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## NOTE

This contribution is part of a larger dialogue of three articles and one responding piece that form the current issue of JOLCEL. The other contributions are “Latin Cosmopolitanism and the Roman Empire” by Christoph Pieper (pp. 1–26) and “From Adam to Tsar’ Kosmos: Cosmopolitanism in the Byzantine Tradition” by Helena Bodin (pp. 28–51). The response piece is “Thinking about Cosmopolitanism” by Theo D’haen (pp. 73–79).

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# The Classics at World's End A VOC Secretary Reframes the Cape Khoi

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## ABSTRACT

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. In the years that had passed since Jan van Riebeeck's landing at the Cape in 1652, marking the first permanent European settlement in modern-day South Africa, regular expeditions had been launched into its hinterland. A year after his retirement from VOC service, Grevenbroek wrote a letter in Latin about the Cape's native inhabitants: *Elegans et accurata gentis Africanæ circa Promontorium Capitis Bonæ Spei vulgo Hottentotten Nuncupatæ Descriptio Epistolaris* (An Elegant and Accurate Account of the African Race Living Round the Cape of Good Hope, Commonly Called Hottentots). In this paper, I consider Grevenbroek's engagement with ancient (Greek and Roman) antiquity in his framing of the Khoi. Ancient times had left early modern Europe with an authoritative literature on the world's geography and history, descriptions about its then-known people, and suppositions about the ways of life of its many un-known people in yet to be discovered realms. In his letter, Grevenbroek returns to the Classical sources to meaningfully recapture the Cape native people and thus renegotiate the popular contemporary European image about them.

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From 1684 to 1694, the Dutchman Johannes Willem van Grevenbroek (1644-circa 1726) was secretary of the Council of Policy at the Cape for the Dutch East India Company (VOC).<sup>1</sup> Since Jan van Riebeeck's landing at the Cape in 1652,

<sup>1</sup> This paper follows from my PhD thesis, defended at the University of Amsterdam on 2 June 2020: Tycho Maas, *Shifting Frameworks for Understanding Otherness*. I wish to thank the anonymous reviewers for their feedback on this article in an earlier stage.

marking the first permanent European settlement in modern-day South Africa, regular expeditions had been launched into its hinterland. A sustainable relationship with the Cape's native inhabitants, involving their willingness to barter and to share pasture, was key to the settlement's success as a self-sufficient half-way post on the VOC's trade route to the East. A year after his retirement from VOC service, Grevenbroek wrote a letter in Latin about the Cape's indigenous peoples: *N.N. Graevenbroeckii Elegans et accurata gentis Africanae circa Promontorium Capitis Bonae Spei vulgo Hottentotten Nuncupatae Descriptio Epistolaris Anno MDCLXXXV* (*An Elegant and Accurate Account of the African Race Living Round the Cape of Good Hope, Commonly Called Hottentots, From a Letter written by J.G. Grevenbroek in the Year 1695*).<sup>2</sup> The nick-name 'Hottentots'—an onomatopoe for the clucking of a brood hen that was said to resemble native speech—is exemplary of the derogative animalisation that is common in 17th-century European writing about Cape native peoples. Yet, in his letter Grevenbroek appears to argue against this dominant representation: he not only argues for their civility, he also blames his countrymen for deteriorating relations with them and for maintaining a false image about them.

In this paper, I consider Grevenbroek's engagement with Classical Latin literature in his framing of the Khoi (as I will refer to the large diversity of Cape native tribes and peoples for ease of reference).<sup>3</sup> Ancient times had left early modern Europe with an authoritative literature on the world's geography and history, descriptions about its then-known people, and suppositions about the ways of life of its many un-known people in yet-to-be-discovered realms. In conjunction with this, Christian eschatology explained the dispersal of people across the world as it was known to early modern Europe. I provide a close reading of the opening paragraphs of Grevenbroek's letter, analysing Grevenbroek's references to Roman authors. I ask how Grevenbroek returns to the Classical sources to meaningfully recapture the Cape native people and renegotiate the popular contemporary European image about them. It becomes apparent that although Grevenbroek's Latin is part literary play, his intertextualities strategically move the Khoi away from the derogative early-modern European image about them. At the same time, Grevenbroek is able to reinvigorate the extant Classical and biblical frameworks of knowledge that gave rise to the representation he argues against. This makes him a unique voice in studying the Khoi and the history of knowledge.

<sup>2</sup> The sole extant copy of the letter is kept as MSB203 at the National Library of South Africa, Special Collections, Cape Town Campus. Unless otherwise stated, I cite Latin and its English translations from the only text edition, Benjamin Farrington and Isaac Schapera, *The Early Cape Hottentots described in the writings of Olfert Dapper (1668), Willem ten Rhyne (1686) and Johannes Gulielmus de Grevenbroek (1695)*. On the issue of the spelling and Latin rendering of Grevenbroek's name, see Tycho Maas, *Authorship of a Letter about the Khoi in the National Library*, 7–10.

<sup>3</sup> More information about the tribes that inhabited the Cape peninsula and the colonisers' nomenclature for them can be found in, among others, Elphick, *Kraal and Castle*, and Nienaber, *Khoekhoense stamname*.

## 1 Europe's Outward Gaze

Books about 'newly discovered' peoples were as popular in 17th-century Europe as the novel is today.<sup>4</sup> Overseas explorations continued to bring home knowledge of peoples that had existed on the pages of ancient books and 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 *Kaffrarie of Lant der Kaffers, anders Hottentots genaemt (Kaffraria or Land of the Kafirs, also named Hottentots)* (1668) by Olfert Dapper, and *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)* (1686) by Willem ten Rhyne.<sup>5</sup> They rank as the longest continuous treatises about the Khoi by Dutchmen from the decades preceding Grevenbroek's letter. Titles of such treatises typically introduce a particular people and the region they inhabit, and their content and structure are to a large extent informed by a conventional set of ethnographical parameters, each of which is commented upon in assessment of the people's (degree of) civility.<sup>6</sup> Ten Rhyne, 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 miserabilis 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 ictibus; ita durissima indole omnem eluctati humanitatem, in majorum feritate perseverant, furto deditissimi: alter enim alterius fraudulenter saepe ditatur pecore. Humaniores & magis casti fuerint Africani illi, qui tibi triumphale nomen imposuere, Africane Scipio! magnum urbanitatis & castimoniae exemplar!<sup>7</sup>

For the purpose of this article, I centre on Ten Rhyne's concluding remark, in which he advances a famous case from ancient history in support of the assumed distinction between the Khoi and the people of northern Africa. In the context of early modern ethnographic literature, references to Classical literature not only served as a stylistic display of the author's eloquence, but also provided an

<sup>4</sup> Kieskamp, *De Khoekhoe tijdens het bewind van Jan van Riebeeck 1652–1662*, Introduction.

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin and Schapera, *The Early Cape Hottentots*.

<sup>6</sup> The order in which items were discussed varied. On the development of ethnography and travel writing as separate genres, see Stagl, "Die Apodemik oder "Reisekunst, als Methodik der Sozialforschung," Stagl, *A History of Curiosity*, and Szaly, *Ethnologie und Geschichte*.

<sup>7</sup> Farrington and Schapera, *The Early Cape Hottentots*, 122, emphasis in text. "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, 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 carcasses. 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."

authoritative voice to meaningfully frame the foreign. The Roman general Scipio Africanus ended the Second Punic War against Carthage (217–202 BCE), finally bringing victory to Rome.<sup>8</sup> His campaign proved a turning point in Roman history, 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.<sup>9</sup> 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). Organising their lives thus, "their native barbarism" (*nativa barbaries*), "idle desert life" (*otiosa solitudo*) and "wretched ignorance of all virtues" (*miserabilis virtutum inscitia*) makes Khoi hearts resist "every impulse of humanity" (*omnem humanitatem*).<sup>10</sup>

Ten Rhyne's pejorative voice with regard to the Khoi was not unique. Commonly described in negations of Christian civility, the habits and life of the Cape natives seemed a long stretch from the European benchmark in the majority of early modern writings about them. When the English took possession of the Cape on 24 June 1620, being the first Europeans to do so, and ousting the Dutch in the process, the observed absence of a Christian society legitimised their actions: "[i]t was concluded that to intitle [sic] his Majesty king supreme head and governor of that continent not yet inhabited by any Christian prince."<sup>11</sup> Although the Khoi are still referred to as 'men' in the contract that was drawn up at the Cape's annexation, in the decades that follow they are gradually denied the rank of Christian people and grouped with heathens or beasts. Some of the dominant ethnographic criteria at the basis of such judgments are summarised by ship surgeon Nicolaus de Graaf in a report from his first calling at the Cape for the VOC in 1640:

[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.<sup>12</sup>

By the time Jan van Riebeeck landed at the Cape in 1652, the Khoi, thus bereft of human, Christian civility, had gradually come to confirm the trope of the

<sup>8</sup> At the concluding Battle of Zama, Scipio Africanus conceded to the Carthage general 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).

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> Farrington and Schapera, *The Early Cape Hottentots*, 122 translate '*feritas*', the untamed nature as it pertains to wild beasts (literally beastliness), as 'savagery.' '*Otiosa solitudo*' they translate as 'idle desert life'; '*otium*' is the opposite of '*negotium*' (work, labour) and the ancients associated it with laziness, a vice. '*Solitudo*,' 'solitude,' translated as 'desert,' conveys a sense of unhindered indulgence.

<sup>11</sup> *Eustace Man to the East-India Company*, October 13 1620, by Humphrey Fitzherbert, VC58 (Theale), Western Cape Archives and Records Service, Cape Town. 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 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.

<sup>12</sup> Cited from Raven-Hart, *Before Van Riebeeck*.

ignoble savage, by far the dominant trope that described the foreign peoples that Europe encountered during the Age of Discovery (15th-17th century).<sup>13</sup> The ignoble savage became a standard that defined and judged a non-European people as corrupt, unprincipled, and vicious. Noting that the early modern European image of the Cape was bound by an evident ideological bias and built around a body of exclusively white writing, the South African writer, translator, and Nobel laureate J.M. Coetzee maintains in his book *White Writing. On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (1988) that knowledge about the Khoi did not actually advance. He notes a reiteration of stock images about the ignoble savage as fixed knowledge about the Khoi in early modern times that he describes as the “echo chamber of the discourse of the Cape.”<sup>14</sup> As a consequence of its pervasive reverberations, Coetzee argues, the question 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 [...]. The idea that the Hottentot may be Adam is not even entertained for the sake of being dismissed.<sup>15</sup>

Various authors, among whom Olfert Dapper, do not appear to have ever left Europe to see with their own eyes the people they describe, if we look at a compilation of extant works. The full burden of this ‘echo chamber’ of copying, collating, and configuring extant knowledge within Europe’s dominant outward gaze 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.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, Ten Rhyne’s parallel from ancient history in support of his observations about the Khoi is not an innocent comparison. It should be understood within the context of selective and partial reading of the Classical library, biblical exegesis, and contemporary travelogues and encyclopaedias on the world’s peoples that gave rise to a repertoire of stock representations—stereotypes that could hardly be traced to specific sources.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> On this topic, see note 6.

<sup>14</sup> Coetzee, *White Writing*.

<sup>15</sup> Coetzee, *White Writing*, 18. van Wyk Smith, “Review: White Writing,” 94, points out in a review of Coetzee’s book that 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’. van Wyk Smith, “‘The Most Wretched of the Human Race,’” 287, 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.” 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.

<sup>16</sup> Matthews, *A Voyage to the River Sierra-Leone*, 159.

<sup>17</sup> On the idea of a stereotype as a form of ‘knowledge’ that cannot be traced to any particular source, see, for example, Hall, *Representation and the Media*.

Finally, it should be noted that in appreciating an expanding world and the peoples that inhabited it, early modern Europe meaningfully framed Classical antiquity in a larger biblical history of the world. Although the 15th to the 17th centuries witnessed an unprecedented surge in travel writing and reports on foreign people under the influence of crusades and journeys of exploration into Asia and Africa, anthropologist Michael Ryan rightly 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."<sup>18</sup> As Ryan indicates in his paper *Assimilating New Worlds in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (1981), "Montaigne and other humanists knew this [variety and diversity of the human form] from their reading of ancient, not [medieval] travel, texts."<sup>19</sup> Yet, as Ryan observes, "the real discovery was not the exoticism of the other but his ultimate similarity with peoples already assimilated into European consciousness."<sup>20</sup> 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: Shem into Asia, Japheth into Europe, and Ham into Africa. Consequently, the novel was interpreted as an extension to the familiar, so that a pagan became a Christian who had erred from the faith: medieval world maps with Jerusalem at the centre of a concentric world stood at the basis of later variations to the idea that the further a people was removed from Jerusalem, the longer their separation from the faith, and—supposedly—the more 'rusty' their civility.<sup>21</sup> Hence John Matthews' observation about a 'regular gradation in the scale of understanding' moving southwards across Africa, and Ten Rhyne's contrast of the Khoi at the continent's southernmost extremities with 'the more humane Africans' of northern Africa. Within this narrative of man's dispersal across the globe, to the early modern mind the ancient Romans—the one great heathen civilisation converted to Christianity—represented an earlier age in world history. Roman literature, it was surmised, could thus provide insight into the habits of other pagan civilisations, like those found in southern Africa, and shed light on how far they had become removed from the faith, or—in other words—how close they were to conversion.<sup>22</sup> This ideological bias in Europe's outward gaze not only underpins the echo chamber and the majority of early modern travel writing, but it also stands at the basis of Grevenbroek's argument for Khoi civility.

<sup>18</sup> Ryan, "Assimilating New Worlds in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," 520.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ivi*, 529.

<sup>21</sup> Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 389ff., discusses various popular theories such as the chain of being, allowing for the insertion of tiers between the ranks of mankind and animals, and that of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish Jesuit missionary José de Acosta who 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.

<sup>22</sup> 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.

## 2 Grevenbroek's Introduction

Having spent a decade at the Cape, Grevenbroek has become convinced that the dominant image of the Khoi as an uncivil people demands renegotiation. Firstly, rather than relying on contemporary writing, he returns to the Classical sources, thereby effectively bypassing the echo chamber of discourse on the Cape. Secondly, he relies on the Christian model for the dispersal of people across the globe, (re)capturing the Khoi as fellow brethren.

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—in the single publicly available English translation of the entire letter—are introduced as “our Africans” (“*Afri[s] nostri[s]*”):

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

Voluptatem, quam ex litteris meis te sensisse testaris, eandem et forte majorem, ex tuis in me propensae voluntatis testibus, venustate et prudentiâ plenis, quibus me dignatus percepi: quarum lectione et delectatione satiari [Satiari] nequeo, gratiasque [gratiasq.] penitissimo pectore [Pectore] Superis ago, quorum benignitate, in experimentum forsan, peculiolum aliquod mihi concessum, ut pietatis meae erga te [Te] specimen [Specimen] videant. [:] Demirror Famam, nunquam ad liquidum perductam, tantas acqui(s)visse eundo vires, fictique adeo tenacem, ut illa quae veritati affinia de Afris nostris divulgantur, etiam apud vos percrebuerint;<sup>23</sup>

The opening lines signal to the reader that what awaits 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.” “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 next is a rhetorical technique that delivers explicit praise of the addressee's ethical qualities and emphasises his intention to

<sup>23</sup> Farrington and Schapera, *The Early Cape Hottentots*, 172. Throughout this article, I quote from this translation of Grevenbroek's letter, published in volume 14 of the Van Riebeeck Society Series. The syntax of Grevenbroek's opening paragraph is quite confused – following Farrington and Schapera, I have not supplied an equivalent for the words “qui legum severitate et judicorum metu se alligari.” “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.”



win the audience’s sympathy and support.<sup>24</sup> Through his *captatio*, Grevenbroek enters into dialogue with the Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca, who famously advanced *captationes* in the opening lines of his letters to Lucilius, his assumed student.<sup>25</sup> Grevenbroek’s extensive Classical book collection at the Cape included an edition of these Epistles (‘moral letters’), which he studied, as marginalia in his hand indicate.<sup>26</sup> Two extracts from Seneca’s letters illustrate similarities in wording and content with the opening of Grevenbroek’s letter:

Magnam ex epistula tua percepi voluptatem [...]<sup>27</sup>

Ex iis, quae mihi scribis, et ex iis, quae audio, bonam spem de te concipio: non discurreis nec locorum mutationibus inquietaris. Aegri animi ista iactatio est: primum argumentum compositae mentis existimo posse consistere et secum morari.<sup>28</sup>

Mastering a Classical Latin style of writing in early modern times was, at least in part, an exercise in style and good taste, with the two major tiers of engagement at the time being imitation (*imitatio*) and emulation (*aemulatio*). The latter was generally regarded as the loftier one, where a writer sought to match or ultimately surpass the greatness of the Classical example.<sup>29</sup> Although Grevenbroek’s lengthier opening is built around the same motifs as Seneca’s, 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 an unsatisfactory medium.<sup>30</sup> However, my primary concern is not with Grevenbroek’s

<sup>24</sup> Cicero, *Orator* 2.128. Lausberg, Orten and Anderson, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric*, 129–30, §274–5. Throughout this article, I use English titles as per the Loeb Classical Library in reference of literature from antiquity, and cite Latin and their English translations from the latest Loeb edition, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>25</sup> Cicero, *Orator* 2.115.

<sup>26</sup> National Library of South Africa, Special Collections, D09.d.36. On Grevenbroek’s library, See Van Stekelenburg, *Een intellectueel in de vroege Kaapkolonie*, 3–34, and also *The Cape in Latin and Latin in the Cape in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, 89–109.

<sup>27</sup> Seneca, *Epistles* 59.1. “I derive great pleasure from your letter [...]” The translation is mine. A more verbatim translation than Benjamin and Schapera, *The Early Cape Hottentots*, 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.”

<sup>28</sup> Seneca, *Epistles* 2.1. “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.” The translation is mine.

<sup>29</sup> Pigman, *Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance*, 1–32, remains a seminal study.

<sup>30</sup> Archival note *De Nalatenschap van Albert van Stekelenburg* by Albert van Stekelenburg, 2001, MS381, Special Collections Stellenbosch University Library. Van Stekelenburg notes that a single page (Farrington and Schapera, *The Early Cape Hottentots*, 295) could boast at least eight allusions or direct citations from Martial, Plinius Minor, Cicero, Vergil, Horace and Quintilian. Van Stekelenburg, *Een intellectueel in de vroege Kaapkolonie*, 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 the author of this article). Van Stekelenburg, “The Cape in Latin and

style per se, but with the rhetorical or philosophical effect of Grevenbroek's engagement with the Classics, which was carefully geared to his argument about the Khoi.

After the opening salutation, Grevenbroek introduces his subject and argument, making clear his reason for writing the letter: he has come to understand that "rumour" has proved so "tenacious" that "half-truths" about "our Africans" are now circulated widely. He did not expect this, since the source of half-truths cannot be traced: "[Rumour,] never bearing a clear report" (*Numquam ad liquidum perductam*).<sup>31</sup> The issue that he outlines in his opening paragraphs, then, is how to think of "our Africans," the native inhabitants of the Cape, in a way that goes beyond rumour. He substantiates this in his first remarks on the Khoi, which follow the letter's introduction:

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. Candore animi multis nostratium superiores sunt, corporis vero nonnullis, et arbitrato meo, forte omnibus albore pares, si nit[i]ori studerent, nunc adipe et radiis solaribus usti, asperoque faciei pigmento infuscantur, suntque coloris ravidu adustioris [...].<sup>32</sup>

The passage treats conventional ethnographic aspects: hygiene, appearance, and character. The Khoi habit of putting animal grease on their bodies was a recurring motif in early modern writing about them, and a ground for their classification as 'beasts,' as outward appearance was taken to be indicative of a people's character. Yet, although there is a normative judgment also in Grevenbroek—the Khoi are deemed unclean—, he argues that outside appearance provides a poor ground for an assessment 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, with the (Classical) Latin word for bright white, '*Candore*,' notably capitalised in Grevenbroek, also conferring notions of purity and integrity in mind or character. Additionally, where Ten Rhyne's reference to antiquity supported a derogatory

Latin in the Cape," 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 *secespita*, *clunaculus*, aut *excisorium scalpellum* (208)." Ibidem: "Grevenbroek's descriptions of himself as 'studiis 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." See Farrington and Schapera, *The Early Cape Hottentots*, 169.

<sup>31</sup> Farrington and Schapera, *The Early Cape Hottentots*, translate this as "never bearing a clear report."

<sup>32</sup> Farrington and Schapera, *The Early Cape Hottentots*, 174: "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 offenin ( 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. 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."

impression of the Khoi, Grevenbroek claims that the Khoi outdo antiquity's most notable swimmers, the Cretans. He presents the Khoi as "patient beyond belief," and observes that however savage the Khoi may be in appearance, the facts that they were ready to wage war to defend themselves and that they had not been enslaved suggest ("*tamen*") that they did not live what Ten Rhyne described as an "idle desert life." The argument advanced in *An Elegant and Accurate Account* is, then, in part a negation of extant discourse about the Khoi, presented as moral advice to the reader. In the remainder of his introduction, Grevenbroek develops this as a twofold argument around Classical literature and a Christian worldview.<sup>33</sup>

First, in the next lines Grevenbroek admits that the echo chamber used to dictate his own youthful prejudices about the Khoi, but that a prolonged period of first-hand experience with them has led him to change his mind:

gentem hanc [sc. Khoi] uno animo, in diem et in commune, ad naturae legem congruenter convenientem viventem, in quodcunque genus hominum hospitem, candidam, fidam, veritatis, aequitatisque amantem, nec ab omni Numinis alicujus cultu funditus expertem, et singularem illi inesse ad omnia naturalis ingenii dexteritatem, **ut est hominum captus, capacique ad praecepta** animo inveni, qui legum severitate, et judiciorum metu se alligari, quondam praejudiciis juvenilibus abrepta, temeraria mea Musa cecinit:

*Quamvis sint homines, hominis vix nomine digni* etc.<sup>34</sup>

The entire letter is an intertextual web of seamlessly integrated references to Roman Latin literature, 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."<sup>35</sup> Exemplary for the letter as a whole, the highlighted clauses in this passage are taken from canonical works by Roman authors from the first century before and after the common era: "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). As pointed out, Grevenbroek structures his discussion of the Khoi partly along criteria familiar from early modern ethnographic literature—such as justice, worship, and character—, yet his references typically are not found in contemporary writings, such as that of Ten

<sup>33</sup> Van Stekelenburg, *Een intellectueel in de vroege Kaapkolonie*, 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 (Maas, "Authorship of a Letter about the Khoi"). The epistolary form was advanced to that effect elsewhere in early modern ethnography: Huigen, *Verkenningen van Zuid-Afrika*, 43.

<sup>34</sup> Farrington and Schapera, *The Early Cape Hottentots*, 172. Highlights in bold throughout this paper are mine, TM. "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.**"

<sup>35</sup> Farrington and Schapera, *The Early Cape Hottentots*, 169.

Rhyne or Dapper. The above citation from Cicero’s philosophical work *Tusculan Disputations*, for example, is part of a passage that deals with the bearing of pain in foreign peoples. It is observed that some nations that are inclined to glory and victory are able to bear the pain from battle wounds, while they cannot bear the pain from disease, “neque enim illum [dolorem] quem facile tulerant ratione aut sapientia tulerant, sed studio potius et Gloria.”<sup>36</sup> To illustrate his point, in what follows, Cicero opposes the Grecians (Greeks) to the Cimbrians and Celtiberians:

Itaque barbari quidam et immanes ferro decertare acerrime possunt, aegrotare viriliter non queunt; Graeci autem homines non satis animosi, prudentes, **ut est captus hominum**, satis, hostem aspicere non possunt, eidem morbos toleranter atque humane ferunt. At Cimbri et Celtiberi in proeliis exsultant, lamentantur in morbo: nihil enim potest esse aequabile quod non a certa ratione proficiscatur.<sup>37</sup>

The Cimbrians were a Germanic tribe who invaded the northern Iberian Peninsula, inhabited by the Celtiberians. To Roman eyes, both were barbaric peoples, for they appeared to be foreign to the Roman ways of life.<sup>38</sup> Although the Grecians, according to Cicero, lack the level of courage appropriate for battle, at least their behaviour is founded on reason and philosophy (fixed principles: “a certa ratione proficiscatur”), which is lacking in the Cimbrians and Celtiberians. Indeed, they are as sensible as suits mankind (“prudentes, ut est captus hominum”). Similarly, for Grevenbroek the Khoi may appear foreign to European behaviour and customs, but they are no less civil—quite the opposite, as the word ‘*Candore*’ will make clear. The Khoi possess key characteristics of (European ideas of) civil culture, such as a love for truth (“*veritatis*”), justice (“*aequitatis*”), and worship of some God (“nec ab omni Numinis alicujus cultu funditus expertem,” note the litotes). What is more, however, is that a consistent rationale underpins their way of life: they have “a rare nimbleness of mother wit” and “minds receptive of instruction.” More than writing a classicising Latin, Grevenbroek thus engages Classical literature that has a foreign people as its subject matter directly, to elaborate his own position regarding Khoi civility.<sup>39</sup>

This can be further illustrated through the highlighted clause at the end of the passage, which is the only line in the entire letter that draws attention to itself as a citation: it is centred on the (manuscript) page, has an empty line before and after it in an otherwise left-aligned script that runs page-wide, and has “etc.” at

<sup>36</sup> “[f]or they did not support themselves under their former [battle] sufferings by reason or philosophy, but by inclination and glory.”

<sup>37</sup> Idem. “We find accordingly some uncivilized barbarians able to fight desperately to the end with the sword but unable to behave like men in sickness. The Greeks on the other hand, who are not so very courageous but have a sufficiency of sense **answering to their mental powers**, cannot look an enemy in the face; and yet these same men show endurance and spirit, as human beings should, in bearing sickness, while the Cimbri and Celtiberians revel in battle and wail in sickness. For nothing can keep the same level unless it starts with fixed principle.”

<sup>38</sup> On Roman ideas of *barbaritas* and *humanitas*, see for example Braund, *Roman Assimilations of the Other*, 15–32 and Veyne, *Humanitas: Romans and Non-Romans*, 342–69.

<sup>39</sup> This, in turn, he supports with examples from his own experiences at the Cape.

its end (notably absent in the English translation).<sup>40</sup> It is a verse from Ovid's *Tristia* (circa 11 CE), poems of sorrow and lament written after he was banned from Rome to Tomi (now Constantia, on the Romanian coast). The particular poem from which Grevenbroek quotes 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:

sive locum specto, locus est inamabilis, et quo  
 esse nihil toto tristius orbe potest,  
 sive homines, vix sunt homines hoc nomine digni,  
 quamque lupi, saevae plus feritatis habent.  
 non metuunt leges, sed cedit viribus aequum,  
 victaque pugnaci iura sub ense iacent.  
 pellibus et laxis arcent mala frigora braxis,  
 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 e medio reddere verba queat.<sup>41</sup>

The explicit reference engages Classical discourse about foreign (non-Roman, non-civil) peoples, inviting the reader to explore Ovid's first-century description of the Getae against the 17th-century prevailing opinion about the Khoi, and Grevenbroek's claim that these are "half-truths." According to the poet, the locals are more savage than wolves, they dress and do their hair like beasts, and (importantly) they fear no law and speak no civil language.<sup>42</sup> In his book *Banished Voices: Readings in Ovid's Exile Poetry* (1994), Gareth Williams remarks that "All these details emphasise Ovid's isolation from his fellow Tomitans while at the same time making clear their need for the civilising influences of Rome."<sup>43</sup> Where Ovid looks at the people ("specto homines") and casts his opinion, Grevenbroek, in turn, 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 people because, like the Getae, they lived in a state of perceived primitivism and shared a natural state with animals. But after a decade's experience with Khoi customs and habits, he parallels Ovid's assessment of the non-Roman peoples with his own youthful prejudices. It is also interesting that Ovid—on grounds of the observed lack of civility among the people—rejects the place as hateful and the saddest on the planet ("locus est inamabilis, et quo esse nihil toto tristius orbe

<sup>40</sup> 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.

<sup>41</sup> Ovid, *Tristia* 5.7.43–54. "If I look at the place, the place is hateful, / and nothing could be sadder on this earth, / **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."

<sup>42</sup> The claim that the Getae spoke no Latin and only a little Greek is in all likelihood false. See Williams, *Banished Voices*, 154ff.

<sup>43</sup> Williams, *Banished Voices*, 158.

potest”). Some vestiges of the Greek language remain, though barbarised, but no one speaks Latin (“in paucis [...] verba queat”). Grevenbroek, conversely, laments in the conclusion to his letter that the Cape would have been better off without the acquirements of settler culture:

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.<sup>44</sup>

Putting himself apart from much of the European early modern ethnographical tradition, Grevenbroek not only critically re-appreciates Khoi culture, but also scrutinises the early modern outward gaze and method of assessing non-European civilisations. He turns a mirror on his home culture, and claims that the acquirements of European civilisation in fact hinder the appreciation of the Cape, indeed suggesting that European settler life has removed itself from what matters most—the paramount goodness of God (*Divina bonitas*) that affords nurture without stint to the inhabitants (“abundè incolis exhibens alimenta”).

This second pillar of his worldview—the Christian roots from which he claims his countrymen have been alienated, and which the Khoi possess in a purer (*‘Candore’*) form—he elucidates in the final lines of his introduction. In organising their ways of life and judging those of other peoples, Grevenbroek’s countrymen practice a corrupted Christian ethics that is now jumping across to the Khoi, he claims. Grevenbroek holds the settlers responsible for the deteriorating relation with the natives and paints a picture of what will happen to the hypocritical Christians who refuse to see this:

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 explore perspicio et cognosco, a quibus blasphemias, perjuria, discordiam, simultates, crapulam, technas, latrocinia, furta, ingratitude, effraenatam alieni appetentiam ignota quondam eis Facinora, aliaque crimina non levis notae, et auri sacram famem traxit; en **praeclaros Christianarum vittarum Mystas!** en Divinae Veritatis assertores strenuos, die et judicio novissimo ab his Barbaris media amphitheatri scrobe ustulandi. Haec est futuri summa favilla mali!<sup>45</sup>

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

<sup>44</sup> Farrington and Schapera, *The Early Cape Hottentots*, 290. “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.”

<sup>45</sup> Farrington and Schapera, *The Early Cape Hottentots*, 173–4, [...] is my deletion. “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 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 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 amphitheatre by these barbarians. “This is the final spark of the woe to come.””

of the letter. Indeed, Grevenbroek has received criticism for his hyperbolic style: "Grevenbroek's rhetorical exaggerations are sometimes next to hysterical."<sup>46</sup> Yet, the drama is in line with the strident tone and message of the preceding lines. Having turned away from the traditional European outward gaze as exemplified by Ovid's citation about the Getae and Sarmations, Grevenbroek now seeks to reverse his earlier opinion on the Khoi: seeking pardon, he now sings a palinode ("hic palinodiam cano"). Derived from the Ancient Greek *πάλιν* (*palin*, meaning 'back' or 'again') and *ᾠδή* ('song'), a palinode retracts a sentiment expressed in an earlier poem. As in this first part of his introduction, Grevenbroek characterises his letter in a classicising vein, and also continues the break with the tradition of writing about the Khoi. He relates the faults of his countrymen ("nostratum vitiis") to forgotten ancestral ways ("moris patrii oblitorum"): his fellow settlers have become estranged from their Christian roots to the extent that Grevenbroek associates them 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." The priests that preach the upholding of the mysteries of Christian worship ("praeclaros Christianarum vittarum Mystas") he ironically describes as 'glorious': they have begun to pass on their ways of life to the Khoi, who have "changed for the worse, and have become secretive, suspicious and shut away" from the Europeans ("in deterius mutatos, sui celantes, tectos et a nobis abstrusos"). There appears to be a play of words between "the faults of our countrymen" ("Nostratum vitiis") and Christian worship ("Christianarum vittarum"), where the metonym *vitta* (the headband worn by (Roman) priests) is now replaced by *vitium* ((Christian) sin). Conversely, the virtues that Grevenbroek praised in the Khoi in the first part of his introduction 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." With more detail than in the first part of his introduction, Grevenbroek challenges the dominant European early modern image about the Khoi, but having come around himself, now also turns a mirror on his fellow Europeans: 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").<sup>47</sup>

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 Roman poet Propertius' *Elegies* (1.9.18) (first century BCE), a series of poems that portray the uneven course of a poet's love affair with a woman called Cynthia.<sup>48</sup> In the particular poem quoted, the poet urges his friend and fellow poet Ponticus, who is also

<sup>46</sup> Van Stekelenburg, *Een intellectueel in de vroege Kaapkolonie*, 96: "Merkwaardig zijn zijn retorische overdrijvingen, die soms een bijna hysterisch niveau bereiken" (English translation my own).

<sup>47</sup> I discuss Grevenbroek's ironical use of the term *'barbarus'* in reference to the Khoi against the background of the dominant 17<sup>th</sup>-century discourse about them in my PhD thesis: Maas, *Shifting Frameworks for Understanding Otherness*, Chapter 3. Grevenbroek adopts the stereotype only to show that it confers no inherent knowledge about the referent.

<sup>48</sup> 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.

in love, to put away all his learned books of poetry and write his own love-elegy for his ‘girl’ instead:

i quaeso et tristis istos sepone libellos,  
 et cane quod quaevis nosse puella velit!  
 quid si non esset facilis tibi copia! nunc tu  
 insanus medio flumine quaeris aquam.  
 necdum etiam palles, vero nec tangeris igni:  
**haec est venturi prima favilla mali.**  
 tum magis Armenias cupies accedere tigres  
 et magis infernae vincula nosse rotae,  
 quam pueri totiens arcum sentire medullis  
 et nihil iratae posse negare tuae.  
 nullus Amor cuiquam facilis ita praebuit alas,  
 ut non alterna presserit ille manu.<sup>49</sup>

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 “anything the girl wants to hear” (“quod quaevis nosse puella velit”).<sup>50</sup> 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 incline the girlfriend to open up to his affection). Grevenbroek’s reworking of Propertius’ elegy provides a disconcerting finale for his letter’s introduction. Extending the implication of the elegy to Grevenbroek’s palinode, the implication is that the European settlers have failed to see the obvious. In the same way that Ponticus is standing in a river, isolated, asking for water, the settlers and the Christian priests are deploring their solitude among savages, while in fact they are surrounded by an unremitting flow of more authentic, pious inspiration than they possess themselves. Instead of reading ‘sad books’ full of half-truths and rumour about the foreign, Grevenbroek has opened up his eyes to the world around him. Although he has come around himself, critically engaging the extant body of literature about the Khoi, and scrutinising trusted Classical authorities, he claims that it is too late for “the glorious priests of the Christian mysteries” and “the strenuous champions of divine truth” (“Divinae Veritatis assertores strenuos”). They will continue to fail to see their part in corrupting the Khoi, carrying the stereotype forward. Significantly, Grevenbroek replaced “prima” (first) in the Propertian line by “summa” (highest; final),

<sup>49</sup> Propertius, *Elegies* 1.9.13–24, translation Katz, *The complete elegies of Sextus Propertius*: “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 final two lines loosely translate to: “Love grants no one an easy passage, driving them back with either hand.”

<sup>50</sup> On the interpretation of lines 13–16, see Yardley, *Ponticus’ Inspiration: Propertius 1.9.15*, 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].”



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 certain 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.

### 3 Framing the World

However much it was *en vogue* among learned circles in early modern Europe to engage in a stylistic-aesthetic imitatio or aemulatio of Classical authorities, there is more at stake in Grevenbroek's letter. Grevenbroek's introduction takes the form of a complex interplay of implicit and explicit allusions to Classical Latin literature and a Christian worldview that not only inform his argument about Khoi civility, but that also critically reflect on the way knowledge about them is acquired. Grevenbroek radically opposes the dominant Khoi image in early modern ethnographic literature of a beastly or degraded civility, and scrutinises the civility of his fellow Europeans. The allusion to Seneca's philosophy allows for an interpretation of Grevenbroek's letter as moral advice to the reader, the reference to Cicero makes apparent how Grevenbroek aptly draws on Classical literature to bypass the prevailing images that perpetuated the stereotyped framing of the Khoi, the reference from Ovid's poetry of exile makes clear how Grevenbroek's view of the foreign has changed, and Propertius' poem he reworks creatively in support of a worldview that accommodates the Khoi as pious brethren.

At the same time, the Classics that in part inspired the half-truths about the Khoi that Grevenbroek seeks to break with, are reinvigorated by him as a source of knowledge for viewing the world and for meaningfully framing the foreign. This he does in conjunction with an appreciation of the Khoi as more authentically pious people, flowing from a Christian eschatology. Grevenbroek thus positions the Khoi at the heart of one of Europe's major intellectual crises: the radical epistemological shift away from the age-old and trusted Classical and Christian library as a source of knowledge about the world, to empirical observation as the starting point for crafting an understanding about it.<sup>51</sup> The fact that he is still able to extend Classical and biblical worldviews to frame his opinion about the Khoi after a decade of first-hand experiences, makes him a uniquely valuable voice in South African and European history, for it shows just how hard it is to reflect on one's understanding of the world, and the frameworks of knowledge that help to construct it.

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<sup>51</sup> On this shift, see the seminal study by *New Worlds, Ancient Texts*.

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