *all* women. As such, the Dutch women’s movement went through the same process as the Western women’s movement in general - just like dominant feminist theorizing was gradually forced to take account of its particular white, Western, etc. outlook (see for instance my discussion of the work of Harding, Collins and Haraway in the previous chapters). On many Dutch feminists it gradually dawned that they had tacitly taken their own experiences and standpoints as paradigmatic for what motivated (feminist) women in general. The absence of a clear-cut feminist contribution to the Dutch minorities debate, therefore, is not due to a sudden indifference of white-Dutch feminists to women of ethnic minority groups, or to the use of a double standard when it comes to other cultures. The silence rather testifies to a growing acknowledgement of the need for the construction of new common grounds to provide room for the different concerns of white, black and migrant women.³⁸ The lives of women appear to be not only determined by gender, but also located at the intersections of other axes of difference, such as class, ethnicity, race, culture, and sexuality. Hence, if feminists wish to hold on to a movement that joins women world-wide, they have to provide space for differences, conflicts and contradictory interests among women. Such a feminism cannot afford to determine once and for all who women are, what they want and what is in their best interest. Feminism rather is a movement that demands space for women to determine *for themselves* who they are, what they want, and what serves their interests best. No wonder that in the course of the Netherlands becoming a more multi-ethnic society, *diversity* has become an important feminist slogan, and that an attitude of (at least initial) *relativism* gets to be recognized as an unmistakable virtue. And no wonder that many feminist participants in the Dutch minorities debate resist the utterly self-confident rhetoric of new realism, its straightforward celebration of the guts to break taboos.

11. Whose realism? Whose reality?

In this chapter, I have shown that, contrary to its pretensions, the Dutch new realist discourse does not unambiguously represent either reality, or the interests of its spoken for. First, new realism perceives Dutch multi-ethnic society from a particular *cultural-ethnic* point of view. As my readings of Vuijsje and Bolkestein indicated, oppositions are construed in order to reject the adversary position as either unfaithful to what is characteristically Dutch or negligent of the lower-class, indigenous Dutch. These oppositions consolidate existing relationships with relevant others, with whom one disagrees about how to organize ‘our’ society, or about which values ‘we’ would want to uphold. This construction of a Dutch ‘us’ as the *subjects* of discourse renders ethnic minority groups into ‘them’, into the *objects* of discourse. They come to occupy the position of distant others, whose problematic presence works as the catalyst for the construction of a particular Dutch identity. Thus, ethnic minorities are subsequently positioned as carriers of

other cultures, as objects of debate and policy, and as antagonistic environment to the indigenous lower classes.

Secondly, new realism's reality is *gendered* in several respects. It opts for a 'fathering' rather than a 'mothering' state, i.e. a state that demands obedience to its laws rather than to care for and nurture its citizens. With this option, moreover, new realists present themselves as endowed with masculine virtues such as guts, honesty and soberness, in contrast to the effeminate, oversensitive approach of their political opponents. In disputations on the position of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants, 'Muslim culture' is the stumbling-block for which the supposed subordinate position of Muslim women would be paradigmatic. Bolkestein *cs.* set themselves up as chivalrous feminists vis-à-vis Muslim women, who, it is self-evidently assumed, have to be protected against 'their' men, and who are interested in becoming integrated in a modern, woman-friendly society such as the Netherlands. At the same time, the generic Muslim immigrant is a man, who is invited to join in 'man-to-man' like conversations, in which the new realist representatives of Dutch society will straightforwardly express their critical opinion of his supposedly woman-unfriendly views: 'I take them seriously, so I quarrel.' Thus, Moroccan and Turkish women are stereotyped in terms of their 'traditional' culture: they are in need of help, their interest is in modernity, in emancipation. When it comes to Surinamese and Antillean 'allochthones', the discourse is framed more in terms of 'race' and racism. Black women, as De Wit's column unintentionally indicated, are stereotyped quite differently: they are not in need of help, because they would manage their interests all too well; they do not need liberation from narrow-minded sexual morals, because they would be sexual debauchees; and they do not need to be protected against 'their' men, as they would already use them to their own benefit.

Hence, 'new realism' does not represent Dutch reality in a neutral, untainted, matter-of-fact like way. It rather appears to be a situated discourse, in the *descriptive* meaning of Haraway's notion of situatedness. On this level, so I claimed, the claim that *all* knowledges are situated can be used for the purpose of critique, namely to 'reveal' the situatedness of a discourse that denies its own situatedness. The foregoing readings of the new realist discourse are indeed meant as critical interventions in the debates at hand. However, my interventions are not critical in the sense that they dispute the 'truth' of new realist representations. My concern rather is with the potential *performative effects* of the new realist appeal to show 'guts', of its construction of public discursive space as one shared by opponents who thus mark out 'our' Dutch culture in opposition to all 'others', and of the construction of subject positions in terms of masculinity. In other words, my concern is with the *power* of such discourse, with the exclusionary and inclusionary effects it might have, rather than with the adequacy of its representations.

A sceptical reader might object that my analyses of the new realist discourse as a case of situated knowledges are beside the point. After all, the new realist claims are not propagated as part of reliable (let alone scientific) knowledge practices - they are brought to the fore as an appropriate way to deal with political problems. Consequently, are not the appeals to 'become realistic' merely clever rhetorical devices to convince addressees of the rightness of a particular political standpoint? Does not it go without saying that political representatives have stakes in constructing realities as they do, that they are highly interested, hence unreliable knowers? Would not scientists' perceptions of reality be more disinterested, hence more reliable?

In my view, however, it is precisely this strict dividing line between science and politics, between knowledge and power, which constructivist and feminist epistemologies, and especially Haraway's concept of situated knowledges, reject. They do so by deconstructing the ontological difference between

political and epistemological representation as a difference between representations of humans and things, and by pointing to the constructed nature of reality, i.e. the performativity of discourse. Thus, in the realm of science it is shown that representations of reality (things) always involve representations of particular (human) points of views, interests, values, and that representations are performative in the sense that they do not so much mirror a reality out there, but rather are accessory to the construction of particular realities. In the foregoing analyses, the same is shown to be valid for the realm of politics: however 'realistic' the claims, they are infused by particular points of views. And the new realist discourse likewise is part and parcel of the reality it depicts, it may very well reinforce that which it claims to reveal only. Hence, political and epistemological representation are equally intertwined discursive practices, whether they take place in the realm of science or in the realm of politics.

The following episode of the case study will concentrate on the realm of Dutch (social) sciences. I will zoom in on one particular study, which exposes the Netherlands as a society riddled with 'everyday racism'. Its author, Dutch-Surinamese anthropologist Philomena Essed, may be reckoned among the most fierce opponents of the new realist discourse. It will turn out that Essed's discourse can hardly be called 'soft': it does not recommend more caution or care, its approach is not at all relativistic, and sceptics are boxed their ears with references to hard facts and undeniable realities.

Notes

1. The real instigator of this Dutch minorities debate, by the way, was the Amsterdam chief commissioner of police Eric Nordholt, who in June 1991 declared that at least 10.000 illegal Ghanaians lived in the Amsterdam neighbourhood of the Bijlmer, and that 90% of the robberies and burglaries in the Dutch capital were perpetrated by Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillean youngsters. He criticized national and local governors for not putting enough money and energy into adequate support for ethnic minorities (Nordholt 1991). His remarks occasioned quite a stir. In a radio-interview shortly afterwards, when challenged by the interviewer whether it should not be 'politics' rather than a chief commissioner who made pronouncements like these, Bolkestein responded that indeed there is a 'taboo' on minorities: people are afraid to be accused of racism. The issue, so Bolkestein, had been approached with too much caution. He expressed hope that "the discussion will now burst out in all honesty" (Bolkestein 1991a). The prologue of the 'official' debate thus worried not so much about the integration and cultural identity of Dutch ethnic minorities, but about illegal residents and criminality.
2. Jan Pronk, Dutch minister of Development, likewise observed this tendency towards realism and conservatism - in Dutch national politics, as well as on the level of international affairs (Pronk 1994a).
3. The original text was a speech, given in Luzern (Switzerland) on the 9th of September 1991, at a conference of the Liberal International. As it immediately received critical response in Holland, Bolkestein rewrote his address to explain his views for a wider Dutch audience. Though the title of the lecture suggests otherwise, Bolkestein solely refers to the position of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants, more in particular to the Muslims among them.
4. The then minister of Home Affairs, Ien Dales, proclaimed that it was indeed time to start 'a national debate' on the issue of ethnic minorities. Conferences were organized, experts invited to write reports, (organizations of) representatives of minority groups asked to join in, and officials were put on the job of analyzing the debate as it showed up in the media. The debate even got a proclaimed, official ending on June 16 1992, with a meeting in Rotterdam (Nanlohy 1992).

5. For instance, by the Dutch Centre for Foreigners, the *NCB* (Rabbae 1991), the Committee for Moroccan Workers in the Netherlands, the *KMAN* (*Binnenhof* 1991), the Participatory Board for Turks (*Inspreekorgaan Turken*) (Bagci 1991), and the Federation of Organizations of Refugees, the *VON* (*Buitenlanders Nieuws* 1991). Other counter-voices joined in with this protest (see Bos and de Jong 1991; van Berkel 1991).

6. See *Trouw* 1991 (editorial); Ramdas 1991; *NRC Handelsblad* 1991 (editorial); Metzemaekers 1991).

7. This view of Dutch society as society per se, as society in its 'pure' form, is nicely illustrated by an article in which the authors, when defining culture in general, tacitly go on to apply their definition to Dutch culture: "Culture is dynamic and it exists thanks to contradictions. Culture develops itself through confrontation with the unknown. The self-evident is brought up for discussion. This can be done in many ways, one of them being the admittance of foreign influences. Originality is not a typical Dutch trait" (Wiersma and Zelissen 1991).

8. In her introduction to a selection of articles from the Dutch Journal of Women's Studies for an English audience, Rosi Braidotti even speaks of the 'paradox' of Dutch cultural identity: "[A] cultural identity whose main strength consists in asserting or pretending that there is no such thing as a Dutch identity. I incurred the wrath of many dear colleagues by suggesting that this approach, obviously inherited from negative theology in that it defines by *not* defining, is nevertheless a characteristic cultural mark of 'Dutchness'. It was pointed out that only a non-Dutch person would see it that way. Thereby proving my point" (Braidotti 1991b: 4).

9. See Cordia 1991; *Katholiek Nieuwsblad* 1991; Eetgerink 1991; De Boer 1991; De Wit 1991.

10. See De Wit 1991; Eetgerink 1991; Cordia 1991; Wigbold 1991; Kox 1991; *De Telegraaf* 1991. Especially the expression that Dutch society was 'hugging' members of minority groups 'to death' proved to be quite popular. It was coined earlier by David Pinto, himself a Jewish-Moroccan immigrant (Pinto 1988). In the 1991-debate, Pinto takes a middle ground stance: he agrees that Dutch policy was too much focused on care and help and overlooked the potential of immigrants. But he rejects the tendency to reduce discussions about 'allochthones' to discussions about 'Muslims', and defends Muslim schools as a way to help people develop a positive self-image (see Pinto 1991a; 1991b).

11. Hans Moll informs his readers that there is a lot to laugh at in *Murdered innocence*. He gives them a foretaste by telling a Jewish joke cited by Vuijsje: "Dad, they say that we killed Christ." "Son, that wasn't us, but those of the Stern family." Although Vuijsje presents the joke to illustrate the difference between jokes *about* and jokes *by* Jews, neither Vuijsje nor Moll reflects further on why it matters *who* is telling a joke: 'goy' people who may reinforce stereotypical images of Jews as the ethnic others, or Jewish people who are usually the objects of such jokes. Jewish humour, and the above is a beautiful example of it, can be perceived as a critical counter discourse, an ironic comment on existing stereotypical images. This, however, was not Vuijsje's interpretation, and Moll even reads his argument in the opposite direction. For he finds Vuijsje's book especially 'sympathetic' because of its 'unspoken desire' for the "intimacy of coarse ethnic indications" [*de intimiteit van groffe etnische aanduidingen*]. Moll gives as an example the term 'lousy Jews' [*rotjoden*], as it was used in a slogan said to be written on a wall the night before the 1941-February strike against the nazi's in Amsterdam: "Keep your lousy hands off our lousy Jews". It seems to me, however, that Moll is simply romanticizing such incidents of verbal abuse: not so civilized people, he seems to suggest, call each other names, but that is quite innocent, they do not mean any harm, on the contrary even - they express their intimacy to the ones they call names. In my view, the historical context of the slogan notwithstanding, from a Jewish perspective, to see two other groups fight about who is entitled to discriminate and hurt you, who may call you names such as 'lousy Jews', and who is your rightful owner, draws you into a disturbing and doubtful kind of intimacy, to say the least. To me, the Dutch expression for sexual harassment, 'undesired intimacies' [*ongewenste intimiteiten*] appears more appropriate to describe what is happening here (Moll

1986).

12. Kagie's book, titled *The first negroe* [*De eerste neger*], contains a series of memories about, but especially from blacks (mostly men from Surinam and the Antilles) who came to the Netherlands in a time that a black person was still a rarity. Jones captures the crux of Kagie's stories accurately when he tells to have noticed "that whites are extremely pleased to have one negro in their midst. Ten - not too bad yet. But if it becomes a hundred, one starts expecting trouble. That's the way it went in the Netherlands" (Jones, quoted in Kagie 1989: 104).

13. According to Bleich, the limiting of expressions, incidents and events that truly may be called 'racist' takes place, among other things, by ascribing the *subjects* of these acts the authority to decide whether they are racist or not. Needless to tell that in most cases they will deny such intention. To Bleich, to let the perpetrators decide whether a certain act was harmful or not shows a remarkable analogy with the tendency to deny the seriousness of sexual harassment by claiming that the doers didn't mean any harm: their advances would be either mistaken attempts to make contact or merely innocent jokes. Bleich quotes a (female) respondent in Vuijsje's book, whose account goes even further when she recalls the differences between two Turkish women, of whom one, according to this respondent, "calls down misfortune upon herself, so to speak: bent shoulders, someone who acts like that is likely to get hit (...) It is never seen from this perspective. Always from the perspective of the one who discriminates." Completely true, Bleich sarcastically joins in: "Off lately, one does not here much talk either about that woman, walking alone in the streets in a miniskirt, who asked for it herself. It is always seen 'from the perspective of the one who harasses'" (Bleich 1986).

14. In this argument, Vuijsje implicitly goes along with the metaphors used by the Dutch-Surinamese sociologist Van Lier, who, in an interview with Vuijsje, likewise assumes that "everyone discriminates, myself included", and concludes that in the present days, "[Race] is treated just as sexuality was in earlier times: it is taboo, it does not exist [...] but since it cannot be discussed it can lead to infection and sickness" (Vuijsje 1986: 26; see also Blakely 1993: 271).

15. In her latest book, Judith Butler spells out the complexities of the notion of performativity, and cautions not to jump to conclusions about the performative effects of a particular speech act. She returns to J.L. Austin's original analysis (Austin 1976 [1962]), to indicate that there are different ways in which we can *do* things with words. Critical applications of the notion of performativity, for instance, often tend to overlook the crucial difference between *illocutionary* and *perlocutionary* acts. With an illocutionary act, such as promising, naming or warning, the saying *is* the doing in the most literal sense: it changes the relationship between speaker and addressee through the *conventional* meaning of the act itself. With a perlocutionary act, such as convincing, persuading or alarming, the doing is not in, but *by* the saying - a perlocutionary act is only efficacious by *consequence* (Butler 1997).

In my assessments of the performative effects of the discourse of new realism, and of other examples of the Dutch minorities discourse in the following chapters, I will primarily focus on acts such as addressing and naming people (as 'Dutch', 'ethnic', 'allochthone', 'other', etc.), acts that can be conceived of as illocutionary: *in* naming or addressing a particular individual or group, one actually places them in the ascribed subject position. Nevertheless, my claims regarding performativity are not about the actual effects of a particular discourse. For, as Butler so concisely points out, there is always a difference between the *acting* and the *acting upon*. This means that an analysis of a speech act, or a discourse, *in itself* is never sufficient to determine its performative effect. This even applies to illocutionary acts, as they may be performed in an inappropriate context, which renders them infelicitous. Moreover, the subjects addressed may make an illocutionary act infelicitous by resisting their being named or addressed thus, or by responding to it with affirmative, empowering counter-moves. My assessments of the possible performative effects of the Dutch minorities discourse therefore should be read as expressions of my political concern about what the discourse in question, as part and parcel of the reality it is about, might accomplish.

16. Georg Simmel's description of the stranger [*der Fremde*] neatly fits the position of members of Dutch ethnic minorities: "der, der heute kommt, und morgen bleibt" (Simmel 1992 [1908]: 9).

17. Or as sociologist Zygmunt Bauman claims, "[t]olerance does not include the acceptance of the other's worth; on the contrary, it is one more, perhaps somewhat subtler and cunning, way of reaffirming the other's inferiority..." (Bauman 1991: 8).

18. Thanasis Apostolou, Dutch-Greek and member of parliament for the social-democratic party (*PvdA*) likewise observes that in the discussions about minorities, members from migrant communities themselves are "hardly addressed and incited to participate in the public debate, because the room that has to be made for that, is already occupied by researchers and 'experts'" (Apostolou 1991).

19. My reading of the minorities debate here makes use of Bauman's phenomenological analysis of the position of strangers in our (post)modern world. To Bauman, following Simmel, it is friendship and enmity, the pragmatics of co-operation and the pragmatics of struggle, which constitute all social bonds: "Being a friend, and being an enemy, are the two modalities in which the *Other* may be recognized as another *subject*, construed as a subject like the self, admitted into the self's world, be counted, become and stay relevant [...] Against this cosy antagonism, this conflict-torn collusion of friends and enemies, the *stranger* rebels [...] All this because the stranger is neither friend nor enemy; and because he may be both. And because we do not know, and have no way of knowing, which is the case" (Bauman 1991: 54-55). It is because of their undecidable status that strangers threaten existing certainties. Bauman's reflections, mainly built on the position of Jews in modern Western societies, emphasize the anxiety caused by strangers: "They are the premonition of that 'third element' which should not be. These are the true hybrids, the monsters - not just *unclassified*, but *unclassifiable*. They do not question just this one opposition here and now: they question oppositions as such, the very principle of the opposition, the plausibility of dichotomy it suggests and feasibility of separation it demands" (58-59).

20. A column in *De Telegraaf*, for instance, sneers at members of the Dutch Centre for Foreigners, the *NCB*, by calling them *watjes* [softies], a nickname with a connotation of effeminacy (Eetgerink 1991).

21. Mol indicates that the first to propose the term *verzorgingsstaat* in 1960, was Dutch historian Hilda Verwey-Jonker. According to Verwey-Jonker, what actually was at stake in what we call the welfare state was not so much welfare in the sense of prosperity, but social security: to be looked after from the cradle to the grave (Mol 1987).

22. The then minister of Well-being, Public Health and Culture (*WVC*), Hedy d'Ancona, invites Bolkestein to try and become acquainted with Dutch Muslims. For on her many visits, d'Ancona reports, "it could happen that I was at a table with women, while the men were in the kitchen and the children went round with snacks" (D'Ancona 1991).

23. Of course, Bolkestein is not the only one. Take for instance an article which wants to give a convincing example of a fundamental value of Dutch society: "[T]he religiously inspired wish of many Muslims to keep girls who have reached puberty from school", cannot possibly be accepted, because it would violate "the basic law of equality between man and woman" (Van Berkel 1991).

24. The author presumably is sympathetic with this political party, as is the journal that published his article, *Het Nederlands Dagblad*. The Political Dutch-Reformed Party (*SGP*) caused quite a stir by insisting (in 1994!) on its right to exclude women from party membership and all public political offices. This principled position was legitimized by references to the Bible.

25. These responses, unless indicated otherwise, can be found in letters to the editor written by readers of *de Volkskrant*, published on September 21, 1991.

26. Since a couple of years, the assumption of women being forced has been further belied by young Muslim women who collectively demand their right to wear a headscarf. These young Islamic women (or *Muslima's*) present themselves as Muslim-feminists. Thus, March 1996, the manifestation 'Moslima!' took place in Amsterdam, during which Muslim women discussed their position within Dutch culture and the Muslim community (see Van Veen 1996). February 1996, *NRC Handelsblad* published a page-long interview with Esmé Choho, a young Moroccan journalist who had become something of a *cause célèbre* after her appearance in a popular TV show, in which she acted as the living proof that a veiled woman could be intelligent and sharp-minded nevertheless. In the meantime, Choho took off her headscarf. But she still calls herself both a 'fundamentalist', provided that this solely means that one starts from the Koran and the *hadith*, and a 'feminist', provided that one does not associate this with the "familiar, secular, 'superbitch'-like variant of the striving for emancipation, while I strive for equality based on texts from the Koran" (Van der Linden 1996). For an interesting reading of the symbolic meaning of the headscarf for both Dutch sceptics (such as Bolkestein), and young Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch women, see Lutz 1996. Already in 1989, in a response to the Rushdie-affair, Rana Kabbani published her *Letter to Christendom*, in which she defends Islam against Western contempt and misunderstanding. Kabbani particularly points out how the recent choice of many young women in Islamic countries to start wearing the *hijab* again, is a highly political and not at all conservative choice, motivated by a variety of reasons, from more freedom in public space to the expression of religious and nationalist pride against Western secularization and imperialism (Kabbani 1989).

27. Another author critically summarizes the stereotypical immigrant thus: "[T]hey beat their women and children, they keep their daughters out of school, they call up to murder their novelists, they do not learn Dutch, they marry off their daughters, and they also find that Muslims all over the world should form one nation, so that this whole business of becoming Dutch will come to no good" (Tinnemans 1991a). The heading of this article, 'Frits van Bouillon', is a joking reference to Bolkestein as a medieval knight of the Cross, up to save the Holy (Hol)Land from the Turks.

28. Frequently, one points at the dangerous effects of rousing public sentiment, stigmatization, of intensifying feelings of anxiety. "Everything you say here, on the *Binnenhof* and in the Hague, gets enlarged in the streets and is experienced differently in the home. It may sometimes legitimize discriminatory behaviour. Politicians, as responsible leaders, will have to be even more careful when they venture their opinions about others," so Jan Pronk, Dutch minister of Development in a television broadcast (Pronk 1994b). Another author even goes so far as to reject the event of the minorities debate itself: "This national debate will function as a catalyst in the new philosophy of policy: We are prepared to do anything for it, we even devoted a national debate to it. And if they won't listen, they will have to take the consequences" (Tinnemans 1991b).

29. De Wit names this the stage of 'philomenian' thinking, the term referring to the name of Philomena Essed, a well-known Dutch-Surinamese anthropologist who published extensively about aspects of everyday racism in the Netherlands. I will discuss Essed's approach of racism in chapter 6.

30. It must be noted that the translation of the Dutch *blank* with 'white' misses an important dimension of meaning. Whereas the use of the Dutch term *wit* indicates the race-conscious approach of the speaker, the word *blank* derives from a more conventional, less politicized vocabulary. I guess therefore that De Wit (sic!) chose her indication *Blank in de Bijlmer* for provocative reasons.

31. The slogan of this demonstration, *Nederland bekent kleur*, was phrased in a very general way, such that as many people as possible could join in. Literally it means: 'Holland shows its colour', whereas, figuratively spoken, it claims that

'Holland takes a stand'.

32. De Wit, white, lives in the Bijlmer herself. In many of her writings, different from the text under discussion here, she manifests herself as a firm defender of the multi-ethnic, multicultural Bijlmer population.

33. The distinction between epistemological and political representation in terms of a difference between 'standing for' and 'speaking for' is adopted from Hannah Pitkin's analysis of the concept of representation (see Pitkin 1967).

34. Hoogervorst and Wilder's reply, by the way, again shows how official representatives in the Dutch minorities debate are contesting for the *vox populi*.

35. For comparable images of black female sexuality under the time of slavery, see Carby 1987: 30-39; on the representation of black women in pornography and prostitution, see Collins 1991: 166-176.

36. Within the Dutch women's movement, De Wit has made herself particularly (in)famous with her radical-libertarian approach of sexuality. She is known for her appeal to women to explore sexual pleasure beyond what she once labelled 'politically correct vanilla sex', her protest against feminist moralism, and especially her repugnance to the passivity and 'victim-ism' that would predominate the feminist subculture (De Wit 1988). A wider audience knows her from undercover and celebratory reports about the worlds of brothels, red windows, gay bars and dark rooms. In one of her columns for *de Volkskrant* she castigates especially US 'feminist moral crusaders' for their lining up with conservative puritans in their indignation about woman-degrading practices in the sex industry. According to De Wit, accounts of the female sex workers themselves should be taken seriously, as most of them are in fact independent, clever and self-respecting professionals (de Wit 1992b).

37. Evelien Tonkens' remark that issues of gender and sexuality often seem to 'loose to' issues of race and ethnicity, although made in reference to Toni Morrison's collection of essays on the (typically US) Hill-Thomas case, seems an adequate diagnosis for the Dutch minorities debate as well (Tonkens 1995).

38. As Maviye Karaman recalls about the relationship between white-Dutch and Turkish women's organizations in the seventies and eighties: "During a manifestation in the *Vondelpark* they [radical Dutch feminists] were demanding the right for women to pee wherever they wanted, like the men. We just considered that dirty, both of women and men. At that moment, we were carrying on a campaign for independent staying permits for foreign women. So you'll understand that we did not really click" (quoted in Tinnemans 1994: 141).