

**Between Blood, Wine, Doritos and Liberal Muslims:
Performing Ethnic Identities in
*Mogadishu and Pax Islamica***

Student	Lotje van der Velden (3497410)
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Second reader	Dr. Eugene van Erven
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Chapter 1. Introduction

BECKY, *fourteen, eyeliner and wristbands, white*, to AMANDA, *Becky's mum, forties, English teacher, white*:

I mean, we are seriously penalised just because we know what diatribe and piñata means. If I communicated with 'bare, sick, and butterz' I'd have more awards than Judi Dench but because I'm white and middle class, it's just fucking assumed that I should have manners. That I should work hard, have aspirations to go to university, spend a gap year building irrigation systems in Mogadishu and know who Judi Dench is. It's so fucking unfair.¹

In the second scene of Vivienne Franzmann's well acclaimed play *Mogadishu*, Becky summarises its contents in a single outpour.² She explains how an ethnic divide still creates different expectations. In March 2013, I viewed the Dutch version of *Mogadishu* as performed by De Utrechtse Spelen and was immediately struck by how closely its topic is connected to issues surrounding the construction of ethnicity.³ I use ethnicity to refer to a specific perception of identity based upon race, culture, language, religion, nationality and physical appearances. This does not include social identities people create for themselves in later life. Ethnicity refers to the way people perceive social identity. Public perception often dictates that ethnicity in the sense of cultural identity is birth-related, suggesting an element of predestination, as we will see in the following chapter.

Within the field of conflict studies however, ethnicity is looked upon as a constructed identity. Research on such constructing usually focuses not on individual stances, but on the processes which lead to the making or unmaking of identity, including interaction between different identities. Many researchers believe that it is from the boundaries between identities that identity itself takes its meaning. The Self is only defined by contrast with an Other through the creation of visible and invisible boundaries. In *Mogadishu*, Becky's speech attempts to highlight some of these boundaries. The visible boundary dividing her Self from an Other, is the fact that she is placed in a group which can be described as 'white and middle class', while her counterpart is placed in a group described as 'black and working class'. The invisible boundaries are the expectations that follow from this division: she is placed in a 'high expectations' group and her counterpart in a 'low expectations' group.

The field of conflict studies focuses its attention mainly on identity construction in political and international conflicts. However, the process of ethnic

¹ V. Franzmann. *Mogadishu*. (London: Nick Hern Books Ltd., 2011): 9.

² V. Franzmann. *Mogadishu*. (London: Nick Hern Books Ltd., 2011).

³ *Mogadishu*. Regie Matthias Mooij. Perf. Mandela Wee Wee, Marie-Louise Stheins e.a. De Utrechtse Spelen, 2012. Toneel.

identity formation takes place on every level of every society. It is an on-going process in which most people at one time or another participate. It is that very fact which makes research into the subject interesting and important. *Mogadishu* is a good example, as will be shown in chapter four.

The construction of ethnic identity forms the central subject of this thesis. The thesis focuses on so-called boundary 'making and unmaking' in one specific social and public setting, the theatre. Using two present-day case studies closely related to topics of ethnicity and boundaries, I will attempt to answer the following main thesis question:

How are ethnic boundaries performed in the plays Mogadishu and Pax Islamica I: Zoeken Naar Mohammed?

My thesis will start out by introducing a theoretical framework within which issues of identity in the plays can be usefully analysed. In this section, the most important aspects of the debate surrounding ethnicity and boundary making and unmaking will be discussed. Concerning the field of performance studies, I consulted several works on the subject of intercultural theatre by Edward Saïd, Mark Fortier, Lizbeth Goodman and Jane de Gay, and by Colin Counsell and Laurie Wolf. The information proved very interesting, but because it touches upon issues of intercultural theatre rather than directly upon ideas of constructivism and primordialism, the information proved a little too unspecific for my purposes.

First, I will explain how the theoretical framework is set within the larger debate between primordialist and constructivist theories of identity. I will use Gerd Baumann to explain how the construction of ethnicity in itself is not necessary meaningful, until people allow it to influence their everyday actions. In the introduction, Becky provides an example: the constructed differences between white and black remain imaginary constructs, until people start to act according to the expectations engendered by them. With the help of Bauman's work, I will look at the way constructed ethnicities influence daily life. I will also provide a brief critique of constructivism using Rogers Brubaker's work.

In order to understand how ethnic boundaries are created, I will then turn to the work of Fredrik Barth. He explains how the ethnic boundaries previously discussed come into existence, a process which will be further explored in the theoretical framework. I will then continue by discussing Michael Ignatieff's work on narcissism, which is particularly interesting within the context of boundaries between Self and Other. He discusses the way the Self is influenced by images of

the Other, and importantly, how ethnic identities can be created not by the Self about the Self, but much rather by the Self about the Other.

Finally, in my analysis of the case studies I use concepts related to boundary making that require some further explanation. Therefore, I will use Bettina Schmidt and Ingo Schröder to explain how everyday images can be shaped in a negative way to create an image of the Other, a concept they refer to as violent imaginaries.

After my discussion of the theoretical framework, I will provide a textual analysis of my two case studies. I used the following questions derived from the theoretical framework as guidelines:

Which ethnic identities are represented in the text and by whom? What attitude do different ethnic characters adopt towards each other?

To what extent are the boundaries of these ethnic identities made or unmade in the play?

What is the significance of these ethnic identities within the plot of the play?

The next part of the thesis focuses on textual analysis of the case studies. The question above were used to explore these case studies. The focus will be on two specific case studies, both plays recently performed in The Netherlands. In *Mogadishu*, London schoolteacher Amanda gets into trouble after false allegations of racism are made against her.⁴ *Pax Islamica: Zoeken Naar Mohammed* is the first of a five part cycle after a concept by Dutch-Egyptian theatre maker Sabri Saad El Hamus and focuses on the identity of Muslims in present-day Western society.⁵ Plot summaries of the plays are provided in Appendix A: Summaries. The analysis of *Pax Islamica* uses additional material from an interview with creator Sabri Saad El Hamus. The full interview can be found in Appendix B: Interview Sabri Saad El Hamus. Note that I provide Dutch and English translations for all quotes used in my thesis. Translations and originals are available for comparison in Appendix C: Quotes Cited English/ Dutch.

In the conclusion, I will summarise my findings, attempt to answer the main question and reflect upon my work.

⁴ V. Franzmann. *Mogadishu*. (London: Nick Hern Books Ltd., 2011).

⁵ Theatergroep De Nieuw Amsterdam. *Pax Islamica*. Amsterdam: J. M. Meulenhoff, 2009.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

Two core notions concerning the construction of ethnicity must be explained. These notions, referred to as constructivism and primordialism, are compared by anthropologist Gerd Baumann in *The Multicultural Riddle*, who uses the metaphor 'blood and wine'.⁶ The discussion will start off by examining the two core concepts and how they can help in understanding the construction of ethnic identities.

2.1 The Construction of Ethnic Identities

Baumann explains how the primordialist view, commonly found in daily life and often slighted in academic circles, considers ethnicity to be in the blood. In this view, a person is considered to be born as, for example, a Moroccan boy, not made into one. Constructivism, on the other hand, looks at ethnicity as crafted by people: though natural components provide the basic ingredients, ethnicity is constructed through human intervention. Wine is made from grapes, but without processes initiated by humans, it would not turn into wine. The boy in the example might have been born with features such as distinct hair colour and skin tone, but without human discourse turning these components into signifying 'Moroccan', he might never have become one. The analogy with wine shows that ethnicity is a fluid, ever-changing process. To continue the previous example, if the same boy wears an orange shirt to a World Cup football match, supporting a Dutch team, he turns into a Dutch-Moroccan. Ethnicity, according to Baumann, is an agglomeration of human-made and adaptable beliefs.

Baumann explains that in certain situations, when people act upon fabricated beliefs, they can turn fluid concepts into solid ones. He calls this process reification. In the process, people turn ethnic identities from something changeable into something that cannot change. For a better understanding, let's look at the boy in the example. He might feel like a Moroccan when he is in Morocco, and like a Dutch person when he is in the Netherlands, or the other way round: it shows that his ethnicity is easily adaptable or fluid. Let's now presume a politician stands up in the Netherlands and tells the boy that he will have to choose: either he will have to take out a passport that tells him he is 'Dutch', or he has to take out a passport that tells him he is 'Moroccan'. He is forced into one ethnic identity, that literally cannot change because it is written on paper.

⁶ G. Baumann. *The Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic and Religious Identities*. (London/ New York: Routledge, 1999).

Constructivism is not always handled correctly and some criticism has been expressed. Sociologist Rogers Brubaker criticizes what he calls 'groupism'. In *Ethnicity Without Groups* he argues against what he calls the tendency of some constructivists to take 'group' as a given fact.⁷ He notices that many constructivists still use the term 'ethnicity' and 'group' interchangeably. He considers this a contradiction. According to him, ethnicity is a social category. It is possible that a group of people forms within a social category who claim to represent the whole category. This process can be called 'groupness', in which 'group' rather *happens* than *is*, meaning that groupness is an ongoing process rather than one solid entity. In my thesis, when examining ethnic identities, the formation of identities by people will be often discussed. The identities under discussion are considered as changeable and fabricated rather than as existing groups. When a reference to 'group' is made, such as in the discussion below, this refers to a social category. It refers to a changing entity that acts as or presents itself as a group, and to which a name is attached in order to facilitate discussion.

2.2 The Formation of Groups from Ethnic Identities: Boundary Making and Unmaking

In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, anthropologist Fredrik Barth seeks to answer the question as to how ethnic identities are constructed.⁸ He connects the construction of ethnicity to the setting of boundaries. Boundaries are not merely the physical borders that separate one country from another, but also refer to mental divides created through discourse. According to Barth boundaries exist mostly between groups: a group cannot define itself unless contrasted with another group. In order to belong to a certain group, Barth explains that a member or aspiring member is expected to 'play the game'.⁹ The person has to assert their group membership, not only by using similar sign systems, but also by playing by the rules of social interaction a group has. Social ties and agreements, and the identities created through them, are not solid entities, but are rather performed.

Boundaries are set both between and within groups. According to Barth, several groups can live in one territory. In an ecological system, all groups will have a clear social position. Often, there will be one or several minorities: these are groups that do belong to the larger group, but move mainly in their own

⁷ R. Brubaker. *Ethnicity Without Groups*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁸ F. Barth. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*. (Illinois: Waveland Press, 1998).

⁹ Idem: 15.

social circles. Boundaries between groups can change in context. Barth argues that this will happen during times when social status becomes more important, for instance in times of economic growth or decline, or during larger periods of social change. Diversification within and amongst groups can take place and ethnic identity can change.

2.3 The Group and The Other

Barth explains how ethnic groups define themselves, but says little about the dynamics of group interaction. The ethnic boundaries of one group can also be set by another. In *The Warrior's Honour*, Michael Ignatieff, an author, former politician and anthropologist, writes about nationalism as a specific way of group making.¹⁰ Nationalists, or any people actively defining themselves as part of a group, put on a so-called ethnic mask, allowing them to temporarily disassociate themselves from their individual identity. They are defined in negative terms, by what they are not; an Other that will never understand them. Ignatieff, following Freud, terms this process 'the narcissism of minor difference'.¹¹ Narcissism consists of not allowing the Self or the Other to be defined by their common humanity, but rather by the minor aspects in which they differ.

According to Ignatieff, this is a negative form of group making in which a person:

'take[s] the neutral facts about a people and turn these facts into a narrative, whose purpose is to illuminate the self-consciousness of a group, to enable them to think of themselves as a nation with a claim to self-determination.'¹²

He identifies a problematic side-effect of such narratives as:

'the particular epistemological illusion that you can be at home, you can be understood, only among people like yourself.'¹³

The idea that one can only be at home amongst others like the Self, and will therefore never be able to converse on an equal level with the Other, is dangerous, according to Ignatieff. The inherent danger is that contact between groups can diminish or disappear entirely due to an unwillingness to communicate and understand resulting from perceived differences. Information lines between groups can falter and wrong information about the Other can be

¹⁰ M. Ignatieff. *The Warrior's Honor*. (London: Vintage, 1999).

¹¹ Idem: 48.

¹² Idem: 51.

¹³ Idem: 59.

produced. The boy from the previous example could end up being depicted as part of a 'violent group', while it is very unlikely that 'violence' is a group value to which he or his perceived group ascribe. Because of such miscommunication, intolerance rises between groups. In extreme cases, such intolerance can lead to what Ignatieff calls the dehumanization of the Other, in which the Other is defined by anything but the common trait of his humanity. Dehumanization in its turn opens the road to hatred between groups.

According to Ingo W. Schröder and Bettina Schmidt in *Violent Imaginaries and Violent Practices*, such dehumanization often starts when certain types of narratives are advanced through media or other public performances.¹⁴ These narratives, which they call violent imaginaries, are not only meant to validate the own group's superiority over the Other, but also the Other's inferiority. They can include stories, performances and inscriptions such as TV images, banners or murals. Characteristics of such imaginaries are that they rely heavily on the identification with a morally superior 'us' and they use a clear 'us – they' structure, in which 'they' usually do something bad that asks for countermeasures by 'us'. They also profess that the outcome of any action can only be winning or losing, in which 'losing' doesn't mean that 'us' loses its moral superiority.

Concluding, the theoretical framework has shown by comparing constructivism with primordialism what the construction of ethnic identities does. It has explained how ethnic identities are usually made by contrasting a Self with an Other, and the creation of invisible boundaries between them based upon rules of interaction. We have seen how intolerance can result from faltering information between groups, in which the Other's inferiority can sometimes be shown through violent imaginaries. We will now turn to the case studies to examine how theories of identity and boundary making can help us to understand the social issues addressed in two recent plays.

¹⁴ I. W. Schröder and B. Schmidt. "Introduction: Violent Imaginaries and Violent Practices". *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2001. 1-24).

Chapter 3. Analysis Of *Pax Islamica*: Multiple Identities and Colliding Cultures

The first play of the *Pax Islamica* cycle, *Zoeken Naar Mohammed*, follows a play-within-a-play structure, in which writer Jeroen van den Berg and actor Sabri collaborate on a play about the prophet Mohammed. Discussing the play, Sabri declares that he is not happy with it at all, as he feels it stereotypes Muslims and does not allow him to tell the real stories from his culture. Meanwhile, Sabri meets with Fanny, a woman pretending to be a journalist, to talk about the play, but ends up being able to tell her his stories. Two elements surrounding the subject of ethnic identity as previously explained feature prominently in the play. The first is the search for the existence of multiple identities. The second is an inquiry to what happens when two different cultures collide. Both will be discussed here.

3.1 Multiple Identities

If according to Baumann ethnic identity is indeed fluid and adaptable, that should mean a person can have multiple ethnic identities and easily switch between them. *Pax Islamica* shows how this can work. Within the search for the existence of multiple identities, it is Sabri's identity that provides the focal point. Sabri defines himself mainly as an Egyptian, but is defined by other protagonists as a Muslim, even a certain type of Muslim. Where Sabri believes that the existence of multiple identities is possible, this is countered at several points by Fanny and Jeroen. They both have a categorical manner of thinking about Sabri. When Sabri tells Fanny about Mohammed marrying his cousin, she jokes 'that you [plural] always fall in love with your own relatives' (my emphasis).¹⁵ Here, by using the plural 'you', she turns a religious story about a single person into a generalisation about all Islamic people. Jeroen defines Sabri as a 'liberal Muslim' on his way to become an 'unbelieving Muslim'.¹⁶

Summarising this categorical manner of thinking, Fanny and Jeroen create an ethnic identity for Sabri which connects to the system of rules that Barth explains group members are supposed to ascribe to. First, according to them, if Sabri wants to ascribe to the group 'Muslim', he will have to play by their rules of interaction, as explained by Barth. Second, Sabri being a Muslim means to them that it is therefore impossible to subscribe to any other group at the same time. Instead of

¹⁵ J. van den Berg. *Pax Islamica I: Zoeken naar Mohammed*. Theatergroep De Nieuw Amsterdam. (Amsterdam: J. M. Meulenhoff, 2009. 6-39.): 35.

¹⁶ Idem: 21.

acknowledging this, they have created strict boundaries in order to categorise Sabri as a Muslim. The play counters both these ideas.

The first idea the play counters is that there should be only one Muslim. Sabri starts breaking these boundaries by telling Jeroen:

You will never understand me by reading the Koran, or Mohammed's biography. There are as many Islams as there are Muslims, is that so hard to understand!¹⁷

By stating that there are as many Islams as there are Muslims, he means that every Muslim interprets the Islam in a different way, resulting in the Islam being different for every individual. Therefore, every Muslim has to be regarded as their own person instead of being generalised as a group. Sabri's words relate to Brubaker, who states that groupism itself is a form of primordialistic thinking, and that constructivism can only be fully realised when there is no thinking in terms of 'group' at all. In line with this non-groupist thinking, Saad El Hamus explains in the interview that one can be a Muslim, but still enjoy a glass of wine, and not pray five times a day.¹⁸ Being a Muslim is more than being part of one singular, unchanging entity. Sabri refuses to ascribe to any rules of social interaction.

The second idea the play counters is that individuals can only have one ethnic identity. In the interview included in Appendix B, Saad El Hamus states that he prefers to be called an Egyptian. When discussing this identity, he talks about the identity crisis of Egypt. In the play, Sabri follows him: "The whole Islamic world is suffering from an identity crisis. This is especially true of Egypt. Are we Arab, are we African, are we Islamic, are we Western. And if you don't have the answer you might end up trying to fall back on something you no longer are."¹⁹ The point of crisis here might be just the fact that one feels like there is a need to choose. In Sabri's conversations with Jeroen he was reduced to a person with a singular identity, but in his conversations with Fanny this singularity gets the chance to open up. They talk about Sabri as a Muslim, but also as an Egyptian, and as a man. Moving beyond the topic of one specific identity, Sabri and Fanny acknowledge that plural identities can exist in one person. Baumann referred to this as the fluid aspect of identity: Sabri can switch quickly between being a Muslim or an Egyptian, because he is both.

¹⁷ J. van den Berg. *Pax Islamica I: Zoeken naar Mohammed*. Theatergroep De Nieuw Amsterdam. (Amsterdam: J. M. Meulenhoff, 2009. 6-39.): 25.

¹⁸ Saad El Hamus, S. Personal Interview. 28 May 2013.

¹⁹ J. van den Berg. *Pax Islamica I: Zoeken naar Mohammed*. Theatergroep De Nieuw Amsterdam. (Amsterdam: J. M. Meulenhoff, 2009. 6-39.): 24.

3.2 Two Cultures Colliding

The second element surrounding the subject of ethnic identity that features prominently in the play is a search into what happens when two different cultures collide. In order to understand the processes going on in the Netherlands at the time the play was written, some light needs to be shed on the context in which it was written.

In *Neoliberal Xenophobia: the Dutch Case*, Jolle Demmers and Sameer Mehendale write about the aftermath of the murder of Theo van Gogh.²⁰ According to them, this murder fits into a larger process in which neoliberalism gives rise to increasing xenophobia in the Netherlands. By spreading symbolic forms of community on the Dutch market xenophobia has a chance to rise in a society that is increasingly diverse. According to Demmers and Mehendale, the performativity of the murder of Theo van Gogh evoked anti-Islamic feelings. Dutch people saw an opportunity to establish boundaries by defining themselves as 'us' and the Islamic other as 'them'. Barth's work backs up these ideas, as he explains that social boundaries are usually tightened in times of social change. In the interview, Saad El Hamus also talks about the problems that the writers faced in the aftermath of the murder of van Gogh, including question whether Dutch society was waiting for such a play at such a time.

In the play, the traces of xenophobia feature prominently, mainly in the form of violent imaginaries. The moral inferiority of the Other that these violent imaginaries propagate according to Schröder and Schmidt, is visible in several of Jeroen's comments on Mohammed, such as 'dangerous, militant Muslim'.²¹ Another result of violent imaginaries is the 'us – they' dichotomy they propagate. As explained in the theoretical framework, ethnic identities are often created not so much by looking at the Self, but much rather by contrasting the Self to the Other. Jeroen contrasts himself with Sabri. Halfway through the play, Sabri used circular movements to demonstrate Jeroen's limited way of thinking in contrast to his own. Later on, Jeroen mimics these:

Because you're in my play Sabri. This here – (he makes a circular movement around Sabri) that's you. And everywhere else (he makes a sweeping movement) belongs to me. You are in my world, whether you like it or not.²²

By stating that Sabri is in his world, he not only refers to the fact that he wrote the play, but also to the fact that it is Sabri who has invaded his culture. Within their

²⁰ J. Demmers, and S. S. Mehendale. "Neoliberal Xenophobia: the Dutch Case". (*Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* (35), 2010. 53-70).

²¹ J. van den Berg. *Pax Islamica I: Zoeken naar Mohammed*. Theatergroep De Nieuw Amsterdam. (Amsterdam: J. M. Meulenhoff, 2009. 6-39.): 23.

²² Idem: 39.

culture, there is a superior 'us' (Jeroen) and an inferior 'they' (the minority group to which Jeroen ascribes Sabri). Jeroen provides an example of the confusion that can exist when people think well of their friend, but are still infected by dehumanizing violent imaginaries about him.

To be able to counter violent imaginaries, Sabri shows that there are positive ways in which cultures can collide as well. He states:

I would like to make a play in which you tell me stories about your life, in which I tell you stories about my life, about Islam, about Mohammed, about Egypt, and in which we try in the course of the evening to find out a little more about the person sitting opposite from us.²³

Storytelling is such an important part in the play, because in line with Ignatieff, Saad El Hamus emphasises how it should improve understanding between Western and Islamic culture. He states that if stories of the loving side of the Islam are never told, people in the Western world will never hear another narrative than the violent imaginaries started by others.²⁴ As explained in the theoretical framework, Ignatieff refers to this as the source of intolerance; a faltering of correct information between groups.

In order to be able to represent two different cultures colliding, the play juxtaposes Fanny and Jeroen with Sabri. In the interview with Saad El Hamus, he states that he 'saw the actress [playing Fanny] as the representative of The Netherlands, as the country to which the actor [in the play] tells his story. In his turn, he is prepared to listen to the story of The Netherlands.'²⁵ In the play, Fanny is indeed the person with whom Sabri exchanges life stories. He and Jeroen do so as well, but where Fanny is curious and open-minded, Jeroen is confused about Sabri: he clearly likes him, but cannot marry the Muslim community with the person sitting opposite him. Understanding Sabri is difficult for Jeroen, because in their discussions, there is little space for any storytelling at all. Fanny and Sabri do tell each other stories, which take them a step closer towards mutual understanding. In this case the understanding is mutual, because Fanny herself gets to tell some stories of her own. Sabri then learns that it is not only him, but also the Other who has to tell stories in order to become closer to promote mutual understanding. Ignatieff explained the problem of narcissism, happening when one person only looks at the Self. The problem can only be lifted if groups look up again to see the Other.

²³ J. van den Berg. *Pax Islamica I: Zoeken naar Mohammed*. Theatergroep De Nieuw Amsterdam. (Amsterdam: J. M. Meulenhoff, 2009. 6-39.): 20.

²⁴ Saad El Hamus, S. Personal Interview. 28 May 2013.

²⁵ Ibidem.

Chapter 4. Analysis of *Mogadishu*: The Reification of Strict Ethnic Dichotomies

In *Mogadishu*, schoolteacher Amanda is pushed to the ground during a fight instigated by troubled black pupil Jason. Jason saves himself from expulsion by falsely accusing Amanda of using abusive, racial language towards him. Backed up by his friends, his lies threaten Amanda's position at the school, up to the point where she is suspended from further teaching. However, Amanda refuses to take action against Jason, defending his behaviour in front of the school and even her own family. The characters' actions are guided by strict ethnic dichotomies as well as the reification of these dichotomies, which are the two focal points of this play. Both will be analysed here.

4.1 Strict Ethnic Dichotomies

The first instance ethnic dichotomies show is in the character list, which provides racial and ethnic information, for instance: 'JASON, *fifteen, leader, black*'.²⁶ It is clear that the identity of the characters is not merely made up of their job, age and relationships, but also strongly related to their ethnic identity. In the first scene, Jason and his gang show that they have learned to think along racial dichotomies as well. They think about the Other in dehumanizing terms: they call Firat, the boy who is being picked on, an 'Arab terrorist bomb-making Muslim'.²⁷

Jason shows that he and his friends are not only aware of the existence of ethnic divides, but they also realise how fluid they are. There are at least two ways in which this shows. First, there is Jason's lie. He persuades his friends to corroborate his version of the events to convince Henderson. First, he gets them to agree he was pushed, and then continues: 'And she said, 'Leave him alone, you black bastard,' and pushed me, yeah?'²⁸ He stresses the importance of that statement: 'She is a racist.'²⁹ Jason knows that this is not the truth, but acts as though it is because he knows that will save him.

His line of thinking can be explained by one critical review from *The Guardian*. This review mentions the term 'white man's guilt'.³⁰ It refers to the sense of guilt a white person supposedly feels towards people of different racial backgrounds for racist treatment of them as a group, both historical and present. The play shows how these feelings can take a turn for the worse and develop into

²⁶ V. Franzmann. *Mogadishu*. (London: Nick Hern Books Ltd., 2011): 4.

²⁷ Idem: 6.

²⁸ Idem: 18.

²⁹ Idem: 19.

³⁰ M. Billington. "Mogadishu – review". (*The Guardian*, 1 February 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2011/feb/01/mogadishu-review>. Accessed 28 May 2013).

racist behaviour: a misplaced sense of pity can lead to notions of 'black helplessness' being reified, as will be discussed later. The idea that a black person is helpless could be seen as a violent imaginary in itself, as Schröder and Schmidt called it. In the play, Jason uses 'white man's guilt' as a ticket out of trouble. He knows that he will not have to act 'helpless' with his friends around – his lying shows that he is anything but helpless – but he realises that he can still use this notion when necessary. In the theoretical framework, Baumann referred to this as the malleable factor of ethnicity.

Baumann's ideas become apparent in a second instance: the treatment of the only white girl in the group, Chloe. Although being white, Chloe has managed to get herself a space in the gang. On stage, this was shown in her matter of dress and her gestures: she perfectly fitted the group. Barth explains that because she plays by their rules, she managed to ascribe to their group. In his terms, this shows how she stretched the boundaries of 'ethnicity' in order to identify with this group. The flexibility of this identity become apparent when Jason's friends jokingly discuss the different support programs they are enrolled in. If it comes to getting free candy while pretending to be interested in extra classes, they accept the notion of 'black helplessness' and do not question their enrolment. The only one of the gang who is not enrolled in any programs is Chloe, who also happens to be the one showing the most genuine learning disability and therefore the most in need of extra support. When one group member tells her he gets Doritos during his support program meetings, she complains: 'You get Doritos? That ain't fair. I want Doritos.'³¹ She does not get any Doritos, nor any support meetings for that matter, not because she can learn easily, but rather because she is not seen as part of the social category 'helpless'. Although being part of the group, her ethnicity is changed back into that of a white girl who is, apparently, never helpless.

4.2 Reifying the Stereotype

Jason's lie could have been harmless, if the adults around him had not chosen to act upon his words. In the theoretical framework, the notion of reification used by Baumann, in which a fluid ethnic identity is turned into something solid, was discussed. *Mogadishu* shows how Jason's behaviour is indirectly encouraged by responsible adults. Whether they know or not, Amanda, Jason's father, headmaster Henderson and the local authorities participate. The process starts with Amanda's refusal to take action. Instead of asking the school or her union for help in the matter of Jason, she does nothing. The reason why becomes clear

³¹ V. Franzmann. *Mogadishu*. (London: Nick Hern Books Ltd., 2011): 29.

from the conversation she has in the second scene with her daughter Becky. In line with her comments in the introduction, Becky tells her mother about an incident that happened in primary school, when Jason took home the school hamster and returned it with burn marks on its skin. The teacher, instead of validating the incident, pretended all was normal.

BECKY. Imagine if it had been someone else that had brought it [the hamster] back in that condition. (...) If it was me or any other of the nice middle-class kids we would have been strung up on the climbing frame and been beaten like a piñata.

Pause.

You always make excuses for shits like him. I bet you a million fucking pounds that he's got more praise postcards at home than anyone I know. And you probably fucking sent them.³²

Later in the same scene, Amanda defends Jason by stating:

AMANDA. And statistically, if you're a working-class African-Caribbean boy, you are more likely to –

BECKY. Boo hoo, poor little black boy blah blah blah.

AMANDA. Some people have harder lives and –

BECKY. Loads of people have hard lives and they're not all wankers.³³

Becky tries to convince Amanda to stop defending Jason. To her, Jason simply *is* a bastard who *happens* to be black, although the fact that both of these statements are true does not mean that one necessarily brings forth the other. The conversation Becky has with her mother shows that nobody should be judged upon their skin colour, regardless of whether the judgment is positive or negative. Defending someone based on the fact that they should have less chance to succeed in life because of their racial background, is not simply another form of racism, but also reifies the image of what Becky calls the 'poor little black boy' rather than encourage change. Amanda reifies the part of Jason's lie in which he makes a point of being 'black', by taking his blackness as an important ingredient to his behaviour.

Reification of this blackness is further enforced by Jason's father Ben. He forces Henderson into taking action against Amanda by threatening legal action,

³² V. Franzmann. *Mogadishu*. (London: Nick Hern Books Ltd., 2011): 8-9.

³³ *Idem*: 12.

by toting a law book and lodging a complaint of racism. He has even taught Jason to speak about people of their background in unifying terms. When Jason tries to make his friends, all with different ethnic backgrounds, follow him in his lie, he tells them that: "My dad says we got to stand up for *ourselves*, innit." (my emphasis).³⁴ Therefore, he has taught his son to create an 'us – they' structure, which Schröder and Schmidt explain as a characteristic of violent imaginaries.

The last step in the process of reification is provided by Henderson and the local authorities. He does not imply that he truly believes Jason's story, but does not help Amanda either. He chooses non-action not because of any genuine sense of wrongdoing on her side or the school's, but because of pressure from local authorities acting against racism. He realises that these authorities will consider him a racist – especially since Jason's father threatened a lawsuit – if the school acts against any black kid, let alone a group. Since the audience already knows that Jason's story is a lie, what is revealed is how discriminating imaginaries are reified through the rationalization of 'the white man's guilt'. Following these ideas, a black boy cannot be expelled or treated like a misbehaving pupil should be treated.³⁵

In the last scene, the process of reification is completed. By this time, Jason's lie has been revealed and Amanda has been acquitted. She asks Henderson whether he plans on expelling Jason's friends, who have lied as well, and Henderson answers:

CHRIS. I can't exclude them all.

Pause.

Excluding six kids in one go will raise eyebrows. Excluding four other black kids, even temporarily, will give [chair of the local authorities on the case] Miriam Harris's flunkies a fucking heart attack. Ofsted will be on the stats in a blink.

AMANDA. Saif's Asian.

CHRIS. I can't just exclude him. What would that look like?³⁶

Here, the fact that Jason is black is put in writing by the local authorities, represented by Miriam Harris. The statistical program 'Ofsted' has noted down Jason as ethnically black and will from now on evaluate not only him but also his school upon this ethnicity, and not on any abilities of himself.

³⁴ V. Franzmann. *Mogadishu*. (London: Nick Hern Books Ltd., 2011): 83.

³⁵ *Idem*: 12.

³⁶ *Idem*: 140-141.

The ironic part of the play is that it turns out Amanda did not defend Jason because he was black, but because his mother killed herself when he was little. Yet everyone, including the liberal thinking Becky, presumed she was acting from a feeling of white man's guilt, which shows that themselves they still feel the pressure of this notion. On the other hand, Becky's father killed himself too, yet she is still treated differently than Jason, as the example with the hamster shows. Because both have parents who committed suicide, the difference between them on which grounds they are treated differently can still only be the colour of their skin. Questioning Amanda's motives therefore still remains up to debate.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

At the start of the thesis, the following question was asked:

How are ethnic boundaries performed in the plays Mogadishu and Pax Islamica I: Zoeken Naar Mohammed?

The play *Pax Islamica I: Zoeken Naar Mohammed* explores two issues surrounding the subject of ethnic identities. First, the play exposes the confusing complexity of ethnicity. It does so by demonstrating that multiple ethnic identities can belong to one individual. It also underlines that it is possible for a person to hold an ethnic identity without subscribing to membership of an exclusive group. Secondly, it identifies a problem area where information lines between groups falter; the result being a seemingly insurmountable inability to understand the Other, because the wrong stories dominate public perception. The play wants to create an opening for telling stories which instead seek to deepen the understanding between different ethnic identities.

The play *Mogadishu* explores collective feelings of guilt and their consequences. It starts out by setting strict boundaries between ethnic 'groups', but as the action progresses these boundaries blur and eventually become meaningless. The play shows that when people act upon a too narrow perception of identity, ethnicity becomes more important than it should be, and identities solidify until it becomes impossible for individuals to change them when needed. In a process begun by Jason and continued by the adults around him, 'blackness' turns from a physical trait into an important aspect of a fixed identity which has to be taken into account when making a judgment.

5.1 Discussion

My research remains limited and leaves space for improvement. I focused on two case studies specifically discussing issues of ethnicity. The plays I studied reflected upon conscious and unconscious boundary making by the characters. It might be interesting to compare my results against case studies of a different type of play, a type which engages in boundary making and the discussion of identity on a less self-conscious level. The question is how plays which do not engage consciously in the discussion surrounding ethnic identity still show processes of boundary making. Plays like *Waiting for Godot* or *A Streetcar Named Desire* might offer the possibility to look into unconscious ethnic boundary making on stage.

Secondly, I have explained how boundary making is an important process in which ethnic identities are formed. However, boundary making does not remain limited to ethnicity. Other types of identity, such as gender, are also formed through boundary making, onstage and off. In order to investigate boundary making on stage on a larger scale, the same concepts could be applied to plays which do not solely deal with ethnicity. Accordingly, it might be useful to develop a specific analytical tool system to investigate them. This would allow similar processes to be investigated using universal criteria. The goal would not only be to see how ethnic boundary making happens on stage, but what the offstage repercussions are. This would call for research into the play's reception by the audience as well.

My study further raises two questions. The first concerns boundary making. If a play specifically discusses ethnic boundaries, even if it seeks to unmake them, does it not in fact reinforce them by affirming their existence? This is a universal problem when it comes to plays about ethnicity. On the one hand, boundaries can only be broken if their existence is acknowledged. On the other hand, once boundaries exist in human discourse, talking about them only reinforces their presence. In *From The Rubble* by the Irish Theatre of Witness project, people involved in the Troubles told the audience their personal stories. For every speaker, the fact that they were Loyalist or Republican was briefly mentioned. However, though boundaries were acknowledged to exist, they were broken not because of conscious resistance, but simply because the decision was made not to make them the focal point of the play.

The second question regards the debate on constructivism and primordialism. To what extent is a strict dichotomy between these two viable? Of course, constructivist thinking does not ignore the existence of birth factors such as skin colour and socioeconomic differences. But what it does not sufficiently acknowledge by stating that boundaries are imaginary is that the fact that boundaries are imaginary might not make them less real. Identity is malleable, but the historical processes which shape it are slow and even mental concepts take time to change. For individuals, it often remains difficult to change prejudices and boundaries which have formed over the course of many years of social and political change. Primordialist versions of ethnicity have helped shape our present-day societies. Boundaries will not simply disappear because enlightened people want them to. Firstly, because not everyone necessarily benefits from their disappearance, and secondly because they are constantly reified, not just by the information in passports and birth certificates, but also by historical artefacts: documents, novels, paintings and plays. Ethnicity may be

constructed, but constructivism alone cannot explain why it remains such a prominent factor in our behaviour towards others. The need for boundaries has existed throughout human history, and primordialist ideas have their roots in geographical, cultural, socio-economic and physical differences which are not readily ignored. In the opening ceremony of the Community Arts Lab festival, a woman told the audience: "I am not a postmodern thinker who deconstructs the past until the concept has lost all its meaning." If constructivist ideas on ethnic identity are to be fully understood, the centuries of human thoughts and deed that precede them cannot be ignored.

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Appendix A. Summaries

The following appendix contains full summaries of *Mogadishu* and *Pax Islamica I: Zoeken naar Mohammed*, including character lists. The actantial model of Greimas has been added to enhance understanding of the dynamics in the plays.

PAX ISLAMICA I: ZOEKEN NAAR MOHAMMED

About the cycle

Zoeken Naar Mohammed is the first part of a five part cycle, based on the five pillars of the Islam. The first play is aligned to the first pillar of the Islam, called the *Shahada*. This is the acknowledgement that every Muslim has to honour Allah as his only God and Mohammed as his only Prophet. In the play, Sabri wonders what it means to be a good Muslim. The name of the play can be translated as *Pax Islamica I: Looking for Mohammed*.

Character list

Sabri

Sabri is an actor, based on lead actor Sabri Saad El Hamus himself, who wants to make a play about the prophet Mohammed. In order to do so, he has hired writer Jeroen to write this play. He is open-minded, but does have some prejudices when it comes to Dutch society.

Fanny/ Aisja

Fanny waitresses at a pub where Sabri and Jeroen discuss their play. She falls for Sabri and, pretending to be a journalist named Aisja, decides to ask him out. She is not very bright, but she is a nice person and curious enough about Sabri to allow him to tell her his stories.

Jeroen

Jeroen wants to write a play about Mohammed. However, he is very confused about the nature of the play and Islam. He also harbours fear for his and Sabri's safety, because they decided to write play in a time when there were many angry feelings against Islam in the Netherlands. As the action unfolds he becomes progressively paranoid, scared and angry.

Location

Sabri's attic apartment in Amsterdam and local pub De Jaren.

Summary

As there is no scene indication in the script, the summary follows the numerous changes in location, mainly through fade outs.

1

Sabri is in bed. He receives an anonymous call, most likely from Jeroen, asking him about Islam. He does not get a really chance to reply before the caller disconnects.

2

Aisja turns up at Sabri's apartment as he is taking a bath. She claims to be a journalist come to interview him on he is writing with Jeroen. A little embarrassed, he lets her in. It quickly turns out that she is not a journalist, but a waitress from Sabri's local pub who has a crush on him.

They talk about Sabri's decision to make five plays about the Islam at this specific moment in time, with Sabri referring to the judgements people make about that decision. Fanny tells him that she had a dream about an Egyptian man. The dream is embedded in her stereotypical view of Arab cultures. Sabri tells her that the interesting thing about the dream would be to really find out who that man was, something he wants his play to do. His way of doing so is by having both parties tell each other stories. This is exactly what happens between himself and Fanny. Their conversation is suddenly interrupted by a threatening phone call from a radical Islamic group.

3

Sabri and Jeroen discuss the play in Sabri's apartment. Jeroen is full of prejudices about the militant side of the Islam. Sabri is annoyed and tries to tell him about the other side of the Islam. He does not get much of a chance to do so.

4

Back in Sabri's apartment, Sabri continues to talk to Fanny about Egypt. He tells her stories about courting girls and the way he perceived the West when he just arrived there: as a country full of John Travolta's. The atmosphere gets cosier and they kiss.

5

Jeroen receives a phone call from the Dutch security services (AIVD), who wish to talk to him about the upcoming play. He refuses.

6

Jeroen and Sabri are at their local pub, de Jaren. Fanny is serving them while they discuss the play. The conversation gets heated. Jeroen expresses his concerns about a possible violent reaction to the play from both the Dutch security services and the Muslim community. He starts showing signs of paranoia and aggression. Sabri expresses his concerns too, but they relate to the play's internal dynamic: the play seems to stereotype Muslims instead of depicting individual experience.

7

Back in his apartment, Sabri dances in front of Fanny dressed in his John Travolta suit when he receives a phone call from a frightened Jeroen. He manages to calm him down when there is a power outage. Fanny and him continue their conversation by candle light. Sitting on the floor of the apartment, Sabri tells some of the stories about Mohammed and the women He loved, which he actually wanted to insert into the play, until Fanny falls asleep in his lap. Dutch security services are seen guarding the house.

8

In the middle of the night, Jeroen enters Sabri's apartment with a gun, trying to scare Sabri into believing that they are in grave danger. Instead, Fanny grabs a gun she found earlier on and points it at Jeroen. Just as the Dutch security services knock on the door, Fanny and Jeroen shoot each other and leave Sabri standing alone, picking up the gun in his confusion.

Greimas model

The Greimas model is used to clarify the motives and actions of the main characters. Here, Greimas' model is drawn in the following way:

Sender	⇒	Object	⇒	Receiver
		↑		
Helper	⇒	Subject	⇐	Opponent

Sabri

Longing for an improved cultural understanding	⇒	Make a play about Mohammed	⇒	Dutch community and Dutch Muslim community
		↑		
Fanny	⇒	Sabri	⇐	Jeroen

Sabri's goal is to make a play about Mohammed. He wants to do this because he wants to improve understanding between two cultures. He believes that both cultures will benefit from such a play. He is helped by Fanny, who is not only ready to listen to his stories, but also teaches him to listen to hers. He is opposed by Jeroen, who does not understand what Sabri wants to do and is afraid of the possible consequences.

Jeroen

Confusion	⇒	Make sense of the situation	⇒	The play, Sabri and Jeroen
		↑		
Violent imaginaries, Dutch security services and a militant Muslim groups	⇒	Jeroen	⇐	Sabri

Jeroen wants to make sense of what is going on. He wants to do so, because at this point, he is very confused about the play. His goal is to improve the play he is making and to keep himself and Sabri safe. He is deterred by violent imaginaries, presumably derived from the (Dutch) media, and threats posed by Dutch security services and an unknown militant Muslim group, who scare him into losing control of the situation. He is helped by Sabri, who tries to explain the play to him and wants to continue making it.

Fanny

Has fallen for Sabri	⇒	Get to know Sabri	⇒	Relationship with Sabri
		↑		
Sabri	⇒	Fanny	⇐	Jeroen, Sabri

Fanny wants to get to know Sabri after falling in love with him at the pub. Likely, she has hopes for a romantic relationship. She is helped by Sabri, who slowly changes his view of her. At the beginning of the play, he reists her advances because he misjudges her motives. She is hindered by Jeroen, who mistakes her for a member of the Dutch security services.

Other Pax Islamica plays (short summaries only)

Short summaries follow of the other *Pax Islamica* plays. They are meant to create an enhanced image of the cycle.

Pax Islamica II: Mohammed en Omnya (Mohammed and Omnya)

Based on the second pillar of the Islam, the *Salaat* (prayer). Written by Lisa de Rooy.

Based on a true story, Omnya kills her husband Mohammed during prayer. She then starts dissecting his body in order to locate the evil within. Mohammed watches her from the other side. He reflects upon their lives. He came to Amsterdam and has since had numerous relationships with women, continuing after his marriage to Omnya. He takes her to Amsterdam, where she lives a life of estrangement and abuse. In death, without any physical needs to restrain him, he finds his heart open to true love again, and manages to communicate with Omnya at the end of the play. When the police pick her up, he tells her that he loves her and will remain by her side.

Pax Islamica III: Zekket

Based on the third pillar of the Islam, the *Zakat* (the duty of giving alms to the poor). Written by Ko van den Bosch.

Mister Hamus, an Arab actor living in Amsterdam, is being treated in a medical institution by two psychiatrists, referred to as the female voice and the male voice. As the conversation progresses, the attitudes of the doctors becomes more hostile until therapy turns into interrogation. At the same time, mister Hamus discovers that really his anxieties have more to do with his stage fright than the xenophobic attitude of the two psychiatrists.

Pax Islamica IV: Sawm

Based on the fourth pillar of the Islam, *Sawm* (fasting). Written by Mustafa Stitou.

Sabri's Dutch wife Sarah is insulted by a Moroccan boy in a Kentucky Fried Chicken, because she comments on his apparent breaking of his fast. She wants Sabri to apologize, as he comes from 'the same background'. Sabri makes a mock apology. During the play, Sabri and his wife grow closer as they pray, fight and make love. In the end, they are able to love each other without boundaries between them.

Pax Islamica V: Hadj

Based on the fifth pillar of the Islam, *Hadj* (the pilgrimage to Mekka). Written by Lisa de Rooy.

This play is an adaptation of *The Brothers Karamazov* by Dostojevski. In the play, father Fjodor has lead a rich life as a brothel owner in Amsterdam. He has created this life for himself using money from the inheritance his wife left him. His wife had meant the money to go to their three sons. As his sons grow up, Fjodor burns the will and decides to sell his brothels and run away with his mistress. To deceive his sons, he tells them that he is leaving to make a pilgrimage to Mekka.

MOGADISHU***Character list***

The first line of each character refers to the way the characters are introduced in the Mogadishu play itself.

JASON, fifteen, leader, black

Full name Jason Chambers. Jason is a troubled teenager. His anger is mainly projected to the outside. He has a charismatic personality that he keeps up in front of everyone, except for his father Ben. When confronted with this man, whom he both loves and fears, he is turned into a little boy with no charisma at all. His mother committed suicide when he was a little boy. Dee is his girlfriend.

JORDON, fifteen, Chloe's best friend, black

Jordon is rather obtuse boy who has a crush on Chloe.

SAIF, fifteen, Chugg's best friend, Asian Muslim

Full name Saif Anwar. Saif is a smart boy, a practising Muslim, who is being pushed by his parents into becoming a doctor. He is not too serious about his future. He might have a secret crush on Dee.

CHUGGS, fifteen, Saif's best friend, black

Full name Jayden Haynes. Chuggs is not only Saif's, but also Jason's best friend. He pretends to be less bright than he really is, although there are indications that this could be due to his frequent weed smoking, and that in fact he is quite bright.

CHLOE, fifteen, a big gob, white

Full name Chloe McGregor. Chloe is the least smart member of the group. She has a major crush on Jason.

DEE, fifteen, Jason's girl, more serious than most, black

Full name Delilah Ogunleye. Dee is by far the smartest of the group. She is respected by the others. She has a good heart, and although she allows Jason to manipulate her, she is doubtful about their lies.

FIRAT, fourteen, recently arrived from Turkey

Full name Firat Yilmaz. Firat has only recently arrived in London. He is smart, hardworking, and high-principled. Him and Becky may have feelings for each other.

AMANDA, Becky's mum, forties, English teacher, white

Full name Amanda Philips. Amanda is a very principled person, sometimes to the point of self-righteousness. She is a good mother and teacher but also quite naïve. She is Becky's mother and is married to Peter.

BECKY, fourteen, eyeliner and wristbands, white

Full name Rebecca Philips. Becky is a troubled teenager as much as Jason, although her anger seems to be directed within. She is smart and very perceptive of others. Her father committed suicide when she was a little girl. Peter is her stepfather. She is Amanda's daughter.

CHRIS, head teacher, fifties, white

Full name Chris Henderson, often referred to as Henderson. Outwardly pleasant, but also ruthlessly ambitious. He is lazy and easily manipulated into doing the wrong thing.

PETER, *Amanda's husband, forties, IT support worker, black*

Peter is a nice man who tries to do right by others, while still standing his ground. He is Becky's stepfather and Amanda's husband.

BEN, *Jason's father, forties, security guard, black*

Full name Ben Chambers. Ben is a charismatic man, a leader figure like his son, Jason. He is also very authoritative and embittered. His wife committed suicide a few years ago.

Location

A school in London, Amanda's home and Jason's home.

Summary

ACT ONE

Scene 1

Jason and his friends are smoking weed or cigarettes (not further specified, but likely weed) on school grounds. Firat, on his way to class, accidentally bumps into Jason, leaving a cigarette burn on his clothes. Angry, Jason insults Firat using racial comments. He then hits him to the ground and starts punching him while the group cheers him. Only Dee tries to stop him. Amanda finds them fighting, but when she tries to intervene, she is viciously pushed to the ground by Jason. The group then scatters quickly.

Scene 2

When Amanda comes home, her daughter Becky, going to the same school, has heard about the incident. She tries to persuade Amanda to see headmaster Henderson, but Amanda refuses, telling Becky she knows things about Jason that make her want to protect him. Becky is angry, and argues how unfair it is that Amanda should want to protect Jason only because he is perceived to be 'a poor little black boy'. According to Becky, he is simply no good, no matter what his background is.

Scene 3

Amanda decides to see Henderson anyway. She tells him what happened, but downplays the incident. She continues to defend Jason. Chris promises her he will take further action.

Scene 4

Jason persuades his friends to lie for him. He has just told Henderson that Amanda used racist language and wants his friends to back up his story in front of the headmaster. The friends are doubtful, but are persuaded in the end.

Scene 5

Henderson is talking to Firat in his office. He hopes Firat will deny the accusation against Amanda, but Firat claims he cannot, because he was on the ground unable to perceive what happened. He does not want to back up any story that might not be true.

Firat leaves and Amanda is called into Henderson's office. He tells her what she is being accused of. Amanda laughs and brushes the accusation aside as ridiculous.

Scene 6

To make sure that all of his friends will tell Henderson the same story, Jason has his friends re-enact his version of the events: Amanda pushing and racially abusing Jason, and only after that Jason pushing her to the ground. From the manner of their conversation, it becomes clear that the group lacks any respect for authority.

Scene 7

At home, Becky and Peter try to persuade Amanda to take further action. However, Amanda has put her faith in the honour of the lying students and the diligence of headmaster Henderson. Becky and Peter do not share this trust, especially when Amanda tells them Henderson did not want her to talk to anyone about the incident. They try to push her to contact her union, but she refuses.

Scene 8

Without Jason present, his friends discuss the right and wrongs of lying to protect him. Dee and Saif, the smart ones, have serious doubts, but in the end are persuaded by Chuggs to lie anyway.

Scene 9

In his office, Chris tries to explain to Amanda how serious the situation is. He rants about how evil he thinks Jason is, telling Amanda that without the costs of Jason's numerous extracurricular activities and therapy sessions, he could have already bought a brand new white board. Amanda wants to speak to Jason herself, but Chris refuses permission. He tells Amanda that Jason's father is coming by and wants her to leave before he arrives. Chris promises to solve the matter.

Scene 10

Becky and Firat are talking. Becky tries to persuade Firat to tell Henderson that Jason's stories are not true. Firat refuses again, since he still considers this lying. He then explains how a similar situation would be handled in Turkey, his home country, where the kids would already have been beaten for disrespecting authority. Talking about their families, Becky tells him that her father died when she was little.

Scene 11

Jason's father Ben talks to Chris in his office. He believes Jason's story, and pushes Chris into suspending Amanda and filing an official complaint of discrimination against her. He threatens Chris with an official complaint of racism for not choosing to believe Jason.

Scene 12

When Jason and his friends are loitering on school grounds, Becky turns up. She addresses Jason and reproaches him for his behaviour, calling him a liar. She also tells Jason that she is not afraid of him. Firat steps in, dragging Becky away before things can take a turn for the worse. He then goes back to inform Jason that he should be nicer to Becky, because she already lost one parent. He feels that the attack of a second parent would be too heavy on her. Jason does not seem impressed by this news. Firat is protected from further harm by the girls in the groups, who like him for protecting Becky.

Scene 13

When Peter finds Amanda at home instead of school, he again tries to persuade her into contacting her union. Amanda laughs his worries away, telling him that she was not suspended but just got a day off. However, Becky comes home and tells Amanda that Jason just told her she is suspended. Amanda calls Henderson and when he confirms this story, her mood starts to change.

ACT TWO**Scene 14**

At home, Jason tells his father excitedly how much he admires him and is proud of him. His father, on the other hand, turns out an authoritative man with hardly any respect for his son. He is not happy or proud at all, but criticizes his son for every mistake, however little. He warns Jason of what will happen if he gets kicked out of school – he will turn out a disrespected, working class man just like his father. During the conversation, it also becomes clear that Jason has lost his mother when he was a little boy.

Scene 15

Amanda barges into Chris' office and has a fight with him. She is furious because she feels he is not really on her side. He tells her that there is going to be an official investigation into her case starting with a case conference, which Amanda will not be allowed to attend. Also, a social worker will be visiting her house to see if she is fit to take care of Becky.

Scene 16

Jason is talking to his friends again. He tells them that he has been to the police to file a complaint against Amanda. When his friends think this is taking it too far, it turns out that even in front of them, Jason does not admit to lying. He intimidates them into testifying for him in front of the police, using all his persuasive powers when they refuse. He is smart, using any means to convince them: Chloe is persuaded because she has a crush on Jason, Jordon because he is in love with Chloe and will follow her everywhere. The smarter Saïd is persuaded because Jason makes him feel he saved him from being picked on in their first year at school and is therefore honour bound to do something in return.

Scene 17

Amanda reports the conversation she had with the police to Peter and Becky. Instead of showing the fear and anger Peter and Becky hoped she would show, she is only concerned about some pictures the police showed of bruises on Jason's chest (possibly made by his father, but not further specified). They have a big fight.

Scene 18

While Jason is persuading the last one of his friends, his girlfriend Dee, to testify in front of the police, Firat interrupts. He tells them that their lies have gone too far and threatens to go to Henderson, telling Jason he now remembers what really happened. Jason is getting more desperate.

Scene 19

In the middle of the night, Amanda finds Becky in the kitchen, preparing knives for an unknown purpose. Becky starts to cry and Amanda comforts her.

Scene 20

That same night at Jason's house, Jason tries to reach his friends on their mobiles in order to see if any of them have been to see the police, but nobody is picking up. His father interrupts, and Jason breaking his rules about the use of mobile phones after certain hours, makes him angry. When Dee calls Jason on his mobile, Ben picks up and humiliates his son by telling Dee Jason still wets the bed.

Scene 21

Amanda and Chris have another fight in his office. Amanda is angry because Chris is not backing her up and continuing the procedures against her. He has also put an incompetent deputy headmaster in charge of her case, which angers her even further.

Scene 22

Becky and Peter talk about Becky’s father. Peter tries to comfort Becky. Amanda comes in. She makes it clear that she is through with Jason, but that she still feels sorry for him. When Becky demands to know why, Amanda reveals that Jason’s mother killed herself, just like Becky’s father.

Scene 23

Jason’s friends, led by Dee, lie to him about going to the police and they argue. In a fight, he accidentally hurts Dee, which leads to his other friends walking away from him. Dee asks him about the bed-wetting, only succeeding in making him even angrier. When she leaves, Becky walks up to Jason and tries to talk to him. She tells him that she knows about his mother and that her father killed himself, too. For the second time, Jason refuses to acknowledge an offer of help.

Scene 24

Chris receives Ben in his office. It becomes clear that Jason’s lie has been discovered, because Dee has come forward with the truth. Chris has therefore decided to expel Jason and reinstate Amanda. Ben refuses to offer his or his son’s apologies. He tries to make Chris change his mind by asking him whether he understands what will happen to Jason if he is kicked out of school. Chris does not acknowledge this question, but asks Ben to go easy on Jason. He tells Ben that usually, teenagers lie for a reason.

Scene 25

Jason is in his room, apparently preparing a noose with his tie to hang himself. It is not clear whether he really intends to kill himself.

Scene 26

Amanda argues with Chris once more, demanding to know why the other students have not been expelled. They have only been suspended and Amanda now feels this is not a harsh enough punishment. Chris tells her he cannot expel all of them because of their diverse racial backgrounds; it would be a bad press for the school. Amanda then tells Chris that she will never teach again. When Dee enters to offer her apologies, Amanda refuses to accept them.

Greimas’ model

Jason

Father	⇒	Saving himself from being expelled	⇒	Himself, father
		↑		
Local authorities, Amanda, Henderson, his father Ben, his friends	⇒	Jason	←	Becky and Peter, later Firat and his friends

In Jason’s model, we see that his immediate goal is to save himself from expulsion. The reason why he does so seems to be the way his father is pressuring him. Apart from that, he also wants to make his father proud. Therefore, those who will benefit from him reaching his goal are not only himself, but also his father.

On the other axis, we see that Jason is opposed by Becky and Peter, who want to make Amanda take steps against him. Later on, he is opposed by more people, especially Firat, an eventually his friends who no

longer wish to lie for him. Help arrives unexpectedly from the adults around him, who support Jason directly or indirectly by validating his lies. In his father's case, this is directly, in Amanda's and Henderson's case, indirectly: they help him through mistaken moral beliefs in Amanda's case and through pressure from local authorities in Henderson's case. The reasons for local authorities to support Jason are not specified, but are likely a combination of moral indignation and public appearance. Jason's most obvious supporters are his friends, who back up his lies, although this changes towards the end of the play.

Amanda

Moral beliefs	⇒	Help Jason	⇒	Jason
		↑		
Becky and Peter, later on Jason's friends and Firat	⇒	Amanda	←	Local authorities, Jason's father, Henderson, Jason, beginning of the play Jason's friends

In the case of Amanda, we see that what she directly wants is to help Jason. She is fuelled by a strong moral belief that everyone deserves a second chance, and her knowledge that not everybody has the same opportunities.

She is helped by Becky and Peter, who support her, and later on by Jason's friends, who no longer wish to lie for him, and Firat, who decides to take action. Her biggest opponent is Jason, who starts to lie about her. She is further opposed by Jason's father, the local authorities and their statistics, who picks side for Jason and threatens Henderson. Other opposition comes from the local authorities who believe in their statistics. The local authorities and Ben are fuelled by Henderson's laziness.

Appendix B. Interview with Sabri Saad El Hamus

Transcript interview Sabri Saad El Hamus

By Lotje van der Velden

Held on 28th May 2013

The following transcript of the interview is in Dutch. The rest of the interview has not been fully translated to English. Instead, all quotes used in the thesis have been translated to English separately; these quotes are marked in **-bold-** and *-italics-* in the text below.

Het idee van de serie is een aantal jaren geleden ontstaan, in 2003, begin 2004. Dat weet ik omdat toen ik bezig was met het voorbereiden en opzetten van het hele plan Theo van Gogh werd vermoord. Toen begon ik te twijfelen: heeft het zin om hiermee bezig te zijn? Dat gevoel heb ik nu weer door wat er in Londen gebeurd is. Op het moment dat er iets of iemand namens mij en mijn religie gaat praten en iets gaat doen in naam daarvan, gaan mijn haren overeind staan. Ik kan daar ontzettend kwaad over worden. Als ik dan iets terug wil doen, vraag ik me of theater, of kunst, überhaupt toereikend is. Ik wilde mijn leven lang al begrip kweken, maar toen dit gebeurde, wilde ik gewoon laten zien we zijn. Verhalen vertellen over mijn helden. En dat zijn niet alleen Shakespeare's en Tsjechovs en Becketts. Er zijn ook anderen. Verhalen die ik hoorde op straat of las in boeken van andere schrijvers, ook uit mijn eigen cultuur. Ik merkte dat er behoefte is aan kennis. Ik heb het gevoel dat een publiek door kennis de moslim beter zou gaan begrijpen. Zulke ambitie heb ik nog steeds. Maar op het moment dat er zoiets groots gebeurd, zoals toen met Theo van Gogh of laatst in Londen, denk ik dat theater alleen niet toereikend is. Je moet meer doen, je moet de straat op gaan, je moet met mensen gaan praten. Het moet niet alleen gericht zijn op theaterpubliek, dat meestal hoogopgeleid en blank is en de tickets kan betalen. Ook de moslims die radicaliseren moeten bereikt worden. Misschien moet ik daar ook stukken voor gaan maken.

Dat soort gedachten hebben er dus altijd al gezeten. Bij *Pax Islamica* was het antwoord op mijn twijfel toen absoluut, volmondig, ja. Juist nu is het nodig om bruggen te slaan. Meer dan ooit is het nodig elkaars verhaal te horen en elkaar te proberen te begrijpen.

Is dat een beetje gelukt?

Ja, je zegt het goed, een beetje. Het is niet voor niets geweest, het is niet onopgemerkt gebleven. Het is een steen die in het water gevallen is en die heeft kringen veroorzaakt. Kijk maar: jij ziet hier, een aantal jaar later, na het lezen van het stuk. Ik geloof dat je met theater je directe omgeving wel kan veranderen, en de mensen die naar je toe komen in de zaal, iets mee kan geven. Hoe meer bereikbaar, hoe beter, dus een stuk dat én laagdrempelig is, voor iedereen toegankelijk is, én waar een boodschap in zit over hoe

wij zijn, dat zou het allerbeste zijn. Maar ik merk dat het vrij moeilijk is om dat allebei te doen. Stukken maken die niet alleen interessant zijn, maar ook vertellen hoe een cultuur in elkaar zit. Mijn cultuur in dit geval, de Arabische, Egyptische cultuur. Die combinatie blijft wel een spagaat. Met *Pax Islamica* is het gelukt om veel te spelen en veel publiek te bereiken, hoewel niet alle stukken makkelijk te behappen waren.

Pax Islamica zijn vijf stukken die geënt zijn op de vijf zuilen van de Islam. Dat begint met de Shahada, dat Allah de enige god is en Mohammed zijn profeet. Als je dat uitspreekt en je weet het, dan ben je Moslim en ga je de rest van de vijf dingen doen. Het eerste stuk ging over Allah en Mohammed. Het is erg moeilijk om een stuk over Allah te maken, over God, dat is zo'n abstract begrip. Alles wat je erover kan zeggen is heiligschennis, bij voorbaat al. Dat was ondoenlijk. Maar over Mohammed, al wordt gezegd dat het niet kan, kan je wel het een en ander vertellen.

Want Mohammed mag eigenlijk niet afgebeeld worden.

Nee, je mag hem niet afbeelden, dat klopt. Dat was al de eerste moeilijkheid.

Wat was de opzet van *Zoeken Naar Mohammed*?

De opzet was om vijf stukken te maken met verschillende auteurs. Zelf heb ik het geïnitieerd, maar ik heb er toneelschrijvers bij nodig gehad. Met vijf verschillende mensen zou ieder zijn eigen visie op de Islam kunnen geven, waarbij ik een debat leid met de maker. Schrijvers van Islamitische achtergrond, zoals Hafid Bouazza, waren niet zomaar beschikbaar. Zo kwam ik als eerste op Jeroen van de Berg, want ik ben bekend met zijn eerdere werk en was erg gecharmeerd van zijn taalgebruik en zijn manier van construeren van stukken. We zijn met elkaar gaan praten en ik gaf hem boeken en vertelde hem van alles, want hij kent de islam natuurlijk niet zoals ik. Ik dacht dat we er met gesprekken en boeken wel zouden komen, en het begon ook goed.

Ik wilde een verhaal maken over het leven van Mohammed. Het uitgangspunt daarbij was dat ik een persoonlijke zoektocht naar de moslim zou maken. Mezelf als moslim. Ik anno nu in Europa, hoe dat is en wat dat inhoudt. Met alle twijfels en onzekerheden van dien. Wij wilden weten wie die man is die opkomt. Omdat het zo persoonlijk was kwamen we heel snel op het idee dat ik dat gewoon zou zijn, ik kom op en ik heet gewoon Sabri Saad El Hamus. Ik ben de man die op zoek is naar de Islam en het karakter van Mohammed. Dat werd het uitgangspunt. Ook wisten we dat het geen monoloog was, dat er een tweede karakter bij kwam; de rol van een jonge journaliste, stagiaire van de Volkskrant, die mij kwam interviewen over het stuk. Toen wisten we ook dat ik in bad zou liggen. Dat vond ik leuk en er was nog niets aan de hand.

Maar de avond voordat we zouden gaan repeteren gaf hij mij de scene dat Fanny/Aisja binnenkomt. De rest was er nog niet, alleen die confrontatie met Fanny. Je

maakt vaker mee dat er aan het begin van de repetities nog geen script is, dat dit al improviserend ontstaat. Het belangrijkste is echter dat je wel op één lijn zit. Maar dit was niet wat ik gevraagd had, en omdat het mijn initiatief is en het eerste stuk van de reeks, was ik bang dat het niet goed zou gaan. Dus ik riep iedereen bij elkaar, acteurs, producent, regisseur, auteur. We concludeerden dat het niet de goede kant op ging en dat we heel snel iets zouden moeten doen, anders zou het niet gaan lukken. De vraag van Jeroen was wat er niet goed aan was. Toen kwam ik met het monoloog dat in de tekst verwerkt is (Hierbij klaagt Sabri tegenover het personage Jeroen over de inhoud van het stuk. Hij klaagt dat het stuk te stereotyperend is en niet werkelijk gaat over de Moslim, maar eerder over de Westerse wereld). Op het gegeven moment tijdens die heftige discussie zag je hem naar zijn bloknoot grijpen en gaan schrijven: wacht even, hier wordt het stuk gemaakt, op dit moment. Dit zou de situatie moeten zijn, zo'n confrontatie tussen de acteur en de schrijver. En dat werd het ook. Alles wat ik zei, begon ik al spelend aan te zetten. Jeroen heeft veel van wat ik gezegd heb genoteerd en zichzelf vervolgens veel erger aangepakt dan ik had gedaan. Toen, op die avond, is het een stuk geworden. Maar de boodschap was duidelijk; dat het niet ging om Mohammed, maar om Nederland, om de Nederlandse samenleving! Jeroen heeft dat allemaal laten inzinken, zichzelf tegen de muur gezegd, en is met deze tekst aangekomen, en de dramatische situatie was geboren in die confrontatie tussen de hoofdrolspelers.

Het stuk was niet als zo'n confrontatie gemaakt, het was gewoon een interview dat uit de hand zou lopen. Jeroen heeft er ook dingen in verwerkt die ik niet gezegd had. Het stuk gaat over een stuk dat in de steigers zit, en waar de acteur niet tevreden mee is. Daarover gaat hij in discussie met de auteur. Hij wordt geïnterviewd door een journaliste die als serveerster ontmantelt wordt, en dan ontstaat er een driehoeksverhouding tussen die mensen. ***Ik zag de actrice als de vertegenwoordigster van Nederland, als het land waaraan de acteur zijn verhaal vertelt. Op zijn beurt wil hij ook het verhaal van Nederland aanhoren.*** Dat was namelijk ook heel interessant; zoals het gedeelte waarin Fanny spreekt over iemand die van de ene straat van zijn wijk naar de andere verhuist en dit vergelijkt met emigratie. En daar ging de voorstelling over; over het vertellen van verhalen aan elkaar, waardoor je dichter bij elkaar kan komen en elkaar beter kan begrijpen. Want onbekend maakt onbemind.

Zulke bereidheid moet getoond worden. Er moet meer kennis zijn dan alleen die over elkaars eten, elkaars muziek, hippe lampjes en leuke kleedjes. Dat soort exotisme is leuk, maar ook oppervlakkig. Het is natuurlijk goed dat mensen dat doen, maar het zou mooi zijn om iets meer te weten van dat eten; van wie de mensen zijn, om bij je buurman aan te kloppen, al was hij Marokkaan of Chinees of Japans of wat dan ook.

Cultuur moet open worden gesteld. Zo kunnen we onszelf verlossen van de angst voor elkaar. Daarmee kun je iets bereiken. Ik vind dat heel belangrijk.

Het stuk werd ondertussen ingehaald door de actualiteit. Behalve de moord op Theo van Gogh kwamen we uit in januari 2006 toen er veel onrust was vanwege de cartoonaffaire in Denemarken. Ik heb toen een contractuele afspraak gemaakt met theater Frascati omdat ik wist dat er een risico was dat als het stuk ook maar een beetje gezien zou kunnen worden als heiligschennis, er bedreigingen zouden kunnen worden geuit. Theaters in Londen bijvoorbeeld, betrokken bij vergelijkbare stukken, hadden zich teruggetrokken. Dat wilde ik voorkomen. Ik wilde er zeker van zijn dat het stuk door zou gaan. Gelukkig hebben we er nooit last van gehad. Het enige wat af en toe gebeurde was dat er een paar Islamitische vrouwen wegliepen omdat ik naakt in bad zat.

Misschien helpt het dat je zelf ook Islamitisch bent.

Ja, en dat vond ik ook zo belangrijk. Ik vind dat je juist als moslim een bepaalde verantwoordelijkheid moet dragen. Anders geef je de kans aan mensen die daar misbruik van maken, zoals Wilders en de zijnen; mensen die keihard op de Islam gaan schieten en er niets van over laten. Daar wil ik iets aan doen. Vanuit de gemeenschap zelf moet er een groep opstaan die zegt: "en nou is het afgelopen, wij vinden dat het niet zo, maar zo zit." Er moet informatie komen over de Islam. Je moet natuurlijk ook kritisch blijven, maar dat kunnen juist wij zijn. Wij kunnen communiceren, van binnenuit. Want dan weet je ook waar je het over hebt, weet je wat je aan het roepen bent.

Dat wij werden ingehaald door de gebeurtenissen in Nederland en Europa is trouwens ook in het stuk verwerkt, in de vorm van de angst van de schrijver. Jeroen van den Berg was ook echt bang. Zo wilde hij wel zijn naam aan het stuk verbinden, maar wilde niet in de actualiteitenprogramma's komen. Het moest in het theater blijven, hoewel het wel over actuele kwesties ging. Dat heeft hij erin verwerkt. Dit komt vooral naar voren in de laatste scene (waarin Jeroen Sabri met een geweer bedreigt om zo duidelijk te maken dat hij bang zou moeten zijn).

Waar komt de titel van het vijfluk, *Pax Islamica*, vandaan?

Ik ben dat ooit tegengekomen. Dat had te maken Pax Christie. Dit is natuurlijk iets heel anders, maar ik vond dat 'Pax' en 'Islam' naast elkaar de doelstelling van het stuk verwoordde: namelijk vrede. Zo heb ik tijdens het maken van de *Pax Islamica* ook besloten om niet alleen 'groet', maar ook 'Salaam', het Arabische woord daarvoor, aan mijn e-mail toe te voegen. Ik wilde dat iedereen weet dat wij niet zo bloeddorstig of agressief zijn als sommige Islamitische groeperingen overkomen. Ik wilde duidelijk maken dat er een hele vredelievende vorm van Islam is. Dat Islam liefdevol is.

Er is bijvoorbeeld een tak van de Islam, het sofisme. Dat is het geloof dat alles wat je doet uit liefde voortkomt, niet uit angst. Liefde is belangrijker dan angst. Het gros van de Islamitische wereld werd opgevoed met angst. Bid, anders beland je in de hel, ga naar Mekka, anders beland je in de hel, kijk uit, doe de Zekket, 2.5% van je jaarlijkse inkomen afgeven, doe alles wat de vijf zuilen zeggen, wat er in de Koran staat, anders beland je in de hel. Het sofisme stelde daar tegenover: je hoeft niet naar Mekka. God is dichterbij dan Mekka. Hij is bij jouw thuis. Op je gebedskleedje kan je ook contact met God hebben. Met Allah. Je moet niet gaan bidden omdat je bang bent dat je anders in de hel belandt. Ik geloof niet eens in de hel. Ik geloof niet dat er een God bestaat die zoiets verzint als de hel. Ik ben wel gelovig, maar ik geloof in het sofisme, en dat is de liefde. Ik denk dat de straf of de beloning hier, in dit leven is. Je wordt gestraft of beloond, hier in het leven, en daarna maak je iets anders mee. Het is een overgang naar iets wat los staat van fysieke pijn of vreugde. Je geestelijke vrijheid is een spirituele toestand waarnaar je verlangt, dat niemand kent, want niemand is er ooit geweest en teruggekomen.

Vandaar dus *Pax Islamica*. De Islamitische Vrede.

De stukken zijn gemaakt aan de hand van de vijf zuilen van de Islam. Waarom is daarvoor gekozen?

Ik heb *Dekalog* gezien, een Poolse serie films gemaakt door Krzysztof Kieslowski. Dat is een prachtige, tiendelige serie over de tien geboden, later door Johan Simons gemaakt voor theater. Ik vond het zo goed, dat ik besloot vijf voorstellingen te maken geënt op de vijf zuilen van de Islam, en dat is me gelukt. Later heeft Kieslowski nog drie films gemaakt over de vlag van Frankrijk. Rood, wit, blauw. Zo is hij dus een inspiratiebron geweest. Nu maak ik ook een serie, met het thema Pax. De eerste, *Pax Hominis*, is net afgelopen, maar gaat volgend seizoen weer in reprise. De tekst is gemaakt door Arnon Grunberg, een heftige tekst.

Wat is het thema van die serie?

Ik wil het over religie hebben. *Pax Hominis* gaat over de verdediging van de mens. De hoofdpersoon, die in sommige interpretaties van recensies gezien wordt als de duivel (hoewel ik zelf niet weet hoe ze daaraan gekomen zijn, maar oké, dat kan), neemt het op voor de mens, maar hij komt bedrogen uit. Tijdens de voorstelling verkondigt hij alles wat hij gedaan heeft en zingt een loflied over de mens. Zijn monoloog wordt langzaam een beetje grimmig. Het gaat voorbij het cynisme wat in de tekst van Arnon zit. Het eindigt met de boodschap 'Leben und leben lassen', 'Leven en laten leven'. Dat is een hoopvolle boodschap die ik aan iedereen mee zou willen geven. Laat iedereen zijn ding doen, om het simpel te zeggen, en dwing niets af. Je mag je geloof belijden, maar laat

mij mijn geloof belijden. Ga mij niet zeggen dat ik geen goede Moslim ben omdat ik niet vijf keer per dag bid, of een glaasje wijn drink, of zoals in *Pax Islamica: Sawm*, bij de Kentucky Fried Chicken overdag eten bestellen tijdens de Ramadan.

In *Zoeken naar Mohammed* klaagt Sabri dat hij het gevoel heeft dat hij zich altijd moet verantwoorden voor zijn geloof en ook voor het besluit om op dit moment een stuk over Mohammed te schrijven. Ik vroeg me af in hoeverre dat uw klacht was, en of u dan niet juist dacht dat met het toneelstuk zulke verantwoording af te gaan leggen?

Dat is eigenlijk heel dubbel. In die tijd had ik zo'n houding van 'Houd toch op zeg, ga weg met je wijzende vingers, ik ben niet verantwoordelijk voor Mohammed B. en voor zijn daden. Hij is gek, zo'n godsdienstwaaninnige, dat is hij en moet hij blijven, en daar heb ik niets mee te maken. Spreek mij daar niet op aan, op wat hij gedaan heeft, of op die andere gek in Londen'. Dat iedere gek namens de Islam kan praten betekent niet dat hij moslim is. Hij is als moslim gedoopt, om het zo maar te zeggen, gaat naar de moskee, denkt dat hij al met één been in het paradijs staat, maar dat is allemaal niet waar. Ik wil me niet verantwoorden voor zijn daden, maar ik vind nu meer dan ooit dat we wel verantwoordelijkheid dragen als moslims, en ons moeten uitspreken, want als er alleen maar gezwegen wordt, en niets kenbaar wordt gemaakt, dan stemmen we toe. Wie zwijgt stemt toe. Dan laat je toe dat de rest van het land denken dat de Islam echt zo is als gesteld wordt door iemand die in Londen met bebloede handen en een slagersmes iemand de kop afhakt. Dan geef je de kans aan rechts radicalen om te stellen dat dit inderdaad in de Koran staat, dat dit een gewelddadige religie is die zulke dingen doet met ongelovigen of mensen die het geloof beledigen. Dat het recht in eigen hand wordt genomen en de eisen kenbaar gemaakt worden via een brief, want praten kunnen ze blijkbaar niet. Zulke vooroordelen ben ik zat. Natuurlijk zijn wij hier tegen. Dit is niet mijn Islam, ik heb een hele andere religie. Ik heb ook de Koran gelezen, en ik weet dat zulke dingen daar niet in staan.

Ik heb altijd gedacht dat wij daar niet verantwoordelijk voor zijn, maar we moeten ons dus wel uitspreken. Anders weet de rest van de wereld niet dat jij dat veroordeelt. En de meerderheid van de Islamitische gemeenschap is het daar ook niet mee eens, maar laat dat niet altijd duidelijk zien. Mohammed B. moet niet alleen van een rechter horen dat hij fout zit, maar ook van zijn Imam. Weten dat het niet Kosjer is, zoals Islamieten zeggen, wat hij gedaan heeft. De gemeenschap moet dat ook afkeuren. Mensen zoals Mohammed B. of die mannen in Londen zijn gevaarlijk. Niet alleen omdat ze iemand hun hoofd afhakken, maar ook vanwege wat ze verspreiden aan beeld over de Islam. Ze bereiken het tegenovergestelde van wat ze willen bereiken door hun volk juist in gevaar te brengen.

De stukken hebben natuurlijk drie jaar de tijd in beslag genomen. Is er in die tijd iets veranderd aan beeldvorming over de Islamitische gemeenschap in de maatschappij?

Het is nog urgenter geworden. We zijn er nog niet uit. In de afgelopen tien jaar was Nederland in grote verwarring. Nu is daar inmiddels ook economische verwarring bijgekomen. Ik heb wel het gevoel dat de sociale en de politieke verwarring iets minder is geworden. Het gevoel van 'wij' en 'zij' is volgens mij verminderd. Het samenleven is een aantal jaren goed gegaan en de gemoederen zijn een beetje bedaard. We weten in ieder geval iets meer over wie deugt en wie niet, we scheren niet alles meer over één kam, we zijn genuanceerder geworden dan een tijdje terug. Ik hoop dat ik ook mijn steentje heb bijgedragen aan het verbeteren van dat beeld. Ik vind dat wij het in Nederland ook iets beter doen dan in andere landen.

Kunt u dat wat toelichten?

Wij proberen toch met de dialoog mensen dichter bij elkaar te brengen. Meer dan in Engeland, of als in Zweden. Stockholm. Iedereen woont nu ook meer gemengd. Er zijn natuurlijk wijken in Amsterdam die meer Islamitisch zijn, maar daar wordt in Nederland dan typisch het woord 'leuk' aan gekoppeld. Het is hip, dat is in Amsterdam begonnen in de jaren 80. En doordat het zo hip wordt, houd je het ook leuk. Het houdt het licht en zorgt dat problemen meer bespreekbaar worden. Nederlandse cultuur straalt ook uit dat er gecommuniceerd kan worden. Nederlanders zijn mondig, en dat geldt ook voor de allochtonen, om dat woord maar te gebruiken, die hier opgevoed zijn. In Egypte zeggen we ook wel: 'Wie met een volk 40 dagen leeft, is één van hen.' Nou ja, 40 dagen is natuurlijk wel erg kort, maar bij wijze van spreken.

Met name in *Zoeken naar Mohammed* viel mij op, dat Moslim-zijn gekoppeld wordt aan Islamitisch zijn, dan weer aan Arabisch zijn, dan weer aan Egyptenaar zijn. Ik vraag me af hoe u die vermenging van verschillende identiteiten zelf ervaart. Want eigenlijk wil het feit dat je Moslim bent niet zeggen dat je dus ook Arabisch en dus ook Egyptisch bent.

Nee, het is eerder andersom. Ik wordt het liefst voor Egyptenaar 'uitgemaakt', omdat ik daar het meest trots op ben. Egypte is immers pas later Islamitisch geworden. Het is vanuit Saoedi Arabië naar Egypte gebracht. De oorspronkelijke bewoners van Egypte zijn Kopten, Christenen. Na de farao's was het Christendom het eerste geloof. Toen pas zijn de Islamieten gekomen en hebben Egypte een moslimland gemaakt. Egypte blijft ook een Afrikaans land en een onderdeel van de Arabische band. De eerste president na de bevrijding van Egypte, Nasser, had enorm hoge ambities in het leiden van de Arabische

wereld, waardoor Egypte een leidende rol kreeg en ook Arabisch genoemd werd. Maar in eerste instantie zijn we Egyptenaren. Ik voel me ook ergens aangetrokken tot het woestijnvolk. In Egypte voel je in sommige delen van het land hoe de faraonische cultuur nog steeds gehanteerd wordt in het dagelijkse leven. Een voorbeeld is het cultiveren van het land. Dat wordt nog steeds volgens de Islamitische – Egyptische, daar ga je al, wat een verwarring – volgens het Egyptische systeem gedaan.

Sinds ik naar Nederland ben verhuisd, is er nog een andere cultuur bijgekomen. Ik leef in Nederland langer dan ik ooit in Egypte gedaan heb. Maar ik heb wel een plek moeten inruimen voor een nieuwe cultuur, de Nederlandse, de Europese cultuur.

Vandaar dat u ook stel dat Egypte uw moeder is en Nederland uw vrouw?

Ja, precies.

Zit Egypte in uw bloed dan?

Ja, dat hoef ik niet te verdedigen. Dat zit in me. Ik lees en schrijf nog steeds in Arabisch Egyptisch. Als ik daar ben, dan ben ik ook thuis. Maar dat geldt ook voor Amsterdam.

Wat voor beeld of boodschap had u eigenlijk in uw hoofd dat u wilde creëren van de Moslim?

Dat is vrij lastig. Het beeld dat ik had is moeilijk en niet helemaal waar. Wat bedoel ik daarmee? Het volgende. Ik haal het beeld uit mezelf, maar waarom ik dit wil mengen met het geloof, weet ik niet. Ik ben gefascineerd door de combinatie van geloof en erotiek. Kort door de bocht. Nou ben ik niet de enige kunstenaar die daarmee aankomt, want het komt in de beste families voor; Madonna, Prince, Michael Jackson, noem maar op, maar niet genoeg, of niet vaak genoeg, in de Islamitische cultuur. Toch gebeurt het wel. Misschien niet in de moderne Islamitische cultuur, maar wel in de oude. Lees bijvoorbeeld Hafid Bouazza's vertalingen van de erotische gedichten van de dertiende en veertiende eeuw.

Ik ben daar een moderne aanhanger van, zou je kunnen zeggen. Anderen die gefascineerd zijn door erotiek en liefde laten het geloof varen. Dat heb ik zelf ook een tijdje gedaan. Nu blijf ik mezelf graag moslim noemen. Maar ik blijf ook nog steeds graag met een rood wijntje in beeld komen. Mensen mogen zien dat ik af en toe rode wijn drink, maar toch moslim ben. Ik schuw niet om openlijk over liefde te praten en mezelf nog steeds moslim te noemen. Ik weet niet of ik daarin de enige ben, maar het zou mooi zijn als mensen inderdaad een evenwicht tussen die twee dingen kunnen vinden. Dat mensen een spiritueel leven leiden en tegelijkertijd niet alles afzweren. Dat is het beeld wat ik wil geven van de moslim. Een man van de wereld die toch gelovig is.

Was het conflicterend om in het toneelstuk steeds versies van uzelf te spelen?

Nee, ik heb het heel leuk gevonden. Je bent in elk personage toch een beetje jezelf. Je speelt altijd een deel van jezelf, maar dan vergroot. Het is wel altijd leuk om mensen te spelen die verder van je vandaan liggen. Niks is saaier dan jezelf te zijn of te willen zijn. Daar betaalt een publiek geen geld voor.

Hoe paste het vijfde stuk, *Hadj*, in de reeks?

Daar zijn we niet helemaal uitgekomen. We wilden eigenlijk te veel. Ooit heb ik Dostojevski's *De Gebroeders Karamazov* gelezen en dat leek me mooi om te spelen met een Arabische familie. Maar dat had niet per se als onderdeel van *Pax Islamica* gemoeten. Maar toen heb ik gezegd dat het misschien geschikt was als vijfde luik; want dan zou de vader zeggen naar Mekka te willen gaan, terwijl hij dat helemaal niet doet. Dat idee zouden we dan toepassen in *De Gebroeders Karamazov*, wat op zich al een enorm thema is. Het stuk stoelde op een aantal fundamenteën, die niet met elkaar matchten. Het had misschien persoonlijker moeten zijn: de rest waren toneelstukken die juist heel dicht bij mezelf stonden. Zo speelde ik in allemaal een Sabri, behalve in *Mohammed en Omnya*, hoewel dat stuk ook erg dicht bij mezelf stond.

***Zekket*, het derde stuk, was het moeilijkst om te spelen.**

Dat klopt. Het had niet heel direct met het onderwerp te maken, de *Zekket*. De aalmoes. Het werd in één zin genoemd, en die is er volgens mij uiteindelijk in het stuk ook uitgehaald. Op het gegeven moment heb ik het onderwerp gewoon los gelaten, geaccepteerd dat het daar niet over ging. Toen ik het niet meer als onderdeel van de *Zekket* zag, werd het stuk heel mooi. Ik heb van het maken ervan genoten, omdat het technisch heel veel van mij vroeg, omdat ik niets deed. Ik zat aan tafel en ik sprak teksten uit. Dit in tegenstelling tot wat ik normaal doe, heel groot, speelde ik heel erg klein, er gebeurde ogenschijnlijk niets, je zag het niet. Ik probeerde die tekst zo te interpreteren dat het wel spannend bleef, maar dat was ook vrij moeilijk om vol te houden. Ik vond het een soort experimenteel lied, dat heel veel concentratie vergt en goed ten gehore gebracht werd.

In hoeverre zijn de verhalen door u bedacht?

Ik heb een dikke vinger in de pap gehad, om het zomaar te zeggen. Het verzinnen, sowieso het initiëren. Veel van die teksten zijn ook inderdaad uit mijn leven gegrepen. Autobiografisch. Heel veel ook niet, gelukkig. Ik was wel het onderwerp. Dat wilde ik ook. Ik wil niemand voor de kop stoten, ik wil niemand beledigen. Als er iemand beledigd wordt, dan ben ik dat. Via mezelf wilde ik op zoek naar de voorbeeldmoslim, als die al bestaat. Wie is dat? Hoe leeft die dan?

Er staat in *Zoeken Naar Mohammed* ook 'Er zijn evenveel Islams als er Moslims zijn'. Dus zou je ook geen stukken over moslims in het algemeen kunnen maken.

Nee, precies. Alleen over jezelf, als Moslim zijnde.

Ging *Zoeken Naar Mohammed* alleen over de Islam of over immigrantengroepen in het algemeen?

Eigenlijk was het een specifiek geval, met een naam en identiteit. Maar door het te specificeren en twee culturen tegenover elkaar te plaatsen, staat dat dan wel weer als symbool of als metafoor voor alle andere twee culturen. Je zou kunnen zeggen dat een Engelsman en een Vietnamees, of een Boeddhist en een Amerikaan zo ook tegenover elkaar zouden kunnen staan. Hier was het dan specifiek de Nederlander en de Moslim. Maar als symbool stond het misschien wel voor alle andere twee componenten.

Appendix C. Quotes Cited English/ Dutch

The following appendix contains a list of all the quotes used in the thesis in Dutch and English, so the translations can be compared. The first and second part contain translations of Pax Islamica and the interview, of which there was only a Dutch version available. They were translated by myself and checked by Jeske van der Velden, BA English Language and Culture. The last part contains the English quotes from the original Mogadishu play by Vivienne Franzmann, compared to the translation by Tom Kleijn made for De Utrechtse Spelen. The annotation under the quote provides information on the page number in the works as referred to on the works cited list. 'PA stands for Pax Islamica, MF refers to Mogadishu Vivienne Franzmann's version, MK refers to Mogadishu Tom Kleijn version and IV refers to interview. For example, (PA 24), refers to Pax Islamica page 24.

Pax Islamica

1

'dat *jullie* steeds maar verliefd worden op familieleden'

'that you [plural] always fall in love with your own relatives'
(PA 35)

2

'Liberale moslim' (...) ongelovige moslim.'

'Liberal Muslim (...) unbelieving Muslim.'
(PA 21)

3

'Jij zal mij nooit begrijpen door de Koran te lezen, of de biografie van Mohammed. Er zijn net zo veel Islams als er moslims zijn, is dat nou zo moeilijk!'

'You will never understand me by reading the Koran, or Mohammed's biography. There are as many Islams as there are Muslims, is that so hard to understand!'
(PA 25)

4

'gevaarlijke, militante moslim'

'dangerous, militant Muslim'
(PA 23)

5

"De hele Islamitische wereld zit in een identiteitscrisis. Egypte in het bijzonder, daar schiet het alle kanten op. Zijn wij Arabisch, zijn we Afrikaans, zijn we islamitisch, zijn we westers. En als je dat niet weet grijp je terug naar iets dat je in de basis misschien wel helemaal niet meer bent."

"The whole Islamic world is suffering from an identity crisis. This is especially true of Egypt. Are we Arab, are we African, are we Islamic, are we Western. And if you don't have the answer you might end up trying to fall back on something you no longer are."

(PA 24)

6

'Want jij zit in mijn stuk Sabri. Dit hier – (hij maakt een cirkelbeweging rond Sabri) dat ben jij. En de rest om ons heen (hij maakt een wijds gebaar) is allemaal van mij. Jij zit in mijn wereld, of je dat nu wilt of niet.'

'Because you're in my play Sabri. This here – (he makes a circular movement around Sabri) that's you. And everywhere else (he makes a sweeping movement) belongs to me. You are in my world, whether you like it or not.'

(PA 29)

7

'Ik zou een stuk willen maken waarin jij mij verhalen vertelt over jouw leven, waarin ik jou verhalen vertel over mijn leven, over de Islam, over Mohammed, over Egypte en we proberen gedurende de avond iets meer te weten te komen over wie er tegenover ons zit.'

'I would like to make a play in which you tell me stories about your life, in which I tell you stories about my life, about Islam, about Mohammed, about Egypt, and in which we try in the course of the evening to find out a little more about the person sitting opposite from us.'

(PA 20)

Interview

1

'Ik zag de actrice als de vertegenwoordigster van Nederland, als het land waaraan de acteur zijn verhaal vertelt. Op zijn beurt wil hij ook het verhaal van Nederland aanhoren.'

'I saw the actress [playing Fanny] as the representative of The Netherlands, as the country to which the actor [in the play] tells his story. In his turn, he is prepared to listen to the story of The Netherlands.'

(IV 3)

Mogadishu

1

'BECKY, *fourteen, eyeliner and wristbands, white*, to AMANDA, *Becky's mum, forties, English teacher, white*:

I mean, we are seriously penalised just because we know what diatribe and piñata means. If I communicated with 'bare, sick, and butterz' I'd have more awards than Judi Dench but because I'm white and middle class, it's just fucking assumed that I should have manners. That I should work hard, have aspirations to go to university, spend a gap year building irrigation systems in Mogadishu and know who Judi Dench is. It's so fucking unfair.'

(MF 4, 9)

'BECKY, *veertien, eyeliner en polsbandjes, blank*, tegen AMANDA, *moeder van Becky, in de veertig, lerares Engels, blank*:

Ik bedoel, wij krijgen serieus op ons donder omdat we weten wat 'lijfeigene' en 'collectieve verantwoordelijkheid' betekent. Als ik met alleen 'kut, kanker, toring' zou praten, had ik meer prijzen dan Arnon Grunberg, maar omdat ik wit ben en uit een keurig gezin kom, gaan ze er gewoon van uit dat ik goede manieren heb. Dat ik hard werk, graag naar de universiteit wil, na mijn eindexamen een jaar lang irrigatiekanalen in Mogadishu ga graven en weet wie Arnon Grunberg is. Het is zo oneerlijk, godverdomme.' (MK 1, 5)

2

'JASON, fifteen, leader, black'
(MF 4)

'JASON, vijftien, de leider, zwart'
(MK 1)

3

'Arab terrorist bomb-making Muslim'
(MF 6)

'Een brandstichter, een moslimterrorist, een islamitische bommenmaker'
(MK 3)

4

'And she said, 'Leave him alone, you black bastard,' and pushed me, yeah?'
(MF 18)

'En zij zei, 'Laat hem met rust, zwarte klootzak,' en gaf me een duw, ja?'
(MK 10)

5

'She is a racist.'
(MF 19)

'Ze is een racist.'
(MK 11)

6

'You get Doritos? That ain't fair. I want Doritos.'
(MF 29)

'Krijg jij Doritos? Dat is niet eerlijk. Ik wil ook Doritos.'
(MK 17)

7

'BECKY. Imagine if it had been someone else that had brought it back in that condition. (...) If it was me or any other of the nice middle-class kids we would have been strung up on the climbing frame and been beaten like a piñata.

Pause.

You always make excuses for shits like him. I bet you a million fucking pounds that he's got more praise postcards at home than anyone I know. And you probably fucking sent them.'

(MF 8-9)

'BECKY Stel dat iemand anders hem in zo'n toestand had teruggebracht. (...). Als ik het had gedaan of een van die andere keurige kinderen, waren we aan het klimrek vastgebonden en afgeranseld als een lijfeigene.

Pauze.

Jij hebt altijd een excuus klaar voor dat soort klootzakken. Ik durf er goddomme duizend euro om te verwedden dat hij meer prijzen voor goed gedrag heeft gekregen dan iedereen die ik ken. En de meeste zijn waarschijnlijk ook nog door jou gegeven, goddomme.'

(MK 4)

8

'AMANDA. And statistically, if you're a working-class African-Caribbean boy, you are more likely to –

BECKY. Boo hoo, poor little black boy blah blah blah.

AMANDA. Some people have harder lives and –

BECKY. Loads of people have hard lives and they're not all wankers.'

(MF 12)

'AMANDA En statistisch gezien, als je een zwarte jongen bent uit een werkersmilieu, dan is de kans groot dat je –

BECKY Boehoe, arm klein zwart jongetje blablabla.

AMANDA Sommige mensen hebben het moeilijker in het leven en –

BECKY Een heleboel mensen hebben het moeilijk in het leven, maar het zijn niet allemaal klootzakken.'

(MK 6-7)

9

'My dad says we got to stand up for ourselves, innit.'

(MF 83)

'Mijn pa zegt dat we voor onszelf op moeten komen, man.'

(MK 50)

10

'CHRIS. I can't exclude them all.

Pause.

Excluding six kids in one go will raise eyebrows. Excluding four other black kids, even temporarily, will give Miriam Harris's flunkies a fucking heart attack. Ofsted will be on the stats in a blink.

AMANDA. Saif's Asian.

CHRIS. I can't just exclude him. What would that look like?
(MF 140-141)

'CHRIS Ik kan ze niet allemaal van school sturen.

Pauze.

Zes kinderen in een keer van school sturen, al was het maar tijdelijk, geeft aanleiding tot vragen. Als daar dan ook nog eens vier zwarte kinderen bij zitten, krijgt het Meldpunt Discriminatie meteen een hartaanval. Die staan meteen bij de statistiek op de stoep.

AMANDA Saïf is Aziatisch.

CHRIS Ik kan niet alleen hem eraf sturen. Wat voor indruk zou dat maken?'

(MK 85)