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**PERFORMING ASABIYYAH in DAVID GREIG'S  
PLAY *THE EVENTS*: BELONGING, COLLAPSE,  
AND KHALDUNIAN INSIGHT**

**ABSTRACT**

This article offers a Khaldunian reading of David Greig's *The Events*, a contemporary play that explicitly references the 14th-century historian and philosopher Ibn Khaldun and his concept of asabiyyah—the social cohesion or group solidarity that undergirds the formation, endurance, and eventual decline of political communities. Rather than approaching the play primarily through the lens of trauma or radicalisation, the study foregrounds the structural dynamics of communal disintegration and ethical responsibility. Through an analysis of *The Boy*'s ideological rhetoric and Claire's moral decisions, the article delineates two divergent responses to the erosion of social bonds: one rooted in exclusion, resentment, and symbolic purification; the other grounded in mutual vulnerability, shared practice, and moral restraint. While the play invokes Khaldunian concepts, it also reveals the danger of their misappropriation. *The Boy* distorts asabiyyah, converting it from a principle of ethical solidarity into a rationale for violence, tribal fantasy, and cultural exclusion. Drawing on Khaldun's thought alongside Bauman, Butler, Levinas, and Anderson, the article reinterprets *The Events* as a meditation on the fragility of collective life and the ethical possibilities of reconstructing solidarity in the aftermath of ideological collapse.

**Keywords:** David Greig; *The Events*; Ibn Khaldun; Asabiyyah; British Drama

**DAVID GREIG'İN *THE EVENTS* OYUNUNDA  
ASABIYETİN TEMSİLİ: AİDİYET, ÇÖZÜLME  
ve HALDUNCU BİR YORUM**

**ÖZET**

Bu makale, David Greig'in 14. yüzyıl tarihçi ve düşünürü İbn Haldun'a ve onun asabiyet kavramına atıfta bulunan çağdaş tiyatro oyunu *The Events*'i Halduncu bir perspektifle ele almaktadır. Asabiyet, siyasal toplulukların kuruluşunu, sürekliliğini ve nihai çöküşünü belirleyen toplumsal dayanışma ve kolektif bağlılık ilkesidir. Bu çalışma, oyunu yalnızca travma ya da radikalleşme ekseninde değil, toplumsal çözülmenin yapısal dinamikleri ve etik sorumluluk sorunsalı çerçevesinde değerlendirir. *The Boy* karakterinin ideolojik söylemi ile Claire karakterinin etik tercihleri incelenerek, sosyal bağların çözülmesine verilen iki zıt tepki ortaya konur: ilki dışlayıcılık, kin ve simgesel arınma üzerine kuruludur; ikincisi ise karşılıklı kırılganlık, ortak eylem ve ahlaki öz-denetim temelinde gelişir. Oyun, Halduncu düşünceyi çağrıştırmakla birlikte, bu fikirlerin nasıl yanlış biçimde araçsallaştırılabileceğini de ortaya koyar. *The Boy*, asabiyet kavramını etik dayanışma ilkesinden kopararak, şiddet, kabileci fantezi ve kültürel saflık adına boş bir meşruiyet zeminine dönüştürür. Haldun'un kuramı, Bauman, Butler, Levinas ve Anderson gibi düşünürlerin yaklaşımlarıyla birlikte ele alınarak, *The Events* oyunu, ideolojik çöküş sonrasında toplumsal dayanışmanın kırılganlığı ve etik dayanışmanın yeniden inşası üzerine düşünsel sorgulama olarak yeniden yorumlanır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** David Greig; *The Events*; İbn Haldun; Asabiyet; Britanya Tiyatrosu

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## Introduction

David Greig's *The Events* (2013) is a haunting contemporary drama set in the aftermath of a mass shooting. At its centre is Claire, a liberal priest and community choir leader, who survives the attack and is left grappling with the desire to understand why it happened, to seek justice, and ultimately to pursue forgiveness. Her choir—composed of asylum seekers, immigrants, the elderly, and other socially marginalised figures—is annihilated in a single act of violence by a young man referred to only as The Boy. Inspired by the 2011 mass murder committed by Anders Breivik in Norway (Greig, 2014) *The Events* transcends this real-world reference to pose broader questions about identity, exclusion, and collective life in contemporary Europe (Hudson, 2017, p. 308). In staging such devastation, the play opens into an inquiry not just into the singular event itself but also into how communities can imagine solidarity in the face of violence and marginalisation.

The play offers a profound meditation on hostility, belonging, and the fragility of social cohesion. What distinguishes *The Events* is its refusal to provide simple psychological or political explanations for the act of terror. Instead, it immerses the audience in a philosophical and ethical inquiry into what compels individuals to seek belonging through destruction, a concern addressed in this article through Ibn Khaldun's concept of *asabiyyah* and its relation to social cohesion and communal breakdown.

Existing scholarship on *The Events* has primarily interpreted the play through ethical and political lenses. Ethical readings, such as Martin Riedelsheimer's (2017, p. 203), understand the choir as a fragile "community of the precarious," drawing on Judith Butler and Emmanuel Levinas to emphasise vulnerability, hospitality, and moral responsibility after violence. Political interpretations, including James Hudson's (2017), situate the play within debates on ideological extremism and multiculturalism, reading The Boy as a figure shaped by far-right resentment and the limits of liberal tolerance.

While these approaches illuminate the play's ethical and political concerns, they tend to frame community either as moral exposure or ideological conflict. This article advances a different, complementary perspective by reading *The Events* through the lens of Ibn Khaldun's concept of *asabiyyah*. By analysing the opposition between Claire's choir and The Boys' imagined tribe, it offers a structural account of how solidarity is formed, corrupted, and destroyed, thereby contributing a new sociological dimension to existing interpretations of the play.

Building on and departing from these critical approaches, this article examines David Greig's *The Events* through the concept of *asabiyyah*, a key term in the political and historical thought of Ibn Khaldun. Notably, Greig's play includes direct references to Khaldun and his theory of historical cycles, making *asabiyyah* not only a useful analytical lens but also a theme within the text itself. The analysis focuses in particular on the opposition between Claire's choir, which briefly enacts a fragile form of collective cohesion through shared practice, and The Boy, whose imagined community reflects a corrupted, exclusionary form of solidarity. In Khaldun's (2005, p. 98) formulation, *asabiyyah* refers to the cohesive force that binds individuals into a functioning group, enabling social formation and political durability.

In *The Events*, this idea is evoked—and ultimately unsettled—through the ideological rhetoric of The Boy, whose notion of tribal protection draws selectively on Khaldunian language while distorting its ethical content. Opposed to The Boy's rhetoric is Claire's pursuit of a different

kind of solidarity, based on vulnerability, collective presence, and restraint. The play presents a confrontation between two forms of communal life: one shaped by exclusion and symbolic purification, the other by mutual recognition and shared responsibility. This article traces Greig's engagement with Khaldunian ideas—particularly the decline of solidarity in settled societies—and reflects on the possibility of ethical renewal in the aftermath of political and social collapse.

### **I. Conceptual Background: Ibn Khaldun on Asabiyyah, Lineage, and Acquired Solidarity**

The concept of *asabiyyah*, as developed by the 14th-century North African thinker Ibn Khaldun in his *Muqaddimah*, refers to the foundational social cohesion or group solidarity that binds communities together. More than a descriptive label, *asabiyyah* functions as a dynamic explanatory principle that accounts for the rise, endurance, and eventual decline of political formations. *Asabiyyah* is the animating spirit that enables groups to act collectively, defend themselves, establish governance, and preserve unity in the face of adversity. Without *asabiyyah*, no dynasty, polity, or society can endure (Khaldun, 2005, p. 111). Its loss signals not only political weakness but also a deeper moral and social disintegration, as communal bonds give way to individualism, dependence, and inertia.

Crucially, Khaldun distinguishes between two primary sources of *asabiyyah*, a differentiation that lies at the core of his sociological thought and provides the interpretive foundation for this article. Khaldun (2005) writes that “Group feeling results only from blood relationship or something corresponding to it” (p. 97). One arises from inherited bonds—namely, kinship, ancestry, and familial ties—which tend to generate instinctive loyalty and strong group cohesion. The other emerges through lived association: people bound not by blood but by shared experience, mutual aid, sustained proximity, and ethical or spiritual affiliation. While the former is rooted in biological continuity, the latter is formed through social practice and intentional alignment. Khaldun explains that a person may attach himself to another group—through goodwill, alliance, clientage, or even exile—and in time be treated as if of that lineage. What matters is not blood but shared obligations such as loyalty, mutual protection, or responsibility for justice. Over time, “the things resulting from common descent are there, it is as if (common descent) itself were there” (Khaldun, 2005, p. 100), suggesting that the original lineage may fade from conscious recognition.

The former type of solidarity is instinctive and often exclusionary; the latter is cultivated, ethical, and potentially inclusive. In his introduction to the *Muqaddimah*, Süleyman Uludağ (2007) refers to these forms as lineage-based and cause-based solidarity. Though *asabiyyah* is rooted initially in kinship, its theoretical scope expands well beyond biological ancestry. As Uludağ observes, Khaldun's framework accommodates both tribal and supra-tribal forms of solidarity, allowing for broader interpretations that include political, religious, and ideological affiliations. He argues that cause-based *asabiyyah*—arising from shared purpose, moral commitment, or long-term habituation—can evolve to encompass national or imperial identities, integrating tribal and regional loyalties within a broader structure (98-99). In this view, reducing *asabiyyah* to nationalism or ethnic sentiment oversimplifies its sociological function. Both forms—lineage-based and cause-based—function as structurally persistent forces in the organisation of political and communal life. This dual structure makes *asabiyyah* a flexible and enduring concept, capable of illuminating the moral and structural foundations of collective identity from medieval polities to contemporary societies.

## II. Kinship, Ethical Purpose, and Shared Practice

In Khaldun's historical model, the initial strength of a community or ruling group often stems from bonds grounded in shared ancestry—ties of blood, tribal loyalty, and familial obligation. These inherited connections are especially potent in nomadic societies, where survival depends on mutual defence, collective action, and an instinctive reflex to protect one's kin (Khaldun, 2005, p. 98). Yet Khaldun is equally attuned to the limitations and risks of this form of solidarity. While it may serve as the original adhesive of group cohesion, it can easily give rise to factionalism, exclusivity, and internal rivalry. Khaldun (2005, p. 336) notes that relations among groups depend on whether their purposes converge or diverge: shared aims foster affection and alliance, while conflicting aims produce hostility, strife, and even war. *Asabiyyah* thus emerges as the mechanism through which both solidarity and enmity take shape, structuring the dynamics of social cohesion and rupture.

The internal fragility of inherited loyalty becomes particularly evident when leaders begin to sever ties with their own communities in favour of outsiders. Khaldun (2005) explains that in consolidating power, leaders often alienate their own people, claiming glory for themselves and turning to non-kin allies who are willing to defend their rule, even at the cost of their lives (pp. 146-147). This shift marks a structural transformation: What begins as a cohesive political force rooted in familial obligation deteriorates into a fragile formation driven by self-preservation and fear. As inherited ties ossify into privilege and exclusion, they lose their adaptive potential. Instead of serving the common good, they become instruments of hierarchy, competition, and decay.

Khaldun further warns that in settled, urbanised societies, abundance and luxury gradually erode the moral and affective bonds that sustain communal life. As Khaldun (2005, pp. 151–152) observes: “Each one will stretch out his hand for whatever he needs... injustice and aggressiveness are in the animal nature... This causes dissension... hostilities lead to trouble and bloodshed... which lead to the destruction of the species.” In his framework, the weakening of social solidarity is not merely a political phenomenon—it signals an ethical decline, a collective loss of discipline, justice, and mutual responsibility.

Khaldun also describes another path to solidarity—one not based on ancestry, but formed through shared life, service, and social habituation. This alternative model is found among companions, disciples, neighbours, and others who come to form bonds through sustained proximity and moral investment. Khaldun (2005) notes: “By taking their special place within the group feeling, they participate to some extent in the descent to which that particular group feeling belongs” (p. 103). Such affiliation may begin without kinship, but over time it can acquire the same strength. Khaldun emphasises that when these relationships are marked by loyalty, shared responsibility, and daily interaction, they produce real cohesion. “If close contact is established in such a manner, the result will be affection and cooperation” (Khaldun, 2005, p. 148). This formulation highlights the ethical and affective dimension of *asabiyyah*, suggesting that solidarity is not imposed by structure alone but cultivated through sustained proximity and reciprocal engagement.

Unlike inherited ties, this model of solidarity is cultivated rather than assumed. It is the product of repetition, shared purpose, and mutual recognition. It can be formed across difference, sustained by commitment rather than blood. Khaldun thus recognises the ethical and political potential of bonds created through habituation—a social intimacy rooted in familiarity, ritual, and

moral choice. These associations enable the emergence of inclusive communities whose cohesion derives from shared values rather than ancestry.

In modern societies—pluralistic, mobile, and often fragmented—this form of solidarity becomes especially vital. Where inherited frameworks of belonging may no longer suffice, *asabiyyah* formed through ethical engagement and symbolic practice offers a foundation for collective identity that is both responsive and resilient. It invites a rethinking of belonging: not as a matter of origin, but as the outcome of proximity, repetition, and conscious participation in shared life.

This theoretical framework sets the stage for a deeper examination of *The Events* as a dramatic meditation on these two forms of solidarity. While Khaldun's historical model is rooted in premodern social structures, his insight into how communities rise and unravel through shifting patterns of cohesion remains remarkably relevant. In what follows, I explore how David Greig's play enacts a confrontation between inherited and cultivated bonds—between exclusionary tribalism and an ethics of shared practice. Through the figure of Claire and the fragile community she leads, *The Events* presents a living portrait of *asabiyyah* formed not through blood but through ritual, intimacy, and mutual care. The choir she assembles becomes a theatrical space in which Khaldun's theory attains contemporary resonance.

### III. Claire's Choir: The Dramatic Representation of Acquired Ethical Solidarity

In David Greig's *The Events*, the choir led by Claire serves as a symbolic enactment of socially cultivated solidarity—one built not on blood or ancestry, but on shared intention, emotional investment, and ethical inclusion. Bringing together individuals marked by social vulnerability and marginalisation—across age, migration status, gendered care roles, and cultural background—the choir resists homogeneity and instead embodies a fragile yet deliberate form of collective belonging.

The bond among its members is not genealogical but relational, emerging through ritualised practice: Rehearsals, shared performances, collective attention. This formation resonates with Ibn Khaldun's account of habituated proximity, whereby group cohesion arises through repetition, familiarity, and shared conditions rather than natural disposition. As he notes, "Man is a child of the customs and the things he has become used to. He is not the product of his natural disposition and temperament. The conditions to which he has become accustomed... have replaced his natural disposition" (Khaldun, 2005, p. 95). In this sense, the choir exemplifies a non-ancestral *asabiyyah*, forged through shared practice rather than descent.

This cultivated belonging is explicitly articulated in Claire's address to newcomers at the choir's first meeting. Rather than establishing boundaries of competence, language, or identity, Claire frames the space through hospitality and ethical invitation: "Come in. Don't be shy. Everyone's welcome here... Do you speak English? Not to worry. We're all a big crazy tribe here" (Greig, 2013, n.p.). Participation is decoupled from performance: "If you feel like singing – sing. And if you don't ... that's OK too." (Greig, 2013, n.p.). Solidarity here is neither conditional nor coercive; it is grounded in presence, care, and the sharing of space. Claire's offer of practical tasks—"You can help me put out chairs if you like" (Greig, 2013, n.p.)—further emphasises communal responsibility over expressive ability. Read through Ibn Khaldun's concept of *asabiyyah*, this scene demonstrates how cohesion may emerge through habituated proximity and

shared practice rather than obligation or lineage. The choir is constituted not by who its members are, but by how they are invited to remain together.

While the choir's cohesion is initially cultivated through musical practice, its ethical solidarity becomes most legible in moments where singing is suspended. This is articulated in Claire's recollection of the shooting, when The Boy confronts her and Mrs Singh with the ultimatum, "I have one bullet. Which one of you do you want me to shoot?" Claire recalls their response: "We both said 'Me'" (Greig, 2013, n.p.). This collective self-exposure transforms vulnerability into a shared ethical act. Rather than deflecting danger onto another, responsibility is assumed reciprocally. Solidarity here is enacted not through aesthetic harmony but through mutual exposure to harm, exemplifying the ethical potential of habituated proximity: cohesion grounded in reciprocal obligation and care.

### III.1. The Choir as an "Imagined Ethical Community"

Benedict Anderson (2006, p. 6) offers a foundational definition of the nation as "an imagined political community," one in which individuals conceive themselves as part of a unified whole despite never having met. Anderson's formulation is not limited to nations; it describes a broader symbolic mechanism by which communities come into being—through shared narratives, rituals, and affective frameworks. "The nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson, 2006, p. 7), and this comradeship is constructed not by physical proximity but by cultural imagination.

Claire's choir may be read through this lens as a kind of imagined ethical community, one articulated explicitly within the play's own discourse. Reflecting on its formation, Claire describes bringing together "vulnerable people, old people, asylum-seekers, immigrant men, young mums and so on," (Greig, 2013, n.p.), foregrounding heterogeneity rather than shared origin. What unites the group is not identity but shared space, vulnerability, and common practice, summarised simply in Claire's remark: "We sang" (Greig, 2013, n.p.). In Anderson's (2006, p. 6) terms, they "imagine" their communion through rhythm, voice, and bodily presence. Music becomes the medium through which strangers encounter one another ethically, participating in a common world not through sameness but through aesthetic collaboration—a form of coordination that requires attentiveness to others without demanding identity alignment. Unlike nationalist imagined communities, which often stabilise belonging through exclusionary narratives, the choir sustains cohesion through ongoing exposure and mutual responsiveness.

This collectivity, though fragile, carries significant symbolic weight. It offers an alternative to exclusionary forms of belonging rooted in ancestry or identity boundaries. As Martin Riedelsheimer (2017, p. 209) observes, the choir functions as "supplying the play's vision of an alternative community of the precarious," offering a model of belonging that resists exclusionary formations rooted in ancestry or rigid identity boundaries. Rather than securing cohesion through sameness, the choir enacts what Judith Butler might describe as a space in which identity is not fixed or pre-given but emerges through shared precarity and mutual exposure. She argues that political subjecthood often requires individuals to appear as bounded and recognisable entities, even though such boundaries are inherently unstable: "When we argue for protection against discrimination, we argue as a group or a class... in that context, we have to present ourselves as bounded beings—distinct, recognizable, delineated, subjects before the law" (Butler, 2020, pp. 24–25). Yet such delineation is always unstable as "It is not as an isolated and bounded being that

I survive, but as one whose boundary exposes me to others... an exposure that is the condition of sociality and survival alike” (Butler, 2009, p. 54). Crucially, vulnerability must be recognised if it is to carry ethical force—“there is no guarantee that this will happen” (Butler, 2020, p. 43), vulnerability does not automatically generate ethical recognition. Read through Butler, the choir is not merely inclusive; it becomes a fragile structure of recognition. Its ethical significance lies not in eliminating difference, but in staging the conditions under which difference becomes perceptible and ethically addressable rather than neutralised.

In this context, Emmanuel Levinas’s ethics of the face-to-face encounter becomes relevant—not as a theoretical detour, but as a philosophical deepening of the choir’s ethical logic. For Levinas, responsibility precedes identity: “From the start, the encounter with the Other is my responsibility for him” (Levinas, 1998, p. 103). The face of the Other issues an ethical command that resists assimilation and instrumentalisation— “to be in relation with the other face to face is to be unable to kill” (Levinas, 1998, p. 10). Claire’s choir enacts this ethical orientation by refusing to ground solidarity in sameness. Its cohesion emerges from repeated encounters that sustain attentiveness to alterity, modelling a form of community rooted in care rather than identity.

In this sense, the choir models a post-ancestral form of *asabiyyah*—a solidarity cultivated through habituated practice. Crucially, The Boy’s demand, “Everyone who belongs here, go. The rest of you are going to die” (Greig, 2013, n.p.), exposes the group collectively to a lethal threat, thereby requiring an ethical intention. This aligns with Ibn Khaldun’s insight that collective cohesion can arise through habituation and mutual dependence, even in the absence of blood ties. Yet the play insists on the fragility of such formations. The destruction of the choir is not merely a narrative shock but a philosophical intervention: an assault on the possibility of an ethically grounded community that resists exclusionary identity politics. This rupture prepares the ground for the figure of The Boy, whose imagined tribe represents a corrupted inversion of *asabiyyah*, forged through fear, negation, and symbolic violence.

#### **IV. The Collapse of Ethical Cohesion: Tribal Fantasies and the Breakdown of Solidarity**

The Boy’s attack violently disrupts a fragile ethical structure. It is not only the destruction of lives, but also an assault on the very idea of pluralistic solidarity. The choir’s shared voice—musical and moral—is extinguished. What collapses is not just a community, but a model of belonging based on mutual recognition and collective presence.

The Boy attempts to justify his actions by reframing a historical trauma: the colonisation of Australia. He asks the audience to imagine an Aboriginal child witnessing the arrival of British ships—“convicts,” “officers and ratings,” accompanied by “class, religion, disease,” and “instruments of objectification and violence” (Greig, 2013, n.p.). This is an authentic history of cultural devastation. Yet rather than calling for justice or reflection, The Boy appropriates the event to justify a massacre. “You would stand on the rocks, and you would say, –‘Kill them. Kill them all.’” (Greig, 2013, n.p.). The past is not recalled as a site of mourning or repair; it is weaponised. Colonial guilt is displaced and rebranded as a pretext for violent purification.

This rhetorical manoeuvre masquerades as a historical grievance but ultimately serves the interests of ideological extremism. To lend further weight to his position, The Boy invokes Ibn Khaldun’s cyclical theory of history, claiming to defend his “tribe” from a society weakened by “cheap togetherness” and sustained by “immigrant labour and globalisation” (Greig, 2013, n.p.). The notion of tribal protection becomes a justification for annihilation.

The Boy's imagined community is built not through commitment or shared struggle, but through exclusion and resentment. "I don't hate foreigners," he says, "I hate foreigners being here." The claim hinges on the idea of territorial purity. A political figure echoes this view: "If racist means believing people are happiest and most secure when they live amongst their own kind, then yes. I think most people are racist, don't you?" (Greig, 2013, n.p.). Here, exclusion is reframed as common sense, and racism is naturalised under the guise of realism. The language of community is stripped of moral obligation.

This imagined tribe does not emerge from solidarity, but from injury. Its defining feature is negation. It draws coherence not from what it affirms, but from what it rejects. Beneath the rhetoric lies a refusal of shared life, a hollow vision of belonging that collapses when examined closely. There is no cohesive political position, only symbolic injury and moral displacement.

In contrast, Ibn Khaldun's theory of *asabiyyah* rests on mutual struggle, ethical cohesion, and collective protection. It is a generative force rooted in responsibility. The Boy's version is a distortion: it imitates the form of communal solidarity while evacuating its moral substance. Instead of cultivating trust or reciprocity, it thrives on separation, fear, and the projection of threat. It marks decline, not renewal.

This degraded form of *asabiyyah* mirrors the ideological patterns of contemporary far-right movements. These movements often structure themselves around exclusion, cultural nostalgia, and revenge. James Hudson (2017) reads *The Events* as a theatrical exploration of such tendencies, highlighting the play's engagement with anti-immigrant sentiment, the limits of liberal empathy, and the failure of multicultural tolerance when confronted with ideological extremism. From this perspective, The Boy appears as a symbolic composite of pan-European anxieties, racialised resentment, and masculine grievance, mobilising a rhetoric of *tribal* protection in which identity is defined primarily through boundary and exclusion.

While such readings emphasise ideological extremism, the present analysis approaches The Boy's alienation as fundamentally existential rather than doctrinal. His violence does not arise from a coherent belief system but from the collapse of symbolic and communal frameworks that sustain meaning. In *City of Fears, City of Hopes*, Bauman (2003) argues that in conditions of deep uncertainty, individuals seek symbolic structures to contain their fears. When such structures are absent or collapse, they often resort to exclusion as a substitute for community, usually constructing an artificial sense of security by positioning the other as a threat (28-34). The Boy's act thus functions not merely as ideological retaliation but as a desperate attempt to restore symbolic coherence through purification and sacrificial violence, revealing a corrupted form of belonging rather than a stable political conviction.

This unravelling becomes explicit in Claire's confrontation with him. When she asks, "What are you?" The Boy no longer offers ideology. He lists contradictions and failures: "I am a Europe-wide malaise," "the end point of capitalism," "the product of the welfare state." He claims to be both "typical" and "unique." He descends into incoherence: "I am a void into which you are drawn. I am sick. Dead. Lost. And alone." The language no longer articulates belief but expresses exhaustion. Political meaning gives way to a language of collapse. His question, "What is to be done with me?" (Greig, 2013, n.p.), marks not a turn to ethics, but a demand for judgment. It is the residue of agency, not its reassertion.

At this point, Anderson's (2006) notion of "imagined communities" gains renewed relevance. For Anderson, nations are mental constructs that generate belonging among strangers through shared narratives. The Boy's tribe is also imagined—but unlike Claire's choir, it is built on the symbolic erasure of the Other. The choir forms around shared ritual, trauma, and presence. His community is formed through antagonism. The vision is not hopeful but destructive.

The Boy's invocation of the "conjuring flame" captures this logic. He claims that, to leave a mark, he must choose between "art or violence," and concedes, "I was never good at drawing" (Greig, 2013, n.p.). Violence becomes his only means of expression. He cannot create, only destroy. His use of Khaldun's historical theory reflects this same pattern: emptied of analytic force, reduced to a fantasy of cyclical purification.

His last statements—"I was angry, and I had a gun," "I was tired. Everything was pointless. I just wanted it to end"—strip away the remnants of ideology. When Claire observes, "Your ideology melts under scrutiny," he replies: "Because there's nothing there" (Greig, 2013, n.p.). What remains is not belief, but fatigue, boredom, and a void of meaning.

In an earlier scene, The Boy recounts how he took in a girl thrown violently from a car. He sheltered her, played Call of Duty, and covered her with a sleeping bag. The following morning, he remembers thinking: "What I need is a gun." Claire asks, "To kill her?"—and he answers, "To protect her." The moment captures the confusion at the heart of his ethics. Violence and care blur. Responsibility collapses into reflex. When questioned further, he retreats into incoherence: "I think I just got a bit obsessed with aborigines" (Greig, 2013, n.p.). The story dissolves into symbolic drift. The girl is not a person but a projection—absorbed into his ideological confusion.

Claire's retort—ironically imagining the Aboriginal boy welcoming the colonisers with, "Thank fuck something interesting has finally happened" (Greig, 2013, n.p.)—does not resolve the scene. It underscores the disjunction between narrative and accountability. Claire is left without a stable ethical ground on which to place The Boy's action.

The Boy emerges, finally, not as a figure of ideological conviction, but as the emblem of its failure. His gestures toward tribal belonging and historical grievance do not generate durable solidarity but mask an absence of shared responsibility or ethical obligation. His imagined community remains abstract and unstable, sustained only through the production of an enemy. In Ibn Khaldun's account, *asabiyyah* generates cohesion, ethical duty, and collective continuity; The Boy's configuration represents a structural inversion of this logic, replacing responsibility with violence and preservation with destruction. This corrupted form of *asabiyyah* forecloses the possibility of a shared future, rendering his fantasy of solidarity a nihilistic unmaking rather than a generative beginning.

## V. Is a New Form of Ethical Asabiyyah Possible?

In Ibn Khaldun's cyclical model of political and social transformation, *asabiyyah*, initially grounded in kinship and lineage, begins as a cohesive force but gradually deteriorates over time. While vital to early group survival and political consolidation, this form of solidarity often hardens into rigid exclusivity—protecting privilege rather than fostering unity. Once removed from the urgencies of survival and animated instead by comfort, inheritance, and nostalgia, *asabiyyah* becomes vulnerable to fragmentation, corruption, and eventual collapse.

*The Events* dramatises this Khaldunian arc through The Boy's regression into a mythic, ancestral tribe. His longing for a purified community, rooted in imagined heritage and threatened by multicultural coexistence, reflects a society in which traditional forms of solidarity have lost their integrative function and mutated into violent ideology. Khaldun links such decline to the comforts of urban life: growing luxury, individualism, and the erosion of mutual dependence. As communities become insulated, they relinquish self-reliance in favour of external governance. The original *asabiyyah*—once forged through shared struggle—gives way to delegation, detachment, and moral decay. What begins in cohesion ends in disconnection.

This trajectory is poignantly rendered in *The Events*, where The Boy's radicalisation is not driven by deprivation or ignorance, but by a profound estrangement from any stable form of belonging. As explored in the previous section, The Boy's identity ultimately unravels into contradiction, exhaustion, and ontological void. He is severed from family, alienated from community, and unmoored from coherent ideology. The psychologist labels him "empathy impaired, deviated from the human norm," noting he "deliberately planned to cause pain to a large number of people." His father calls him "masculinity in crisis," marked by fractured familial ties: a mother who committed suicide, divorced parents, and repeated social rejection (Greig, 2013, n.p.). Even among those who supposedly share his views, he finds no place.

The Boy's path exemplifies a broader condition: as concrete communal bonds erode, individuals seek refuge in symbolic or imagined affiliations that promise identity without demanding ethical responsibility. Claire and The Boy represent opposing responses to pluralism—what Zygmunt Bauman (2018) calls mixophilia and mixophobia. In conditions of uncertainty, the desire for belonging often curdles into defensive identity formations. Urban spaces, dense and diverse, provoke contradictory responses: mixophilia—the attraction to heterogeneity, surprise, and discovery—and mixophobia—the fear of disorder, contamination, and the unfamiliar. The former is the promise of urban life; the latter, its most reactionary underside (p. 15). In charting these divergent impulses, the play underscores the fragility of belonging in plural societies, where the yearning for community can either open toward encounter or collapse into fear.

Despite the trauma it depicts, *The Events* does not end in despair. Instead, it gestures toward the fragile but real possibility of ethical renewal—a new form of *asabiyyah*, not based on blood or ancestry, but on shared vulnerability, mutual recognition, and moral choice. Claire's refusal to kill The Boy and her attempt to reassemble the choir with new voices mark the beginnings of this transformation. In Khaldunian terms, this is where the cycle might begin again: not with conquest, but with the habituated familiarity that arises through shared action, space, and repetition. Wounded yet resilient, the choir begins to live again. Music, throughout *The Events*, functions as more than a metaphor. It is the structural and affective glue of the community. It allows for harmony without uniformity—for the coexistence of dissonance and order. After the attack, singing becomes a form of resistance against the silence that violence imposes.

This configuration represents a form of *asabiyyah* grounded not in origin but in orientation, central to the play's ethical argument. Rather than deriving cohesion from bloodline or projecting it toward domination, the choir's solidarity emerges through attentiveness to others in shared vulnerability. *The Events* thus stages an alternative model of belonging based on ethical responsiveness, standing in direct contrast to The Boy's exclusionary logic and clarifying that the play locates the source of violence not in solidarity itself but in its inversion. As Khaldun suggests, solidarity can be cultivated through proximity, repetition, and moral purpose. This is not the

*asabiyyah* of fate, but of responsibility. As Bauman (2018, p. 68) reflects, the denial of responsibility—“the act of suspending ethical obligation at the boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’”—is fundamentally incompatible with the very idea of morality. In this light, true community emerges not from inherited sameness but from chosen solidarity: a conscious, ethical commitment to coexistence. This reimagined form of solidarity is not only theorised but enacted through music, shared presence, and Claire’s final ethical refusal.

Perhaps the play’s most radical gesture is ethical: Claire’s refusal to poison The Boy. In that moment, she turns away from retribution, even when justice seems to demand it. Her nonviolence is an act of agency, a deliberate defiance that resists becoming what has harmed her. In that choice, we glimpse the kernel of a new *asabiyyah*—one grounded in restraint, humility, and ethical responsibility rather than fear or purity. It is a solidarity that embraces brokenness as the very condition of care. Khaldun’s model is thus ethically reimagined: cohesion emerges from a shared refusal to perpetuate harm rather than conquest or bloodshed. *Asabiyyah* appears here not as historical inevitability but as a moral project.

Claire’s final words—“Don’t be shy. Everyone’s welcome here. We’re all one big crazy tribe here” (Greig, 2013, n.p.)—offer neither nostalgia nor irony. They articulate a commitment to begin again. This is not the restoration of a lost order, but the slow and uncertain making of a shared life—one that must be chosen, rehearsed, and sustained.

### Conclusion, Discussion, and Suggestions

David Greig’s *The Events* presents a stark reflection on the collapse of social cohesion in contemporary Europe. The play is not simply about the traumatic aftermath of violence but about the conditions that allow communal life to disintegrate. Through its structure and language, *The Events* stages the dissolution—and potential reconfiguration—of *asabiyyah*, the collective bond at the centre of Ibn Khaldun’s analysis of political and social life.

This article has read *The Events* through the Khaldunian framework to examine how solidarity, once rooted in kinship, shared struggle, and ethical responsibility, deteriorates under the pressures of political fragmentation and cultural estrangement. Khaldun’s cyclical model—where *asabiyyah* gives rise to collective strength but ultimately collapses in settled life—finds dramatic expression in the play’s depiction of the choir’s destruction. Initially a symbol of a fragile but inclusive community, the choir is undone by an act of violence driven by a regressive and exclusionary notion of belonging.

The contrast between Claire and The Boy captures two responses to the loss of communal life. Claire’s rebuilding of the choir reflects an attempt to sustain solidarity through care and shared presence, rather than identity or tradition. The Boy’s fantasy of tribal purity, by contrast, is shaped by resentment and the projection of fear. He draws on the language of protection and cultural preservation, but his rhetoric masks a deeper moral and psychological collapse. His isolation and disintegration suggest that the rejection of ethical responsibility—rather than the absence of tradition—is at the core of his violence.

The play does not resolve these tensions easily. Yet in Claire’s refusal to seek revenge, and in her decision to gather new voices, a different possibility emerges. Rather than reproducing inherited forms of belonging, she initiates a new form of solidarity based on co-presence, vulnerability, and restraint. In Khaldunian terms, this shift marks a renewal of a familiarity built

through shared activity and mutual regard. This model of *asabiyyah* is no longer cyclical or predetermined but ethical and contingent.

The analysis has drawn on Bauman, Anderson, Butler, and Levinas to frame the broader cultural and ethical stakes of the play. The Boy's desire for purity reflects what Bauman calls mixophobia—a fearful retreat from pluralism and unpredictability. In contrast, Claire's response embodies mixophilia, an openness to difference and shared life. The choir, as an imagined community in Anderson's sense, is not bound by ancestry but formed through symbolic, aesthetic participation. This vision aligns with Butler's notion of identity as emerging through shared precarity and mutual exposure, and with Levinas's conception of ethical responsibility grounded in the face-to-face encounter. Together, these frameworks illuminate the play's call for a community founded not on blood or origin, but on vulnerability, care, and ethical recognition.

*The Events* thus stages not only the fragility of community, but the conditions under which it might be reimagined. Read through Khaldun, the play presents a model of solidarity that is provisional and enacted rather than inherited or imposed. It insists that community, if it is to survive, must be based not on sameness or exclusion, but on the willingness to remain present with others—even, and especially, in the wake of violence.

While *The Events* may receive scholarly attention for ethical precarity, trauma, extremism, and multiculturalism, this study examines the play through a historical-sociological lens. It engages with non-Western political thought, focusing on the structural questions of communal breakdown and moral cohesion. Taking its cue from the play itself, the analysis introduces Ibn Khaldun's theory of *asabiyyah* into the critical discourse, offering a fresh perspective on Greig's work by situating it within a broader philosophical inquiry into the conditions of collective life. Future research might extend this Khaldunian framework to other contemporary plays that explore ideology, belonging, and social fragmentation across different cultural and political contexts.

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