Shifting frameworks for understanding otherness


Maas, T.A.J.

Publication date
2020

Document Version
Final published version

License
Other

Citation for published version (APA):
Shifting Frameworks for Understanding Otherness

The Cape Khoi in pre-1652 European Travelogues,
an Early Modern Latin Letter,
Promotiecommissie:

Promotores: prof. dr. E. Jansen Universiteit van Amsterdam  
prof. dr. E. Peeren Universiteit van Amsterdam

Overige leden: prof. dr. M.C. van der Waal Universiteit van Amsterdam  
prof. dr. C.A.P. Clarkson Universiteit van Amsterdam  
dr. P.S. Gerbrandy Universiteit van Amsterdam  
prof. dr. J.M. Koppenol Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam  
prof. dr. S. Huigen University of Wroclaw  
prof. dr. O.J. Praamstra Universiteit Leiden

Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen

Dit onderzoek is mede tot stand gekomen dankzij financiële steun van de Europese Commissie (Eurosa+: Europe and South Africa Partnership for Human Development), het Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds, Hendrik Muller’s Vaderlandsch Fonds, de Van Ewijk Stigting (Kaapstad), en de Suider-Afrikaanse Vereniging vir Neerlandistiek (SAVN).
Acknowledgements

One of the pitfalls while writing this thesis was for me to avoid all too dissident theory at the cost of the material at its centre: text. My supervisors’ resourcefulness and continuous support and honest confidence in the project have been, quite frankly, indispensable. Four years of supervising an extranaeus based in ‘the other’ hemisphere seemed hardly a challenge to the versatility of prof. dr. Ena Jansen and prof. dr. Esther Peeren.

I wish to thank the Erasmus Mundus EUROS A Partnership (‘Europe & South Africa Partnership for Human Development’) for its generous financial support in the incipient stages of this research. It would not have come to further fruition without the aid of the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds, Hendrik Muller’s Vaderlandsch Fonds, Van Ewijk Foundation, Suider-Afrikaanse Vereniging vir Neerlandistiek (SAVN), and a UvA385 Scholarship. A finishing fellowship at the University of Amsterdam granted me peace of mind during the final stages of the PhD programme.

I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Stellenbosch University, its staff at the International Office and the library’s Special Collections, and to its department of Afrikaans and Dutch, particularly then-associate professor Ronel Foster. Her encouragement during my MA provided an important impetus for me to start this project. The staff at the Western Cape Archives and Records Service, and the Special Collections of the National Library of South Africa proved astute and tireless when it came to my repeated and extensive requests for files, folders, and photocopy permits. The students of the Dutch School in Cape Town and Hout Bay International School offered me an escape into the outside world as their voices put the silent wisdom of the ancients into perspective.

Many other people played a role in bringing this research to bloom, through proof-reading parts of it, by offering valuable critique of my ideas, but first and foremost by bearing with me as I went on a journey that took me to the ends of the earth (and of my stamina), and back. A word of thanks is more than due to Annemarie and Maurits as well as to my friends throughout the bountiful republic – your warm presence nurtured my sense of feeling at home instead of walking alone. Potchefstroom has welcomed me into the world of Living Latin, and the Boytjies & Girljies and Wacky Weekenders were always there to support my soul with wining and fine dining – we have never let our schooling interfere with
our education. My final thanks goes to my parents and sister, to Hannah, my family, and my friends back home in the Netherlands. Your patience and understanding waxed and waned over time more than I realise, I am sure. Your support means more than I can say.

It has been a privilege to live at the footstep of a mountain and of great advantage to this thesis to be able to work \textit{in situ}. The Cape has provided a relaxing and invigorating environment for me to work on this project and brought an urgency to its argument. A final year in Amsterdam allowed me to fine-tune it.

	extit{Caveat emptor.}

Amsterdam, April 2020
A Note on Nomenclature

In this thesis, I use terms that form part of the history of racial classification in South Africa without any implication that such terms have a scientific basis or that they can be employed unproblematically.

European settlers called the pastoral people of the western and northern Cape, nowadays referred to as ‘Khoikhoi’ ('people of people’), ‘Hottentots’, and referred to hunter-gatherers present throughout what is now South Africa, commonly called ‘San’ now, as ‘Bushmen’. These peoples are closely related and are known collectively as the ‘Khoi-San’ or ‘Khoisan’. Only small populations survive in South Africa today. In discussing historical sources, I use the source’s terminology in referring to native peoples, adding quotation marks to register their status as stigmatising or ‘othering’ colonial labels. The colonial historical sources use many different names for the same tribe or people. The Goringhaicona, a cattle-less people, are, for example, referred to as ‘Strandlopers’ by Van Riebeeck in the Daghregister, but also called ‘Watermans’ or ‘Vismans’. Their leader (captain) is referred to as Herrij, Harry, and Herrie, or called by his indigenous name, Autshumao.

I use the term ‘Khoi’ to collectively refer to the native inhabitants of the Cape whom the Dutch in the 17th and 18th centuries typically called ‘Hottentotten’. The word ‘Khoe’ is first found in Van Riebeeck’s Daghregister, in January 1653, as ‘Quena’, where –na is the plural suffix. In South African scholarship, a variety of spellings are used across academic disciplines. I use the modernised spelling ‘Khoi’.

More information about the tribes that inhabited the Cape peninsula and what they were called by the colonisers can be found in, among others, Richard Elphick’s Kraal and Castle. Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa (1977) and Gabriel Nienaber’s Khoekhoense stamname (1989).
This page intentionally left blank.
Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.............................................................................................................................................. i
A Note on Nomenclature..................................................................................................................................... iii
Table of Contents.................................................................................................................................................. v
List of Figures ........................................................................................................................................................ vii

Introduction – Framing the (un)familiar ................................................................................................................. 1

Chapter 1 – Before Van Riebeeck: Framing the Khoi ......................................................................................... 15
  Portuguese callers (1488-1580)......................................................................................................................... 16
  English and Dutch accounts (1580-1615) ........................................................................................................... 27
  Classifying the Khoi (1600-1652) ...................................................................................................................... 35
  Conclusion.......................................................................................................................................................... 53

Chapter 2 – Grevenbroek and the Khoi: Towards a Revolution of Knowledge ....................................................... 57
  Settlers versus Khoi........................................................................................................................................... 59
  The Letter’s sources and structure ...................................................................................................................... 76
  Grevenbroek as a child of his time ..................................................................................................................... 89
  Conclusion.......................................................................................................................................................... 102

Chapter 3 – Grevenbroek and the Khoi: A Latin Framework, Revisited .............................................................. 105
  ‘Youthful prejudices’ ....................................................................................................................................... 107
  Half-truths, revisited ........................................................................................................................................ 119
  Classical sourcework ....................................................................................................................................... 125
  A classical style Cape....................................................................................................................................... 130
  Exposing ‘Hottentot’ ....................................................................................................................................... 144
  Conclusion.......................................................................................................................................................... 151

Chapter 4 – Postcolonialism and the Historical Novel: Grevenbroek and the Early Cape in Eilande ................... 153
  Voicing the archive......................................................................................................................................... 157
  Governor versus secretary ................................................................................................................................. 161
  The Khoi in Eilande....................................................................................................................................... 170
  ‘Andersmaak’ ............................................................................................................................................... 180
  Conclusion.......................................................................................................................................................... 190
List of Figures

Figure 0.1 Thomas Hobbes’ tile shortly after being placed. Photo by me, TM.

Figure 0.2 Title Page MSB203. Courtesy of the National Library of South Africa (NLSA), Cape Town Campus, Special Collections.

Figure 1.1 Earliest known map showing the full extent of Africa (1554), by Sebastian Münster. Woodcut map, with added colour, 26 x 35 cm. Münster, S. (1554), Cosmographia universalis, Basel, 10r.


Figure 1.3 Liber chronicarum, ‘Secunda etas Mundi’ (1493). Schedel, S. (1493), Liber chronicarum, Nuremberg, 12v.

Figure 1.4 ‘Aethiopia inferior, vel exterior’. Copperplate map, with added colour, 37 x 48 cm. Blaeu, J. (1635), Theatrum orbis terrarium, sive atlas novus, Amsterdam, 15v.

Figure 1.5 Chain of being, visualised as a ladder. Sebonde, R. de (1512), Liber de ascensu et descendu intellectus, [?]. Reproduced from Armaingaud (1932, II, 63-4)).

Figure 2.1 ‘Hottentots’. Lodewyckz, W. (1598), Historie van Indien, Amsterdam. Reproduced from Van Wyk Smith (1992).

Figure 2.2 ‘Diabolical Hottentots’. Herbert, T. (1634), A Relation of Some Years Travaile [sic], London. Reproduced from Van Wyk Smith (1992).

Figure 3.1 For Grevenbroek, the ‘Promontorio Bonae Spei’ (Cape of Good Hope peninsula) presumably extended to the Boland mountain range. Map adapted from Sparrman, S. (1779), Mappa Geographica, [?].

Figure App.1 Post Horn set in Crowned Shield. Drawn from the Grevenbroek manuscript (NLSA MSB203) by me, TM.
Figure App.2 Countermark NLSA MSB203.
Drawn by me, TM.

Figure App.3 Post horn, D&C Blauw, 1793.
Voorn (1960).

Figure App.4 Inside front cover (NLSA FB5429).
Courtesy of the NLSA, Special Collections, Cape Town Campus.

Figure App.5 Post horn, 27 August 1657.
Drawn from Daghregister (Western Cape Archives Inventory 1/1/25) by me, TM.

Figure App.6 Post horn, 25 April 1672.
Drawn from request from the free-burghers (Western Cape Archives Inventory 1/2/80) by me, TM.

Figure App.7 A close match with MSB203.
SLD.138.1, courtesy of the Gravell Watermark Archive.
Introduction
Framing the (un)familiar

To make visible the unseen can also mean a change of level, addressing oneself to a layer of material which had hitherto had no pertinence for history and which had not been recognised as having any moral, aesthetic or historical value.

Foucault (1972, 50-51)

In November 2019, the municipality of Amsterdam developed a walking tour through the historical city centre that passes nine sites where 17th century philosophers lived or where their books were published. Each site is marked by a tile in the sidewalk with a quote from the relevant philosopher. A stone’s throw away from the former headquarters of the Amsterdam Chamber of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), one finds the tile commemorating Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) (figure 0.1). The quote, taken from *Leviathan* (1651), reads: ‘[in the natural condition] the life of man is solitary, poore [sic], nasty, brutish,

Figure 0.1 Thomas Hobbes’ tile shortly after being placed. It is located at the crossing of the Molsteeg and the Spuistraat. Photo by me, TM.
and short'. Hobbes was writing about what human nature might have been prior to civilisation. In this Hobbesian natural condition – outside of society – there is a war of every natural man against the others.

Writing roughly a year before Jan van Riebeeck founded the VOC refreshment station at the Cape in South Africa, Hobbes was addressing pressing issues for early modern Europe. The continent’s major seafaring nations – the Portuguese, Spanish, English and Dutch – had been pushing back horizons since the dawn of the 16th century, bringing home not only physical goods but also knowledge about ‘newly discovered’ lands and peoples. In terms of the number of copies printed, reports, travelogues and encyclopedias on the world’s peoples were as popular in the 17th century as the novel is today. The main question the exploration of the world raised for Christian Europe was where to position these peoples in relation to the European self. Hobbes’ answer was to distinguish between a natural and a civil state of man, maintaining that the ‘savage people of America’ approximated the former.

Hobbes was only one of many philosophers attempting to meaningfully frame the new. Throughout history, concepts and theoretical perspectives have continuously been developed to frame the new and to reframe the familiar, thereby creating and recreating an understanding of the world. In this thesis I examine the framing and reframing of the Khoi, the native inhabitants of the Cape peninsula and its hinterlands in what is now South Africa. An important aim is to make apparent that the formation of knowledge about the Khoi is a matter of framing and not of discovering ‘facts’. Factual knowledge is surrounded by a host of interpretive frameworks or worldviews that generate meaning. Hence, I examine what the dominant frames for interpreting the Khoi looked like – what aspects of the Khoi and their way of life these frames highlighted – and what image of the Khoi they

---

1 Hobbes, *Leviathan* 1.XIII.9 quoted from Pogson Smith (1909). I have not been able to identify the author of the slightly free Dutch translation.

2 Hobbes, *Leviathan* 1.XIII.8 quoted from Pogson Smith (1909), maintains that a strong king is needed to control society: ‘[D]uring the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in a condition which is called War; and such a war, as if of every man, against every man’.


5 I use ‘Khoi’ as an umbrella term to refer to a variety of native tribes and peoples at the Cape. See A Note on Nomenclature.
created in the light of South Africa’s ongoing renegotiation of its past and in the context of European intellectual history.

I organise my discussion around two key moments in South African (literary) history. 1652 and 1994 are two major hinges in the nation’s interpretation of the present in light of the past, and the past in light of the present. 1652 marks the first permanent settlement of Europeans at the Cape, the VOC refreshment station under the command of the Dutchman Jan van Riebeeck. This has been the traditional starting point for much South African (literary) history. 1994 saw South Africa’s first democratic elections, marking the formal end of apartheid and prompting a host of reframings of the 1652 events and of South African history at large. In these reframings – for the first time in the country’s history – all the country’s peoples could freely have their voices and perspectives heard alongside each other.

I use the term ‘framing’ rather than ‘contextualising’ or ‘representing’. This term has several advantages, as outlined in Jonathan Culler’s *Framing the Sign* (1988):

[The term] reminds us that framing is something we do; it hints of the frame-up (‘falsifying evidence beforehand in order to make someone appear guilty’), a major use of context; and it eludes the incipient positivism of ‘context’ by alluding to the semiotic function of framing in art, where the frame is determining, setting off the object or event as art, and yet the frame itself may be nothing tangible, pure articulation.⁶

As I illustrate in this thesis, European knowledge about the Khoi in Van Riebeeck’s time was generated through very different lenses than the image of the Khoi in more recent years. During apartheid (circa 1948-early 1990s), South African literature produced in the wake of 1652 was framed positivistically as the expression of an early Afrikaner national spirit.⁷ Elizabeth Conradie’s *Hollandse skrywers uit Suid-Afrika. ‘n Kultuurhistoriese studie (1652-1875)* (1934) was the first sizeable effort at an exhaustive, systematic survey of texts written in Dutch in South Africa.⁸ Given the title of her first chapter, ‘[t]he grafting of Dutch culture onto South African soil’, it is not surprising that the first text she analyses is Van Riebeeck’s

---

⁶ Culler (1988, ix).
⁷ Huigen (2006, 5): “n uitdriking van ‘n vroeë Afrikaanse nasionale bewussyn’. In Apartheid ideology, Afrikaners had a longer history than English South Africans and their European ancestry proved cultural refinement over the indigenous population.
⁸ Conradie sees Dutch literature in South Africa ending in 1875, the founding year of the (First) Afrikaans Language Movement, an effort to have Afrikaans recognised as a separate language from Dutch.
**Daghregister**, the Commander’s daily log, kept for his employers in Amsterdam.\(^9\) The *Daghregister* is also presented as the cradle of Afrikaans literature in J.C. Kannemeyer’s seminal *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse literatuur* (1984), where he argues that the ‘Dutch-South African literature may be regarded as the origin of Afrikaans literature’.\(^10\)

Although 1652 has since the birth of the democratic Republic of South Africa in 1994 remained a relevant starting point for Afrikaans literary historiography, a shift has taken place from a nationalistic ideological to a linguistic framing. Thus, in his contribution to H.P. van Coller’s *Perspektief en profiel. ’n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis* (2006), Siegfried Huigen takes 1652 as his departure point but names the volume’s opening chapter ‘South-African literature written in Dutch, 1652 to 1925’.\(^11\) Similarly, in *A History of South African Literature. Afrikaans Literature 17\(^{th}\) – 19\(^{th}\) Centuries* (2015), Jerzy Koch’s opening text is again the *Daghregister*, based on the argument that

> [a]n indirect effect of the VOC’s decision to set up a supply station was the emergence in Africa of a distinctive Germanic language. [...] South African texts in Dutch are [in this book] treated as the protoliterature of Afrikaans.\(^12\)

At the same time, recent South African literary histories reflect the 1994 democratic turn by including texts from previously deprivileged groups, including the Khoi, and by challenging the tendency to trace any national literature to a single starting date. Notably, Michael Chapman’s *New Century of South African Poetry* (2002) features native oral lyric as the subject of its opening chapter, while H.P. van Coller, in his contribution to David Attwell’s

---

\(^9\) Conradie (1934, 3ff.): ‘Die oorplanting van die Hollandse kultuur na Suid-Afrika’. The *Daghregister* was kept by Van Riebeeck from December 1651 to May 1652 for the VOC’s directors, the Lord’s XVII in Amsterdam (‘Heeren XVII’).

\(^10\) Kannemeyer (1984, 24): ‘Hollands-Suid-Afrikaanse letterkunde beskou [kan word] as die oorsprong van die Afrikaanse letterkunde’.

\(^11\) ‘Nederlandstalige Suid-Afrikaanse letterkunde, 1652 tot 1925’. Huigen puts the start of Afrikaans literature in 1925, when Afrikaans replaced Dutch as South Africa’s official language.

\(^12\) Koch (2015, 16; 18). Interestingly, in Dutch literary historiography, Jonckbloet (1855 and 1888), Kalf (1906-1912), Te Winkel (last edition 1922), Van Mierlo (last edition 1949) and Knuvelder (1970) confine their scope to the Netherlands, without considering literature written in its overseas dominions. The same goes for Anbeek (1993). South African literature is represented in Schenkeveld-Van der Dussen (1994) through Elisabeth Eybers, the first non-Dutch citizen to have won the most prestigious Dutch literary award, the P.C. Hooftprijs, in 1991. Francken and Praamstra (2012) suggest that ‘Zuid-Afrikaanse Nederlandse letterkunde’ (South African Dutch literature) should be included in Dutch literary history because it is a corpus ‘that is in part written and published outside the motherland’ (‘die deels geschreven en gepubliceer is buiten het moederland’). In the latest comprehensive Dutch literary history, Bel (2015, 820) suggests that colonial literature only found an audience in the Netherlands and Belgium in the interbellum. She touches upon the Congo, the Dutch East Indies, Surinam and the Dutch Antilles, but South African colonial literature remains outside her scope.
and Derek Attridge’s *Cambridge History of South African Literature* (2012), argues that the beginning of Afrikaans language or Afrikaans literature cannot be pinned down to one particular text or moment in time.\(^{13}\)

The fact that different frames can lead to opposing views of the same people or a corpus of texts has been noted for South African travel accounts by Siegfried Huigen in *Knowledge and Colonialism. Eighteenth-Century Travellers in South Africa* (2009). Huigen writes that

> [i]n studying the South African travel accounts, the existing critical literature broadly follows two approaches: on the one hand, in the older studies, a positivistic reconstruction of the routes followed by the expeditions, and on the other, in recent literature, a postcolonial accusation against colonial representations.\(^ {14}\)

He rightly observes that ‘[t]he new approach is in many ways the ideological mirror image of this [older] approach and is nurtured by indignation about apartheid and colonialism’.\(^ {15}\)

In Huigen’s earlier study *De weg naar Monomotapa. Nederlandstalige representaties van geografische, historische en sociale werkelijkheden in Zuid-Afrika* (1996), his concern is with representations of particular realities in texts about South Africa written in Dutch. Using the Khoi as an example, Huigen points out that he is not so much interested in the historical realities or the accuracy of ethnic nomenclature, but focuses primarily on the ‘paper people’.\(^ {16}\) In five chapters, he analyses the way in which the landscape, society and, above all, the history of the country are represented in Dutch texts. Moving from 1652 to the 20\(^ \text{th}\) century, Huigen successfully reclaims works written in, or about South Africa in Dutch for South African literary studies. Yet, it has been pointed out by Robert Ross that his attempt ‘to reposition writing in Dutch as part of the central white South African literary tradition is probably overdrawn’ because Huigen’s analyses make apparent that the texts engage discourses that are relevant to a much broader South African intellectual history.\(^ {17}\)

---

\(^{13}\) Chapman (2002). Van Coller (2012, 264) also focuses on language to frame Afrikaans literature: ‘The origins and development of Afrikaans literature need to be understood in relation to the development of the language’.

\(^{14}\) Huigen (2009\(^ {1}\), 26).

\(^{15}\) Huigen (2009\(^ {1}\), 28).


\(^{17}\) Ross (1998, 511-512).
Andrea Kieskamp, in *De Khoekhoe tijdens het bewind van Jan van Riebeeck 1652-1662. Een bronnenonderzoek* (2000), compares literary historical sources about the Khoi from the period 1652 to 1662 with those in the fields of archaeology, history, anthropology and linguistics. She concludes that literary studies long centred around Van Riebeeck and the experiences of the Dutch in ‘dark’ Africa. Only in the 1990s did literary scholarship – like in other fields – put the Khoi centre stage.18

This brief overview of literary historiography makes clear that an interpretation of literature from the early Cape benefits from an approach which includes a variety of texts that – in Huigen’s words – do not exclusively answer to ‘aesthetic definitions of literature’ and which engages historical frames that are not necessarily nationalistic or based on the language in which the text is written.19 Culler points out that the framing of texts usually takes place along the lines of ‘fiction’ and ‘non-fiction’, which remain ‘the appropriate way[s] of dividing the multifarious corpus of publications’, be it in a bookstore, library or bestseller list.20 He proposes a break from this usual hierarchical relation between ‘real situations or events and imagined ones’, maintaining that ‘[real-world] discourses prove to function according to principles and processes most dramatically and explicitly manifested in literature’.21 Studying framing through narrative, then, is to treat both fiction and non-fiction as ‘models that enable us to make sense of the world’.22

In this thesis, accordingly, I illustrate the importance of framing through a comparative close-reading of pre-1652 European travel accounts, a letter in (early modern) Latin about the Khoi written by a retired secretary from the Dutch colonial administration in 1695, and Dan Sleigh’s 2002 Afrikaans novel *Eiland*.

In Chapter 1, my focus is on outlining the frameworks within which the native Cape people were appreciated by the first Europeans to encounter them. I start with the first attested European rounding of the Cape of Good Hope by the Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias (1488), and end with the first permanent (Dutch) settlement at the Cape under Jan van Riebeeck (1652). As Huigen observes for Dutch texts from the early Cape in his contribution to *Perspektief en profiel. ’n

---

18 Kieskamp (2000, 200): ‘[In het centrum stond] de persoon van Van Riebeeck en/of de belevissen van de Hollanders in het verre, onbekende Afrika. [...] Pas in de jaren negentig is er literatuur verschenen waarin de Khoekhoe centraal staan’.
19 Huigen (1996, 4n9). See also Huigen (2009).
20 Culler (1988, 201).
21 Culler (1988, 201, 209).
22 Culler (1988, 210).
Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis (Volume 3, 2006): ‘Dutch is the oldest written word in South Africa and to date remains the writing language that has been used longest. There are 273 years of history that have been practically forgotten’.23 If Dutch texts from the period 1652-1925 are already an understudied part of South African literary history, pre-Van Riebeeck texts have hardly been studied at all, let alone in relation to a broader cultural context. Looking at an extra 164 years’ worth of European texts about the Khoi significantly extends the national canon of South Africa and demarginalises a previously unprivileged and under-represented people. Finally, reading these texts with a focus on the contemporary frameworks used in them contributes to both South African and European cultural history.

Major Rowland Raven-Hart’s Before Van Riebeeck. Callers at South Africa from 1488 to 1652 (1967) is an early effort to illustrate the amount of attention paid to the Cape natives in pre-Van Riebeeck times across languages and nationalities.24 Gathered from archives and repositories throughout South Africa, the anthology includes ‘records of travels containing the stories of ships and visitors who called [at South Africa] which have never been translated into English and are relatively unknown to the average reader’.25 Raven-Hart stakes no claim to exhaustiveness, and Malvern van Wyk Smith has called his selection of sources and extracts on the Khoi ‘highly selective and heavily edited’ and ‘itself the product of a mentality that saw nothing amiss in projecting the Hottentots as simply idle’.26

My own project in Chapter 1 is to trace the gradual development of dominant ethnographic criteria about the Khoi in travelogues, diaries, VOC logs and archives. I show that European discourse about the Khoi was never singular or stable but always in flux, although by 1652 particular Christian parameters had developed within which Khoi customs were predominantly described as a negation of European ones, and thus deemed uncivilised. The use of the term ‘Hottentot’ to refer to the Khoi reflects this pejorative stance and the increasingly one-dimensional image of the Khoi Europeans disseminated.

The reiteration of stock images as fixed knowledge by Europeans in early modern times has been described by the South African writer, translator and Nobel laureate J.M.  

23 Huigen (2006, 3): ‘[Nederlands is] die oudste skryftaal in Suid-Afrika en is tot nog toe steeds die skryftaal wat die langste in gebruik was. In dié 273 jaar het ’n Nederlandstalige Suid-Afrikaanse letterkunde ontstaan wat vrywel vergete is’.
24 Against Raven-Hart, Anderson (1983) contends that only in the 18th century, with the rise of the nation-state, did national frameworks begin to have interpretative force for literary historiography.
Coetzee as the ‘echo chamber of the discourse of the Cape’.\textsuperscript{27} Noting that the early modern European image of the Cape was built around a body of exclusively white writing, bound by an evident ideological bias, Coetzee argues in his book \textit{White Writing. On the Culture of Letters in South Africa} (1988) that knowledge about the Khoi did not actually advance. Also, he maintains that the question as to why the Khoi should rank below the civil, Christian state was never asked:

Nowhere in the great echo chamber of the Discourse of the Cape is a voice raised to ask whether the life of the Hottentot may not be a version of life before the Fall [...] a life in which man is not yet condemned to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, but instead may spend his days dozing in the sun, or in the shade when the sun grows too hot, half-aware of the singing of the birds and the breeze on his skin, bestirring himself to eat when hunger overtakes him, enjoying a pipe of tobacco when it is available, at one with his surroundings and unreflectively content. The idea that the Hottentot may be Adam is not even entertained for the sake of being dismissed.\textsuperscript{28}

As Van Wyk Smith points out in a review of Coetzee’s book, the latter relies heavily on Raven-Hart’s 1967 anthology and, as a result, misses out on ‘the more positive and revisionary discourse about the Khoi’.\textsuperscript{29} In his paper “‘The Most Wretched of the Human Race”. The Iconography of the Khoikhoi (Hottentots)” (1992), Van Wyk Smith asserts that the iconography of the Khoi in early European travelogues about Africa reveals that the Khoi were considered in two ways: ‘either indigenes were beings of natural innocence [...] or they were still in a state of brute savagery exiled even from divine grace’.\textsuperscript{30} He shows that the analogy between the Cape and Paradise, and the accompanying interpretation of the Khoi as living in a state of positive primitivism was common, albeit less so than the pejorative voices.

My own reading of the framing of the Khoi in various early European sources makes apparent that the dominant European discourse depicted the Khoi as ‘the opposite of the European’. I agree with Coetzee that the majority of 17th century European accounts used certain criteria to confirm the common opinion that the Khoi were living without the Christian-Jewish faith and hence were bereft of all civility.\textsuperscript{31} Moreover, my findings

\textsuperscript{27} Coetzee (1988, Chapter ‘Idleness in South Africa’).
\textsuperscript{28} Coetzee (1988, 18).
\textsuperscript{29} Van Wyk Smith (1990, 94).
\textsuperscript{30} Van Wyk Smith (1992, 287).
\textsuperscript{31} Van Wyk Smith (1992, 285).
emphasise how neither positive nor negative primitivism puts the ethnographic and Christian frameworks of appreciation into question.

There were few Europeans who challenged the prevailing image of the Khoi or the frameworks on which this image was based, but, as I will argue in Chapters 2 and 3, the Dutchman Jan Willem van Grevenbroek (1644-circa 1725) was one. He produced one of the most extensive descriptions of the Cape’s native people of his time: *Elegans & accurata gentis Africanae, circa Promontorium Capitis Bonae Spei, vulgo Hottentotten nuncupatae, descriptio epistolaris*, ‘An elegant and accurate description in letter form about the African people commonly called Hottentots, who inhabit the Cape of Good Hope’ (figure 0.2). The letter survives in a single manuscript copy, which is kept at the National Library of South Africa (NLSA), Special Collections. A censored Dutch translation was published in two parts

![Image](image1.png)

**Figure 0.2** Title Page MSB203.
Courtesy of the National Library of South Africa (NLSA), Cape Town Campus, Special Collections.

---

32 MSB203.
by Jan van Oordt as ‘Elegans et accurata [...]’ in the January and February 1886 issues of *Zuid-Afrikaansch tijdschrift*.

These parts were later edited by Everhardus Godée-Molsbergen and republished as Volume XXXVI of the Linschooten-Vereeniging-series, *Reizen in Zuid-Afrika in de Hollandse tijd. Deel IV* (1932).\(^{33}\) In 1933, the classicist Benjamin Farrington and the anthropologist Isaac Schapera produced the ‘first English translation, [and] the first transcription and publication of the Latin text’. Published as Volume 14 in the Van Riebeeck Society Series, it remains the only English translation available and the sole Latin edition to date. I discuss the manuscript and the text editions in detail in Appendix 1.

My central argument in Chapters 2 and 3 is that Grevenbroek’s text embodies a key transition in the framing of the Khoi that reflects the beginnings of a radical epistemological shift in the European history of thought. Grevenbroek, secretary of the Dutch East India Company at the Cape from 1684 to 1694, acknowledges a gap between the dominant European image of the Khoi and his own observations of them. Rather than denying the Khoi their humanity on the basis of ostensible differences with early modern European customs, in his letter, Grevenbroek reframes the Khoi, critically reflecting on the way knowledge, including knowledge about the Khoi, is acquired.

In the early 2000s, Bert van Stekelenburg launched a first effort at contextualising Grevenbroek’s letter in two papers: ‘Een intellectueel in de vroege Kaapkolonie. De nalatenschap van Jan Willem van Grevenbroeck (1644-1726)’ (2001) and ‘The Cape in Latin and Latin in the Cape in the 17th and 18th Centuries’ (2003, posthumously).\(^{34}\) Noting that Grevenbroek was a learned humanist from Leiden, Van Stekelenburg rightfully draws attention to the manifold intertextualities between the letter and ancient Roman and Greek literature, interpreting them as a form of gentleman’s literary play, inspired by Grevenbroek’s isolation on the southernmost tip of Africa.\(^{35}\) Whilst I concede to a degree of learned literary play, I argue that Grevenbroek’s letter also uses references from ancient

\(^{33}\) Van Oordt (1886, reprinted 1932) omits the Latin passages on initiation ceremonies (circumcision), urinating, and passing air.

\(^{34}\) Van Stekelenburg (2001; 2003) calls him ‘Van Grevenbroeck’. I use the form Grevenbroek used most commonly by himself. As secretary of the Council of Policy at the Cape, he signed off all its minutes and correspondence (Western Cape Archives and Records Services, C1887-1904). He also left an impressive book collection with ex libris (NLSA, Dessian Collection). He used variants of his name, in Latin, ‘Graevenbroecki[i][i][us]’, and Dutch, Van Graevenbroeck, De Grevenbroek.

\(^{35}\) Van Stekelenburg (2001; 2003).
literature to reposition the Khoi in a move that I consider to be part of a major European epistemological shift that defines the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, when ‘the world was no longer accessible only through learned books in Latin, [but] could be known directly’.\textsuperscript{36} In his book \textit{New Worlds, Ancient Texts. The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery} (1992), Anthony Grafton coins the term ‘Revolution of Knowledge’ to refer to this transition from a world that was imagined on the basis of ‘the bounds of the [European] library’ to one that was coloured in also in accordance with empirical observation, newly regarded as a trusted source of knowledge.\textsuperscript{37} He writes that ‘between 1550 and 1650 Western thinkers ceased to exist that they could find all important truths in ancient books’ and describes the ensuing European epistemological crisis, primarily on the basis of early European texts about native Americans.\textsuperscript{38} To my knowledge, no similar effort has as yet been undertaken for European texts about African peoples. It is my contention that Grevenbroek presents a unique voice in Cape history that positions the Khoi at the heart of one of Europe’s major historical intellectual crises.

In Chapter 2, I consider the position of Grevenbroek’s letter in relation to contemporary political and religious concerns in Christian Europe about foreign people. I compare his discussion of important contemporary ethnographic criteria like religion, language, and law with contemporary writing about the Khoi, notably fellow-Dutchmen Willem ten Rhyne (1647-1700) and Olfert Dapper (1636-1689), and I discuss the place of empirical evidence in Grevenbroek’s sourcework and the structure of his letter. In Chapter 3, I focus on Grevenbroek’s engagement with ancient Greek and Roman sources to frame the Cape and the Khoi. I explore his return to ‘authentic’ classical thought, bypassing centuries of interpretations of ancient literature about foreign (African) people, and I discuss his use of the Latin word ‘barbarus’ (barbaric person) and the two instances of the word ‘Hottentot’ in his letter.

From Chapters 2 and 3 it becomes apparent that Grevenbroek does not question the ancient and Christian frameworks themselves. I maintain, therefore, that he is a child of his time, presenting an early stage in the Revolution of Knowledge. His distinctive concern with the Khoi imparts on the letter a compelling importance in South Africa’s ongoing

\textsuperscript{36} Grafton (1992, 4).
\textsuperscript{37} Grafton (1992, 6).
\textsuperscript{38} Grafton (1992, 1). About the native American and Renaissance Europe, see Lemaire (1986).
renegotiation of its past and in the context of the European history of thought. This legitimates Grevenbroek’s position at the centre of this thesis.

In Chapter 4, I compare the image that Grevenbroek paints of the Khoi in his letter with the way in which individual historical Khoi characters, and Grevenbroek himself, are portrayed in the Afrikaans novel *Eilande* (2002) by the South African novelist and historian Dan Sleigh (Geelbekfontein, 1938), translated as *Islands* (2004). *Eilande* portrays Grevenbroek, its narrator, as writing a history about the 50 years since the arrival of Van Riebeeck at the Cape. Focalising his account through seven historical characters in seven chapters, Grevenbroek aims to rescue voices forgotten by history, including those of himself and the Khoi. I argue that the novel renegotiates the past, and past portrayals of the past, by reframing Grevenbroek and individual Khoi characters through the lens of South Africa’s contemporary postcolonial circumstance.

*Eilande* has occupied a central place in South Africa’s continued literary (re)imagination of its past, and Sleigh ranks among the most notable contemporary writers of historical fiction in Afrikaans about the Cape under Dutch administration (1652-1795). The novel has been met with wide acclaim in South Africa and abroad. In reviews, H.P. van Coller calls *Eilande* ‘one of the best historical novels in Afrikaans’ and Francois Smith compares Sleigh to Tolstoi, whilst André P. Brink ranks his time working on the English translation (*Islands* (2004)) among ‘the most enriching and pleasant experiences of my life’.39 In their literary history *Skrywers in die strydperk. Krachtlijnen in de Zuid-Afrikaanse letterkunde* (2005), Eep Francken and Luc Renders describe *Eilande* as ‘the surprise of the new century in Afrikaans literature’ for the intricate picture it paints of the early Cape that appeals to a broad South African audience.40 The Dutch translation of the novel, *Stemmen uit zee* (2004), was ranked number 98 of 100 bestselling novels in The Netherlands in 2004, and the American edition *Islands* (2004) was listed by *The Seattle Times* as one of the ten best books of 2005 and by *Booklist. An American Library Association Publication* as one of the top ten debut novels of 2005.41

40 Francken and Renders (2005, 120): ‘[Eilande is] de verrassing van de nieuwe eeuw in de Afrikaanse letteren’.
41 CPNB Top 100 2004 cited by Terblanche (2017).
In my reading of *Eilande*, Grevenbroek’s concern with the Khoi is not portrayed as driven by ancient or Christian frameworks, like in the historical letter. Using Spivak’s seminal article ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ (1988) on the representation of ‘the Other’, I argue that, in the novel, Grevenbroek is instead concerned with the unequal degree to which various voices have been preserved in the historical archive, and the difficulty, if not impossibility, of allowing unpreserved voices to speak without speaking for them. I contend, then, that the novel’s use of Grevenbroek as its narrator does not set out to confirm what Spivak has called ‘the epistemic violence of imperialism’, but allows *Eilande* to highlight how the Dutch administration disadvantaged the Cape’s native inhabitants in a variety of ways, and how its policies led to a biased image of the Khoi being passed down in the VOC archives.42

Using Homi Bhabha’s theory about colonial mimicry in ‘Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse’ (1984) and Monika Fludernik’s theory about stereotyping elaborated in ‘Cross-Mirrorings of Alterity’ (1999), I argue that *Eilande* shows the colonial divide between settler and colonised to ultimately be untenable. According to Bhabha, a colonised person is only allowed to ‘mimic’ select elements of coloniser culture to remain identifiable as colonised. I explore how in the novel a process called ‘Andersmaak’ (remaking) portrays two prominent historical Khoi characters, Autshumao (Herrie) and Krotoa (Eva), as being moved by the colonial circumstance to ‘appropriate’ particular aspects of the Dutch coloniser’s identity in an attempt to improve settler-native relations and to integrate into settler society, respectively. Yet, as ‘Andersmaak’ cannot resolve the colonial divide, the unsustainability of a colonial society is exposed in what Bhabha has called ‘the ambivalence of colonial discourse’.43

The pre-Van Riebeeck travelogues and Grevenbroek’s voice as it appears in both his historical letter and in *Eilande* underline that the Khoi were/are spoken about and thus framed from a European perspective. Highlighting this process of framing and its changing underpinnings adds to our understanding of European intellectual history, and is particularly salient in the context of South Africa’s continued renegotiation of its past after the end of apartheid.

This page intentionally left blank.
Chapter 1
Before Van Riebeeck:
Framing the Khoi

But although knowledge is primarily intuition, for finite knowers such as human beings intuition by itself can never be knowledge. In order to be knowledge finite intuition requires concepts or thought, for it needs to be determined as thus and so.

Bird, G. (2010, 508, emphasis in text)

In this chapter I trace the framing of the Khoi by European explorers between 1488 and 1652. The landing of Jan van Riebeeck at the Cape in 1652 continues to mark the starting point of much of South African historical pedagogy. Yet, the history of contact with Cape natives and the trickle of accounts about them into Europe had been continuous ever since the Portuguese discoverer Bartolomeu Dias was the first European to round the Cape of Good Hope in 1488. Of all African peoples, the Cape Khoi rank amongst the most extensively documented by Europeans in the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries. These documents thus present a unique opportunity to push back South Africa’s written history by 164 years. More than that, they show that the image of the Khoi in 1652 is not so much a starting point for history as an intermittent point in a process that continues to unfold into the present. What are the dominant frameworks that the Europeans applied to understand a people foreign to them? How did these frameworks influence Europeans’ image of the Khoi? Descriptions of the Khoi stood at the birth of a renewed wave of attention for foreign peoples that the Age of Discovery (15th-17th century) would spark. Eyewitness accounts and empirical observation began to show the limits of ancient and biblical worldviews. As such, European accounts of the Khoi also mark the start of modern ethnographic observation.

This chapter provides the background of developing European knowledge frameworks against which to appreciate Grevenbroek’s 1695 treatise about the Khoi, discussed in the next two chapters. I first elaborate on the earliest Portuguese explorers that rounded the Cape and their observations about the Khoi. I put particular focus on biblical worldviews and remarks about skin colour to point out how new information expanded European expectations of the Khoi, and African people generally. Advancing
chronologically, I then discuss English and Dutch accounts to reveal the dominant criteria descriptions of the Khoi adhered to, which led to a more systematic European discourse on their culture. Aspects of language, behaviour, and law and religion came to provide arguments for a dismissal of Khoi civility, expressed mostly as a negation of (European) Christian culture. At the same time, however, more precise observations prompted reflection on the dominant biblical worldviews of the time. By the time Van Riebeeck landed at the Cape in 1652, cracks were showing in the very frameworks that had come to determine the outward gaze of Europeans towards the Khoi. I end this chapter with a brief discussion of Van Riebeeck’s mission letter and conclude that already before 1652 discourse about the Khoi was continuously in flux.

**Portuguese callers (1488-1580)**

The Cape natives entered the European stage as herdsmen. In 1488, Bartolomeu Dias, the Portuguese officer who can claim the first attested double rounding of the Cape of Good Hope by a European, had lost all sense of direction in a storm and was dangerously low on supplies. At the height of his perils, he ‘sighted land in a bay which we called the Angra dos Vaqueiros, because of the many cows seen there, watched by their herdsmen’. The author goes on to dwell on the herdsmen some more:

> And since they [the herdsmen] had no language which could be understood, we could have no speech with them; but rather drove off their cattle inland, as if terrified at such a new matter, so that we could learn no more of them than that they were blacks, with woolly hair like those of Guinea.

---

1. Throughout this chapter I cite manuscripts and supply my own translations, unless otherwise stated, and unless the source text is Portuguese or Spanish, in which case I primarily relied on Raven-Hart (1967) and Johnson (2012), the former amended by colleagues in the department where appropriate (see Introduction). The following readily available studies provide transcriptions, translations and references, though with no claims to exhaustiveness: Axelson (1954; 1973), Coke (1957), and Raven-Hart (1967). Abbreviated references are used for series of the following historical societies: Van Riebeeck Society (VRS); Linschooten Vereniging (LV); Hakluyt Society (HS).

2. The Royal Portuguese historian and chronicler João de Barros (1496-1570) is the main source for information about Dias’ journey: Barros (1552). Raven-Hart (1967) relies on the 1778 reprint. According to Axelson (1973, 100), ‘[t]he royal instructions which were issues to Dias have vanished and so have all the actual records of his voyage, like those of Cão’s’. Barros wrote about 60 years after Dias’ journey, serving Dom Manuel I and Dom João III, who reigned Portugal from 1494-1521 and 1521-57 respectively.
It is not known how long Dias remained at Angra dos Vaqueiros (Bay of Herdsmen), but the natives did not show themselves again. Dias’ report led the great Cape historian G.M. Theal to conclude: ‘Thus no information concerning the Hottentot inhabitants of the South African coast, except that they had domestic cattle in their possession, was obtained by this expedition’. This ignores that the extract reveals that the Khoi were described as ‘blacks’ and that their language ‘could not be understood’. Moreover, the comparison of their hair with that of ‘those of Guinea’ suggests that the herdsman were, uncommon for the time, appreciated in a comparative frame of reference.

In line with this, in ‘Ethnography and Ethnology in the Sixteenth Century’ (1964), the ethnographer John Rowe maintains that the origins of modern anthropology are to be sought in the 15\textsuperscript{th} century:

[Although] what we find in the fifteenth century [is] little more than a point of view which made anthropological observation possible, [it constitutes] the beginnings of an interest in differences among men.

Dias thus brought home some knowledge of people on the southern extremity of Africa whom Europeans had never contacted before. Physical and readily observable characteristics allowed a compare-and-contrast with other people. Significantly, the Cape natives’ status as herdsman (rather than their external characteristics) is foregrounded by the framework through which the hungry crew sees them. The remark that ‘we could learn

\begin{itemize}
\item[3] Battered by the storm, Dias’ vessels needed some refitting, so the fleet was there for several days at least (Raven-Hart (1967)). The Bay of Herdsmen is probably the inlet which since 1601 has been known as Mossel Bay, approximately 300 kilometres east of modern-day Cape Town. Cf. Theal (1907, Volume 1, 33).
\item[4] Theal (1907, 33-34). Maylam (2001, 29) notes that Canadian-born Theal reflected 19\textsuperscript{th} century ethics at the Cape: ‘For all his prolific historical output, G.M. Theal, for instance, merely assumed that the racial order was a natural, normal state of affairs that had long existed and did not require investigation’. See also Saunders (1988, 70).
\item[5] Cf. Rowe (1964, 3): ‘It is unusual in sixteenth century ethnographic accounts to find comparisons made with other contemporary native peoples; most men who made ethnographic notes had no prior experience of their own with non-European peoples’.
\item[6] Rowe (1964, 1).
\item[7] Portuguese expeditions were dispatched in the hope that they would establish a profitable trade route to the fabled riches of India. Axelson (1973, 19) writes that by the middle of the 12\textsuperscript{th} century, ‘Portugal had attained what are essentially her present frontiers. Bounded by unfriendly and often actively hostile Spanish kingdoms and Muslim principalities, Portugal was forced to look at the seas not merely for communication with the rest of Christendom, but also for essential trade’. According to Johnson (2012, 15), ‘The constant foe for Portugal was Islam, and the function of Portuguese writers was to justify Portugal’s military expansion’. Newitt (2018, 14) argues that ‘Portuguese expansion was a direct by-product of Portugal’s poverty, not wealth. [...] With the land yielding poor returns, the nobility had always been inclined to seek its fortunes through armed exploits’.
\end{itemize}
no more of them’, moreover, implies a desire to know them in a way that goes beyond their external characteristics.

When Dias set sail for the Cape, biblical and ancient Greek and Roman literature had been shaping European expectations about African people for centuries.\(^8\) On board his two ships, Dias carried four women – Guinean convicts – who were to be set ashore at different places, trek inland, and report to the next white men they would see.\(^9\) It was hoped that, through their efforts, a king called Prester John, who was believed to reside in the interior and to be able to point the way to India, would be reached. ‘Presbyter Johannes’ was said to rule over a Christian nation lost amid the Muslims and pagans of the Orient.\(^10\) João de Barros, the official historian of the Portuguese Court, motivates Dias’ journey accordingly:

And because [...] whenever India was spoken of, mention was always made of a powerful King called Prester John of the Indies, who was said to be a Christian, Therefore [sic] it appeared to King João that by means of him some route to India might be found [...]. Also it seemed to him that if his ships followed the coast which they were now discovering [West of Africa] they could not fail to reach the Prasum Promontorium at the end of that land. Therefore, in the year 1486 he decided to send both ships by sea and men by land [...].\(^11\)

The semi-legendary figure of Prester John held sway over the European imagination from the 12\(^{th}\) to the 17\(^{th}\) century. In 1165, a sensational letter began to circulate around Europe, purported to have been written by Prester John: ‘I am lord of Lords. Under heaven, I surpass in riches and virtue and power all other kings upon the whole earth’.\(^12\) His dominions were thought to border the Earthly Paradise and to contain such treasures as the Fountain of Youth. Responding to the letter and aiming to contact Prester John, Pope Alexander III (1159-1181) dispatched a messenger to Africa, who was never heard of again.

The desire to locate Prester John’s lands had already entertained the earliest Portuguese explorers of the west coast of Africa. Geographical knowledge from Greek

---

\(^8\) See Grafton (1992), Hodgen (1964), and Uebel (2005).

\(^9\) Degredados, prisoners who worked on the ships, were mostly exiled convicts. They were under sentence of death and given a chance to escape immediate execution. Women were chosen to go ashore as it was considered more likely that they would be protected by the natives. As for the settlers: ‘Because free men were usually unwilling to become soldiers, administrators, priests, or, especially, settlers [...] until the early 20\(^{th}\) century the dungeons of Portugal were the most important source of white settlers for Angola’ (Bender (1987, xxvi; 13n33)).


\(^11\) Raven-Hart (1967, 1) translates from Barros (1/3/4). Cf. Theal (1907, 25ff.). To further the chances of contacting Prester John, the Portuguese king despatched an overland expedition in addition to Dias’ overseas one.

\(^12\) Uebel (2005, 155).
antiquity helped them in their efforts. In 1415, Prince Henry (Henrique), son of King João, had two clear reasons for leading the then biggest Portuguese armada to date – 20,000 men in about 200 vessels – to north-west African shores: firstly, he wished ‘to learn about lands that lay beyond the bounds of European knowledge’, meaning beyond ancient knowledge of the world. When Barros, in his account of Dias’ journey, mentions the Prasum Promontorium, a term coined by the Greek cartographer Ptolemy (2nd century), he is referring to the extreme southern boundary of ancient knowledge of Africa, which Portuguese navigators would keep pushing south, until they assumed Mozambique to be

**Figure 1.1** Earliest known map showing the full extent of Africa (1554), by Sebastian Münster. The (Latin) caption reads: ‘Map of the whole of Africa, as well as a comprehensive description, stretching even beyond Ptolemy’s furthest bounds’. The lands of Prester John are plotted south of a split in the Nile (‘Sedes Preste Iohan’), whose source, after Ptolemy, is placed in two lakes fed by waters from the Mountains of the Moon. Notable details include the lush forest in the middle of the Sahara and the one-eyed ‘monoculi’. Ptolemy is considered the high-water mark of Ancient geographical knowledge and cartography. Having disappeared from European consciousness after the fall of Rome (5th century), his *Geographia* (*Cosmographia*) was rediscovered in the 13th century, and the Byzantine scholar and monk Maximus Planudes drafted a series of maps designed to depict the world as Ptolemy would have drawn it. Woodcut map, with added colour, 26 x 35 cm. Münster, S. (1554), *Cosmographia universalis*, Basel, 10r.
Prasun. Secondly, Prince Henry wished to spread the Christian faith. He hoped that ‘in some remoter region’ his captains would discover ‘a Christian prince who would join him in campaigns against the enemies of the faith’. On the earliest obtainable map of the whole African continent (1554), the realms of Prester John were located in modern day Ethiopia (figure 1.1, previous page): ‘The King of Ethiope (whom we commonly calle Pretoianes or Presbiter Ihon) is a man of suche power, that he is reported to haue vndre him three skore and two other kings’, the German Hebraist Johannes Boemus wrote in his Manners of all Peoples in 1520. A century later, despite repeated failed attempts to locate Prester John, the English ship surgeon Ralph Standish still admitted to the belief that ‘this land of Cape de Bona Esperance is within the region and governement of Prester John: the Counttrey being fertille ground and pleasant and a counttrey verie temperatt [...]’.

Functionally, the exact locus of Prester John never really mattered, as ‘Prester John became a symbol to European Christians of the Church’s universality, transcending culture and geography to encompass all humanity’. The narrative supported the idea that Africa, like the rest of the world, had originally been populated by Christian peoples. The Khoi, it was assumed, had become isolated from these roots to the extent that their Christian fire had diminished to an almost unrecognisable flicker under thick layers of heathen nativeness. Already before Dias’ and Prince Henry’s time, then, an essentially Christian framework underpinned perceptions of the native inhabitants of African shores, as well as the European understanding of the perceived differences among men.

---

13 Although 16th and 17th century cartographers knew that Ptolemy could not have located the Prasum at more than lat. 15° 30’ S., the term stuck. In 1726, the Dutchman François Valentyn writes in his Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën (Volume II, Chapter 6): ‘dat het Prasum promontorium een en ’t zelve met de Kaap der Goede Hoope is’, thereby expressing the popular opinion that the Cape of Good Hope was Africa’s southernmost point.

14 As with Dias, there are no accounts left by Henry. One is dependent on the account by the Portuguese Royal archivist and the prince’s personal biographer Zurara (Azurara), a contemporary of Prince Henry, translated into English by Beazly and Prestage (1896-1899).

15 The land of Prester John was in fact variously located between India and East Africa. Hodgen (1964, 136-7) writes that ‘According to the best medieval opinion, [Ethiopia] possessed an ‘Indian’ or Asian component as well as an African’. Marco Polo, for example, wrote that Prester John was identical with the Tartar Ung Khan, but he also declared that Christ was the sovereign of Abyssinia.

16 ‘Three skore and two’: three times twenty plus two, thus 62 kings. Boemus (1520, Chapter 3 (‘Of Ethiope, and the ancient maners of that nation’)).

17 India Office, Marine Records 16 (‘Sandish-Croft Journal’ (1612)).

Dias did not deliver the Portuguese king João II a route to Prester John, nor to India. On-shore contact with the Cape natives was not established until the next Portuguese journey, under the leadership of Vasco da Gama, about 10 years later. He would be the first to barter with the Khoi and successfully voyage to India. On the morning of Saturday 8 July 1497 – not quite five years after Columbus sailed to the so-called New World in the west –, favourable winds pushed Da Gama south along the coast of Africa. Near a place he named Santa Ellena, modern day Saint Helena Bay, Da Gama reported that the land seemed sterile and uninhabited. Yet on his second trip to shore, two Khoi appeared, ‘going about gathering honey on the moor’. While Da Gama was too busy ascertaining the position of the fleet by means of the sun to notice the two Khoi men appear, his men stealthily surrounded them and captured one. They made the latter a prisoner and took him to their ships, where he dined with the commander. An Angolan slave was put in the Khoi’s company in an effort to overcome the language barrier, but to no avail. The next day the Khoi man was put back ashore with some trinkets, and soon a party of 15 to 20 Khoi appeared on the beach.

The following account by a member of Da Gama’s crew reveals Portuguese expectations of the people along the coast:

---

19 Dias gave the Cabo de Boa Esperança (Cape of Good Hope) its name, owing to the prospect that the Portuguese could entertain of reaching India by this route. It was also referred to as Cabo Tormentoso (Cape of Storms). Dias was forced to turn around near modern day Mossel Bay. Barros writes that the seamen argued that no one had ever brought home such tidings as they would. Dias then had them sign an oath of secrecy and ordered the turn-around. What particular part of the Cape peninsula he landed at on his return is unknown, as is the date of landing. Dias had left Tagus, Portugal, at the end of August 1486. In celebration of the 400th anniversary of Dias’ feat, a replica of his Caravail sailed from Portugal to Mossel Bay in 1988. It can today be seen in the Mossel Bay Museum.

20 Dias arrived back in Lisbon in December 1487. Upon his return, the king decided that another journey be undertaken to find out if the sea stretching away from the southern extremity of Africa would in fact lead to India. Under Dias’ supervision, ships were constructed.

21 Vasco da Gama brought home to Portugal an account of the sea route to India, colouring in the final stretches of the east coast on maps of Africa (Theal (1907, 71)): ‘soon as much was known by the Portuguese concerning the East African coast as we are acquainted with to-day [...]’. Da Gama’s exploits are celebrated in the famous epic by Luís de Camões (circa 1524-1580). Stanza 1 of his Os Lusíadas (The Lusiads), as translated by William Julius Mickle (1776), goes: ‘Arms and the Heroes, who from Lisbon's shore, / Through Seas where sail was never spread before, / Beyond where Ceylon lifts her spicy breast, / And waves her woods above the watery waste, / With prowess more than human forced their way / To the fair kingdoms of the rising day: / What wars they waged, what seas, what dangers passed, / What glorious empire crowned their toils at last’.

22 The place still bears this name. The town of St. Helena Bay is located about 150 kilometres north of Cape Town. On a clear day, Table Mountain is visible from it.

23 Velho (repr. 1861). Velho almost certainly took part in Da Gama’s journey. The translations of reports from Da Gama’s journey are from Axelson (1954, 1ff.). Translations are also available in HS I, 42.
In the land the men are swarth. They eat only sea-wolves and whales and the flesh of gazelles and the roots of plants. They wear sheaths on their members. Their arms are staffs of wild olive trees tipped with fire-hardened horns. They have many dogs like those of Portugal, which bark as those do. [...] And the land is very healthy and temperate, and has good herbage.24

External descriptors and habits seem to have been the primary means to identify a people. Skin colour, diet, clothing and weapons are noted as being different from those at home, while it is remarked that both the Portuguese and Khoi keep many dogs. The commander’s effort to put an Angolan slave (‘a negro’) in the Khoi prisoner’s company, furthermore, shows that he entertained expectations about connections between African languages, and possibly African people more generally.25

The next day, ‘there arrived about two hundred blacks, large and small, [at the shore,] bringing with them about twelve cattle, oxen and cows, and four or five sheep; and when we saw them we went ashore at once’. Looking on from aboard the ships, the Portuguese watched the gathering turn into a modest festivity:

They [the Khoi] at once began to play on four or five flutes, and some of them played high and others played low, harmonising together very well for blacks from whom music is not to be expected; and they danced like blacks. The Commander [Da Gama] ordered the trumpets to be played, and we in the boats danced, and so did the Commander when he again came to us. When this festivity was ended we went ashore where he had been before, and there we bartered a black ox for three bracelets. We dined off this on Sunday; and it was very fat, and the flesh was savoury as that of Portugal.26

Even though the Portuguese had never seen the Khoi dance, there clearly existed certain preconceptions about their dancing. They would dance ‘like blacks’, thus differently from the Portuguese, and advanced cultural forms of expression such as harmonised music were not to be expected.

In Portuguese accounts, ‘black’ seems to be used as a generic term for African people, referring to many tones of non-white. In ancient and medieval times, differences in skin colour were noted but remained a mostly unmarked identifier: ‘before the sixteenth century in western Europe there was little attempt to categorise groups, or differentiate

---

24 Raven-Hart (1967, 3).
25 See my observations later in this chapter about the importance of language in providing a Christian lineage for the Khoi.
26 Note the reversal of the later stereotype that all black people are musical. There is some disagreement between the sources about the order and location of the events; some place them in St. Helena Bay, some in Mossel Bay. Theal (1907, 55) locates them in St. Helena Bay but provides no rationale.
between them, on the grounds of race or colour’. In a legacy from ancient times, white-black relations were based on a long and easy familiarity and on mutual respect. However, around skirmishes with the Cape natives surfaced an appreciably discriminatory change in the word’s semantics.

When a friendly intercourse between Da Gama’s men and the Khoi had been kept up for some time, a soldier by the name of Fernão Veloso was granted leave to visit the dwellings of the Khoi and to obtain some knowledge of the style of their habitations. His visit, however, did not go as planned. There is no proof of treachery from either side but the reports agree that Veloso retraced his steps back to shore in great haste, with the Khoi tailing him. A crew member aboard one of the ships reported:

And the said Fernão Veloso, as soon as he came opposite the ships, began to shout, while the men remained concealed in the brushwood. We were still at supper; but as soon as we heard him we put ourselves into the sail-boat. The blacks began to run along the beach; and they came as near to Fernão Veloso as we were. When we were about to pick him up they began to attack us with assegais […], wounding the Commander and three or four men.

The next day, the Portuguese set sail. When the fleet next moored on Cape shores one late afternoon, Da Gama decided it would be safer to wait for morning before going ashore and that they would take weapons as a precaution.

The Portuguese explorer Antonio de Saldanha (1503) built on the connotation of blackness in relation to the Khoi, being the first to explicitly warn about the nature of ‘the natives of that land [Africa]’. At first, the Cape presented itself to him peacefully. Bartering was unfolding in all tranquility until the Portuguese suddenly found themselves ambushed:

---

27 Maylam (2001, 15). See also Snowden (1991, 65-73) and Cox (1948, 326): ‘In the Middle Ages […] we find no racial antagonism in Europe’. Instead, differences in religion were used to support more normative judgments.
28 See also Van Wyk Smith (2009).
29 From my readings, ‘blacks’ or ‘swarthy’ appear as the most common European denominators for sub-Saharan Africans in this period, sometimes accompanied by explanatory phrases such as ‘of swarthy appearance like those of Sta Ellena Bay’. The addition of geographic descriptors might have served to help future expeditions to identify and contact the right people for barter.
30 Raven-Hart (1967, 4).
31 Velho (repr. 1861), as translated by Axelson (1954, 1).
32 There was even occasion for leisure. Barros reports that ‘[Antonio de Saldanha] climbed a mountain, very flat and level on the top, which we now call “The Table of the Cape of Good Hope, from whence he saw the end of the Cape”’ (Barros (1/7/2; 1/7/4), translated by Raven-Hart (1967, 14; 16)). Antonio de Saldanha is credited with the first European ascent of Table Mountain (via Platteklip Gorge).
In the end, Barros writes, ‘the said Antonio de Saldanha found himself in peril of his life in going to help one of his men, and did not escape scot-free from them, being wounded in one arm’. Barros concludes that ‘the people at the coming of Antonio de Saldanha showed themselves to be very treacherous and not to be trusted’. Later Portuguese expeditions asserted that the ‘blacks’ were volatile, unpredictable, impolite and, ultimately, uncivilised, that is, non-Christian in their behaviour. It was surmised that these ‘blacks’ could not be the people of Prester John. The observation became an epitheton: the treacherous blacks.

A definite low-point for the Portuguese overseas was the journey of commander Francisco d’Almeida (1510), who died in the first recorded slaying by the Khoi. Returning from his viceroyalty in Portuguese India, Almeida confidently steered his fleet to Table Bay, then called Saldanha Bay. He knew that after the potentially perilous storms and cliffs of the Cape, a sheltered bay awaited them, where fresh water could be taken in and opportunities for barter might present themselves:

And since [the fleet] had need of water, and behind the Cape was a watering-place called ‘of Saldanha’ [...] the Viceroy ordered the Pilots to take the ship there [...] and have leave that [...] some men should go to barter with the blacks [...] with pieces of iron or cloth.

After successful exchanges of iron for cattle, a group of about 12 Portuguese accompanied the Khoi to their village inland. What then transpired is unclear. Barros reports that ‘negroes took [the Portuguese’s daggers], and also other things that they fancied’. One of the servants of Almeida’s men then seeks

to revenge himself [...] under the pretext of carrying certain things he had bought, [a servant of the Viceroy] brought along two of them [the blacks]; and since they, suspecting him of malice, were unwilling to come to the shore, and he somewhat forcibly compelled them to do so, they threw down what he had bought, and so misused him that he presented himself to the Viceroy with his face bloodied and some broken teeth.

---

33 Velho (repr. 1861), as translated by Axelson (1954, 1).
34 Barros (2/3/9), translated by Raven-Hart (1967, 9). Many of the early accounts refer to Table Bay as Saldanha Bay, since Saldanha was the first to report having moored there.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
After this, matters took a violent turn. Almeida marched about 150 armed men on the Khoi village, seizing children and cattle. Barros reports about the Khoi that they were ‘about one hundred and seventy in number, attack[ing] with stones and assegais of fire hardened wood, against which their weapons were useless’.\[37\] Using their cattle as moving shields, the Khoi forced the Portuguese to retreat to their ships in disarray. 75 Portuguese were killed, among whom Almeida and 11 senior officers. Barros concluded his account of the defeat as follows: ‘[our men] were killed by sticks and stones, hurled not by giants or armed men but by bestial negroes, the most brutal of all that coast’.\[38\] The defeat came at a time when the Portuguese were swiftly consolidating their overseas interests. In the eyes of the Portuguese historian the Khoi are a people with a primitive mode of warfare.\[39\] The lack of a civil method of warfare, Barros implies, makes the Khoi inferior to the Portuguese. Calling the Khoi ‘brutal’ means that they are deemed to lack all signs of (European, Christian) civility. As a result, the Khoi are considered bestial in the literal sense. This dichotomy between man and beast, civil and uncivil, is enforced in the oppositional discourse of warfare.

After a steady rise in Portuguese activity around the Cape, ‘[t]he story of Almeida’s humiliating end in Table Bay interrupted Portugal’s sequence of military and naval victories in Africa and Asia’.\[40\] Still, the Kingdom of Portugal was resolute in its determination to secure commerce in the Far East. A resolution for all outbound fleets was passed, which outlined in detail how sailors were to engage with native people:

---

37 Barros, Da Ásia, 302. Theal’s translation of Barros (1896; 1907) is not always reliable, coloured as it is by the ethics of the 19th century Cape: he has ‘Hottentots’, which is first used in the 17th century (see ‘Classifying the Khoi (1600-1652)’ in this chapter).
38 When the Portuguese returned to the shore to bury the Viceroy’s body, they found it ‘laid low, with a lance through his throat [...] despoiled of all its clothing’. They immediately left ‘this barbarous place [...] and set sail for the Kingdom [of Portugal]’. Johnson (2012, 31) provides a concise literary-historical survey of how the Khoi victory over Almeida in 1510 has been remembered, showing how the lessons drawn from it have mutated from a humiliating slaying by ‘bestial negroes’ to an inauguration of ‘South Africa’s tradition of anti-colonial resistance’.
39 Warfare would become a stock parameter of early modern ethnography.
40 Johnson (2012, 11). After the initial spurt of Portuguese calls around the Cape between 1488 and the 1520s, they avoided the Cape in favour of Angola and Mozambique. In 1575, Manoel de Mesquita Perestrello was ordered to explore and describe the African shore from the Cape of Good Hope to Cape Correntes. In 1576, he was the last Portuguese commander to call at the Cape before the English began to explore its shores in 1579. His Roteiro is available in reprint (Perestrello (1939)) and translated in Theal (1897, I). When Mesquita Perestrello discussed the ‘Cape of Good Hope’, he recalled that ‘here João de Queiros and almost all his crew were killed in the year 1505’. The slaughter thus continued to weigh heavily on Portuguese minds.
The instructions of the [Portuguese] king [Manuel] were that where they came peace and friendship were to be offered to the inhabitants on condition of their accepting the Christian faith and engaging in commerce, but if these terms were refused, relentless war was to be made upon them.41

Christianity shaped the framework within which the Portuguese believed their trade networks and overseas societies would thrive.42 Relations between the Portuguese and local people were not overly favourable anywhere on African shores. By 1500, Muslims had come to inhabit large stretches of the east African coastline, up to and south of the Zambezi, and were nearly everywhere hostile, according to Portuguese accounts. Appeasement through peace and friendship would from now on be the Portuguese policy in the area. Any threat to it, however, justified a ‘relentless war’ being waged upon the aggressor.43 Prince Henry’s concerns of almost a century earlier about securing barter and trade, and spreading Christianity in campaigns against the enemies of the faith had come to underpin Portuguese dealings with the Khoi, or indeed any native people.

The Portuguese brought home to Europe infinitely more first-hand knowledge about the African peoples than there had been before. As a result, external and readily observable characteristics, like skin colour, gained importance for assessing a people’s character and civility.44 As Margaret Hodgen argues for early modern ethnographic observation, ‘outward appearance was taken to be an index to inward character and potentiality’.45 The Portuguese accounts I have discussed in this section show how actions were interpreted as indicative of the ‘nature’ of the Khoi and that of black people in general. In addition, Christian faith, or rather the observed lack thereof, came to take a central place in the

41 Theal (1907, 91-2). The resolution must have been deemed of the utmost importance, as Da Gama only returned to Portugal on 28 August 1499 – a short window to comply with the stringent terms of the latest Resolution. In March 1500, at the end of the monsoon season, thirteen ships sailed for the east, carrying 1,200 soldiers and sailors – far exceeding the size of any fleet dispatched in the world at the time. (The approximate times at which the different monsoons set in were known, and February and March were the best times to take advantage of them, sailing to the East.) In the 19th century, Germans would offer the same terms to the people of Zanzibar and Zimbabwe (cf. the ‘Letter to Major Von Wissmann’, in: James, Lawall, and Patterson (2005)).

42 Cf. Hodgen (1964, Chapter 7).

43 Barros, commenting on Almeida’s actions, concedes that the Portuguese could also have learned a Christian lesson from the events: ‘God allowed this to happen as an example to the living, that they may learn to be more anxious to gain a good name than to acquire wealth’ (Barros, Da Asia, 306, in: Johnson (2012, 11)). The chronicler Gaspar Corrêa (d.1562) also exhorts his countrymen: ‘[a]s it is always the character of the Portuguese to endeavour to rob the poor natives of the country of their property, there were some sailors who tried to take a cow without giving what the negroes asked for it’ (Corrêa, Legends, 46, in: Johnson (2012, 13)). He concedes that the Khoi acted in self-defence, as they legitimately ‘feared we might wish to build a fortress there also and take their watering place, and thus they would lose their cattle’.

44 See also Boxer (1963).

45 Hodgen (1964, 392).
evaluation of the Khoi vis-à-vis European man in the accounts of all European maritime powers.

**English and Dutch accounts (1580-1615)**

Although the Kingdom of Portugal practised secrecy about its trade routes and related knowledge, word about the challenges and successes of the early Portuguese expeditions spread, as did information on lands and peoples encountered. In 1552, Barros published his series of chronicles about Portuguese explorers, which was widely read and translated across Europe.\(^{46}\) In 1592, nine Amsterdam merchants commissioned Cornelis de Houtman and his brother Frederik de Houtman to Lisbon to learn what they could about newly developed sea routes to the East Indies: the people encountered, the spices traded, etc. They were arrested and incarcerated when they were caught trying to smuggle classified navigational charts back to Holland, but eventually released on ransom. By the time the English and Dutch set sail for the Cape in the final decades of the 16\(^{th}\) century, they had been able to familiarise themselves with accounts of ‘blacks’ to some degree.\(^{47}\)

An English account from an expedition that was dispatched from Plymouth in May 1591 illustrates that skin colour became pivotal in a description and evaluation of the Khoi. On 29 July, lieutenant Edmund Barker reports that the ships made it to Saldana Bay, ‘neare the Cape of Buona Esperança’:

> [...] and there came unto [us] certain blacke salvages [sic], very brutish, which would not stay, but retired from [us]. [...] We got here a negro, whom we compelled to march into the country with us, making signs to bring us some cattell. [...] But at this time we could come to the sight of none; so we let the negro go, with some trifles. Within 8 dayes after, he, with 30 or 40 other negroes brought us downe some 40 bullocks and oxen, with as many sheepe; at which time we bought but a few of them. But within 8 dayes after, they came downe with as many more [...].\(^{48}\)

There is no mention of violence, suggesting that the observation that the Khoi are ‘very brutish’ evokes an inherent connotation of ‘blacke salvages’. May and Barker also show

\(^{46}\) Barros modelled his chronicle *Decadas da Asia* [...] on Livy’s *History of Rome*: Though he never went farther east than the coast of modern-day Ghana, Barros ‘probably saw more documents on his subject than any man before or since’, the British historian of sixteenth-century Malaya Ian MacGregor (1955, 41) writes, quoted in Dion (1970, 21). The *Decadas* have never been translated in their entirety.

\(^{47}\) Bender (1978, 12-3). On the exchange of knowledge in early modern Europe, see Blair and Grafton (1989).

\(^{48}\) H5 II, 586ff. (Edmund Barker). The English at this time still relied on sign language in their communication with the Khoi.
that, besides colour, there were other parameters used to describe a people, such as clothing.

In the later 16th and 17th centuries, sets of ethnographic characteristics were developed. Albrecht Meier’s book *Certain briefe, and speciall instructions for gentlemen, merchants, students, soildiers, mariners, etc.* (1587) was influential in this. It dealt with the collection of artefacts and instructed travellers on what should be observed and recorded. Very much inspired by Classical antiquity, it sought to familiarise every traveller with the archetypical writer of Greek epic Homer, ‘seer of many Regions, and of the manners of many Nations’. The list of aspects to be observed includes ‘manners, honestie, humanitie, hospitalitie, love, and other morall vertues of the Inhabitants’, ‘the disposition and spirit of the people’, ‘the fare and dyet of the region’, ‘How the king or prince is allyed with his neighbour Princes, and who are his confederates, and who not’, language, and religious practices.

Meier’s work filled a void, as the VOC only drew up detailed instructions for commanders’ log books in 1643. By 1589, Meier’s instructions had been translated into English and were used widely, also outside captain’s logs. The organisation and features observed in many private diaries and accounts shows its influence. Indeed, ‘there was the large company of uninstructed voyagers upon whom devolved the important task of making the first face-to-face judgments of the native peoples’. These European travellers brought home knowledge about peoples that had remained untreated by the revered authors from antiquity. At the same time, ancient literature and a Christian worldview framed the European outward gaze.

---

50 It was revised in 1669: *Memorie voor de koopluyden en andere officieren; waer op sy [...] sullen hebben te letten, omme de heeren bewinthebberen [...] punctueelijck te onderrichten*, Middelburg: P. van Goetthem. A copy was sent to Batavia, arriving there 1 December 1670. It is reproduced by Van der Chijs (1885, 604-5), and discussed by Delmas and Penn (2011) and Delmas (2013).
51 Hodgen (1964, 407). Meier’s work also found another application: publishers would ‘buy’ seamen’s narratives, and edit them into a travelogue, or compile travelogues themselves, often combining first-hand stories with previous knowledge and their own understanding. Famous is the example of the Utrecht book-seller Simon de Vries (+/- 1670); see Baggerman (1993).
52 In medieval times, the genre of travel writing (*ars apodemica*) had largely been confined to recitations about the comforts and discomforts of pilgrimages to the Holy Land. From the 15th century, with the Age of Discoveries, Hodgen (1964, 185) writes, the travel guide as a literary genre gained wider application. 16th century travel literature falls into two groups: the first containing useful information for the traveller to faraway lands, and the second prescribing what travel accounts should include.
The accounts of three Dutch and English sailors from the late 16th and early 17th century make clear the advances in ethnographical observation that had been made in Europe since the Portuguese expeditions and the changes in the criteria used to describe Khoi culture. On 2 April 1595, a year after returning from Portugal, Cornelius Houtman served as ‘chief merchant’ on the first Dutch fleet to round the Cape of Good Hope and to proceed on an expedition to the East Indies. Aboard was Willem Lodewijckz, a midshipman with the Chamber of Amsterdam, who would keep a meticulous log of the fleet’s whereabouts and adventures. On 4 August, the fleet moored near the Cape for a week to refresh. A skiff took several men ashore to scout. Willem Lodewijckz looked on from aboard, and saw Khoi appear from the bush:

Meanwhile seven black men came to the skiff, who had followed the track of our men who had gone inland. [...] Our men had given them some knives, cloth, bells, and little mirrors, as also some woollen clothing, but this they did not know what to do with, and therefore threw it away. They were given wine, and biscuit which they ate, and as evening was coming on our men returned to the ship.

With the Dutch spending more time in the vicinity of the natives, Lodewijckz took the opportunity to gather material for an extensive ethnographic account. I cite it at some length, as the extract gives a good idea of how far empirical observation and its systematic organisation had come since the Portuguese first encountered ‘the blacks’ a century before:

These folks are in stature somewhat less than those here [he wrote the account from Sumatra], red-brown in colour [...] entirely naked but for an ox-hide around them like a cloak and a wide thong of leather round their waists, of which one end hung before their privities. Some wore little wooden boards under their feet instead of shoes. Their ornaments were bracelets of ivory and red copper, polished seashells, also Paternosters [large beads] of bone and wood, and various cicatrisations burned into their flesh. They always stank greatly, since they besmeared themselves with gat and grease. We could find none of their dwellings, far less of their women. We saw most of them make fires under bushes, which they did very quickly by twisting one piece of wood against another: thus they passed the night, and such fires we saw every night in various places. When we killed any oxen

---

53 The fleet rounded the Cape four months into the voyage to the east, on 2 August, and on the next day passed ‘C d’Aguilhas [l’Aguilhas]’. It did not call at the Cape on the outbound trip. As the Dutch did not distinguish between different tribes, it makes no difference to my argument that their encounter did not take place at the Cape. Out of 249 crew on four ships (Mauritius, Hollandia, Amsterdam and Duifken), only 87 returned. The voyage was nonetheless a symbolic victory for the Dutch over the Portuguese. In 1598, the Houtman brothers led another journey, during which Cornelius was killed and Frederik imprisoned. During the latter’s confinement, he compiled the first Dutch-Malay dictionary, and later, in 1619, he made one of the earliest sightings of Australia.

54 Lodewijckz is well known for his chart of the Java Sea and his histories of the East Indies, written after this journey to the east and translated throughout Europe. LV 7; 25; 32.

55 LV 7 as translated by Raven-Hart (1967, 16). Ibid. for the other citations in this paragraph.
they begged for the entrails, which they ate quite raw after shaking out most of the dung, or stretched it over the fire on four sticks, or warming up a little of the paunch ate it up. I could learn no more of them but that they speak very clumsily, like the folk in Germany [...] who suffer from goitre [...] Also they had some pieces of dried meat hanging around their necks, and little bones.

Lodewijckz describes what he sees and entertains relevant comparisons to paint a picture of the Khoi’s basic physique. Employing a structured, eloquent, unwavering style, he observes rather than interprets the actions of the natives. With photographic detachment he describes the stature and demeanour of the Khoi, before detailed their clothing, ornaments, way of making fire, and feeding habits. Where data falls short, it is significant that he reports that he cannot comment on that aspect of their culture, as with the homes and the women. Comparing his account with that of two of his contemporaries provides further evidence that a more fixed ethnographic set of criteria was developing.

In 1595, Franck van der Does, cadet aboard the Hollandia, wrote a ‘Short relation of the Inhabitants’ (Cort Verhael vanden Inwoonders):

They [the natives] are short in stature, ugly of face, the hair on their heads often looking as if singed off by the sun. [...] They go quite naked but for the tail of a small wild animal before their privities, which are little covered by it. Also [...] the skin of a wild beast hung around their necks, which [...] on the outside has the hair still on it. In place of shoes they have two double pieces of leather under their feet. [...] They have very neat weapons [...] shaped like a spear, an inch thick and eight or nine feet long, some with iron points and some without [...] their speech is just as if one heard a number of angry turkeys [...] little else but clucking and whistling [...] And indeed it looked as if they would have eaten some of us, since they made little ado of eating raw guts, from which they had little scraped out the dung with a finger. 56

The similarity of the ethnographic parameters invoked by Lodewijckz and Van der Does is remarkable: they both mention skin colour, clothing (or the lack thereof), feeding habits and weapons. Moreover, the encounter with the natives’ speech again invites a comparison, this time with turkeys, to which I will return below. 57 However, in comparison with Lodewijckz,

56 LV 25.
57 Not all accounts were as elaborate as the ones by Lodewijckz and Van der Does. Some writers mention only one or two details about the Khoi. An anonymous account from the Hollandia (LV 25), for example, mentions the Khoi language in passing and refers to the ornaments and spears that they wore and carried. The author describes the Khoi as wearing ‘the tail of a fox or other tail covering their maleness’, as having ‘under the feet [...] pieces of skin in lieu of shoes’, and as carrying ‘spears with wide iron points’. This account also features the first attested description of the Khoi speech as ‘clucking like turkeys’, which would become a stock phrase. A third account adds that ‘their speech is just as if one heard a number of angry turkeys’ (Franck van der Does, Cadet in Hollandia, Cort Verhael, in: LV 25). Interestingly, the latter account adds that the Dutch first did not dare go ashore, because they feared that ‘the African savages would kill and eat us’. (On telling different peoples apart, see ‘Classifying the Khoi (1600-1652)’ in this chapter.)
Van der Does draws more comparisons, notably with beasts. His image and judgment of the Khoi calls to mind that of the Portuguese accounts a century earlier.

John Davys was a pilot on an English ship that sailed three years after Lodewijckz and Van der Does. It anchored in ‘the Bay of Saldania [...] where there are three fresh rivers’ on 11 November 1598. Besides illustrating how a similar framework of ethnographic criteria was used across Europe around the turn of the 17th century, his account highlights the prominence of Biblical theories about the origin of people and their spread across the globe in early modern Europe’s worldview.

Like most of the other accounts, Davys’ starts off with the main stimulus for contacting the Khoi – barter – and provides basic information on Khoi physique, clothing and language:

The people [which] came to us with Oxen and Sheep in great plenty, which they sold for peices [sic] of old Iron and spike Nailes. [...] The people are not circumcised: their colour is Olive blacke, blacker then the Brasilians, their haire curled and blacke as the Negroes of Angola, their words for the most part inarticulate, and, in speaking, they clocke with the Tongue like a brood Hen, which clocking and the words are both pronounced together, verie strangely. [The Khoi] goe all naked, having only a short Cloke of Skinnes, and Sandals tyed to their feet, they paint their faces with divers colours, they are a strong active people, and runne exceedingly, and are subject to the King of Monomotapa, who is reported to be a mightie King, their weapons are only ha[n]d Darts. [...] They made great Fires upon the Mountaines in the Countrey.

Figure 1.2 T and O map (1472).
Early modern maps increasingly had to integrate new information with old traditions. A T and O map is a common medieval mappamundi that puts Jerusalem at the centre of the then-known world. It identifies the three known continents as populated by descendants of Sem, Iafeth and Cham, and follows the Homeric conception that the world was surrounded by an uninhabitable ocean.
The Cape Khoi are ranked with ‘the Negroes of Angola’ in terms of skin colour, and in this, they are seen as different from the people in Brasil. Besides pointing out the comparative method used to describe a people, I want to illustrate that Davys’ observations accord with the contemporary Christian theory about the spread of people across the globe.

When Boemus, in 1520 (three decades after the discovery of the New World), wrote that the world is composed of only three continents, or ‘thre partes, Affrique, Asie, and Europe’, he aligned himself with ‘thaunciente division of the earth’ and the biblical adage of the great deluge and dispersion of man.\(^{58}\) It was believed that after the great deluge, Noah’s three sons were dispatched to each populate one of the three known continents: Shem into Asia, lafeth into Europe, and Cham into Africa. On the basis of this belief, well into the 17\(^{th}\) century, all ‘blacks’ could be perceived as one people, originating from the centre of Christian faith, Jerusalem (figure 1.2, previous page, and figure 1.3, next page).\(^{59}\) Davys’ observation that the Khoi were not circumcised is highly relevant in this respect, as Jews adhered to this custom.\(^{60}\)

In the model of concentric dispersal over the earth, the Japanese at the far end of Asia and the Khoi at the southernmost tip of Africa were both geographically and in time the furthest removed from Jerusalem. The Khoi, from the Christian perspective, had become so far removed from the Christian navel of the earth that only a flint of the original faith could have been preserved. Davys’ statement that the Khoi were darker of skin than the ‘Brasilians’ makes sense in this regard: skin colour was thought to vary with exposure to the sun; the darker a people’s skin, the further and longer removed from the Christian centre they were supposed to have been dwelling. Amongst the Africans, the Khoi were seen as having suffered particularly much from the related degeneration and diffusion of the faith.\(^{61}\)

---

\(^{58}\) The Spanish presbyter Orosius (early 5\(^{th}\) century) divided the history of the world into eras, the first spanning from Adam to the great deluge, the second to Abraham, etc. Orosius regarded the Roman Empire as a link between Christianity and contemporary history.

\(^{59}\) Early modern and medieval maps expressed ideologies more than serving practical navigational purposes. This was a break with tradition. In antiquity, Herodotus had ‘disapproved of the work of contemporary mapmakers’ (De Bakker (2016, 82ff.)) because ‘they do not take “known unknowns” into consideration: “They draw Ocean flowing around the whole earth, portray the earth to be more perfectly circular than if it were drawn with a compass, and make Asia the same size as Europe”’ (4.36.2). He chose to describe the world in words and dismissed map-use from his heuristic agenda. Scholars doubt that Ptolemy included maps in his *Geography*.

\(^{60}\) The vast majority of travelogues state that the Khoi do practice circumcision.

\(^{61}\) Kindling the fire of Christianity among the natives was an aim of many journeys of exploration, but only in more recent centuries were efforts at converting native peoples used in defence of colonial practices (Bender (1978, Introduction)).
Davys’ reference to Monomotapa is another indication of the Christian substratum to his gaze. Monomotapa was a mythical land that, like the legend of Prester John, determined the early modern European horizon of expectations of Africa. It was believed that Monomotapa held the legendary gold mines of the biblical King Solomon. On the map

Figure 1.3 Liber chronicarum, ‘Secunda etas Mundi’ (1493).
The map is after Ptolemy’s configurations to render a sphere on a flat surface. The border contains twelve windheads inspired by ancient literature, while Sem, lafeth and Cham support the map in three of its corners. The Liber Chronicarum divides the history of the world into seven stages, according to a scheme laid out by Isodore of Seville. The second stage, depicted here, features a discussion of outlandish creatures that according to ancient and medieval tales inhabited the furthermost parts of the earth. Seven are presented in the panel on the left, among whom a centaur, a four-eyed man from an Ethiopian tribe, and a (presumably African) man with a huge underlip. At a time when Dias had already circumnavigated the Cape, the Indian Ocean is wrongly depicted as an enclosed sea. (Schedel used as a model the mappamundi from an edition of the Cosmographia of the Roman geographer Pomponius Mela published in Venice in 1488.)
Schedel, S. (1493), Liber chronicarum, Nuremberg, 12v.

62 For literary representations of Southern Africa, and for more on the role of Monomotapa, see Huigen (1996). Scholars now generally agree that the empire of Great Zimbabwe (associated with a dynasty that ended around 1450) was the main centre for the sub-Saharan trade in gold. Scholars have tried to determine the exact location of Ophir, the area over which King Salomon ruled. The Portuguese term ‘Monomotapa’ is a direct translation of the African royal title ‘Mwene-mutapa’, meaning ‘prince of the land’ (Stewart (1989, 395)). An identification of Ophir with Sofala in Mozambique is mentioned by Milton in Paradise Lost (11:399-401).
of the famous Amsterdam cartographer Bleau – a standard for southern African topography for much of the 17th century – Monomotapa is shown to cover the entire extent of the continent from the Victoria Falls southwards (figure 1.4). Davys’ conviction that the inhabitants of the Cape are subject to the king of Monomopata shows the dominance of a traditional Christian worldview in interpreting ‘newly discovered’ people.

![Figure 1.4 'Aethiopia inferior, vel exterior'.](image)

Monomopata is envisaged to cover all of Southern Africa, and is part of Ethiopia, the land of Prester John. Copperplate map, with added colour, 37 x 48 cm. Blaeu, J. (1635), *Theatrum orbis terrarium, sive atlas novus*, Amsterdam, 15v.

Functionally, as with Prester John, the locus of Monomotapa never mattered. However much descriptions of Khoi culture were gaining in detail, as long as open spaces continued to fill the heart of Africa on European maps, hopes of locating powerful, hidden realms of Christendom continued to provide a stimulus for journeys of exploration.63

63 The coastline of Africa had been known ever since Da Gama but the lion’s share of the African hinterland would remain blank on European maps until well into the 19th century. See the maps in Oliver and Fage (1973). For one example, the gold mines of Solomon of Monomotapa inspired Portuguese exploration westwards from Mozambique, and eastwards from the Cape by the Dutch and English. Between 1659 and 1686, the Dutch launched eleven expeditions from their Cape settlement to pioneer contact with the Monomotapa people and
As the European visitors at the Cape probed deeper into Khoi territory and culture, they began to realise that not all Khoi tribes shared the same traits in the same degree. Around modern-day Durban, for example, some 1500 kilometres east from Cape Town, it was noted that ‘the blacks’ did in fact circumcise. During the first decades of the 17th century, a gradual awareness developed that the Khoi were not one people but many. This, in turn, allowed for a mapping of the tribes’ various degrees of ‘remoteness’ from Christian habits. The incomprehensibility of the Khoi language to a European ear, for example, was advanced as proof that Khoi culture, as a consequence of the long separation from the Christian centre of the world, had deteriorated under continued exposure to animal sounds. As an anonymous account from a 1601 English voyage has it, the Khoi ‘spake in the Cattels Language (which was never changed at the confusion of Babell), which was Moath for Oxen and Kine, and Baa for Sheepe’. This refers to the idea that, prior to the construction of the Tower at Babel, humanity was united in a single language. The writer assumes a human origin of the Khoi but deems it necessary to provide a Christian explanation for their seemingly un-Christian language. With the Christian nature of the Khoi unquestioned, and more detailed accounts of their culture becoming available, the question of where to place of the Khoi in the hierarchy of Christian man gained urgency.

Classifying the Khoi (1600-1652)

By the start of the 17th century, cultural diversity had become a prominent issue in the mind of many a learned European. Distinguishing between different colours of skin was no longer sufficient to tell the divergent habits of ‘the blacks’ apart. How could ‘black people’ practice different habits, European man asked himself, while speaking mutually incomprehensible languages? Answering this question necessitated a more stringent set of ethnographic criteria, capable of distinguishing between African peoples. Rather than forcing cracks in the Christian worldview, closer observation facilitated a classification of diversities of mankind.

---

64 Journey under the command of Sir James Lancaster (1601), cited in Purchas (1905, 392ff.).
65 The confusion of tongues at Babel is the narrative that explains the fragmentation of human languages as told in Genesis 11:1-9. During the Middle Ages, it was supposed that the Hebrew language was used by God to address Adam in Paradise. In later centuries, but before the acceptance of the idea of an Indo-European language family, these languages were considered to be ‘Japhetite’ by some, claiming priority over Hebrew because they had never been corrupted as their speakers did not partake at Babel. See Dugdale (2016).
according to their (overall distance from) Christian ‘civility’ and capability to practice Christian virtues. Important criteria were law, religion and social organisation, and language and character.

The classification of the diversities of mankind urged a reconsideration of the place of man relative to all other known creatures. This relative ranking was referred to as ‘the chain of being’.66 It ordered all beings into a hierarchy, visualised as a ladder, with man situated between the more celestial rank and that of animals (figure 1.5). This visualisation

---

had its origins in the Middle Ages, when the ecclesiastical hierarchy was meant to rationalise the feudal principle. The political institutions on Earth were understood to mirror the graded ranks of the Heavens: God’s grace had invested His power in some to rule over many. In its medieval outline, the chain classified man as a being with life, feelings, intelligence, judgment and free will – the highest rank under the celestial angels. On the lowest rung of the ladder was the earth, categorised as a being without life, feelings, intelligence, judgment, or free will.67

The question was where to position the African ‘blacks’ and account for the diverging degrees of bestiality and uncivility that were noticed. The proposal of the 16th century Spanish Jesuit missionary José de Acosta, who had lived in South America for seventeen years, was particularly influential.68 Having studied the people of the New World, he proposes in the introduction to his De procuranda salute indorum (The Natural and Moral History of the Indies) (1589) that all ‘barbarians’ – which in practice meant all non-European, remotely Christian, people – be classified into three classes. Firstly, people with knowledge and use of letters, and a degree of ‘civility’ (like the Chinese); secondly, those who lacked script but possessed some form of organised government and religion (like the Mexicans); and thirdly, the savages, who, according to Acosta, were to be distinguished into those without organisation and those with the rudiments of organisation, who were assumed to be slightly more peaceably inclined.69 The chain of being allowed for the insertion of a rank for each of these classes between man and animals.

Significantly, the realisation that different ‘blacks’ were (dis)similar to Europeans in varying degrees had made it apparent that the Christian idea about the spread of people over the world left some matters unexplained. Spatially, the idea of the Noahiden repopulation after the great deluge was still thought accurate, in that it showed how the races had spread over the earth. Historically, however, it struggled to explain how and when ‘the blacks’ had split up. The chain of being resolved this by combining a spatial arrangement of forms with a historical or evolutionary development.70 This acknowledged the existence of differences between peoples and allowed these to be explained through

---

67 See, for example, Raymond de Sebonde (1457), Theologia naturalis sive liber creaturarum, which was translated by Michel de Montaigne a century later (Armaingaud (1932)).
68 See Rowe (1964, 5). On the academic network of exchange in early modern Europe, see Blair and Grafton (1989).
69 Acosta (1590, proemium, 115-123), translated into English as HS I.33.
70 Hodgen (1964, 389ff.).
their distance from the Christian centre or origin of the world, and their period of separation from this centre. Thus, the chain of being could explain why the Khoi language could not be understood and why it contained animal sounds, unlike the languages of many other African peoples, while not denying the Khoi a place in mankind’s shared origin.  

Behaviour, language, and law and religion constituted three major criteria used to rank the Khoi – or any non-European people – in the chain of being. In their assessment of the civility of the Khoi, 17th century accounts are indebted to the earlier Portuguese practice of interpreting Khoi behaviour and external characteristics as indicative of their nature and potentiality. The French writer Pièrre d’Avity, in his Description Générale de l’Afrique (1643), for example, discusses the Khoi under the two headings of religion and ‘moeurs’ (ethos); skin colour is treated as part of the latter.  

From the mid-1590s onwards, Dutch and English callers described the Khoi as ‘very bold, but deare’, ‘very treacherous’, ‘very brutish’, ‘very thievish’, and remarked that ‘they betray you’, that ‘they will picke and steal, although you looke on them’, and that ‘you must be well on your guard against them, lest you be cheated by them’. An English fleet in 1608 provides examples of these accusations:

And many tymes, having sould them [the cattle] to us [the English], yf we looked not the better to them, they [the Khoi] would steale them agayne from us and bringe them agayne to sell; which we were fayne with patience to buy agayne of them without giving any foule language, for feare least they would bringe us no more.

As lykewayse yf they stole any thinge, yf yt weare of smale valewe, wee would not meddle with them butt suffer them to carry yt awaye; which they tooke very kindly, so soe much that they brough such

---

71 Explained as positive primitivism, the original values of early Christianity were thought to be preserved in the Khoi more purely, albeit under thick layers of nativeness. In the letter that Van Riebeeck sent to the Directors of the Company after his landing at the Cape in 1652, he asked for teachers to help him rekindle the Christian fire in the Khoi: ‘With regard to [what L. Janz writes of] the natives or their children learning our language, is deserving of notice, and no less a good thing, and consequently the propagation of our Reformed Christian Religion, which he seems to hope, is still better – wherein a good teacher would do the best service, if your Honors were pleased to consent to an expense, which is calculated also to tend to the better edification of your servants to be stationed here’ (quoted from Thael (1897, 11)). In contrast, negative primitivism interpreted the primitive state as corrupted and degraded. On the two interpretations of ‘primitivism’ in early modern anthropology, see Hodgson (1964) and Pagden (1982). On the binary of the primitive versus the non-primitive and the view that European self-awareness was possible only because of the Age of Exploration, see König, Reinhardt and Wendt (1989).

72 Avity (1643, Chapter ‘Cap de Bonne Espérance’).
plenty downe, more then wee were able to tell what to doe withal. Yett we refused no one, for feare lesse in soe doinge they would bring noe more.73

Trust became a scarce commodity at a time when the success of European overseas endeavours depended on opportunities to refresh and barter. A Dutchman in 1609 remarks that ‘the country people were lurking about our tents, so that alarm was given’.74 Cornelis de Houtman (1595) writes that ‘for iron we got beasts [from the Khoi], and [as a precaution] we shot them with muskets, whereat the natives were affrighted and began to run away’.75 This suggests that both the Khoi and the callers were always on their guard. Khoi behaviour is described as negations of Christian virtues, a custom which was corroborated by the Acosta’s and the chain of being’s binary between man and ‘barbarians’.

Language was another key element in assessing a people’s civility, and a recurring aspect in accounts about the Khoi since Dias. It is one of the readily observable features of a people – even if one lacks an understanding of the particular speech. Many European travellers were awestruck by Khoi speech, as for the first time in history, they were exposed to click sounds and a ‘new’ language family. The 16th and 17th centuries saw comparisons with hens, turkeys, apes, monkeys, sheep, birds, and geese.76 ‘[Their] speech it seemed to us inarticulate noise, rather than language, like the clucking of hens, or garbling of turkeys’.77 Metaphors from the animal kingdom were common and implicitly ranked ‘Hottentots’ with the animals.78 The German J. S. Wurffbain explicitly questions the human character of Khoi speech:

They do not in the slightest possess speech or a voice as men usually have, but they gargle and clap their mouth in a very particular way, yet, they somehow manage to understand one another.79

In the early modern European frame of reference, although the Khoi – like the animals – managed to understand one another, their speech was far removed from the ‘proper

73 John Jourdain (1608). Quoted from HS II, 16.
74 Cornelis Claesz. van Purmerendt (1609), Journael […], 1651. (Hague Archives Codex 4389).
75 Letter in LV 32.
76 See Nienaber (1963, 84), who, among many others, cited Thunberg, a Swedish physicist, who wrote in 1773: ‘When several Hottentots sit conversing together, the sound is very like the clacking of so many geese’.77 Terry (1616), quoted from 1777 reprint. Terry was chaplain on the 1616 fleet under Benjamin Joseph.
78 Nienaber (1963, 85).
79 Wurffbain (1646), ‘[Sie] haben gantz keine Sprach oder denen Menschen sonst gewohnliche Stimme, sondern gurgeln und schnalzten auf eine gantz besondere Weise met dem Mund, worbey [sic] sie doch einander unter sich verstehen können’.
human languages’ supposedly found in civilised nations. Lodewijckz (1595), as noted earlier, comments: ‘I could learn no more of them [the Khoi] but that they speak very clumsily, like the folk in Germany [...] who suffer from goitre. [...] in speaking, they [the Khoi] clocke with the Tongue like a brood Hen’.\textsuperscript{80} Houtman (1595) observes that when they speak, the ‘Hottentots’ ‘move about in a very strange way’, Davys (1598) writes that they talk ‘verie strangely’, and Terry (1615) finds that the language is ‘a very strange confused noise’.\textsuperscript{81} J. J. Kaerel jr. (1595) calls it ‘an unsuitable mumble’, Lodewijckz added that it is ‘much impeded communication’, and an anonymous Englishmen writes that the Khoi ‘spake in the Cattels Language’.\textsuperscript{82} These accounts put the Khoi closer to the animals than to mankind.

European explorers were very interested to find that dwellers of other continents could be considered to be savages and close to beasts.\textsuperscript{83} The savage (Latin: ‘silvaticus’, literally: forest dweller) had been a dominant category in medieval thought.\textsuperscript{84} He was a wild man, thought to sleep in the open and to subsist by hunting and gathering. Embodying the natural state of being, he was assumed to be un-civil and thus to have no religion or social or political structure. Many Europeans saw their ideas of the savage confirmed in the Khoi.

Implicit in European accounts is the idea that Khoi language cannot (or should not) be learned. Sir James Lancaster, the Englishman who called the Khoi ‘negroes’ in 1591, maintains that ‘[i]n seven weekes which we remained here in this place, the sharpest wit among us could not learne one word of their language’. Another Englishman, Sir Thomas Herbert, reports that

\[t\]heir words are sounded rather like that of Apes, then Men, whereby its very hard to sound their dialect, the antiquitie of it whither from Babell or no, the qualitie, whither beneficall or no, I argue not. [...] And comparing their imitations, speech and visages, I doubt many of them have better Predecessors then Monkeys. Which I have seen there of great stature.\textsuperscript{85}

Herbert clearly did not hold the natives in high regard; he calls them ‘canibals’ and ‘sauage Inhabitants’, and relates them to the ‘Anthropophagi’ and ‘Troglodites’ – mythical man-

\textsuperscript{80} Seyger van Rechteren (1629, cited in Raven-Hart (1967, 23-4)): ‘Haer geluyt / ofte spraeck is als het klocken der Hoenderen’.
\textsuperscript{81} ‘[S]eer vremt met gedrachten [gebaren]’.
\textsuperscript{82} ‘Een ongeschickt murmelen’; ‘seer belemmert spreken’.
\textsuperscript{83} Rowe (1964, 5).
\textsuperscript{84} He was a favourite subject in European art between the 12\textsuperscript{th} and 15\textsuperscript{th} centuries. Cf. Berhnheimer (1952).
\textsuperscript{85} Herbert (1626, quoted in Raven-Hart (1967, 14; 16)). Grevenbroek also references these creatures: see Chapter 3.
eaters and savage cave dwellers that featured on early maps of the continent. To underline his point, he includes a list of 21 ‘Hottentot words’ that he had compiled himself, and to this added the numerals one to ten.86 Linguists nowadays would interpret such a list as evidence that the Khoi’s ‘inarticulate noise’ is in fact a language that aids communication. In 1626, however, Herbert’s list underlined doubts that the Khoi language could be traced back to Babel and thus called the civility of the Khoi into question.87 Herbert concludes that their language is closer to the animal kingdom than to human speech. This shows how, fifty years before Van Riebeeck, biblical worldviews still determined Europe’s outward gaze; ethnographic frameworks were based on the Scripture and ethnographic observations were interpreted to support this worldview rather than allowed to challenge it.88

Moving forward from 1610, law and religion became affixed to descriptions of the Khoi. The observed lack of political and religious structure was an important motive in downgrading the Khoi to the realm of beasts in the chain of being. ‘In the logic of the Europeans’, the ethnographer Rowe observes, ‘[savages] must be men without law or government, and probably also without religion’.89 This idea was captured in a French rhyme: ‘sans roi, sans loi, sans foi’, that was found in many a 16th and 17th century book.90 Accordingly, the majority of English and Dutch accounts found that ‘They [the Khoi] live without law or religion, like animals’, or that ‘[The country people are] without any lawe or religione, but doo live like brute beasts’. In encyclopaedic fashion, the French navigator Pyrard de Laval (1610) also glosses over ‘Khoi facts’:

---

86 Nienaber (1963, 21ff.; 166ff.).
87 The words on Herbert’s list are all nouns and indicate that the prime purpose of their visit was barter: bracelet, brass, knife, (ostrich) egg-shells, quills, water, seals, ship, skin. Only one of the words is a verb: ‘to give’ or ‘to hand’. Some words in his list suggest a particular fascination of Europeans: woman, genitor, ‘mens stones’, womb. Cf. the 18th century objectification of Saartjie Baartman as the ‘Hottentot Venus’.
88 Although the Europeans did not learn Khoi language, some Khoi did master English. The native chief Xhore made history in 1613 in becoming the first Khoi (and perhaps the first black African) to be taken to England. The Khoi man, ‘who call’d himself Cooree [...], was brought to London’. Yet, ‘[w]hen he had learned a little of our language, he would daily lie upon the ground, and cry very often thus in broken English “Cooree home go, Souldania [Saldanha Bay] go, home go”’. As the Khoi had no script for their language, sources write about the chief as Xhore, Co[o]r[r][ee], and Corie whilst some use his Anglicised name, (Chief) Harry.
89 Rowe (1964, 5). Rowe wrote about the New World. North Africa had been known to European man since antiquity. I noted several decades’ lag between Rowe’s observations and those about the Khoi but have not explored this further.
90 Avity (1643, Chapter ‘Cap de Bonne Espérance’) observes under the heading ‘religion’ that the Khoi ‘lack all form of law and religion, and for that reason, are called Cafres’ (‘[i]ls n’ont aucune ny, ny religion, & pour ceste cause, on les nomme Cafres [...]’). On the Arabic origin of the word ‘caffir’, meaning heathen, see note 99.
The people who live along this coast [the Cape of Good Hope] [...] are very brutish and savage, as stupid as can be and without intelligence, black and mis-shapen, with no hair on their heads, their eyes always running. They cover their privy parts with the hairy skins of beasts, and their backs with an entire large skin which they tie below the chin, leaving the tail hanging so that from a distance one might say that they had tails. The women have very long breasts, and dress like the men. They eat human flesh and entirely raw animals, with the intestines and guts without washing them, as do dogs. The men have as weapons only certain sharp darts with iron points on the ends. Further, they live without law or religion, like animals.91

Mentioning the lack of law and religion almost as an afterthought, Laval illustrated how its equation to animality needs no further comment – it in fact concluded his argument.

Laval is exemplary in his handling of the dominant, popular frameworks for the available knowledge of the Khoi in this period and in the judgment reached about them. With the place of the Khoi in the chain of being resolved as a savage, familiar motives were often reiterated rather than reinterpreted.92 I discussed in the Introduction that J.M. Coetzee describes this prevailing European image of the Khoi as inherent to the ‘echo chamber of the discourse of the Cape’.93 Knowledge about the Khoi did not actually advance, as the majority of 17th century European writers followed familiar criteria to confirm the common opinion that the Khoi were living without the Christian faith, and hence were bereft of all civility. One Dutchman was briefer than Laval and uses the criteria almost as a checklist: ‘[The people are] the most barbarous in the world, miserable, destitute of religions of any kind, civility, speech, and they go naked’. The Englishman Sir Thomas Roe wrote in 1615:

The land is fructfull, the people the most bareberous in the world, wearing the guts of sheepe around their necks for health and rubbing their heads (curled like Negroes) with dung of beasts and durte. These have no civility.94

Another English account is equally brief:

---

91 Translation Raven-Hart (1967, 47).
92 What distinguishes Laval’s account from all previous ones is the lack of any indication that he actually interacted with the natives. His detached description is encyclopaedic in the claim to truth it suggests. In earlier accounts, a bartering scene typically leads up to digressions on the land and its people. The details in such narratives are a way to establish their authenticity. The content of Laval’s account, too, differs from others. I have not come across other sources that mention the natives’ running eyes or bald heads. Laval sojourned in South Asia (modern day India and surrounds) from 1601 to 1611 and wrote his account shortly after his return to France. Possibly, Laval did not disembark at the Cape himself, or added these elements. On the wider issue of ‘eyewitness accounts’ and compilations by people that never left Europe, see Baggerman (1993).
93 Coetzee (1988, Chapter ‘Idleness in South Africa’).
94 Quoted from HS II, 1.
[t]hey [the Khoi] are bruitt and sauadg, without religion, without language, without laws or
government, without manners or humanittie and last of all without apparel, for they go naked save
onelie a ppees of a sheepes skyn.

By the 17th century, criteria like civility had acquired a definite meaning in
ethnographic writing across Christian Europe. To have no civility was to have no (human)
culture. When the first hopeful nudges towards a settlement at the Cape were made,
English merchants seemed convinced that, due to the observed lack of civility in the natives,
they could put the land to better (that is, more commercially viable) use, or perhaps needed
it more urgently, than the Khoi. They thus staked their claim to Cape lands. The account of
John Jourdain (1608) is interesting for indicating the possibility that civility be extended to
the natives:

Beinge planted and sowne in due time, and kept as it ought to bee, if this countrye were inhabited by
a civill nation, hevinge a castle or forte for defence against the outrage of those heathenish people
and to withstand and offraine force, in shorte time it might be brought to some civilitie, and within
fewe yeares able of it selfe to furnish all shipps refreshinge.95

Jourdain’s reasoning suggested that the civilised could justly stake a claim to land occupied
by the uncivilised. Jourdain employed familiar concepts of the time to build a dialectic of us
versus them.

In 16th and 17th century Europe, complex concepts like civility and moral virtues
(often grouped under religion) were commonly used to bring order to a rapidly expanding
world. The Dutch scholar Justus Lipsius, for example, writes in A direction for travaillers [sic]
(1592):

The sight, consideration and knowledge, of sundry rites, manners, pollicies and governments is the
most conducive to true wisdom about the world, especially when they are compared together
‘perfectlie’.96

Similarly, Montaigne, in his famous essay Of Canibals (Les Cannibales, circa 1580), despite
his critique of religion, ‘was one of a long line of scholars for whom savagery was merely
civilisation stripped of everything that made it admirable and hence was envisaged by a

95 John Jourdain (1608), reproduced in HS II, 16. In hindsight, this report’s visionary power is astounding: the
initial settlement in 1652 would be centred around a castle, marking the separation between Khoi and
European.
96 Lipsius (1592), quoted from Hodgen (1964; 187).
resort to negatives’.97 Using the tribes of Brasil as examples, he portrays savagery as the ethnological antithesis of European society. For Montaigne, a primitive social environment was typified by the absence of the advantages the residents of the European enjoy in letters, law, governments and husbandry. Carl Linnaeus – however forward-thinking a botanist he might have been – also entertains the opinion that the human race was composed of the homo sapiens, among which was the fair, sanguine and brawny European, and the homo monstrosus, among which he reckoned ‘the less fertile Hottentots’ and ‘the beardless Americans’.98 Many of the reports on the Khoi discussed so far shows similar reasoning.99

Whether Europeans entertained a view of the Khoi that can be described as positive or negative primitivism, whether they defined savagery as a series of negatives to European life, or whether a negation of civility was employed to deny the Khoi their place in the Christian chain of being, in the eyes of both learned men and unschooled sailors, the savage was either an inferior man or a superior animal. It goes beyond the scope of this study to review in detail just ‘when and how the genus Homo was bisected’ into civilised and non-civilised back in Europe.100 Suffice it to say that the shift in opinion was not sudden and not necessarily induced by men of learning.

It must be remembered that to place all savage peoples in the same classification was by no means to confer identity upon them. The Cape Khoi differed from the people of Mozambique and it did not take the Europeans long to concede that even the Cape was populated by different peoples. Specific terms were developed to mark these differences. ‘Cafres’ was an early generic term for southern African natives, first found in a Portuguese source from 1506, meaning ‘unbeliever’.101 The Portuguese occasionally used the term in

97 Hodgen (1964, 377).
98 Note how adjectives pin ‘races’ down to certain key characteristics or epithetons.
99 As for the claims that the Khoi are cannibals (Laval (1610), cited in this paragraph), these are isolated instances and seem inspired by the cannibalism found in other native races known at the time inhabiting North and South America.
100 Hodgen (1964, 170).
101 The word ‘Cafres’ is of Muslim origin. To get news of the ships missing from Albuquerque’s 1503 fleet, the Portuguese dispatched a mission to examine the coast from the Cape of Good Hope to Sofala. Finding pieces of burnt timber of a ship, ‘two convicts [are set] on land there, who had volunteered for this task […] who after seven days returned […] but the Cafres could give no news of the crew […] and it was assumed that the fire had been made by the Cafres, to get the nails of her, iron being so much esteemed among them; and all the harm that they did to these convicts was to despoil them of the clothes they wore’.
Dutch transcription, such as in ‘Kafferkuyl Bay’ in a Portuguese source from 1576. In 1685, the Frenchman Nicolas Gueudeville would still write that the inhabitants of ‘Kaffraria’ are ‘Cafres, mot Arabe qui signifie hommes sans loi’. The term continued to be widely used by English and Dutch settlers alongside the Dutch ‘Hottentot’. The latter is first found in a document by the sailor Jón Ólaffson 1623.

The Frenchman Jean Baptiste Tavernier in a 1649 report holds that the words ‘Hottentot’ and ‘Cafres’ are interchangeable: ‘But of all the people that ever I saw in all my travels, I never saw any so hideous nor so brutish as the Comoukes, [...] and those of the Cape of Good Hope, whom they call Cafres, or Hosentotes’ (emphasis in text). Under a 1680 dictionary entry Caffarie, the land’s inhabitants are indeed called ‘Hottentots’:

Caffarie gemeenlijk, oock wel Cafferarie, en Costa de Caffres by de Portugezen, of het Landt der Caffers by de Hollanders, waer van de inwoonders by de onse veeltijds de Hottentots genaemt worden, bysonder de zuidelijckgelegen, en die haer omtrent Cabo de Bona Esperanca onthouden, en dat om haer belemmertheid en wanheebelijckheid van spraeck.

With the expansion of ethnographical theory, the practice of naming a land after its people – of which Cafrarie is an example – became the custom. It attests to a dawning consciousness that the Africans were regarded as ‘blacks’ but that this term was not

---

102 Cf. Perestrello (1575; 1939)). Theal (1897, I) surmises that Kafferkuyl Bay refers to present-day Stilbaai.
103 Gueudeville (1685, 67) treats ‘Kaffaria’ as a region in ‘L’Ethiopie Inferieure’ (‘Southern Ethiopia’): as noted earlier, much of the map of Africa was still an empty blank.
104 The provenance of the word ‘Hottentot’ has been the subject of discussion among amateur and professional historians alike since it was coined in the 17th century. Interpretations range from it being the people’s name for themselves to it being an onomatopoeia that reflects how the Khoi’s guttural speech sounded to the Europeans. Nienaber (1963, 32ff.; Chapter 5; Chapter 6) provides a useful overview.
105 He wrote that the natives ‘danced for us [...] in return for bread and kerchiefs, and they went wholly naked, covering only the parts where modesty constraints. Their dance was after this fashion: on uttering the word “Hottentot!” they snapped two of their fingers and clicked with tongue and feet, all in time’ (cited in HS II, 53). In 1640, Nicolaus de Graaff commented that he and his fellow Dutchmen ‘made an earthen wall [...] against any attack by the Hottentots’ (De Graaff (1640, 42)).
106 On Tavernier, see note 61 in Chapter 2. Tavernier’s biographers claim that at the time of publication in 1676, 27 years had passed since his travels, which gives 1649 for his visit. Tavernier’s experiences have the form of a long narrative without any dates. English translation by John Philips, 1678, cited from Hodgen (1964, 52).
107 VroeMiddelnederlands Woordenboek (WNT), sub voce ‘Caffarie’. ‘Hottentot’ was the term used in official VOC documents and in Van Riebeeck’s log from 1652 onwards. Van Riebeeck made no effort at defining the term, which gives reason to suppose that by 1652, at least in the Dutch context, it had become part and parcel of discourse about the Cape. Fredrickson (1981, 34) argues that reports from this time ‘gave the ‘Hottentots’ the general reputation of being the most bestial people yet encountered by Europeans in the course of discovering and conquering new lands’. Rhoddie and Venter (1960, 43) highlight Van Riebeeck’s effort to put up an almond hedge to separate white inhabitants from the Khoi as an early attempt at territorial segregation, an interpretation that Sleigh (1993) disputes.
accurate enough to distinguish between the different peoples dwelling in the southern part of the continent. Simple geographical denominators such as ‘Strandloopers’ told the different kinds of ‘Hottentots’ and ‘Cafares’ apart and described what they did there: Strand-loopers roamed the shores. In 1634, less than two decades before Jan van Riebeeck’s landing at the Cape, Peter Mundy was among the first callers to explicitly distinguish between two groups of ‘Hottentots’.\footnote{Mundy’s 1634 manuscript is preserved at the British Museum Library. I quote from the reprint in HS II, 35.} Using the familiar colour denominator ‘black’ (‘Swart’), Mundy argues that the inland group was the more civilised of the two – although civilised, of course, is a relative term here:

The People here [around Table Bay] are in Collour Swart like those in India or Mulatoes in Spaine. The Men have verye little or noe beards, being also without Religion, Lawe, Arte or Civility that we could use. [...] Theis that are hereabouts (by reporte) are of a baser sort and live in fear of others called Saldania men, whoe are farther in the land.\footnote{Ibid. (321-2). Mundy, quoting sources from 30 years before, makes a comparison between ‘blacks’ and ‘Mulatoes’. Nienaber (1963, 23) suggests that Hadda, a Khoi man who was taken to Bantam in 1629 and returned home the next year, was Mundy’s source.}

Although the distinction could hardly have been more rudimentary, it should be appreciated that Mundy used particular ethnographic parameters to distinguish between native peoples and tell apart various levels of civility.

The split between inlanders and coastal people would recur in later accounts. Johan van Mandelslo, a Dutchman who called at the Cape in 1639, corroborated a distinction between two groups of natives:

The inhabitants of this country are of two sorts: some which live very miserably by the waterside, but without ships or boats. They live on herbs, roots and fishes, and especially on the dead whales which are cast ashore by storms, which must serve as their best food. They are called the Watermen, because they live by the shore. The other sort, which live further inland, are called Solthanimen, from which this bight is called Saldanha Bay. They live somewhat better than the Watermen. They also do not cultivate the soil, which is excellent and rich and produces all sorts of ground- and tree-fruits. But they have lovely cattle, sheep and goats.\footnote{Translation Raven-Hart (1967, 152). Although Van Mandelslo probably relied on personal observation of the Khoi, his etymology is reversed, as both the bay and the people are named after the Portuguese explorer Soldanha (1503). Van Mandelslo (1658, 124-5): ‘De Inwoonders van deze Contrey zijn tweederley soorten. [...] Eenige welk aan ‘t water doch zonder Schip of Boot zeer armelijck leven onderhouden zich met Kruyden Wortelen en Visschen byzonder met de doode Walvisschen welke door storm aan ‘t Landt gesmeten worden dit moet haar beste Spijs zijn. Men noemt haar Water-mannen dewijl sy aan Strant woonen. De andere soort welk verder in ‘t Landt woont worden Solthaniman genoemen daar af dezen Boezem Solthani Baay genoemt}
The Watermen are depicted as scavenging hunter gatherers, while the Soltitanimen, who also do not practice agriculture, at least herd cattle. For Van Mandelslo, the Soltitanimen thus observed a higher standard of life. Yet, however differently their cultures may manifest themselves, the two groups were still ‘blacks’. Van Mandelslo’s conclusion about the natives’ civility is familiar parlance:

The people found here [at the Cape] are black, uncivilised and beast-like in their life and speech, more resembling beasts than men; they give off a nasty smell because they smear all their bodies with fish-oil, so that they shine from it.111

Similarly, the Dutchman Jan Sigmund Wurffbain on a 1646 journey found that the inhabitants of the land ‘indeed look much like men but in manners and the rest of their way of life they more resemble the unreasoning beasts’.112 Although the geographical denominators attest to increasing detail in ethnographical observation, conclusions about Khoi life remained unchanged:

[The Khoi are] very uncivilised, [living with] no laws, policies, religions or ordinances […]. [They are] nothing other than wild heathen, dirty and stinking men, in their customs more beasts than men. […] [They have] no Christian civilisation.113

The Khoi thus continued to be ranked below Christian man. As observations became little more than epithetons that confirmed existing frameworks, knowledge about the Khoi, in Coetzee’s words, turned into prejudices.

To conclude, the first prolonged stays of Europeans at the Cape confirmed discourse about the Khoi as savages. The English took possession of the Cape on 24 June 1620, ousting the Dutch in the process. They declared that ‘it was concluded that to intitle [sic] his Majeste king supreme head and governor of that continent not yet inhabited by any Christian prince’.114 Even though the Khoi are referred to as ‘men’ in the contract that was

wort. Zy leven wat beter als die Watermannen; zy bouwen ‘t Lant ook niet ‘t welk heerlijk en vet is maar zy hebben schoon Vee van Schapen Runders en Bokken’.
111 The name Watermans, as used by Van Mandelslo (1639), was also used by Van Riebeeck in his journal (Dagregister) for the years 1652-1662 (Cited in Theal (1897, sub voce)). Throughout his office at the Cape, Van Riebeeck maintained that the Strandloopers were a particular type of ‘Hottentot’.
112 Wurffbain (1686, 22).
113 De Graaff (1640, 52).
114 The ceremony was deferred and the English formally annexed the Cape on 3 July 1620. Under naval law, a nation could take possession of a land by simply putting up a sign and a flag. In this case, a mount of stones
drawn up at the annexation, the fact that they were no Christians was enough justification for the English to take ownership of their lands. King James, however, had little interest in the Cape and never had it inhabited by his own men. And so the Dutch were the first to – albeit unwillingly – spent several consecutive months on Cape shores. The VOC’s *Mauritius Eyland* shipwrecked on 7 February 1644 in Table Bay, whilst on its outbound journey to the east, forcing the 350 crew to shuttle all cargo to the shore and abandon ship. Three years later, the VOC’s *Haerlem* ran aground on 26 March 1647, ‘sitting very fast on a sandy shore 1 1/2 miles from Table Bay’. The wreckings constituted the longest periods of uninterrupted European presence at the Cape before Jan van Riebeeck and reports on the Khoi from this period proved pivotal in the VOC’s decision to build a refreshment station at the Cape.

Both shipwrecked crews reported that building a fort was central to their survival. Officers from *Mauritius Eyland* drew up a series of resolutions for the time until a homebound crew would pass the Cape. No longer were the Khoi there for a quick barter; contact now had to be sustainable, perhaps even formalised so as to guarantee the crews’ safety. In the *Resolutions*, the officers explain that a fort was necessary ‘to be free of danger from the natives, who are not to be trusted’. Other letters, such as this one by an English caller, share the idea that ‘the men are first to raise a small fort to defend themselves’. The fort became the first building of a semi-permanent nature at the Cape: ‘a fort of casks, armed with one gun [...] and about 340 men’. The second fort, built by the *Haerlem* crew, was sturdier, ‘provided on all four corners with mountings or batteries, and on each of the

was raised, which they called King James’ Mount, and a small English flag was delivered to the natives, which, according to the report, they carefully kept.

115 The English did not levy taxes or re-enforce their claim to the land. Pending an English decision on a refreshment station, Aldworth (1611) and Kerridge (1612) (both quoted from Raven-Hart (1967)) speak out in favour of the natives and against the negative light they were put in previously: ‘[The natives are] very affable & tractable onto us, and not of base and beastlike disposition, and voyde of all reason as commonly hath been reported of them’. And: the natives are ‘very courteous and tractable folk’. I cannot confirm whether such experiences stretched beyond the purpose of pleasing a benefactor.

116 Diary of Leendert Janssen, codex OD1648II (The Hague). In both cases, the rest of the fleet could not take in all men and supplies from the wrecks. The supplies were rowed ashore, and the crew were left behind at the Cape to safeguard them from capture by the Khoi and the European competition.

117 Letter from Upper-merchant Thomas van Cuijck to the Lords XVII, not dated (probably early April 1644). Hague Archives codex 1056. William Minors (OC1868), who called at the Cape on the homebound journey, claims in a letter (20 May 1644) from aboard *Royal Mary* that the purpose of the fort was to ‘preserve what is ashor vntill from Battauia they cann send shipping to fetch them [the sailors] away’.

118 I have been unable to track down any further accounts by the *Mauritius Eyland* crew. Cf. Nienaber (1963, 27).
same a gun, the breastworks being about 8 or 9 feet high’. Reports describe the Khoi as ‘enemy’, who are ‘not to be trusted’. There is also still the ‘fear of the savages who might readily play some hostile trick on the Dutch as was their custom’. In the eyes of the VOC Commissioners, the fort was deemed ‘sufficiently secure against enemy attacks by the natives of this land’.

Rather than drawing the Dutch closer to the Khoi, the construction of the forts seems to have formalised the opposition between the crew and the ‘enemy savages’. In 1649, with all crew rescued from Table Bay, the VOC took stock and reflected on the risk that having no permanent refreshment stations on African shores entailed for its trading routes with the East. Answering to a VOC request, two survivors from the Haerlem, Leendert Jansen and Matthijs Proot, compiled a Remonstrantie (Remonstrance). Its full title clearly reflects the VOC’s purpose in ordering it:

Remonstrance, in which is briefly set forth and explained, the service, advantage, and profit, which will accrue to the United Chartered East India Company, from making a Fort and Garden, at the Cabo de Boa Esperance.

In the outline of a permanent settlement at the Cape, the natives took a central place. Yet, contrary to popular opinion, Jansen and Proot also cast a critical glance at the Dutch and developed an early argument in defence of the Khoi. While the Remonstrantie started off with a recuperation of the common consensus – ‘Others will say that the natives are brutish and cannibals, from whom nothing good is to be expected; and that we shall have to be on our guard continually’ – these opinions were soon discarded as not based on fact: ‘this is only a sailors’ yarn [‘een Jan Hagels praetjen’] as shall be more closely shown

119 Wurffbain (1686, 24).
120 The fort was also given a name, underlining its (semi-)permanent nature: Fort Sandenburgh. It was home to 62 people from the Haerlem, armed with 30 muskets. Report of the Commissioners, OD1648II (Hague Archives). As the shipwrecked crews awaited rescue, they regularly obtained meat and fish from outward-bound ships (Witte Duijve, BDR8/4/1648, sailing with Princesse Royale, DBR15/4/1648). The Witte Duijve carried orders from the Lords XVII to offloaded provisions and supplies. A letter from Van Riebeeck to Batavia dated 25 May 1652, locates Fort Sandenburgh about 3 miles up the west coast from where he was building his fort.
121 It was informed largely by the Journael (Journal), kept by the same Leendert Jansen. First entry 25 March 1647. The Remonstrantie and the Journael are the only two accounts from this time at the Cape. Raven-Hart (1963, 207) speculates that N. Proot is a misreading of M. Proot in the manuscripts and that he may very well be Matthijs, first intended commander at the Cape. Copies of private letters from Mauritius Eiland and resolutions of its impromptu council have also been preserved; Raven-Hart (1963, 157ff.) provides a bibliography.
122 Translated by Moodie (1838-1841, sub voce 26 July 1649), as are all further quotations from the Remonstrantie in this paragraph. A fort and garden would supply ships and be beneficial in maintaining regular traffic to and from the East. Mooring fees could be levied on ships from friendly parties.
and denied’. In what follows, Jansen and Proot discuss the familiar ethnographic categories but rather than drawing a conclusion about the natives’ non-civility, they point the finger at the Dutch:

It is not to be denied that they are without laws or government like many Indians, and it is indeed true, that also some sailors and soldiers have been killed by them; but the reason for this is always left unspoken by our folk, to excuse themselves for having been the cause of it, since we firmly believe that the peasants of this country [Holland], if their cattle were to be shot down and taken off without payment, would not show themselves a whit better than these natives, had they not to fear the law.

To a degree, Jansen and Proot align the Remonstrantie with the contemporary framework of ethnographical analysis; they compare the Khoi with New World natives and mention the customary categories of law and government. Yet, importantly, they stress that the killing of mariners by the Khoi is not a consequence of the observed lack of civility on the latter’s part. Without denying that the natives are uncivil, Jansen and Proot build a case for them by providing an analogy with what Dutch people in the same situation could be expected to do.

The five-month sojourn after the wrecking gave Jansen and Proot ample exposure to the Khoi. Armed with these experiences, they develop an argument that reverses the common opinion:

[T]he natives, after we had been there about five months, came daily to the fort (which we had thrown up to our defence) with all friendliness to barter. [...] [crew] of the aforesaid ship Haerlem [...] who [the natives] could readily have killed when in their hands, had they been inclined to cannibalism (as is asserted by some), so that without any doubt the killing of our folk is rather in revenge for the taking of their cattle, than for eating them. Thus the fault is not on the side of the natives, but lies in the uncivilised and ungrateful conduct of our folk.

Personal and prolonged close-up experience with the Khoi gave Jansen and Proot the authority to challenge some of the un-Christian behaviour ascribed to the Khoi. More than that, they relate descriptors of non-civility normally associated with the Khoi to the European visitors and put the blame for deteriorated relations between them and the natives with the Dutch. It should also be noted that – in marked contrast with earlier accounts – the Remonstrantie exclusively refer to the Khoi with neutral terms like
'inhabitants [of this land]'.

In addition, Jansen and Proot use more precise geographical distinguishers, like ‘the beach roamers among the inhabitants’.

For all the cultural relativism of Jansen and Proot, Jan van Riebeeck seems to have been more of a practical man. Having read the Remonstrantie, he accepted the position of commander of the fleet that was to set up a halfway post at the Cape but expresses his concerns about the Khoi in a letter to the Directors of the VOC Chamber of Amsterdam:

Although Mr. Leendert Janz does not appear to entertain much apprehension of any interruption from the natives, provided they are well treated, I say, notwithstanding, that they are by no means to be trusted, but are a savage set, living without conscience, and therefore the fort should be rendered tolerably defensible, for I have frequently heard, from diverse persons equally deserving of credit (who have also been there) that our people have been beaten to death by them, without having given the slightest cause: we should, therefore, act cautiously with them, and not put too much trust in them.

Van Riebeeck clearly believed that first-hand observation produces trustworthy knowledge. Interestingly, however, he stresses that such trust is based on numbers ('I have frequently heard, from diverse persons [...] who have also been there'): one man's experiences are not enough to convince him that the Khoi are trustworthy and not uncivil. To remedy their uncivility, Van Riebeeck requested that the Lords XVII send Christian teachers to the Cape.

The conclusion of the directors of the VOC is well known. In December 1651, Jan van Riebeeck sailed from Texel with the ships Drommedaris, Reijger, and Goede Hoop. The VOC’s lengthy instructions carefully outlines the actions he was to undertake upon arrival at the Cape. His concerns seem to have been heard:

a general rendezvous be formed near the shore [...] in order to provide that the passing and repassing East India ships, to and from Batavia respectively, may, without accident, touch at the said Cape or Bay, and also upon arriving there, may find the means of procuring herbs, flesh, water, and other needful requirements, [...] You shall [...] in the first place go on shore with a portion of your people, taking with you as many material as you require, in order hastily to erect for your defence,

---

124 ‘[S]trantlooper s vande Inhabitanten’.
125 Theal (1896, sub voce October 1651).
126 See my earlier remark on positive primitivism in note 71.
against attacks of the inhabitants – being a rude [rouwe] people - a fitting wooden Lodge, as well for the people to lodge therein, as for storing all the implements you take with you.127

The Directors conceded that the Khoi are a ‘rouwe’ people. They did not give reasons for their judgment but the choice of the term ‘rouwe’ confirmed that a negation of their civility was at play. At the same time, the Directors conceded that a refreshment station could not succeed without a good understanding with the natives. Consequently, they suggested that Van Riebeeck slyly attach the natives to him:

You will also make inspection near the Fort for the land best suited for depasturing and breeding cattle, for which purpose a good correspondence and intelligence with the natives will be very necessary. [You must] reconcile them in time to your customs, and attach them to you, which must be effected with discretion, above all, taking care that you do not injure them in person, or in the cattle which they keep or bring to you, by which they may be rendered averse from our people, as has appeared in various instances.

Notably, the Directors strike quite a different tone than the English during their brief annexation of the Cape in 1621. There is no talk of confiscating lands, which the English moreover justified on the basis of a civil versus uncivil dichotomy. Striking a golden mean between the Remonstrantie’s tone and Van Riebeeck’s doubts, the Directors aimed at ‘befriending’ the Khoi in order to gain favours from them. The Dutch thought a sustainable relationship with the Khoi an essential part of a developing a commercially viable refreshment station in support of its overseas trade. However, the Khoi were not regarded as a cultural equal – the idea was to teach them to become more amenable and civilised by having them follow European customs and become attached to the Dutch administration.128

The mission letter to Van Riebeeck includes the first institutional policy for appeasing the Khoi. The Directors’ ambitions were commercial, not ethnographic per se. Yet, Van Riebeeck, in his letter, describes the Khoi as ‘a savage set, living without conscience’ and he advances a Christian framework to argue his case, thereby invoking the familiar discourse about them. The arrival of the Dutch at the Cape remained a unilateral decision: the Khoi did not have any say in it. Jansen and Proot presented a rare and brief wind of change and

127 It is interesting that the Directors do not adopt the terminology familiar from earlier sources to describe the Khoi, but use ‘rouwe’ instead. The historical dictionary in WNT (http://gtb.inl.nl) gives ‘Go beyond the limits, atrocious, disgraceful’. (‘De perken te buiten gaand, gruwelijk, godgeklaagd.’)
128 Sleigh (2004, Introduction) emphasises that Van Riebeeck extensively used tobacco and alcohol as gifts, indicating that the Khoi were not befriended but made addicted.
although the basis for establishing a relationship may have been changing, authority continued to reside with the thought frames of knowledge above the equator.

**Conclusion**

So, what do the sources that predate Van Riebeeck’s arrival at the Cape tell us about changes in the European framework for appreciation of the Khoi? For one, they reveal that a recent verdict such as that of Renaissance historian Kate Lowe that ‘to the majority of the Europeans, the defining feature was African skin colour, and nothing else [...] mattered, and consequently nothing else was recorded’, is simply not true, ignoring as it does bookshelves full of earnest ethnographic record.129 What European reports about the Cape Khoi do show is that discourse about them was always in flux – already before 1652.

In the earliest Portuguese eyewitness accounts about the Khoi from the 15th century, as a legacy from ancient and medieval times, ‘black’ did not carry derogatory connotations. Readily observable characteristics such as skin colour, hair and language were appreciated in a comparative framework. Scuffles between the Khoi and the Europeans, however, tainted the image of the Khoi, and ‘black’ became indicative of a people’s nature. With the number of eyewitness accounts growing in the 16th and 17th centuries, also from English and Dutch writers, information about the Khoi would be organised more systematically, along increasingly fixed criteria. These included, notably, language, law and religion, and behaviour. The Khoi were described as a negation of European habits, living in a primitive, natural state. Christian worldviews facilitated a graded categorisation of the Khoi as ‘uncivilised savages’, ranked between European (Christian) man and beasts. Bestial metaphors sparked from this framework. With more accurate observation dawned the awareness that not all African people were one. In the decade before Jan van Riebeeck’s landing at the Cape, marooned Dutch crew described the Khoi as enemy. Van Riebeeck, in contrast, would try and ‘civilise’ the Khoi by introducing them to Christian customs.

Overall, this chapter has made clear that the European outward gaze and horizon of expectations about Africa was invested in a Christian worldview and drawing on ancient authorities in geography and history. In that regard, the Portuguese and Van Riebeeck form hinges in a process of framing that started long before them and which continues into the present. As the South African historian Paul Maylam argues:

---

129 Lowe and Earle (2005, 6).
On the one hand it is erroneous to suggest that a ready-made racism, or an embryonic racial order, was brought to the Cape by the Dutch in the seventeenth century. There was no systematic body of racial thought. [...] On the other hand, it would be equally misleading to separate the history of South Africa’s racial order from the rise of capitalism, Protestantism and imperialism in early modern Europe.130

All the same, if there was a defining feature of pre-Van Riebeeck accounts about the Khoi – and African people in general – it was the observed lack of Christian features. Significantly, the ethnographer Hodgen reminds us that there is no unequivocal answer to the question of why certain frameworks surfaced over others:

Hierarchical ideas were used freely but works will be searched in vain for coherent statements of the reasons for their use, or for any uniformity of opinion as to their relation to the status of savage man.131

As accounts and encounters multiplied, the frailty of any one standard of judgment became uncomfortably clear, and many a 17th century mind was shocked into an admission of cultural relativism. In 1612, Peter Martyr writes:

The Aethiopian thinketh the blacke colour to be fairer then the white: and the white man thinketh otherwise. Hee that is polled thinketh himselfe more amiable than hee who weareth long hayre, and the bearded man supposeth hee s more comely than hee that wanteth a beard. As appetite therefore moveth, not as reason perswadeth, men run into these vanities, and every province is ruled by its own sense [...]132

Then as now, judgment depends on perspective; it is all too easy to judge ‘the’ standard of one’s own time and place supreme. Montaigne ponders over cultural relativism:

130 Maylam (2001, 23). Maylam provides a concise overview of what he calls ‘the emerging racial order’ before Van Riebeeck. The topic is marked by starkly opposing views. Guelke (1989, 40) argues that the Dutch brought their prejudices with them to the Cape: ‘White supremacy is not an essentially South African product, but has its origins in a pre-existing Dutch colonial vision, which was premised on European dominance and a sense of racial superiority. [This] was made manifest in colonial settings in institutional racism and slavery’. Frederickson (1997, 19), in contrast, argues that the Dutch colonial project was not imbued with a deep-seated racism, and not set on conquest and colonisation, but stubbornly commercial: ‘the Dutch showed little racial prejudice’. Elphick and Giliomee (1989, 525) see the attitudes of the Dutch as shaped by their own cultural norms, perceptions of black communities, and ‘forms of contact’. Comparing the Dutch attitudes in Africa with developments in the New World, Van den Boogart (1982, 40) puts cultural differences rather than skin colour at the basis of an emergent Dutch racism. In his view, Africans were generally perceived by the Dutch to be living in a state of ‘savagery’ but the Dutch ‘also discovered that Africans were not entirely savage’ and considered them superior to Amarindians in political organisation, agriculture and craftsmanship.
131 Hodgen (1964, 415).
132 Pietro Martire d’Anghiera (1612). Writing only a decade after the return of Columbus, Martyr (1455-1526) was one of the first to put realism against ancient wisdom and the embellishment of medieval fantasy. Cf. Hodgen (1964, 30-1).
What goodness is that, which but yesterday I saw in credite and esteeme, and tomorrow, to have lost all reputation [...], is made a crime? What truth is that, which these Mountains bound, and is a lie in the world beyond them? How comes it to pass [...] that people separated only by a river or a mountain are dissimilar?133

Nonetheless, travel books that reiterated the prevailing perceptions of the inhabitants of African shores had a readership that far outnumbered that of Montaigne and Peter Martyr.134 At the same time, it should be observed that a major shift took place between the early Portuguese navigators, whose horizon of expectations about the African people was determined by the bounds of the ancient and biblical library, and Van Riebeeck’s judgment that reliable information may also come from empirical observations, preferably in large numbers. It was only a matter of time before Europeans began to realise that the Christian explanation of the history of the world was unable to account for the growing number of empirically acquired observations that contradicted it.

In the next chapter, I focus on a Dutchman, Johannes Willem van Grevenbroek, who argues that the reiteration of stock-motives over the centuries had come to disadvantage the Khoi, whilst designating the Europeans hypocrite Christians. I will show how, in his attempt to ‘civilise’ the Khoi, Grevenbroek strategically returned to Christian and ancient sources.

133 Quoted from Hodgen (1964, 222). Montaigne is thinking about the mountains separating the Italians and the French.
134 Print numbers of travel books prove just how popular travel narratives were and how vital in the transmission of knowledge of foreign peoples across Europe. See Stagl (1980; 1983). Both Montaigne and Peter Martyr were not read widely until centuries after their death.
Chapter 2

Grevenbroek and the Khoi: Towards a Revolution of Knowledge

Vreemde lande het in biblioteke bestaan. Die hele wêreld was in boeke.
Strange lands existed in libraries. The whole world was in books.

Grevenbroek, in Sleigh (2002, 695)

After studying prominent chronicles of the Cape in the previous chapter I now turn to an author who spent years at the Cape. The Dutchman Johannes Willem van Grevenbroek (1644-circa 1726) was secretary of the Dutch East India Company’s Council of Policy at the Cape from 1684 to 1694. A year after his retirement, he wrote a letter in Latin about the Cape’s native inhabitants: *Elegans et accurata gentis Africanae circa Promontorium Capitis Bonae Spei vulgo Hottentotten Nuncupatae Descriptio Epistolari* (An Elegant and Accurate Account of the African Race Living Round the Cape of Good Hope, Commonly Called Hottentots).¹ In it, he sets out to counter the 17th century European consensus about the various native peoples at the Cape, commonly called ‘Hottentots’ and typically ranked between man and beast in evolutionary theory as described in the previous chapter. In opposition to contemporaries like fellow-Dutchmen Willem ten Rhyne (1647-1700) and Olfert Dapper (1636-1689), Grevenbroek argues for the humanity of the Khoi (as I will refer to the large diversity of Cape native tribes and peoples for ease of reference).²

In this chapter and the next, I consider Grevenbroek’s letter against the background of some of the more immediate political and intellectual concerns of a late-17th century European writer, and compare his position to that of peers such as Ten Rhyne and Dapper. The shared nationality of the three authors, the span of their treatises, and the exclusive focus on the Khoi set them apart from most contemporaries. In this chapter, I primarily focus on the political and religious dimensions of Grevenbroek’s argument, while his

¹ The sole extant copy of the letter is kept at the National Library of South Africa, Cape Town Campus (Special Collections, MSB203). Unless otherwise stated, I cite Latin and its English translations from the only text edition, Farrington-Schapera (1933), published as Volume 14 in the Van Riebeeck Society Series. Where discrepancies with the manuscript exist, I show amendments in square brackets. See also Appendix 1. The letter probably was not correspondence in the modern sense, but the epistolary form might have been used for didactic purposes. See Chapter 3.
² See A Note on Nomenclature.
engagement with ancient (Greek and Roman) antiquity is the main concern of the next. The following sections centre on the content, structure and sources of Grevenbroek’s letter. First, I observe that Grevenbroek’s appreciation of native culture runs parallel to his scrutiny of settler ethics: he argues that Khoi are ‘whiter of soul’ than Europeans, whom he describes as hypocrite Christians. I then analyse Grevenbroek’s rationale for his sourcework by discussing three framed narratives at the letter’s centre that address recent engagements between settlers. He finds that these events show the Khoi to be human and thus refute common opinion about them. Finally, I take a closer look at the letter’s assessment of Khoi religion, language and law to show how Grevenbroek relies on primary ethnographic criteria to present his argument for the authentically Christian nature of the Khoi.

From my analysis, it becomes apparent that Grevenbroek seeks to supplement the existent body of knowledge about the Cape as found in ‘the writings of all [European] naturalists’ with his own empirical observations, the fruit of a decade spent at the Cape. Grevenbroek’s letter thus moves away from the prevailing pejorative image of the Khoi that J.M. Coetzee has called ‘the echo chamber of discourse about the Cape’. In Grevenbroek’s view, not the Khoi, but the European settlers have strayed from Christian ethics and ‘virtus’ (virtue), which the Khoi observe. Khoi and settlers have equal access to mankind’s inherent virtuous nature – except that a corrupt leadership keeps Cape society from acknowledging this Godly in-spiration of all. I conclude that Grevenbroek’s letter positions the Khoi at the centre of a major political and religious debate in early modern Europe on the nature of God and state, as expressed in Baruch Spinoza’s revolutionary and contested philosophical treatise Ethica (1677).

At the same time, despite the letter’s uniquely developed argument for the Khoi, Grevenbroek’s position remains ambivalent. His reliance on personally acquired empirical evidence rather than on the trusted, age-old library allowed him to redress familiar criteria for assessing Khoi civility. Yet the frameworks underlying these criteria remained unchallenged: Grevenbroek’s focus on the presence of Christian virtues in the Khoi may have moved them away from being considered a degraded humanity but it also re-affirmed their Christian lineage. Grevenbroek thus still interpreted the novel as an extension to the familiar. Indeed, as a second conclusion, I argue that the letter positioned the Khoi in the

---

3 Coetzee (1988, Chapter ‘Idleness in South Africa’).
early modern intellectual transition which Anthony Grafton has called the Revolution of Knowledge: the transition from age-old trusted sources kept in libraries towards empirical observation as a source of superior knowledge.\(^4\) This was a slow and gradual process that played a decisive role in the transition from late medieval to early modern Europe. In this transition, Grevenbroek’s letter presents an early and significant step forward but not a complete break.

**Settlers versus Khoi**

Books about ‘newly discovered’ peoples were very popular in 17\(^{th}\) century Europe.\(^5\) Overseas explorations continued to bring home knowledge of nations that had existed on the pages of ancient books or in popular oral tradition but that until then no European had seen with his own eyes. Two Dutch examples of books about a ‘new’ people are *Schediasma de Promontorio Bonae Spei; ejusve tractus incolis Hottentotis (A Short Account of the Cape of Good Hope and of the Hottentots who inhabit that region)* (1668) by Willem ten Rhyn and *Kaffrarie of Lant der Kaffers, anders Hottentots genaemt (Kaffraria or Land of the Kafirs, also named Hottentots)* (1686) by Olfert Dapper.

The titles of such treatises typically introduce a particular people and the region they inhabit, and their content and structure were to a large extent informed by a conventional set of ethnographical items that would be commented upon.\(^6\) Ten Rhyn, for example, devotes a chapter to the ‘nature’ of the ‘Hottentots’, focusing, as was common, on their observed lack of virtue. It starts thus:

**Cap. XIV. De Indole.** // Enimvero nativa barbaries & otiosa solitudo illorum animis voluptatum omnium ac vitiorum genera miserabiliis virtutum inscitia subjicit: levitate quippe, & inconstantia, mendaciis, fraudibus, perfidia ac infamibus omnis libidinis curis turpissime exercentur, nequissime sanguinarii nec enim imbelles satis est prostrasse, dum trucidatis multis etiamnum insultant telis & baculorum icibus; ita durissima indole omnem eluctati humanitatem, in majorum feritate perseverant, furto deditissimi: alter enim alterius fraudulenter saepe ditatur pecore. Humaniores & mage casti fuerint Africans illi, qui tibi triumfale nomen imposuère, Africanae Scipio! magnum urbanitas & castimoniae exemplar!

Chapter 14. Their Character. // Their native barbarism and idle desert life, together with a wretched ignorance of all virtues, imposes upon their minds every form of vicious pleasure. In faithlessness,


\(^6\) See Appendix 1. The order in which items were discussed varied. On the development of ethnography and travel writing as separate genres, see Stagl (1980; 1995) and Szaly (1983).
inconstancy, lying, cheating, treachery, and infamous concern with every kind of lust they exercise their villainy [...]. They are so bloody in their inclinations as to practise their cruelties even upon their vanquished enemies after their death, by striking their arrows and weapons into their dead carcases. Thus in the hardness of their hearts, resisting every impulse of humanity, they persist in the savagery of their fore-fathers. They are so addicted to theft, that one neighbour does not stick to enrich himself by stealing the cattle of another. Those Africans who gave you your triumphal name, O Scipio Africanus, lofty exemplar of culture and sainthood, must have been more humane, more chaste, than these.7

In his concluding remark, Ten Rhyne advances a famous case from ancient history in support of his assumed distinction between the southern Khoi and the people of northern Africa. He mentions the Roman general Scipio Africanus, who ended the Second Punic War against Carthage (217-202 BCE), finally bringing victory to Rome.8 Scipio’s campaign was regarded as a turning point in Roman history then as it is now, with Rome defeating an age-old nemesis and enforcing its authority over North-African shores. For his triumphs, the Roman senate awarded Scipio the honorary ‘agnomen’ (victory title) ‘Africanus’: Scipio-of-Africa.9 Ten Rhyne suggests that ‘those Africans’ whom the Romans deemed worthy of their efforts are indeed ‘more humane’ than their southern African counterparts, who ‘persist in the savagery of their fore-fathers’ (‘feritas’, literally: beastliness) – a native barbarism (‘nativa barbaries’) of unhindered indulgence (‘otiosa solitudo’) and resistance to any form of humanity (‘omnem humanitatem’).10

Ten Rhyne’s paternalistic stance with regard to the Khoi was not unique, nor was his use of a parallel from ancient history in support of his argument. But the ancient reference is more than a derogatory remark. As the historian Anthony Pagden put it in The Fall of Natural Man. The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology (1982):

[N]atural scientists and travel writers from [the Roman] Pliny to John de Mandeville [14th century] constituted for many Europeans a mental ‘set’, a cluster of images which were thought to constitute a

7 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 122, emphasis in text). The Latin and its English translations from Ten Rhyne and Dapper in this chapter and in the next are from Farrington-Schapera (1933) unless otherwise stated.
8 At the concluding Battle of Zama, Scipio Africanus conceded to the Carthaginian Hannibal the civic leadership of the Empire of Carthage, in modern Tunisia. Scipio’s son, Scipio Africanus the Younger, would destroy Carthage and annex it into the Roman Empire in the Third Punic War (149-146 BCE).
9 Such agnomens were not uncommon for Roman generals: Marcus Antonius (Mark Anthony), for example, was granted the agnomen ‘Creticus’ (the Cretan) for his conquest of Crete.
10 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 122) translates ‘feritas’, the untamed nature as it pertains to wild beasts (literally beastliness), as ‘savagery’. ‘Otiosa solitudo’ is translated as ‘idle desert life’; ‘otium’ is the opposite of ‘negotium’ (work, labour) and too much of it was associated in ancient times with laziness, a vice. ‘Solitudo’, ‘solitude’, translated by Farrington-Schapera as ‘desert’, conveys a sense of unhindered indulgence. Grevenbroek aimed to write a Classical Latin; see Chapter 3.
real world of nature in the remoter areas of the world where, precisely because they were remote, the unusual and the fantastic were thought to be the norm.11

During the later Middle Ages, the European observer had initially not been equipped with an adequate vocabulary or classification system to meaningfully describe ‘the unusual and the fantastic’ that they found out there. When the recognition of difference was finally expressed, there was a belief, as Pagden puts it, that ‘the new could always be satisfactorily described by means of some simple and direct analogy with the old’.12 Ten Rhyne’s contrast of the Khoi with ‘those Africans’ that had been known to the Romans might not seem ‘simple and direct’ to the modern reader, but at the time was a sensible way to describe – and classify – the new. To the European observer, the Khoi were ‘new’, but, thanks to these analogies, felt not entirely unfamiliar.

It is worth stressing that Ten Rhyne’s description of Khoi customs as a negation of European customs was thus not unique. As Pagden wrote:

In European eyes most non-Europeans, and nearly all non-Christians, including such ‘advanced’ people as the Turks, were classified as ‘barbarians’. [...] Those who neither subscribed to European religious views, nor lived their lives according to European social norms.13

The vast majority of 17th century accounts explicitly or implicitly suggests that the Khoi are ‘barbarians’. Typically, their authors support their case by commenting on a more or less set list of ethnographic criteria. Occasionally, personal experience was included. Ten Rhyne, for example, spent about four weeks at the Cape in 1673.14 His account on the Khoi combines an account of his personal acquaintance with the people with the available (ancient and contemporary) literature on the subject. Like the accounts of many other transitory visitors, Ten Rhyne’s writings – despite his time at the Cape – are an affirmation of the early modern European horizon of expectations of the African as living in a negative primitivism. As explained in the Introduction, J.M. Coetzee noted that the reiteration of such motifs in the

11 Pagden (1982, 10).
13 Pagden (1982, 13; 24). The term ‘barbarian’ and its connotations play a crucial role in many attempts to characterise the Khoi and their way of life. Since Grevenbroek engages with the word’s connotations from Roman and Greek times, the term will be discussed separately in Chapter 3.
14 Nowhere in his account does Ten Rhyne state explicitly how long he was at the Cape for, but Farrington-Schapera (1933, 81) writes that ‘it appears from the official records that the ship on which he must have arrived, the Ternaten, reached Table Bay on 15 October 1673, from Amsterdam, and departed for the East on 10 November, after a stay of nearly four weeks’. 

61
majority of European writing about the Khoi confirmed the dominant horizon of expectations about them and, therefore, knowledge about the Khoi did not actually advance.\textsuperscript{15}

Grevenbroek, however, saw the Khoi differently. A decade of working and living at the Cape convinced him that, over the course of centuries, reiterations of ‘knowledge’ about the Khoi had reduced the people to the emblematic figure of the ‘beastly savage’ found in most books.\textsuperscript{16} The argument advanced in \textit{An Elegant and Accurate Account} is, then, in part a negation of extant discourse about the Khoi. This is already apparent from Grevenbroek’s opening remarks on the Khoi:

\begin{quote}
Caloris, frigoris, inediae, omniumque laborum supra fidem patientissimi, injuriarumque minime, quippe in vindictam proni, [...]. Aspectu rancidi, cultu feri, vita agrestes, bellicosi tamen et insuetae servitutis, aëripedes agilitatem pernicitatem nonnumque equorum, et Cretenses nandi facilitate, praevertentes.
\end{quote}

They are beyond belief patient of heat, cold, fasting, and every kind of toil, but utterly impatient of injury, and prone to vengeance. [...] They are offensive to look at, savage in their dress, wild in their mode of life, but warlike and unaccustomed to slavery. They are as swift as the wind, often outstripping horses in fleetness of foot and Cretans in swimming.\textsuperscript{17}

The passage is an obvious break with primarily disgusted and paternalistic descriptions of the Khoi. Where Ten Rhyne referred to antiquity in painting a derogatory impression of the Khoi, Grevenbroek stated that they outdo its most notable swimmers, the Cretans (the truth of this statement is irrelevant). Also, the Khoi are presented as ‘beyond belief [the most] patient [people]’ (‘supra fidem patientissimi’). Finally, however savage the Khoi may be in appearance, the fact that they were ready to wage war to defend themselves and had not been enslaved suggested to Grevenbroek (‘tamen’) that they did not live what Ten Rhyne described as an ‘idle desert life’.

The introductory passage continues as follows:

\textsuperscript{15} The mental image became an objective reality. Another important issue that Coetzee (1988) addresses is that the early modern European image of the Cape was built around a body of exclusively white (European, colonial) writing. I will discuss this in Chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{16} As with Ten Rhyne and Dapper, the title of Grevenbroek’s treatise introduces a particular people and the region they inhabit. Yet, as I have argued elsewhere (Maas (2017)), the title page was added on a later date by somebody other than Grevenbroek. See also Appendix 1.

\textsuperscript{17} Farrington-Schapera (1933, 174).
Candore animi multis nostratium superiores sunt, corporis vero nonnullis, et arbitratu meo, forte omnibus albore pares, si nit[...i]or studerent, nunc adipe et radiis solaribus usi, asperoqu[...].

In whiteness of soul they are superior to many of our countrymen, and in whiteness of body they are equal to some, and, in my judgment, would perhaps be so to all, if they cared for cleanliness. But as things are, what with fat and the scorching heat of the sun and the sharp pigment they put on their faces, they have grown dark and are of a swarthy brown colour.18

This covers conventional ethnographic aspects: hygiene, appearance and skin colour. The Khoi habit of putting animal grease on their bodies was a recurring motif in early modern ethnography, and a ground for classifying them as ‘beasts’. Although there is a normative judgment also in Grevenbroek – the Khoi are deemed unclean –, he argues that outside appearance provides a poor ground for a judgment of Khoi character. In opposition to the echo chamber of discourse of the Cape, and in a radical inversion of the conventional image, Grevenbroek introduces the Khoi as superior to many a Dutchman in whiteness of soul.

In his letter, Grevenbroek oftentimes renegotiates the image of the Khoi parallel to a critique of his fellow-settlers. Personal gain-getting, for example, which Grevenbroek considers rampant among the settlers, seems absent among the Khoi, who, per Grevenbroek’s observations, share everything:

Non ingratum tibi, nec abs re fore arbitror si narravero me vidisse Afram, cui pro diurno labore in gabata a quodam Belga anaelecta dabantur, quae laeta haud aliter quam pipans gallina pullos convocat, suos conclamans populares, eis capturam tanquam in diribitorio dilargitur, vix bucellam sibi servans, hacque bonorum communione promiscue gaudent omnes, ita ut tubulus nicotiani accensus ab ore ad os omnium accurrentium perambulat, donec in fumum et cineres tabacum conversum sit. A Barbaris certare beneficis Christiani discant.

It will not bore you, I think, and it will be à propos, if I tell you that I have seen a Hottentot woman, who in return for a day’s labour had been given some scraps in a platter by a certain Dutchman. She began to crow with delight like a hen gathering her chickens, calling her people together and making a regular distribution of her booty among them, and hardly keeping a mouthful for herself. All alike delight in this communion of goods. Even a pipe of tobacco when kindled is passed round from mouth to mouth of the crowd that keeps running up, until the weed has vanished into smoke and ash. Let the Christians learn from the natives to vie with one another in well-doing.19

Here, the initial contrast between the ‘Afra’ (‘Hottentot woman’) and ‘Belga’ (‘Dutchman’) tellingly shifts to an opposition of ‘Barbaris’ and ‘Christian’ in the final line. As Pagden

18 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 174).
19 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 272).
implied by stating that ‘barbarians’ in the eyes of the 17th century Europeans were those ‘who neither subscribed to European religious views, nor lived lives according to European social norms’, Christianity was a key property of the European self-image, and many a non-European was defined through Christianity’s observed absence.20 By concluding that the (Dutch) Christians can ‘learn from’ the (African) ‘barbari’, Grevenbroek inverses a dominant dichotomy, and shows awareness of the terms in which it is commonly expressed and the tradition from which it stems.

Moral qualities and Christian virtues are key to Grevenbroek’s settler critique and rehabilitation of the Khoi. A case in point is the story of a shipwrecked Dutch crew that tried to make their way back to the Cape. In February 1686, the Dutch ship Stavenisse was wrecked approximately 110 kilometres west of Port Natal (modern-day Durban). Failing in their attempts to reach the Cape on foot, the crew returned to a native tribe they had previously encountered, and which had generously re-supplied them. Grevenbroek observed that the hospitality of the natives surpasses the charity of even the early Christians. Also, such hospitality is wholly absent among settlers, who trick and enslave the natives, and are thus ‘Christians only in name’:

[I]llo sancto liquet Afrus commercio faciles indulgentissimosque, diversitores suos domus reversos omnibusque rebus exutos, ne verbo quidem inclementiore appellasse, aut vultu contumelioso inseguutos, mansuetudine vix primitiae Ecclesiae Christianis notâ: sed vae dedecus! in nobis patitur Christus opprobrium, in nobis patitur lex Christiana maledictum! dum nomine tenus Christiani excensu in hanc plagam nonnunquam è navibus facto, miseris incolas blanditiis, et crepdiorum donis pellectos, aut trucidant, aut vinctos plagiarii, in suas naves, alibi magno distrahedos, contrudunt: et quid mirum! si hoc detestabili et infando lucro inescati redeuntes Christiani ab Afris, cautius mercari doctis, jure talionis sones cum insontibus caedantur.

[But] this much at least is clear that the Africans are so kindly and easy to deal with that when their guests again came back stripped of all they had, they did not address one word of reproach to them or cast at them the least resentful look, thereby exhibiting a charity scarcely known even to the Christians of the primitive church. But, oh, the shame of it! it is by us dishonour is cast upon the name of Christ, by us the law of Christ is made a thing accursed. Christians only in name, ever and anon there disembark upon these shores, men who deceive the natives with soft words and the gift of a few trifles, and then either slaughter them or kidnap them for the slave trade, bind them, thrust them aboard ship and sell them in strange lands at a great price. What wonder then that the Christians,

---

20 Pagden (1982, 24). See also Chapter 1.
when they return again tempted by this loathsome and unspeakable traffic, find that the natives have become more particular in their dealings, and retaliate by slaying the innocent with the guilty.\(^{21}\)

Ten Rhyne found that the Khoi live in a state of ‘barbaritas’, bereft of a European ‘humanitas’, but Grevenbroek highlights how they possess ‘a charity scarcely known even to the Christians of the primitive church’ (‘mansuetudine vix primitivae Ecclesiae Christianis notâ’). Indeed, Grevenbroek describes the virtues that he finds in great abundance in the Khoi and finds lacking among the settlers as authentically Christian. Ironically, the European settlers – who, in the echo chamber, are the Christian benchmark against which the Khoi are gauged – seem to consistently shame the very values that Christianity seeks to uphold: they deceive the Khoi with words and cheap gifts, and ultimately pack them, bounded, in their slave ships (‘vinctos plagiarii ... contradunt’).\(^{22}\) Grevenbroek presents Khoi counter-violence against the settlers as an understandable response to the dismal treatment they suffer. A waning Christian conscious not only seems to make the Europeans oblivious to their own behaviour, but also seems to keep them from acknowledging the Christian virtues present among the Khoi.

Throughout the letter, many similar examples illustrate that morality has been waning among the Europeans. In contrast, the Khoi are shown to be incorruptible in their standards, such as here: ‘Nullo aere quantovis pretio extraneis eos mancipio distracturos. Liberus quippe servitutis pretium ingratum est’, ‘No money, no price will tempt them to sell themselves into slavery to strangers. Freemen despise the price of servitude’.\(^{23}\) Yet passages like this one and the previous should not be read merely as counter arguments to the dominant discourse about the Khoi. Importantly, in a dominant discourse that explains civility as Christianity, it is fundamental to Grevenbroek’s argument for Khoi humanity that they are Christians.

\(^{21}\) Farrington-Schapera (1933, 222; 224).

\(^{22}\) Dapper (1668, cited in Farrington-Schapera (1933, 46)) admits that the Khoi have their ‘lapses’, but explains them benevolently and, like Grevenbroek, contrasts their lifestyle positively with that of the Dutch: ‘In generosity and loyalty to those nearest them, they appear to shame the Dutch. For instance, if one of them has anything he will willingly share it with another; no matter how small it may be, they will always endeavour to share and divide it amongst themselves in a brotherly manner. It is true that stealing does sometimes occur among them, owing to their consumption of the root dacha, which they mix with water and drink, thereupon becoming drunk and unwittingly driven to excesses. Others, hard pressed by poverty, also try to smuggle away something here and there; but if discovered they must pay for this with their lives’.

\(^{23}\) Farrington-Schapera (1933, 196).
Grevenbroek insists that Khoi customs are grafted onto the same Christian stratum as European customs, for example in the case of a European trading mission that ventured into the Cape hinterlands. The Europeans were carefully groomed, as was their habit when doing business. Yet, they soon found out that the Khoi had different ideas of a cultured appearance:

Nostrates procul hinc prefecti, mercaturam facturi, in gentem, cui non cornea fibra est, quae nostris tum forte comptis rasisque, aut imberbibus, merces suas distrahendas explicantibus indicantibusque, joculari convicio exprobrat, maritos suos vocarent, si secum pacisci vellent, cum in(s)titricibus sibi nullum negotium. Talia Barbari!

Our countrymen went on a trading expedition some distance from this place and encountered a people whose wits were not all of wood; for when our men, who as it happened were nicely groomed, and had either shaved or not yet come to grow a beard, were spreading out their wares for sale and inviting purchasers, this people cast a humorous scoff at them, that they should summon their husbands if they wished to come to terms, for they never did business with women. This from savages!24

Grevenbroek implies that, in contrast to contemporary expectations, it is the Khoi who set the grooming standard. But Khoi custom is also again shown to be grafted onto a backbone of rules that is readily intelligible within a European framework – the trading settlers would hardly have rejoiced in a denial of their masculinity. Grevenbroek’s concluding exclamation, then, is one of pleasant irony and posed a crucial question: what did it mean to say that the Khoi were barbaric, and the Europeans were not?

‘This from savages!’ echoes an issue about cultural difference that had been posed a century before by Michel de Montaigne for the French and the Italians: ‘What truth is that, which these Mountaines bound, and is a lie in the world beyond them?’25 It still weighed heavily on the minds of 17th century anthropologists. Relativism could not provide an answer, for the acceptance that other worlds were simply other did not shed light on the meaning of exotic behaviour. Grevenbroek’s implied answer is that there existed little difference between Khoi and settlers, insofar as Khoi and European customs both answered to a Christian rationale – although the former’s may be covered with a rustic veneer during long years of separation from fellow-Christians.

24 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 176).
25 See Chapter 1, ‘Conclusion’.
In what follows, I substantiate the Christian framework Grevenbroek discerns in the Khoi. First, however, I want to point out that Grevenbroek illustrated that the Khoi were a race of man – not animals driven by instinct – by elaborating the rationale to their behaviour. When a Khoi chief meets his nemesis for peace-making, for example, Grevenbroek explains that the chief offers his strongest hand for a particular reason:

[...] pactaeque societatis signo, manus invicem sociant: sed hic sinistram, ille dextram jungit: quod miratus, hujusque novitatis mihi causam rimanti inquirentique, *malum hunc accolam finitimumque gravem scaevam esse, sinistrum qua viribus praepollet noxiosissimamque in fidei pignus obtulisse nervosè paratissimè argutulus attendenti respondet Barbarus.*

[...] and as a sign of established amity they shook hands. But the one gave his left hand, the other his right. I was surprised at this, and on my seeking and enquiring into the reason for so strange an action, the native, a shrewd fellow, replied to my query boldly and promptly, saying that this bad and troublesome neighbour was lefthanded, and had therefore offered his left hand which was the stronger and the more apt to mischief as a pledge of faith.  

Grevenbroek provides several examples of Khoi reasoned behaviour, structured along contemporary ethnographic parameters, to show that they are not isolated instances. In

---

26 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 272). Ignorant of an intricate custom at first, Grevenbroek shows that he learned through observation and inquiry. I return to empiricism as a means of questioning the European consensus about the Khoi in the next section.
another example, Grevenbroek rationalises the Khoi’s frequent use of animal entrails. European ethnographies and encyclopaedia often sported compelling visualisations of Khoi dress, hairdo and feeding habits, which served to illustrate their uncultured way of life (figure 2.1, previous page, and figure 2.2). Grevenbroek, however, provides an explanation for this seemingly unfamiliar custom:

Si conjectare permittitur, non alia de causa ipsos aegri collo omentum circumdare, eumque axungia oblinire dicerem, quam ut iis spirituum vitalium nimias exhalationes sistant, porosque corporis obturando, frigus externum arceant, caloremque nativum foveant.

If I may be allowed a conjecture, I should say that the reason of their hanging the entrails round the neck of the patient and anointing him with fat is to check the excessive exhalation of the vital spirits, and, by closing the pores of the body, to keep out external cold and foster the native heat.  

27 Van Wyk Smith (1992) has shown that it was a common strategy in Khoi iconography to render the unfamiliar familiar. See, for example, Khoi body posture in figures 2.1, previous page, and 2.2. The vast majority of illustrations were made by artists that never left Europe and the Khoi are oftentimes posed in the manner of ancient statues.

28 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 242).
Khoi medical habits may seem unfamiliar to the European eye, but Grevenbroek shows that they, like European treatments, are built around an orderly system of norms, values, actions and physiological considerations. According to Coetzee, a rationale for Khoi behaviour – other than a savage one – is typically absent from the European echo chamber of discourse. Grevenbroek, however, presents a break with the broadly accepted view that the Khoi, like animals, acted to instinct, which classified them as beasts or barbarians. In a discourse in which reason was considered not only the highest, but also the most archetypically human faculty, Grevenbroek’s conjecture suggests that the Khoi use of entrails may in fact be a reasoned reaction (‘quam ut ... foveant’).29

Interestingly, Grevenbroek mentions the sheep’s entrails worn around the neck earlier in his treatise as well. There, he notes that the Khoi look at European jewellery in disdain, as it serves no obvious practical purpose. The Europeans, on the other hand, fail to acknowledge the rationale that underpins the use of entrails:

Et pretiosissima eorundem monilia, ex tenuissimo filo, acu texta, plurisque empta, quam maximae pecudum greges veneunt, nullum alium usum, commodum, utilitatemque habentia, praeterquam eum quem luxus fingit, venenato joco circumcisè explodunt, dum ipsi praeordiorum intestinorumque ex collo pendentium virtute et pinguedine mactat pecudis, nostratibus tantopere exsibilatis medicamentis, nonnunquam morbus depellunt, et averruncant.

They [the Khoi] also condemn with curt and biting ridicule the precious necklaces of the Europeans, strung with a needle on a slender thread, bought for a greater price than the largest flocks of sheep, and having no other use, convenience, or value than that fictitious one that luxury provides. Yet they themselves sometimes banish or avert diseases by the power of entrails and intestines which they hang round their necks, and by the fat of slaughtered beasts, remedies greatly scoffed at by our countrymen.30

The comparison of entrails with jewellery emphasises a contrast: aesthetic vanity has led the settlers to ‘scoff’ at jewellery that serves a more pragmatic purpose. Notably, the passage explains the European custom from a Khoi point of view. Grevenbroek was hereby able to oppose the Khoi’s simple living with a European settler lifestyle of ‘[fictitious] use, convenience and value that luxury provides’ (‘usum, commodum, utilitatemque ... quem luxus fingit’). To not read the passage as an answer to the question of how to interpret the observed differences between Europeans and non-Christians is to miss the point. Put briefly,

29 Pagden (1982, Chapter 3).
30 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 206).
Grevenbroek’s answer is that the Khoi have remained closer to the values of early Christianity than the European settlers.

An intriguing aspect of Grevenbroek’s letter is that he was nominally one of the people he scrutinises: he was a (former) VOC clerk from (Christian) Europe. It is therefore worthwhile to delve into what he found was the root of the settlers’ moral corruption. This brings out the more immediate theological concerns of the time reflected in the letter. Grevenbroek claims that the Cape’s problems can be traced back to Amsterdam, which attracts criminals and rascals from far and wide. Once at the Cape, Grevenbroek goes on, the enlisted ‘change their climate and their merchandise, but not their hearts’. [...]. Their virtue is to triumph over the restraints all other men obey’ (‘[...] et caelum mercesque non animum mutasse videri. [...] virtutis esse domare quod cuncti pavent’). 31 The restraints are those of Calvinism, the main religion in the Dutch Republic at the time. 32 Many ‘Reformed’ men were turned into tyrannic ‘Deformers’, and no means was left untried in pursuit of personal gain:

Enthusiastic Reformers (I am tempted to call them Deformers), who having sworn allegiance to Calvin allow nothing now to good works and everything to grace; they ascribe nothing to virtue and still less to merit; they are zealous champions of innominate contracts: Do ut Des, Facioque ut Facias etc., but for the rest know nothing of their country’s law. Hence their rule may be likened to the warning

31 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 236). ‘Virtutis ... pavent’: literally, ‘it is of virtue to conquer that which everybody is frightened of’.

32 Political grievances against Philip II, King of Spain, Lord of the Seventeen Provinces of the Netherlands and a Catholic, sparked hostility towards the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands, with Calvinism gaining adherents especially among the middle class. After the Eighty Years’ War (1568 to 1648), in a complex interplay of political and religious tension, Calvinism became the de facto state religion in the Dutch Republic. Harris Harbrison (1955, Chapter 1) explains that many public offices could be occupied only by Calvinists, although totalitarian control was not affected for the sake of commerce. Joost van den Vondel also reflects on this widely felt religious tension in his poem on Amsterdam (‘Op Amsteldam’, 1631): ‘Wat volken ziet ze niet beschijnen door de maan, / Zij die zelf wetten stelt de ganse oceaan? [...] Welvaren blijv’ haar erf, zolang de priesterschap / De raad niet overheerst en blindhokt met de kap’. The last two lines were added in 1647. For Vondel, the reformed vicars’ lust for political power is the only threat to Amsterdam’s prosperity (cf. Sterck (1929, 354)).
examples of antiquity in its stupid despotism; they pardon the ravens and punish the doves, protect the guilty and oppress the innocent, and give the place of honour to crime.33

In what follows, Grevenbroek argues that the construction of additional churches would in itself be no solution to the betrayal of Calvinist virtues: ‘it is a mistake to begin by erecting crosses and gibbets for the suppression of crime’ (‘nec praeposteri cruces et patibula coërcendis sceleribus initio erigere’).34 He points a finger to the Company, and more particularly to the void in Christian ethics among its officials at the Cape. As long as Grevenbroek’s fellow members at the Council of Policy did not set a virtuous example for the settlers by altering their mentality, standards of virtue at the Cape would remain even lower than they are in Europe:

salutemque Reip: ex lege in qua jurati sunt, supremam debere esse, sed praecipites ruentes [...], corradunt per omne fas et nefas exerculo pecuniam, virtutem post nummos habent. [...] quam ob rem ne mireris si dixerio me plura indicia non adumbratae sed expressae pietatis, probitatis, fortitudinis, ingenuitatis, aliarumque virtutum signa in Europa una die vidisse, quam tot tantisque stipendiorum curriculis, quibus sub signis Societatis nostrae merui, inter commilitones nostros observaverim.

the safety of the state into the service of which they are sworn, comes before all. Instead they rush heedless on, [...] ruthlessly sweeping all the money they can into their drag-net, despising virtue in comparison with cash. You must not then be surprised if I say that in one day in Europe I have seen more evidences of piety, honesty, courage, innocence, and other virtues, and not the mere promise of these virtues but their fulfilment, than I have seen among my colleagues here in all my long years of service with the Company.35

Grevenbroek’s continued references to virtue as a behavioural compass and as the foundation for the safety of the state drew on a religious-political debate at the time in Europe. In his Ethica, the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) argues for an understanding of God that is radically different from that of traditional eschatology: for Spinoza, the universe is a part of God. God is not an abstract creator of the universe, whose presence is shown through miracles; instead, God is present in every aspect of the universe’s natural state (or, order). There thus exists only one substance; everything, man

33 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 284). A man of the world, Grevenbroek understands the temptations faced by Company staff. There are more riches to be gained in India, he explains, than in the Americas or at home: ‘All [men] are turned towards India, and very few in the other direction’ (‘[o]mnia licet Indiam advorsum, perpaucavetrovorsum videant’) (Farrington-Schapera (1933, 234)).
34 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 284).
35 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 284).
included, is a property of God. Spinoza intends all this not as philosophy in itself but to serve a very practical purpose: the idea of free will is a result of man’s ignorance, Spinoza argues, because he fails to recognise the Godly roots of his actions. Virtue, understood in its wide generality, allows man to live a temperate life that is naturally in balance with the Godly universe. To act in accordance with virtue is thus to be focused on the ‘being’ (‘esse’) in the Godly universe:

In proportion as a man aims at and is successful in pursuing his utile, that is his esse, so much the more is he endowed with virtue; on the other hand, in proportion as he neglects to cultivate his utile or his esse, so much the greater is his impotence.36

In the Ethica, political society is preceded by a so-called state of nature, in which there is no law or religion or moral right or wrong, but solely the individual (‘ego’), who must do all he can to preserve himself. Spinoza argues that men, as rational creatures, have come to realise that a law of reason is in greater self-interest than the law of nature. Yet, unbounded self-interest is to be restrained, and this is ‘most naturally’ done by a democratically elected sovereign.

Like for Spinoza, Grevenbroek’s religious conceptions have clear socio-political ramifications.37 In Grevenbroek’s argument, the ‘ego’ of the settlers (particularly that of their leaders) is the central issue in founding a society that is balanced in God. The settlers yield to self-interest and are not focused on the ‘esse’. The Khoi, however, are virtuous, in that their actions are more Christian than those of the early Christians. Grevenbroek also explains that the Cape is filled with God’s presence, and that all it needs is a radical expulsion of ‘the disturbers of the State [and] their leader’ by someone of unsullied – religious – character:

[…] spectaveris, Deoque complacitum esse, me in hunc compingere locum, cujus felicitati nihil deest, quam ut hoc exulcerato formidulosaeque tempore, per aliquem religiosum Numam, caput non rediviam gemursam(que) curantem, ab scelera vestigis expiatur, et Reip: turbines audaciâ furentes, flagitiaque anhelantes cum eorundem Autolico Duce, qui pecori imperat, quem tota armenta sequuntur, exophthalmoque scordalo, perque alterum Titum Judaei hi funditus exstirpentur, et colonia his everricula et erubescenda sentià vacuefacta, ad pileum vocata floreat vigeatque:

36 Ethica, liber IV, propositio XX. ‘Quo magis unusquisque suum utile quaerere, hoc est, suum esse conservare conatur, et potest, eo magis virtute praeditus est; et contra quatenus unusquisque suum utile, hoc est, suum esse conservare negligent, eatenus est impotens.’ Translations from Rickaby (1909, sub voce ‘Fortitude’).
37 There is no volume of Spinoza among the 91 books that remain of Grevenbroek’s private library, which comprised at least 370 titles (see Van Stekelenburg (2003, 94)).
magnique refert rudis hic populus, dulci fortuna ebrius Numinis metu mitigetur, melioreque consuetudine permulceatur.

Reflect too that it has been God’s will to fix me in a spot that lacks nothing for happiness except that in this corrupt and parlous age some religious Numa should arise, to attend to the head, not to the sore nail or the corn on the toe, and to clear the place of the traces of its crimes. But as for the disturbers of the State, raging in their fury and panting with villainy, together with their leader, a pop-eyed thieving blackguard, who lords it over the flock and whom the whole troop follows, another Titus must arise to extirpate them like the Jews of old, and when the colony has been purged of these plunderers and of this shameful scum, and rescued from slavery, it will flourish and prosper. It is of great moment to this rough people, made drunk with good fortune, that it should be tamed by the fear of God, and mellowed by better ways of life.38

Grevenbroek makes the omnipresence of Godly substance central to solving the Cape’s problem with its leader, who, at the time, was governor Simon van der Stel: the lament about ‘the disturbers of the State’ is framed by an explicit dedication to (the supreme) God (‘Deo’) and to the divine presence (‘Numinis’).39 Grevenbroek writes that he is (literally) bent, rolled, or involved in God (‘Deo[que] complicatum’), and that ‘this people should be tamed through a (fearing) respect for the divine presence’ (‘hic populus ... Numenis metu mitigetur’), where Numen is understood as a Godly spirit that permeates the universe.

The passage above also builds on two famous cases from Roman antiquity. Whereas Ten Rhyne advanced ancient history in an illustration of the Khoi’s savage nature, Grevenbroek – in an inversion – directs the authority of the ancients to the morally bankrupt Cape settlers. Firstly, Numa was the second king of Rome, elected after extensive strife between two rivalling parties. After a violent period under the first king, Romulus, relative peace was restored under Numa. He is credited with installing various religious and political institutions, is said to have been in direct contact with the Roman Gods, and was praised extensively for his piety.40 The Cape, too, Grevenbroek writes, needs a ‘religious Numa’ – for a fresh start. The other ancient motif is the reference to Titus, who in 79 became the tenth Roman Emperor. Roman relations with the Jews in the east of the Empire had been complicated ever since Rome had made Judaea a province of the Empire in 6. For

38 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 297). The ‘pileus’ was a felt cap ceremoniously presented to a slave when he was freed. It was a symbol of Libertas, the goddess of liberty.
39 Grevenbroek was known to disagree with his governor’s policies. See Sleigh (1993) and Chapter 4.
40 According to Livy (History of Rome 1.18), Romulus had 300 ‘Celeres’ (‘swift men’) as personal bodyguards. Having refused the throne when it was first offered to him, Numa eventually accepted, but disbanded the guard. This has variously been explained as a sign of moderation, as self-protection against corruption and the guard’s questionable loyalty, and as a token of religious faith. Numa constructed the Temple of Janus (as an indicator of war and peace) and established the cult of Terminus, God of boundary markers.
example, the Jews refused to have statues of Roman Emperors placed in their synagogues, and would in fact not honour any statue since their religion forbade this. Protests against over-taxation by Roman officials joined the list of grievances, sparking a rebellion in which Roman ‘traitors’ were killed in Jerusalem.41 In the ensuing Jewish-Roman war (66-73), Titus captured Jerusalem and crushed the Jewish rebellion, looting and destroying the Temple, the icon and centre of Jewish identity.42

Grevenbroek compares ‘those Jews’ with the ‘disturbers of the State’ at the Cape (‘turbines audacia furentes’, literally: ‘furious (men), agitation by audacity’). The officials at the Cape need to be purged, like the Jews were overthrown by the Roman order. Their ‘leader’, then-governor Simon van der Stel, is compared to Autolycis (‘Autolico Duce’), a mythical Greek thief who could not be caught by anyone and who had the power to metamorphosise himself and stolen goods at will.43 Grevenbroek is convinced that once the ‘colonia’ is saved from the ‘slavery’ imposed by the corrupt governor and his henchmen, it will be guided to ‘better ways of life’ (‘meliore consuetudine’).44 The Cape populace will meet good fortune (‘dulci fortuna ebrius’) and can then be mellowed by ‘fear for the divine presence’ (‘metu Numinis’).45

It is interesting that Grevenbroek writes from a (pagan) Roman perspective – the Jews are perceived as the disturbers of a Roman order – and that Spinoza rejects the particularism that many argued was essential to Judaism. For Spinoza, the Godly election of the Hebrews, their ‘vocation’-as-gift, had been temporal and conditional. With their social organisation and political situation long gone – and without them being superior in wisdom or proximity to God to any other nation –, Spinoza argues that ‘at the present time there is nothing whatsoever that the Jews can arrogate to themselves above other nations’.46 In

41 Philo, Flaccus VI.43. Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War 2.8.11.
42 The justifiability of Titus’ actions has been a topic of debate ever since. See, for example, Gambash (2013).
43 The story of Autolycis is told, for example, by the Roman author Hyginus (circa 0) in his Myths (201), of which Grevenbroek had a copy in his possession. (See my remarks on Grevenbroek’s library in Chapter 3.)
44 ‘Erubescenda sentina vacuefacta’ is a phrase from Valerius Maximus, 1st century writer of historical anecdotes: ‘hac turpi atque erubescenda sentina vacuefactus exercitus noster’, ‘our army was then emptied of this shocking and shameful bilge water’ (II.7.1). The bilge are the pedlars and sutlers as well as the countless prostitutes that poisoned the soldier’s spirit with too much pleasure, Valerius Maximus writes.
45 Originally, Roman religion did not know anthropomorphic Gods but only divine powers that were present everywhere in the world. ‘Numina’ became anthropomorphic as a result of contact with the Greek world, in which myths played an important role. See Rose (1926, 44).
Spinoza’s philosophy, piety and blessedness are Godly universals, accessible to anyone, whatever their religious denomination.

Spinoza maintains that ‘the highest virtue of the intellect is the knowledge of God’.47 A virtuous life, as he calls it, opens up ‘better ways of life’ for all and will safeguard the state. Arguably, Grevenbroek’s ‘happiness’ (‘felicitati’) in the first line of the above passage is a Cape filled with a Godly presence, a ‘Numen’, in which un-virtuous leaders no longer stand in the way of people living in accordance with this presence. In the conclusion to his letter, Grevenbroek states:

Quo uno omnia verbo complectar, terram scias hanc suis contentam bonis, nec mercis aut opis alicujus (si luxuria absit) indigam, tam longè latèque se pandit Divina bonitas, abundè incolis exhibens alimenta.

To put all in a word, you must know that this land is sufficient unto itself, and needs neither commerce nor any other aid, if luxury be absent, so bountifully does the goodness of God here display itself, affording nurture without stint to the inhabitants.48

Although Grevenbroek does not say so explicitly, it could be argued that his ideal ‘colonia’ is one in which Europeans and Khoi live as Christian brethren. The particularism that Spinoza discerned in the Jews, then, is what Grevenbroek finds in the settlers. At the same time, he interprets Khoi customs as more than a positive primitivism: he finds that the Khoi are more authentic than the early Christians. The land (‘terra’) is enough to support the Khoi, for the goodness of God (‘Divina bonitas’) spreads itself (‘se’) open far and wide (‘longe latèque’). This is opposed with commerce (‘mercis’), ‘luxuria’, and any other aid (‘opis alicujus’), which, it is implied, have come to characterise European life at the Cape, chaired by a corrupt administration.49 Such properties focus on what Spinoza called the ‘ego’, and lead away from the communal ‘esse’. Couched in ancient references, contemporary ethnographical discourse and allusions to Christian eschatology, Grevenbroek’s argument seems to be that, unlike the Khoi, the Dutch settlers have abandoned their Christian roots under a corrupt leadership, which is what stands in the way of a happy, virtuous and sustainable society. Grevenbroek thus again advances the opposition between Khoi and European in favour of

47 *Ethica*, liber V, propositio XLII.
48 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 290).
49 The translation is quite free. The Latin has ‘indigam’, suggesting that the divine land is certainly not ‘unworthy’ of commerce or luxury, but does not need such aids as long as it is filled with God’s goodness.
the former, and couches his argument in early modern political-religious concerns, supported with relevant examples from ancient history.

The Letter’s sources and structure

Grevenbroek’s argument for Khoi humanity in conjunction with his sustained critique of settler ethics sets his letter apart from contemporary ethnographic writing on the Khoi. In this section, I show how, as a part of this, Grevenbroek re-dresses familiar ethnographical criteria using knowledge obtained during his time at the Cape. In this way, he renegotiates not only the image of the Khoi, but also the way this image was constructed. A look at his sourcework and the letter’s structure permit a closer exploration of his position among his peers.

The vast majority of accounts of the Khoi provides a discussion through customary ethnographical criteria. To an extent that is difficult to underestimate, these texts tend to be informed by works of others – be they written by travellers, writers-from-home or publishers.50 This is not to say that travellers did not disembark onto Cape shores to observe the land with their own eyes, but that the novel or unfamiliar was interpreted within or as an extension to the familiar as predominantly laid out in ancient literature, exegetical texts and contemporary writings.

We know that Grevenbroek had a considerable influence on at least two authors. One is Peter Kolb, whose Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum (The Cape of Good Hope Today) (Nürnberg, 1719) has been dubbed ‘the most detailed and serviceable treatise we have on the early Cape Hottentots’.51 He acknowledges Grevenbroek once, in very general terms:

At last Mr. Johann Wilhelm de Grevenbroek, a man of remarkable industry, understanding and knowledge, who after serving several renowned ambassadors had finally come here as Political Secretary to the Illustrious Company, taught me from the notes, which he had likewise made concerning the Hottentots during his residence here.52

The Abbé de la Caille, who stayed at the Cape from 1751 to 1753, asserts in his Journal historique du Voyage fait au Cap de Bonne-Espérance (1763) that Kolb copied everything from Grevenbroek:

50 Baggerman (1993) discusses this for the 17th century Dutch bookseller Simon de Vries.
51 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 162).
52 Kolb (1719, 416), English translation by Farrington-Schapera (1933, 162).
M. Grevenbroek, ... an extraordinary man, had made some researches into the manners and customs of the Hottentots. After his death his papers were sent to Kolb, who pieced them together without any skill or judgment.\(^{53}\)

All that Kolb says in the rest of his book is taken from the memoirs of a certain Grevenbroek, secretary of the Council at the Cape, who had put into writing what the Hottentots whom he had seen had replied to his questions.\(^{54}\)

François Valentyn addresses particular qualities of Grevenbroek’s treatise. He writes in his *Beschryvinge van de Kaap der Goede Hoop* (Amsterdam, 1724-1726):

“I have seen a Latin treatise by Mr. Secretary Grevenbroek, who had taken the trouble to write an elaborate and able account not only of their manners and customs, but also of their language; this treatise he allowed me to read in Stellenbosch in 1705."\(^{55}\)

Valentyn is probably referring to (a draft of) Grevenbroek’s letter: the Latin-Hottentot-Dutch vocabulary that Valentyn includes in his own description of the Cape is copied verbatim from it.

It is important to note that Valentyn and Kolb not only incorporated parts of Grevenbroek’s letter into their work, but also acknowledged Grevenbroek.\(^{56}\) At the end of the 17th century, referencing one’s sources in the modern sense of the word was not yet expected practice and an explicit evaluation of the writer’s rationale was seldomly triggered – as is also implied by Coetzee’s term ‘echo chamber of discourse about the Cape’.\(^{57}\) Grevenbroek stands out in listing his sources as well as in elaborating his understanding of what constitutes truthful evidence and how this understanding differs from his predecessors’.

\(^{53}\) Caille (1763, 156-157), quoted from Farrington-Schapera (1933, 163). There is no evidence that papers by Grevenbroek were in fact sent to Kolb.

\(^{54}\) Caille (1763, 322; see also 156-157), quoted from Farrington-Schapera (1933, 163). It is not known if Grevenbroek mastered any indigenous languages, yet it seems likely that he did, judging by his comments on Khoi language and his extensive, multilingual book collection. See Chapter 3 and Van Stekelenburg (2001; 2003).

\(^{55}\) Valentyn (1726, 106), cited and translated by Farrington-Schapera (1933, 163).

\(^{56}\) Copyright ethics would only be tentatively established in the 18th century. For a case study of François Valentyn (1666-1727) and ethics regarding plagiarism (or the lack thereof), see Huigen (2009). Interesting also is the case of François Leguat (1637/39-1735). His travel account, first read as a work of non-fiction, was denounced as fiction in the 19th century.

\(^{57}\) At the same time, controversies raged over many ‘truthful’ statements about foreign peoples: Grafton (1997, Chapter 7). Breisach (1998, 1553) asserts that still in the 18th century, when referencing was becoming a topic of scholarly debate, the uncluttered page without footnotes ‘found its advocates in the Classical period when in-text recourse to past authorities sufficed for gaining credibility’. 

77
Grevenbroek prioritised first-hand evidence over any other source type. In the conclusion to his letter, he lists five of his sources:

Vale vir Revde et stabili salute potiaris, acroamaque hoc adstricte ex schedis meis rejectaneis adversarissisque compilatum, carrassorissisque Minervae tam rerum auditione acceptarum, quam quas certis auctoribus omni exceptione majoribus, et ex annalibus, instrumentisque authenticus comperii, oculisque usurpavi [...]  

[...] this little composition has been thrown together from my note-books and odd pages of writing. It is a rough sketch, embodying matters of hearsay as well as information gathered from reliable witnesses, written records, authentic documents, and my personal observation.  

Indeed, his modest ‘thrown-together composition’ (‘compilatum’) was based on a variety of sources unavailable to any of his peers: first-hand access to official yearbooks from the Castle (‘annalibus’), authentic records (‘instrument is authenticus’) and a decade of personal observation (‘oculisque usurpavi’). More than that, Grevenbroek could weigh the two source types that were more widely available – hearsay and reliable witnesses – against his own experiences. After all, he was the Council of Policy’s secretary from roughly 1685 to 1695, attending the vast majority of its meetings, writing and signing off on its minutes, and surveying its various correspondence with the East and the Lords XVII in Amsterdam.  

Statements such as ‘a certain Dutchman whose word I can assure’ (‘Accepi ex quodam non tennenda fidei Batavo adseverante [...]’) suggest careful assessment of the information available.  

What is more, on two occasions Grevenbroek includes suggestions for further reading. First: ‘supplement this [observation] with the observation of the English write[r] Hellyn [sic], the Aquitanian Tavernier, and the Swiss Stoupa, whose works I saw long ago’ (‘Adde quaecunque de his Hellyn Anglus, Aquitanus Tavernier, cum Helvetto Stoupa scripsere, olim mihi aliasque visa, [...]’). And second:

58 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 298).
59 Many of the Cape council’s minutes and letters written or signed off by Grevenbroek have been preserved at the Cape Town Archives and Records Services: C1887-1904 (minutes) and C1378 (letters).
60 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 194). With the notable exception of the two suggestions for further reading mentioned below, Grevenbroek does not specify or name his sources. Possibly, he was striving for consistency with his own anonymous opening and his promise that he did not want to ‘reveal state secrets’. (As noted, the front page, which contains the sole explicit mention of Grevenbroek’s name in the document, was added at a later date. See Maas (2017)).
61 Farrington-Schapera (1933; 236). The works are Heylyn, P. (1657), Cosmographie. Containing the Horographie and Historie of the whole world. London, and Tavernier, J.B. (1676), Les Six Voyages de Jean Baptiste Tavernier [...] en Turquie, en Perse, et aux Indes, Paris. Like Farrington-Schapera (1933, 237n58), I have been unable to identify Stoupa.
Haec ab exordio detexui, longiusque prolapsus, quam epistolae cancelli patiuntur: plura si de hujus juvenis navisque sorte scire gestis, evolve si placet Mercurii Europaei tomi sexti partem secundam, complectentem sex posteriores menses anni 1695, editam Amstelodami typis Timothei van Hoorn in 4o pag. M. 237 ubi omnia fusius, non meo, sed ni fallor cujusdam praestantissimi auctoris clancularii stylo exarata patent.

I have told this story from the beginning, and it has been too long a digression for the limits of a letter. If you wish to learn at more length the story of this man and his ship, turn up, if you will, vol. vi, part 2 of the European Mercury, comprising the last six months of 1695. It is published at Amsterdam by Timothy van Hoorn. There on p. 237 you will find the whole story told at greater length, not by me, but by the pen of an anonymous author of great powers, if I may trust my judgment.62

Finally, the historical instances mentioned in the letter, such as the framed narratives that I will discuss shortly, took place during Grevenbroek’s time in office at the Cape, suggesting that he built his image of the Khoi around events that he could personally verify. This explicit care for sourcework makes Grevenbroek’s letter stand out from other literature of his time.

Elsewhere in the letter, Grevenbroek continues his rationale. He explains that much is unknown about the Cape and, in a description of the animals of the land, identifies the gap he sees in the extant literature:

Multitude [animalium], quorum genera ut plurimum in quatuor et plures species se spargentia, easdemque maximam partem nostratibus ignotas, omnibusque scriptoribus incognitas, attonitus animadverti.

[I am] astonished to perceive, [species that] are for the most part unknown to the Europeans and unrecognized in the writings of all naturalists.63

Some African mammals had been described by the ancients in mythical terms and by explorers, but Grevenbroek observes a void in all European written sources about the Cape (‘omnibus scriptoribus’). The passage about Cape wildlife has no direct bearing on the Khoi Grevenbroek sets out to rehabilitate, but it is indicative of his way of collecting evidence:

et ne à fide abhorrentia narrare videar, scias eadem mihi assiduos testes retulisse, et inter caetera visas ipsis pascentes bellusas, capite equo similes, oblongo collo, brevi caudâ, reliquis vero corporis partibus elephatem referentes adaequantesque, incredibilis penè pernici tatis, adeoque cicures ut mansuefactas crederes; porro ex ore nonnullorum haud spernendae fidei accepi, visos sibi monocerotes equo statura omnibusque membris simillimos in fronte cornu brachii longitudinie et

62 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 232).
63 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 265).
crassitie gestantes feroceissimos: ali quorum fides non vacillat narrant dari illic bicornes equos paris ferocitatis et formâ egregios: [...] Onagrum non minoris pernicitatis et spectatae pulchritudinis fasciis albis nigrisque duorum digitorum latitudine alternatim per totum corpus, ab auribus usque ad caudam et imos talos affabrè striatura dispersum miratus.

I do not want you to suppose that I am straying from the truth; you must know therefore that the most careful observers have reported the above facts to me, and have told me among other things that they have seen creatures grazing with horses' heads, long necks, short tails, like elephants in the rest of their parts and as big, of an almost incredible swiftness, and at the same time so little shy that they seemed domesticated. I have also heard credible witnesses state that they have seen ferocious unicorns as big as horses and like them in every limb, with a horn on the forehead as long and as thick as your arm. Others, of unimpeachable veracity, say that there are horses here with two horns, equally ferocious and of exquisite beauty. [...] I have seen with wonder a zebra of no less speed and rare beauty, artistically striped over his whole body from his ears to his tail and down his legs to the pastern with alternate bands of black and white two fingers thick.64

Entertaining as Grevenbroek’s descriptions are to us of a giraffe, rhinoceros and zebra for an audience that had never seen an image of them, relevant to my argument are his assertions that he is covering uncharted territory. He confirms to his reader that he does not want to stray from the truth (‘ne à fide abhorrentia narrare videar’), even though he is including second-hand knowledge: he relies on careful observers who report facts (‘assiduos testes’), credible witnesses (‘porrò ex ore nonnullorum haud spernendae fidei’), and people of ‘unimpeachable veracity’ (‘alii quorum fides non vacillat’). In short, Grevenbroek sketches an image of the Cape that is empirically driven. He supplements the European body of written knowledge about Africa with a new class of sources. The body of European naturalists can be weighed against Grevenbroek’s own observations. The implication must have been radical enough for Grevenbroek to feel the need to dwell on his trustworthiness.

Grevenbroek’s answer to his own implied question about the remaining value of the ‘European naturalists’ to whom so much is apparently unknown is ambivalent. In the case of the Cape mammals, he does not call extant knowledge into question. Instead, he adds to the familiar image of the Cape, relying exclusively on information that he obtained in situ. The case of the unicorn is an obvious misnomer but this seems to be an isolated instance in his attempt at telling fact from fiction whilst operating on the edge of knowledge.65

64 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 265). Interestingly, South African National Parks does not introduce giraffes in its game reserves on the Cape side of the Karoo, as they are not native to the area. Expedition logs and maps testify that settlers had penetrated across the Karoo by the time Grevenbroek wrote his letter (personal correspondence with Joseph Mbosi, PR officer at Addo Elephant National Park, 20 November 2015).
65 On the unicorn as a locus of knowledge in early modern Europe, see Huigen (2007, Chapter 4).
For his treatment of the Khoi, Grevenbroek builds on the conventional set of ethnographic criteria, but develops it only with information that he could obtain himself.\textsuperscript{66} Oftentimes, this information takes the form of an anecdote or memory not found in any other works. For example, when Grevenbroek discusses how a Khoi mother shows affection for her child, he remembers having seen the same at a Khoi wedding where the bridegroom wished to show his love for his wife.

Procus ardentem castumque suum amasias testaturus amorem, illius sinistrum malam duobus suis dextrae digitis, pollice et indice, leni tactu comprimit, eosque osculatur. Pariter quidam trimulus Afer stipem à me petens, impetratam continuo matri, gaudio exiliens porrigit, quae sinistrâ eam avidè arripiens, primoribus duobus dextrae digitis laevam pusionis bucculam attingit, eosque labiis suis admotos, laeta me coram suaviatâ.

The bridegroom, wishing to prove his burning and chaste passion for his beloved, gently pinches her left cheek with the thumb and forefinger of his right hand, and then kisses these two fingers. I observed a similar action, when a native child of three years of age begged a copper of me, and forthwith, jumping with joy, gave it to his mother; for she eagerly snatched the coin with her left hand, but with the first two fingers of her right hand she touched the left cheek of the little lad, then put the fingers to her lips and fondly kissed them in my presence.\textsuperscript{67}

This passage constitutes a clear break from the encyclopaedic vignettes and enumeration of facts in much other writing about the Khoi. It makes Grevenbroek’s account more personal. Yet, again, it can be difficult to tell fact from fiction when exploring new territory, also (particularly) when relying on first-hand knowledge or witnesses. Grevenbroek is well-aware that – as stories travel – exaggeration and mythification can obscure the line between fact and fiction to the point that ‘we get false notions of the real facts’ (‘nos de veritate rerum adumbratâ intelligentia hallucinari’):

\begin{quote}
aequi bonique console, fidesque penes auctores sit, quippe multa elutriata in hebetes quarti imo quinti interpretis aures, et effutita audaci, temeraria et barbara linguâ, credentium se narrate apprimè intelligere, cum nihil intelligent, verbum de verbo malè exprimentes, impudentiaque sua fidem capitulatores sibi perstruentes, et secum ipsi discordes, necessum est, omnes de genuino sensu balbutire, et nos de veritate rerum adumbratâ intelligentia hallucinari. Hoc Ryparographi levidense hujus provinciae commentariolum, conditionemque regionis, brevi aliam manu Lysippea ex vero et liquido per singula lineamenta simulatam, communi bono, valentioribus lateribus excepturam, spero imo confido.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{66} In contrast to contemporaries like Dapper and Ten Rhyne, Grevenbroek does not treat the criteria under separate headings or in encyclopaedic fashion but weaves them into a coherent argument. With his denominators for the Khoi, Grevenbroek also breaks with tradition: see Chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{67} Farrington-Schapera (1933, 200).
My informants must bear the responsibility for what they say. Many statements have been filtered through the dull ears of four or five interpreters, and then poured forth in a bold, rash, and barbarous style by men who believed they understood what was told them, though they really understood nothing. They interpret badly, but endeavour by their boldness to make themselves believed, and they often contradict themselves. Inevitably they all miss the true sense, and our understanding is darkened and we get false notions of the real facts. I hope, nay, I am confident, that this slight sketch of the province, and description of the country will soon be superseded, for the common good, by another of more powerful eloquence fashioned in every line, truly and brilliantly, by the hand of a Lysippus.68

Together with Praxiteles and Scopas, Lysippus (4th century BCE) is commonly considered one of the greatest sculptors from ancient Greece. Besides showcasing Grevenbroek’s eloquence and knowledgeability, the reference is also an instance of false modesty.69 Whilst Grevenbroek ultimately abdicates responsibility for third-party knowledge (‘aequi bonique consule, flesque penes auctores sit’), he was invested in ensuring readers of the trustworthiness of his account. His observations represent a decade of careful selection and weighing up of information gathered at the Cape. Contrary to his assertion, there is little indication to assume that he wrote his letter for it to be surpassed soon.

Three lengthy narratives at the letter’s centre illustrate how Grevenbroek relied on events from during his time in office to (re)construct the image of the Khoi. The narratives recount the adventures of William Chenut, a young Frenchman taken captive by natives, and of the wreckings of the ship Stavenisse in 1686 and of the ship Gouden Buys in 1693.70 Such narratives as well as their framing are atypical for contemporary travelogues and ethnography. Scholars have noted the letter’s unusual structure; Bert van Stekelenburg, in his first paper on Grevenbroek from 2001, commented: ‘Grevenbroek often digresses or interrupts his account, so that his method seems rather loose and sometimes illogical’.71 Indeed, at the end of the three inserted narratives, Grevenbroek apologises that he has been ‘side-tracked all too long’ (‘longiusque prolapsus’) or writes that ‘I ask that the reader forgive the rather long digression’ (‘parce quaeso longius evagato’).72 He concedes that ‘we

68 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 298).
69 See my remarks on Grevenbroek’s imitation of ancient literature as false modesty in Chapter 3.
70 Schoeman (2008, Chapter 3) asserts that these three events featured in early histories of the Cape settlement. The story of the Gouden Buys, as related by Lourens Thijisz and Daniel Sillemann, appeared in pamphlet form in 1706 (Ongelukkig of Droevig verhaal Van’t Schip de Gouden-Buys) and was republished by Blommaert and Gie (1922, 129-169). A new edition was published by Kieskamp and Gessel (1995).
72 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 232; 236). Translations by me, TM.
must now return from our side-track to our story’ (‘redeamus a diverticulo in viam’) or that ‘my pen must return from where it went astray’ (‘redeat illuc unde deflexit calamus’). Yet the letter’s structure, with the three framed narratives, is a direct consequence of Grevenbroek’s sourcework – which forms the basis of his argument about the culturedness of the Khoi.

The three narratives present well-known cases that reverberated in the settlement’s cultural memory. In Amsterdam, they contributed to rumours of murder and cannibalism by the Khoi. A pamphlet recounting the unlucky wrecking of the Gouden Buys, published in Amsterdam in 1695, describes the ‘Hottentots’ that the crew encountered on shore as ‘savage cannibals’ (‘wilde mensch eeters’). Grevenbroek does not explicitly rebut these accusations but rather, his point in presenting three histories of miraculous survival is that each hinged on the good-naturedness and support of the natives. Together, the narratives exemplify the virtuous nature of the natives and present a contrast with the image that existed of them at the Cape and in Europe.

The first narrative focuses on William (Guillaume) Chenut, a young Frenchman who left for the Cape on an English merchant ship in 1684. He and some of his countrymen were taken captive by natives on an expedition to the shore near modern-day St. Helena Bay, some 150 kilometres north of Cape Town. They later escaped and managed to reach the Cape Castle overland thanks to the repeated aid of various native tribes. In his account,

---

73 Farrington-Schaper (1933, 238; 286). Translations by me, TM.
74 The apologies for the digressions are also examples of false modesty: see Chapter 3. Grevenbroek carefully selected the three narratives to cover both east and west Africa so as to illustrate the goodnaturedness of all African natives. Interestingly, the reiterations of the aims of the letter on pages 224 (Chenut) and 230 (Gouden Buys) are roughly halfway between the opening statement (172) and the conclusion (290). The architecture, or structure, of Classical literature, and in particular that of ‘the great national epic of ancient Rome’, Vergil’s Aeneid, has been a popular topic with Classicists. Duckworth (1960) argued that mathematical points of symmetry in the Aeneid highlight aspects of the epic’s argument. On Grevenbroek’s effort to write in a Classical vein, see Chapter 3.
75 See Kieskamp and Van Gessel (1995, Introduction). The cannibal was an archetype in early modern depictions of the savage. Montaigne (1580) considers Native Americans as cannibals. Depictions of the Khoi as cannibals seem to be scarce, but examples include Laval (1610) and Dapper (1668, cited from Farrington-Schaper (1933, 29)): ‘They [the Kobonas, a Cape people] are real cannibals, for if they can get hold of a Hottentot or any other person they roast him alive and eat him’. (‘Deze zijn rechte mensch-eters: want zoozy eenen Hottenlot van ander mensch kunnen bekomen, dien braden zy levendigh en eten hem op.’)
76 Chenut’s uncle refused to conform to the worship of the French king, Louis XIV. In 1685, the Edict of Fontainebleau revoked the 1598 Edict of Nantes, which had granted the Huguenots the right to practice their religion with no persecution from the state. Its revocation led to a mass exodus of Protestants from France; quite a few were taken in at the Cape, where they founded the village Franschhoek (‘French corner’).
Grevenbroek describes all natives – both those that initially took the sailors captive and those they encountered along the way – as men of mercy, reason and principle:

[S]ed inexsuperabilia juga montium, praealtis asperibusque silvis inaccessa, latronibusque obsessa vetant, qui coorti armis, numero viribusque longe superiores, obsistentes trucidant, ast arma, commeatum, tegumentaque abjicientibus moderati, nudis vitam concedunt, iterque relegere patiuntur: qui domum revertentes, clade hac nihil derterti, multa de rebus hospitum suorum asportantes, omnibusque rebus rursum instructi, iter per valles et ambages iteratò tentant [...].

The mountains were [also] beset by robbers, who being far superior in arms, numbers, and strength, barred the way against them and were for slaughtering them; but when they [Chenut and his countrymen] cast away their arms, food and clothing, the brigands spared their lives and suffered them to retrace their steps. Returning home [i.e. the kraal] again undismayed by this disaster, they collected much property of their hosts, and being again equipped with everything attempted a second journey, this time through winding valleys.\(^77\)

Grevenbroek does not deny that the journey was perilous and that the hinterland could be full of danger: some of the natives ‘obsistentes trucidant’ (‘were for slaughtering them’). Yet at the same time, there were also natives who showed piety by taking in the sailors and preparing them for a second overland attempt home. Importantly, the native robbers (‘latrones’), too, practiced mercy in response to the sailors’ surrender. Put differently, they recognised and acknowledged the settlers’ cultural code of surrender, thereby displaying a restraint and civility that formed a stark contrast with the dominant European image of the ‘noble savage’ or ‘Hottentot’.

Reflecting on the examples of unselfish aid and compassion on the part of the natives he provided, Grevenbroek remarks:

Hinc inferre libet, quod nulla gens sit adeò effera, quae illaesæ in innoxium saeviat hominem, eumque ignotum, nudum et inermem necare velit: testorque me vidisse ἀνδροτοφαγὸν (sic) malis meis illachrymantem, commilitonibus quibusdam meis, mihi in calamitate innocenti, inauditâ crudelitate insultantibus. Manus de tabula.

Hence it may be inferred that no race is so savage as, unprovoked, to offer violence to an innocent man, or wish to slaughter a stranger, naked and unarmed. And I bear witness that I have seen a cannibal shedding tears at my misfortunes, while companions of mine, with unheard of cruelty, jeered at me in a disaster I had done nothing to deserve. But why paint the lily?\(^78\)

\(^77\) Farrington-Schapera (1933, 222).
\(^78\) Farrington-Schapera (1933, 224).
Grevenbroek wilfully plays with the reader’s expectations here: the Greek word for man-eater is opposed to the designation of his fellow European soldiers as companions (‘commilitonibus’), but the former turns out to be more civil than the latter.\(^\text{79}\) At the same time, Grevenbroek calls the natives a beastly nation (‘gens effera’) and claims to have seen a man-eater himself, thus also reinforcing the discourse about the Khoi as non-human creatures (see the chain of being, discussed in Chapter 1). It is important to stress that Grevenbroek does not directly oppose or deny the dominant discourse about the Khoi. Instead, he extrapolates from Chenut’s experience to argue that no race will kill unarmed strangers.\(^\text{80}\) He redresses familiar motifs from the echo chamber with new classes of evidence – archival sources, first- and second-hand testimonies –, thereby adding what he finds is missing from the ‘writings from all naturalists’.\(^\text{81}\)

After Grevenbroek’s take on Chenut’s adventures follows an account of the *Stavenisse*, which was wrecked some 110 kilometres west of Port Natal, in 1686. 60 of the 71 people aboard reached the shore, being the first Dutchmen to set foot on these lands.\(^\text{82}\) 13 men first constructed a new vessel from the combined wreckage of the *Stavenisse* and two earlier ships, the *Good Hope* and the *Bonaventura*, and then sailed to the Cape. The others tried to make it home on foot but found themselves less fortunate.\(^\text{83}\) In the next four years, some were picked up by rescue expeditions dispatched from the Castle but others

\(^\text{79}\) Grevenbroek signed his will and his ex libris with the addition ‘causarius miles’, ‘private who left service early but with good cause’. A military career as a private has been supposed by Boëseken (1961, *sub voce* Grevenbroek), yet it also seems possible that Grevenbroek used ‘commilitonibus’ to refer to his years with the VOC – from which he retired at age 50 or 51: Van Stekelenburg (2001, §1).

\(^\text{80}\) Interestingly, the three Englishmen that accompanied Chenut to the shore were immediately killed by natives. Only when they realised that Chenut was still alive did they begin to pity him, according to Grevenbroek. The merchant vessel Centaurus picked Chenut up from the native shore on 9 February 1688 and took him to the Cape. Grevenbroek offers much more detail than the Centaurus’s log book; Godée Molsbergen (vol. III, 87ff.) gives the available literature: Grevenbroek’s account (Farrington-Schapera (1933)) and Van der Stel’s letter of 20 June 1689 to the Lords XVII (reprinted by Moodie (1960, 425)).

\(^\text{81}\) Farrington-Schapera (1933, 216n46) suggests that Grevenbroek heard Chenut recount his adventures in person at the Council of Policy: ‘the much fuller details given by G. were no doubt obtained at first hand from the boy himself’. I have not managed to identify such evidence (Cape Archives and Records Services).

\(^\text{82}\) The captain’s account of the overland expedition was later published, together with some notes of his crew, by Godée Molsbergen (1932, III.92-4), Moodie (1938, 426-7), and Theal (1896, II.302-3). Grevenbroek’s account is in line with that of the survivors but, significantly, does not mention the overland attempt to reach the Cape. These details he must have been obtained first-hand as the Castle’s chief secretary who signed off on all minutes of the official hearings in which survivors from lost vessels were heard.

\(^\text{83}\) Some died from illnesses, others drowned when crossing rivers, and some were overrun by elephants or other wild beasts.
were never heard of again. The news of the shipwreck generated a shockwave through the colony, again sparking stories of native cannibalism.84

Grevenbroek does the scale of the Stavenisse event justice by including a three-page narrative. Excluding rumours of cannibalism, he stresses the helpfulness of the natives in constructing the new vessel. Also, he notes that an expedition that came to look for survivors the next year found that the possessions left behind by the marooned sailors had not been plundered but were still intact:

Imo gregem viginti et amplius decumanorum boum, aperto campo pascere sinunt: quae omnia Argonautae nostri, anno converso, ex mandato Patrum Conscriptorum Societatis nostrae, eò liburnicà delati, ponderi, numero, et mensura integra, et illaesa, tanquam S. Sancta, et numini alicui dicata, spectatiori quam Attica fide, intacta invenerunt. Digna quae marmore caedantur!

They [the survivors] even left a herd of twenty or more fine oxen grazing on the open plain. A year later our Argonauts were conveyed in a galley to the same place by the order of the Council of our Company, and they found all that they had left behind uninjured and perfect in weight, number and size, as if sacrosanct or dedicated to some deity. Their possessions could not have been more scrupulously respected by the proverbial Attic good faith. The story ought to be cut in marble!85

Minutes from the Council of Policy and letters to the Lords XVII in Grevenbroek’s handwriting verify that an expedition was sent out that retrieved goods from the shore near the wrecking site.86 The Khoi are portrayed as equally inviolable in their faith as those from Attica, or the city of Athens, symbolising Greek cultural refinement. The Dutch sailors are compared to the Argonauts, a band of Greek sailors from mythology that embarked on a quest that would take them to the far corners of the then-known world. Grevenbroek’s narrative praises the restrained nature of the natives in the equally remote realms of the Cape, particularly when they could have easily taken the crew’s belongings after they had left. He thus elaborates on virtues normally not associated with the Khoi.

At the narrative’s conclusion, Grevenbroek emphasises how the Europeans can learn from the natives:

84 For the impact of the Stavenisse’s wreckage, see Paesie (2002). The survivors reported riches in the hinterland and in 1719, by decree of the Lords XVII, a trading-post was set up in Rio de la Goa (Maputo, Mozambique). No gold was found, but raids by the natives were common, and half the garrison died of malaria. See Huigen (2007, Chapter 3).
85 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 228).
86 Cape Town Archives and Records Services, C1891, reprinted by Moodie (1960).
In confesso est ipsos nil habere antiquius sanctiusve, quam arctum hospitiis solver animum et peregrinos convivasque tecto, hunc in finem singulis pagis erecto, omnique comitate et commeatu publicitus excipere, et cum asymbolis hilariter helluari, et ad crepusculum usque anancæis poculis certare: quod testantur liquidō Batavi nave Stavenisse novissimē vecti [...]. Haec virtute sane, intra paucas memorandā, multos Europaeos hic nobiscum degentes, longis parasangis praeventunt, utinamque cives nostril hospitalitatis sacra aemulentur, et à barbaris discant hospitii jura nunquam fallere, [...].

It is admitted by all that the Hottentots hold no obligation more sacred than that of comforting a distressed soul by hospitality. Strangers and visitors are entertained at the public expense, in a hall erected in each district for this purpose, with every courtesy and attention; they partake of joyous banquets scot free, vying with their hosts till the fall of night in swallowing brimming goblets at a draught. Clear proof of this is afforded by the recent case of the crew of the Dutch ship Stavenisse. [...] In this very important virtue they are miles ahead of many Europeans who live here with us. I only wish that our citizens would rival them in their respect for strangers and learn from the natives never to break the laws of hospitality and to rid themselves of their inhuman and savage temper.87

Although some exaggeration may be underpinning Grevenbroek’s description of Khoi hospitality, the important point is the contrast drawn with the ‘inhuman’ Europeans. Here, too, Grevenbroek turns the popular horizon of expectations around. In the opposition between the Europeans (‘Europaeos’) and the ‘barbari’, the latter are shown to be more hospitable than the former. Ultimately, Grevenbroek relates this to the natives’ virtuous nature.

Before turning to the last of the three framed narratives, Grevenbroek states that, in selecting them, it is his aim to prove that any tribe in Africa possesses a virtuous nature:

Haec in exortiva Africae plaga acta sunt, et ne occiduos hujus orae incolas sua laude fraudem, paucula etiam de illis levi penicillo, à capite accersita, summaque tantum secutus fastigia rerum attingam, quo tradam qualiscunque inter Barbaros maximē inconditos, et agreste hoc hominum genus, possit esse virtus.

These events were unfolded on the east side of Africa. That the inhabitants of the West may not be robbed of their meed of praise, I shall now lightly sketch a few incidents of their history from memory, touching only on the main points, in order to show that virtue can exist among savages of any sort, even the most rude, and in the midst of this wild race of men.88

This passage draws on a legacy from antiquity that pervaded the early modern geography of Africa: the distinction between the two Ethiopias – a more savage nation in eastern Africa

87 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 238). Instead of ‘Hottentot’, Grevenbroek uses ‘barbarus’, in the sense of ‘foreign [to European culture]’. On Grevenbroek’s adaptation of Classical semantics to a Cape context and the word choice in the English translation, see Chapter 3.

88 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 230).
and a more civil one in the western part.\textsuperscript{89} On the one hand, Grevenbroek admits to a contemporary worldview that goes back to antiquity, allowing a division of people into distinct races (‘genera’). On the other hand, he is able to advance the idea that no matter how ‘rude’ on first appearance African peoples may appear, all possess virtue (‘virtus’). Again, Grevenbroek does not reject the dominant ancient framework for viewing the African but adds to the dominant discourse that exists about the Africans on the basis of his own experiences.

True to his word, in the final framed narrative Grevenbroek moves away from eastern shores. He summarises the story of the \textit{Gouden Buys}, a Dutch ship wrecked near modern-day Saldanha Bay, some 120 kilometres north of Cape Town, in 1693. Its crew also received help from the natives, thanks to whom some sailors made it back to the Cape alive. On its way to the Cape from Europe, \textit{Gouden Buys} had already lost the majority of its 190 sailors to disease when Captain Baanman commanded two men to be put ashore near Saldanha Bay to find help: Laurens [sic] Thijsz, carpenter, and Daniel Silleman.\textsuperscript{90} Grevenbroek recounts how Laurens, having spent three weeks in the bush where he survived on tortoises and his own urine, was found by Africans who saved him:

Solus Laurentius Matthei F. vulgò Laurens Thijs, faber lignarius moribundus ab Afris, natione magis quam ratione Barbaris, reperitur, qui noctem antecapturì cum semi-mortuo, humeris ipsorum alternatim suscepto, ad mapalia citato cursu properant. Hic inedia propè necatum, primo recenti lacte, mox jusculo ovillo, tandem carne elixa alïisque efficacibus fomentis refocillant: alio Pegasio nuncio nostratium in Saldagniensi portu stationem, de Laurentii casu certiorem faciunt, ubi V. Kal. Janiis benigne à popularibus, post varios casus excipitur:

Only Laurens, son of Matthew, commonly known as Laurens Thijs, a carpenter, survived to be discovered in a dying state by the Africans, savages in name but not in nature, who in order to anticipate the fall of night carried the dying man in relays on their shoulders and ran with him to their huts. He had almost perished with hunger. But they were able to revive his strength, feeding him first with fresh milk, then with a little mutton broth, and finally with boiled meat, and using other efficacious remedies. Then by a messenger like another winged Pegasus they informed our men stationed at Saldanha Bay about Laurens’ plight. Here on the 28th of December, his troubles at an end, he was made welcome by his fellow-countrymen.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{89} See Van Wyk Smith (2009) and Chapter 3.
\textsuperscript{90} It will be noticed that Grevenbroek says nothing of Silleman, except that there was another survivor of the wreck. This is peculiar, as Grevenbroek must have been present at their hearing before the Council upon their return, or at least have signed off on the minutes.
\textsuperscript{91} Farrington-Schapera (1933, 232). Grevenbroek gives the Roman date for 28 December. About Grevenbroek’s manifold ancient mannerisms, see Chapter 3.
Again, the European’s survival is not hampered by the natives but facilitated by them. Also, Grevenbroek uses another ancient reference in their praise: he calls the ‘African’ messenger ‘another Pegasus’, the winged stallion from ancient mythology that fought against evil powers.

Together, the three framed narratives exemplify the virtuous nature of the natives through an emphasis on the unselfish aid they provided to strangers in major events in the recent history of the Cape. Grevenbroek’s empirical evidence confirms that ‘virtus’ exists in any people – also in those classified as savages. He couches his argument in a key political-religious debate of the 1680s and 1690s discussed by, for example, Spinoza. He thus redresses the image of the beastly, uncivil African vis-à-vis the civil, Christian European settlers in popular discourse. All in all, he challenges the echo chamber but at the same time strategically re-empowers ancient frameworks and biblical frameworks. This puts Grevenbroek in an ambivalent position, making him a child of his time.

Grevenbroek as a child of his time

As explained in the previous section, a Christian perspective based on the biblical creationist account contained in Genesis, which depicts God as living outside the universe and preceding it, could no longer be taken for granted in the second half of the 17th century. With explorations bringing home undeniable evidence of unfathomed diversities of man, how was one to maintain a coherent Christian worldview? Grevenbroek maintains that a universe in which God is present in every element is congruent with the traditional Christian belief in the common origin of humankind. In this section I explore Grevenbroek’s discussion of the key ethnographic categories of language, law and religion. He interprets a new class of evidence to re-invigorate a Christian worldview. This puts him at an early stage in the Revolution of Knowledge as a child of his time.

Grevenbroek’s argument for a rehabilitation of the Khoi flows from a Christian dogma in Genesis 10. After the great deluge, the world was repopulated from its Jewish centre, Jerusalem: the African natives were descendants of Cham, son of Noah, while his brothers Iafeth and Sem repopulated Europe and Asia respectively. Throughout the letter, Grevenbroek relies on early modern ethnographic parameters to trace Khoi habits back to Jewish customs. Here, for example, he discusses religious rites:
Utrusque autem omnes ritus tam sacerdotaes quam sacrificales, meram antiquitatem redolentes, ab Israëlitis, tot licet saeculorum intervallo obumbratos, traxisse, quis adeo lusciosus ut non videat?

Indeed who is so blind as not to see that it is from the Israelites that both divisions of Hottentots have derived all their sacerdotal and sacrificial rites, which are redolent of the purest antiquity, though admittedly the lapse of so many centuries has obscured the connection.92

Grevenbroek’s view is not unique, as already discussed in Chapter 1. One popular branch of early modern anthropology explained corporeal and cultural differences between peoples on a temporal-progressive scale: as Noah’s progeny inhabited different climatic ‘spheres’ in relative isolation from each other, their skin colour varied with the sun’s intensity. This is what caused the Asian’s ‘yellow’, the European’s ‘white’, and the African’s ‘black’ skin.93 Of all African people, those of southern Africa had lived at the greatest distance from the Christian centre: hence, their Christianity was said to be most diluted, weathered, or overgrown with a rustic veneer. Underneath their beastly appearance, it was supposed that Christianity was preserved in a primordial, authentic – albeit primitive – form.

The Noahiden view could be maintained as long as the Scripture and the ancient library continued to be the most trusted sources for knowledge, and as long as information about ‘the African’ could be interpreted as an expansion of the conventional worldview. As I pointed out in the Introduction, Anthony Grafton in his book New Worlds, Ancient Texts. The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery (1992), coins the term ‘Revolution of Knowledge’ to refer to the crisis that empirical observation – as a trusted base for knowledge about the world – brought to the information contained in centuries old written (biblical and ancient) sources.94

Grevenbroek lived and worked during this transition. His use of his own, personal observations and critical judgment allows him to refute the emblematic figure of the Khoi as a savage. As I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter, he explicitly states that the reiteration of familiar, centuries-old ethnographic motifs has reduced the Khoi to a fixed set of stereotyped, false impressions. Also, as discussed in the previous section he remarked that much about them is unknown to the ‘European naturalists’. At the same time, his observations do not force cracks in the Christian origin myth, and ancient elements still

92 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 208).
93 See, for example, Hodgen (1964).
94 Grafton (1992, 6).
present a meaningful framework to him for describing Africa and its peoples. In other words, Grevenbroek’s empiricism allows him to challenge the prevailing discourse about the Khoi, but his empiricism – or rather, his interpretation of the empirical evidence – still empowers the traditional Christian worldview. The epistemological frameworks that give meaning to the fundamental beliefs about the history of the world, the origin of mankind, and cultural diversity of Europeans were not revised until much later. Indeed, as Grafton explains, the dawn of empiricism and the ensuing ‘revolution in the forms of knowledge and expression [that] took place in early modern Europe’ was a slow and gradual transition.\textsuperscript{95}

Within it, I argue, Grevenbroek’s account of the Khoi holds a significant place.

Nowhere does Grevenbroek explicitly elaborate on his worldview. However, examples of his adherence to a Jewish parentage for the Khoi are plenty. Jewish lineage is suggested, for example, in his observation that the Khoi share terms to describe kin relationships with the Jews (Israelites)\textsuperscript{96}:

\begin{quote}
Hic mihi silentio praetereundum non videtur, quod Afris nostris communi fratis sororisve nomine, more Isræliterum indigitetur patruelis et consobrina, aliisque quarto consanguinitatis gradu se invicem contingentes.
\end{quote}

Here I think I should mention that among our natives (i.e. the Hottentots) the names of brother and sister are, in the Israelitish fashion, bestowed on cousins on the father’s or the mother’s side; while among others (i.e. the Magosi) the names of brother and sister are given to those related to one another in the fourth degree.\textsuperscript{97}

Circumcision and semi-castration were also interpreted as readily appreciable manifestations of the Khoi’s linkage with the Israelites. However, in this respect Grevenbroek observes certain differences as well, between Africans and Jews, and between different African tribes (‘the inhabitants of the remoter parts’ versus ‘the natives near us’):

\begin{quote}
A Judæis circumcisionem, non præputii, sed graviorem cuticulae ad umum ventrem usque resectae, mutuatos diceres eos, qui abdita regionis inhabitant: et ab his eos qui nobis propinqui, didicisse sinistri colei (honore dicto) excisionem [diceres].
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{95} Grafton (1992, 6) argues that the dawn of empiricism as a trusted basis for knowledge acquisition would shape modern anthropology, ethnography, and the sciences in general. See also Grafton (2007; 2009).

\textsuperscript{96} Family and social structures were a common item in early modern descriptions of foreign peoples.

\textsuperscript{97} Farrington-Schapera (1933, 286 and 286n96): Grevenbroek here provides the earliest proof that what anthropologists term the classificatory system of kinship nomenclature was used by the Khoisan and Xhosa people.
It must be supposed that it is from the Jews that the inhabitants of the remoter parts have learned the practice of circumcision, [although it is a more serious operation with the Africans, involving the cutting away not only of the prepuce but of the skin right up to the base of the abdomen. From the Jews also the natives near us must have acquired the practice of removing the left testicle, if you will excuse the mention of it.]

Given that circumcision was one of the most iconic ethnographic parameters in early modern writing about the Khoi, Grevenbroek’s tentativeness is noteworthy. The Latin ‘diceres’, a subjunctive form of the verb, indicates that the writer does not guarantee the factuality of the statement provided; it adds an element of uncertainty, often rendered in English as a wish, desire or doubt. Notably also, Grevenbroek does not take the purportedly primordial, Christian custom as a starting point to discuss the extent to which the Khoi have fallen or degraded. Instead, he again distinguishes between those natives living closer to the Cape and those living further inland (‘alliis’ and ‘qui abdita regionis inhabitants’). This distinction between different African tribes is not a common motif among contemporaries and signals how Grevenbroek engages his own empirical knowledge to re-empower a Christian worldview.

A comparison with two contemporaries, Dapper and Ten Rhyne, highlights how Grevenbroek interprets the primary ethnographic tricolon of the time – language, law and religion – to rehabilitate the Khoi. Language, law and religion are key tropes in arguably the most influential theory of Grevenbroek’s time to distinguish between peoples, that of the Spanish Jesuit missionary José de Acosta (see Chapter 1). The latter’s *Natural and Moral History of the Indies* (1590) facilitated a classification and relative ranking of foreign peoples.

---

98 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 208). In the English translation, the square bracket marks the beginning of a 300-word passage that was censored by Van Oordt (1886; 1932) in his Dutch translation.

99 At the time, there was little consensus about the alleged Khoi practice of removing one of the testicles. Among those who thought it was true, it was considered the reason why the Khoi could run fast. The discord among ethnographers regarding the practice of semi-castration was put to bed by Fritsch (1872, 14), who maintains that earlier observers must have been deceived by the fact that, in both Hottentots and Bushmen, ‘the scrotum is often drawn up close to and just under the root of the penis, and appears to contain only one testicle, the other not having descended into the scrotal sack’ (quoted from Farrington-Schapera (1933, 143)).

100 The translations ‘it must be supposed’ and ‘the natives must have acquired’ by Farrington-Schapera (1933) accurately render the subjunctive.

101 Dapper probably never visited the Cape but relied on informants and books for his account, whilst Ten Rhyne’s findings are the product of a (brief) personal acquaintance with the Khoi (Farrington-Schapera (1933, 2)): ‘He [Dapper] does not appear to have ever left Holland to see with his own eyes any of the countries he describes. For his material he relied solely on printed sources and on memoranda specially prepared for him. That this circumstance does not guarantee the accuracy of his work is obvious. His great merit, however, lies in the fact that he ranged very widely in search of information, and that he had a shrewd eye for relevant detail. His work was comprehensive and painstaking, and as the first great compendium of modern knowledge about Africa it became deservedly famous’.
It was translated into all the major European languages and remained the most-commonly used handbook on the New World and ethnography more generally until well into the eighteenth century. In it, Acosta interprets the religious practices of Native Americans as the work of the devil and attempts to reconcile all of the empirical observations of the New World with Christian and ancient scholarship. But his work can also be read in a more secular key: in his temporal-progressive model, there were different stages of development: those people who lived in the utterly ‘degenerated’ nomadic state, those who had established some degree of ‘barbarous’ political order, and those who had established great empires. According to Acosta’s theory, the Khoi peoples, with their tribal society and nomadic lifestyle, and living on the southernmost tip of Africa, would have ranked below those that established great empires.

Grevenbroek does not explicitly engage with Acosta’s stages of development. He does, however, do for the Khoi what Acosta did for the peoples of the New World: develop first-hand knowledge of the Khoi into a grand theory of ‘natural and moral history of the Africans’. Like Acosta, Grevenbroek mixes his empirical insights with elements from (Greek and Roman) antiquity, traditional Christian eschatology, and current theological debates. Acosta’s temporal-progressive interpretation of the Noahiden dispersal led to a hierarchical ranking of peoples. Grevenbroek, similarly, endorses the idea of a more developed Ethiopian and a less developed non-Ethiopian side of Africa, and acknowledges that there are different African peoples with diverging customs. Virtue, however, for him exists in all peoples, irrespective of these distinctions.

As explained in Chapter 1, an observed lack in a people of (Christian) language, law or religion was readily interpreted as an absence of civility, warranting them a rank between Christian man and beasts. In 1668, Olfert Dapper opened his treatise *Kaffrarie of Lant der Kaffers, anders Hottentots genaemt* with a statement about the perceived bestiality of their language and the absence of law and religion:

"s lants inboorlingen, die by d’onzen, om hunne belemmerheit en wanhebbelijkheit van tale, met den naam van Hottentoos of Hottentots gemeenlijk bekent zijn, en zonder eenige wetten van Godtsdienst leven."
The country or land of Kaffraria (or, according to Marmol, Quefrerie) is so named after the Kafirs, its native inhabitants. They are commonly known to our countrymen as Hottentos or Hottentots, because their language is so clumsy and difficult; and they live without any laws of religion.¹⁰²

To Dapper’s reader, this would have signalled that what follows is a treatise on ‘native inhabitants’, lower than Christian man. Dapper substantiates this, for example, for religion:

By al de Kaffers of Hottentots of strantlopers, heeft noit iemant, hoe nau ook onderzocht, een teken van eenigen godtsdienst kunnen bespeuren: nochte dat zy Godt of den duivel eenige eere bewijzen; niet tegenstaende zy wel weten, dat ’er een is, die zy ’s Humma noemen, die de regen op d’aerde doet neerkomen, de winden waien, en hitte en koude geeft, zonder evenwel hem aen te bidden: want waerom, zegg zy, zouden zy dezen ’s Humma aenbidden, die den eenen tijt dubbele drooghtte, en den anderen tijt dubbel water geeft, naerdien zy het liever matigh en van pas zagen. [...] Dan hebbende gene kerken, nochte houden de minste Vergaderingen.

No one, however thoroughly he has inquired, has ever been able to find among all the Kafirs or Hottentots or Beachrangers any trace of religion, or any show of honour to God or the Devil. They know nevertheless that there is a being, named by them ’s Humma, who sends rain on earth, makes the winds blow, and produces heat and cold. But they do not pray to him; for why, say they, should they pray to this ’s Humma, who at one time gives excessive drought, and at another excessive rain, when they would rather see it fall moderately and conveniently. [...] They have no churches, nor any sort of congregation.¹⁰³

In Dapper’s view, the major characteristics of civilised (Christian) religious worship were notably absent among the Khoi. Although they recognise a superior being, they fall short of European standards in the ignorant motives for their worship, and because they lack centralised religious institutions. Instead, Dapper discerns signs of superstition (‘waengeloof’):

Het schijnt evenwel dat zy eenigh waengeloof aen d’opkomende nieuwe mane zouden hebben: want wanneer die begint gezien te worden, zullen zy gemeenlijk met hele troepen t’haerwaarts keren, en den gehelen nacht met groot gejuich, zoo met dansen, springen, zingen en kloppen in de handen, als prevelen binnen ’s monts, overbrengen.

They [also] appear to have some superstition about the new moon; for when this is first seen, they all turn towards it in groups, and make merry the whole night, dancing, jumping, singing and clapping their hands, and also murmuring in their mouths.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Farrington-Schapera (1933, 6).
¹⁰³ Farrington-Schapera (1933, 74; 76).
¹⁰⁴ Farrington-Schapera (1933, 76).
Superstitions, such as the worship of natural phenomena, were taken to indicate that a people was not on a par with Christianity. Dapper considered the Khoi’s homage to the moon to be a sign of idolatry. A contemporary reader would have immediately understood that Dapper ranks the Khoi among the lowest class of lawless creatures.

Ten Rhyne is not as decisive in his judgment as Dapper. He observes that although the Khoi do not have law, they do appreciate some supreme being (‘de supremo quodam Capitaneo memorans’), which means that they could not be quite lawless. In his chapter on religion, one sees him struggle with the question of where to rank the Khoi:

\[\text{CAP. XX. // De Religione. [sic] // Barbara licet & plane brutalis haec natio, ut inter easq} \text{ gentes, quae legem etiamsi non habent, naturae quae legis sunt, faciunt, recenseri non possit exlex. Attamen summi cujusdam Entis vel leviculam - cognitionem habere videntur, saepe de supremo quodam Capitaneo memorans.}\]

Chapter 20. // Religion // Though this nation is barbarous and brutish, yet, since it is numbered among those peoples who though they have not the law yet do the things that are of the law of nature, it can not be regarded as being utterly lawless. They seem even to have some slight knowledge of a supreme being, since they often speak of a Great Chief.

Adherence to some form of law bestowed upon the Khoi a higher rank in Acosta’s framework than Dapper’s observations could justify. For Ten Rhyne, then, the Khoi do not live in the original, ‘degenerated’ state. All the same, Khoi religion for him is still closer to paganism than to Christianity:

\[\text{Ast ordinarius eorum cultus cum omnibus fere antiquis gentilibus, quarum primi in ea sententia fuere Aegyptii, in hoc convenire videntur, ut Solem & Lunam pro Diis suis habeant. […] Lunam vero, ut dictum saltando venerantur.}\]

Their ordinary worship seems to agree with almost all the pagans of antiquity, among whom the Egyptians were the first to adopt the opinion that the Sun and Moon are gods. […] The moon, as has been said, they worship by dancing.

---

105 About superstition in early modern times, see Pagden (1982, 169ff.): ‘Superstition confused the creature with the [Godly] creator’. Acosta admitted that all religious consciousness begins as superstition.

106 As noted above, such reason was considered to be not only the highest but also the most archetypically human faculty.

107 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 138).

108 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 140).
The differences between Dapper, Ten Rhyne and Grevenbroek underline that the Revolution of Knowledge was a slow transition involving many frameworks that offered diverging and sometimes mutually exclusive interpretations of the same phenomenon.

On the other side of the ethnographical spectrum from Dapper, Grevenbroek, drawing on a decade of personal experience at the Cape, leaves little doubt as to the Christian origin of Khoi faith. A conversation with a Khoi man ostensibly provided him with the required details:

[respondet Barbarus:] qui porrò scissitanti (sic) scrutinique mihi, quo nomine apud ipsos Supremum numen veniat: continuó mirabili genealogia ultimae originis adjicit Khourrou vel Thikkwa: inferum autem Damoh appellari: ab hoc Summo Deo, Noh primum hominem, ejusque conjugem Hingnogh creatos: hosque sanguinis sui ultimos auctores humanum genus, majoresque suos uxores ducere, liberos tollere, poligamiae, pacti et concordiae studere, alium non laedere, suum cuique tribuere docuisse, hisque similia praecipita, infra succincte narranda tradidisse, non irrediculè infit.

In response to my further enquiries as to the name by which the Supreme Being was known among them, he immediately traced a wonderful genealogy back to the beginning and gave the name Khourrou or Thikkwa. The devil, he said, was called Damoh. By this Supreme God were created Noh the first man and Hingnogh his wife. This pair, the ultimate authors of his race, had taught mankind and his ancestors to marry wives and rear children, to practice polygamy, peace and concord, to hurt no one, to give to each his own, together with other similar precepts, which will be succinctly set forth below. This information he gave me, sensibly enough.¹⁰⁹

In Grevenbroek’s rendering, the Khoi origin narrative is the Christian origin narrative after a long period of separation. Khoi religion is built around a supreme being (‘supremum numen’) and a devil (‘inferum’), whom Grevenbroek asserts created the first man and his wife, to whom the Khoi trace back their genealogy. The first pair, like Adam and Eve, taught men about virtues and vices.

In Grevenbroek’s interpretation, Khoi virtues and vices exhibit notable correspondences to the principles of Christian living. For example, the Khoi administer the ultimate penalty – death – for deeds that are comparable with violating the Ten Commandments:

¹⁰⁹ Farrington-Schapera (1933, 192). Grevenbroek appears to have drawn on the experiences of the Stavenisse crew: ‘They [the Khoi] deduce their origin from a certain man and woman, who grew up together out of the earth and who taught them to cultivate the ground, to sow corn, milk cows and brew beer’ (in: Godée Molsbergen 1932, Ill.62); Moodie (1838, 431). Farrington-Schapera (1933, 192n21) observes that the myth of mankind’s origin recounted by Grevenbroek is not found among the modern Nama.
Divinitatem aliquam Messimo dictam, in lucis summo cultu venerantur, cum spe minime dubiā, ipsos Christianorum sacris propediem iniardin; deprehensum in adulterio adulteramque vivos jugulant, eodemque supplicio homicidia, furta, et latrocinia plectunt, eorundem bona fisco addicentes.

They worship a divinity called Messimo, in groves, with such reverence that there is little room to doubt that they will ere long be initiated into the Christian religion. A man or woman taken in adultery they put to death. Homicide, robbery, and brigandage merit the same penalty, the goods of the condemned being forfeit to the public treasury.\footnote{Farrington-Schapera (1933, 288). Idem (289n99): ‘Messimo = medzimu, the name applied by the Mashona to their ancestral spirits’.

Grevenbroek aims to prove that the Khoi have a systematic faith that derives from the early modern benchmark of civility: Christianity. As for Dapper’s observation that the Khoi knew no centralised worship, Grevenbroek cites a trustworthy farmer who regularly witnesses natives practicing sacred rites near his farm. According to this farmer, the Khoi adhere to sacred spots:

Accepi ex quodam non temnendae fidei Batavo adseverante, se nunquam praetervectum cautem, uno alt(e)rove milliari à praedio suo distantem, quin viderit quoscunque comites Barbaros, decriptum ex proximo frutice aut arbore ramum, ei tanquam verbenam instravisse, rogatosque causam, jejuné satis, sui majorumque suorum antiquitus id moris, et vetustissime in usu ipsis esse, respondisse, et aegerrime tulisse, quod nostrates, loco hoc capitali, exonorantes alvum, illorum cultui tam foedè illudenter.

A certain Dutchman whose word I can trust assures me that he has never passed a certain rock a mile or two distant from his farm, without observing the natives who accompany him pluck a branch from some shrub or tree hard by and strew it upon the ground as a sacred offering. Being asked the reason for this act they replied, without further explanation, that it was the custom of their ancestors from of old and long in use among them, and that they took it very ill that our countrymen should foully insult their worship by disburdening their bowels in this sacred spot.\footnote{Farrington-Schapera (1933, 194).}

The Latin can be read in two keys. On the one hand, the phrase ‘majorum suorum moris’ (custom of their ancestors) positions Grevenbroek’s letter amidst a more secular concern of early modern writers about the Khoi. The Latin word for custom, ‘mos’, was used in lieu of terms like ethnography and ethnology, which were not coined until the late eighteenth century. As the anthropologist John Rowe explains in ‘Ethnography and Ethnology in the Sixteenth Century’ (1964):

The closest sixteenth century equivalent to “ethnology” was the phrase “moral history”, used by José de Acosta in 1590 as a parallel to “natural history”. The word “history” in these contexts has its
original meaning of “research”, or “a report on research”, while “moral” is derived from the Latin mos, moris, “custom”.112

Indeed, Grevenbroek’s letter, like Acosta’s treatise, was an attempt at providing a moral and natural history of the Khoi – but one with Christian roots.

On the other hand, the phrase ‘majorum suorum moris’ has an ancient Roman origin. ‘Mos maiorum’ (ancestral custom) was the unwritten code woven into society from which pagan Rome derived its norms: it permeated every aspect of political, social and military life.113 Conveniently for the early modern writer about foreign peoples, the Romans were also the one great people that converted to the Christian faith and brought it to Europe.114 In the light of Grevenbroek’s eloquence, the choice of words seems hardly a coincidence. The Khoi are seen to practice a system of sacred rites that, like in ancient Rome, has Christian norms and values engrained in it. When the time is right, Grevenbroek seems to suggest, the Europeans or the Khoi will acknowledge these shared roots.

Grevenbroek also held a radically different opinion from his contemporaries about the second important factor in the tricolon used to assess a people’s civility: language. As previously mentioned, Dapper’s description of the Khoi language as ‘turkey-cock speech’ is no innocent comparison but part of the Khoi’s more general animalisation:

**Tale.** // Al deze Hottentots, inzonderheid d’aan strant-gelegen, spreken een en dezelve tale of sprake, die t’eememael belemmert, en by d’onzen om de moeilijkheid der uitsprake niet te leren is, tot merkelyk nadeel van het verder opspeuren der gelegenheit des lants, en handeling met deze volken. Hun sprake gaet geduurigh met klokken, als de kalkoensche hanen, klappende, of klatzende over het ander woort op hun mont, gelijk of men op zijne duim knipte.

Language // All these Hottentots, especially those along the shore, speak one and the same language. This is at once a hindrance, for owing to the difficulty of pronunciation it cannot be learned by our countrymen, to the great detriment of further exploration of the country and of dealing with these

---

112 Rowe (1964, 1-2). The meaning of ‘research’ also went back to antiquity: the Greek historian Herodotus is immortalised by his work Ἰστορίης ἀπὸδεξις (‘Historiēs apodexis’, ‘A report of my inquiry’), which remained a fount of knowledge on foreign people until well into the Renaissance, owing to its many cultural and ethnographic digressions.

113 Hölkeskamp (2010, 17): ‘[Mos maiorum’s] range of reference and meanings was almost unlimited [...] This notional stock of time-honoured principles, traditional models, and rules of appropriate conduct, of time-tested policies, regulations, and well-established practices not only prescribed social behavior in “private” life, but also regulated all criminal and “public” law, the state religion as well as the military system, the ways and means of running politics at home and abroad’.

114 The Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity on his deathbed in 337, and with the Edict of Milan (313) had put an end to the persecution of Christians.
people. Their speech is full of clucks like those of the turkey-cocks; they clap or clack each word in the mouth, as if a man were snapping his thumb [...].

In 1686, in his treatise about the Khoi, Ten Rhyne in a similar vein describes Khoi speech as ‘noise’ rather than language. His comparison with birds from antiquity again implies a ranking of the Khoi with beasts:

Rather than repeating these stock motifs about Khoi speech, Grevenbroek relies on his own observations and groups the Khoi with mankind. He finds that the native language (‘linguam patriam’) is not the same throughout the Cape (‘nec passim eandem [linguam opinor]’) and that it possibly consists of various dialects (‘eam [linguam] varis constare dialectis [opinor]'). A unique feature of his letter is the table of 12 Khoi numerals (one through ten plus 20 and 30). The table is consistent with the hypothesis made in the case of circumcision and castration: that not all peoples in southern Africa are one. Accordingly, the table distinguishes between two peoples: those ‘in Promontorio Bonae Spei’ (at the Cape Peninsula) and those further afield, called the Magosi. Each is seen to have their own language although they share linguistic properties. Grevenbroek goes on to argue that the idiom is well-developed and rich (‘idioma hoc maturum divesque’), and that etymologies and derivations are systematic:

115 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 70). Despite Dapper’s disdain for the Khoi language, his account is one of the first, albeit rudimentary, attempts at its systematic description: it is claimed to be one language, and the distinctive clicks of the Bantu language family are noted.
116 The belief that the lack of a proper language among the Khoi ranks them among the beasts was not deemed incompatible with their supposed Christian roots; it was surmised that their lengthy separation from fellow Christians had degraded their speech.
117 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 152).
118 Significantly, only in the 19th century would Bleek and Lloyd, in their famous research into (nowadays mostly extinct) Khoi languages, provide proof for Grevenbroek’s early claims. Their collection is accessible at the University of Cape Town (Special Collections), but also online: http://lloydbleekcollection.cs.uct.ac.za/. Accessed 20 January 2019.
Caye Mansine, navem interpretatum denotat, voce compositâ ex Caye- domus, et Mansine mediâ productâ, aqua i.e. domus aquatica, non absono inclinamento pro nave.

Caye mansine means a ship. It is a compound word from Caye, house, and mansine, with the middle syllable long, which means water, i.e. water-house, not an unintelligent turn of speech for ship. For Grevenbroek, then, Khoi speech is certainly no animalist noise but a coherent language with rules and grammar.

By contemporary linguistic standards, Grevenbroek’s observations about Khoi language are an extraordinary testimony to the value of independent research. Being a child of his time, however, Grevenbroek interprets his data to conclude that the two Khoi languages share one ancestor, Hebrew:

Patriam ipsorum linguam aliqua cum Hebraeorum idiomate communia habere opinor, nam videtur ex gutturalibus, dentalibus, lingualibus alisque vocalibus labris illuctantibus, nobisque pronunciatu asperis conflate.

I am of opinion that the language of the natives has something in common with Hebrew, for it seems to consist of gutturals, labials, dentals, linguals and other sounds that fall with difficulty from the lips and are hard for us to pronounce.

As with the other customs, Grevenbroek perceives a common ground in idiom (‘aliaqu ... idiomate communia’) between the languages spoken on the southernmost tip of the continent and Hebrew. Whatever the ethnographic criterion, a Jewish lineage is a recurring cornerstone of Grevenbroek’s interpretation of Khoi customs.

Grevenbroek does not explicitly discuss the third aspect of the major tricolon in assessing a people’s civility: law. This is remarkable in the light of his exhaustiveness and careful reasoning throughout the letter, and because he studied law in Leiden before he moved to the Cape. It seems unlikely that he was unaware of the two dominant theories regarding law and foreign nations. Firstly, in the 16th century, Spanish jurists and theologians concluded that the American Indians were subject to the crown of Spain not by virtue of any positive law, but because their ‘poor and barbarous education’ had made them, temporarily

---

119 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 280). In modern isiXhosa, ‘Khaya’ means home, and ‘amanzi’ is water. ‘Mansine’ may be the locative form of ‘emanzini’: Farrington-Schapera (1933, 281n93). Grevenbroek’s data were revolutionary additions to the established corpus of knowledge about the Khoi.
120 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 280).
at least, unable to create civil societies for themselves.\textsuperscript{121} It would not have been a far cry to extend such claims to the Cape and its people: any claims the VOC or the settlers might have had arose as a consequence not of rights but of a Christian duty to care for peoples who were considered to be in an utterly ‘degenerated’ condition. Similarly, given his humanist upbringing at home and private library at the Cape, it seems unlikely that Grevenbroek was unacquainted with Aristotle’s theory of natural slavery, which was an accepted way in early modern thought of explaining why some people ruled over others. In his treatise \textit{Politeia (The state)}, the ancient Greek philosopher writes:

\begin{quote}

those who are as different [from other men] as the soul from the body or man from beast—and they are in this state if their work is the use of the body, and if this is the best that can come from them—are slaves by nature. For them it is better to be ruled in accordance with this sort of rule, if such is the case for the other things mentioned.\textsuperscript{122}
\end{quote}

In the light of the implicit nature of Grevenbroek’s criticism of the dominant theories and authors of his day, it is perhaps not surprising that he does not explicitly engage with any debates from the legislative domain. All the same, it is remarkable that Khoi law or the legalities of settler life at the Cape remain untreated altogether. After all, Grevenbroek is known to have sided with the free-burghers in the revolt against the governor’s son (Willem-Adriaan van der Stel) in 1705. Grevenbroek aided with the legal correspondence with the Lords XVII which followed, and which eventually led to the governor’s dismissal from the Cape.

A possible reason for avoiding the law in his discussion of Khoi culture is provided by Grevenbroek’s own position at the Cape Council. He probably wrote his letter a year after retiring. I will explain in Chapter 4 that, at the time, his position at the Cape was precarious: he possessed confidential information from his decade at the Council and his relationship with governor Simon van der Stel was marred by disagreement over policies that – in Grevenbroek’s eyes – disadvantaged the Khoi. In Chapter 3, I will show how Grevenbroek spent considerable effort to safeguard his anonymity in his letter – even though the informed reader must have known that the letter’s Latin, insider knowledge and considerable detail could hardly point to anyone else than Grevenbroek. Similarly, in the letter, Grevenbroek does not name the people in the Dutch administration he accuses of

\textsuperscript{121} Pagden (1982, 3).
\textsuperscript{122} Translation Lord (2013, sub 1254b16–21).
unethical behaviour – even though the sustained critique leaves the informed reader little doubt that it is directed at governor Simon van der Stel. Given this situation, Grevenbroek may not have wished to discuss the legal position of the VOC and Khoi law, especially since he did not absolutely need it to make his argument about Khoi virtue.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the urgency and relevance of Grevenbroek’s letter in the context of European writing about (southern) African peoples. I have made clear that Grevenbroek’s argument for Khoi humanity positions the Cape natives at the heart of the political-religious debate in early modern Europe about the Godly nature of the universe and man’s place in it. In addition, the letter embodies an early step in a radical epistemological transition that would redefine the way European man looked at the world and himself. In this so-called Revolution of Knowledge, the bounds of the venerated ancient and Christian library gave way to empirical observation as a source of superior knowledge about the world.

The title of Grevenbroek’s letter mirrors that of other early modern treatises about the Khoi, but moves away from them in argument, structure and sourcework. For Grevenbroek, the Khoi are more Christian – ‘whiter of soul’ – than the Europeans, especially Simon van der Stel and the Castle administration, who shame their Christian roots through unethical behaviour. Grevenbroek challenges the emblematic figure of the Khoi as a beastly, uncivil race and the ‘echo chamber of discourse about the Cape’, that is, the stereotyped image of the Khoi. Underpinning Grevenbroek’s argument is that Khoi norms and behaviour are grafted onto a stratum of Christian virtue (‘virtus’), as described by Spinoza in his *Ethica*: Godly substance permeates the entire universe, which implies that all men are innately Christian and have equal access to virtue.

Grevenbroek developed his argument for a rehabilitation of the Khoi as Christian brethren by relying on empirical evidence collected during his time in office at the Cape, while much other writing is informed by stock motifs about the Khoi and the tradition of writing about them. He is thus able to interpret familiar ethnographical categories and well-known cases from local history anew. Dapper and Ten Rhyne, also writing about the Khoi, concluded that they are a degraded class of man. Grevenbroek, drawing on a decade of first-hand experience with the Khoi, reaches a different conclusion, while remaining within a
Christian framework. He returns to the biblical dogma of the Noahiden dispersal of people across the globe, which allows him to reaffirm a Jewish lineage for the Khoi.

Nowhere does Grevenbroek explicitly engage theological, political or ethnographical discourse of his time. Yet, recurring statements about the trustworthiness of his empirical sources and a continuous concern with providing truthful evidence suggest that Grevenbroek was well-aware that his effort to supplement ‘the writings of all European naturalists’, ancient and modern, was an unconventional and revolutionary move. His empiricism allowed him to counter popular opinion yet it did not challenge the more fundamental worldviews of the time. Instead, the epistemological value of the frameworks that underpin contemporary views of the Khoi are re-empowered. This, indeed, makes him a child of his time. In the next chapter, I illustrate how Grevenbroek likewise strategically draws on ancient literature to renegotiate the prevailing early modern image of the Khoi, whilst re-invigorating this second dominant European framework for viewing the world.
This page intentionally left blank.
Chapter 3
Grevenbroek and the Khoi:
A Latin Framework, Revisited

All history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and reinscribed exactly as often as was necessary.

Orwell (1950, 41)

In Chapter 2, I argued that Grevenbroek delivers an argument for the humanity of the Khoi that sets him apart from his contemporaries. I explored the ethnographical parameters of his argument to show how he relies on empirical observation to re-empower a traditional Christian worldview in which all peoples of the world equally share in a Noahiden lineage and a virtuous nature. The current chapter focuses on a second dominant discourse that determined the outward gaze of early modern Europe, which Grevenbroek also mentions in the introduction to his letter: the ancient world. To what extent does Greek and Roman antiquity provide a meaningful framework for appreciating ‘the Other’, how does this framework translate to early modern times (late 15th-18th century), and how does Grevenbroek engage it to frame the Khoi? From my continued analysis of the letter, it becomes apparent that Grevenbroek re-engages not one but two dominant discourses of his time to re-interpret Khoi habits and customs as more authentic than those of the European settlers.

I first observe that the introductory paragraphs of Grevenbroek’s letter, which allude to moral letters by the Roman philosopher Seneca (1st century), frame the argument as a Classical exercise. Grevenbroek finds that centuries of ‘half-truths’ about the Khoi have built an image of them that he calls ‘rumour’. He aims to bypass these ‘youthful prejudices’ by returning to Greek and Roman literature about ‘the Other’.

Secondly, I note that Grevenbroek’s manifold references and allusions to ancient literature have previously been interpreted as a learned man’s stylistic mannerisms and a form of imitatio of Classical models. Whilst I concede to this viewpoint, I focus on the role of these references and allusions to ancient literature in determining Grevenbroek’s view of the world and the place of the Khoi in it. The fact that Grevenbroek writes in Latin, I argue,
indicates how much he values the Classics for their knowledge: intertextual close-readings make apparent how Grevenbroek strategically advances particular aspects of Classical thought to support his argument for Khoi humanity. Taking Ethiopia as an example, I show how Classical thought to an important degree influenced early modern expectations of Africa. Referring to the ethnographic treatise about the Khoi by the Dutchman Willem ten Rhyne (1686), I further demonstrate how the re-iteration of Classical motives over the centuries contributed to establishing the dominant image of the Khoi that Grevenbroek refers to as consisting of ‘half-truths’.

Next, I analyse how Grevenbroek strategically draws on Classical nomenclature to frame the Cape. Notably, he calls the Khoi ‘barbari’, but, rather than using this term in the derogative sense that dominated early modern discourse about the Khoi, he shows that their spatial and temporal foreignness from the dominant society of judgment does not mean that they are less civil or less Christian. Similarly, his Stoic understanding that all of mankind has equal access to virtue (‘virtus’) leads him to conclude that – although society might distribute positions of power unevenly among humans – the Khoi are a race of man rather than beasts.

The two instances of ‘Hottentot’ in the letter make apparent that Grevenbroek is aware of the epistemological dimension of his renegotiation of the image of the Khoi. He does not challenge the prevailing viewpoints by merely denying or opposing its conclusion about Khoi beastliness, but he exposes the stereotype in order to turn it against itself. Drawing on Stuart Hall’s theory about stereotypes in Representation and the Media (2005), I argue that Grevenbroek draws on the animalist connotations of the term ‘Hottentot’ to illustrate that the word contains no inherent knowledge about the Khoi. Through careful literary play, he shows that the term is filled with the ideological power of the dominant discourse and embodies the ‘half-truths’ he seeks to oppose. Together, Grevenbroek’s Christian and Classical frameworks re-fill the tainted stereotype, thus renegotiating the established, derogatory image of the Khoi.

I conclude this chapter by reiterating that Grevenbroek’s position remains ambivalent. The shift to empirical observation as the preferred source of knowledge in the Revolution of Knowledge was slow and gradual. Grevenbroek couches empirical observations in a framework of Christian dogma and ancient worldviews. This marks Grevenbroek as a child of his time, who interprets the novel as an extension of the familiar.
At the same time, his awareness of the epistemological implications of the frameworks relied upon for interpreting the world is radical for the time, and places Africa and the Khoi at the heart of a European intellectual debate that would carry on well into the 18th century.

‘Youthful prejudices’

In the opening of his letter, Grevenbroek does not introduce the Khoi or his argument right away. Instead, the opening lines take the form of a Classical Roman salutation, after which follows an extensive captatio benevolentiae, the winning or capturing of (the reader’s) goodwill. This then leads up to Grevenbroek’s argument about the people that are introduced as ‘our Africans’ (‘Afris nostris’):

Admodum Revdo. Doctissimoque [Doctissimoq.] Viro
N.N. S.P.D.


To the right reverend and learned gentleman......
Greetings.

You say that you receive great pleasure from my letters; I feel the same and perhaps more from the expressions of your goodwill towards me, so full of charm and thought, with which you honour me. I can never read nor relish them enough, and from the bottom of my heart I thank the Powers above through whose kindness there has been granted me, perhaps to test me, some little share of this world’s goods so that they may see a proof of my pious devotion to you. I am astonished that Rumour, never bearing a clear report, should have acquired such strength in her course and proved so tenacious of falsehood that those half-truths that are spread abroad about our Africans should have reached even your ears.  

The opening lines signal to the reader that what awaits him is a text not just in Latin but in a Classicising, Romanising Latin. S.P.D. (‘salutem plurimam dicit’) is a Roman epistolary salutation: ‘the sender sends greetings (literally: ‘says “many greetings”’) to the addressee’.

---

1 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 172). Unless otherwise stated, like in Chapter 2 I cite Latin and its English translations from the only text edition, Farrington-Schapera (1933), published as Volume 14 in the Van Riebeeck Society Series. Where discrepancies with the manuscript exist, I show amendments in square brackets. See also Appendix 1.
‘N.N.’ could take the place of the name of the writer, where the name was genuinely unknown or the writer wanted to remain anonymous. It is short for ‘nomen nominandum’ (‘name hitherto unknown’, literally: ‘the name is yet to be announced’) or ‘nomen nescio’ (‘I do not know the name’). The captatio benevolentiae which follows is a rhetorical technique aimed at pleasing an audience. The speaker delivers explicit praise of the addressee’s ethical qualities and emphasises his intention to win the audience’s sympathy and support.² It was made famous by Roman orators who needed the favour of the public or a jury in trials, with Cicero (1st century BCE) considering it one of the pillars of oratory art.³

In the captatio, Grevenbroek enters into dialogue with the Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca, who famously used the captatio benevolentiae in the opening lines of his letters to Lucilius, his assumed student. Grevenbroek’s book collection at the Cape included an edition of these Epistles (‘moral letters’), which he studied, as marginalia in his hand testify.⁴ Two extracts from captationes in Seneca’s letters illustrate similarities in wording and content to the opening of Grevenbroek’s letter:

Magnam ex epistula tua percepí voluptatem [...]  
I derive great pleasure from your letter [...]⁵

Ex ii, quae mihi scribis, et ex ii, quae audio, bonam sper, de te concipio: non discurris nec locorum mutationibus inquietaris. Aegri animi iactatio est: primum argumentum compositae mentis existimo posse consistere et secum morari.

Judging by what you write me, and by what I hear, I am forming a good opinion regarding your future. You do not run hither and thither and distract yourself by changing your abode; for such restlessness is the sign of a disordered spirit. The primary indication, to my thinking, of a well-ordered mind is a man’s ability to remain in one place and linger in his own company.⁶

---

³ Cicero, Orator 2.115.
⁴ National Library of South Africa, Special Collections, D09.d.36.
⁵ Seneca, Epistles 59.1. Translation by me, TM. A more verbatim translation than Farrington-Schapera (1933) of Grevenbroek’s opening paragraph would be: ‘Pleasure, which you say you feel from my letters, - the same and perhaps a greater [pleasure] even - from your expressions of goodwill towards me, full of warmth and thought, with which I am honoured, I derive’. Unless otherwise stated, ancient Greek and Latin literature throughout this thesis is cited from the relevant editions in the Loeb Classical Library; translations from Kline (2003) unless otherwise stated.
⁶ Seneca, Epistles 2.1.
In their respective *captationes*, Seneca and Grevenbroek each praise their addressee as being sincere, upright, and worthy of their sympathy and advice. In the last passage from Seneca, each clause logically builds on the previous one and intertwined with this is implicit praise of Lucilius. Seneca’s argument naturally follows from this structure as does his self-presentation as mentor. Although Grevenbroek’s lengthier opening is built around the same motives, it could be argued that his implied role as mentor, praise of the addressee – in service of the argument –, and the introduction of the subject in the final line are less naturally and elegantly intertwined than in Seneca. Scholars have interpreted Grevenbroek’s Latin accordingly, describing it as literary play, a learned gentleman’s pastime, and even an unsatisfactory medium.\(^7\)

George Pigman summarises a scholarly consensus about 17th-century literature when he writes in his ‘Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance’ (1980) that ‘a major characteristic of Renaissance literature is the imitation of Classical texts’, with the two major tiers of engagement – already discerned at the time – being imitation (*imitatio*) and emulation (*aemulatio*).\(^8\) The latter was generally regarded as the loftier one, where a writer sought to match or ultimately surpass the greatness of the Classical example. As the two tiers for engagement imply, imbuing one’s work with Classical Latin references in early modern times was, at least in part, an exercise in style and good taste. However, I am not concerned here with assigning Grevenbroek to any particular category per se. In my view, his main achievement consists in citing ancient Roman authors and adopting a Classical worldview for framing the Khoi in a new way, rather than in mastering a Classical Latin style of writing. My concern, consequently, is with the rhetorical or philosophical effect of Grevenbroek’s engagement with the Classics, which was carefully geared to his argument about the Khoi, thereby serving a pragmatic purpose.

---

\(^7\) Van Stekelenburg (Stellenbosch University Library, Special Collections, MS381) notes that a single page (Farrington-Schaper (1933, 295)) could boast at least eight allusions or direct citations from Martial, Plinius Minor, Cicero, Vergil, Horace and Quintilian. Van Stekelenburg (2001, n14): ‘[Grevenbroek’s effort] to write about the Cape in a laboriously compiled Latin and an overdose of Classical references [are] so out of synch, that the effect is comical, if not irritating’ (translated from the Afrikaans by me, TM). Van Stekelenburg (2003, 101): ‘A peculiarly distressing feature of the style is the accumulation of masses of synonyms which add nothing to the narrative but confusion. Although the Cape knows only one genus of Lobster, Grevenbroek calls it cammarus, astacus, pagurus, carabus (184) – in one breath. The knife used at circumcision is secsepita, clunacculus, aut excisorium scalpellum (208)’. Ibidem: ‘Grevenbroek’s descriptions of himself as “studis assertum, involutum literis, et mansuetiorum Musarum amicum” (“dedicated to his studies, engrossed in books and a friend of the sweet Muses”) is no doubt justified, yet it is no claim to good taste or creative talent’. Cf. Farrington-Schaper (1933, 169).

\(^8\) Pigman (1980, 1-3).
After the opening salutation, Grevenbroek introduces his subject and argument, making clear his reason for writing the letter: he has come to understand that, in Europe, ‘rumour’ has proved so ‘tenacious’ that ‘half-truths’ about ‘our Africans’ have reached his protégé. He suggests that he would not have expected these half-truths to be so tenacious, as their source cannot be traced: ‘[Rumour] was never haunted to transparency’ (‘Numquam ad liquidum perductam’). Grevenbroek aims to bypass the half-truths that have been spread about the Khoi; his return ad fontes (to the ancient sources) is intended as a move away from the early modern image of the Khoi to a more meaningful and authentic framing. Grevenbroek’s term ‘rumour’ refers to the European copying and collating of knowledge about foreign people since antiquity, and especially since the Age of Discovery (15th-17th century). It constitutes a repertoire of stock representations of foreign peoples in which the Classical library, biblical exegesis and actual experience are intertwined.

As Ronald Meek argues in his influential book Social Science and the Ignoble Savage (1976), the trope of the ignoble savage was by far the dominant trope in early modern Europe, describing certain non-European peoples as corrupt, unprincipled and vicious. The one-dimensional image of the ‘ignoble savage’ gradually became a benchmark that defined and judged non-European people as non-Christian people. It greatly influenced public discourse about the Khoi, including what Coetzee, as discussed in Chapter 2, called ‘the echo chamber of discourse of the Cape’. The issue that Grevenbroek outlines in his opening paragraphs is how to think of ‘our Africans’, the native inhabitants of the Cape, in a way that goes beyond rumours.

Like Seneca, Grevenbroek builds his response to ethical questions around practical examples, giving advice to his reader on the basis of personal experience and reflection, in this case with regard to the Khoi:

gentem hanc [sc. Khoi] uno animo, in diem et in commune, ad naturae legem congruentem convenientem viventem, in quodcunque genus hominum hospitalem, candidam, fidam, veritatis, aequitatisque amantem, nec ab omni Numinis alicuius cultu funditus expertem, et singularem illi

---

9 Van Stekelenburg (2001, 95) suggests that the letter was sent to a church minister in the Netherlands: ‘The long letter was written at the recipient’s request, as Van Grevenbroek states at the end (290)’. I propose that, as is commonly assumed for Seneca’s letters, Grevenbroek’s letter was not intended for a particular individual, but that instead the form provided a more personal and compelling medium for presenting a moral argument than the traditional dialogue or tractate. See also Maas (2017).

10 Farrington-Schapera (1933) translates this as ‘never bearing a clear report’. On Grevenbroek’s sourcework, see Chapter 2 and the next section.
inesse ad omnia naturalis ingenii dextertilatem, **ut est hominum captus, capacique ad praecepta** animo inveni, qui legume severitate, et judiciorum metu se alligari, quondam praejudicis juvenilibus abrepta, temeraria mea Musa cecinit:

*Quamvis sint homines, hominis vix nomine digni* etc.

I found this people with one accord in their general daily life living in harmony with nature's law, hospitable to every race of men, open, dependable, lovers of truth and justice, not utterly unacquainted with the worship of some God, endowed, within their own limits, with a rare nimbleness of mother wit, and **having minds receptive of instruction**. My rash Muse was swept away by youthful prejudices when I formerly sang: *Though men, they scarce deserve the name of man.*

In this passage, Grevenbroek admits that the ‘echo chamber’ dictated his own ‘youthful prejudices’ about the Khoi, but a decade of first-hand experience with the Khoi at the Cape has changed his mind. The argument advanced in *An Elegant and Accurate Account* is, then, primarily a negation of extant discourse about the Khoi, presented as moral advice to the reader.

The passage also makes clear that Grevenbroek’s engagement with the Classics goes beyond stylistic imitation. He returns *ad fontes* to illustrate his understanding of what the half-truths about the Khoi are, and how they came into existence. The two highlighted clauses in the previous passage are taken from canonical works by Roman authors: ‘ut est captus hominum’ (Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 2.27.65), ‘capax ad praecepta’ (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.243) and ‘Sive homines, vix sunt homines hoc nomine digni’ (Ovid, *Tristia* 5.7.45). **Indeed,** the entire letter is an intertextual web of references to and stylistic echoes of Latin literature from the time of the Roman Empire, leading Grevenbroek’s English translator Benjamin Farrington to comment that ‘the Latin of Grevenbroek […] is dictionary Latin, laboriously compiled by a man of poor taste and inaccurate though very likely wide scholarship. [It] is full of tags from Virgil, Horace, Lucretius and others’. Such a judgment, I will contend, ignores the effects of Grevenbroek’s invocation of the Classics, which go beyond a gentleman’s pedantic literary play.

Significantly, the above citations are not drawn from the common pool of ethnographic motifs associated with the Khoi in early modern times; they are mostly not

---

11 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 172). Highlights in bold throughout this chapter are mine, TM.
12 The epistolary form was also used in early modern ethnography – notably, Kolb also composed his treatise as (a series of) letters – and was said to breathe a sense of the historically unbiased observer: Huigen (2007, 43).
13 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 169).
found in the works of Grevenbroek’s contemporaries. Also, the seamless integration of the first two references into Grevenbroek’s text makes the intertextuality hardly noticeable, unless one is familiar with the sources. This would suggest that literary play and a display of eloquence were not Grevenbroek’s only or primary aims.

The highlighted clause at the end of the passage is the only line in the entire letter that draws attention to itself as a citation: it is centred on the page, has an empty line before and after it in an otherwise left-aligned script that runs page-wide, and has ‘etc.’ at its end (notably absent in the English translation).\textsuperscript{14} The citation illustrates not only Grevenbroek’s erudition or stylistic mastery, but it also shows how Classical literature informs his argument. It is a verse from Ovid’s \textit{Tristia} (circa 11), poems of sorrow and lament written after he was banned from Rome to Tomi (now Constantia, on the Romanian coast). The particular poem that Grevenbroek quotes from deals with the Getae and the Sarmatians, local peoples whose habits and livelihood, so the poet reminds the reader, had little in common with Roman civility:

\begin{quote}
\textit{sive locum specto, locus est inamabilis, et quo esse nihil toto tristius orbe potest, sive homines, vix sunt homines hoc nomine digni, quandque lupi, saevae plus feritatis habent. non metuunt leges, sed cedit viribus aequum, victaque pugnaci iura sub ense iacent. pelibus et laxis arcent mala frigora bracis, oraque sunt longis horrida tecta comis, in paucis remanent Graecae vestigia linguae, haec quoque iam Getico barbara facta sono. unus in hoc nemo est populo, qui forte Latine quaelibet et medio reddere verba queat.}\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

If I look at the place, the place is hateful, and nothing could be sadder on this earth, \textbf{if at the people, they barely deserve the name}, they’ve more cruel savagery in them than wolves. They fear no law: justice yields to force, and right is overturned by the sword’s aggression. They keep off the evils of cold with pelts and loose trousers, shaggy faces hidden in long hair. A few still retain vestiges of the Greek language, though even this the Getic pronunciation barbarises. There’s not a single one of the population who might chance to utter a few words of Latin while speaking.

According to the poet, the locals are more savage than wolves, dress and do their hair like beasts, and (importantly) fear no law and speak no civil language.\textsuperscript{16} In his book \textit{Banished Voices: Readings in Ovid’s Exile Poetry} (1994), Gareth Williams remarks that ‘All these details

\textsuperscript{14} Given the care and consistency with which the copyist of Grevenbroek’s letter handled typographical features (underscore, typeface), I have no reason to assume that the positioning of Ovid’s line is the copyist’s intervention.

\textsuperscript{15} Ovid, \textit{Tristia} 5.7.43-54.

\textsuperscript{16} The claim that the Getae spoke no Latin and only a little Greek is in all likelihood false. See Williams (1994, 154ff.).
emphasise Ovid’s isolation from his fellow Tomitans while at the same time making clear their need for the civilising influences of Rome.\textsuperscript{17}

Through the reference to Ovid, Grevenbroek engages Classical discourse about foreign (non-Roman, non-civil) peoples. The reader is invited to explore the intertext and compare Ovid’s 1st century description of the Getae with the 17th century ‘half-truths’ about the Khoi. Grevenbroek admits that there was a time when he agreed with Ovid’s statement about the Getae. Formerly, then, he might have denied the Khoi their status as ‘civilised men’ because, like the Getae, they lived in a state of perceived primitivism and shared a ‘natural’ state with animals. But Ovid’s assessment has now become part of what Grevenbroek considers his ‘youthful prejudices’. The quotation is not affirmative but illustrates Grevenbroek’s move away from ‘former descriptions of the Khoi’ towards a more empirical approach within a revised Classical framework.

That is not to say that a degree of stylistic or literary play is not a defining feature of Grevenbroek’s letter. A learned man with an impressive (Classical) book collection amidst a predominantly agricultural community, as I argue in the next section, he must have treasured his knowledge of ancient Roman and Greek literature. Though not exclusively, in his letter he mainly quotes Roman authors from around the year 0, marking the end of the Roman Republic and the beginning of the Roman Empire. In the 19th and 20th centuries, ‘Classical Latin’ would identify the exceptional literary achievement of the years surrounding the birth of the Roman Empire.\textsuperscript{18} Grevenbroek’s apology for the roughness of his Latin is a case in point. Like Ovid in his \textit{Tristia}, which we know Grevenbroek had a copy of at the Cape, Grevenbroek apologises for the roughness of his Latin. Also, Grevenbroek’s apology is interspersed with allusions to Classical authors.

Acknowledging the savagery of the people around him in comparison to the Romans, Ovid cannot but offer an extensive apology for his rustic Latin in the Tristia. Language was a defining characteristic of Roman-ness; in the next sections of this chapter, I explore a parallel between Grevenbroek’s use of the word ‘barbar’ (‘barbarus’) as identifying someone who spoke a non-European language, and an ancient understanding of the term in

\textsuperscript{17} Williams (1994, 158).
\textsuperscript{18} This distinguished it from the ‘silver Latin’ that followed it. See Teuffel (1873) and Settis and Cameron (2006).
reference of someone who did not speak Latin (or Greek) and lived outside the Latin (or Greek) sociosphere. Ovid concludes his poem thus:

ille ego Romanus vates—ignoscite, Musae!—
Sarmatico cogor plurima more loqui.
en pudet et fateor, iam desuetudine longa
vix subeunt ipsa verba Latina mihi.
nec dubito quin sint et in hoc non paucab libello
barbara, non hominis culpa, sed ista loci.
ne tamen Ausoniae perdam commercia linguae,
et fiat patrio vox mea muta sono,
ipse loquor mecum desuetaque verba retracto,
et studii repeto signa sinistra mei.
sic animum tempusque traho, sic meque reduco
a contemplatu summoveoque mali.
carminibus quaero miserarum oblivia rerum:
praemia si studio consecuari ista, sat est

I, the Roman poet – forgive me, Muses! –
am forced to speak Sarmatian for the most part.
See, I’m ashamed to admit it, from long disuse,
now, the Latin words scarcely even occur to me.
I don’t doubt there are more than a few barbarisms
in this book: it’s not the man’s fault but this place.
Yet, lest I lose the use of the Italian language,
and my own voice be muted in its native tongue,
I speak to myself, using forgotten phrases,
and retrace the ill-fated symbols of my studies.
So I drag out my life, and time, so I retreat from
and banish the contemplation of my troubles.
I seek forgetfulness of my misery in song:
if I win that prize by my studies, it’s enough.

Grevenbroek, too, apologizes for the roughness of his Latin:

pauca haec cuicimodi sunt, profiligandis tuis quaestionibus, quaequae mihi memoratu visa digna, et
Latiali sermente scriptu facilia non aspernaberis, nec ea censoria lima laevigare, calamistro tuo
inure, nec desultorio meo stylo peregrinantibus usitatissimo ignoscere gravaberis.

you will not despise these few observations [about the Khoi], such as they are, in which I attempt to
reply to your questions, and to record what seemed to me both worth telling and easy to express in
the Latin tongue; nor will you refuse to smoothe my roughness with your critical file, to dress the
unkempt locks of my poor prose, and to forgive the homely style which is all that exiles can attain.

Grevenbroek’s false modesty shows clearer in the Latin than in the English translation: his
Latin style, he explains, has inevitably been roughened and made ‘homely’ by his exile.
Notably, the apology takes the form of a manicured display of Latin eloquence.

‘Latialis’ (‘Latiaris’) is the adjective form of Latium, the area in which Rome was
founded. The word evokes the earliest days of the eternal city. Rather than writing ‘lingua
(Latina)’ or ‘sermo (Latina)’, a more unmarked way of referring to ‘the Latin language’,
Grevenbroek draws on a metonym for the Latins (or: ‘Latini’), the original inhabitants of the

---

19 Ovid, Tristia 5.7.55-68. On the theme of exile in Ovid’s poetry and its reception, see, for example, Hinds (2011).
20 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 290).
lands. Contrary to his claim, then, he does not follow the most ‘facilium’ (easy) way to express himself in the Latin tongue.

‘Calamistro tuo inure’ literally translates as ‘heating with your curling tongs’. A rather marked way of ‘dressing the unkempt locks of my prose’, the phrase is also found in Cicero, the acclaimed Roman orator (106-43 BCE), who uses it as a metaphor for adding (literary) ornamentation to an otherwise ‘straight’ oration.21 In the passage, he insists that straightforward prose can still provide a wealth of material for others to draw from; it is free of embellishment, ‘and as such represents one pinnacle of perfection’.22 ‘The foolish’, Cicero writes, ‘will try to scorch the material with curling tongs. He [the writer of the material] has, however, certainly scared sane men away from writing. For there is nothing in history sweeter than pure, clear brevity’.23 The style of Cicero’s speeches, intended to be delivered before the jury in court, could hardly be more different from the detached style of Caesar’s The Gallic War that he here praises. It is the paradox of Cicero’s own work that he adumbrates: throughout history, his oratory has been cited as the greatest example of rhetorical finesse from antiquity and has been read for its polished syntax in sentences that keep unfolding with elegantly structured clauses.24 Through the intertextuality with Cicero, Grevenbroek capitalises on his ability to ‘curl’ the letter himself, rendering the invitation to his addressee to do it for him and his apology for his roughness of his Latin instances of false modesty.

Indeed, Grevenbroek was not as circumspect as Cicero ostensibly advises about leaving his prose unembellished. ‘Desultorio meo stylo peregrinantis usitatissimo’, for example, is more than a ‘homely style which is all that exiles can attain’. In Classical Latin, the term ‘desultor’ (literally ‘one who leaps off’) signified a person skilled at leaping between horses, in this way riding two to four horses at the same time, sometimes with a chariot. He would vault on either of them to please crowds in the circus, or use the skill in battle to change quickly from a tired to a fresh horse. Grevenbroek’s combination of the skill and sophistication of a ‘desultor’ and the worn connotations of ‘usitatissimo’ (the superlative form of something common; worn) is oxymoronic. The effect relies on the Latin

21 Cicero, Brutus 262.
22 Kraus (2005, 98).
23 ‘ineptis illa volent calamistris inurere: sanos quidem hominess a scribendo deterruit; nihil est enim in historia pura et inlustri brevitate dulcius’.
24 See Steel (2013).
syntax. Read from left to right, Grevenbroek first compares his skill in writing to that of a ‘desultor’. Only in the second instance does he claim that his skill has become extremely common, as is typical for those that dwell in foreign lands.

It has been pointed out that there is a contradiction between Ovid’s content and form: Ovid is trying to gain sympathy from his readers by claiming that the circumstances of exile are destroying him as a poet, whilst continuing to write verse of a quality that undermines his claim.\(^{25}\) Similarly, Grevenbroek’s apologies for his rustic language reference revered examples from antiquity. I consider these references as a form of literary imitation that bolsters his authority through false modesty.

It is Grevenbroek’s achievement that he is able to advance literary imitation in support of his argument for the Khoi. In the remainder of his introduction to the letter, he elaborates on the second pillar of his argument for the Khoi, which is Christian theology. As shown in the previous chapter, the discrepancy between Christian virtues as practiced by the European settlers and the Khoi is fundamental to Grevenbroek’s argument for the Khoi’s humanity and virtue. Here, he describes how corrupted Christian ethics practiced by Dutch settlers have jumped across to the Khoi, and paints a picture of what will happen to the hypocritical Christians:

\[
\text{Cujus delicti veniam petens, hic palinodiam cano, dum proh dedecus! Nostratium vitiis, moris patrii oblitorum, in deterius mutatos, sui celantes, tectos et a nobis abstrusos explorate perspicio et cognosco, a quibus blasphemias, perjuria, discordiam, simulstes, crapulam, technas, latrocinia, fulta, ingratitudinem, effraenatam alieni appetention ignota quondam eis Facinora, aliqua crimina non levis notae, et auri sacram famem traxit; en praecarios Christianarum vittarum Mystas! en Divinae Veritatis assertores strenuos, die et judicio novissimo ab his Barbaris media amphitheatris scribe ustulandi. Haec est futuri summa favilla mali!}
\]

And for this fault [i.e. my youthful prejudice] I now seek pardon and sing a palinode; for, alas for the disgrace! it is through the \textit{faults of our countrymen}, who have forgotten their ancestral ways, as I now plainly see and recognize, that the natives have been changed for the worse, and have become secretive, suspicious and shut away from us. From us they have learned blasphemy, perjury, strife, quarrelling, drunkenness, trickery, brigandage, theft, ingratitude, unbridled lust for (for) what is not one’s own, misdeeds unknown to them before, and, among other crimes of deepest die, the accursed lust of gold. Behold \textit{the glorious priests of the Christian mysteries!} Behold the strenuous champions of Divine Truth! On the last day at the last judgment they shall be burned in the middle ditch of the amphitheatres by these barbarians. ‘This is the final spark of the woe to come.’\(^{26}\)

\(^{25}\) Gosling (1996, 2); Williams (1994).

\(^{26}\) Farrington-Schapera (1933, 173-174), \{\ldots\} is my deletion, TM.
The description of the burning of hypocrite Christians by ‘these barbarians’ in an amphitheatre on Judgment Day provides a rather dramatic finale to the opening of the letter. Indeed, Grevenbroek has received criticism for his hyperbolic style: ‘Grevenbroek’s rhetorical exaggerations are sometimes next to hysterical’.

Yet, the drama is in line with the strident tone and message of the preceding lines. Grevenbroek sees that the faults of his countrymen (‘nostratum vitiis’) are related to the disingenuous upholding of the mysteries of Christian worship (‘Christianarum vittarum’) by ‘glorious priests’ that are, in Grevenbroek’s opinion, not glorious at all: their behaviour has turned the Khoi away from the Europeans. Also note the association of ‘our countrymen’ with ‘the Christian worship’ (both genitive case), and ‘vitiwm’ (sin) with ‘vitta’ (the headband worn by (Roman) priests). The implied virtuous life of the Khoi has been corrupted by the Europeans, who are associated with a series of Christian vices that recall the seven cardinal sins and the Ten Commandments: ‘blasphemy, perjury, strife, quarrelling, drunkenness, trickery, brigandage, theft, ingratitude, unbridled lust for what is not one’s own’. Conversely, the virtues ascribed to the Khoi are based on the Christian tradition, too: ‘[they live] in harmony with nature’s law, [are] hospitable to every race of men, open, dependable, lovers of truth and justice, not utterly unacquainted with the worship of some God’. Grevenbroek challenges the dominant European early modern worldview about the Khoi by turning the image around. More than this, he argues that the settlers have betrayed their own Christianity by corrupting a pious people. This is what merits their severe punishment on Judgment Day at the hands of the Khoi (‘his Barbaris’). Ovid’s image of the beastly nature of local peoples in a remote corner of the empire is turned around for the Cape, where the settlers corrupt the more authentically Christian life of the Khoi. The implicit argument Grevenbroek presents is that an uncritical repetition of motifs from Classical literature can lead to ‘prejudices’ about the foreign and may also produce a corrupt self-image, as the example of ‘the glorious priests of the Christian mysteries’ suggests.

The final line of the opening of Grevenbroek’s letter continues the criticism of the Europeans and the urgent tone. It alludes to a line from the Elegies (1.9.18) by the Roman

---

28 Cf. the Lord’s Prayer.
29 In the next sections of this chapter I discuss the irony of Grevenbroek’s use of the term ‘barbarus’ in reference to the Khoi against the background of the dominant 17th century discourse about them.
Propertius (1st century BCE). They are series of poems that portray the uneven course of the poet’s love affair with a woman called Cynthia. In the particular poem quoted, the poet urges his friend-poet Ponticus, who is also in love, to put away all his learned books of poetry and write his own love-elegy for his ‘girl’ instead:

i quaeque et tristis istos sepone libellus,  
et cane quod quaevis nosse puella velit!  
quid si non esset facilis tibi copia! nunc tu  
insanus medio flumine quaeris aquam.  
ncedum etiam palles, vero nec tangeris igni:  
haec est venturi prima favilla mali.  
tum magis Armenias cupere accedere tigres  
et magis infernae vincula nosse rotae,  
quam pueri totiens arcum sentire medullis  
et nihil iratae posse negare tuae.  
nullus Amor cuquam facilis ita praebuit alas,  
ut non alterna presserit ille manu.  

Please, go bury those sad books  
and sing anything the girl wants to hear!  
What if this abundance were not so easily yours?  
Now, like a madman, you are standing in the middle of a river, asking for water.  
And you’re not even pale yet. You haven’t really felt the fire.  
This is but the first spark of the suffering to come.  
Then you’d rather face Armenian tigers  
and know the bondage of hell’s wheel  
than to feel so often the boy’s bow in your marrow  
and be powerless to deny your angry girl a single thing.  
Love doesn’t give his wings so easily  
that he does not repress with the other hand.

The river and water are common symbols for inspiration, here reworked creatively by Propertius to serve as an indication of Ponticus’ failure to see the obvious: as a poet, he should not be looking in books, but should find within himself ‘a wealth of material from which to draw inspiration for writing quod quaevis nosse puella velit [anything the girl wants to hear]’. What he is feeling now, according to the poet-narrator, is only the first spark: his love will deepen, and with that the need to write a love elegy (which, it is hoped, will open the girlfriend to his affection).

Grevenbroek’s reworking of Propertius’ elegy provides a disconcerting finale for his letter’s introduction and invites a comparison of the circumstances of those addressed and described. Like Ponticus, the European settlers have failed to see the obvious: that they are among Christian brethren. In the same way that Ponticus is standing in a river, isolated, asking for water, the settlers and their Christian priests are deploring their solitude among savages, while in fact being surrounded by an unremitting flow of Christian inspiration.

---

30 This is the only citation that is marked as such in Farrington’s translation; none of the other Classical references are put in quotation marks.  
31 Propertius, Elegies 1.9.13-24, translation Katz (2004). The final two lines loosely translate to: ‘Love grants no one an easy passage, driving them back with either hand’.  
32 On the interpretation of lines 13-16, see Yardley (1981, 324): ‘The identification of the composition of love-poetry with the experience of a love affair has, of course, already been established [at the beginning of Elegies 1.7]’.
Instead of reading those ‘sad books’ full of half-truths and rumour, the settlers should open their eyes to the world around them – as Grevenbroek has done.

Although Grevenbroek has come around, he claims that it is too late for his fellow settlers, who fail to see their part in corrupting the Khoi and continuing the stereotype. Significantly, ‘prima’ (‘first’) in the Propertian line has been replaced by ‘summa’ (‘highest’; ‘final’), thus focusing on the last judgment on the youngest day. In contrast to Propertius’ ‘you haven’t really felt the fire,’ Grevenbroek seems to be saying that the settlers will most definitely feel it – but that the reader of his letter might still be saved, if he pays heed to Grevenbroek’s message.

Grevenbroek’s introduction thus takes the form of a complex interplay of implicit and explicit allusions to the Classical tradition and Christian dogma. However much it was en vogue among learned circles in Grevenbroek’s time to engage in literary imitatio or aemulatio of the Classical authorities, there is more at stake here than stylistic play. The allusion to Seneca’s philosophy allows for an interpretation of Grevenbroek’s letter as moral advice to the reader, the reference to Ovid’s poetry of exile make clear how Grevenbroek’s view of ‘the Other’ has changed, and Propertius’ poem is reworked creatively in support of a Christian worldview that accommodates the Khoi.

If we accept that the Classical references in the letter’s opening are too particular to be coincidental, what does this tell us about Grevenbroek’s use of the Classics in the development of his argument about the Khoi? In what follows, I focus on the value the Classical heritage had for Grevenbroek. Although it may seem that the Classics that in part inspired the half-truths about the Khoi still inform Grevenbroek’s worldview, it is crucial that he returns ad fontes to interpret the Classical sources rather than relying on centuries of interpretative commentaries and select reiterations. His aim is to interpret the Khoi in light of ‘authentic’ Classical Roman and Greek theory about ‘the Other’.

**Half-truths, revisited**

Grevenbroek is not unique in looking back at antiquity when surveying an African people. Antiquity had left Europe with accounts about foreign peoples, many encountered, but some only surmised. The latter centuries of the Middle Ages witnessed an explosion in travel writing under the influence of crusades and journeys of exploration, notably to Asia and Africa. At this time, ancient literature remained the dominant frame of reference
through which the world and its peoples were assessed. In his paper ‘Assimilating New Worlds in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’ (1981), anthropologist Michael Ryan maintains that ‘the bewildering variety of peoples and diversity of cultures did not bowl over a Europe which had cause to appreciate that variety was a fact of life’.  

As Ryan indicates, ‘Montaigne and other humanists knew this [variety and diversity of the human form] from their reading of ancient, not [medieval] travel, texts’.  

Much early modern travel writing thus saw in foreign peoples the confirmation or extension of an antique supposition of a nation’s existence.

The tendency to model Europe’s outward gaze to ancient authorities, however, is just one side of the coin. There remained the issue that the Classical world, it was now widely realised, had been pagan during most of its history. Only in 313 CE had the Roman emperor Constantine put an end to the persecution of Christians with the Edict of Milan and converted to Christianity on his deathbed, thereby making it the new imperial faith. On this basis, many early modern observers believed there existed a real, and not simply a metaphorical, relationship between the pagan peoples of Africa and those of the antique world.

One evolutionary model explained pagan antiquity as a temporal-geographical interlude between a Christian past and an early modern Christian present. As noted in the previous chapter, the book of Genesis allows for the visualisation of the dispersal of man as a grand outward sweep from the Christian centre of the world, with each of Noah’s three sons repopulating one of the then-known continents (Europe, Asia and Africa). Consequently, as Ryan observes, ‘the real discovery was not the exoticism of the other but his ultimate similarity with peoples already assimilated into European consciousness’.  

The novel was interpreted as an extension to the familiar, so that a pagan became a Christian who had temporarily erred from the faith. A careful study of the ancient Romans – the one great heathen civilisation converted Christian – would provide insight into the habits of other pagan civilisations, like those found in southern Africa, and shed light on how far they had erred from the faith, or – in other words – how close they were to conversion.  

---

33 Ryan (1981, 520).
34 Ibidem.
36 From this model sprang the effort of many early modern thinkers to establish a (supposed) genealogy of any exotic people with one of the Noahides.
ancient world was thus given a place in a larger Christian world. Pagan antiquity provided an authoritative frame of reference through which early modern man could meaningfully interpret the foreign.

The case of Ethiopia illustrates how the two discourses moulded together determined Grevenbroek’s African horizon of expectations. Known since antiquity, Ethiopia unsurprisingly functioned as a beacon on early modern Europe’s political-religious map of Africa. As I discussed in Chapter 1, the country’s heartlands were purportedly inhabited by the Christian prince Prester John, whose lands were surrounded by pagan peoples. It is therefore not surprising that, in his letter, Grevenbroek situates the Cape and the Khoi in relation to Ethiopia:

\[ \text{Interiora regionis Aethiopiae confinia frequentibus multisque habitantur pagis, quorum amoenitate indigenae detinentur, et advenae omnium rerum copia, terraeque ubertate alliciuntur.} \]

In the interior of the country bordering on Ethiopia are many populous districts, the charm of which detains the native inhabitants, while strangers are allured by the abundance of all things and the richness of the soil.  

To a modern mind, this brief observation does scant justice to the heaps of geographical and topographical knowledge available at the time: many expeditions had been launched into the interior since the Dutch East India Company had settled at the Cape in 1652, and Grevenbroek, as secretary of its Council of Policy at the Cape, drew up many of the reports that were presented before it. Yet, his concern in his 121-page letter was with the people and the state of the Cape, and this single line sufficed to situate this concern in relation to the dominant reference point in European thought about Africa. In its very brevity, then, it illustrates Ethiopia’s role as a formative concept in Europe’s understanding of Africa and its inhabitants from antiquity onwards.

The South African literary historian Malvern van Wyk Smith traces the influence of Ethiopia as one of Europe’s primary organising tropes about Africa back to Homer (8th century BCE). In his *Odyssey*, the Ethiopians are ‘the farthestmost of men’ and are divided into two peoples, some living ‘where Hyperion sets and some where he rises’.  

---

37 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 212).
38 As with other contemporary worldviews and theory, Grevenbroek does not mention Prester John explicitly (see Chapter 2).
39 Homer, *Odyssey* 1.22-24. Hyperion (‘the high-one’) is a nickname of the sun, Helios.
seminal study *The First Ethiopians: The Image of Africa and Africans in the Early Mediterranean World*, Van Wyk Smith writes:

Homer’s suggestion that there were two Ethiopias ensured the longevity and procreative powers of his myth and allows us to speak not merely of an Ethiopian myth but of a dialectic metaphor or discourse of Ethiopia.40

In his *Histories*, the ancient Greek historian Herodotus (6th century BCE) similarly distinguished between the ‘eastern Ethiopians [with] straight hair’ and the ‘western Ethiopians [who] are more woolly haired than any other people in the world’.41 He plotted their land ‘where the south declines towards the setting sun […] the country called Ethiopia, the last inhabited in that direction’.42

At first a schematic geographical and ethnographic distinction, the division of Ethiopia would quickly become evaluative. In the Middle Ages, Eastern Ethiopia became known as the location of noble peoples living in an earthly paradise, a tradition which encouraged the later myth of Prester John. Many a caller who commented on the Cape’s natural beauty and healing effect on sick sailors reasoned that the earthly paradise could not be far.43 In opposition to Eastern Ethiopia (or simply Ethiopia), ‘savage Ethiopia’ oftentimes found expression in a binary of beautiful nature inhabited by uncivilised (that is, pagan) people.44 To many in the first half of the 17th century, the habits and life of the Cape natives were a long stretch from civility – and thus from Prester John’s supposed (Eastern) Ethiopia. The Englishman John Heylyn arguably recalled his 1621 passing of the Cape, when he commented in his 1652 *Cosmographie* [sic] that ‘[a] pity ’t is so beautiful and rich a country should be inhabited by so barbarous and rude a people’.45 A popular interpretation was that the Christian lands of Prester John were under threat from the pagan peoples that surrounded them. The supposed border between the two Ethiopias was variously placed

---

40 Van Wyk Smith (2009, 6).
41 Herodotus, *Histories* 7.69–70.
43 See Chapter 1.
44 Oliver and Fage (1973) in their history of Africa include several maps of the continent to illustrate how its heartlands were only very gradually mapped, with large swaths still ‘largely unknown to Europeans around 1900’ (map 11).
45 Heylyn (1652, IV.64 *sub voce* ‘Cafraria’). The exploration of the African hinterlands was slower than that of the coast, allowing the myth of Prester John to hold sway even over 18th-century maps of Africa. In the 19th century, the Voortrekkers still named Nylstroom after what they thought it was: the river Nile (cf. figure 1.1). Nylstroom, now called Modimolle, is a small town in Limpopo, South Africa’s northernmost province.
across Africa. The Portuguese writer Duarte Pereira, in his *Esmeraldo de situ orbis* (circa 1506), writes the following:

> At this promontory [the Cape of Good Hope] Africa comes to an end in the Ocean, and is divided from Asia; from this point the boundary of Africa runs due north following the course of the Nile, through the midst of the Ethiopias [...] to Damatia on the Sea of Egypt.\(^{46}\)

Although the geographical location of Christian Ethiopia provided the impetus for many expeditions into the Cape hinterlands, the concept of Ethiopia itself already testifies to the combined power of Christian and Classical discourse in shaping early modern expectations of a world not yet ‘discovered’. New observations were interpreted as extensions to established expectations, rather than as a challenge to them. Pereira wrote just 30 years after the Cape was first rounded. After 1652, with every expedition undertaken from the Castle, Ethiopia was pushed back on the map but it never quite ceased to exist as a formative concept in the European imagination.

The various peoples between the Cape settlement and Ethiopia were seen as frontier peoples – fallen Ethiopians whose customs and habits could be assessed to judge their degree of civility (or, in fact, savagery) in comparison to Christian men. The full burden of this tradition is infamously summed up by John Matthews, lieutenant in the Royal Navy, in 1788:

> Trace the manners of the natives, the whole extent of Africa from Cape Cantin to the Cape of Good Hope, and you find a constant and almost regular gradation in the scale of understanding, till the wretched Cafre sinks nearly below the Ouran Outang.\(^{47}\)

Like many other exotic peoples, the ‘wretched Cafre’ or Khoi, also called Hottentot, were extremely negatively interpreted in relation to the evaluative division of Ethiopia.\(^{48}\)

Grevenbroek’s second and final mention of Ethiopia is as brief as the first, and occurs in a reference to Delagoa Bay, modern-day Maputo in Mozambique:

> Sinum del Agoa Aethiopiam versus.

---

\(^{46}\) Pereira (1506), cited by Van Wyk Smith (2009, 13).

\(^{47}\) Matthews (1788, 159).

\(^{48}\) Van Wyk Smith (1992, 285): ‘inhabitants of the “new lands”, and of the Black in particular, [were] “the other” – the strange, exotic opposite to the European norm’.
If the eastern side of Africa is Ethiopian, the western side is not. Indeed, after discussing the virtuous nature of natives in the eastern parts, Grevenbroek turns to the west to show

ne occiduos hujus orae incolas sua laude fraudem, paucula etiam de illis levi penicillo, à capite accersita, summaque tantum secutius fastigia rerum attingam, quo tradam qualiscunque inter Barbaros maximè inconditos, et agreste hoc hominum genus, possit esse virtus.

that the inhabitants of the West may not be robbed of their meed of praise, I shall now lightly sketch a few incidents of their history from memory, touching only on the main points, in order to show that virtue can exist among savages of any sort, even the most rude, and in the midst of this wild race of men.50

I discussed this passage in Chapter 2 and quote it again at this place to emphasise that Grevenbroek relates to the Ethiopian division of Africa that played a dominant role in European expectations of Africa since antiquity. Yet, although here there is a ranking of degrees of savageness, I illustrated in the previous chapter that Grevenbroek discusses ‘a few incidents’ in an effort to counter popular opinion about the ‘barbari’. It is significant that ‘virtus’ provides the climax of the sentence. Grevenbroek’s main point of departure, as I have shown, is a non-evaluative division of the continent, in which all people are inspired by and have equal access to Godly virtue. In his view, the authoritative ancient Greek authors might have supported this biblical worldview.

The fact that Grevenbroek starts from an assumed similarity between the world’s people is important: the evaluative ranking of civility that follows from the temporal-geographical dimension of the early modern evolutionary theory is never mentioned in his letter. He neither denies nor confirms that the separation in time and distance from the Christian centre of the world may have covered Khoi Christianity with a rustic veneer; what is important to his argument is that the Khoi’s ‘virtus’ is more apparent from their habits and customs than from those of the European settlers.

In the next sections, I take a closer look at the place Classical heritage has in Grevenbroek’s argument. I start with arguably the most palpable aspect of his heritage,

49 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 286).
50 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 230).
his book collection, and discuss the way in which similar titles were used by contemporaries in support of their argument about the Khoi.

**Classical sourcework**

Grevenbroek’s private book collection at the Cape included at least 370 titles, for that is the number that was auctioned after his death, of which 91 survive in the National Library of South Africa (NLSA).\(^{51}\) If these books are at all representative of Grevenbroek’s library, they confirm his broad knowledge of languages and primary interest in Classical literature and law. Marginalia in his hand, present in many of the books, are oftentimes in the source language and confirm that Grevenbroek mastered Dutch, French, German, English, Italian, Latin and Greek.

One of the most impressive (and costly) books in the collection is the *Lexicon philologicum* (1655), a folium-sized encyclopaedia that aimed to include all knowledge in the world. It is bound in supple, white veal leather – the most expensive binding at the time.\(^{52}\) As was the custom for such books, the *Lexicon* was written in Latin and Greek. Inevitably, it included a lemma on Ethiopia, which asserts that the country is to be found in a hot zone:

>Aethiopiam ferventissimam esse indicat adustus color, & Trygloodytae, quibus subterraneae domus sunt.

First of all, the burnt colour of the people indicates that Ethiopia is very hot, and so does the need of the Troglodytae to have their homes underground.\(^{53}\)

The *Lexicon* was printed in Frankfurt in 1655, 170 years after Europeans first rounded Africa. It being a philological lexicon, material brought home from the numerous (failed) attempts at locating Ethiopia is not included. The cited line about Ethiopia, then, is a direct citation from Seneca’s *Naturales Quaestiones* (circa 62), a work on natural philosophy. The Troglodytes were mythical cave dwellers that Greek antiquity had hypothesised inhabited part of the African continent.

Grevenbroek must have valued the rather stout *Lexicon philologicum* enough to take it with him to the Cape when he moved there in 1684. Yet, he does not make reference to

---

51 Van Stekelenburg (2003, 10) carried out research into Grevenbroek’s book collection. A list of the extant books in the NLSA rests with me, TM.

52 NLSA, Dessinan Collection, D09.c.73. The *Lexicon philologicum* is one of the few books that carry Grevenbroek’s full, red-wax family seal on the title page.

53 Seneca, *Natural Questions* IV.47, translation TM.
Trogloodytes in his letter, nor to any other part of the lemma on Ethiopia. Instead, he goes back to the Classical source and adheres to the primordial division of Ethiopia proposed by Homer. In contrast, the German Peter Kolb, writing about the Cape in 1719, did make a systematic comparison of traits he finds in the Khoi with those found, according to other sources, among the Jews and the Trogloodytes. Kolb’s ethnographic writing is, to some extent, a familiar collation from available sources, supplemented by some observations of his own. Grevenbroek, however, considers empirical evidence and a return ad fontes for Christian and ancient frameworks of the utmost importance.

A closer comparison with the only other Latin ethnographic treatise of comparable size and scope from the early Cape about the Khoi makes clear how distinctive Grevenbroek’s approach was in terms of a critical interpretation of his sources. In 1686, less than 10 years before Grevenbroek wrote his letter, Willem ten Rhyne published his Schediasma de Promontorio Bonae Spei (An Account of the Cape of Good Hope), as I mentioned in Chapter 2. There is no proof that Ten Rhyne ever visited the Cape. As was typical for the time, he based his portrayal of the Khoi on Classical sources, contemporary academic works, and travelogues. His account exemplifies how images of the Khoi were continuously recycled and to what effect. When Ten Rhyne comments on the gluttony of the Khoi, for example, his description is partly borrowed from the Roman historian Justinus (2nd century):

Aurum &argentum non perinde ac reliqui mortales, appetunt; quippe ibidem divitiarum cupidio, ubi & usus. Imo in his plus saepe proficit vitiorum ignoratio, quam in alis virtutis cognitio. Atque ita sub molliori coelo immania posse esse ingenia, patet.

They do not covet gold or silver like other mortals; in truth the desire of riches exists only where they are in use; and ignorance of vice is often of more service among them than knowledge of virtue among other people. To sum up they afford a clear proof that even a mild climate can produce monstrous dispositions.

The highlighted lines are citations (with slight changes) from Justinus’ Histories:

54 Huigen (2007, Chapter 2) reworks Kolb’s observations into a table. Kolb visited the Cape, where he had access to Grevenbroek’s notes on the Khoi and supposedly also his library, before writing his own letter. This letter was based so heavily on Grevenbroek’s that contemporaries accused him of plagiarism (see Chapter 2). Kolb was not known for his astute mind or workmanship and was dismissed early from his position as astronomer (Huigen (2007, 37ff.)).

55 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 124). Bold highlights are mine, TM.
Aurum et argentum non perinde ac reliqui mortales adpetunt. Lacte et melle vesunctur. Lanae his usus ac vestium ignotus et quamquam continuis frigoribus urantur, pellibus tamen ferinis ac murinis utuntur. Haec continentia illis morum quoque iustitiam edidit, nihil alienum concupiscientibus; quippe ibidem divitiarum cupidus est, ubi et usus. [...] Tanto plus in illis proficit vitae orum ignoratio quam in his cognitio virtutis.

Gold and silver they despise, as much as other men covet them. They live on milk and honey. The use of wool and clothes is unknown among them, although they are pinched by perpetual cold; they wear, however, the skins of wild animals, great and small. Such abstemiousness has caused justice to be observed among them, as they covet nothing belonging to their neighbours; for it is only where riches are of use, that the desire of them prevails. [...] So much better effect has the ignorance of vice in the one people than the knowledge of virtue in the other.56

Justinus was known for his exhaustiveness, which made him a trusted source as a repertorium of the knowledge of the ancient world in later centuries. His work purportedly describes all peoples of the world, be they mythical, known first-hand or familiar from hearsay. Justinus here comments on the Scythians, a nomadic people that roamed the lands between modern-day Iran and the Black Sea. Widely known throughout the ancient world, they represented the archetype of a savage, wild people with little civil standing.57 Ten Rhyne applied Justinus’ comments about the Scythians to the Khoi. But whereas Justinus’ concluding words allow for a nuanced view of the ‘ignorant savage’, Ten Rhyne finds no mitigating circumstance for the ‘immania ingenia’ (‘savage minds’) of the Khoi.

Besides consulting Classical authors, Ten Rhyne also derived information about the Khoi from contemporary writers. For their character, for example, he is indebted to Georgius Hornius (Georg Horn), professor of history at Leiden University in Holland. Twenty years before Ten Rhyne’s treatise, Hornius wrote a history of the world featuring brief critiques of all peoples inhabiting it, in alphabetical order: Arca Mosis, sive Historia imperiorum et regnorum condito orbe ad nostra tempora (Moses’ ark, or: a history of the empire and rulers from the origins of the world up to our times) (1666). About the Africans, he wrote:

Africani sanguine sicco, calido: corpora nigro, adusto, capillo crispo et lanuginoso: leves, inconstantes, mendaces, dolosi, perfidi.

56 Justinus Histories 2.2, translation TM.
57 Justinus copied much information from these sources (like for the Scythians from Herotodus, Histories 4), oftentimes with little or no referencing. His Histories held so much information – many passages would nowadays be regarded as digressions – that it was also called Historiae Philippicae et Totius Mundi Origines et Terrae Situs (Philippic histories and the origins of the entire world and all of its lands). See Syme (1988).
The Africans are dry, hot blooded creatures: their bodies are black, indeed blackened by the sun, their hair is frizzy and downy: they are faithless, inconstant, lying, treacherous, and infamous.\textsuperscript{58}

Ten Rhyne’s description of the Khoi runs thus:

\textit{levitate} quippe, \& \textit{inconstantia}, \textit{mendacii}, fraudibus, \textit{perfidia} ac infamibus omnis libidinis curis turpissime exercentur

\textit{In faithlessness, inconstancy, lying}, cheating, \textit{treachery}, and infamous concern with every kind of lust they exercise their villainy.\textsuperscript{59}

Except for the replacement of ‘fraudibus’ with the synonym ‘dolosi’, this is a verbatim copy of Hornius. Notably, the Khoi are described in terms of their negation of Christian values but credited with a more ‘human’ character than the native Americans (‘Americani’), who, Hornius’ next entry shows, could apparently be described in two words: ‘barbari, anthropophagi’ (‘barbarians, man-eaters’).

Still, the Khoi were not deemed fully ‘human’. The description ‘capillo lanuginoso’ (‘woolly hair’) invokes the image of sheep that was commonplace in early modern Khoi iconography (see figure 2.1 and figure 2.2). As I argued in Chapter 2, comparisons with animals were no innocent imagery but part of a general animalisation of the indigenous. Resembling beasts, the Khoi could not be on a par with European (Christian) mankind. Ten Rhyne uses another simile involving animals taken from the third popular category of sources of information on the Khoi: earlier treatises. Amongst Ten Rhyne’s sources was a treatise on the Khoi written by Olfert Dapper, a fellow Dutchman, in 1668. For his description of the ornamentation (‘Cieraedjen’) of the Khoi, Dapper relied on a comparison with spaniels:

De mans hebben het hair verçiert met kopere plaetjes, duite, witte horentjes en grote kralen, en scheren dat op zommige plaetsen wat af, en laten dat hier en daer wat staen, byna op een zelve wijze, \textit{gelijk hier te lande de waterhonde geschoren worden}.

\textsuperscript{58} Hornius (1666, translation TM).
\textsuperscript{59} Farrington-Schapera (1933, 122).
The men have their hair decorated with small copper plates, doits [Dutch copper coins], small white horns and big coral beads. From some spots they shave it off altogether, leaving patches here and there, just like spaniels are shaven here at home.60

When, some 18 years later, Ten Rhyne comes to describe the clothing of the Khoi (‘De Vestimentis’), he incorporates the same comparison:

Communia ornamenta sunt vel capitis, vel quod uti nos villosos tondemus canes, in plenilunares, semilunares, stellares &c.

They commonly wear ornaments on their head, or else, as we do with poodles, they shave their hair into full moons, crescent moons, or stars.61

The application of the same motif by both authors seems too particular to be coincidental; I have not come across it in other literature.

Together, Ten Rhyne’s citations from Justinus, Hornius and Dapper illustrate the sources commonly mobilised in early modern writing about the Khoi. In an effort to meet the increasing demand for knowledge of foreign lands, writers and book sellers copied and collated information from their peers and predecessors.62 Although among the class of learned men in Europe an awareness had developed that not all knowledge contained in dictionaries and reference books was equally accurate, referencing was not yet expected practice.63 As I illustrated in Chapter 1, for the 21st century reader, this makes it very hard to find out when and how certain images came into being or (ethnographic) motifs in descriptions of the Khoi became fixed. Grevenbroek’s remark about ‘half-truths’ and rumour ‘that can hardly be haunted to transparency’ was at least partially motivated by his awareness that his personal observations did not match the existing corpus of writings about the Khoi.

60 Dapper (1668), Kaffrarie, of Lant der Hottentots, edited and translated in Farrington-Schapera (1933, 50). See my discussion of the comparison of Khoi speech with that of animals in Chapter 1.
61 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 118).
63 Grafton (1997, 192) describes the case of Pierre Bayle, who set out, in the early 1690s, to write the Historical and Critical Dictionary, intended as ‘a dictionary of all the mistakes in other works of reference. [...] Anything the reader learned elsewhere and would now find contradicted in Bayle, would be true’. Bayle himself described the plan as ‘worse than setting out to fight monsters. It’s trying to wipe out the Hydra’s heads: at the least it’s trying to clean to Augean Stables’. The Dictionary appeared in December 1696 and was enlarged in 1702 before becoming ‘the favourite reading matter of just about every literate European’ (Grafton 1997, 194). Grevenbroek, noting much the same problem with knowledge about the Khoi (see Chapter 3), wrote his letter a year earlier.
However, the vast majority of early modern Europeans that travelled to the Cape saw their horizon of expectations, based on book knowledge, confirmed, or at least interpreted the novel as an extension to the familiar opinion about the Khoi. Consequently, the anthropologist Margaret Hodgen writes in *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (1964) that, in opposing the civil European to the savage,

the accounts of Renaissance voyagers were almost unanimous. And how could they be otherwise? Sixteenth century theology and seventeenth-century rationalism, being what they were, gave little aid and comfort to a belief in the essential goodness of such examples of ‘primitive’, untutored humanity as were found in Africa and the Americas.65

A decade of empirical evidence convinced Grevenbroek that the early modern network of knowledge about the Khoi was far from fact. In his letter, he returns to Christian dogma and ancient sources in an effort to bypass the ‘rumours’ and ‘half-truths’ that have come to prejudice the European impression of the Khoi. For Grevenbroek, the two discourses together provide a consistent worldview into which his rehabilitation of the Khoi can be incorporated. The key terms ‘barbarus’ and ‘barbaritas’ – which occur multiple times in the passages cited above – illustrate how Grevenbroek appropriates concepts that spring from ancient Greek and Roman discourse to appreciate the Khoi as Christian man.

**A classical style Cape**

A central issue in exploring unchartered territory is how to cope with unfamiliar phenomena. For early modern European society, this issue arose with particular urgency in the encounter with ‘newly discovered’ peoples. It was resolved by assessing otherness through the self, taken as the standard of what it meant to be cultured (civil): to speak a certain language, practice a particular faith, live a virtuous life, etc.

In Chapter 2, I showed how Grevenbroek assimilates the Khoi into the European frame of reference as Christian brethren. In this section, I maintain that in addition he not only describes the Cape and the Khoi in Latin but adapts Classical nomenclature to a local

---

64 See Grafton (1992); Stagl (1995). Hodgen (1964, 354; 361-2) ponders: ‘Why the persistent effort to clothe savagery with documentary significance? […] The Church, with its distaste for the unconventional in marriage and funeral rites, not to mention the non-Christian in religion, may in this have exercised an overwhelming influence upon the explorers. Or it may be that, except for a few well-balanced minds, indelible memories of fantastic medieval ethnological lore made objective observations impossible’.

65 Hodgen (1964, 361).
context and to the supposed Christian roots of the Khoi. Providing an ‘authentic’ alternative to the ‘half-truths’ that had come into existence since antiquity, he renegotiates the paternalistic discourse about the Khoi and their place between man and savage in the chain of being. In part, he does this by explaining how the meaning of ‘barbari’ in relation to non-European people has shifted since antiquity. The Khoi are ‘barbari’ not in the early modern sense of savages, but in the Classical sense of ‘foreign’ to the life and customs of the viewer.

‘Barbari’ is Grevenbroek’s word of choice to refer to native people in and outside of the Cape (he uses it 41 times in his letter). The Europeans are never called ‘barbari’ but most frequently ‘Europaei’ (28 times).66 It is all too easy to interpret this opposition in the light of 21st century semantics. Indeed, Maria Boletsi and Christian Moser, in Barbarism Revisited. New Perspectives on an Old Concept (2015), observe that

> [s]ince the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the rhetoric of ‘barbarism versus civilization’ has taken center stage in Western political and public rhetoric. [...] Barbarism reinforces the discourse of civilization by functioning as its negative offshoot and antipode.67

They go on to write that the opposition differentiates ‘between a “good inside” and a “bad outside”, between a “we” that assures itself of its superior value by pitting itself against an “other” who is denied the achievement of civilization’.68 The viewer is thus able to evaluate the separation between the self and the other both spatially and in terms of civility.

For the conceptual historian Reinhart Koselleck, the spatial contrast has been a particularly powerful conceptual tool. In his paper ‘The Historical-Political Semantics of Asymmetric Counterconcepts’ (2004) he traces it back to Hellenistic times, where it separated the barbarian from the civil:

> From the sixth to the fourth centuries B.C. the conceptual couple of Hellene and Barbarian became a universal figure of speech which included all of humanity through assignation to one of two spatially separated groups. This figure was asymmetrical [...] The name of one people – the Hellenes – became the counterconcept for all the rest, who were assembled under a collective name which was simply the negative of Hellene.69

---

66 I refer to the masculine plural Latin form; this, however, includes all derived forms, i.e. feminine forms as well as adjectives.
67 Boletsi and Moser (2015, 11).
68 Boletsi and Moser (2015, 14). See also Boletsi (2013).
According to Koselleck, in post-ancient times a temporal characterisation developed from the spatial definition of a barbarian. A barbarian was seen as someone still embodying customs that had no legitimacy in the present, thus living in a different time, or put out of time by his customs and habits. The theory of the Noahiden repopulation of the world lent new urgency to the ancient model and expanded it to a temporal-geographical scheme. On this basis, Ten Rhyne ranks the primitive lower than the civil because the former embodies an earlier stage.

The temporal and spatial division between self and other also underpin Grevenbroek’s argument for the Khoi. Contrary to the dominant early modern understanding of the word, however, Grevenbroek saw in the Khoi clear signs of a virtuous lifestyle and of religion and law, which were major criteria in early modern ideas of civility. He argues that the Cape and its people are not aided by what his fellow Europeans may call civility. The conclusion to his letter should be interpreted in this key: ‘the land is sufficient onto itself’ (‘terram scias hanc suis contentam bonis’). By virtue of their separation in time and space, the Khoi are more authentically Christian and not degraded humanity.70

Given the temporal and spatial dimension of the concept of the barbaric and of the dominant judgment of the Khoi within a Christian framework, and given Grevenbroek’s use of the term ‘barbari’ and the Christian argument for Khoi humanity, one is directed towards the connotations the term ‘barbari’ has for him. These connotations become clear from his use of the word amidst related terms. In frequency, ‘barbarus’ in Grevenbroek is followed by ‘Afri’ (‘Africans’, 34 counts), and ‘gens’ (‘people’, ‘nation’, 17 counts).71 At the time of the Roman Empire, ‘Afer’ (plural: ‘Afri’) was a common term that referred to something or someone of or connected with (the province) Africa. ‘Gens’ was a generic term that denoted a group of people that shared in a particular heritage, such as a nation or family.72

Grevenbroek seems to adopt both terms without negative connotations. Yet, notably, he uses ‘Afri’ and ‘barbari’ in conjunction with specifiers like ‘hi’ or ‘noster’ (‘these’, ‘our’). For example, the opening of the letter first introduces its subject as ‘Afris nostris’ (‘our

---

70 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 291).
71 Other denominators all occur less than ten times. ‘Cisalpiní’ (four times, 184; 240; 254; 270), ‘Hottentotes’ (three times, title page: 178; 282), ‘transalpínes’ (two times, 256; 260), ‘íncola’ (once, 230), ‘inhabitantes’ (once, 252), ‘indígenae’ (once, 212). Specific peoples named are: ‘Magosi’ (nine times, Farrington-Schapera (1933, 196; 220; 224; 236; 252; 258; 280; 282)): ‘amaXhosa’, ‘Matimbi’, ‘Embi’, ‘Mapontes’ and ‘Makrugas’ (all once, 222).
72 Glare et alii (2012 sub voce ‘Afer’; sub voce ‘gens’).
Africans’). Notably, Grevenbroek exclusively uses specifiers, like pronomina in conjunction with a noun, for those living ‘in Promontorio Bonae Spei’ (‘on the Cape peninsula’). One could argue that such a use of pronomina is a merely convenient way to distinguish the Khoi from other ‘gentes Afric(an)ae’ living further afield. Yet, the semantics of the Latin pronouns, notably ‘nos’ and ‘noster’, seem to indicate otherwise.\(^73\)

In her paper ‘Roman Assimilations of the Other. Humanitas at Rome’ (1997), on encounters with ‘the Other’ in Roman antiquity, Susanna Braund finds it ‘striking’ that there is no widespread Latin word that defines the ‘us’ or ‘our’ of Roman culture. This, she surmises, ‘is presumably because it is the default, in the mouths of those who authored the texts that we read: it [humanitas] is ‘us’.’\(^74\) In Classical Latin, the Mediterranean Sea is simply ‘Mare nostrum’, and the emperor Claudius (1st century), according to the historian Tacitus (Annales 11.24), talks about all Italy – all its ‘terrae’ and ‘gentes’ – coalescing in ‘nomen nostrum’, ‘[all bearing] our name’. Does a similarly inclusive understanding govern Grevenbroek’s use of the pronoun for Cape natives? Seeing that Grevenbroek is arguing for Khoi (Christian) civility, it would seem that ‘Afris nostris’ (‘our Africans’) share in what dominant 17th century discourse about the Khoi defined as ‘our’ European Christian customs. If this is indeed the case, what does this mean for Grevenbroek’s understanding of the term ‘barbari’?

The main focus of Grevenbroek’s letter is on describing, in detail, the customs and habits of the people introduced to the reader as ‘Afris nostris’ in the opening argument, and whom I refer to under the umbrella term Khoi.\(^75\) As I showed in Chapter 1, already before Van Riebeeck an awareness developed among Europeans that the natives living on southern African shores were not one but in fact many peoples. Yet there existed little consensus as to how many there were, and there was even less agreement on how to tell them apart. In his 1668 treatise on the Khoi, Dapper mentions 11 different peoples by name, and Ten Rhyne, in 1686, mentions six. They have only two in common.\(^76\) Grevenbroek, in turn, distinguishes between those living ‘in Promontorio Bonae Spei’ and those who live not on

\(^{73}\) In Classical Latin, ‘hi’ ranks amongst the ‘most unmarked overt third person anaphors’ (Danckaert (2012, 223)).

\(^{74}\) Braund (1997, 26).

\(^{75}\) See A Note on Nomenclature.

\(^{76}\) See Appendix 2.
the peninsula but further inland.\textsuperscript{77} As noted in the previous section, despite making this distinction, Grevenbroek’s ultimate aim was to show that ‘virtue’ existed among all Africans, including those of west Africa considered most savage, whom he also includes in the term ‘Afris nostris’.

Although his letter concentrates on the natives living closest to the Castle, about whom most empirical evidence would have been available to him, Grevenbroek also dwells on the peoples further afield. As shown in the previous chapter, the three narratives at the letter’s centre are geared to supporting Grevenbroek’s argument that even the remotest people, most easily targeted by ‘rumour’, are virtuous. Grevenbroek collectively calls these people ‘Magosi’, and introduces them in the story of the wrecking of the \textit{Stavenisse}:

\begin{quote}
Novissimè famà accipiunt gentem, Promontorio nostro viciniorem, quotannis catervatim in Magosis (sic vocata regio in qua naufragi nostrates cum maxime hospitantur) […] confluere.
\end{quote}

Lastly they [the Dutch settlers] got rumour of a race, living near our Cape, who every year came in companies among the Magosi - this is the name of the people of the district in which our shipwrecked fellow-Europeans were principally entertained.\textsuperscript{78}

Grevenbroek mentions the ‘Magosi’ (always under this name) nine times, which is a significant number when weighed against the occurrence of other denominators. It is also significant that Grevenbroek only advances proper nouns for peoples that do not live on the Cape peninsula; for the ‘natives at the Cape’ he employs various denominators, many of which are more periphrastic and geographical.

Grevenbroek, being a learned man, must have been aware that there existed little consensus about distinguishing between the tribes at the Cape. In addition, making such distinctions could potentially contradict his argument that their seemingly diverging habits could be traced to a common Jewish root. Instead of distinguishing different peoples

\textsuperscript{77} Grevenbroek recalls how the Magosi told him that ‘four peoples were their neighbours, the Matimbi, Embi, Mapontes and Makriggas, the last being very warlike and living off plunder’. Farrington-Schapera (1933, 222): ‘huic quattor populosis confines esse, videlicet Matimbos, Embos, Mapontes, et Makriggas, hosque novissimos bellicosissimos, raptuque vivere’. Grevenbroek does not go into detail about these peoples. Dapper (1668) and Ten Rhyne (1686) include lengthier discussions about the Cape’s tribes and peoples (see Farrington-Schapera (1933)).

\textsuperscript{78} Farrington-Schapera (1933, 224). The Cape settlement did not have formal boundaries at the time. Farrington-Schapera (1933) identify the Magosi as the amaXhosa, a people that migrated into the Cape from the east, and that in Grevenbroek’s time lived further inland from the Cape peninsula.
Grevenbroek uses ‘barbari’ to refer to the natives that he knows quite well, who inhabit the peninsula:

\[ \text{Notus mihi Barbarus Gauda dictus (quo nomine Latinis Dama venit)} \]

\[ \text{A native I know goes by the name of Gauda (in Latin dama, or buck)} \]^{79}

Occasionally, ‘barbarus/-i’ is spelled with a capital letter, but this does not seem to refer to a particular person or people. ‘Barbari’ can also refer to previously unknown people living further away, as in Grevenbroek’s tale of a shipwrecked crew off the east coast of Africa in 1684:

\[ \text{Escendentem in terram inexploratam cum sociis, Barbari ex insidiis latebrisque inermibus assiliunt incautosque trucidant,} \]

[But] as they disembarked upon this unknown shore, the natives sprang out of ambush, fell upon them and cut them down unarmed and off their guard.\(^{80}\)

In discussing Grevenbroek’s use of ‘barbari’, it is important to note that the sole English translation of the letter does not reflect his terminology. Farrington variously renders ‘barbari’ as ‘natives’, ‘savages’ and ‘Hottentots’. ‘Afer’ is translated as ‘native’, ‘savage’ or ‘Hottentot’, in addition to the literal ‘African’. The three most common denominators in the translation are thus ‘natives’ (79 times), ‘savages’ (eight times), and ‘Hottentots’ (seven times), whilst Grevenbroek’s most common term for the settlers (‘Europaei’) is duly translated as ‘Europeans’.\(^{81}\) It seems that Farrington’s terminology was

---

\(^{79}\) Farrington-Schapera (1933, 204, translation TM). Italics as per the manuscript (MSB203).

\(^{80}\) Farrington-Schapera (1933, 218). Cf. Godée Molsbergen (1932, III.87ff.) for the full account.

\(^{81}\) The seven instances of ‘Hottentot’ in Farrington-Schapera’s English translation (1933) show the wide array of Latin captured in this term:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin Term</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| nostrorum Barbarorum | ‘our natives’; Farrington-Schapera (1933, 209): ‘our Hottentots’.
| Afrorum sedulam | ‘dedication of the Africans’; Farrington-Schapera (1933, 227): ‘the zealous aid of the Hottentots’.
| ipsos | ‘they’; Farrington-Schapera (1933, 239): ‘the Hottentots’.
| Afros | ‘Africans’; Farrington-Schapera (1933, 241): ‘the Hottentots’.
| linguam Hottentoticam | ‘the Hottentot speech’; Farrington-Schapera (1933, 283): ‘the language of the Hottentots’.
| Afris nostris | ‘our Africans’; Farrington-Schapera (1933, 287): ‘our natives (i.e. the Hottentots).’

135
informed by a different rationale than Grevenbroek’s – one expressive of the ethics of the time of translation. For readers of the 1930s, the word ‘barbarian’ had derogatory or pejorative connotations, which may have led Farrington to avoid it, despite the very different connotations of ‘Barbarus’ in Classical Greek and Latin.

Grevenbroek advances multiple other terms for ‘hi Barari in promontorio’ but all of these occur less than ten times. For example, he refers to the Khoi as ‘Cisalpini’, ‘those on this side of the mountain’, a borrowing from the ancient Romans applied to the Cape context. For the Romans, the Alps served as a natural barrier between those living on ‘this side’ ['cis’, i.e. the Roman side], and those living to their north – outside of the Italian peninsula. These peoples were collectively referred to by the Romans as the ‘Transalpini’, a term that Grevenbroek uses as well. This term makes clear that Grevenbroek views the Cape and its largely unexplored hinterlands in relation to the familiar, a familiar he notably puts at the Cape and not in Europe. The mountain range is in all likelihood the one of which the part closest to Cape Town is nowadays tellingly referred to as the Hottentots-Holland range (figure 3.1, next page). In the letter, Grevenbroek contrasts the ‘Cisalpini Afri’ with the ‘remotiiores Barbari’, ‘the more distant natives’, living on the far side of the mountain:

Variosque bulbos [...] Cisalpini Afri reponunt: remotiores caveas Barbari effodiunt, in quibus solerter ad aliquot annos frumentum asservant.

The natives on our side of the mountains bestow [various bulbs] [in ditches and caves]. The more distant natives dig storerooms in the earth in which they skilfully preserve corn for many years.82

It is worth stressing that Grevenbroek seems well-aware that a mountain ridge provides a natural barrier between people with diverging customs:

Potus nobis vicinis aqua at lacte, sed extimae gentes sitim insuper oxýgulo, alica, zýrho, ceriā, aut cervisiā levant

Our neighbours drink water and milk, but the distant tribes quench their thirst also with curds and various sorts of beer.83

In the introduction, translator’s note and footnotes, which accompany the text and translation, the Khoi are singularly referred to as ‘Hottentots’ – the word occurs 55 times in the footnotes. This is indicative of the discourse at the time of the translation and erases Grevenbroek’s framing of the native landscape.

82 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 184).
83 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 180).
Citimi proximè nos aderrantes, quiæ montibus superfusi vecticulariam vitam, avidamque abactores agunt, desertaque et humano cultu vacua sequuntur.

Our nearest neighbours, whose wanderings bring them quite close to us, and those who are scattered over the mountains, live in a hand-to-mouth existence as robbers and cattle-raiders.84

From the above, we can draw two tentative conclusions. Firstly, although a spatial dimension aids Grevenbroek’s distinction between the Magosi and the Khoi, it does not bear the evaluative connotations that Koselleck described for the ancient Greek use of ‘barbaritas’. Grevenbroek’s terminology does not invoke the contemporary temporal-evolutionary model that permitted a relative ranking of civility for different Africans in opposition to Europeans. His preferred terms, ‘Barbari’ and ‘Afri’, are generic and need a specifying pronomen or geographical denominator to denote a particular people. Secondly, passages comparing native tribes are relatively rare in Grevenbroek’s letter, which

---

84 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 254).

---

Figure 3.1 For Grevenbroek, the ‘Promontorio Bonae Spei’ (Cape of Good Hope peninsula) presumably extended to the Boland mountain range, indicated in red. The Hottentots-Holland area is just to the south-east of Stellenbosch – the village to which Grevenbroek retired – and some 45 kilometres from the Castle and modern-day Cape Town. The ‘Transalpini’ and Magosi dwelled on its far side. Map adapted from Sparrman, S. (1779), Mappa Geographica, [?].
concentrates on comparing Cape natives and settlers on ethical grounds and in relation to dominant ethnographical parameters of the time. His use of various terms, including ‘barbari’, for the same group of people appears to have no bearing on his central argument; it could be an aesthetic mannerism that, as Van Stekelenburg and Farrington argued (see previous section), showcases his eloquence or mastery of Latin.

For many ancient Roman authors, human beings existed in two forms, some living in the wild state and others, to their own advancement, in a cultured environment. The Romans Latinised ‘barbarus’ (plural ‘barbari’) after the Ancient Greek ‘barbaros’, an onomatopoeia that supposedly resembled the sound of non-Greek languages to Greek ears. If we follow the concept through the Hellenistic world, we see that ‘barbaros’ (βάρβαρος) gained meaning as the antonym of ‘politēs’ (πολιτής), citizen (derived from ‘polis’ (πόλις), city-state). Ancient writers have variously defined citizenship, among others in terms of education (παιδεία, ‘paideia’) and ‘humanitas’ (‘humanity’), and interpreted such qualities as learned or acquired (as opposed to being innate), or have related it to the city (Athens, Rome) as opposed to the rustic countryside. In what is arguably the term’s widest generality, ‘Οι Βάρβαροι (‘hoy barbaroy’, the barbarians) denoted ‘all non-Greek-speaking peoples’. Herodotus divided the world in those who speak Greek and the barbarians who do not. The Greek-Roman philosopher Plutarch (circa 46-circa 120) claimed that those barbarians who were defeated by Alexander the Great ‘would not have been civilised, had they not been vanquished’. The Greek historian Strabo (+/- 0) portrayed the Greco-Roman empire as an island of civilisation in a barbarian world. For him, barbarism was relative, like Christianity in the early modern interpretation of foreign peoples’ lives and manners: the further one proceeded to the edges of the world, away from the Mediterranean, the more barbaric its people.

---

85 See, for example, Vitruvius, On Architecture 2, praefatio, 5; Cicero, On moral Ends 5.19.54.
86 Greek and Roman conceptions of otherness are potentially enormous subjects which have been discussed quite extensively. See, for example, Rieks (1967, 14-23) for a useful overview of earlier scholarship on ‘barbaritas’.
87 Braund (1997, 21ff.) provides a useful overview of the term ‘humanitas’ in Classical literature.
88 Liddell, Scott, and Jones (2002, sub voce βάρβαρος).
89 Herodotus, Histories 4.16-32 (on the Scythians.) Herodotus reflects the vast spectrum of what was seen to constitute barbarity in ancient times. He scrutinises, for example, two ‘barbarian’ cultures on opposite ends of the spectrum of perceived civility, the Scythians and the Egyptians. Besides concluding that peoples from the east are more effeminate than those from the west, he does not impose any negative evaluations. Indeed, the objective of his Historiae was ‘to record the astonishing achievements both of Greeks and non-Greek peoples’.
90 Plutarch, Moralia 328F (on the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander).
91 Strabo, Geography, Conclusion.
The concept of the barbarian, then, distinguished one people from another both geographically and in terms of manners and customs, but was not part of a definite ranking of bestiality, common in many early modern evolutionary models.\textsuperscript{92} When Koselleck observes that, in ancient Greece, the barbarian was the asymmetrical counter-concept of the Hellene, he does not suggest that the void created by the absence of the qualities that define the self is filled by an alternative or definite set of ethnographic parameters. Indeed, the qualities attributed to the barbarians throughout antiquity were always changing: to the Greeks, being effeminate was barbarian, but Caesar described the barbaric Gallic nations as dangerous, masculine, warriors.\textsuperscript{93} Similarly, Braund concludes that the Romans did not have a well-defined idea of ‘humanitas’, other than that it was the ‘Romanitas’ that distinguished Romans from non-Romans. Grevenbroek’s use of the term ‘barbarus’ has connotations of unpolishedness in relation to the (European) self, but does not imply a ‘negative offshoot and antipode’, or a ‘bad outside’ in opposition to a ‘good inside’ (Boletsi and Moser, cited above). In that sense, he adapts aspects also found in ancient uses of the term to a Cape context and to his argument for the Khoi, thereby defying the dominant 17th century understanding of the term in relation to a non-European people.

In one telling example, Grevenbroek uses the term to refer to fellow settlers who served as informants for his letter. Although he does not explain what their ‘barbara lingua’ exactly entails, the settlers are said to be of little wit (‘cum nihil intelligent’):

quippe multa elutriata in hebetes quarti imo quinti interpretis aures, et effutita audaci, temeraria et barbará linguá, credentium se narrare apprimè intelligere, cum nihil intelligent,

Many statements have been filtered through the dull ears of four or five interpreters, and then poured forth in a bold, rash, and barbarous style by men who believed they understood what was told them, though they really understood nothing.\textsuperscript{94}

Here, Grevenbroek uses ‘barbara’ not to exclude the men from civilisation altogether, but to mock them as ignorant, in order to underline his main argument that the Khoi are more authentically Christian – and more civilised – than the settlers.

\textsuperscript{92} Rubel (2016, 43-53).
\textsuperscript{93} Caesar, The Gallic War 1.1. The Roman author Tacitus (1\textsuperscript{st}-2\textsuperscript{nd} century), in his Germania, used the barbaric Germans as a mirror to his fellow Romans: they were surely wild, but at least they were courageous and chaste and practiced virtues that the Roman had forgotten – arguably an ancient antecedent to the early modern noble savage (see Chapter 2).
\textsuperscript{94} Farrington-Schapera (1933, 298).
Elsewhere in the letter, Grevenbroek refers to the language of the Magosi as ‘barbarorum’:

[L]inguaeque barbarorum peritus, multa de origine, legibus, moribusque hujus gentis, eamque Magoses appellari, aliaque scitu digna, discit.

Being now skilled in the native tongue he learned much of their origin, laws, and customs, and, together with much else worth knowing, that they were called Magosi.95

Farrington’s translation of ‘lingua barbarorum’ as ‘native tongue’ is apt, as no negative judgment of the language is implied, only its belonging to ‘the Other’. The Magosi language can be learned and is capable of conveying important information. Grevenbroek’s comment implicitly repeats his argument for first-hand empirical evidence as a privileged foundation for knowledge of the other, who is placed outside the dominant European culture but not considered unhuman, unpolished or uncivilised.

This is underlined by Grevenbroek’s account of the rescued sailors in one of the framed narratives, where ‘Barbaris’ is used in the early modern sense of savages only for that sense to be refuted:

Solus Laurentius Matthei F. vulgò Laurens Thijis, faber lignarius moribundus ab Afris, natione magis quam ratione Barbaris, reperitur […]

Only Laurens, son of Matthew, commonly known as Laurens Thijis, a carpenter, survived to be discovered in a dying state by the Africans, savages in name but not in nature […]96

In translating ‘Barbaris’ as ‘savages’, Farrington indicates that this was how the Africans were commonly seen. In Grevenbroek’s view, however, Laurens survived because the natives were not savages at all. Rather, they had preserved a more authentic Christian ‘nature’ (‘ratione’) than the settlers.

Elsewhere, too, Grevenbroek presents examples of Christian values that he finds in the habits of the so-called ‘barbari’. For example, he expresses his amazement that natives, after a day’s work at the Castle, share their wages (bread, tobacco, etc.) with the entire tribe. ‘A Barbaris certare beneficiis Christiani discant’, he comments: ‘Let the Christians learn

95 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 220). The ‘he’ is a Dutch boy who grew up with the natives. Farrington-Schapera (1933, 220) suggests that Grevenbroek derived much of his information from this boy.
96 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 232).
from the natives to vie with another in well-doing’.

The contrast he makes with Christians is significant, as Christian (civil) man constituted the benchmark against which other peoples’ civility was assessed. Grevenbroek here triggers reflection upon the set of norms and values that has come to define European life and customs. In the comparison of European jewellery with the Khoi hanging entrails around their neck to cure diseases (see Chapter 2), too, this set of norms and values is depicted as empty, un-pragmatic, and vain, with the barbari showing themselves to be truer Christians.

In another example, Grevenbroek tells of a European boy brought up in a native tribe after losing track of his friends. The tribal King’s son set the boy up for punishment, but Grevenbroek reports that the king found out about his son’s wickedness. His conclusion again engages contemporary discourse about the Khoi only to reverse it:

‘Alteri non faciendum quod sibi factum nolit. Adoptatitium hunc filium fraterno amore, omnibus officiis, studio, humanitate benevolentiaque sibi complectendum discat’. [...] Barbarus nomine [dixit], sed re multis Christianis humanior.

‘Do not do to others what you would not they should do to you. Keep the laws of hospitality inviolate. Learn to regard this adopted son of mine with a brotherly love, and treat him with all duty, zeal, kindness and goodwill’. [...] [Said] He, who was in name a savage but in fact more humane than many Christians.

Grevenbroek indicates that humane judgment is something not typically expected from ‘barbari’ in the early modern sense of the word, and explicitly states that the tribal King is ‘humanior’ (‘more humane’) than their Christian assessors. In the Cape context Grevenbroek endows the Roman term in reference of the self, ‘humanitas’, with Christian connotations: adopted children should be treated ‘with brotherly love’ (‘fraterno amore’). Through the empirical evidence of the story of the humane King who endorses Christian values, Grevenbroek argues that to describe the Khoi as ‘barbarus’ in the early modern sense is to deny their apparent virtue. Thus, he not only re-interprets and re-assesses Khoi culture, but also turns the European benchmark for assessing the seemingly non-Christian into a measure of the Europeans themselves, to which the Cape settlers cannot live up.

This example also illustrates that Grevenbroek’s concept of ‘barbarus’ is consistent with the spatial dimension that Koselleck associates with its use in Classical Greek times, as

---

97 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 272).
98 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 220).
well as with the temporal dimension characteristic of its post-antique use: the Khoi are located at a physical distance from European culture, and have been so for considerable time. Yet, in contrast with what the dominant discourse of Grevenbroek’s time about the Khoi suggested, to him this is a good thing, as it means that the Khoi have preserved the Christian roots more authentically and purely.

As in the concept of ‘barbarus’, Classical heritage and a Christian understanding also converge in Grevenbroek’s use of the term ‘virtus’. In the previous chapter, I already showed how the letters of the Stoic philosopher Seneca occupy a central place in Grevenbroek’s framing of his letter. The following passage from one of the three framed narratives discussed in Chapter 2 allows for an illustration of the way in which Grevenbroek’s view of society engages a Stoic understanding of ‘virtus’: ‘virtue can exist among savages of any sort, even the most rude, and in the midst of this wild race of men’ (‘tradam qualiscunque inter Barbaros maximè inconditos, et agreste hoc hominum genus, possit esse virtus’).99 The final word in the Latin is highlighted by its position: ‘virtus’. Originally bearing on male (‘vir’) qualities in early Roman times, ‘virtus’ became a key term in Stoic doctrine in the first century. Within the cosmos (the world around mankind), virtue was a faculty that had been bestowed upon the human species, just as animals, in their turn, were equipped with the instincts necessary to their survival. By making the word ‘virtus’ a defining trait of ‘barbaros maxime inconditos’, Grevenbroek underlines his point that the Khoi, though seemingly ‘the rudest savages’, are not beasts but men. In the terms of Seneca’s philosophy, this put the Khoi on a par with the European settlers in terms of their place in the cosmos.

In reading Seneca’s famous letter on slavery (47), the modern reader is surprised to find that Stoic philosophy had no problem with it from an ethical point of view. In his paper ‘Humanitas: Romans and Non-Romans’ (1993), Paul Veyne maintains that the Stoics were aware that ‘barbarians and slaves were two-legged creatures without feathers who belonged to the human race’.100 Barbarians, like slaves, are no less human than the people in other social classes, for all are driven by an innate virtue. In the famous simile of the stone arch, Seneca articulates his argument for the commonality of humankind: the arch

99 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 230).
100 Veyne (1993, 346).
would collapse if the stones did not mutually support each other.\textsuperscript{101} This image makes clear that mankind is one, and must act for the benefit of all, because, as Veyne puts it, virtue alone ‘made possible the mode of existence that natural determinism had foreseen for the human species’.\textsuperscript{102} In Grevenbroek’s letter, Christianity and Stoic philosophy outline a similar model for mankind: the Khoi chiefs, the natives who saved Laurens, and ultimately also the settlers all have engrained in them a tendency to act virtuously and humane.

The Stoics remarked (as did many early modern Europeans) that mankind holds a different place in the cosmos from animals, and they also observed that individuals have unequal capacities. Already in antiquity, the problem was to decide which was more important: mankind’s common nature or the differences? In early modern times, newly discovered peoples lent renewed urgency to these questions. As I argued in Chapters 1 and 2, the issue of how to deal with a growing number of greatly divergent peoples found expression in the hierarchical separation of heavenly creatures, men, animals and dead matter in the chain of being, and in the inclusion of additional tiers between men and animals.

Although Grevenbroek concedes that there are differences in customs between the cis- and transalpines, like Seneca with his image of the stone arch, he emphasises similarity over difference. According to Michel Foucault, similarity rather than difference was the principal mode of organisation in early modern Europe; in his study Les Mots et les Choses (\textit{The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences}) (1966), he maintains that starting in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, principles of analogy allowed researchers to uncover ‘underlying’ equivalences and resemblances between a familiar and an unfamiliar subject.\textsuperscript{103} Indeed, analogies were necessary devices for understanding ‘pagan’ peoples, who were positioned as having spent extended periods of time outside Ethiopia and away from the Christian centre of the world. As I explained above, the possibility of assimilating the pagan to the Christian was assumed through the analogy with the ancients. Acosta exemplifies this when he summarises his impression of the peoples of the New World:

\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Epistles} 95.52-53.
\textsuperscript{102} Veyne (1993, 348).
\textsuperscript{103} Foucault (1966, Chapter 3).
And if any one wonder at some fashions and customs of the Indies, and will scorn them as foolees or abhore them as devilish and inhumane people, let him remember that the same things, yea worse, have been seen among the Greeks and the Romans, who commanded the whole world[.]

Both Acosta and Grevenbroek base their appreciative judgment of foreign peoples on the example of the ancients, who not only ruled the world, but also, in the case of the Romans, were the one great pagan people that came to embrace Christianity.

Grevenbroek’s main concern was with establishing the Christian lineage of the Khoi, which ensured their inclusion in the Godly ‘virtus’. The more practical consequences of his observations about the order of man he leaves for others to discuss. Thus, when he has made his point about the native languages having links to Hebrew, he does not engage in an exhaustive discussion of the native languages, but moves to another topic:

[in Magosis quam hic apud Afros nostros] discriment pateat, liceatque aliquando (si libet) alteri cuidam Bochardo, exoticarum linguarum perito, eorumdem originem indigare, videlicet.

The difference between the [Magosi and our Africans] will be obvious, and we may, if you please, leave to some future Bochard, skilled in strange tongues, the task of tracing out their origin.

Grevenbroek, like the Stoics and many Church fathers before him, provides an outline of what he believes to be the organising principles of mankind, including Khoi, settlers, and indeed any people in the world. His concern was, in Stoic terms, with the order of the cosmos – in Veyne’s words, ‘the natural theatre of all peoples, Greek or barbarians’ – in which his combined Christian and ancient frameworks allowed him to also include the Khoi. Grevenbroek’s ‘barbarus’ embodies Classical connotations: the Khoi may seem foreign to the European settlers but they are no less human. Although Christian and ancient thought may appear as separate fields in the majority of 21st century scholarship, for Grevenbroek they were part of a continuous history of Christianity, together providing the alpha and omega in interpreting the world, and the place of the Khoi in it.

Exposing ‘Hottentot’

I cannot close my discussion of Grevenbroek’s nomenclature for the Khoi without elaborating on that contested word encountered so often in the works of his

---

104 Acosta (1590, II.306), quoted from Ryan (1981, 150).
105 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 280).
contemporaries, which also features in the title of the letter: the Cape natives, ‘commonly called Hottentots’ (‘Vulgo Hottentotten nuncapatae’). The term ‘Hottentot’ has its origins the 16th century and reflects the perceived inferior position of the Khoi race: it is believed to be an onomatopoeia for the clucking of a brood hen. In the letter proper, Grevenbroek only uses the word twice. I have argued elsewhere that the title page was added by someone other than Grevenbroek and that the title itself is misleading, insofar as the use of a word from the dominant discourse about the Khoi creates false expectations about the letter’s tone and aim. The two occurrences of the word ‘Hottentot’ in the letter proper therefore stand out and warrant further analysis. In both cases, it appears that Grevenbroek plays on the term’s animalistic connotations to mock the Dutch. Implicitly, he is able to show that the word reflects no knowledge of the Khoi, and he suggests that the ‘echo chamber of discourse’ has filled the term with animalist half-truths. Grevenbroek exposes the emptiness of the word ‘Hottentot’ and of much early modern discourse about the Khoi, thereby underlining his argument for a revised framework to appreciate their humanity.

The first instance of the word occurs several pages into the letter, when Grevenbroek has already introduced the Cape natives to the reader as ‘Afri’ (‘Africans’), ‘Barbari’ (‘natives’), and ‘qui Promontorio nostro proximi’ (‘those who live closest to this peninsula’). So far, Grevenbroek has praised qualities of the Khoi. Their eyesight, for example, he has claimed to exceed that of ‘that Sicilian, who, if we may believe Strabo [an ancient Greek geographer and historian, circa 0], did from the Lilybaean promontory count the vessels of the Carthaginian fleet’. He next turns to Khoi feeding habits, writing:

Lanam quam Hottentorum ovibus spissam natura negavit, hanc (res miratu digna!) pro capillitio eis datam, ovesque musimones, aut capillatas dicerem: quarum femura docto quorundam delicatulorum nostratium summique fastidii palato, non aequo ac Europaeorum vervecum armi, salivam detestabili fastu movent.

Dense wool, like that [hair] of the Hottentots, nature denies to the sheep, which (it’s worthy of marvel!) they [the Hottentots] have been gifted with for hair, and the sheep I should call wild sheep, or hairy sheep: sheep thighs move the saliva on the learned palate of our countrymen because of the

---

107 See my remarks about the animalisation of the Khoi and their ‘natural state’ in Chapter 1.
108 Maas (2017). It is important to reiterate here that Grevenbroek’s use of the term ‘Hottentot’ is more restricted than Farrington-Schapera’s translation (1933) of his letter suggests.
109 The Roman author Pliny (1st century) in his Natural History (8.199) refers to a unique and particularly hairy type of sheep or mountains goat as ‘musmo’.
In comparison to surrounding passages, the Latin is confused. The single sentence covers two topics – Khoi hair and Khoi taste – by relying on one term of comparison: sheep. Indeed, the animalisation of the Khoi in the opening clause, which compares their hair with sheep’s wool, echoes through the remainder of the sentence and invokes the image of the uncouth, wild, hairy native that dominated early modern thinking about the Khoi.111 In fact, Grevenbroek claims that Khoi hair is frizzier than the sheep’s, before transferring the image of hairiness and uncivility back onto the sheep, which he calls wild (‘musimones’) and hairy (‘capillatas’). One could argue that Grevenbroek needs the reference to what is known (sheep) to describe the unknown (Khoi hair) to a presumed European audience, yet the animalisation is essential to the mockery that follows.

In the next clause, Grevenbroek transitions to discussing food. The relative pronoun ‘quarum’ draws in the sheep and the image of their hairiness. Indeed, the assertion that the sheep are hairy and uncouth now creates a meaningful contrast: the mutton (‘quarum femura’) is opposed with the ‘learned palate of our countrymen’ (‘nostratium […] docto […] palato’). When a European is exposed to mutton, saliva does not flow in appreciation of it, but, it is implied, in disapproval, which Grevenbroek qualifies as ‘loathsome’. Here, it becomes clear that the passage is in fact not a criticism of Khoi habits but of Europeans’ acquired taste and lack of appreciation for native food. Khoi food is disapproved of (‘detestabili’) by the Europeans but this disapproval in itself is considered loathsome (‘fastu’), as items such as sheep’s thighs are ‘delicacies and items of the highest taste’ (‘quorundam delicatulorum nostratium summique fastidii’). Note that in the text the ‘docto … palato’ ‘embraces’ the morsels: a learned European palate, Grevenbroek seems to imply, should appreciate such delicacies. Yet, the settlers apparently reject the mutton because it does not taste like beef shoulder. Grevenbroek thus mocks the settlers by playing with a key

---

110 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 178). Translation TM. Farrington’s translation renders the Latin quite freely: ‘It is a notable fact that nature has adorned the heads of the Hottentots with the thick wool she has denied to their sheep. The sheep I should describe as musimones, or hairy. A leg of the local mutton does not, owing to their hateful gourmandise, tempt the nice palate of our dainty countrypmen so powerfully as a shoulder of European lamb.’ Also, the manuscript has ‘Hottentotorum’ for ‘Hottentorum’. Farrington (1933, 169) asserts that he has purged the text of errors, but the the 17th century Dutch Hottento is the older (and original) form of Hottentot. Cf. Den Besten (2007, 45)n49).
111 Herodotus (Histories 3.114; 7.69-70), cited above, also referred to the western Ethiopians as woolly-haired.
image in the European animalisation of the Khoi, which is also part of the name ‘Hottentots’. An opposition of the ‘Europaei’ with ‘Barbari’, for example, would not have had the desired effect, as it is the term Hottentot that embodies the animalist imagery and prejudices (‘half-truths’) that Grevenbroek seeks to challenge.

At this point, I want to return to the letter’s comparison of European jewellery with the sheep’s intestines hung around Khoi necks. There, too, the Khoi are, seemingly conventionally, brought together with animality (through the mention of sheep), only to enable Grevenbroek to show up the Europeans, who fail to acknowledge that the intestines are part of Khoi medicine, while the Khoi astutely note that European jewellery serves no such practical purpose. In this way, Grevenbroek makes clear that Europeans interpret such ‘empty luxury’ (vanity) as a sign of civility, whilst in fact it is less authentic (and less Christian) than the Khoi custom, which the Europeans reject, blinded by a wrongful sense of superiority.

Yet, Grevenbroek’s engagement with the Hottentot image is more than a way to mock European attitudes. By explicitly alluding to the animalist grounding of the term, he breaks open the stereotype, exposing it to scrutiny and renegotiation. In his documentary film Representation and the Media (2005), Stuart Hall observes that a stereotype entails closure in representation: ‘[a stereotype] naturalizes the representation to the point where you cannot see that anybody ever produced it’. Hall points out that one purpose of language is to (re)establish meaning through (re)interpretation, thus allowing for meaningful knowledge production about the world around us. However, the effect of ideology, which Hall describes as ‘power that intervenes in language’, is ‘to close language, to close meaning, to stop the flow’. Ideology freezes the world and how we see it represented. Ideology precribes an image rather than producing knowledge. For Hall, stereotyping is ‘an attempt to fix’ through such an image. A stereotype, then, is ‘empty’ because knowledge production has ceased and because it contains no inherent knowledge of the subject that it defines. In Grevenbroek’s time, ‘Hottentots’ embodied such a stereotype, sustained by the power of the ideology of the superior European self.

The possibilities to contest a stereotype are few. According to Hall, there is ‘a problem in attempts to reverse stereotypes’ by representing the negative group in a more

---

112 Hall (2005, 21).
113 Hall (2005, 19).
positive way, by negating, as it were, the negative.\textsuperscript{114} Besides the obvious stalemate that oppositional discourse can lead to, there is also the issue that the positive image exists by virtue of the negative one, and as such, is equally ‘empty’ as the negative stereotype.\textsuperscript{115} For Hall, the best way to contest a stereotype is ‘to occupy the very terrain which has been saturated by fixed and close representation and to try to use the stereotypes and turn the stereotypes in a sense against themselves’.\textsuperscript{116} By opening up the practice of representation, the emptiness of the image comes to the fore, and the stereotype can be made to turn against itself.

In his letter, Grevenbroek engages the stereotype to precisely this epistemological effect. Like many contemporaries, he uses the stereotype, or ‘half-truth that has never been haunted to transparency’, in the animalist context that has saturated it. Yet, he draws attention to the term’s connotations and the knowledge that it seemingly imparts on the subject by using it for the first time in his letter in this particular context, moreover transferring notions of beastliness and uncivility back from the Khoi to their beasts and the food, and ultimately to the European settlers. This transfer of imagery exposes the emptiness of the term ‘Hottentot’, which is shown not to generate any knowledge or meaningful understanding of the Khoi – quite the opposite. Throughout the letter, Grevenbroek tries to revivify or unfix the image of the Khoi by arguing for their humanity. He moves away from the early modern ideological discourse about the Khoi that has empowered a stereotypical image, showcasing a thorough understanding of the stereotype’s ideological power, and creates a new image by strategically drawing on Christian and Classical frameworks.

The second instance of ‘Hottentot’ in the letter also serves this aim. Again, Grevenbroek invokes an archetypical animalist connotation of the term by building on the premise it reflects the guttural sounds and clicks in the Khoi languages, which seemed incomprehensible to European ears, warranting a ranking of its speakers with the beasts, or between beasts and man. In the passage in question, Grevenbroek advances ‘Hottentot’ in

\textsuperscript{114} Ibidem, emphasis in text.
\textsuperscript{115} Rosello (1998, 26) similarly argues that it is ‘useless and even dangerous’ to assume that ‘the opposition between positive images and negative images can function equivalently to the opposition between stereotypes and more truthful representations’.

\textsuperscript{116} Hall (2005, 21).
an opposition with the settlers in order to mock the European mentality and once more expose the term’s emptiness:

Mea sententia nostrates hic citius expeditiusque Hottentoticam addiscent linguam, quam Barbari Belgico commodè loqui sermone scient: more proh dedecus! praepostero, cum merito Belgas non latere deberebant, quam firmum sit unionis vinculum linguae commerces, illudque esse ingens adminiculum populis in officio et quiete continensis: exemplo veterum Romanorum in suis provinciis, et cum maximè Hispanorum Lusitanorumque in utraque tam orientali quam occidentali India probatissimo; sed pudet scribere nostros plurimum ad opes et luxuriam magis, quam ad commodum utilitatemque publicam spectaret, qui quum merito omnes curas, vigilias cogitationesque suas in Provinciae hujus salutate configerent.[1]

In my opinion the Dutch here will more quickly and expeditiously learn the language of the Hottentots, than the natives will acquire a good speaking knowledge of Dutch. This, alas, is the reverse of what ought to obtain. The Dutch ought to be aware how firm a bond of union a common language is, and how powerful a means it is of keeping peoples loyal and peaceful. We have the authoritative precedent of the ancient Romans, and more especially of the Spaniards and Portuguese in the Indias, east and west. But, I am ashamed to say, our countrymen for the most part pay more heed to gain-getting and soft living than to the public advantage and good. They ought to devote all their cares, all their thoughts, all their working hours to the well-being of this province[.]117

As in the passage on Khoi hair and food, the paragraph on language consists of a single Latin sentence, but here the ethnographic topic at stake is communicated immediately, as well as Grevenbroek’s position. In the first part of the sentence, ‘nostrates’ (‘the Dutch’, literally: ‘our people’) is contrasted with ‘Hottentoticam [...] linguam’ (‘the language of the Hottentots’, literally: ‘the Hottentot(ic) language’). In the second part of the sentence the two peoples to be compared (‘barbari’ and the settlers that speak the ‘belgico [...] sermon’ (‘the Netherdutch language’) are repeated in a chiasmus. This inverted parallelism is the first step in the mockery that follows: by 1695, history has already shown that the Khoi sooner acquire a speaking knowledge of Dutch than the other way around, but Grevenbroek claims that the opposite will be the case. Next, Grevenbroek provides examples from history in which the native population learned the settler’s language and was thereby kept peacefully in its place (‘in officio et quiete’). Grevenbroek ranks the Dutch among the authoritative Romans and the successful Spanish and Portuguese colonisers. Yet there is one fundamental difference between the Dutch and their predecessors, Grevenbroek suggests: the Dutch are too focused on making ‘a quick buck’ for themselves to create a ‘bond of union’ through language with the natives. As a consequence of this attitude, the Dutch will

find themselves speaking ‘Hottentotic’ before the natives will master the ‘civil’ language. The truthfulness of his claim is beside the point: what Grevenbroek wants to convey is that the Dutch approach to colonisation will see them assimilated into what they consider the negation of their civility.

The English translation, I want to contend, underplays Grevenbroek’s mockery. Farrington, quoted above, interprets the passage as entailing a criticism of Dutch ignorance and gain-getting, but as still keeping Grevenbroek on the side of the Dutch subjugation of the Khoi. Significantly, in the Latin text, ‘nostrates’ and ‘Belgico sermone’ embrace the ‘Hottentoticam linguam’ of the ‘barbari’. One could argue that Grevenbroek thus underlines the urgency of a Dutch effort to make the Khoi learn Dutch, which would aid the settlement’s success as a refreshment station. Yet, Grevenbroek is not concerned with the comparative difficulty of the languages or the language-learning abilities of the Dutch or the natives and he does not seek to rank the languages with respect to their degree of civility, as would be the aim of most ethnographic treatises of his time. Also, his concern is not with the VOC’s success. The Khoi, he argues in his letter, are more authentically Christian than the Dutch settlers, and their language must therefore also be more authentically Christian than the Dutch language – this he proves elsewhere through correspondences with Hebrew, as I discussed in Chapter 2. Consequently, against the ‘Hottentot’ stereotype, it will not harm the Dutch if they adopt the Khoi language, as it would bring them closer to their Christian roots. The language and this Christian insight is what the Dutch ought to ‘devote all their cares, all their thoughts, all their working hours to’. Indeed, this would be to the benefit of the province as a whole (‘Provinciae hujus salutate’).

Grevenbroek needs the stereotyped term to expose the ignorance; ‘Hottentot’ is literally a beastly onomatopoeia. He shows that the term ‘Hottentot’ is short-sighted insofar as it conveys no actual knowledge of the Khoi language, or of the course of history. He exploits this ignorance by turning around a fact from recent history: it has already been proven that the Khoi have mastered the Dutch language. Grevenbroek reopens the framing of the Khoi by implicitly bringing to the fore the Christian roots of their language. The chiasmus and Grevenbroek’s play on historical ignorance show the stereotype to be ‘empty’, and point out its ideological power. To adopt Hall’s terminology, Grevenbroek turns the ‘Hottentot’ stereotype against itself. This allows him to refill the term from a Christian
understanding of the history of the world and evolution of the world’s peoples, and renegotiate its connotations.

Both occurrences of the word ‘Hottentot’, then, turn the term’s ideological power against the ‘echo chamber of the discourse of the Cape’ it is an icon of. An educated man like Grevenbroek could not let the word go unmentioned in a treatise that seeks to break with ‘half-truths that were never haunted to transparency’. Without providing a definition or direct critique of the term ‘Hottentot’ (or any other term) and without fleshing out the precise ‘rumours’ or ‘half-truths’ about the Cape he is challenging, he illustrates that the term contains no inherent knowledge of the topic under discussion by advancing it in the contexts it supposedly sprang from: those of animalist sounds and beastly feeding habits. Thus relying on empirical evidence, a Christian framework, and ancient worldviews, Grevenbroek in his letter renegotiates the dominant early modern European image of the Khoi. He reinterprets the ‘Hottentot’ as an authentic ‘barbarus’ and therefore embodies a leap forward in the Revolution of Knowledge.

**Conclusion**

I have argued in this chapter that Grevenbroek’s letter presents a significant break with the half-truths he seeks to counter and, as such, with the writings of centuries of European travellers and philosophers who reported on civilisation in the southern hemisphere. Firstly, Grevenbroek benefited from a uniquely long posting at the Cape as secretary to the Council of Policy. He could put his trust in a decade’s worth of empirical observation, which convinced him that his experiences with the Khoi *in situ* did not line up with much of the extant body of literature about them. His personal understanding of the Khoi is the starting point for his claim in the letter’s introduction that his ‘rash Muse was swept away by youthful prejudices about the Khoi’.

Being a learned man, it is not surprising that Grevenbroek, for his reinterpretation of the Khoi as having virtue, relies not only on empirical observation but also on Classical sources and Christian dogma. The idea of a common origin of mankind provided a crucial foundation for Grevenbroek’s argument for Khoi humanity, allowing him to argue that the Khoi have preserved a purer and more authentic Christianity than the settlers.

In this chapter I have shown that there is an epistemological dimension to Grevenbroek’s literary play and intertextuality with the Classics that belies their
interpretation as mere ‘pedantic’ stylistic mannerisms. Most notably, Grevenbroek strategically renegotiates aspects from Classical frameworks designed to deal with otherness to the Cape circumstance. Although ‘barbaric’ in Grevenbroek’s adopted Classical sense bears connotations of being unpolished, foreign and outside the ‘civil’ self of the judging society, this does not exclude the Khoi from the rank of man. Grevenbroek’s recourse to the Classical ‘barbarus’ allows him to offer a fundamentally different interpretation of the Khoi from major authors of his time such as Ten Rhyne, Dapper and Kolb.

The two occurrences of the term ‘Hottentot’ in the letter make apparent Grevenbroek’s genuine concern with producing truthful knowledge about the Khoi. He does not deny or oppose stereotypes directly, but through examples makes apparent that ‘rumours’ cannot be traced to their source, carry no inherent knowledge about the topic, and are sustained only by the ideological power of the ‘echo chamber’ about the Cape. By employing the stereotypes and turning them against themselves, Grevenbroek exposes their ‘emptiness’, thus problematising the very process by which the European framing of the Khoi had taken shape. His ancient and Christian frameworks enable him to meaningfully renegotiate the image of the Khoi. The dominant frameworks of the time are thus not replaced but centuries of re-interpretation of Classical and Christian texts is bypassed. In this way, Grevenbroek’s letter represents a major step forward in the Revolution of Knowledge. He may revert to the Christian and ancient library, but uses its knowledge, in combination with his personally acquired, empirical observation, to develop a new image of the Khoi that challenges the discourse of his time from an epistemological concern with the nature of knowledge. It makes apparent the conflict between those who sought to continue to interpret the world in the line of tradition and those who championed empirical research that would continue until well into the 18th century. In the next chapter, I discuss the (re)interpretation of Grevenbroek’s letter and life in the postcolonial context of the 21st century in Dan Sleigh’s Afrikaans historical novel Eilande (2002) which was published in English as Islands (2004).
Chapter 4
Postcolonialism and the Historical Novel: Grevenbroek and the Early Cape in *Eilande*

Maar jy kan nooit vertel sodat iemand ten volle begryp nie, want die hoorder sit in sy eie droom gevang. Only, one can never tell [history] in such a way that understanding is complete, because the listener is caught in his own dream.

Grevenbroek, in Sleigh (2002, 736-737)

In the previous two chapters I discussed Grevenbroek’s framing of the Khoi in his letter from 1695. In this chapter I explore the Afrikaans historical novel *Eilande* (2002) by the South African novelist and historian Dan Sleigh. The novel is set in the early Cape and features Grevenbroek as its omniscient narrator. In a prologue in the first person, ‘Stemme uit die see’, Grevenbroek introduces himself to the reader as ‘Ek, die klerk’. Through his single voice, a plethora of other voices is preserved: each of the seven chapters that follow stages a different male protagonist who lived during the decades directly preceding or following the founding of the VOC refreshment station at the Cape by the Dutch in 1652. Together, the chapters form Grevenbroek’s draft of an elaborate history of the early Cape called *Beeld van die Kaap. Die eerste halfeeu.*¹ The novel has Grevenbroek writing the draft ‘shortly’ after his retirement, relying on his experiences as secretary to the VOC Council of Policy at the Cape (1684-1694).

As I noted in the Introduction, in South Africa and abroad, *Eilande* was met with wide acclaim for its intricate combination of fact and fiction, and the multiplicity of perspectives it presents. Through the eyes of the seven protagonists, *Eilande* also tells the story of two Khoi women: Krotoa and her daughter Pieternella. Krotoa was one of the first interpreters and intermediaries between the native peoples and the Dutch settlers, and the first native person to marry a Dutch settler; her daughter is known as the first mixed-race Cape person. Krotoa’s name appears in the VOC’s journals from as early as 1652, which is one reason why

---
¹ In an interview, Sleigh concedes that he is not aware of historical evidence that Grevenbroek wrote a document with that title (Maas (2018)).
nowadays she is one of the most written about women in South African history. The first chapter of *Eilande* is focalised by Autshumao, chief of the Goringhaicona and Krotoa’s uncle. The English sailors who moored at the Cape to refresh knew him as Harry, with the Dutch calling him Herrie. The chapter recounts his struggle with the arrival of the Dutch in 1652, focusing on their permanent presence and increasingly demanding requests for cattle and land use in their effort to make the settlement self-supportive and capable of resupplying passing VOC ships. Autshumao takes Krotoa to Van Riebeeck when she is still a child. Initially working as a nanny for the Van Riebeeck family, she soon becomes pivotal to Khoi-Dutch relations through her work as an interpreter. The second chapter is focalised by VOC surgeon Pieter Havgard, also known by his Dutch name, Pieter van Meerhof. When he and Krotoa fall in love, Pieter convinces Van Riebeeck to let her become the first native woman to be baptised at the Cape (1662). Krotoa is, tellingly, christened as Eva. From Pieter and Eva’s subsequent marriage is born Pieternella. The following chapters, in roughly chronological order, present the perspectives of fisherman Bart Borms; Hans Michiel Callenbach, administrator of an outpost; Deneyn, the Castle’s chief lawyer; carpenter Daniel Zaaijman; and finally Grevenbroek himself. Together, *Eilande*’s seven protagonists recount 50 years of Cape history, with the connecting elements being Krotoa/Eva and Pieternella, whom each of them knew.

Focusing on Afrikaans prose from the period from 1997 to 2002, Henriette Roos in *Perspektief en profiel. ’n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis* (2006) notes a rise in novels about the early years of Dutch administration at the Cape after the landing of Jan van Riebeeck in 1652. Indeed, the formal end of apartheid in 1994 that marked South Africa’s first democratic elections saw a renewed interest in the nation’s past. In contrast with pre-1994 novels that focus on the same period, Roos shows, protagonists are less often heroic European or colonial explorers, and the perspective chosen is more often that of non-white (wo)men.

---

2 Landman (1996) writes that after Krotoa’s death her story remained less explored than that of white European women who came to South Africa on missionary expeditions. It was not until after the 1920s that her story became a part of South African history. Scully (2005) argues that Krotoa is one of the women than can be used to show the universality of the way that people were treated in the colonial system worldwide. See also Jansen (2003).

3 I adopt the definition of focalisation provided by Bal (1983, 244-250), in whose theory focalisation indicates the viewpoint or angle from which things are visually perceived (as opposed to narrated). In Bal’s model the focaliser’s position is described in relation to the story: the focaliser can be inside the fictional world (character-focaliser) or outside it (narrator-focaliser).
A notable example of recent South African historical fiction that engages the early years of Dutch administration at the Cape from a different perspective is Trudie Bloem’s *Krotoa-Eva. The Woman from Robben Island* (1999), a fictionalised biography of the Khoi woman Krotoa. She was one of the first interpreters and intermediaries between the native peoples and the Dutch settlers, and the first native person to marry a Dutch settler. Set in the politically tense atmosphere of the 17th century Cape, the novel explores the notion of identity and an individual’s response to culture clashes. In her historical Afrikaans novel *Pieternella van die Kaap* (2000), Dalene Matthee tells the story of Pieternella, Krotoa’s daughter, who is known as the first mixed-race Cape person. The blurb of the English translation praises Matthee for renegotiating the dominant narrative of the early Cape by adding the voice of a non-white person, who is, moreover, a woman:

Matthee has resurrected and breathed new life into the early history of the Cape [...]. She allows the historically misunderstood Eva finally to come into her own through the eyes of her clever, sensitive daughter.

Krotoa and Pieternella also feature in *Eilande*. Together, these examples of post-1994 South African literature reflect a tendency in the national literary field to re-explore early Cape history through previously unheard voices.

Granting such voices a stage not only acknowledges the heterogeneity of the Cape’s population then and now but also challenges the dominant narrative that prevailed in pre-1994 historical novels about the early Cape. Jakes Gerwel, in *Literatuur en apartheid: konsepsies van ‘gekleurdes’ in die Afrikaanse roman tot 1948* (1983), and Vernon February, in *Mind your colour. The ‘Coloured’ Stereotype in South African Literature* (1981; 2019), show that from the earliest colonial and Afrikaans literature on, native people were structurally marginalised, and that when they did play a role, they were stereotyped as irresponsible, idle creatures, dependent upon the wisdom and good naturedness of their white masters to achieve any degree of civility. Scholars have argued that in the depiction of historical subject matter, Afrikaans historical novels from the first half of the 20th century were inspired by ‘nationalistic approaches’ and that this perspective on the past has been

---

4 The novel was also published in English as *Pieternella. Daughter of Eva* (2012).

5 About Pieternella in *Pieternella van die Kaap* and in *Eilande*, see Van Zyl (2003).
'demythologised' in post-1994 literature. The multitude of historical voices that have been added in recent years, including in Eilande, question the stereotyping effect as well as the objectivity of a singular historical narrative.

In this chapter, I argue that Eilande presents a postcolonial reading of the historical time of its narrative, from the perspective of its environment of production and publication, post-1994 South Africa. I first discuss the novel's narrative structure. As opposed to much other historical fiction about the early Cape, the narrative structure of Eilande reflects the unequal degree to which European and Khoi voices, and male and female voices, have been preserved in the historical archive. Given that it still preserves the European perspective as dominant in making Grevenbroek the narrator, I ask how the novel relates to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's observations about the (im)possibility of narrating 'the Other' from the self-side of the colonial divide, and about the 'epistemic violence of imperialism'.

The remainder of the chapter consists of a comparison of Grevenbroek's presentation of the Khoi in his letter and in Eilande. This substantiates how the image of the Khoi has changed as a result of changing beliefs about epistemology, or the framing of knowledge about the world. The ancient and biblical frameworks that are the substratum to Grevenbroek's letter, which I analysed in the previous two chapters, are not mobilised in the novel as arguments for the Khoi's humanity. Given that the novel is structured around various protagonists, I build my discussion of the novel's image of the Khoi around individual characters. Firstly, I contend that central to Eilande's positioning of the Khoi is the opposition between Grevenbroek and Simon van der Stel (governor 1691-1699). The VOC's extensive archives form the basis for much that is known about the early Cape in terms of political, legislative and economical history. These archives have substantiated criticism of Van der Stel's supposed financial corruption. I discuss how Eilande – through Grevenbroek's voice – explores this corruption to de-marginalise the Khoi, thereby renegotiating the historical narrative about the early Cape.

Secondly, I will show how Eilande positions the Khoi as confronted with a divide between settlers and native people. By describing a process called 'Andersmaak' (remaking),

---

6 Pretorius (2015, 62) distinguishes between 'Afrikaanse skrywers se nasionale benadering' in the first half of the 20th century, and a 'demiologisering [...] in die Afrikaanse letterkunde' that followed in depicting the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). See also Burger (2015) and Viljoen (1996).
7 Spivak (1988).
8 See, for example, Schoeman (2008, Introduction; Chapter 1).
9 See, for example, Sleigh (1993).
*Eilande* explores how Krotoa and chief Autshumao are forced to remake themselves in the colonial encounter. I draw on Homi Bhabha’s theory about colonial mimicry and the ambivalence of colonial discourse to explore ‘Andersmaak’ in the context of the power imbalance between Khoi and settlers in the early Cape. I also engage Monika Fludernik’s theory about autostereotypes and heterostereotypes to ask how *Eilande*’s ‘Andersmaak’ helps to materialise the novel’s postcolonial voice.

My analysis of *Eilande* will present it as a historical novel that renegotiates the past for post-1994 South Africa by exploring various forms of conflict and resistance at the early Cape through the interactions of its individual protagonists. In staging a plurality of voices that co-exist, *Eilande* reflects the heterogeneity of both the democratic South Africa and the early Cape.

**Voicing the archive**

*Eilande*’s narrative structure is a distinctive aspect of the novel in the field of post-1994 literature on the early Cape and plays an important role in constituting the novel’s postcolonial voice. The prologue and the final chapter together frame *Eilande* as an exercise in unmuting the voices of everyday people from South Africa’s past. In the prologue, ‘Stemme uit die see’, Grevenbroek presents the ocean of history as a fertile place from which voices are continuously born: ‘Eindelik die see, die groen vrugwater waarin ons dryf, en gedryf het. [...] [Mense] roep uit die see [...]. Ook Autshumao roep uit die see. Van hulle vertel ek’ (2). The narrative of *Eilande* is the fruit of Grevenbroek’s effort to preserve these voices, including his own. He emphasises how all seven protagonists possessed valuable first-hand knowledge of the Cape but did not document their personal feelings and thoughts: ‘Ons was soldate, ‘n beeswagter, matrose, ‘n klerk, mense met min emosie in ons woordeskat [...]’ (1). He also reveals that through his job at the VOC Council of Policy he ‘knew’ all six people whose voices he presents in his text, even though he may not have met every one of them. Chief Harry, for example, passed away before Grevenbroek arrived at the Cape.

In the opening paragraphs of the final chapter, Grevenbroek contemplates the purpose of his history *Beeld van die Kaap* in more detail. Reviving the sea metaphor, he muses: ‘Hier[die] stories roep om gehoor te word, soos die hand van ‘n drenkeling uit die see kom en ‘n stem sê: help my’ (687). This makes explicit Grevenbroek’s realisation that
early Cape history is more than the VOC’s economical and legislative history as preserved in its archives.10

[What in daardie wankelrige kaartehuis [van die VOC] nog ontbreek [is] dat die sleutel tot die Kaapse verversingstasie sy buiteposte is. En selfs dié kennis was nie volledig nie. Die buiteposte was lewende mense. (691-2)11

The title of the novel, significantly, refers to this image of ‘lewende mense’ as islands in the ocean of history. In relation to these 'islands', Grevenbroek asks himself, ‘[H]oe klink hulle stemme?’ (733). The use of the plural emphasises that there are always multiple voices of history and that Beeld van die Kaap (and Eilande itself) is therefore only one of many possible histories of the early Cape.

Making space for a plurality of narratives has been identified as an important aspect of healing a fragmented society like that of post-1994 South Africa. In his paper ‘Back to the Future: History in/and the Postcolonial Novel’ (1997), Brian May observes that the historical novel has been a popular medium in the postcolonial context because a new socio-political status quo urges a society to re-assess the past and establish a new equilibrium.12 According to Hayden White in The Historical Text as Literary Artefact (1978), historiography in general should certify the existence of a plurality of narratives by underlining that ‘there is no such thing as a single correct view of any object under study but that there are many correct views’.13 White asserts that any historical study is characterised by a degree of subjectivity since the author is required to give meaning to a set of events by describing or characterising them. In line with White’s theory, Grevenbroek (and by implication Sleigh) in his presentation of multiple historical voices should not just be seen to provide an

---

10 Sleigh (1993) presents a case for the inclusion of the voice of everyday (wo)men in the history of the Cape and in colonial narratives more generally. In an interview (Maas (2018)), he cites a saying from 17th century Holland: ‘De Caab verlooren de Kompanjie verlooren. Elkeen kon dit soos ’n kinderrympie opsê. Die sleutel tot Nederland se ekonomie was de Kompanjie, die sleutel tot de Kompanjie se sukses was die besit van Oos-Indië, die sleutel tot Oos-Indië was die Kaapse verversingstasie’. White (2004, 94): ‘Buiteposte was onontbeerlik vir die VOC se kommersiële stelsel. Die buiteposte was kerneenhede wat die VOC se seethandel met ’n verskidenheid ekonomiese aktiwiteite onderskraag het’. ‘De Caab verlooren, de Kompanjie verlooren: VC 95: Annotatiën en Remarques … van J.W. Cloppenburg, 7969, g.p. (Verbatim Copies, Kaapse Staatsargiefbewaarplek).

11 Unless stated otherwise, emphasis in citations from Eilande in this chapter are in the text.

12 May (1997, 268): ‘Just as the [historical novel] arose […] as the European bourgeoisie’s instrument of “eclips[ing] […] the feudal and aristocratic modes of intercourse”, so the postcolonial novel [arose] as an instrument of, and a commentary on, political and cultural independence’. He cites McKeon (1985). See also, for example, Booker and Juraga (1997) and Dalley (2014).

13 White (1978, 47).
alternative history to the VOC’s dominant narrative of the early Cape, but also to question the objectivity of any single, monolithic, totalising, or grand narrative.

Despite Grevenbroek’s prominent role in the novel as narrator and historiographer, many reviewers have suggested that *Eilande*’s central character is not Grevenbroek at all, but Pieternella.14 After all, the seven focalisers in *Eilande* present a history of the early Cape in which Krotoa/Eva and especially Pieternella occupy a key position. Indeed, in the prologue, Grevenbroek admits that Pieternella is the connecting element in his history of the early Cape:

Ek het dié [sewe mans] uitgesoek wat haar gedra het in die hart, van voor haar geboorte tot ná haar einde. Hulle het gehep om die klein vlotjie drywend te hou. Tot ná haar dood, en die verpligting was op my, want mense stef eers werklik as hulle nie meer onthou word nie. (1)15

The observations by Grevenbroek and the reviewers about Pieternella’s central role in *Eilande* are important in the light of the abovementioned role of recent historical fiction (such as Matthee's *Pieternella van die Kaap*) in challenging native women’s marginalised position in South African historiography. Yet, it is significant that, in *Eilande*, Pieternella’s voice is not directly represented; she is spoken for and remembered by others, all of whom are men and – except for Autshumao (Harry) – European.16

In her seminal essay ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ (1988), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak explores the problem of speaking for ‘the Other’ or subaltern, with particular reference to (orientalist) colonial discourse and the ideological construct of male gender dominance. Spivak argues that the possibility of representing the subaltern Other is ruled out by the very meaning of ‘representation’. According to Spivak, any effort at speaking for the Other remains limited to a representation of the Other from the Self-side of the colonial,

14 See, for example, Quaedvlieg (2004) and more recently Otten (2016). Also, Sleigh (in Steinmair (2004). Sub Jan Smuts, q.4) regrets this and points out that Pieternella is under Grevenbroek’s narrative control: ‘Ek was jammer om dit te verneem. Let op dat De Grevenbroek nie vir Pieternel voer op die verhoog nie, maar op die kante en in die hoeke laat speel. Hou net vir De Grevenbroek dop: hy trek die toutjies. Hy gebruik haar oo as katalisator in die verhaal, die “draad wat die gegewens verbind” wat hy nodig gehad het’.

15 In presenting Pieternella from seven different perspectives, Sleigh strives to counter a perceived limitation of South Africa’s postcolonial discourse: ‘Dit bly by Krotoa, Krotoa, Krotoa met Sarah Baartman as afwisseling. Wanneer gaan dit, byvoorbeeld, uitbrei?’ (Steinmair (2004). Sub Jan Smuts, q.4). Sarah Baartman was a Khoi woman who was taken to Paris and exhibited as an attraction in the early 19th century under the name ‘Hottentot Venus’, with ‘Venus’ referring to the Roman goddess of Love. She has become an archetype of orientalism and the objectification of ‘the Other’ and ‘the female’. See, for example, Holmes (2016).

16 Sleigh concedes in an interview (Maas (2018)) that, of all characters in the novel, Grevenbroek’s voice is by far the one that is best preserved in the historical archives, whereas there are no remains of Pieternella’s voice.
patriarchal borderline. From the European viewpoint, writing about the Khoi is a process of ‘crossing over’ in which the crosser is not, and cannot, be the Other. Any attempt by western intellectuals to represent the Other furthers the Other’s dependence upon western ideological constructs to speak out for themselves, which re-inscribes their subordinate position and re-enforces Western logo-centrism. Eventually, what is at stake in any such representation is an individual’s heterogeneity, which risks being erased through an assumed cultural solidarity. The ‘epistemic violence of imperialism’ described by Spivak challenges Grevenbroek’s stated desire to present and preserve Pieternella’s voice. Indeed, although Grevenbroek may have sympathised with the Khoi cause, the biblical and ancient frameworks he evoked in his letter about the Khoi constitute deeply European modes of understanding the world. In *Eilande*, too, he ultimately can do no more than present Pieternella and Autshumao (the sole native protagonist) from a European perspective; they cannot speak in their own voices.

*Eilande’s* significance as a historical novel, then, should not be sought in its narrator’s attempt at lending Pieternella a voice. Rather, through its intricate narratological structure, *Eilande* explores processes of (un-)silencing as forms of colonial conflict and resistance. Thus, it makes visible how Pieternella’s voice, the voices of the six chapter protagonists and Grevenbroek’s own voice have all been silenced to various degrees by the VOC-based narrative of early Cape history. It does this by replicating the way in which, in the colonial archive, Grevenbroek’s voice has been preserved (through his own writings), whereas Pieternella and other Khoi people only appear in other people’s writings. In *Eilande*, accordingly, Autshumao’s voice is preserved through Grevenbroek and Pieternella’s voice is preserved in a dialogue she has with Autshumao, which is imagined by Grevenbroek. The novel thus shows how colonial and colonised voices are not equally silenced by history, and how silenced ‘other’ voices can only be recovered or explored through the coloniser’s archive. Considering Pieternella the main character negates the novel’s emphasis on her presentation from other people’s perspectives.

The novel also thematises the gender-based imperialism that characterises the representation of a native woman’s voice by a European male who purports to ‘save’ her. In the final paragraph of the American edition of the novel, Grevenbroek is seen thinking that it is his responsibility to save Pieternella’s voice from the dragon Time, who devours any
voice not put down in words, thereby banishing it from the earth.\textsuperscript{17} Wrapping up his \textit{Beeld van die Kaap}, Grevenbroek ponders: ‘Thus was slain the dragon Time, the damsel delivered, [the] quest at last at an end’ (758).\textsuperscript{18} The novel opens up this presentation of Pieternella as a native woman without agency who needs to be saved from being forgotten by a European man to a critical reading. Through its narrative structure, which emphasises not Pieternella’s (or other native characters’) but Grevenbroek’s agency and power to (re)shape history, \textit{Eilande} represents native (women’s) voices in a way that reflects and implicitly critiques colonial power relations, as sedimented in the archives. In what follows, I focus on the novel’s portrayal of Grevenbroek, his views on the Khoi and his critique of the Cape administration, and I assess how this portrayal compares to the conclusions I reached about Grevenbroek on the basis of his letter about the Khoi in Chapters 2 and 3.

**Governor versus secretary**

The novel emphasises Grevenbroek’s resistance to governor Simon van der Stel’s administration, in particular with regard to what Grevenbroek saw as Van der Stel’s unethical policies regarding the Khoi.\textsuperscript{19} In \textit{Eilande}, Grevenbroek draws on his years of service as secretary to the Council of Policy and is shown to have smuggled home excerpts of minutes that he now relies on for his \textit{Beeld van die Kaap} (703): ‘hy, die klerk De Grevenbroek, [het] jare lank kort uittreksels gemaak om later te gebruik, en dit in sy mou huis toe gedra’, because ‘as die pen jou wapen is, dan skryf jy’ (717-8). Grevenbroek is portrayed as choosing to destabilise the image of the Cape administration through his writing. In Chapter 2, I observed that Grevenbroek notably left out any direct reference to the governor as well as any legal aspects and suggested that this might have been out of self-preservation in the light of the governor’s ruthless oppression of critical voices. In what follows, I first explore how \textit{Eilande} develops the tension between the governor and the

\textsuperscript{17} Sleigh concedes that ‘[\textit{Eilande}] is die verhaal van ‘n reddingspoging [hoe die ridder die dame van die draak [Tyd] gered het]’. (Steinmair (2004). Sub Chris van der Merwe, q.5.) The American edition pursues the dragon metaphor more explicitly than the Afrikaans edition as Sleigh felt it was more appropriate to the American context (Maas (2018)).

\textsuperscript{18} The image alludes to the central quest of a typical medieval epic narrative, the \textit{chanson de geste}, in which a damsel is rescued by a knight.

\textsuperscript{19} In his seminal study of the historical novel, Lukács (1955) maintains that the quintessential element of the genre is its embodiment of social tension in the form of individual protagonists: ‘Through the plot [of the historical novel], at whose centre stands [the typical hero], a neutral ground is sought and found upon which the extreme, opposing social forces can be brought into a human relation with one another’. Lukács ‘neutral ground’ has since become the topic of scholarly debate; see, for example, White (1978) and De Groot (2010).
secretary in a postcolonial framework, and then compare it with the presentation of the governor in Grevenbroek’s letter.

In their study *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin understand postcolonialism to be an undermining voice to colonialism, rather than a strictly chronologically subsequent era.\(^{20}\) They use the term in reference to any culture affected by the colonial circumstance, which ultimately can be taken to mean that any literature from the colonial era was conceived in a tension with the colonial administration.\(^{21}\) Similarly, Elleke Boehmer, in her study *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (2005), suggests that postcolonial resistance happens by unveiling the structures of power and suppression that characterise colonial regimes. Boehmer does not limit postcolonialism to the period following colonialism but understands it to refer to an ideology or sentiment that can also be played out in literature from colonial times; this would include Grevenbroek’s letter about the Khoi and the account his fictionalised character writes in *Eilande*.\(^{22}\) This idea is shared by Stephen Slemon – who relates it to the historical novel in particular – in his article ‘Unsettling Europe. Resistance Theory for the Second World’ (1990). There, Slemon maintains that ‘literary [historical] writing is about internalized conflict’.\(^{23}\) Given the coloniser’s status as settler in the colonial circumstance and his status as former-coloniser in the postcolonial circumstance, neither the colonial nor the postcolonial circumstance is the coloniser’s motherland. Internalised conflict arises as an inevitable consequence of this and is present in white settler writing from both colonial and postcolonial times.\(^{24}\) This understanding of an inherent, unavoidable postcolonial tension pinpoints the urgency of *Eilande* in terms of the historical period narrated and explains its relevance to its contemporary context of composition.\(^{25}\)

For the South African environment, Paul Maylam, in *South Africa’s Racial Past. The History and Historiography of Racism, Segregation, and Apartheid* (2001), embarks from the

\(^{20}\) I do not distinguish between post-colonial and postcolonial. For a summary of the discussion on this distinction, see Oha (2005), who calls preoccupations with orthographical intricacies ‘living on the hyphen’.

\(^{21}\) Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989, 1-2).

\(^{22}\) Boehmer (2005, 3). Legally, the Cape only became a Dutch colony in 1695; before that time, the VOC was granted administrative rights. I understand coloniality broadly as indicating an oppressive power relation between a European and non-European people.

\(^{23}\) Slemon (2006, 102).

\(^{24}\) See also Ahluwalia (2005).

\(^{25}\) See also Anker (2009).
popular argument that colonialism only ended with 1994’s democratic elections.26 Although Maylam does not provide a definition of colonialism, he convincingly shows that forms of its disruption and subversion go back to the establishment of the first permanent European settlement at the Cape in 1652, and before. Like Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, and Boehmer, Maylam relies on the theory of power which Michel Foucault puts forward in The Archaeology of Knowledge (L’archéologie du savoir (1969)): that power itself inscribes its resistances and, in the process, seeks to contain them. The postcolonial condition can therefore be understood as an ex-temporal circumstance of resistance or ‘tension’ in the time and place under scrutiny produced by colonial power. The conflict between Grevenbroek and the governor’s administration, as portrayed in Eilande, is a case in point.

Grevenbroek’s rationale for writing Beeld van die Kaap becomes clear in the final chapter, which puts him and Simon van der Stel in opposition to each other. The first paragraphs of the chapter present Grevenbroek as he is composing Beeld van die Kaap, living the sober and ascetic lifestyle of a retired academic.27 Notably, the opening phrase is a common epistolary greeting from Roman times (Lectori Salutem, ‘hail to the reader’) whereas the chapter’s closing line quotes the inscription on Grevenbroek’s grave (Hic exspectat resurrectionem. J.G. de Grevenbroek. ‘Here, J.G. de Grevenbroek awaits the youngest day’). The omniscient narrator of the novel can be understood to be Grevenbroek resurrecting his own voice. The opening reads as follows:

Lectori Salutem!

U sien die klerk Johannes Guilielmus de Grevenbroek. Hy skryf by kerslig in ‘n buitekamer op die plaas Welmoed, aan die Kaapse kant van Stellenbosch. Hy het nie ‘n vrou, kind of familielid in hierdie land of oorsee nie. [...] Hy het vanaand ‘n akademiese toga om sy skouers. Die kleed is sonder warmte, motgevreet in die some, verslete oor die blaaie en groen van ouderdom. Sy skryftafel was eers die eettafel van ‘n groterige gesin. [...] Op die oomblik het ‘n gedagte by hom opgekom, iets onbelangriks, maar hy wil dit nie vergeet nie. Hy skryf dit in Latyn. [...] Die taak waaraan hy nou werk, is om inligting wat hy gedurende sy loopbaan in Jan Kompanjie se dien en daarna versamel het, te orden en uit te bou tot ‘n geskiedenis van die Kaapse nedersetting se eerste vyftig jaar. [...] Die inligting wat hy versamel vir sy Beeld van die Kaap, soos hy voorlopig sy manuskrip betitel het, sluit persoonlike besonderhede in van mense wat nog leef en ryk genoeg is om hom te dagvaar [...] Dit was ‘n interessante en gebeurtenisvolle tyd, daardie eerste halfeeu wat nou pas verby is. Tipies van

---

26 In this view, apartheid was the inevitable Afrikaner reaction to the Anglo victory in the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), and the Union of South Africa (1910), which formally marked the end of the colonial administration, is regarded as a continuation of Anglo-Afrikaner interests.

27 Sleigh: ‘Ons weet egter maar bitter min van Grevenbroek as persoon. Hy was ‘n sekretaris, en sekretarisse praat nie self nie. Vir die persoonlike inhoud is ons afhanklik van sy brief [oor die khoi]’ (Maas (2018)).
omwenteling wat uit hebusg gebore word, meen hy, was die tydperk van sy ondersoek getrou met
die dood en met bloed gedoo. Is dit nou te sterk gestel? [...] Stellenbosch is ‘n dom en blinde dorp,
en daar is min hoop dat dit sal verander. Hier woon ‘n paar met wie hy soms ‘n woord wissel, mense
wat die geleentheid gehad het om oorsee ‘n universiteit by te woon, al het hulle dit nie werkelik
benut nie. Soos die predikant Beck [...] (689-9). 28

Verifiable facts about Grevenbroek are few. His name, profession and domicile are
confirmed in archival records but information on his family is lacking. The Latin phrases that
frame the chapter are not found in his letter about the Khoi and Grevenbroek’s burial site
has – despite efforts in that direction – never been identified. 29 As noted in Chapter 3, his
private book collection was impressive, both in size and academic stature, boasting ancient
literature, expensive editions and titles in various modern languages, with marginalia in
Grevenbroek’s hand oftentimes in the language of the book in question. Yet, when his
belongings were publicly auctioned after his death, there was only average interest. 30 In the
novel, accordingly, Grevenbroek’s belongings are described as second hand and worn-down,
yet the types of goods – such as a toga – confirm his status as an educated gentleman. He
rents the candlelit room where he writes in Latin until late in the evening at Welmoed, a
farm near Stellenbosch. The reason for his choice of location is not made explicit, but the
chapter suggests that its distance from the Castle and Cape society plays a role.

From what follows, it transpires that Grevenbroek in the novel is concerned about
the Cape administration’s corruption. For example, he has taken to concluding the Council
of Policy’s minutes and letters with (renderings of) Latin sayings: ‘Dit is ‘n plig om te werk,
gedoen, en niemand benadeel nie’ (717). The VOC archives confirm the intellectual’s
protest. Although there is no historical evidence that Van der Stel did not read Latin, the
novel assumes this: ‘Van der Stel wou weet wat dit [die Latynse spreuk] beteken. [...] “Jy
[Grevenbroek] wil hê die Here moet dit lees. Laat staan jou bog en hou jou boodskappies

28 The opening address to the reader may call to mind Grevenbroek’s letter but seems to primarily illustrate
that he was a learned man.
29 SAHRA (formerly: National Monuments Council) carried out extensive research on Welmoed farm, where
Grevenbroek wished to be buried, for the restoration of the Van der Byl tombs (file 9/2/084/176). They found
no sign of a grave that can be connected to Grevenbroek. (Private correspondence with Clinton Jackson,
SAHRA, 10 November 2017.)
30 The bidding records are preserved in the Cape Town Archives and Records Services. See Van Stekelenburg
hieruit. Ek sê wat in die boek gaan en wat nie’’ (717). The novel thus positions Grevenbroek as part of the settler administration but also embodying a challenge to it.

Over the course of the chapter, a conflict develops between the humanist secretary and the autocratic governor. Grevenbroek shows that Van der Stel manipulates what is being archived. Not only does he expose the governor’s fraud, but he also challenges the image of the VOC based on the archives. In one example, Van der Stel refuses to let Grevenbroek copy a letter from the Lords XVII into the council’s minutes: ‘Een brief van die direkteure wou Van der Stel hom nie laat sien nie. Hy het gesê daar staan niks in wat die Politieke Raad aangaan nie’ (718). As it turns out, the Lords XVII want Van der Stel to reimburse a bandit whom he robbed in Batavia, so as not to compromise the peace in the East.

On another occasion, Van der Stel is shown to not follow VOC directives, which is to report on all of his actions. As noted in Chapter 1, Van Riebeeck’s mission letter indicates that the Lords XVII strived for appeasement of the Khoi. When Van der Stel attacks a native tribe, the Lords XVII write a letter in which they express their dismay over what they see as a violent act against a former ally:

Eenkeer skree Here Sewentien in teleurstelling en hulpeloze woede oor tienduisend myle groen seewater, in hulle brief aan Van der Stel: “Ons kan nie begryp hoe dit moontlik in u harsings kon gekom het om ‘n man wat die Kompanjie se vriend was en ons soveel jare getrou gedien het, op hierdie wyse aan te val nie, en ons vrees die gevolge van u daad, wat bitterheid en haat onder die Hottentotte sal wees.” Hy, die Kaapse goewerneur, het nie eens die Direkteurs laat weet dat hy die Chainouque-stam van kaptein Dorha in die Overberg, daardie een stam wat die Kompanjie amper veertig jaar lank deur sy moeilikste tye gevoed en gehelp het, laat aanval en uitwis het nie. (718)

Notably, the imagined response by the Lords XVII to Van der Stel’s actions does not express regret over the loss of native life but anger and fear concerning the bitterness and hatred these actions incited among the Khoi. This can be explained through their awareness of the Cape’s importance to the VOC’s future commercial success.31 The novel implies that Amsterdam was too far away for Van der Stel to be bothered by his superiors’ directives too much, but the letter does support Grevenbroek’s argument about Van der Stel’s corrupt administration.

---

31 See Van Riebeeck’s mission letter discussed in Chapter 1.
In yet another case, founded in historical fact, Van der Stel disowns the private farm Wittebome without legal cause. In the chapter, we find Grevenbroek busy drafting the Cape’s land deeds when Van der Stel barges into his office:

Van der Stel het skree-skree by Grevenbroek se kantoor ingekom en die grondbrief van die plaas Wittebome gekrap, maar hom kalm gehou en met waardige stilte in ’n lêer daarna gesoek. Van der Stel het dit uit sy hande geruk, die woord *Herroep* tussen twee lyne daarop gekrap, dit neergesmyt en weer uitgestorm. (715)

No reason is given for Van der Stel’s desire to confiscate Wittebome. However, Grevenbroek’s timidity and the governor’s brusqueness (he rips the deed out of Grevenbroek’s hands and revokes its previous ownership) prompts the reader to side with Grevenbroek. The next day, Grevenbroek watches as the governor commits fraud in the company’s records. Van der Stel attempts to cover up his actions by making it appear to be the Council’s decision to take Wittebome from the farmer Coenraad Visser. Subsequently, Van der Stel also tampers with the *Daghregister* – the official annals of the settlement kept by the governor as a daily journal – to make up a Council meeting where this was supposedly decided. The following passage stresses Grevenbroek’s dismay at Van der Stel’s immorality:

Die oggend daarna lees Grevenbroek in die dagregister dat dit ’n Raadsbesluit was om Coenraad Visser van Wittebome van sy grond te jaag en Mauritius toe te verban, omdat hy net wil jag en nie graan verbou nie. Twee vare leuens, dié oggend in die loflike Kompanjie se Dagregister, want eerstens is geen raadsvergadering gehou nie, en tweedens, nadat Van der Stel tot bedaring gekom het, gee hy Visser verlof om te wag tot sy koring ryp is vir sekel voor hy Wittebome moet verlaat. So, Visser se fout was, dit word nou duidelijk, dat die goewerneur sy stukkie grond wil hê omdat dit aan Constantia grens, en hy was onwillig om dit in nederige diensbaarheid af te staan. Dit is waarom Nabot deur die koning gestenig is, was dit nie? Moes vry Nederlanders hierdie hebsugtige man sy sin gee? (715)

Grevenbroek thus presents evidence that the narrative of VOC history as it is preserved in the official archives has been tampered with, which provides the rationale for his drafting of an alternative history of the early Cape.

The depiction of Grevenbroek in this passage lends authority to his postcolonial counter-voice to the official VOC archives. He is shown to advance his understanding of the

---

32 The archival evidence on which this account is based is the sudden and unmotivated disappearance of Wittebome from the Company’s books. Van der Stel’s tampering with the *Daghregister* is the only plausible explanation for the silent change of ownership and Grevenbroek was in a position to have known about it.
Scripture to make an ethical judgment about events at the Cape. A parallel is suggested by him between the dispossessed farmer and the biblical Naboth, whose farm was taken from him by the greedy King Ahab. The rhetorical question at the end Grevenbroek answers elsewhere: ‘[Maar] onder die Van der Stels is geen burger vry nie’ (717). The novel’s depiction of Grevenbroek’s argued reflection and Van der Stel’s whimsical actions develops the animosity between the two.

In the following paragraph, a confrontation between Grevenbroek and Van der Stel is imagined. It includes one of the novel’s few dialogues between Van der Stel and Grevenbroek:

Toe Van der Stel die namiddag weer op kantoor kom, het De Grevenbroek hom daarop gewys dat die verbanning nie ‘n Raadsbesluit was nie. Van der Stel se blas vel het verbleek. Hy het sy vinger voor sy gesig kom skud. “Hou jou neus uit my sake, as jy in jou pos wil bly.” “Die Hoë Kommissaris het my in die pos aangestel.” “Hy is dood. Bly uit my pad uit. Hou jou bek verder.” (716)

This shows Grevenbroek as acting in accordance with his duties, whereas Van der Stel does not seem to be following any rationale other than his whimsical character. As such, it validates Grevenbroek’s effort to write his Beeld van die Kaap and explains why he could do so only after retirement, away from the Castle.

There are also examples included in the novel of how Simon van der Stel acted in direct violation of the VOC rules and regulations, which carefully outlined a governor’s rights and responsibilities. The VOC constitution, for example, forbade a governor to hold estates or cattle in private ownership. Nonetheless, Simon and his son Willem-Adriaan van der Stel possessed growing numbers of cattle and confiscated a larger share of outpost produce than they were entitled to. They also took possession of state land which had been confiscated from the Khoi people. At a time when Simon van der Stel’s private farm at

---

33 The story of Naboth is recounted in 1 Kings 21. ‘Naboth owned a vineyard in Jezreel near King Ahab’s palace. One day, Ahab said, “Naboth, your vineyard is near my palace. Give it to me so I can turn it into a vegetable garden”. […] Naboth answered, “This vineyard has always been in my family. I won’t let you have it.”’ In what follows, the King’s wife Jezebel incites Naboth’s neighbours to lodge false accusations against him in a makeshift court. He is subsequently stoned to death, the farm thus being disowned.

34 Interestingly, Grevenbroek would be involved in the 1705 free-burgher revolt. The novel appears to interpret the scarce archival evidence for Grevenbroek’s opposition to Van der Stel as a precursor to this revolt.

35 Sleigh maintains: ‘Hulle was groot diewe. Willem-Adriaan het die buitenpos Hottentots-Holland, naby Stellenbosch, eenvoudig geskrap uit die kompanjie se boeke en dit vir homself gevat. Hy het groot eie besittings gehad en die Kompanjie se swawe gebruik om die buitenpos te omskep in een van die grootste plase in die Kaap, hoewel albei sake verbode was vir ‘n goewerneur’ (Maas (2018)).
Constantia covered more morgen than Amsterdam, his son confiscated the VOC outpost of Hottentots Holland and had it registered as Vergelegen under his own name. In the novel, it takes Grevenbroek several years to find out about this corruption. A report by inspector Van Reede serves as the first clue:

This passage concludes with a strong sense of irony. In what follows, it is explained that, in the East, rich men and company officials constructed country houses to escape from Batavia’s mosquitoes and poor sanitation. ‘Maar’, Grevenbroek is shown thinking, ‘destyds aan die Kaap was daar geen enkele rede vir heer Willem Adriaan om vir hom ‘n hofstede ‘n volle dagreis van die Kasteel af aan te lê nie, behalwe heersug en hebsug, en dit het hy in oormaat gehad’ (725). Again, Grevenbroek asserts that the dominant VOC narrative is lacking information that would have changed it. He also suggests that there are particular reasons for this that have to do with power relations. In uncovering these reasons, Grevenbroek, in the novel, can be seen to build a postcolonial Cape narrative, as does the novel itself.

As Boehmer and also Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argue, postcolonial resistance occurs when the structures of power and oppression that characterise colonial regimes are unveiled. In the terms of Slemen’s theory of internalised conflict as a defining feature of postcolonial tension, Grevenbroek embodies contending societal forces. By having him

---

36 Sleigh (2004, 161-2) cites Bogaert (1711, 471): Constantia stretched 891 morgen; Amsterdam was 822 morgen. Sleigh (1993) also notes anomalies in VOC budgets with regards to outposts and a rapid expansion of Hottentots Hollands following the sudden change in its name and owner. Kolb mentions this as well (Volume II, 98, 100-1, 250).
37 ‘Dit was die toestand in die Ooste, en die rede waarom welgestelde here vir hulle ‘n buiteverbyf gebou het’ (725).
38 ‘Destyds’ suggests a gap between the time of writing and the time described. Grevenbroek retired in 1694, only three years after Willem-Adriaan van der Stel succeeded his father as governor, and a good seven years before the former would confiscate Hottentots Holland. Grevenbroek is thus imagined to be writing Beeld van die Kaap sometime between 1701 and his death in 1724 or 1725. The free-burgher revolt of 1705 and the ensuing expulsion of Willem-Adriaan van der Stel are not mentioned in the novel, which would point to 1701-1705.
expose Van der Stel’s fraud and corruption, *Eilande* destabilises the master narrative of VOC and Cape history.

As a postcolonial historical novel, *Eilande* thus provides a stage for playing out the conflict and resistance that characterised colonial societies, with the narrative clearly leaning towards a critique of colonialism. Although Grevenbroek in the novel does not question colonialism as a structure, he does resist the governor’s VOC administration and exposes it as corrupt and unethical. His criticism touches on the injustices that Maylam identified as core to the colonialism of pre-1994 South Africa: the suppression of native people, abuses of power and the undermining of public policies. In reflecting ethically on these injustices, the novel’s Grevenbroek provides a postcolonial counter-narrative to the VOC archives.

Grevenbroek’s voice of resistance in the novel is not the voice of resistance in his actual letter about the Khoi. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the letter on the Khoi is concerned with changing the European image that exists of them and with the epistemological premises on the basis of which this image is construed through an appeal to Christian, ancient and ethnographic frameworks. In the letter, repeated comparisons of the settlers with the Khoi serve to underscore the unspoilt, Christian and thus virtuous nature of the latter and the corruption of the former, especially – though he is not named explicitly – Simon van der Stel.\(^{39}\) The novel does not invoke the frameworks of the letter, but advances an image of Grevenbroek as a learned secretary objecting to the autocratic governor’s actions on ethical grounds – arguably, this is a more modern image that reflects contemporary South African concerns about public office.

In the next sections, I shift to my second point of comparison between the letter and the novel, which concerns their portrayal of the Khoi. I first discuss how a stereotyped image of the Khoi saturates the 17\(^{th}\) century world of the novel and how the characters of Van Meerhoff, Deneyn and Grevenbroek are seen to criticise this image. The novel makes apparent that the derogatory image of the Khoi is related to their position as colonised in the colonial circumstance. Next, I contend that, through the process of ‘Andersmaak’, the novel explores the possibility of the colonised crossing the colonial divide to become part of the world of the coloniser. As the novel’s portrayal of the characters of Autshumao and

---

\(^{39}\) Although the letter does not mention the governor by name, it is clear that the accusations target him in particular. See Chapter 3.
Krotoa/Eva makes clear, their lack of power prevents them from ever fully crossing over. At the same time, however, the novel also demonstrates the untenability of the colonial divide and thus, through ‘Andersmaak’, develops its postcolonial voice.

The Khoi in *Eilande*

In the opening paragraphs of his letter about the Khoi, Grevenbroek asserts that he seeks to address his ‘youthful prejudices’ about them, which had been belied by empirically acquired evidence regarding Khoi life at the Cape. Over his years there, he has come to regard the Khoi as human, more Christian than the settlers. Likewise, the novel suggests that Grevenbroek’s interest in the Khoi developed the more time he spent away from Europe.40

*Eilande* grounds Grevenbroek’s interest in the Khoi in his academic, humanist upbringing and his command of Latin. Both these aspects are traced back to a two-year absence from the Cape. Shortly after his arrival at the Cape in 1684, having taken up his position as secretary to the Council of Policy, Grevenbroek left for India as assistant to VOC Commissioner Van Reede. Archival sources do not provide insight into Grevenbroek’s motivation but do reveal that he resumed his duties upon his return to the Cape in 1686.41 Between 1678 and 1703, Van Reede published his *Hortus Indicus Malabaricus*, an influential series of 12 volumes on the flora and fauna of the Malabar on the west coast of India, in Latin.42 The novel speculates that when Grevenbroek returns to the Cape, his interests shift from botany to the Khoi, and he discovers in himself a passion for writing in Latin:43

---

40 Sleigh: ‘Sy medelye met die Koina het nie altyd bestaan nie, dit was as gevolg van ‘n verandering van denke nadat hy meer oor hulle en die verhouing tussen hulle en die blanke geleer het’. (Private correspondence with Dan Sleigh, 15 May 2018).

41 Farrington-Schapera (1933, 161) mistakenly writes that Grevenbroek accompanied Commissioner Van Goens. Van Goens’ log book mentions Grevenbroek’s request to return to the Cape, as does the Cape’s *Daghregister*, but again without any statement of motivation. Farrington-Schapera (1933, Introduction to Grevenbroek).

42 The entire series was translated into Dutch by Abraham Poot in 1720 as *Malaboarse Kruidhof* (Amsterdam).

43 Sleigh: ‘Ons weet [...] nie hoekom Grevenbroek die Kaap kortliks verlaat het om later weer terug te kom nie. Maar dit is ‘n feit dat kommissaris Van Reede die boek *Hemelse velde* geskryf het. Grevenbroek se brief oor die Koina en Sonqua is amper poëties waar dit handel oor die Kaapse flora. So ek het maar besluit dat hy met Van Reede saamgekoms het omtrent sy botaniese belangstelling – en natuurlik die salaris’ (Maas (2018)).
It is not known if Grevenbroek ever wrote on botany. However, both the letter and the novel relate his interest in the Khoi to his experiences outside Europe. As noted, Grevenbroek’s introduction to the letter frames his discussion of the Khoi in ancient and Christian discourse. Also, his ubiquitous referencing of and allusions to ancient literature suggest a humanist, academic upbringing. Post-mortem auction records of his book collection confirm that Grevenbroek possessed a humanist interest and command of modern and ancient languages that was most likely unique for the Cape at the time.\(^{44}\)

A notable difference with the letter is that in *Eilande* neither an ancient nor a Christian discourse plays a role in framing Grevenbroek’s thoughts about the Khoi, although Christian values are seen to shape his character in a more general way. Chapter seven provides one of the more explicit instances of this. When Grevenbroek is writing an epigram, this is described as follows:

*Probeer so leef dat dit hoop op ’n ewige lewe skep, anders is menslike bestaan doelloos. As daar ná ons sterwe niks is nie of geen hiernamaals, moes ons so geleef het dat dit ’n onreg sal wees. Hy herlees die epigram met sy kop skep gehou, vervang die woord skep met bevorder, plaas ’n vraagteken daarby, maak ’n punt bo elke i, en druk die papier bo by sy toga se mou in om later daaroor te dink. Die gedagte het hy meer as sestig jaar gelede by ’n vader ab gekry, en hy werk steeds aan die bewoording. Hy is oortuig hy kan daarop verbeter. Moontlik word dit ’n bruikbare epigraaf, eendag. (687)*\(^{45}\)

The epigram suggests an attempt to live a meaningful personal life and the ‘vader ab’ and ‘hiernamaals’ invoke Christian connotations.\(^{46}\) However, in the novel these connotations do not have a bearing on Grevenbroek’s engagement with the Khoi. *Eilande*, although alluding to the idea that Grevenbroek’s Christianity is different from that of his fellow-settlers, does not present it as a pillar of his worldview.\(^{47}\) As I will show, underpinning his framing of the Khoi in the novel is, rather, a concern with the dominant (colonial) discourse.

---

45 I have found no historical evidence of this epigram or of any other personal writing by Grevenbroek besides his letter on the Khoi.
46 The epigram can be traced back to Ancient Greece, where the term *ἐπιγραφή* (epigrafe, inscription) referred to an inscription, mostly in stone, such as a funerary or religious inscription. The Roman poet Martial (40-104), who wrote short, often quippy verses, was influential in establishing it as a literary genre.
47 In his diary, Adam Tas (Fouché and Smuts (1914)) mentions that Grevenbroek worked with him to safeguard people in a church in Stellenbosch during a storm one night. Sleigh: ‘Hoewel hulle [die Stellenboschers] maar
As for the second pillar of Grevenbroek’s letter, the ancient worldview, the novel explicitly refers to Grevenbroek’s ancient schooling and upbringing to speculate that herein lies the root of his academic, humanist reflections on the Cape and appreciation of the Khoi. Drawing on archival sources, Eiland mentions that Grevenbroek’s father was a teacher at the ‘Latynse skool’ and speculates that ‘Dit was sy vader, wat sy enigste seun Guilielmus in plaas van Wilhelms laat doop het’ (693). Indeed, Grevenbroek was raised in the heart of town at Leiden’s most-prestigious canal (‘Raapenburg’ (699)), on the doorstep of Leiden University. Although there is no evidence of his education, the novel suggests a certain privilege derived from being so near the Leiden academic environment: ‘Wat homself betref, hy het as kind nooit ’n skool besoek nie omdat dit nie nodig was nie. As ’n kind in Leiden sy dag in ’n skool moet omsit, is daar ’n fout met sy ouers. Elke openbare gebou binne die Singels is ’n skool’ (693). Reflecting the knowledge systems of Grevenbroek’s time, the novel depicts him as raised by university and church, as being educated about the world through books, most notably from the ancient world, and suggests that the world of the VOC was equally close:

Benewens die Latyn van sy ouerhuis vir universiteit en kerk, kon hy vroeg ook Frans en Engels lees. Vreemde lande het in biblioteke bestaan. Die hele wêreld was in boeke. Geheimsinnige helde, deels mite, deels vermoede, uit Persië, Rome en Griekland, het in sy kamer herleef, en die Ooste was daar net oor sy drumpel. (695)

The novel has Grevenbroek, like many privileged youngsters of his time, undertake a Grand Tour of several years of Europe’s ancient and religious monuments at the end of his education: he visits Rome and Naples, and spends time in the monasteries of Benedict, Franciscan, Dominican, Carmelite, Capuchin, Servite and Jesuit monks (697-699). Eiland thus suggests that by the time he signed up for the Cape, Grevenbroek had enjoyed a full humanist upbringing, making him a learned secretary working under a less educated, unscrupulous governor. As with the Christian framework, the novel does not explicitly develop particular elements of Grevenbroek’s ancient education.

eenvoudige boere was, is dit [sc. monsters] nie wat ‘n Christen sé nie. [Grevenbroek] wou ook nie ‘n graf op die kerk se begraafplaas hé nie. [He was buried at Welmoed.] Tegelykertyd gaan slaap hy in die kerk om hom te beskerm as die Kaapse storm oor die dorp jaag en gee hy om vir die samelewing. Sy kennis van die Latynse en Griekse letterkunde is merkwaardig; hy het amper weggekrui in die antieke wêreld. Hy het definitief ‘n ander waardestelsel gehad as die Stellenboschers. Ek vermoed dat ek de Grevenbroek nie as ‘n konvensionele Christen wou uitbeeld nie’ (Maas (2018)).
Thus, while Grevenbroek’s concern in the letter on the Khoi is an epistemological re-orientation with regards to their image, in order to show that virtue can exist in any ‘genus’ of native people, in the novel, it is his academic background that explains his critical mindset with regards to the governor, and that lends authority to his postcolonial effort to make heard various voices silenced by the monolithic VOC-generated narrative of the early Cape.

The seven protagonists whose voices are unsilenced in the novel are introduced in the prologue through their name and occupation. They are Europeans from within the Castle or Cape settlement – Grevenbroek, Deneyn and Pieter Havgard –, a European from outside the Castle – the postkeeper –, one non-European (Chief Harry) and a fisherman. The prologue establishes three binaries that govern the narrative: Europeans versus Khoi, men versus women, and the Castle versus the non-Castle. In the course of the novel, however, these binaries are also disturbed: the two learned gentlemen at the Castle, Grevenbroek and Deneyn, hold different opinions about the Khoi from the other settlers, and Krotoa physically moves from her tribe to the Castle.

Although the novel shows that diverging views about the Khoi existed at the Cape, even within the Castle administration, its focal point is the Castle, centre of European administration at the Cape. This brings along with it an hierarchical, oppositional framing of the Khoi-settler dynamic, visualised as Castle versus non-Castle, and expressed in the use of derogatory terms for the Khoi. In the novel, Van Riebeeck adopts a hostile stance towards the Khoi: ‘Vir die inboorlinge moet daar nie ‘n duim grond oorbly nie. Hulle moet weg uit Tafelberg se skaduwee uit’ (92). As commander of the Cape, Van Riebeeck must make the refreshment station a success and perceives the ‘Hottentots’ as contestants for the fertile ground in the Castle’s vicinity: ‘Dit was nie die Here Meesters se bedoeling dat hulle skepe vir ons van kos moet voorsien nie, maar andersom. [...] Die Hottentotte hou ons skraal, die hase en bokke vreet ons groente, en die volk is opstandig van honger’ (78). The early years of Dutch settlement at the Cape were marked by gradual expansion of the settler community: the VOC pushed demands for exclusive use of lands, for which – it is stressed in the novel – little compensation was offered to the Khoi besides tobacco, brandy, beads and

---

48 The early success of the VOC at the Cape was dependent on the Khoi’s willingness to barter. As shown in Chapter 1, the mission letter from the Lords XVII from 1651 outlined the appeasing approach to the Khoi that Van Riebeeck was to build his policies at the Cape around. In his reply, Van Riebeeck, however, expressed a reluctance to trust the Khoi on the basis of reports of Khoi violence written after the experiences of two shipwrecked Dutch crews near the Cape in 1644 and 1647.
other trifles. In the novel, Van Riebeeck drafts a plan to confiscate the fertile Liesbeek Valley from the Khoi and build a palisade with armed checkpoints all the way from Table Mountain to False Bay to mark it off:

Daar sou ‘n heining wees om rowers uit te hou, en gewapende ruiter, en alles sou met kanonne bewaak word. [...] Hy sou al sy mag in die projek gooí, en die Liesbeeckvallei een groot bewaakte boerdery maak, sodat die bruin herders besef dit kan nie herwin word nie. (89)\(^49\)

Within a year after Van Riebeeck’s arrival, the spatial separation between natives and settlers develops into a physical border. A hedge physically separates Khoi and settlers and serves as tangible confirmation of an imagined separation of the uncouth, idle animal from the civil, hard-working man.

Van Riebeeck’s opposition of Khoi and European man, as portrayed in *Eilande*, is grounded in 17\(^{th}\) century European discourse about the Khoi – the very discourse that Grevenbroek challenges in his letter. The binary opposition between Khoi and Europeans is established in the first chapter of the novel, with the arrival of the English:

[Autshumao] hoor die Engelse praat oor die Kaap se kos en water en brandhout. “*My dear fellow, a simple takeover. No trouble at all.*” Jy stamp die stinkerdsopsy, en vat grond, water, bome en gras.

“The natives are harmless. Like children, really.” (7)

Although Grevenbroek as narrator refers to various Cape tribes and peoples by distinct names, the English, Van Riebeeck and various other settlers amalgamate them under labels such as ‘natives’ or ‘Hottentots’. The point of departure in each of the seven chapters is the dominant 17\(^{th}\) century image of the natives as unworthy of the name of man (91), cowardly (173), superstitious (309), rude, clumsy, without education, more bestial than human (395), barbaric and a disgusting race (444). This image is maintained through a sustained practice of spatial separation.

In the novel, demarcated, physical boundaries such as Van Riebeeck’s hedge between the natives and the Dutch appear in several chapters. Hans Michiel, outpost commander at Keert de Koe, comments that his outpost and the fence that runs from it marks the border between the settlement grounds and the ‘suiwer en onophoudelike barbarisme’; the fence is patrolled from his outpost, ‘die enigste opening tussen die kolonie

\(^{49}\) A short stretch of Van Riebeeck’s hedge has been preserved in situ at the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens in Cape Town.
en Afrika’ (309). Keert de Koe’s perspective exemplifies the hierarchisation of colonial and native culture, and the resulting marginalisation of the Khoi. The opposition between the Dutch self and the Other, between European civility and its perceived absence in native culture, is further stressed by the novel’s mentioning of ‘wit mense’ who return from the other side of Keert de Koe after dusk, when the gate is closed for reasons of safety, and ‘Afrika, nog leër, donkerder [as die nag]’ (314).

The fence is a one-sided construct on the part of the settlers and is the materialisation of a mental opposition. Time and again, the fence is the cause of strife and war. The omniscient narrator emphasises that ‘Die Koina het nie van die hek gehou nie’, and asserts that ‘Hulle sou die hekwag te lyf gaan en die hek probeer oopbreek’. Van Meerhoff reflects:

Oorlog het tussen sy mense en [Krotoa se] mense uitgebreek, omtrent ‘n jaar na sy aankoms. Dit was ook onvermydelik. Daar was twee aanspraakmakers op ‘n voedingsbron en die swakke moes wyk vir die sterke. Wie die sterke was, die Koina of die wybroek, moes uitgemaak word. (77)

War is presented as an inevitable consequence of the aim of the refreshment station. Gradually, the threat of war comes to frame the relations between the settlers and the natives. Van Riebeeck asks Krotoa to bring to her people a declaration of war (‘oorlogsverklaring’ (87)) and puts a reward on killing or bringing in male natives: ‘Van Riebeeck het uit sy eie sak honderd gulde aangebied vir die een wat die leier van die rowers [inbring]. Vyftig vir sy dooie kop. Vir ander Hottentotte was die vergoeding tien gulde [per kop]’ (87). Thus develops the general opposition between Khoi and Europeans.

Francois Smith, in his article ‘Sleigh met Tolstoi vergelyk’ (2004), points out that policies of suppression and annihilation are not regarded as inhumane in colonial discourses where ‘the Other’ is regarded as unworthy and only partially human or lacking humanity altogether. Indeed, Van Riebeeck uses the term ‘Hottentotte’, thereby invoking the dominant derogatory 17th century discourse about the Khoi. In Eilande, the Dutch settlers and the VOC administration take for granted that Khoi lands can be taken without legal procession, that they may be shot if seen with a weapon (87), that they should face the death penalty if caught stealing cattle (86), that their heads are worth 10 Dutch guilders each (87) and that their names will be erased from the books of history (119). Also, during
an expedition into the Cape hinterlands a Dutch sergeant tells Pieter about his feelings after a war against the French and compares it with skirmishes against the Khoi:

 [...] jy voel soos ‘n koning wat uit goue skottels eet, want jy het hard geveg en oorwin, en jou respek vir die vyand is hoog. Maar hier voel jy aldag slegter; dit voel of jy teen verdomde skape veg [...] ‘Ek het vir hulle geen respek nie, meester [Pieter]. Nie op die slagveld nie en nie op straat nie. Ek reken hulle nie as waardig nie’. (91)

The sergeant’s comparison of the Khoi with sheep reflects the contemporary animalisation of the Khoi.

Thus, the novel shares with Grevenbroek’s letter its point of departure in developing an argument for the Khoi: the dominant 17th century idea that the Khoi are not on a par with European man. In the novel, Grevenbroek, Deneyn, and Van Meerhoff are the three Europeans who present a counter-voice. In the case of Van Meerhoff, Eilande relates this to his affection for Krotoa and their subsequent marriage. Grevenbroek and Deneyn have different motivations.

Chapter 7 immediately makes clear that Grevenbroek aims to oppose Company policy with regards to the Khoi out of a desire to contribute to the body of human knowledge:

Wat De Grevenbroek geïnteresseer het, was die vraag: Daardie inboorlinge wat uit hierdie waterryke oowerweiding verdryf is, wat het van hulle geword? Hoe meer hy oor hulle gelees het, hoe meer wou hy oor hulle lot weet. Die antwoorde, vir hom as ‘n nuwe Kapenaar, was uiers interessant. Dit wou voorkom asof die Kompanjie hulle opsetlik aan drank en tabak verslaaf gemaak het om hulle beeste goedkoop in die hande te kry. Die beeste was nodig vir landbou en vervoer. Valentyn, die predikant, het reeds een en ander daaroor gepubliseer. Hy, De Grevenbroek, sou dit ook doen; miskien was hy tog hier in die beste posisie om ’n bydrae tot die menslike kennis, tot die rekord, te maak. (702)

Grevenbroek provides a critical perspective on the relationship between the Khoi and the Dutch. The phrasing implies an ethical disparity between company policy and Grevenbroek’s opinion: the Dutch have wilfully addicted the Khoi so that they could buy their cattle at a bargain. Grevenbroek’s ‘bydrae tot die menslike kennis’ in Eilande consists in uncovering this unequal relationship between VOC and Khoi, and the role played in this by governor Simon van der Stel. Ultimately, in the novel Grevenbroek aims not so much to make an argument for the Khoi as an argument against a singular image of the past.
The person in *Eilande* who seems most concerned with the Khoi from an academic point of view is not Grevenbroek, but the lawyer Deneyn, who, in Chapter 5, is confronted with a case of murder.50 A settler has murdered a Khoi man who was allegedly involved in a cattle raid on the Castle. Three Khoi chiefs report to the Castle, reminding the Council that not so long ago five young Khoi men were captured by the Company, whipped, and sent to Robben Island to work for the Company.51 The chiefs ask: ‘Hoe kan daar sekere strawwe vir Koina en ander strawwe vir Hollanders wees?’ (396). Deneyn does not answer immediately as he struggles to justify the company’s refusal to bring the murderer to justice whilst punishing the five native cattle thieves. In his papers, however, he legitimates the punishment of the five thieves through the popular view that Khoi were beasts, not men:

Deneyn het nie ’n antwoord vir hulle [the chiefs] gehad nie, maar destyds het hy sy persoonlike oortuiging duidelik op papier gestel toe hy sy pleidooi vir die straf van die vyf seuns gelewer het. *Die Afrikaanse inlanders, genaamd Hottentotte*, het hy geskryf, *is deur alle Europese nasies waar in die wêreld hulle ook al mag reis, tot dusver die brutaalste bevind, wat volgens die autoriteit en geloof van geskiedskrywers alle ander in onkunde en verfoeilike sedes ver te bowe gaan. Ten opsigte van hulle opvoeding, geaardheid en leefwyse skyn hulle meer dierlik as menslik te wees. Hulle het die voorkoms van redelike wesens en het gevolglik ’n redelike siel, maar ek is onseker of die beginsels van die volkereg op hulle van toepassing is. So staan dit daar, in sy skrif.* (396-7)52

In its exploration of the opposition between European peoples and ‘other peoples’ along the lines of contemporary ethnographic categories – virtue, nature and way of life – this passage reflects the method employed in Grevenbroek’s letter.53 In opposition to the letter, however, as argued in Chapter 3, Deneyn’s use of ‘Hottentotte’ confirms a dominant 17th century presentation of the Khoi.

In what follows, Deneyn casts doubt on his earlier judgment and proclaims the treatment of the Khoi unjust in a similar way to Grevenbroek putting his ‘youthful prejudices’ into question in the letter. Where Grevenbroek’s position is marked out through an opposition with Simon van der Stel, governor IJsbrandt Goske appears as Deneyn’s

50 Huigen (1991): ‘Tot einde 1674 was De Neyn fiscaal aan de Kaap. Daarmee was hij de hoogste juridische ambtenaar. De fiscaal moest zorgen voor de handhaving van wet en orde en de bewaring van de voc-monopolie in de handel. Het was een positie van enig aanzien, zeker ter plaatse’.
51 In Chapters 2 and 3 I explained that ethnographic parameters drive Grevenbroek’s discussion of Khoi culture in his letter. In the novel, the image of the Khoi is built around more general conditions that are constitutive of the colonial master-narrative, such as forced labour. It is a historical fact that Khoi were sentenced to work for the Company at Robben Island.
52 There is no historical evidence that Deneyn wrote any pleas or passages of this nature.
53 Indeed, besides Grevenbroek, Deneyn is the only protagonist in the novel who, by virtue of his profession, may be supposed to have enjoyed an academic education.
antagonist. More so than his predecessors, Goske, the Cape’s first governor from 1672 until 1676, actively suppresses the Khoi and does not bother with his chief-lawyer’s concerns. Grevenbroek, the narrator, comments: ‘Goske het begin deur sy gesag op die Spiereilandse Koina af te dwing’ (425). The governor issues a letter of instruction for his soldiers, his Instructie, ‘wat sê die Gonjemans [a Cape tribe] moet ‘n skrik kry wat hulle nageslagte sal onthou’ (439). He also issues orders such as this one: ‘Goske het laat bekend maak dat enige Hottentot wat met ‘n assegai gesien word as ‘n vyand beskou en sonder uitsondering gedood sal word’ (441). Eventually, he wages war against the Ngonnemoa, a native people who live on fertile lands that the Company seeks for herding its cattle. Deneyn wonders if confiscating the land out of the blue and a potential massacre are the right course:

Was dit oorlog? het Deneyn gewonder [...] Oorloë word verklaar deur die oorhandiging van amptelike notas tussen regerings, en in hierdie geval het die Nederlander tot die vlak van die barbaar gedaal en hulle struikrowery met massamoord vergeld. [...] Die gedane misdaad kon binne weke ‘n volksmoord word, want die Koina leef van hulle vee se produkte, en Ngonnemoa se mense en hulle kinders was nou sonder kos in die hart van die winter. Of was volksmoord Goske se doel? Hy sou dit ontken, dit is te verwagte. (441-2)

Deneyn assesses the events against a European ethical framework for warfare; this leads him to feel that the Khoi do not deserve the governor’s approach (declaring war as a response to an act of robbery seems excessive to him, especially when this war will lead to starvation), but does not see him argue in favour of ‘elevating’ the Khoi to the same level in the chain of being as the Dutch. A second case that troubles Deneyn in the novel is Goske’s invitation to witness an ‘execution’ by the beating of natives at the Castle. For Deneyn, the execution’s brutal manner confirms that European justice in Africa is unlawful:

“[En] as jy vandag iets wil leer van justisie in Afrika, kom saam met my op die muur, en kyk van daar af.” Wat Deneyn van die muur af gesien het, was die stadige, stelselmatige doodslaan van vier mense deur vreemdelinge wat niks daarby verloor het of baat nie, met stokke effens dikker en skaars langer as sy eie wandelstok. Dit is onwettig, was sy eerste gedagte; die mense is ter dood veroordeel, maar nie tot marteling nie. (443)

---

54 The rank of governor, having been created as a temporary measure during the Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672-1674), would be re-installed at the Cape in 1691 for the remainder of the Dutch administration, with Simon van der Stel the first incumbent. Before a governor was installed, the VOC appointed administrators, the first of whom Jan van Riebeeck. Goske started the construction of a more permanent Castle at the Cape that still stands today: the five-pointed star.
These two examples convince Deneyn that installing true justice at the Cape demands a different approach. He seeks guidance from the lawbooks he looked to as a student but these books have nothing of use to tell him about the status of the ‘Hottentots’, the power invested in a governor, or the applicability of European frameworks to an African context:

[Deneyn] het naslaanboeke uit sy studiejare gelees om leiding. Dit was maklik om te sê: My boek weet nie van slawe nie; my boek sê niks van Hottentotte nie; my boek weet nie van [goewerneur] Goske nie; my boek ken nog nie ‘n handelsmaatskappy wat die wêreld aan die keel beet het nie; my boek sê niks van ‘n Kasteel wat met krag en kaal hande uit dorre duine boontoe gebeur word nie. Dit was maklik om vir homself verskonings te vind. [...] Die boek vertel net van my jeug in Wes-Europa. Ek sien niks wat hier kan help nie. Hier is die Kaap; ek is gevang en verban op ‘n dorre eiland; ek staan alleen, ek het geen leier of leiding nie. (444)

Deneyn concludes that knowledge is situated and not of use outside the context it was produced in:

Toe kom die gedagte by hom: hy sou graag nou terug universiteit toe gaan om vir die studente te sê: “Wag. Pas op. Wat julle leraars verduidelik, wat julle hier in boeke lees, lyk anders buite Leiden se stadsmure, anders in ‘n storm op see, anders in Afrika, anders in ‘n kaserne in die Ooste. En as hulle hom sou antwoord: “Wat moet ons doen? Het jy advies vir ons?” Dan moet hy sê hy weet nie, hy probeer sy bes doen op die plek waar hy is. Deneyn was ‘n gevangene van daardie kasteel. (444-5)

Deneyn’s assertion that Africa is different from Europe follows from the urge to provide an alternative to Goske’s oppression – to adapt his knowledge to adequately and justly serve the unfamiliar environment. The final line of the passage, which proclaims him a prisoner of the Castle, makes clear that his views are not shared by the administration he serves. In Eilande, then, Deneyn shares with Grevenbroek the desire to make known the untenability of the way the Cape is run and particularly how the governor acts with regards to the Khoi.

Eventually, Deneyn is dismissed from the Cape by the new governor, Bax, who demands that he overturn some of his verdicts. Deneyn, the highest-ranking jurist at the Cape, refuses, as he feels this would be unfair to the Khoi. Bax concludes his discussion with Deneyn thus: “As jy nie omgee vir my wense nie, kan jy liewer jou kis gepak hou vir die eerste baarskip wat hier inloop. Jy sal Batavia toe gaan, of jy wil of nie” (518). These final words of the chapter on Deneyn confirm the degree of autonomy with which governors
after Van Riebeeck were able to run the Cape. Deneyn’s voice is made to submit to the colonial master-narrative, but Grevenbroek’s *Beeld van die Kaap*, by including it, preserves Deneyn’s island in the ocean of history.

In the novel, Deneyn, with his troubled vision, is one of the voices resisting the dominant discourse of the time about the Khoi. Rather than providing a single, coherent alternative view, the novel presents a postmodern, postcolonial history of the Cape in which the multiplication of perspectives argues for the untenability of any master narrative. Where Grevenbroek’s letter limited itself to the self-side of the colonial divide (he is ultimately concerned with the behaviour of the Dutch), *Eilande* as a historical novel not only presents conflicting colonial voices, but also explores Khoi actions relating to the divide between them and the settlers that the latters’ arrival had initiated. The novel frames historical facts about Krotoa and Autshumao as reactions to the colonial divide and as attempts to resolve it. After exploring the failure and detrimental consequences of these attempts, *Eilande* concludes that a successful reframing of the Khoi as human is impossible in a society shaped by colonial discourse. Yet, as I will show in the following section, although Krotoa and Autshumao fail to become a part of Dutch society, their actions point to the unsustainability of the unequal power balance through which a colonial society justifies its authority.

‘Andersmaak’

The arrival of the Dutch at the Cape leads to an opposition between settlers and Khoi that materialises in measures such as Van Riebeeck’s hedge. Several of *Eilande*’s characters, notably Autshumao (Chief Harry; Herrie) and Krotoa (Eva), are moved into frustrated efforts to overcome or resolve the divide. I argue that they find themselves unable to cross over and ‘become’ the other, because the colonial context, although initiating their remaking within the coloniser’s discourse (‘Andersmaak’), also prevents them from being framed as equals to the settlers. Ultimately, this leads to the colonised’s demise. Yet, the cases of Autshumao and Krotoa also point to how the unequal power balance makes a colonial

---

55 Huigen (1991) describes how Deneyn moved from the Cape to India in 1674, not forced by the governor, but of his own accord, ‘in de hoop daar zijn fortuin te maken’. Accusations of drinking, frivolity and illegally benefiting from selling goods transported on Company ships followed him, but he never admitted any wrongdoing.
society untenable in the long run. This makes ‘Andersmaak’ a key aspect of *Eilande*’s postcolonial critique.

The ‘Andersmaak’ of Chief Harry plays out in the face of an increasing European presence at the Cape. *Eilande*’s opening chapter *Die andersmaak van Chief Harry* (*The Remaking of Chief Harry*) shows how Autshumao’s identity is remade three times as a direct consequence of the arrival of Europeans at the Cape. Autshumao’s story illustrates that ‘Andersmaak’ involves complex processes of identification across the boundaries between social groups. Before 1652, Authumao, ‘een rooi sonop leier van die Goringhaicona’ (3), has regular dealings with mainly the English, who come to Table Bay to refresh and barter cattle, and who call him Chief Harry. Grevenbroek recounts how Autshumao’s name was changed to Chief Harry when he was taken on a journey to the East by the English: ‘Op daardie reis het Autshumao die seevolk se siektes aangesteek, hulle taal geleer en Chief Harry geword. Jy kon maar soek, Autshumao was nie meer daar nie’ (5). The change in names is marked typographically in the novel: ‘Autshumao, Chief Harry, het die laaste dae van die maande van die seereis [to the East] deur die hete trope op sy rug deurgebring’ (7). The chapter continues by focusing on the arrival of the Dutch and their initial contact with the native peoples, which prompts a second change of identity for Autshumao. The Dutch still call him Chief Harry (Herrie), but Grevenbroek comments that they have changed his identity yet again by framing him as the leader of the ‘Hottentot’ rather than as ‘Strandloper’ or ‘Sonqua’: ‘[Hy] het drie maal andersmaak gehad. Hy was Strandloper, toe Sonqua, en nou is hy Hottentot, soos die Hollander dit sien’ (53).\(^{56}\)

Although the name Chief Herrie confirms Autshumao’s status as chief, the colonisers’ unwillingness to call him by his birth name illustrates the unequal power balance between the Europeans and the Cape native people. *Eilande*’s protagonists – with the exception of Grevenbroek – give no sign of any awareness that Autshumao belongs to the Goringhaicona. As explained in Chapter 1, European reports from the decades before Van Riebeeck already attest to an awareness that the Cape peoples are not one. Nevertheless, the Dutch settlers in the novel frame him as a Hottentot, the generic derogatory term for a Cape native.

\(^{56}\) The novel portrays the Dutch as aware that the Khoi are not one people, but finding this irrelevant: ‘Die Hollanders kon nie verklaar waarom daar twis tussen die groeipes Hottentotte was nie, maar dit was van geen belang vir die skeepdiens nie’ (16).
The ‘Andersmaak’ that Grevenbroek has Chief Harry undergoing goes beyond a change of names. The Europeans and Khoi frame the world and the people that inhabit it very differently. By adopting the European nomenclature to refer to himself, Autshumao accepts the European framing of the Cape as the dominant one. However, when he tells his tribe that he has a new name, they do not accept his new identity: ‘Hy het hulle vertel sy nuwe naam is Chief Harry, maar hulle het hom nie geglo nie’ (8). Autshumao decides to shift between identities: amongst his native people, he is Autshumao; amongst the Dutch, he is Chief Harrie. This indicates an awareness on Autshumao’s part of the new power balance that the European arrival has initiated, and his position in it. He adopts the identity the coloniser ascribes to him as a means to secure his people’s future in a Cape dominated by settlers. As Grevenbroek the narrator tells the reader, focalising through Autshumao:

Vreemde nasies sal in Gogosoa [a native chief] se weiding kom woon; dit is hulle kinders wat sy land sal besit. Hy [Autshumao] sien dat dit vir die Koina in komende tye beter kan wees om vriende met die wittes te bly, om eers die teenstander se vee en kinders te help grootmaak. [...] Vir die guns om self ’n paar beeste te laat wei, en ’n kans om op die been te kom, moet die Koina vrede hou met hulle. So gaan dit beter wees vir die Koina, vir hulle wat sonder perde die nuwe heersers moet verwelkom. (7)

Autshumao realises that the Khoi will be dominated by the ‘wittes’ and focuses his thoughts on the need to keep the peace with them in the terms of the inferiority implied by the Dutch ‘Hottentot’.

Another chief, Oedasoa, realises that white men will continue to increase their presence at the Cape at the cost of the native peoples. As the European settlement struggles to become self-sufficient, let alone re-supply passing ships, fertile lands are sought further inland, where tribes are put under increasing pressure to barter and surrender pasture. Oedasoa discusses his concerns about the future of his people with Autshumao and accuses him of helping the Dutch to destroy the Khoi:

“Die Hollander sal oor die berg gaan en die Chainouqua en die Hessequa uit hulle weidings uitjaag, dat sy diere daar kan loop. Waar moet ons Koina wei?” “ Dit sal nog lank wees voor hy so sterk is.” “Maar jy, Autshumao, jy help hom vooruit. Jy is nie ’n Hollander nie, waarom werk jy teen jou mense?” (46-47)

Oedasoa confirms that the separation between native people and the Dutch cannot be overcome by Autshumao’s pragmatic strategy of shifting identities, by his ‘Andersmaak’. By
trying to be both Khoi and Dutch, Autshumao confirms the divide between coloniser and colonised. Although he clearly hopes that his approach will ensure his people’s survival, Oedasoa points out that Autshumao is not in fact Dutch and has betrayed his people by choosing their side. Thus, ‘Andersmaak’ manoeuvres the native people into a marginalised position.

The inequality between coloniser and colonised is a central concern of Homi Bhabha in his paper ‘Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse’ (1984). In his discussion of the colonial circumstance, he asserts that a colonial setting is characterised by a fundamental inequality that can be described in terms of power, and he observes that ‘the question of representation of difference is therefore always also a problem of authority’.57 Where such authority is established or enforced, patterns of thought about the other become rigid and keep the (colonised) other separated from the (colonising) self. Importantly, the authority to which the colonial subject is subjected determines the representation of the other. Bhabha describes this as ‘the process of the fixation of the colonial as a form of cross-classificatory, discriminatory knowledge’.58 From the perspective of the coloniser, renaming Autshumao Chief Harry fixes him as the colonial subject and the animalistic ‘Hottentot’.

As mentioned in the Introduction, in her article ‘Cross-Mirrorings of Alterity’ (1999), Monika Fludernik distinguishes between heterostereotypes and autostereotypes to understand the processes at play in ‘conditions of colonial oppression or, [...] in the circumstances of migration, exile and cultural hybridity’.59 She defines a heterostereotype as an imagological framework about another people, while an autostereotype is a person or a people’s self-image. By adopting the name that the Europeans gave him and introducing himself to his tribe as Chief Harry, Autshumao subsumes his self-image as Goringhaicona to the European heterostereotype of the Other. Fludernik would see this as an example of ‘the appropriation on the part of the colonial subject of the negative heterostereotype imposed on him as his very own autostereotype’.60 Autshumao’s presentation as Chief Harry thus

57 Bhabha (1984, 130).
58 Bhabha (1984, 131).
60 Fludernik (1999, 31). She also goes into the gender aspect of the colonial scenario.
contributes to the fixation of an unequal power relation between the ‘wittes’ or ‘die nuwe heersers’ and the native peoples.61

Autshumao is forced to remake himself in the colonial encounter, being subjected to a power imbalance engrained in the colonial relation between coloniser and colonised. Yet, Bhabha emphasises that, under colonial conditions, one cannot attain settler identity but only approximate it. The colonised subject is only allowed to appropriate or imitate particular aspects of coloniser culture that are earmarked for this purpose. Bhabha calls this mimicry, because it ‘appropriates [into coloniser culture] the Other as it visualizes the power’.62 Colonial mimicry arises from the colonist’s ‘desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite’.63 As Bhabha describes it for the British colonial setting: ‘to be Anglicized, is emphatically not to be English’.64 What this suggests is that the “colonial” is dependent for its representation upon some strategic limitation or prohibition within the authoritative discourse itself.65 In other words, mimicry gives the colonial subject a partial presence in the coloniser culture, while keeping this subject recognisable as the other. As I have shown, the novel grants Autshumao a partial presence in the coloniser culture insofar as it benefits the refreshment station: Van Riebeeck concedes that Autshumao – by virtue of the respect his people accord him as chief and because he speaks English and Dutch – is instrumental to the early settlement’s barter and peace with the natives. This partial presence or mimicry materialises around his name: Autshumao is given a Dutch name, Herrie, but with the added title ‘chief’ which marks him as still a native (non-Dutch) person. Moreover, ‘Herrie’ is surmised to be not just the Dutch rendering of the name the English gave to him, Harry, but to be also an onomatopoeia for the undefinable noise (Dutch: herrie) that his native language makes to Dutch ears.66 Thus, Autshumao, notwithstanding his (forced) adaptation of the negative heterostereotype as his autostereotype, is only partially appropriated into the coloniser culture.

---

61 One could argue that in adopting the coloniser’s title for him, Autshuamo expresses a ‘wish to become white, to exchange places with the colonizer’ (Fludernik 1999, 31). Yet, I find there to be little evidence for this; Autshumao’s ‘Andersmaak’ is presented in the novel as a strategic choice to ensure the future well-being of his people.
62 Bhabha (1984, 126).
63 Bhabha (1984, 126, emphasis in text, as for all other emphasis in Bhabha (1984)).
64 Bhabha (1984, 128).
65 Bhabha (1984, 127).
66 Schoeman (2008, Chapter 1).
Because of this irony, ‘colonial subjection’, Bhabha writes, makes apparent the ‘ambivalence of colonial discourse’. The fact that Autshumao is endowed with particular aspects of coloniser culture exemplifies that coloniser identity is (also) a construct, exposing its alleged signs of ‘racial and cultural superiority’, according to Bhabha, as non-inherent and non-essential. The coloniser’s authority, he maintains, is founded solely in power. Exposing the non-naturalness of colonial authority leads to a crisis in the colonial administration, as Eilande shows through the case of Krotoa.

Like Autshumao, Krotoa occupies a central place in the relations between the Dutch and the native tribes in the early years of Van Riebeeck’s administration. Yet, in opposition to Autshumao’s narrative, which is told in one chapter, Krotoa’s story runs through all seven chapters. As Grevenbroek notes in the prologue, all seven protagonists knew her or her daughter, Pieternella. Starting as a nanny in the Van Riebeeck family, Krotoa becomes increasingly involved with the Van Riebeeck administration. As an informant and interpreter, she becomes instrumental to the relative success of some of Van Riebeeck’s early measures against the Khoi, such as the fence and targeted campaigns against particular tribes. Eilande speculates that, until she and Pieter van Meerhoff, VOC surgeon, meet and fall in love, Krotoa wants to follow the native custom and marry a man of her tribe, but she defers the marriage by repeatedly returning to Van Riebeeck, where she enjoys the comforts the Dutch life offers. Like Autshumao, Krotoa uses the name (Eva) the Dutch give her whenever she is with the settlers. She also changes her clothes when she moves between her native people and the settler community. This again emphasises that ‘Andersmaak’ is not something that happens by choice: Van Riebeeck’s wife insists that Krotoa wash and wear Dutch clothes when she is with them.

After Krotoa falls in love with Pieter, she leaves the Van Riebeeck household less often to visit her people. She is baptised, becomes Pieter’s lawful wife and – in the novel and in South African cultural memory – gives birth to the first legitimate mixed-race baby at the Cape, Pieternella. Differently from Autshumao’s ‘Andersmaak’, Krotoa’s christening and

---

68 Conversely, whenever Krotoa/Eva goes home she changes her Dutch gown for her tribe’s clothes: ‘In haar Hollandse klere het sy tot by die drif in die Brakrivier geloop. [...] [Sy het] haar Hollandse klere uitgetrek, opgevou en in haar bladsk gesit. Toe het sy ‘n velrok en karos omgehang, haar armringe aangesit, en met ‘n stok in die hand verder geloop’. (118)
marriage thus involves the very Christian foundations on which the European autostereotype in the 17th century was founded.

In the novel, Grevenbroek surmises that Eva is at first unwilling to undergo baptism: ‘Eva was onwillig. [...] Hulle wil haar in die Hollandse kamp injaag’ (159), and: ‘Pieter wou haar ompraat’ (160). Yet, seeing that she is pregnant and that, as a consequence, she is irrevocably rejected by her native family, and considering that she will be rejected by the Dutch community unless she marries Pieter, she concedes to embrace settler customs. This, however, does not mean that Krotoa now fully belongs with the Dutch. In Eilande, this is first pointed out by Van Riebeeck when she has only just joined his household. Observing that she commutes between her native tribe and the Castle, Van Riebeeck shares his concerns about where she belongs with Pieter:

Die ding is net, Pieter: Wie is vandag haar mense? Is dit ek of Maria [Van Riebeeck’s spouse], of Herrie [Chief Harry] se mense, of Oedasoa [a Khoi chief] se mense, of haar oorlede pa se mense anderkant die berg? Hier het veranderings oor die Kaap gekom wat haar lot vier, vyf keer verander het. (59)

The passage illustrates an awareness on the part of the coloniser of the effect of the ‘Andersmaak’ induced by the colonial circumstance. Like Autshumao’s fate, that of Krotoa has changed several times under the influence of the Dutch settlement at the Cape. Van Riebeeck acknowledges that Krotoa’s situation is changing as a direct consequence of her work for him, but he is also doubtful about where her loyalty lies – with the Dutch or one of many native peoples. He admits, moreover, that his relationship with her is self-serving: “Ek het geneem om hulle taal te leer by haar; dit is waarom ek haar in my huis geneem het,” het Van Riebeeck gesê’ (55). Van Riebeeck aims to use Krotoa to learn the Khoi language, signalling that there is no real acceptance: Krotoa remains an Other firmly placed on the other side of the colonial divide. Indeed, Van Riebeeck’s efforts in facilitating the first non-white baptism and the first mixed marriage at the Cape stand in sharp contrast with various suppressive policies he comes to enforce against the Khoi. The novel emphasises that his loyalty ultimately lies with his employer, the VOC, and that although he is not in favour of slavery, he will endorse it as a necessary evil: ‘In Suid-Amerika het die Spanjaard en die Portugees op groot skaal slawe gebruik. Hy was nie ten gunste van slawerny nie, dis op sy beste ’n noodsaaklike euwel. Maar hy sal dieselfde doen as daar nie beeste kom vir die Kompanjie se werk nie’ (47). Krotoa, as a go-between, is essential to maintaining good
relations with the native tribes and for successful barter. She is thus tolerated on the Dutch side of the colonial divide, but Van Riebeeck clearly does not consider her ‘one of us’.

The novel shows Krotoa caught between the two sides of the colonial divide, each of which progressively comes to regard her less as a mediator (Khoi) or interpreter (Dutch) than as a traitor (Khoi) and unreliable messenger (Dutch). Seeing that she is spending extended periods of time with the Dutch, her tribe does not accept her anymore as ‘one of them’. Autshumao calls her “n spioen van die vyand’ (50). When he is taken captive by the Dutch, Krotoa translates his bile for Pieter: ‘Hy sê ek is ‘n wit man se teef’ (106). Being rejected by her people pushes Krotoa towards Pieter’s colonial life. Tellingly, at her baptism she is granted the name of Eva, the first woman created by God according to the Bible, in a process of ‘Andersmaak’ that Pieter asserts will give her immortality:

Eva, of dank Krotoa, het Pieter gedink, jou naam is nou ingeskryf, jy sal nooit meer sterf nie. Ek hoop dié andersmaak bring geluk. (162)

As a consequence of the colonial circumstance, Krotoa is thus manoeuvred into a position in which she is left with little choice but to adopt, in Fludernik’s and Bhabha’s terminologies, particular aspects made available to her of the coloniser’s autostereotype. During an evening stroll on the Castle walls, she describes to Pieter that Van Riebeeck’s importance in her life: ‘Die kommandeur is my vader. Die lewe is maklik her vir my, en ek kan eendag rustig oud word’ (63). This indicates a pragmatic adoption of the settler identity to make her life easier, rather than an adoption of Dutchness out of a desire to become Dutch. In the same way as Autshumao’s ‘Andersmaak’ is presented in the novel as a strategic choice to ensure the future well-being of his people, Krotoa does not, in Fludernik’s words, ‘wish to become white, to exchange places with the colonizer’.69 In the same dialogue, Krotoa is quoted as admitting to Pieter what she also told Van Riebeeck, who had it copied down in the Daghregister: ““Meeste dae tink ek is ek ‘n Hollander” Dit het hy [Pieter] self geskryf gesien, in Van Riebeeck se handskrif, in die Fort se dagregister: Krotoa het gesê dat sy ‘n Hollandse hart het’ (62-3). Here, Krotoa does not say that she is Dutch but that she feels like a Dutch person most days. Also, the novel emphasises that the statement about having a Dutch heart does not come from her but from Van Riebeeck. Thus, Krotoa is not

remade completely. At the same time, by appropriating the particular aspects of colonial identity made available to them, Krotoa and Autshumao underline that the Dutch identity can be adopted by others, exposing, in Bhabha’s words, ‘the ambivalence of colonial discourse’.

In *Eilande*, Krotoa is gradually excluded from both sides of the colonial divide. Pieter observes that she is ‘alone amongst strangers’ and reflects on how this affects her:

> Hy kon sien hoe Eva los raak van Van Riebeeck en sy vrou, die gewoontes, die hoflike taal van die groot huis, en die godsdiens wat sy daar geleer het. Sy het meer gedrink, en soms gevloek. Dit het sy by hom geleer. Soms wou sy net die Koina-taal praat, met hom en al die ander. Hy het vermoed dat sy Van Riebeeck se guns verloor het. Sy was nou alleen tussen vreemdelinge. Die Hollandse vroue het haar vermy omdat sy die goeie sedes oortree het, en sy moes hulle afkeer daarvan verduur. Die Koina, haar enigste mense, het van haar af weggeby omdat sy die Hollander in die oorlog gehelp het, en deesdae omdat sy ’n wit man gehad het wat haar geen respek gee met andersmaak nie. (151)

The ‘Andersmaak’ in the final line of this passage refers to the native transition rites that Krotoa would have gone through had she chosen a native life. Pieter no longer acknowledges aspects of her native identity, making apparent that Krotoa has physically crossed over to the settler culture, but, at the same time, that she is rejected by her own people and increasingly by the man whose colonial customs she has come to embrace. In the passage above, Pieter notes that his wife is becoming more and more depressed: she has started to drink more and is wilfully breaking Dutch norms of good behaviour. From a colonial perspective, she is lapsing back into the heterostereotype of the uncultured, beastly native. Pieter realises that Krotoa’s ‘Andersmaak’ haunts her:

> Dit het Pieter bekommer dat sy neerslagtig word. Hy kon dit daagliks in haar sien, maar vermoed dit is eensaamheid omdat sy geen ma of susters het om haar sake mee te bespreek nie. Hy het nie vermoed dat sy droom oor die andersmaak waaronder sy en haar kind die lewe moes ingaan nie. Want sy was ’n weeskind, ’n dier wat van ’n trop veggedwaal het. (152)

‘Andersmaak’ has forced Krotoa into a crisis of belonging. Pieter surmises that the ‘Andersmaak’ that he hoped would grant her immortality is incomplete, and that the native transition rites (the ‘Andersmaak’ in the passage) now haunt her to the point that she feels orphaned into settler culture. Fludernik notes that the colonised subject’s failure at ‘transferring the image’ – a failure that is inscribed into the colonial system – causes ‘the colonized subject [to] flounder in self-hatred’ (31). As, in response to this self-hatred, Krotoa
begins to shame the settler culture she was awarded entry to, she is more and more rejected by the settlers. Indeed, her ‘Andersmaak’ is halted in that she is offered no further aspects of settler culture to adopt. On the contrary, she is increasingly identified as an outsider in an effort to explain her ostensibly uncultured behaviour. Her skin colour is noted as one aspect that prevents her from ever completely becoming part of settler culture. As Grevenbroek comments: ‘Die arm kind. Die Hollanders het haar geminag omdat sy bruin is, en die Koina omdat sy onder die Hollander woon. Al twee roep en wys na haar – verraaiër’ (97).

The fact that Krotoa is thus caught in the colonial divide brings to the fore the ambivalence of the colonial discourse: she has remained identifiable as a non-settler to the settlers, despite her baptism, marriage and European-style clothing. Through Krotoa’s crisis, Eilande explores the conflict in colonial discourse that Bhabha describes as a case of double articulation, or ‘mimicry’. Mimicry, he asserts, on the one hand refers to the partial appropriation of coloniser culture. The coloniser culture sees itself partially represented in the Other and through this partial representation confirms its authenticity and superiority. Krotoa’s baptism and marriage confirm the superiority of settler culture to the administration that enforces it: Krotoa embraces the foundations of the coloniser’s autostereotype, distancing herself from her native customs. However, from the coloniser’s perspective, she again drifts to the native heterostereotype as a consequence of the crisis that ‘Andersmaak’ has brought to her. Moreover, she has always remained identifiable as colonised, most immediately through her skin colour. Krotoa is now simultaneously the embodiment of the ‘Hottentot’ and the archetype of Christian women – Eva. This shows that the image of the Hottentot and that of the coloniser is a construction and can be deconstructed. In Bhabha’s words, Krotoa’s dual embodiment, or ‘Andersmaak’, ‘problematises the signs of racial and cultural priority’, bringing a crisis to the colonial administration.70

The crisis is seemingly resolved by moving Krotoa to Robben Island, when the governor conveniently ‘promotes’ Pieter to be the island’s postkeeper. After Pieter is killed during an expedition to Madagascar, Krotoa is forbidden to return to the Cape. The administration decides to keep her out of public sight. Banished to Robben Island, Krotoa

---

70 Bhabha (1984, 126).
can no longer confront the administration with the ‘double vision’, the ambivalence of colonial discourse. Addicted to alcohol, the novel surmises that she dies there with no friends or family to surround her in 1674.71

Krotoa’s physical banishment from settler culture and her death provide, however, no real solution to the crisis faced by the Dutch coloniser culture that seeks to re-establish its authority. The confrontation with a partial vision of the self that preceded her banishment ‘poses an imminent threat to both “normalized” knowledges and disciplinary powers’ by revealing that settler culture is not naturally superior.72 The sign of Krotoa-as-the-inappropriate-settler makes it necessary for the colonial power to exert its authority by, in Bhabha's terms, intensifying surveillance. Yet, such a re-confirmation of the fixation of the colonial as ‘a form of discriminatory knowledge’, Bhabha maintains, also makes apparent that ‘a colonial circumstance hides no essence, no “itself”’. By enforcing its authority and superiority through the exercise of power, a colonial circumstance ‘necessarily raises the question of the authorization of colonial representation’ (131). Thus, Krotoa’s demise, as a consequence of ‘Andersmaak’, ultimately illustrates that a colonial system that defines itself in terms of strict oppositions is set up to never fully accept a colonised subject. Moreover, eventually, it will be exposed by the colonised as not possessing any inherent superiority. In Eilande, at the dawn of the 18th century, when Grevenbroek is writing his Beeld van die Kaap, governor Simon van der Stel is far from realising this. Yet, the notion of ‘Andersmaak’ frames the stories of Autshumao and Krotoa in such a way that, for readers of the novel, the unsustainability of the colonial framework is exposed.

Conclusion

Eilande is a historical novel that presents a postcolonial reading of the early colonisation of the Cape from the perspective of post-1994 South Africa. The novel is narrated by Grevenbroek and its seven chapters constitute his effort at unsilencing the voices of seven protagonists – presented as forgotten islands in the ocean of history – who all knew the Khoi woman called Krotoa and her daughter Pietermella.

---

71 After Krotoa’s death, her story would become a focus of historical research and a part of South African history after the 1920’s. See, for example, Jansen (2002) and Landman (1996). Examples of her legacy in literature and film include Bloem (2000) and the feature film Krotoa (2017).
72 Bhabha (1984, 126).
73 Bhabha (1984, 131).
It is noteworthy that the 17th century frameworks that, in the previous two chapters, I showed to be essential for Grevenbroek’s argument for the Khoi’s humanity in his letter – a ancient worldview, Christian eschatology and early modern ethnography – are not mobilised in relation to his character or his view of the Khoi in the novel. Instead, Grevenbroek’s interest in the Khoi is seen to be driven by a more general humanist concern that is triggered by the unethical way the Cape is being governed by Simon van der Stel’s administration, in which governor Van der Stel is seen to tamper with VOC minutes and records, thereby corrupting the archive and, ultimately, history, underlining the novel’s postcolonial point that seemingly authoritative archives and histories should be questioned and supplemented by the voices they silence.

In this chapter, I have shown how part of Eilande’s value as a postcolonial novel lies in its narrative structure, which reflects the unequal way in which European and Khoi voices, and male and female voices, have been preserved in the historical archive. Rather than suggesting that this inequality can be easily overcome by recuperating the lost voices of history, the way the stories of the native characters in Eilande are told through European eyes draws attention to Spivak’s ‘epistemic violence of imperialism’, which keeps the subaltern from speaking for itself. Another important aspect of Eilande’s renegotiation of the colonial history of the Cape is underlined by its depiction of the colonial process of ‘Andersmaak’ (remaking). By outlining the effects of ‘Andersmaak’ on the Khoi characters of Autshumao and Krotoa, Eilande highlights the harm caused by the strict colonial divide between settlers and native peoples in the early Cape. The novel shows how Grevenbroek, as a colonial narrator, can ultimately only observe the Khoi from the colonial side of the divide, while Autshumao and Krotoa experience the impossibility, within the colonial framework, of being accepted either as native or as assimilated into Dutch culture. By accepting the settler’s name for him and keeping peace with the Dutch, Autshumao hopes to protect his people, but his actions ultimately affirm the dominancy of the settler’s framework and the marginalisation of the native peoples. Krotoa, despite marrying a Dutch man, having his child and being baptised as Eva, is never fully accepted by the Dutch and also loses her native home. Her frustrated crossing over – and the Dutch determination to never fully let her do this, in line with Bhabha’s theory of colonial mimicry – leads to her banishment and untimely death.
The case of Krotoa/Eva illustrates the unsustainability of a society characterised by a colonial divide. Jan van Riebeeck approves Krotoa’s Christian baptism and marriage, seemingly allowing her access to the foundational values of European settler identity. Yet, partly as a consequence of her skin colour, Eva remains Krotoa. The partial representation of the colonial self in the colonised other brings a crisis to the coloniser’s self-image, or, in Fludernik’s terms, autostereotype. Krotoa’s unsuccessful ‘Andersmaak’ illustrates that the coloniser’s supposed authority is not founded in any definite racial or cultural superiority but in the exercise of power.

Eva’s banishment to Robben Island may physically remove the threat she embodies to the administration, but it does not provide a solution to the colonial divide between Cape natives and settlers. The fixed and rigid division of power in which the authority of a colonial regime is invested will also lead to the administration’s ultimate demise. By highlighting what Bhabha calls the ambivalence of colonial discourse, Eilande allows for a different articulation of Cape history. The novel cannot change the course of Cape history as we know it, but it does show that under any apparent (colonial) stasis, there is a (postcolonial) challenge to the status quo.
Conclusion

If stories are retold and reimagined, the re- is of decisive importance: each new invention happens in the margin of the already-written, or against the background of the already-written. This excludes a reading of the new narrative as a fortuitous invention, as mere fiction, because it engages with the world – the world itself being conceived as a story. It inserts itself into the reader’s consciousness as an invitation to a moral choice.

André Brink (1998, 22)

In 2019, the Dutch historian Bart de Graaff published Barend Barends. Die vergete kaptein van Danielskuil. The book tells of Barend Barends, the illegitimate son of a European colonist and a Khoi woman. Around 1770, Barends was making a living through plunder and cattle theft at the Cape colony’s northernmost edges, across the Orange River, at a safe distance from the Castle’s authority. After he had gathered about 200 followers, the Castle administration decided to recognise him as ‘Baster’-kaptein, ‘leader of the baster (a mixed race) people’.

De Graaff’s book shows the dual status of kaptein Barends, outlaw and official leader at the same time. Yet, the book is also a journey into Barends’ image today. During apartheid, his name was erased from the books of history and his people largely forgotten. De Graaff takes us along on his journey into ‘baster’ country and his search for Barends’ descendants. He finds that many are proud to walk in their ancestor’s footsteps and carry the name ‘baster’ forward. In the eyes of many South Africans, however, the ‘basters’ isolated, pastoral way of life positions them outside society. As the historian Bill Nasson notes in his review of Barend Barends, today’s ‘[South African] nationalistic elite looks upon South African history as a political classroom in which one is taught who to respect and who to reject’.¹ De Graaff’s book and Nasson’s review underline that the problem of framing is very present in today’s South African society. When apartheid’s racial framework was lifted, questions about how to (re)frame the past and to what (political, social) effect became a topic of public debate. The conversation on how to interpret the present in the light of the past, and the past in the light of the present, is ongoing. As Nasson aptly writes: ‘The

¹ Nasson (2020): ‘Die [nasionalistiese] elite beskou die Suid-Afrikaanse verlede as ’n politieke klaskamer waar almal moet leer wat verheerlik en wat veroordeel moet word’.
discovery of forgotten [baster] voices’ is very relevant to ‘the early 21st century in which we consciously struggle with our identity’.²

My research emerged from a concern with framing. As I explained in the Introduction, factual knowledge is given meaning by interpreting and reinterpreting it through different frames that attain only partial articulation. In the preceding chapters, I have illustrated the importance of framing for the image of the Khoi in the light of South Africa’s renegotiation of its past and in the context of European intellectual history. I have outlined what the dominant colonial European and postcolonial South African frames for appreciating the Khoi looked like – what aspects of the Khoi and their way of life these frames highlighted – and what image(s) of the Khoi they created.

In Chapter 1, I studied pre-1652 European travelogues about the Khoi. If texts from the early Cape have until now only occupied a modest niche in Afrikaans, South African, and, to a lesser extent, Dutch literary history, often framed positivistically as early expressions of the historiographer’s national, ideological or linguistic concerns, texts from before 1652 are largely forgotten. Indeed, Karel Schoeman pointed out in his Patrisiërs & prinse. Die Europese samelewening en die stigting van ‘n kolonie aan die Kaap (2008) that the VOC and its Cape archives, as from 1652, long provided the starting point and dominant perspective form which to narrate Cape history. In analysing pre-1652 texts that originated from a pre-nation state environment as part of a contemporary European discourse characterised by particular expectations of the largely unknown world ‘out there’ and the peoples in it, I have sought to add 164 years to South African (literary) history and demarginalise the Khoi. As Schoeman also points out in his book Kolonie aan die Kaap. Jan van Riebeeck en die vestiging van die eerste blankes, 1652-1662 (2010), the VOC was a trading company that legislated and ran the Cape from its commercial interests, but there are many non-VOC related sources and many non-VOC perspectives that warrant exploration.³ I have made clear that early Cape literature framed the Khoi according to the conventions of early modern European thought, while emphasising that discourse about the Khoi in pre-1652 European travelogues was never singular or stable but always in flux. Thus, as a legacy from classical times, observations about the Khoi’s dark skin colour did not have

² Idem: ‘Die ontdekking van die vergete stemme [...]. [D]ie vroeë 21ste eeu [is] die era waarin ons selfbewus worstel met identiteit’.
derogatory connotations in the earliest Portuguese accounts but served to distinguish between various tribes in a dawning ethnographic consciousness. Readily observable characteristics dominated the earliest eyewitness descriptions of the Khoi, which became disparaging only after quarrels related to barter erupted. Christian worldviews further facilitated a categorisation of the Khoi as inferior. A popular evolutionary model was the hierarchical chain of being, which explained the African as living outside Christian man’s time and space, ranking him between man and animals.

This negative framing intensified and became more fixed as interactions between Khoi and Europeans became more frequent with the permanent presence of the Dutch at the Cape after 1652. Together, Chapters 2 and 3 have shown how Grevenbroek’s letter about the Khoi presents an early stage in what Grafton calls the European ‘Revolution of Knowledge’. On the one hand, Grevenbroek moves away from the written word of contemporaries and reiterations of ancient and biblical knowledge about the Khoi, whilst explicitly embracing empirical observation as the basis for understanding the world. On the other hand, he is also a child of his time, using aspects of classical and contemporary Christian discourse to coherently frame his personally acquired evidence. In the end, Grevenbroek appreciates the novel as an extension to the familiar and does not yet challenge the dominant pillars of early modern European discourse about the Khoi – something that would only happen in the 18th century.

Grevenbroek’s letter has a dual urgency to it. Firstly, its explicit concern with the nature and trustworthiness of knowledge about the Khoi positions the Cape natives at the heart of a major transition in European intellectual history. As editors Martin Lengwiler, Nigel Penn and Patrick Harries illustrate in Science, Africa and Europe. Processing Information and Creating Knowledge (2018), scholarship is opening up to approaches that not only show that European (scientific) knowledge about Africa in colonial times was ‘a foil against which Europeans came to view themselves as members of enlightened and modern civilizations’, but also that Africa urged Europe to ‘shape, adapt and refine’ their knowledge.4 Grafton has illustrated this for European texts about the native Americans, as has Ton Lemaire in his book De Indiaan in ons bewustzijn. De ontmoeting van de Oude met de Nieuwe Wereld (1986), but to my knowledge no such effort has yet been undertaken for

4 Lengwiler, Penn and Harries (2018, 6).
the Khoi. Secondly, by virtue of its unique voice in appreciation of the Khoi, Grevenbroek’s letter has a distinct relevance in the context of South Africa’s ongoing renegotiation of its past. As Paul Maylam argues in *South Africa’s Racial Past. The History and Historiography of Racism, Segregation, and Apartheid* (2001), issues such as discrimination, racism, and marginalisation in modern-day South Africa can be traced back to the first European (VOC) settlement at the Cape, and even before that time. Reframing its past in the post-1994 circumstance, South Africa is still coming to terms with these issues. Grevenbroek’s letter and the travel accounts explored in Chapter 1 not only confirm Maylam’s thesis, but also add depth and nuance by distinguishing the different forms the European framing of the Khoi took.

In Chapter 4, I explored how the past is re-framed by Dan Sleigh’s historical novel *Eilande* (2002), which is narrated by Grevenbroek. Through a close-reading of *Eilande*’s narrative structure and Grevenbroek’s presentation of himself and individual Khoi characters, I illustrated that Grevenbroek’s voice in his historical letter and his voice in *Eilande* each frame the past in the light of the respective epistemologies of their time. Grevenbroek’s concern with the Khoi in the novel is driven not by the Christian or ancient frameworks that he mobilised in his historical letter. Instead, it is driven by his rejection of the moral and financial corruption of governor Simon van der Stel, who in the novel is seen to exploit the Khoi to the advancement of the settlers, and to wilfully tamper with the VOC archives, thereby altering the image of history for posterity. In my reading, the novel presents a postcolonial interpretation of the early colonisation of the Cape from the perspective of post-1994 South Africa.

*Eilande*’s seven chapters unsilence the voices of their respective protagonists – historical persons presented as forgotten islands in the ocean of history – each of whom knew Krotoa (Eva), and her daughter Piertennella. In his historical study *Die Buiteposte. VOC-buiteposte onder Kaapse bestuur, 1652-1795* (1993), Sleigh asserts that what is absent from the familiar picture of the VOC and from much modern historical pedagogy about the Cape are the individual men and women that through their hardships kept the VOC afloat and saw to the settlement’s various needs.⁵ The multitude of voices in *Eilande* adds to the body of post-1994 South African literature that reflects a democratic and postcolonial turn in the

---

⁵ *Die Buiteposte* was originally published as Sleigh’s PhD thesis.
demographic variety of both its authors and protagonists. The novel questions the objectivity of a singular historical narrative and – notably through its portrayals of lawyer Deneyn and Grevenbroek – provides examples of colonial frameworks being challenged in the 17th century.

I made two central arguments about the manner in which Eilande reframes the past. Firstly, building on Spivak’s seminal essay ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ (1988), I argued that Grevenbroek (and, by extension, Eilande) emphasises the one-sidedness of the fact that the Khoi were spoken about from a European perspective and refrains from assuming that their lost voice can simply be recovered and made to speak for itself. Acknowledging what Spivak has called ‘the epistemic violence of imperialism’, I maintained that Eilande’s narrative structure replicates the unequal degree to which the voices of coloniser and colonised have been preserved in the colonial archives. Secondly, building on Homi Bhabha’s theory about colonial mimicry and Monika Fludernik’s observations about stereotyping, I argued that Autshumao’s and Krotos’s ‘Andersmaak’ exposes what Bhabha calls ‘the ambivalence of colonial discourse’: the fact that a colonial framework is not built on any inherent ideological or cultural superiority but instead maintained through the exercise of power. Ultimately, according to Bhabha, a rigid adherence to the divide between coloniser and colonised will lead to the colonial society’s demise. Along these two lines, the novel reframes the past – and the position of the Khoi in it – in a postcolonial manner that has particular urgency in present-day South Africa.

My argument that framing is of decisive importance in the formation of knowledge about the Khoi goes beyond a mere re-reading of historical sources. As outlined in Jonathan Culler’s Framing the Sign (1988), which I cited in the Introduction, ‘framing is something we do’ and ‘the frame is determining’, even though ‘the frame itself may be nothing tangible, pure articulation’. Framing can pertain to the inclusion of sources that hitherto were seen to have little or no pertinence for history, as I illustrated for pre-Van Riebeeck accounts in Chapter 1. In Chapters 2 and 3, I showed that framing can also entail the scrutiny of how knowledge comes into being, of the frame itself. Grevenbroek questioned his peers’ interpretation of the age-old written word and returned to the source texts to provide what he considered a more authentic reading, which, supplemented by a revolutionary use of his

---

6 Culler (1988, ix).
own experiences with the Khoi, led him to reframe the Khoi as part of humanity. Chapter 4, finally, made clear that framing can also mean reframing the past through a historical voice (Grevenbroek) in a fictional medium (a novel). Therefore, in this thesis I have compared different textual forms from different periods, in line with Culler’s idea that the study of framing through texts involves ‘the study of narrative as a fundamental system of intelligibility’ that is subject to change. I have bridged centuries, lands, genres, and academic disciplines to show that a diachronic study of the framing of the Khoi not only assigns them a prominent place in European intellectual history, but can aid their repositioning in modern-day South Africa.

---

7 Culler (1988, 209).
Appendix 1

Descriptive Bibliography and History of the Grevenbroek Manuscript Including Brief Comments on its Text Editions

Grevenbroek’s letter exists in one manuscript copy, kept at the National Library of South Africa (Cape Town Campus, Special Collections, MSB203).

Descriptive bibliography MSB203

Dimensions:
cover: 18.0x23.5 cm  
paper: 17.5x22.0 cm
written space: consistent body of running script; on the inside is added a column for marginalia, 4-5 cm wide.

State:
No significant damage. The title page shows marks indicating considerable use; it is smudged at the sides, with little cracks at the edges.

Cover:
White-grey, undecorated vellum of an unknown date before 1882. Fly sheets on the inside front and back. The title sheet (supposedly the manuscript’s earlier cover) is bound into the vellum with the quires.

Binding:
The bindings of the individual quires are not aligned with those pasting the manuscript to its vellum cover, and are of a different material. There are no signs of re-binding.
Late entries:
On the inside cover are the ex libris of the Sutherland Library and that of the South Africa National Library. Two earlier shelf marks, one in ink, one in pencil.

Collation:
Modest 4°: i + A-O² + i [124 pages]¹
A separate title sheet wraps around A-O.

Paper:
The title sheet is made of uneven paper of a thick quality. The quires are made of thinner paper of regular thickness and smoothness. Possibly the title page served as a protective cover before it was bound in vellum. The watermark in the quires is a post horn set in a crowned shield (figure App.1, previous page). Beneath the shield a sign like an arrow, underneath which are letters spelling ‘WR’. On the other half of the sheet is an unclear countermark, probably depicting the papermaker’s initials (figure App.2). The watermarks are horizontal and at the fold. It is impossible to obtain an unobstructed view of the watermarks as the binding runs through their centre. This makes it particularly hard to identify the (smaller) countermark. Each sheet carries either a watermark or a countermark.

Ink:
Black ink for text and margins.

Hand:
The manuscript is written in a clear, consistent book cursive. The character of the writing does not change visibly and there are no clear ruptures that would allow identifying several scribes.

¹ The NLSA catalogue states ‘121pp.’ indicating the number of written pages. Pages 122 and 123 only have numbering. Page 124 is blank. Van Stekelenburg (2003, 95) has 120 pages.
Place and Date of Composition:
No literature exists about the manuscript history. The ex libris, in combination with comments inscribed on the fly sheet of a separate notebook, allow the origin of the manuscript to be pushed back to 1882. Before it was catalogued into the collection of the South African Public Library, the manuscript was kept at the Sunderland Library in London. It is not known when it arrived there. The central ex libris, its bottom edge tucked under another ex libris, reads: ‘From the Sunderland Library, Blenheim Palace, Purchased [sic], July, 1882, by Bernard Quaritch, 15 Piccadilly, London’. Fairbridge would acquire the manuscript from Bernard Quaritch three years later; a scribble in pencil on the right side of the fly leaf states: ‘Purchased from Mr. Quaritch, November 1885 for C.A. Fairbridge’. The second and most recent ex libris, that of the South Africa Public Library, reads: ‘Presented to the South African Public Library by C.A. Fairbridge Esq.’ The year of presentation has been added in a later hand in pencil: 1886. A note in pencil on the right side of the flysheet in the hand of Fairbridge affirms that it was indeed gifted to the library: ‘Presented to the South African Public Library by A. Fairbridge’ follows his autograph. It has resided at the South African Public Library, now the South African National Library, ever since, and is the only known copy of Grevenbroek’s Elegans et Accurata [...] Descriptio.

History of MSB203
In one of his notebooks, kept at the National Library in Cape Town, Fairbridge noted: ‘N.N. Graevenbroeck. Secretary of the Council of Policy for India 1695. The original M.S. [sic] was presented by me to the S.A. Public Library. CAF’ (figure App.4, next page). The notebook has Van Oordt’s Dutch translation bound into it. Its second and final part was published in February 1886, so Grevenbroek’s manuscript was gifted to the South Africa Public Library in 1886. It is likely that Fairbridge, who was based in the Cape, took it with him from Mr.

---

3 The NLSA catalogue has: ‘Purchased from Mr Quaritch, November 1885 for CAF’.
4 The NLSA catalogue has: ‘Presented to the South African Library by Chas A Fairbridge’.
5 Inside front cover. The flyleaf carries statements from Fairbridge on the poetics of Van Oordt’s translation: ‘Excerpts from the Zuid Afrikaansche Tijdschrift in which Graevenbroek ... is published from the original M.S. – not castrated to suit the modesty of its editor Dr Van Oort. [...] CAF’ And under that: ‘One of the “immodest” passages omitted is curiously illustrative of a feminist [sic] habit regarded by Herodotus as prevailing among the Ancient Egyptians’ (emphasis in text).
Quaritch in London. Considering the availability of white/cream coloured veal leather vellum at the Cape, the manuscript was probably bound into its current cover at the Sunderland Library. Watermarks and paper quality provide further clues about the manuscript’s time and place of composition.

Grevenbroek must have composed his letter between (late) December 1693 and 1695. Critical literature has assumed the year 1695 on the front page of MSB203 as the date of composition of the original text by Grevenbroek. This is indeed a convenient date as Grevenbroek would by then have retired and could base his account on the knowledge he acquired during his time as the Council’s scribe at the Castle. Also, considering Grevenbroek’s opinion of the Van der Stel governors, it would have been safer from him to write the letter while no longer in VOC service. Supporting evidence for 1695 from other sources is lacking, but the wrecking of the VOC ship De Gouden Buys in 1693 is extensively covered in the letter, indicating a post-1693 date of composition.

The physical properties of the paper proper (colour, etc.) and watermarks tentatively confirm 1695 as a likely year of composition. The paper of MSB203 is a writing paper. In early modern times, different purposes of writing were met with types of paper. Parameters that reflect the primary

---

6 I have not found additional biographical information about ‘Mr. Quaritch’.

7 A bookbinder with expert knowledge in vellum would be able to confirm this thesis. The fly sheets that are glued inside the front and back cover were probably added at the same time.


9 The Cape mainly relied on Dutch paper imports as there are no signs that the VOC erected any paper mills or encouraged paper culture at the Cape. Paper used at the Cape largely mirrors the trends of the Dutch paper market. Paper was imported in batches and consumed accordingly. It seems that paper was available to the
usage of a particular quality of paper in early modern paper making are size, watermark, thickness and smoothness.

The primary watermark in MSB203 is a post horn set in a crowned shield (figure App.1). In its manifestation as ‘posthorn in crowned shield’, it was a standard pattern (irrespective of paper size) from the 17th century onwards. The post horn as a watermark has a long history; its predominant use has always been in writing paper. Vice versa, writing paper is characterised by the horn: ‘It was one of the commonest of all watermark patterns, in use as such in Europe since the 14th century. The pattern was presumably intended, at least in later examples, to evoke urgent postal delivery.’

If set in a shield, the posthorn is a relatively unembellished design, as depicted in figure App.5 and figure App.6, or the more elaborate motif of figure App.3. The first two designs bear no crown, have no inverted figure S curves in their outlines and a pendant mark is absent. These designs occur as early as the later 16th century. The earliest post horn set in a crowned shield is dated 1668. The watermark in MSB203, with its crown, elaborate S curves and pendant, is closer to this design. Although this reveals

---

general public and that the VOC kept a tight reign over paper trade, but it is unknown how distribution was organised. Evidence that the VOC had paper made to order is only found after 1722. Paper culture only developed after the annexation of the Cape by the British in 1795. In this, the Cape was markedly different from the other overseas territories under VOC administration. Future research into overseas watermark databases could further an understanding of the Cape’s unique position. It would also develop knowledge of the paper trade and global economy in early modern times, and build towards a more reliable framework to date paper sources and open up new windows on relations between the colonial world and Europe.

11 Although the more sober motive is older, it continued to be used alongside the crowned shield throughout western Europe.
nothing about the place the copy was produced, it narrows down the manuscript’s date of composition to after 1668.

The many details in the shield’s design and the horn allow further identification. The letters spelling ‘WR’ beneath the shield the initials of Strasbourg papermaker Wendelin Ri(c)hel (†1555). They were frequently plagiarised as a mark of quality and are found as pendant marks all over western Europe for over three hundred years. They are found in Dutch paper from 1636 onward. However, I found combinations of ‘WR’ with the post horn only for the period 1614 to 1687.

The appendage from the bottom of the shield as depicted in figure App.3 became fashionable towards the end of the first half of the 18th century; the inverted lily of orange blossom is a motive that sprang from patriotic sympathies in the Netherlands. The watermark of MSB203 does not have this appendage. The paper for MSB203 was thus with great likelihood produced in western Europe between 1668 and 1687. As a result of the paper prices in early modern times, it was not unusual that paper was kept for extended periods of time until a purpose that legitimised its use would arise.

Further defining elements of the watermark in MSB203 include the three lilies on the crown of which only the centre one has a pointed top leaf; the two floral elements in between the lilies, that both are three-partite; and the three circles in the crown’s band. Although it has been observed that ‘when paper is viewed from the direction in which the paper makers’ names are to be read […], the bell of the horn always points to the left’, I found that many horns in Cape paper and also the bell of the horn in MSB203 actually point to the right.

Dedicated post paper was used in the Netherlands from at least 1636. It was bought in from Germany. In the political turmoil of the time, it would take considerable time for a Dutch paper industry to develop and supply the Dutch market. In 1666, post horns are still

---

12 Churchill (1935, 12).
13 I compared the watermarks in MSB203 against Briquet (1952), Churchill (1935), Heawood (1931; 1950), Voorn (1960; 1973; 1985), the Thomas L. Gravell Watermark Archive and the watermarks in Cape paper presented in this research. Although still considered authoritative in their field, Churchill (1935) and Briquet (1952) rely on a limited data set.
14 The vast majority of post horns in a crowned shield that carry such an appendage also have a set of initials written under it. The reverse is also true. E.g. SLD361.1 (year: 1787); SLD341.1 (year: 1791). Counterexamples that lack a chauvinist pendant exist for the United States from the final decades of the 18th century.
16 It is mentioned in a Dutch Ordinance of 1636 that mentions different sorts of paper (Dutch Ordinances of the Province of Groningen, 1618-1797; cf. Churchill (1935, 11)).
found in imported paper; in this case, paper from Italy. The post horn is first found in paper produced by Pieter van der Ley, papermaker in the Zaan area. Watermark research illustrates that Dutch post paper was imported into England, and that their watermarks were oftentimes also copied by local papermakers.\textsuperscript{17} Original Van der Ley post horn paper was used in England in 1668.\textsuperscript{18} This is a few years earlier than assumed by the great Dutch paper historian Voorn, who suggests that Honigh and Van der Ley produced the first dedicated writing paper in the Netherlands around 1672-73.\textsuperscript{19} None of the great many watermarks produced in the Netherlands in the period 1614 until early 18\textsuperscript{th} century answer to the particularities of the watermark in MSB203. Many feature one or more square gems in the crown for the three round ones in MSB203; the lilies have different centre petals; the two floral elements have only one petal; the dimensions of the watermark as a whole are off; or the proportions of the individual elements are markedly different.

However, matches for MSB203 are found in paper from late 17\textsuperscript{th} century London. Some do in fact seem clean copies of the watermark in MSB203.\textsuperscript{20} An example is shown in figure App.7. Variations between different moulds from the same papermaker were common, and are no reason to discard a possible match MSB203 with paper made in or around 1687.\textsuperscript{21} Dutch writing paper gained particularly popularity on the English market after 1670, and considerable quantities of Dutch paper were imported into England in the following decades. Conversely, there is no proof of English writing paper imported into the Netherlands.

\textbf{Figure App.7} A close match with MSB203. SLD.138.1, courtesy of the Gravell Watermark Archive.

\textsuperscript{17} Cf. Churchill 1935 and the Gravell database.
\textsuperscript{18} Gravell Watermark Archive SLD.090.1.
\textsuperscript{19} Voorn (1960, 102).
\textsuperscript{20} E.g. Gravell Watermark Archive SLD.138.1. No further samples of this particular post horn design have been found in other sources or repositories.
\textsuperscript{21} I have not been able to identify the paper maker. The Gravell database does not mention a countermark. The Folger Shakespeare Library finds itself unable to disclose such information by correspondence.
It has not been possible to connect the watermark in Grevenbroek’s manuscript to a particular paper maker or paper mill. Paper trade and watermark suggest that MSB203 might have been copied from a primer in England, possibly London, around 1695. The Grevenbroek manuscript was certainly not produced before (late) December 1693.\textsuperscript{22} The ex libris on the inside cover of MSB203 from an English library in 1882 might suggest English ownership for the intermediate years; this would falsify a tentative suggestion in critical literature for two Dutch addressees of the letter.\textsuperscript{23}

**Text editions**

Farrington-Schapera’s 1933 diplomatic transcription of the Grevenbroek manuscript is an attempt at establishing a ‘best’ reading. As the editors point out, in their transcription and translation they have only ‘slightly modernized the punctuation [and] curbed the lavish and erratic use of capitals [and] silently corrected many small slips’.\textsuperscript{24} Their rendition of the opening lines of the manuscript is exemplary of the edition as a whole:

Admodum Revdo. Doctissimoque [Doctissimoq.] Viro

N.N. S.P.D.


To the right reverend and learned gentleman......

Greetings.

You say that you receive great pleasure from my letters; I feel the same and perhaps more from the expressions of your goodwill towards me, so full of charm and thought, with which you honour me. I

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} French, Dutch and German watermarks and countermarks have enjoyed greater attention in filigranological studies than their English counterparts. Looking at the British role in overseas explorations, it is a matter of consequence that a more extensive British watermark and countermark database be developed, that the paper and countermark of the match at the Folger Shakespeare Library be studied and that the importance to include countermarks in any watermark database be stressed. This would further research into the origin of MSB203 and build a more reliable framework of watermarks for the purpose of dating paper sources not only from Europe but from the early modern world at large.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Cf. Van Stekelenburg (2001).
\item \textsuperscript{24} Farrington-Schapera (1933, 169). I did not encounter too many of the alleged ‘many small slips’. A full list of discrepancies with the manuscript rests with me, TM.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
can never read nor relish them enough, and from the bottom of my heart I thank the Powers above through whose kindness there has been granted me, perhaps to test me, some little share of this world’s goods so that they may see a proof of my pious devotion to you.²⁵

In square brackets, I have shown discrepancies with the manuscript text. Farrington-Schapera’s edition obscures one or two mannerisms of Grevenbroek’s style, such as his use of abbreviations, which in the manuscript makes him come across as a conscious classical philologist.²⁶ Farrington-Schapera do present the Latin and the English translation on parallel pages, so that one can develop a feel for Grevenbroek’s Latin, particularly where the connotations and syntax of the translation differ from the Latin. Caution is due when relying solely on the English translation, which, as I explain in Chapter 3, in referring to the Khoi betrays a particular view of them that is not Grevenbroek’s. As stated in the Introduction, a censored Dutch translation was prepared by Jan van Oordt (1886, reprinted 1932).

---

²⁵ Farrington-Schapera (1933, 172).
²⁶ The choices for a diplomatic or a ‘best’ reading are only occasionally acknowledged (as footnotes), which stands as a point of critique. ‘q.’ is short for the enclitic Latin ‘-que’. Another common manuscript abbreviation used by Grevenbroek is ‘-ā’ for a word ending in ‘-am’.
This page intentionally left blank.
Appendix 2  
Comparative Ethnography

The table below compares the structure of three major treatises about the Khoi from the early Cape, which together make up Volume 14 in the Van Riebeeck Society Series: Farrington-Schapera (1933). Details have been omitted to bring out patterns in the structure and topics covered. There is no connection between topics that are next to each other in separate columns in the table. Note the variation in the peoples discussed and the time spent at the Cape: there is no proof that Dapper ever left Holland; Ten Rhyn was at the Cape for about four weeks; and Grevenbroek had been there for ten years when he wrote his letter. Also note the many new topics added by him, as well as the loose structure of his account in comparison to those of Dapper and Ten Rhyn, which are more encyclopaedic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Olfert Dapper (1668), Kaffrarie of lant der Kaffers, anders Hottentots genaemt. (Kaffrarie or land of the Kafirs, otherwise named Hottentots.)</th>
<th>Willem ten Rhyn (1686), Schediasma de Promontorio Bonae Spei; eiusve tractus incolis Hottentotis. (A Short Account of the Cape of Good Hope and of the Hottentots who inhabit that region.)</th>
<th>Johan Willem de Grevenbroek (1695), Elegans et accurata gentis Africanae circa Promontorium Capitis Bonae Spei vulgo Hottentotten Nuncupatae Descriptio Epistolaris. (An Elegant and Accurate Description of the African Race living round the Cape of Good Hope commonly called Hottentots, from a letter).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical description of the land.</td>
<td>The Arrival</td>
<td>Captatio; Aim and purpose of the letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land is not divided into kingdoms, but some peoples are governed by chiefs. Relative organisation of the Hottentots: • Goringhaikonas • Gorachouquas • Goringhaiquas • Cochoquas or Saldanhars • Great and little Karichuriquas and Hosaas • Chainouquas • Kobonas • Sonquas • Namaquas • Brygoudys</td>
<td>Chap. I The Situation of the Cape of Good Hope [Geography] First impression: whiteness of body – whiteness of soul</td>
<td>Chap. II Animals Superior senses Chap. III Birds Feeding habits: food Chap. IV Fish Women’s duties in household Chap. V Insects and Poisonous Creatures Twins Chap. VI Plants Subsistence Chap. VII The Seasons of the Year Men’s duties Chap. VIII The Hottentots who inhabit this realm: • Essequaes • Namaquas • Sousvas • Sonquas Purses around neck, attire, quiver Warfare and peacemaking The Supreme being Rivers and hot springs Female knapsack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Chapters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build of the Kafirs or Hottentots</td>
<td>Heusaquas, Gregoriquas, Honnimas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing of the men</td>
<td>Intercourse, babies, birth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing of the women</td>
<td>‘Those who mingle freely with our men about the Castle.’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ornamentation</td>
<td>Chap. IX Their relations with other peoples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons</td>
<td>Chap. X Physical Characteristics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>On the Jewish connection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>Chap. XI Clothing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsistence</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>Chap. XII Buildings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>Story of William Chenut</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishments of Theft</td>
<td>Chap. XIII Furniture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incest</td>
<td>Failed trading mission to Magosi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishment of Homicide and Assault</td>
<td>Chap. XIV Their Character</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings</td>
<td>Chap. XV Their Habits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Chap. XVI Means of Livelihood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>Laws of the land</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Chap. XVII Their mode of War</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishment of Homicide and Assault</td>
<td>Chap. XVII Mode of Buying and Selling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings</td>
<td>Chap. XVIII The Magistrate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Extreme penalties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>Chap. XX The Law of Nations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Moving around</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Chap. XXI Marriage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishment of Homicide and Assault</td>
<td>Chap. XXII The Education of the Children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings</td>
<td>Jewellery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Chap. XXV Arts and Crafts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>On greeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishment of Homicide and Assault</td>
<td>Chap. XXVI Their Medical Practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings</td>
<td>Ancestors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Chap. XXVII Their Language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Justice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishment of Homicide and Assault</td>
<td>Chap. XXIV The Education of the Children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings</td>
<td>Death</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Washing of skins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Daggha and Cama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishment of Homicide and Assault</td>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings</td>
<td>Weather</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>The veld</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Soil and crops</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishment of Homicide and Assault</td>
<td>Seasons and flowers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Arts and crafts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Ocean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishment of Homicide and Assault</td>
<td>Witnesses, sources and method</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings</td>
<td>Farewell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References

References to series published by the following historical societies have been abbreviated in the body text:
Van Riebeeck Society (VRS); Linschoten Vereniging (LV); Hakluyt Society (HS).
   HS I, 33 (José de Acosta).
   HS I, 42 (Alvaro Velho).
   HS II, 1 (Sir Thomas Roe).
   HS II, 16 (John Jourdain).
   HS II, 35 (Peter Mundy).
   HS II, 53 (Jón Ólaffson) (translated from the Icelandic by Bertha S. Phillipotts).
   HS II, 586ff. (Edmund Barker).
   HS IV, 52ff. (Henry May).
   LV 7; 25; 32. (Willem Lodewijckz; Franck van der Does; Various Anonymous & Cornelis de Houtman).

Archival materials

I am indebted to the following institutions and their staff for their kind permission to reproduce and cite from their collections:
India Office, The British Library, London:
   Marine Records OC1868 (William Minors).
   Marine Records 16 (Sandish-Croft Journal).
National Archives, the Hague:
   BDR8/4/1648 (Witte Duijve).
   DBR15/4/1648 (Princesse Royale).
   Codex 1056 (Thomas van Cuijck).
   Codex 4389 (Cornelis Claesz. van Purmerendt (1609), Journael [...]).
   Microfilm from codex 1067 bis (Journael, gehouden bijden ondercoopman Leendert Jansen).
   OD1648II (Report of the Commissioners to the Lords XVII).
National Library of South Africa, Special Collections, Cape Town:
   D09.c.73 (Lexicon philologicum).
   D09.d.36 (Seneca, Epistles).
   FB5429 (Notebook of C.A. Fairbridge).
   MSB203 (Manuscript Grevenbroek).
   Sig. Z 2 r (Pietro Martire d’Anghiera, De novo orbe (1612)).
South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA), Cape Town:
   File 9/2/084/176 (The Van der Byl tombs).
Stellenbosch University Library, Special Collections, Stellenbosch:
   MS381 (Van Stekelenburg Collection).
Western Cape Archives and Records Services, Cape Town:
   1/STB/19/176 (Inventory Grevenbroek).
   C1887-1904 (Minutes of the Cape Council 1684-1694 with Grevenbroek as secretary).
   C1378: 89 (Uitgaande brieven).
   1/1/25 (Daghregister)
   1/2/80 (Politieke resoluties).
Works cited

Acosta, J. de (1590), *De procuranda salute indorum*, Salmanticae: Apud Guillelrum Focuell. (Translated as *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*).


Barros, J. de (1552, reprinted 1778), *Da Asia [...] dos feitos [...]*, Lisbon.


Farrington, B., and Schaper, I. (eds.) (transl.) (1933), *The Early Cape Hottentots described in the writings of Offert Dapper (1668), Willem ten Rhyne (1686) and Johannes Guilielms de Grevenbroek (1695)*. Van Riebeeck Society Series, Volume 14, Cape Town: The Van Riebeeck Society.


Grant, M. (ed.) (trans.) (1960), The Myths of Hyginus, University of Kansas Publications in Humanistic Studies, no. 34, Lawrence: University of Kansas Press.


Herodotus, Histories. See Godly (1960).


Homer, Odyssee. See Murray and Dimock (1995).

Hornius, G. (1666), Arca Mosis, sive Historia imperiorum et regnorum condito orbe ad nostra tempora (Moses’ ark, or: a history of the empire and rulers from the origins of the world up to our times), Leiden: Officina Hackiana.


Hyginus, Myths. See Grant (1960).


Jonckbloet, W.J.A. (1885-1888), Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche letterkunde, Groningen: Wolters. 6 volumes.


Leibbrandt, H.C.V. (1905-1989), Precis of the Archives of the Cape of Good Hope. Requesten (Memorials) 1715-1806, Cape Town: Cape Times. 4 volumes.


Les Six Voyages de Jean Baptiste Tavernier [...] qu’il a fait en Turquie, en Perse, et aux Indes, 1676, Paris: Gervais Clouzier and Claude Barbin.


Purchas, S. (1905), *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes*, Glasgow: Maclehose.


Rhyne, W. ten (1686), *Schediasma de Promontorio Bonae Spei; eiusve tractus incolis Hottentotis*, Schaffhausen: John Martin Meister. See Farrington-Schapera (1933).


Terry, E. (1616, reprinted 1777), *Voyage to East India [...]*, London.


Theal, G.M. (ed.) (1907), *History and Ethnography of Africa South of the Zambesi, from the Settlement of the Portuguese at Sofala in September 1505 to the Conquest of the Cape Colony by the British in September 1795*, London: S. Sonnenschein. 2 volumes.


Williams, R. (1976), Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society, New York: Oxford University Press.


Wurffbain, J.S. (1686), Vierzehen Jährige [...], Salzbach.


Zandvliet, K. (1998), Mapping for money: maps, plans and topographic paintings and their role in Dutch overseas expansion during the 16th and 17th centuries, Amsterdam: Bataafsche Leeuw.
Summary

Shifting Frameworks for Understanding Otherness


In this thesis I examine the framing and reframing of the native inhabitants of the Cape peninsula and its hinterlands in what is now South Africa. An important aim is to make apparent that the formation of knowledge about these peoples, whom I refer to as the Khoi, is a matter of framing and not of discovering ‘facts’. Factual knowledge is surrounded by a host of interpretive frameworks or worldviews that generate meaning. I use the term ‘framing’ rather than ‘contextualising’ or ‘representing’. The expression has several advantages, as outlined in Jonathan Culler’s Framing the Sign (1988):

[The term] reminds us that framing is something we do; it hints of the frame-up (‘falsifying evidence beforehand in order to make someone appear guilty’), a major use of context; and it eludes the incipient positivism of ‘context’ by alluding to the semiotic function of framing in art, where the frame is determining, setting off the object or event as art, and yet the frame itself may be nothing tangible, pure articulation.¹

Accordingly, I examine what the dominant frames for interpreting the Khoi looked like – what aspects of the Khoi and their way of life these frames highlighted – and what image of the Khoi they created against the background of European intellectual history and South Africa’s ongoing renegotiation of its past.

I organise my discussion around two significant years in South Africa’s (literary) history. 1652 and 1994 are two major hinges in the nation’s interpretation of the present in light of the past, and the past in light of the present. 1652 marks the first permanent settlement of Europeans at the Cape, the VOC refreshment station under the command of the Dutchman Jan van Riebeeck. This has been the traditional starting point for much South African (literary) history. 1994 saw South Africa’s first democratic elections, marking the formal end of apartheid and prompting a host of reframings of the 1652 events and of South

¹ Culler (1988, ix).
African history at large. In these reframings – for the first time in the country’s history – all its peoples could freely have their voices and perspectives heard alongside each other.

I follow Culler in breaking with the usual hierarchical relation between ‘real situations or events and imagined ones’. Studying framing through narrative is to treat both fiction and non-fiction as ‘models that enable us to make sense of the world’. Accordingly, I illustrate the changing ways in which the Khoi have been framed through a comparative close-reading of pre-1652 European travel accounts, a letter in Latin about the Khoi written by a retired clerk from the Dutch colonial administration in 1695, and Dan Sleigh’s 2002 Afrikaans novel *Eilandt*. In Chapter 1, my focus is on outlining the frameworks within which the native Cape people were appreciated by the first Europeans to encounter them. I start with the first attested European rounding of the Cape of Good Hope by the Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias (1488), and finish with the first permanent (Dutch) settlement at the Cape under Jan van Riebeeck (1652). If Dutch texts from the period 1652-1925 are already an understudied part of South African literary history, pre-Van Riebeeck texts have hardly been studied at all, let alone in relation to a broader cultural environment. Looking at an extra 164 years’ worth of European texts about the Khoi significantly extends the national canon of South Africa and demarginalises a previously unprivileged and under-represented people. Finally, reading these texts with a focus on the contemporary frameworks used in them contributes to both South African and European cultural history.

In the travel accounts, I trace the gradual development of dominant ethnographic criteria about the Khoi in travelogues, diaries, VOC logs, and archives. I show that European discourse about the Khoi was never singular or stable but always in flux, although by 1652 particular Christian parameters had developed within which Khoi customs were predominantly described as a negation of European ones, and thus deemed uncivilised. The use of the term ‘Hottentot’ to refer to the Khoi reflects this pejorative stance and the increasingly one-dimensional image of the Khoi Europeans disseminated. Interpretations of the Khoi as living in a state of positive primitivism were far less common, as were invocations of cultural relativism. Moreover, my findings emphasise how neither positive nor negative primitivism put the ethnographic and Christian frameworks of appreciation into question. I thus agree with J.M. Coetzee that the early modern European image of the

---

2 Culler (1988, 209).
3 Culler (1988, 210).
Cape was built around a body of exclusively white writing, bound by an evident ideological bias, which in his book *White Writing. On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (1988) he calls the ‘echo chamber of the discourse of the Cape’. The reiteration of stock images as fixed knowledge by Europeans in early modern times meant that knowledge about the Khoi did not actually advance as the question as to why the Khoi should rank below the civil, Christian state was never asked.

There were few Europeans who challenged the prevailing image of the Khoi or the frameworks on which this image was based, but, as I argue in Chapters 2 and 3, the Dutchman Jan Willem van Grevenbroek (1644 – circa 1725) was one. He produced one of the most extensive descriptions of the Cape’s native people of his time: *Elegans & accurata gentis Africanae, circa Promontorium Capitis Bonae Spei, vulgo Hottentotten nuncupatae, descriptio epistolaris,* ‘An elegant and accurate description in letter form about the African people commonly called Hottentots, who inhabit the Cape of Good Hope’. The letter survives in a single manuscript copy, kept at the National Library of South Africa.

My central argument is that Grevenbroek’s text embodies a key transition in the framing of the Khoi that reflects the beginnings of a radical epistemological shift in the European history of thought. Grevenbroek, secretary of the Dutch East India Company at the Cape from 1684 to 1694, acknowledges a gap between the dominant European image of the Khoi and his own observations of them. Rather than denying the Khoi their humanity on the basis of ostensible differences with early modern European customs, Grevenbroek reframes the Khoi, critically reflecting on the way knowledge, including knowledge about the Khoi, is acquired. I show how Grevenbroek’s letter uses a Christian worldview, intertextualities with Greek and Roman literature, and contemporary ethnographic criteria to reposition the Khoi in a move that I consider to be part of a major European epistemological shift that defines the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. In his book *New Worlds, Ancient Texts. The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery* (1992), Anthony Grafton coins the term ‘Revolution of Knowledge’ to refer to this transition from a world that was imagined on the basis of the (European) library to one that was coloured in also in accordance with empirical observation, newly regarded as a trusted source of knowledge. Grevenbroek presents a unique voice in Cape history that positions the Khoi at the heart of one of Europe’s major historical intellectual crises. At the same time, he does not question the ancient and Christian frameworks he invokes. I maintain,
therefore, that he is a child of his time, presenting an early stage in the Revolution of Knowledge. It is Grevenbroek’s distinctive concern with the Khoi that imparts on his letter a compelling importance in South Africa’s ongoing renegotiation of its past and in the context of European intellectual history, legitimating his position at the centre of this thesis.

In Chapter 4, I compare the image that Grevenbroek paints of the Khoi in his letter with the way in which individual historical Khoi characters, and Grevenbroek himself, are portrayed in the Afrikaans novel *Eilande* (2002) by the South African novelist and historian Dan Sleigh (Geelbekfontein, 1938), translated as *Islands* (2004). *Eilande* portrays Grevenbroek, its narrator, as writing a history about the 50 years since the arrival of Van Riebeeck at the Cape. Focalising his account through seven historical characters in seven chapters, Grevenbroek aims to rescue voices forgotten by history, including those of himself and the Khoi. I argue that the novel renegotiates the past, and past portrayals of the past, by reframing Grevenbroek and individual Khoi characters through the lens of South Africa’s contemporary postcolonial circumstance.

In *Eilande*, Grevenbroek’s concern with the Khoi is not portrayed as driven by ancient or Christian frameworks, as in the historical letter. Using Spivak’s seminal article ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ (1988) on the representation of ‘the Other’, I argue that, in the novel, Grevenbroek is instead concerned with the unequal degree to which various voices have been preserved in the historical archive, and the difficulty, if not impossibility, of allowing unpreserved voices to speak without speaking for them. I contend, then, that the novel’s use of Grevenbroek as its narrator does not set out to confirm what Spivak has called ‘the epistemic violence of imperialism’, but allows *Eilande* to highlight how the Dutch administration disadvantaged the Cape’s native inhabitants in a variety of ways, and how its policies led to a biased image of the Khoi being passed down in the VOC archives.

Using Homi Bhabha’s theory about colonial mimicry in ‘Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse’ (1984) and Monika Fludernik’s theory about stereotyping elaborated in ‘Cross-Mirrorings of Alterity’ (1999), I argue, moreover, that *Eilande* shows the colonial divide between settler and colonised to ultimately be untenable. I explore how in the novel a process called ‘Andersmaak’ (remaking) portrays two prominent historical Khoi characters, Autshumao (Herrie) and Krotoa (Eva), as being moved by the colonial circumstance to appropriate particular aspects of the Dutch coloniser’s identity in an attempt to improve settler-native relations and to integrate into settler
society, respectively. Yet, as ‘Andersmaak’ cannot resolve the colonial divide, I explore how *Eilande* pursues what Bhabha has called ‘the ambivalence of colonial discourse’, exposing the unsustainability of a colonial society.

The pre-Van Riebeeck travelogues and Grevenbroek’s voice as it appears in both his historical letter and *Eilande* underline that the Khoi were/are spoken about and thus framed from a European perspective. Highlighting this process of framing and its changing underpinnings adds to our understanding of European intellectual history, and is particularly salient in the context of South Africa’s continued renegotiation of its past after the end of apartheid.
Samenvatting
Verschuivende denkkaders voor een begrip van andersheid

De Kaapse Khoi in Europese reisverslagen van voor 1652, een vroegmoderne Latijnse brief, en de Zuid-Afrikaanse roman Eilande (2002)

In dit proefschrift onderzoek ik het *frames* en her-*frames* van de oorspronkelijke bewoners van het Kaapse schiereiland en zijn achterland, in het tegenwoordige Zuid-Afrika. Een belangrijke doel is om duidelijk te maken dat het genereren van kennis over deze volkeren, die ik gezamenlijk aanduid als de Khoi, een kwestie is van *frames*, en niet van het ontdekken van ‘feiten’. Feitelijke kennis wordt omkaderd door uiteenlopende interpretatieve raamwerken en wereldbeelden, die betekenis genereren. Ik verkiez de term *frames* boven ‘contextualiseren’ of ‘representeren’. Zoals Jonathan Culler uiteenzet in Framing the Sign (1988), brengt deze uitdrukking bepaalde voordelen met zich mee:

[De term] herinnert ons eraan dat *frames* iets is dat we doen; het zinspeelt op een complot [frame-up] (‘bewijsmateriaal bewust zo voorstellen, dat iemand schuldig lijkt’), een belangrijk gebruik van context; en het gaat een beginnend positivisme van ‘context’ uit de weg doordat het verwijst naar de semiotische functie van kadreren in kunst, waarbij het kader [*frame*] bepalend is, en het object of de gebeurtenis neerzet als kunst, terwijl het kader op zichzelf niets tastbaars hoeft te zijn, maar pure articulatie.¹

Derhalve onderzoek ik hoe de heersende *frames* (denkkaders) voor het interpreteren van de Khoi eruit zagen – welke aspecten van de Khoi en hun levenswijze deze *frames* benadrukten – en welke beeld van de Khoi ze creëerden tegen de achtergrond van de Europese intellectuele geschiedenis en Zuid-Afrika’s voortdurende herwaardering van het verleden.

Ik zet mijn bespreking op rond twee belangrijke jaartallen uit de Zuid-Afrikaanse (literaire) geschiedenis. 1652 en 1994 zijn twee veelzeggende scharnierpunten voor Zuid-Afrika’s interpretatie van het heden in het licht van het verleden, en van het verleden in het licht van het heden. 1652 markeert de eerste permanente vestiging van Europeanen aan de Kaap: het verversingsstation onder leiding van de Hollander Jan van Riebeeck. Dit vormt het traditionele startpunt van veel Zuid-Afrikaanse (literaire) geschiedschrijving. 1994 is het jaar van Zuid-Afrika’s eerste democratische verkiezingen, wat het formele einde van apartheid

¹ Culler (1988, ix), alle vertalingen TM.
betekende en velerlei her-framings tweegbracht van de gebeurtenissen van 1652, en van Zuid-Afrikaanse geschiedenis in het algemeen. Voor het eerst in de Zuid-Afrikaanse geschiedenis konden alle bevolkingsgroepen vrijelijk en naast elkaar hun stem en perspectief op het verleden laten horen.

Ik volg Cullers breuk met de hiërarchische verhouding tussen ‘waargebeurde situaties of gebeurtenissen en fictieve’\(^2\).\(^2\) In mijn onderzoek naar framing op basis van verhalende teksten beschouw ik zowel fictie als non-fictie als ‘modellen die ons helpen een begrip van de wereld te vormen’\(^3\).\(^3\) Ik illustreer veranderingen in de manier waarop de Khoi zijn ge-framed dan ook middels vergelijkende close-readings van verslagen van Europese reizigers van vóór 1652, een brief in het Latijn over de Khoi, geschreven door een gepensioneerde secretaris van de Hollandse koloniale administratie in 1695, en de Afrikaanstalige roman Eilande (2002) van Dan Sleigh. In hoofdstuk 1 leg ik mij toe op het schetsen van de raamwerken waarbinnen de Kaapse inboorlingen beschouwd werden door de eerste Europeanen die hen ontmoetten. Ik begin met de vroegstbekende Europese ronding van de Kaap de Goede Hoop, door de Europese ontdekkingsreiziger Bartolomeu Dias (1488), en eindig met de eerste permanente (Hollandse) vestiging aan de Kaap onder Jan van Riebeeck (1652).

Als Nederlandstalige teksten uit de periode 1652-1925 al een onderbelicht deel van de Zuid-Afrikaanse literatuurgeschiedenis vormen, zijn teksten van vóór Van Riebeeck helemaal zelden bestudeerd, allerminst binnen een breder cultureel kader. Mijn beschouwing van 164 jaar aan Europese teksten over de Khoi vormt zo een aanzienlijke uitbreiding van de nationale canon van Zuid-Afrika, en de-marginaliseert een historisch minder bevoorrechte en ondergemiddeld vertegenwoordigde bevolkingsgroep. Tot slot draagt mijn onderzoek naar deze teksten vanuit een focus op de historische raamwerken die eraan ten grondslag liggen, bij aan zowel de Zuid-Afrikaanse als de Europese culturele geschiedenis.

Wat betreft de reisverslagen volg ik de geleidelijke ontwikkeling van heersende etnografische criteria voor de Khoi zoals die voorkomen in rapporten, dagboeken, VOC-logboeken, en archieven. Ik toon aan dat het Europese discours over de Khoi nooit enkelvoudig of stabiel was maar altijd in beweging, hoewel er tegen 1652 wel bepaalde Christelijke parameters waren gevormd volgens welke de gewoonten en tradities van de

---

\(^2\) Culler (1988, 209).

\(^3\) Culler (1988, 210).

Één van de weinige Europeanen die het heersende beeld van de Khoi en de raamwerken waarop dit was gebaseerd kritisch bevroegen, was, zoals ik in hoofdstuk 2 en 3 aantoon, de Hollander Jan Willem van Grevenbroek (1644 – ca. 1725). Hij schreef een van de meest uitgebreide beschrijvingen van de oorspronkelijke bevolking van de Kaap van zijn tijd: Elegans & accurata gentis Africanae, circa Promontorium Capitis Bonae Spei, vulgo Hottentotten nuncupatae, descriptio epistolaris, ‘Een fijnzinnige en accurate beschrijving in briefvorm van het Afrikaanse volk, gewoonlijk Hottentotten genoemd, dat het Kaapse schiereiland bewoont’. De brief is enkel overgeleverd in de vorm van een handgeschreven kopie die bewaard wordt in de Nationale Bibliotheek van Zuid-Afrika.

Mijn overkoepelende argument is dat Grevenbroeks geschreven een belangrijke overgang markeert in het framen van de Khoi die het begin reflecteert van een radicale kentheoretische verschuiving in de Europese geschiedenis van het denken. Grevenbroek, van 1684 tot 1694 secretaris van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie aan de Kaap, onderkent dat er een kloof bestaat tussen het dominante Europese beeld van de Khoi en zijn eigen waarnemingen van hen. Liever dan de Khoi hun menselijkheid ontzeggen op basis van ogenschijnlijke verschillen met vroegmoderne Europese gewoontes en tradities,
herwaardeert hij de Khoi in een proces van kritische bespiegeling op de manier waarop kennis, inclusief kennis over de Khoi, verzameld wordt. Ik toon aan hoe in Grevenbroeks brief – op basis van een Christelijk wereldbeeld, intertekstuele verbanden met oud-Griekse en Romeinse literatuur, en vroegmoderne etnografische maatstaven – de Khoi worden hergewaardeerd op een manier die ik interpreteren als een onderdeel van een belangrijke Europese kentheoretische verschuiving die de overgang van Middeleeuwen naar Renaissance kenmerkt. In zijn boek *New Worlds, Ancient Texts. The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discover* (1992) munt Anthony Grafton de term ‘kennisrevolutie’ als aanduiding voor deze overgang van een wereld die werd voorgesteld op basis van de (Europese) bibliotheek naar een wereld die daarnaast ingekleurd kon worden op basis van proefondervindelijke waarneming, vanaf nu beschouwd als betrouwbare bron van kennis.

Grevenbroek laat een uniek geluid horen in de geschiedenis van de Kaap dat de Khoi in het hart van een van de belangwekkendste intellectuele crises uit de Europese geschiedenis plaatst. Tegelijkertijd plaatst Grevenbroek nog geen vraagtekens bij de Antieke en Christelijke raamwerken die hij aanwendt. Ik benadruk om die reden dat hij een kind van zijn tijd is, en zijn brief een voorbeeld van een vroeg stadium van de kennisrevolutie. Niettemin verleent Grevenbroeks onderscheidende aandacht voor de Khoi aan de brief een overtuigend belang in Zuid-Afrika’s voortdurende herwaardering van het verleden alsook in relatie tot de Europese intellectuele geschiedenis. Dit tezamen rechtvaardigt de centrale plaats van Grevenbroek in mijn onderzoek.

In hoofdstuk vier vergelijk ik het beeld dat Grevenbroek van de Khoi oproept in zijn brief met de manier waarop individuele historische Khoi-personen, en Grevenbroek zelf, voorgesteld worden in de Afrikaanstalige roman *Eilande* (2002) van de Zuid-Afrikaanse schrijver en geschiedkundige Dan Sleigh (Geelbekfontein, 1938), vertaald in het Engels als *Islands* (2004). *Eilande* stelt Grevenbroek, die ook de verteller van de roman is, voor als de schrijver van een geschiedenis van de eerste 50 jaar aan de Kaap sinds de aankomst van Van Riebeeck. Zijn relaas focaliserend door zeven historische personages in evenveel hoofdstukken, stelt Grevenbroek zich ten doel om stemmen te redden die door de geschiedenis vergeten zijn, inclusief die van hemzelf en de Khoi. Ik verdedig de stelling dat de roman opnieuw betekenis toekent aan het verleden, en aan voorgaande voorstellingen van de geschiedenis, door Grevenbroek en individuele Khoi-personages te her-framen vanuit de hedendaagse postkoloniale omstandigheid van Zuid-Afrika.
Anders dan in de brief, wordt Grevenbroeks aandacht voor de Khoi in *Eilande* niet voorgesteld als gestuurd door Antieke of Christelijke raamwerken. Onder gebruikmaking van Spivaks baanbrekende artikel over de representatie van ‘de Ander’, ‘Can the subaltern speak?’ (1988), toon ik aan dat Grevenbroek in de roman in plaats daarvan zich toelegt op de ongelijke mate waarin uiteenlopende stemmen bewaard zijn in historische archieven, en met de moeilijkheid, zo niet onmogelijkheid, om niet-bewaarde stemmen te laten spreken, zonder voor ze te spreken. Ik stel zodoende dat het instrument Grevenbroek-als-verteller niet zozeer beschouwd moet worden als een bevestiging van wat Spivak ‘the epistemic violence or imperialism’ (‘het kentheoretische geweld, eigen aan imperialisme’) genoemd heeft, maar dat het *Eilande* juist laat benadrukken hoezeer het Hollandse bewind aan de Kaap de inheemse bevolking op velerlei manieren benadeeld heeft, en hoe het Hollandse beleid ertoe heeft geleid dat een eenzijdig, bevooroordeeld beeld van de Khoi in de VOC-archieven bewaard is gebleven.


De pre-Van Riebeeck reisverslagen en Grevenbroeks stem zoals die voorkomt in zowel zijn historische brief als in *Eilande* onderstrepen dat de Khoi besproken werden/worden – en daarmee *ge-framed* zijn – vanuit een Europees standpunt. Aandacht voor dit proces van *framen* en de veranderende grondslagen ervan draagt bij aan ons begrip
van de Europese intellectuele geschiedenis, en is met name veelzeggend in het licht van Zuid-Afrika’s voortdurende herwaardering van het verleden, sinds het einde van apartheid.