

THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN AUTHORITATIVE TEXT: PETER KOLB'S DESCRIPTION OF THE KHOIKHOI AT THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

Peter Kolb (1675-1726), a German astronomer and mathematician, was an unlikely candidate to write the book that became the most well-known source of the Cape of Good Hope and the Khoikhoi in the eighteenth century. This essay uses Kolb's work as a case study for the transformation of one man's personal observations into a variety of works that were quite different from the originals in scope and intention. First, the essay discusses the genesis of Kolb's book, *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*, and focuses on the Khoikhoi. I argue that Kolb's genius lies in emphasizing communalities among Europeans and Khoikhoi, as well as the rationality of Khoikhoi customs. The second part of the essay establishes that Kolb's book did indeed become the most authoritative source of the Cape in the eighteenth century. Over the course of that century, the book was radically modified in translations and abridgements to cover only certain essential topics, and increasingly to emphasize the *otherness* of the Khoikhoi.

I. Introduction: Interpreting Accounts of the Khoikhoi

In 1746, 27 years after the publication of Peter Kolb's *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*, a dramatically abridged version of it appeared in a popular collection of travel narratives compiled by Thomas Astley in London, titled, *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels*. In the preface to this work, Astley wrote:

As touching the Hottentots, of whom so many different and romantic stories have been propagated, we shall be able to fully satisfy the Curiosity of the Public by our Abstract of Kolben's Relation; which is so compleat, that he seems to have left nothing for future Travellers to add. We presume, the Reader will be both surprized and pleased with the agreeable Variety he finds in the Manners and Customs of these People; who the Ignorance or Malice of most former Authors had represented as Creatures but one Degree removed from the Beasts, and with Scarce any Thing human about them except the Shape: Whereas, in Fact, they appear to be some of the most humane and virtuous (abating for a few Prejudices of Education) to be found among all the Race of Mankind.¹

¹ *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels: Consisting of the most Esteemed Relations,*

These remarks highlight some important perceptions of Kolb's work in the mid-eighteenth century. First, it was generally acknowledged to be the most complete, and therefore authoritative, account of the Cape of Good Hope. Second, this work provided a view of the Hottentots (as the Khoikhoi, the aboriginal inhabitants of the Cape, were called throughout the eighteenth century) that was unlike any that had come before it. But certain corollaries of these two points help to reveal why Kolb's work is so fascinating as a case study for the construction of an authoritative text. Though the original text was "so compleat," indeed, apparently exhaustive in the details it gave of the Cape, in Astley's collection it has been severely cut down to essential details about the Khoikhoi, together with some information about the flora and fauna and the colony in general. Implicitly, therefore, Astley and his collaborators made a distinction between exhaustive details and useful details. Furthermore, though the remarks praise the humanity of the Khoikhoi as represented in Kolb's work, there is a sense that nearly 30 years later, Kolb's positive description was still in competition with negative or bestial descriptions. And, paradoxically, Astley's extremely abridged account tends to emphasize the exotic, outlandish, or even irrational aspects of Khoikhoi social life and customs, which detracts from the assertion that they are "humane and virtuous."

If Peter Kolb's original *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum* had not appeared to be exhaustive in its description of the Cape, it is unlikely that the book would have received as much attention as it did. It would not have gained the status of an authoritative text either. This paper is about the "construction of an authoritative text" in at least three ways. First, it looks at the life of this particular traveler to argue that the circumstances of his birth and education made him a careful observer, and one who recognized the worth of discourses on the Khoikhoi in learned circles in Europe. Second, it explores the way that this text, *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*, was compiled, written, and published. Here I examine ways that Kolb creates a sense of authenticity, and then, through his erudite analysis, raises his book above previous accounts of the Cape. Most importantly, however, the paper uses a few examples of Kolb's encounters with the Khoikhoi to delve more deeply into the picture of these people that this book was so instrumental in creating. Kolb drew parallels between European and Khoikhoi society, and allowed his description of the Khoikhoi to criticize European culture. The trope

of the critical “Savage” was quite old in European travel narratives, but it was new for the Khoikhoi, and in Kolb’s hands seemed more than usually plausible. Third, this paper briefly looks at the afterlife of the text, its translations and its inclusion in many collections of travel descriptions. This afterlife is perhaps the best evidence that *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum* became an authority on the Cape, and on the Khoikhoi. And, in examining how the text became authoritative in western Europe, I also attempt to say something about cultural change over the course of the eighteenth century.

Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum, by Peter Kolb, subtitled “a complete description of the Cape of Good Hope today,” was first published in German in Nuremberg in 1719. It became the major source on everything to do with the Cape of Good Hope shortly after its publication, and it maintained that status well into the nineteenth century, even though it received considerable criticism in the later eighteenth century. As with all European accounts of non-European cultures, parts of this book are now quite contested, but it is still considered an important source for studying the Cape in the eighteenth century and the early period of contact between Europeans and the Khoisan peoples. At the time it was published, it was undoubtedly the most exhaustive written account of the Cape available. Its 840+ pages are divided into three sections: the first covers *Physicalia*—i.e. topography, flora, fauna, fish, insects, minerals, etc.; the second is concerned exclusively with the social life and customs of the Khoikhoi; and the third describes the European colony at length and focuses on occurrences during Kolb’s own residence at the Cape. These general topics were not randomly chosen. Natural history was an interest avidly pursued by learned men all over Europe in this period, and a close reading of these chapters reveals intellectual and personal connections between Kolb and many “savants” (botanists, zoologists, entomologists—though they cannot be easily separated in this period) who would have been in positions to help and recommend Kolb. Even the section on the colonial intrigues at the Cape had precedents in the European publishing world. Most of the section deals with the rebellion of a group of free burghers against the governor, Willem Adriaan van der Stel, and Ad Biewenga has suggested that for some time in the early eighteenth century there was a vogue in the Dutch Republic for books dealing with this subject.² The Khoikhoi, of

² Ad Biewenga, *De Kaap de Goede Hoop: Een Nederlandse Vestingskolonie, 1680-1730* (Amsterdam, 1999), 34.

course, were particularly current in European learned debates regarding humanity.

Kolb's description of the Khoikhoi was by no means the first. Indeed, there are over 150 European narratives that describe the Cape between 1488, when it was first touched by Bartholomew Diaz, and 1652, when the Dutch set up their refreshment station there. In these narratives, the Hottentots appear as miserable wretches bearing much in common with the animals: they hardly have speech, but instead cluck like turkeys, they smear themselves with rancid fat, wear sheep and cow entrails around their necks, and, worst of all, they have no notion of God or any sort of religion; they are not even idolaters.³ Between 1652 and 1719, there are well over 100 more narratives, including a handful by men who were residents at the Cape for a number of years.⁴ A number of these accounts are more complex and nuanced, reflecting closer familiarity with the area and the people.

At this distance of time and space, it is difficult to know whether we can recover anything of Khoikhoi history and culture in the early period of contact with Europeans. Indeed, many historians and anthropologists repudiate the very idea that European observers of indigenous peoples around the world (from the sixteenth century onwards) could produce anything but hopelessly flawed narratives of what they wanted to see, usually colored by the desire to dominate people they regarded as innately inferior. These criticisms have put much needed checks on the interpretation of travel narratives, and have forced scholars to be more careful in examining both the observers or narrators and the contents of the texts. However, the call to reject travel narratives for anything but the study of European mentalities goes too far. Through careful studies of the people who produced travel descriptions and the contexts in which they were produced, together with sensitivity to the possible counter or parallel narratives produced by indigenous peoples, it is possible to identify descriptions that were of high quality or had greater depth and complexity than others. We may still end up with only shadows and echoes of the lives of indigenous people, but the task of historical practice is to create plausible arguments based on available

³ The best collection of these narratives may be found in Major R. Raven-Hart, *Before Van Riebeeck: Callers at South Africa from 1488 to 1652* (Cape Town, 1967). See also David Chidester, "Bushman Religion: Open, Closed, and New Frontiers," in *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of Bushmen*, ed. Pippa Skotnes (Cape Town, 1996), 52.

⁴ *Cape Good Hope, 1652-1702: The First 50 Years of Dutch Colonisation as Seen by Callers*, Two Volumes, ed. R. Raven Hart (Cape Town, 1971).

sources, and this endeavor is no different. In other words, early modern travelers were not simply creating elaborate fiction out of the impossibility of forming any understanding of non-European peoples and contexts. Joan-Pau Rubiés has argued that the ability of various travelers to learn the “language-games” of non-European cultures meant that it was possible for travelers to become involved at a deeper level, and therefore to interpret what they experienced. Rubiés continues,

This ability to learn languages, however universal, was of course affected by the travellers’ will to understand better, by the empirical means at their disposal and by their diverse critical skills. The existence of different languages is obvious, but insofar as translation seems to have been a possibility, the problem of relativism is only a problem of degree.⁵

In Kolb’s case, he must score high marks in terms of the will to understand, and likewise with methodology and critical abilities.

II. *The Education of Peter Kolb*

Let us begin, therefore, with a close look at Peter Kolb’s life to explain what sort of a man he was, and, at least in part, the personal agenda he had with regard to describing the Cape of Good Hope. In many ways, Kolb was an unlikely candidate to write the most well-known source on the Khoikhoi in the eighteenth century. He was born in 1675, the son of a blacksmith and toll collector in the small village of Dörfles, outside the walls of the town of Marktredwitz in southern Germany. He describes himself as poor but smart, and with the help of good patrons he was able to rise in the world through education. Indeed, in both the introduction to *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum* and in his short autobiography, Kolb’s description of his life revolves around two major themes: education (particularly focused on religion and astronomy) and patronage. Kolb’s education prepared him to value and connect all kinds of observation and the various branches of knowledge, as was expected of a proper man of letters. He was an ambitious man, and over the course of his life until about age 35, he mainly moved up the ladder of patronage and became better ensconced in the learned world of the Republic of Letters, at least within Germany. However, during the last 15 years of his life, he did not fare as well, and though his book on the Cape became famous, there is simply no evidence that Kolb himself made it big.

⁵ Joan-Pau Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance: South India through European Eyes, 1250-1625* (Cambridge, 2000), xvii.

The first two schools Kolb attended were in the moderately-sized towns of Marktredwitz and Wunsiedel, within Brandenburg-Prussian lands. The limited scope of education for children from the lower echelons of society changed over the course of the eighteenth century.⁶ Brandenburg-Prussia was at the forefront of educational reforms, already getting underway with the Pietist pedagogical reforms in Halle in the late seventeenth century. As early as 1717 a state law called for compulsory school attendance for children between the ages of six and fourteen.⁷ Kolb participated in this wave of cultural change that encouraged greater access to education, but it is clear that he was still part of a much smaller subgroup of men (from all orders of society), and that he was gifted with the desire and the intellect that allowed him to pursue a longer course of studies, and consequently improve his position in society.

With the help of patrons from Marktredwitz and Wunsiedel (particularly after the death of his father in 1691), Kolb was able to successfully complete primary and secondary school,⁸ and move on to the big city of Nuremberg. In this period, Nuremberg, an imperial free city,

⁶ For more on schooling in the late seventeenth century, see R.A. Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe: Culture and Education, 1500-1800*, 2nd ed. (London, 2002), chapter two, especially 17 and 56-57; see also, Linda Pollock, “Parent-Child Relations,” in *Family Life in Early Modern Times, 1500-1789*, ed. David Kertzer and Marzio Barbagli (New Haven and London, 2001), 203-04; and Richard van Dülmen, *Kultur und Alltag in der Frühen Neuzeit: Dritter Band, Religion, Magie, Aufklärung, 16.-18. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1994), 171, 174-75, 177.

⁷ Houston, *Literacy*, 57. See also, Van Dülmen, *Kultur und Alltag*, bd. 3: 178-79; and Richard Gawthrop, *Pietism and the Making of Eighteenth-Century Prussia* (Cambridge, 1993).

⁸ Neustadt/Aisch, Kirchenbibliothek, MS 129 Autobiography: Kolb writes, “Scholam Wonsideliensem advi, ibique Alumnorum Ordini adscriptus eo ipse tempore. . . .” He was part of a group of scholars called “poor students,” or “Pauperes,” or “Alumnen” in Latin. These boys did singing duty in church and in the town, for which they took in a collection that provided a reasonable stipend for living expenses. Older *alumnen* might act as tutors to the sons of burgher families with whom they also boarded. It might seem as though being a “poor student” was an exercise in learning humility and social distinction from wealthier students, but as Anthony La Vopa points out, both the practice of tutoring burghers’ children and performance in the choir “had the effect of integrating outsiders into the social fabric and cultural rhythms of local life.” Furthermore, the practice that ambitious pupils got in performing publicly and seeking out patronage must have been invaluable for young men like Kolb himself, who built the rest of his career on patronage as well. See August Wolfschmidt, *Magister Peter Kolb: Ein Forscher und Lehrer aus Franken* (Neustadt an der Aisch, 1978), 6; Hermann Braun, *Der Afrikaforscher Peter Kolb* (Schriftenreihe der Volkshochschule der Stadt Marktredwitz 21) (Marktredwitz, 1975), vii; Elizabeth Jäger, *Wunsiedel, 1557-1632: Band II/1 einer Geschichte der Stadt Wunsiedel* (Wunsiedel, 1994), 106-07 and 115-18; Anthony La Vopa, *Grace, Talent and Merit: Poor Students, Clerical Careers, and Professional Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge, 1988), 22.

was one of the great cities of southern Germany, and well known for publishing and a thriving trade in books.⁹ When Kolb left Wunsiedel his intention probably was to study theology and philosophy, and his friends also expected him to do this.¹⁰ However, in 1696, Georg Christoph Eimhart, a prominent Nuremberg artist, mathematician and astronomer selected Kolb to become his *Coobservator* at the state-of-the-art astronomical observatory he had built. Eimhart is relatively unknown outside of Nuremberg now, but in the late seventeenth century he was an important figure in German networks of learned people in general, and for astronomical experiments in particular. The connection with Eimhart brought Kolb into a circle of prestigious savants and artists, who remained important in his life, and were essential in enabling him to take his next academic step of studying at the University of Halle.¹¹

Although Kolb spent less than three years in Halle, it was clearly one of the highpoints of his life and crucially influential in the course the rest of his life took. Halle was a new university when Kolb arrived there in 1700. It had been founded in 1691 by Frederick III, the Elector of Brandenburg (who was crowned King in Brandenburg-Prussia in 1701), and was intimately connected with the Pietist movement headed by August Hermann Francke.¹² Most students were enrolled in the

⁹ Hanns Hofmann, "Endzeit reichstädtischer Selbständigkeit (1650-1806): Kampf um die Selbstbehauptung," and Ingomar Bog, "Endzeit reichstädtischer Selbständigkeit (1650-1806): Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft im Zeitalter des Merkantilismus," in *Nürnberg—Geschichte einer europäischen Stadt*, ed. Gerhard Pfeiffer (Munich, 1971), 308-09 and 317.

¹⁰ Archive of the Friedrich-Alexander Gymnasium (hereafter AFAG) at Neustadt/Aisch 28, Dürr (Kolb's teacher) to Kolb, 16 June 1694, addressed to: "Petro Kolben, der Musen eifrig Er-/ gebenen, Meinem insonders Geliebten/ freund zu beliebiger Entsiegelun/ Bey Hrn. Johan Grafen/ Teutschen Schulmeister/ auf den Laurenzi-Plaz/ zu erfragen. Nürnberg." AFAG 44, Jobsten [or Jobsen] to Kolb, 23 July 1695: "Herrn Hn. Petro Kolben, S.S./ Theol: studioso, Meinen/ Vielgeliebten freundt und Gönner/ werde dieses zu belieblicher ent-/ siegelung [unclear!]/ Zu/ Nürnberg." AFAG 55, Paucker to Kolb, 18 January 1697: "Monsieur/ Monsieur Piere Kolb,/ Estudent en Philosophie/ mon tres cher Amy pour/ le presentement à/ Nürnberg." Jobsten and Paucker were Kolb's friends from the school at Wunsiedel.

¹¹ On Eimhart's observatory, instruments used there, and important collaborators, see Eric G. Forbes, "Das Eimhartische Observatorium zu Nürnberg (1691-1757)," *Sterne und Weltraum* 9 (1970): 311-313; on the savants and artists in general, see Johann Gabriel Doppelmayr, *Historische Nachricht von den Nürnbergischen Mathematicis und Künstlern . . .* (Nürnberg, 1730; reproduction Hildesheim and New York, 1972).

¹² Christopher Clark, "Piety, Politics and Society: Pietism in Eighteenth-Century Prussia," in *The Rise of Prussia, 1700-1830*, ed. Philip Dwyer (Harlow, 2000). In a time when leading German thinkers were coming to regard universities as hopelessly mired in irrelevant tradition, Halle offered an innovative curriculum and academic and religious counseling for its students. Halle also quickly became one of the largest of the

theological faculty, and it is clear that even those who came to study something else did not neglect the opportunity to hear the lectures of Halle's leading theologians.

The most famous of these theologians of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), then leader of the Pietist movement. Pietists placed emphasis on the devotion of the heart, and developed what Christopher Clark refers to as an “individualized, experience-oriented devotional culture.”¹³ A corollary of this was an insistence, particularly for theology students at Halle, that each individual should experience a “conversion” where one's personal desires became subordinate to the love of God and the all-encompassing desire to serve Him. Furthermore, the love of God was not something to be guarded in one's heart; rather it was to spur the individual on to an actively good life. But, as Martin Brecht points out, Francke did not see much distinction between lay people and the clergy, or those studying to become clergymen—he urged all people to follow the same pietistic lifestyle.¹⁴ Although some students may have attended the University of Halle simply because of its proximity to their homes, most made a choice to go there and be a part of the Pietist renewal.¹⁵ At the same time, Francke was a serious theologian and a scholar of Oriental languages (the first professorship he held at the University of Halle), and he wanted the university to produce good scholars.¹⁶ Kolb himself was not a theological student at Halle—his “Magister” was conferred by the faculty of philosophy. His dissertation, defended and published hardly a year after his arrival in Halle, in July 1701, was on comets.

German universities with over 500 students already in 1700 (on par with Cologne, Leipzig and Wittenberg), and over 1,500 in the 1710s and 1720s. Charles McClelland, *State, Society, and University in Germany, 1700-1914* (Cambridge, 1980), 28; also Gawthrop, *Pietism and the Making of Eighteenth-Century Prussia*, 173-74. According to McClelland, there were 28 universities in the German states (excluding Austria) in 1700, sharing about 8,000 students among themselves.

¹³ Clark, “Piety, Politics, and Society,” 72.

¹⁴ Martin Brecht, “August Hermann Francke und der Hallische Pietismus,” in *Geschichte der Pietismus, Band I: Der Pietismus vom siebzehnten bis zum frühen achtzehnten Jahrhundert*, ed. M. Brecht, et al. (Göttingen, 1993), 473.

¹⁵ Cf., for example, P. Baumgart, “Leibniz und der Pietismus. Universale Reformbestrebungen um 1700,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 48 (1966): 364-86.

¹⁶ Brecht, “August Hermann Francke,” 471-473; Peschke, “A.H. Franckes Reform des theologischen Studiums,” in *August Hermann Francke. Festreden und Kolloquium über den Bildungs- und Erziehungsgedanken bei August Hermann Francke aus Anlaß der 300. Wiederkehr seines Geburtstages 22. März 1963* (Leipzig, 1964), 98.

Having attained this honor, Kolb may have considered taking an academic post, but instead, and again through Eimmar's connections, Kolb was appointed secretary to a noble patron.¹⁷ This man was Baron Bernard Friedrich von Krosick, Privy Councillor to the King of Prussia since 1697, and brother of one of Queen Sophie Charlotte's principal Ladies in Waiting, Christine Antonie von Bülow.¹⁸ Von Krosick, another now little-known figure, was essential in the founding of the Berlin Academy of Sciences. He was the major patron for astronomical projects in Berlin at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and provided crucial resources for the study of astronomy, including a house in Berlin where astronomers were able to live and carry out observations.¹⁹

III. *Setting Sail for the Cape of Good Hope*

In *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*, Kolb describes Krosick as a great friend to astronomy, and one who was also interested in acquiring fame through the projects he supported.²⁰ Kolb claims that through their conversations, Krosick came up with the idea of making simultaneous astronomical

¹⁷ Johann Wilhelm Wagner, "Brevis Narratio de Ratione ac Methodo Observationum Astronomicarum auspiciis Nobilis Magdeburgensis Dn. Bernhardi Friderici de Krosigk, Berolini & simul in Capite Bonae Spei, per aliquot annos olim institutarum; additis quibusdam hic & illic factis observationibus," *Miscellanea Berolinensis ad incrementum scientiarum VI* (1740): 238.

¹⁸ *Leibniz und seine Akademie. Ausgewählte Quellen zur Geschichte der Berliner Sozietät der Wissenschaften, 1697-1716*, ed. Hans-Stephan Brather (Berlin, 1993), 460. I have not been able to work out whether this connection may have exerted an influence on Krosick, but it is interesting to note that Queen Sophie Charlotte provided a great deal of support for Leibniz's idea of founding the Berlin Academy of Sciences. See, for example, Jürgen Mittelstrass, "Der Philosoph und die Königin—Leibniz und Sophie Charlotte," in *Leibniz in Berlin*, ed. Hans Poser and Albert Heinekamp (Stuttgart, 1990), 9-27, and several other essays with similar themes in the same collection.

¹⁹ *Leibniz und seine Akademie*, ed. Brather, 460. See also J.-H.-S. Formey [?], *Histoire de L'Academie Royale des Sciences et Belles-Lettres, depuis son origine jusqu'à présent (Avec les Pièces Originales)* (Berlin, 1752): "Mais avant que de parler des occupations de la Société, je rappellerai un fait qu'on ne pourroit ensévelir dans l'oubli, sans se rendre coupable d'injustice envers un homme d'une naissance distinguée, qui vers le même tems formoit des entreprises, où l'on découvroit autant d'amour pour la vérité, que de générosité pour contribuer à ses progrès. Je veux parler de M. Bernard Frideric, Baron de Krosick, sous les auspices duquel se fit un Voyage Astronomique au Cap de Bonne-Espérance," 54-55.

²⁰ Kolb writes: "Hierüber [the idea of simultaneous observations] wurde nun von Ihm, als einem klugen, verständigen, weitaussehenden und tiefsinngigen Herrn, sehr lange berath-schlaget, welche Kosten dazu erfordert würden: und was vor grossen Ruhm, ein so hoher Liebhaber der Künste und Wissenschaften bey der Welt zugewarten, wenn auch gleich der Endzweck, welcher die Perfection der Astronomie zum Grunde hatte, nicht vollkommen erlangt würde," (*Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*, hereafter *CBSH*, 2).

observations in Berlin and at the Cape of Good Hope. The two places were thought to be close to the same meridian of longitude, and the observations were to be made with identical instruments, ideally at the same time of day or night. According to Kolb, Krosick's aim was to help perfect astronomical science as well as to solve the problem of how to calculate longitude accurately at sea (*CBSH*, 2). Kolb does not go into detail about how this was to be accomplished, and indeed, it is not at all clear what he thought his main task was.²¹ Once he got to the Cape he may have assessed differently still what he could and could not accomplish.

It was a complex project to get underway, with many practical and logistical necessities and difficulties; it also involved the help of a number of important and learned men in the Dutch Republic. Neither Kolb nor Krosick mention collaborators from either France or England, the more well-known centers for this kind of work; instead, all of their contacts seem to be in northern and central-eastern Europe. In Krosick's letters it becomes clear that he knew many useful men in the Dutch Republic, and he had Kolb meet them for strategic purposes. First among these was Nicolaas Witsen, mayor (*Burgermeister*) of Amsterdam and one of the directors of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), who, later, was also of great importance in connection with the publication of *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*.²² In addition, Kolb sought out several other learned men who were either involved in the Dutch government, or in the administration of the VOC, as well as Nicolaas Hartsoeker (1656-1725), then living in Düsseldorf, who was known for his work with microscopes and expertise with lenses. Once these preparations were complete, Kolb was given some time to put his own affairs in order before the voyage to South Africa began. He took this opportunity to go to Nuremberg to say good-bye to his mother and to patrons there who continued to support him—but also, as he says, to get advice from the learned mathematicians living there: Eimmart, Wurtzelbau and Doppelmayr (*CBSH*, 3). These meetings suggest the crucial ties that

²¹ On the complexity of calculating longitude, see the essays collected in *The Quest for Longitude*, ed. William J.H. Andrewes (Cambridge, MA, 1996), and Dava Sobel, *Longitude: The True Story of a Lone Genius Who Solved the Greatest Scientific Problem of His Time* (Harmondsworth, 1995). Interestingly, none of these works mention German contributions to the quest in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries.

²² Witsen is one of the most interesting polymaths of this period of history. See J.F. Gebhard, Jr., *Het Leven van Mr. Nicolaas Cornelisz. Witsen (1641-1717)* (Utrecht, 1881); and P.J.A.N. Rietbergen, "Witsen's World: Nicolaas Witsen (1641-1717) Between the Dutch East India Company and the Republic of Letters," *Itinerario* 9/2 (1985): 121-34.

existed between Kolb and his first teachers in astronomy, despite the fact that he knew more famous scholars in Berlin and elsewhere by this time.

Kolb left Amsterdam in 1705 as a passenger on a VOC ship bound for the East Indies, with a stop at the Cape of Good Hope. He was now, clearly, well-educated and well-connected (equipped with letters of recommendation), and there was a lot of pressure on him to accomplish great things with his astronomical observations, and to relay these findings to a group of anxious scholars back in Berlin. When he first arrived at the Cape, the governor, Willem Adriaan van der Stel, greeted Kolb cordially and invited him to live in the *Thuyn-huys*²³ in the VOC gardens, at the very heart of the colony. Though Kolb did pursue astronomical observations for at least two years, it appears that he never fulfilled the expectations of his patron. He had difficulty finding an independent place to set up his instruments, then he was hampered by the weather, and finally by the length of time that it took for correspondence to pass between the Cape and Europe. Furthermore, Krosick had trouble relaying funding to Kolb, which strained the relationship. Eventually Krosick stopped providing funds altogether—a decision he apparently did not explain to Kolb. However, it was not unusual for educated men, particularly those who participated in the Republic of Letters, to move from one interest to another, as opportunities appeared. Even before he stopped watching the stars, Kolb started taking notes about all sorts of other things he could observe at the Cape. Indeed, because it was so common for learned men to have a multiplicity of interests, it was rather strange that Krosick discontinued his support. But because of this change in his financial circumstances, Kolb was forced to give up his lodgings and to seek employment. This was probably the low point of his life in terms of patronage, but by late 1710 he had made a small comeback and was working as a secretary to the *Landdrost* (literally, the magistrate, but this person was basically the mayor or leader) of the expansion colonies of Stellenbosch and Drakenstein. However, scarcely two years later, Kolb had another round of bad luck: his eyesight deteriorated so much that he described it as “blindness” in the preface to *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*. He was deemed unable to continue carrying out his secretarial duties, but this decision was at least partly based on the fact that the political faction of which he was a part had

²³ Now the official residence of the State President when he is in Cape Town.

fallen out of power again. The combination of circumstances made it easy for the governing council at the Cape to recommend that he should return to Europe, which he did in 1713. Here the quest for patronage began all over again, and the publication of *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum* was a vital part of this period of Kolb's life.

During his stay at the Cape, however, Kolb had ample time not just to observe from the outside, but to become a part of the rhythms of life there. In terms of the settler colonies, he was able to experience life at the center and the peripheries. He became involved in the political intrigues within the colony, and had daily contact with the slaves there, as well as individual Khoikhoi and groups of Khoikhoi who lived in and near the areas that the Dutch claimed.²⁴ Kolb was not an armchair traveler; in fact, he lived at the Cape longer than almost all of the authors who wrote about the Cape in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He knew that the Khoikhoi were part of an on-going European debate about the natural history of man, and therefore had scholarly motivations for deciding to observe them and take notes. However, daily contact meant that he was able to see and hear much more than other travelers, and to develop personal ideas based on relationships of one kind and another, rather than simply on the preconceptions he had brought with him from Europe. This is not to say that Kolb ever fully understood the Khoikhoi or that he was able to present them *as they really were*; however, in the text of *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*, there is constantly at play the aims and motivations of the European man of letters and, equally, a kind of raw data feedback about everything he experienced.

IV. *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum: Getting Published*

Kolb's first order of business when he returned to Europe was to seek a cure for his blurred eyesight, and this he found with a well-known doctor in Baden-Baden. It was probably in this period that he first started writing or compiling *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*, and as mentioned before, he must have been partly motivated by the need for steady employment, as well as the desire to vindicate his name among learned men in Germany. There is no evidence that Kolb reconnected with

²⁴ For a detailed consideration of conditions at the Cape of Good Hope in this period and Kolb's part in the complex social order there, please see my dissertation: "Primitive Man and the Enlightened Observer: Peter Kolb among the Khoikhoi," (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Minnesota, 2005).

any of his former patrons. Eimmart had died shortly after Kolb left for the Cape, and Krosick died in 1714. At this point, then, I would like to turn to an examination of the book itself, including issues of patronage and practical questions of how it was actually constructed or put together. From the late seventeenth century onwards, scholars have argued, Germany underwent something of a “reading revolution” (*Leserevolution*) in terms of reading habits, book production, and uses of vernacular languages. Kolb’s use of the German language and his method of writing fit into this context.²⁵

The first edition of Kolb’s work in German was printed in 1719 by Peter Conrad Monath in Nuremberg. This city was the most important center of publishing and communication in southern Germany at this time, with 99 booksellers and publishers active there between 1701 and 1750.²⁶ The Monath firm published and sold books and art, and seems to have employed engravers.²⁷ Unfortunately, I have not been able to find detailed information about Monath’s business or his relationship with Peter Kolb. Though the firm did not specialize in any particular type of book, we can get a sense of what it published and sold based on the advertisement on the last two pages of *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*. It lists 51 additional titles available from the firm, including works in German, Italian, and Latin. These works are dictionaries, mathematical treatises, a defense of Copernicus, religious treatises, books of sermons and spiritual examples for children, works of natural history (such as ones on insects and flowers), and teach-yourself books on accounting,

²⁵ Book production, or the number of books offered at the yearly book fairs, only reached its pre-Thirty Years’ War level around 1768 (of about 1,587 new releases). At the same time, there was a change in the books offered in favor of the use of the German language—by 1692, more German than Latin books appeared at the fairs, and indeed, by 1714 there were twice as many in German as Latin; by 1735 three times more. This change was due in part to the leadership of German intellectuals such as Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Christian Wolff and Christian Thomasius, who consciously strove to elevate German as an academic language, but also to widen the circle of education in Germany over all. See Reinhard Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels. Ein Überblick* (Munich, 1991), 76-77 and Schottenloher, *Books and the Western World: A Cultural History*, trans. W. Boyd and I. Wolf (London, 1989), 246.

²⁶ The city was in third place behind Catholic Augsburg with 150 firms and Leipzig (the main site of the book fairs in this period) with about 145 firms. See Reinhard Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, 86-87.

²⁷ David L. Paisey, *Deutsche Buchdrucker, Buchhändler und Verleger, 1701-1750* (Wiesbaden, 1988), 178. Paisey also records that the firm had an office in Vienna, and the title page of their re-translation of Kolb’s work in 1745 indicates that they also had outlets in Frankfurt and Leipzig. See pages 329-330 for the full list of publishers active in Nuremberg; pages 302-03 for Augsburg, and 323-25 for those active in Leipzig.

painting miniatures and etching.²⁸ These titles suggest scholarly consumers but also people of the middle classes, since nobles would have had tutors available to teach them artistic skills, for example. Two other books on the list purport to be collections of letters exchanged between a converted Chinese man living in Europe and his pagan friend living in Peking. (The letters were translated from Chinese to English and then to German by Ludwig Ernst von Faramond.) Kolb's book would have been enjoyed by the same readers who bought both these books of letters and works on natural history, and certainly Kolb himself was deeply entrenched in the mentality that produced and pondered such works.

Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum is dedicated to Margrave Georg Wilhelm of Ansbach-Bayreuth, a somewhat less powerful relation of the Brandenburg family that was building up the kingdom of Prussia in the same period.²⁹ It certainly was not unusual for a book, particularly one that wished to extend knowledge, to be dedicated to a nobleman. Surveys of English book dedications in the early eighteenth century have shown that most were addressed to nobles and 14 per cent (of 993) to members of the royal family itself. Thus there were cultural traditions at work here too: on the one hand aristocrats still considered book patronage to be an honorable duty, and on the other hand, the better the patron, the more prestige that accrued to the book.³⁰ The association with Georg Wilhelm may have been another reason that Kolb's work was picked up in the German regions of the Republic of Letters.

²⁸ The Monath firm seems to have published a lot of work done by Nuremberg scientists: see for examples the entries for Johann Philip von Wurzelbau, Johann Leonhard Rost, and Johann Gabriel Doppelmayr in Kurt Pilz, *600 Jahre Astronomie in Nürnberg* (Nuremberg, 1977), 302, 305-07, 316-17, respectively.

²⁹ Georg Wilhelm was a contemporary of Friedrich III of Brandenburg (1657-1713) who became King Friedrich I of Prussia (and is responsible for starting to build up Berlin as a *Residenzstadt*), as well as Friedrich Wilhelm I (1688-1740) who built up the Prussian army. See *Brandenburgs Kurfürsten. Preussens Könige. Das Taschenlexikon* (Berlin, 1998), 28-31. Kolb first thanks the Margrave for his new job and then turns to his concern for his book: "... auch vor diese geringe Arbeit/ welche ich zeit meines Anwesens in Euer Hoch-Fürstl. Durchl. Landen/ aus meinen Annotationen zusammen getragen und verfertiget/ gegen alle Neyder und Feinde/ Deroselben höchsten Schutz und Beystand implorire" (unnumbered, fifth page).

³⁰ Richard Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions: Scientific Dictionaries and Enlightenment Culture* (Cambridge, 2001), 224. Furthermore, Marion Peters suggests that noblemen, as opposed to mayors of towns or businessmen, were often in a better position to give real aid (monetary or in the form of a job) to scholars. See her article, "Nepotisme, Patronage en Boekopdrachten, bij Nicolaes Witsen (1641-1717), Burgermeester van Amsterdam" *Lias* 25 (1998): 91-92,

V. Networks of Letter-Writers, Notes and Strategies

The conceit for each chapter of *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum* is that it is a letter to its patron. Other travelers' accounts that Kolb admired used this style, and he said that it also reflected the fact that many of his chapters originated as letters that he had sent to friends back in Europe while he was still living at the Cape. It was one way to couch his narrative in personal terms, helping to establish himself as an eye-witness. At the same time, however, Kolb's general method in most chapters is to first summarize previous accounts that he considered important, then to report his own experiences, and finally to try to draw conclusions. Thus, his method is to offer two kinds of authority: that of personal experience in a first person voice, and the erudition of a researcher, which enabled him to see all sides of a particular issue.

But though these letters were, in a sense, intellectual constructions, since Kolb never wrote to Georg Wilhelm while he was at the Cape, and the chapters were changed and supplemented after the return to Germany, it is certain that Kolb did write letters to many people concerning his experiences. His network of letter-writers reveals something of his position in the Republic of Letters; it also reveals the way that a book on the Cape might gain momentum to reach publication over a number of years. In the preface to *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*, Kolb first challenges his readers to find a more complete travel narrative about the Cape in any language, and then assures them that in his opinion it would be against both honor and reason to entice the money out of their pockets only to serve them “aufgewärmten Kohls” (warmed up cabbage). He argues that he could prove that this will not be the case with this book, if he could simply show them one of the letters that he sent to “gute Gönner and wehrte Freunde” (good patrons and worthy friends) from the Cape. When he returned from Cape, he found that more had been made of these letters than he could have imagined and he was eagerly pressured to publish his discoveries and share them with the curious world (*CBSH*, unnumbered first page of the Vorrede). A similar reference to letters sent from the Cape occurs in the foreword to the Dutch translation of *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*, with which Kolb was involved just before his death in 1726. Here he states that he wrote many letters to friends in Europe, and that among the learned more

where she describes Cornelis de Bruyn's decision to dedicate his book *Reizen over Moskovie* (1711) to Z. von Uffenbach, Duke of Brunswick, rather than Nicolaes Witsen.

was made of these observations than he had expected.³¹ He was therefore convinced upon his return home to put all his observations in order and publish them. Clearly, Kolb wished to view himself as part of an international class of learned men, and there is a possibility that learned men wrote directly to him to discuss his work in the early 1720s. But there is no evidence of this, and during his lifetime, Kolb did not advance beyond the German and Dutch circles of the Republic of Letters.

It is unlikely that we will ever know all of Kolb's correspondents, but we can uncover a fairly large number of them. Kolb mentions in *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum* and in his autobiography that he wrote to Nicolaas Witsen (mayor of Amsterdam and a Director of the VOC at different points in his life), mainly about the political troubles during his stay at the Cape (*CBSH*, 46 and 812).³² But most of his correspondents seem to have been German-speakers from the southern regions. Kolb certainly wrote to Krosick in the early years, but not after 1707. He mentions writing in Latin to Johannes Gabriel Doppelmayern (or Doppelmayr), Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy in Nuremberg, about a strange phase of the moon that he observed during his journey to the Cape (*CBSH*, 35); he mentions another Latin letter, to Professor Johan Jacob Scheuchzer of Zurich, about the cloud that covers Table Mountain, like a cloth, from September to March (*CBSH*, 70 and 73).³³ There are a few more clues about correspondents in his autobiography, where he mentions that he wrote to Witsen, Pertsch, Goeckel, Praun, Leopold and other celebrated men.³⁴ Pertsch was from a family that chronicled the history of Wunsiedel; Christian Louis Göckel was the physician in Baden-Baden to whom Kolb went to have his eyes cured. The Prauns were a wealthy patrician family in Nuremberg, who had

³¹ *Naaukeurige en Uitvoerige Beschrywing van de Kaap de Goede Hoop* (Amsterdam, 1727), vol. 1: "... van welke brieven veel groter werk onder de Geleerden gemaakt is, als ik my verbeeld had ..." (unnumbered ninth page).

³² He kept up a correspondence with the family of another Amsterdam citizen, Jan Weysenacker, a merchant and innkeeper—though this was a more personal correspondence. In the AFAG these are letters 22, 32, 34, 38, 75, 76 and 77 by Jan, and 23 and 24 by his daughter, Machtelt (again not chronologically numbered).

³³ However, most of the letters that remain among Kolb's papers in Neustadt an der Aisch are from friends he knew at school, and they date from before 1700.

³⁴ Neustadt/Aisch, Kirchenbibliothek, MS 129: "Ab anno itaque [abbreviated in text] 1704 usque [abbreviated in text] ad annum 1714 Germaniam non vidi, sed continuis peregrinationibus exoticis tempus consumsi, ita tamen, ut etiam cum Viris Celeberrimis Witzio, Pertschio, Goeckelio, Praunio, Leopold aliisque [abbreviated in text] litteraria colloquia habuerim" (page 3, verso).

also aided Kolb while he was studying. They engaged in long-distance trade and had links in Bologna and Florence.³⁵ Kolb mentions a specific letter to Georg Alexander Leopold, pastor of the church in Redwitz (most likely the church Kolb attended before he began his studies in Nuremberg) in the section on Khoikhoi religious practices (*CBSH*, 407). In fact, the letter he mentions is one in which he utterly denied that the Khoikhoi believe in any god—he corrects this position vehemently in the book itself. Except for Witsen, none of these men were known internationally, and probably not even within Germany. Three of them were certainly connections from Kolb’s youth. All this suggests that Kolb was not in the first tier, so to speak, of the Republic of Letters, though a few advantageous connections gave him a small foothold.

In addition to Leopold, Kolb mentions several other religious letter-writers in his autobiography—particularly the Pietist missionaries to India, Ziegenbalg and Plütschow; Boeving and Gründler—all of whom mention meetings with Kolb in their letters to August Herman Francke (their director) in Halle.³⁶ But more remarkable for the question of the construction of *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum* is Francke’s letter to Kolb in 1709, which contains a request for Kolb to compile observations on the Khoikhoi specifically. The copy of this letter kept by the Franckesche Stiftungen was labeled “Entwurf” (draft) by an archivist, but phrases in the letter suggest that this was not the first exchange between the two men.³⁷ The press of the orphanage at Halle, under the direction of Francke, published accounts of indigenous peoples and missionary work from all over the world, in the form of newsletters which were bound together later as books. It has been shown that these newsletters were based on actual letters, but they were often edited and rephrased by Francke or his colleagues at the press in Halle. The purpose of such editing was often to heighten the urgency of the call for donations for mission work. As we have seen, Kolb was sympathetic to the Pietist movement and its aims, but oddly, he does not mention Francke or his suggestion for publishing observations on the Cape at any point in *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*.

³⁵ Kolb refers to the family as the “Hoch-Edlen Praunischen Famille” on the first page of the “Dedicatio” of *CBSH*. See also Wolfschmidt, *Magister Peter Kolb*, 9.

³⁶ See for example, the two letters of Joh. Ernestus Gründler written 1709 (one is a copy of the other, though slightly different) in the Missionsarchiv of the Archive of the Franckesche Stiftungen, Halle, I C II: 8 and I C II: 7.

³⁷ Francke to Kolbe, “Entwurf,” end of 1709, Missionsarchiv of the Archive of the Franckesche Stiftungen, Halle, I C 13a:6.

In his letter, Francke first acknowledges a previous letter from Kolb and thanks him for taking the time to answer so thoroughly the questions put to him by Gründler (which explains the source of the information about the Khoikhoi in Gründler's letters). Furthermore, he expresses his gratefulness for Kolb's willingness to show hospitality to the missionaries traveling to India during their stays at the Cape. It gives Francke joy that one of his former and dear auditors (referring to Kolb's time at the University in Halle) is settled at such a faraway corner of the earth, and he says that Kolb is in his prayers. However, though Francke begins by thanking Kolb for answering Gründler's questions, he wants to know more, and makes a request:

It would be appropriate for the public if my sir [Kolb] would bring to light a tract about the Hottentots. I think that such a thing would be most pleasant if it came out in the form of letters, and if [it was] (1) first just one letter of 2, 3 or 4 printed pages; if shorter, then it could give the opportunity to formulate questions that would lead to a thorough report, that could be shared in further letters.³⁸

None of Kolb's observations were published through the press at the orphanage in Halle, so he probably did not send the requested letters or report. However, it is striking that such a letter should exist, and it opens up further questions about contextualizing Kolb. The letter does indicate that Kolb would have had more than one venue available for publishing his narrative. But he never mentions Francke's part in the matter of collecting his observations for publication, which may suggest that he did not consider this man the primary influence on his subsequent work. Kolb's silence might suggest too a desire to distance himself from the Pietists, and for his book to have a wider European appeal. It starts to become clearer that Kolb's relationship to Pietism was quite complex and not one of simple discipleship.

The only author on South Africa that Kolb mentions as an influence in the preface to *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum* is the Pietist missionary Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg. In many ways, Ziegenbalg's writings provided

³⁸ Francke to Kolbe, "Entwurf," end of 1709, Missionsarchiv of the Archive of the Franckesche Stiftungen, Halle, I C 13a:6, end of 1 (recto) to 2 (or verso): "Dem publico wäre es gar angemesen seyn, wenn mein herr von den Hottentotten einen Tractat ans lichts geben wird. Ich halte davon, daß solcher an angenehmsten seyn werde wenn es in form von briefen her aus käme, und wenn vers [unclear in text] (1) nur ein brief geschrieben würde, [word indecipherable] 2. 3. b[bis?] 4. Gedruckten bogen, wen weniger, so wurde solches gelegenheit geben solche fragen zu formiren deren beantwortung zu einer grundlichen Nachricht dienete, so dann in den folgenden briefen ertheilet werden könnte."

negative reasons for Kolb to publish his account. In the preface, Kolb says that he was convinced that he must write about the Khoikhoi at the Cape because of all the mistakes, contradictions and negative assessments he found in other works. He suggests that these mistakes must have been made because the authors had spent too short a time at the Cape or because they were too quick to believe stories told them either by Europeans there or by the Khoikhoi themselves. Kolb mentions Ziegenbalg as one of those who was deceived in this way during his short stay at the Cape. Ziegenbalg was the first of the Pietist missionaries who stopped at the Cape on their way to India, and he met with Kolb in 1706. Most of Ziegenbalg's writings are about his work in India, but he also published some observations on the Cape that appeared in the mission newsletter that was published at the orphanage in Halle: *Kurze Nachricht von seiner Reise aus Ost-Indien nach Europa* (1715-18).³⁹ Ziegenbalg's main concern was to convert the Khoikhoi, and although Kolb essentially agreed with this aim, most often he uses Ziegenbalg's writings to show how Europeans could be misled when attempting to understand the Khoikhoi—particularly when it came to matters of their belief system.

There is not enough space in this essay to fully explore Kolb's relationships with the Pietist missionaries, and how the writings of each one of them affected the construction of *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*. They were, however, a significant subset of the correspondents who helped to shape his worldview, expectations, and his major work on the Cape. But letters were not the only source Kolb used when he worked on the published version of his description of the Cape. In the dedication to his book, Kolb states that he compiled *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum* from his annotations too. When one looks at Kolb's extant notes from the Cape, it is possible to argue that there is a kind of progression in what he decided to do while he was there. From 1705 to 1707 he made rather detailed notes of astronomical observations, and from 1706 to 1707 there are also daily, detailed records of the winds and cloud

³⁹ For more on this newsletter see, Thomas Müller-Bahlke, "Communication at Risk: The Beginning of the Halle Correspondence with the Pennsylvania Lutherans," in *In Search of Peace and Prosperity: New German Settlements in Eighteenth Century Europe and America*, ed. Hartmut Lehmann, H. Wellenreuther and R. Wilson (University Park, PA, 2000), 139-55. On Pietist missionary work generally see, Paul Raabe, H. Liebau and T. Müller, *Pietas Hallensis Universalis. Weltweite Beziehungen der Frankschen Stiftungen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Halle, 1995). On Ziegenbalg: Brijraj Singh, *The First Protestant Missionary to India: Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg (1683-1719)* (Oxford, 1999).

coverage. In 1708 Kolb seems to have stopped observing the stars, though he continued to observe the weather. Now, however, the daily entries also record human activities (mostly among the colonists). Unfortunately, even the notes for 1708 are not complete and there are no other leaves for the subsequent years.⁴⁰ Later in the book Kolb refers to the loss of many of his papers, but without explaining when or how this happened (*CBSH*, 174 and 190).⁴¹

In addition to offering clues about the combination of letters and notes he used to reconstruct his experience when he compiled his book back in Germany, Kolb also foregrounds certain strategies he used for finding out information while he was at the Cape that emphasize the reliability of his work. First, the fact that he lived at the Cape for eight years gave him a definite edge over other travelers, but second, he recounts that he tried to record only those things that he had seen himself or had heard from a trustworthy witness. He says that this difficult method cost him “viele tausend Tropffen-Schweisses/ und unbeschreibliche Beschwehrlichkeiten” (many thousand drops of sweat and indescribable difficulties) as well as often putting him in danger from wild animals.⁴² Clearly references to hardships and to seeing things with his own eyes

⁴⁰ These notes may be found in the AFAG. At some point an archivist numbered them in blue pencil, but these numbers are not chronological. These notes are on approximately A4-size paper, often folded together from a larger sheet, and lightly sewn together like a notebook. The astronomical observations are in two copies with slightly different handwritings, most likely both by Kolb, though it is difficult to tell which is the rough and which the neat copy. The archival numbers run from 62 to 70 on the set of notes that is most complete (from late 1705 to 1707); the notes on the wind are numbered 74 (1706) and unnumbered (1707); the notes for 1708 are numbered 61.

⁴¹ In closing the section on birds, Kolb writes: “Und hiemit hat Er auch dasjenige, mein Herr, was ich von der Vögeln observiret, und nach erlittenen Verlust meiner geschriebenen Memoiren noch übrig behalte . . . so ist der Fehler nicht meiner Aufmerksamkeit, sondern der Fatalität zuzuschreiben, die mir noch unterschiedliche andere Papiere entrissen, deren Verlust mich annoch ziemlich kräncket und schmerzet” (*CBSH*, 190).

⁴² Though Kolb was not able to learn the language of the Khoikhoi, he does comment that when he felt more comfortable about the language, he began making trips farther away from the Cape and into the countryside around the other European settlements. Kolb says that he sometimes had Khoikhoi traveling with him on these journeys who helped him get around (*CBSH*, 61). On one occasion, when he was traveling to the warm baths in the area called the Land of Waveren, he had three Khoikhoi with him who were acting as his translators. At night, when he was lying in his tent, eleven lions approached them and scared him nearly to death. Luckily, his brave companions chased the lions away by throwing fiery branches at them (*CBSH*, 108-109). It may be that this personal experience of having his life saved by his companions is the main reason that Kolb thought so highly of the Khoikhoi. The fact that he had translators with him may explain why Kolb was able to gather so much information.

are ways that Kolb establishes his own worthiness and authenticity as a writer.⁴³ In the preface to the Dutch translation of *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum* Kolb refers exclusively to his account of the Khoikhoi, with no mention of the other information contained in the book. Here he states even more clearly that he resolved not to set out on paper anything that he did not observe himself or hear from the mouth of a Khoikhoi.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Kolb comments on the simplicity of his authorial voice: in the original German text, he remarks that his book does not have the neat turns of phrase that romances have, as this would not have been appropriate to the matter at hand. Indeed, his sentences have a rather Dutch inflection since he spoke Dutch all the time when he lived at the Cape because it was more useful. His language usage certainly allows the reader to hear a particular and personal authorial voice throughout the book—in other words, he seems to emphasize the fact that only he, who had direct personal experience, could have written this book. He goes on to express the hope that his work will be completely clear and that the chapters may be experienced like letters between good friends. This emphasis on simplicity and lack of pretension was not unusual in German travel writing of this period. Stewart, in fact, argues that writers created a self-conscious aesthetic of simplicity.⁴⁵

VI. *The Description of the Khoikhoi*

Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum was divided into three sections: natural history, social life and customs of the Khoikhoi, and discussion of the settler colony. However, the middle section, on the Khoikhoi, was undoubtedly the part of the book that engaged the most interest. We know this because the learned journals that reviewed the book concentrated most heavily on this part of it; and the translations of the original text most often started with the description of the Khoikhoi, and greatly abridged the rest—especially the section on the settler colony. Kolb, as I have

⁴³ On the importance of authenticity, see William E. Stewart, *Die Reisebeschreibung und ihre Theorie im Deutschland des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Bonn, 1978), 37-39. See also Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven and London, 1993), 82-83: he quotes Clifford Geertz, “. . . to be a convincing ‘I’ witness one must . . . first become a convincing ‘T.’”

⁴⁴ *Naaukeurige en Uitvoerige Beschryving*, vol. 1, “. . . uit den mond en ommegang der Hottentotten zelf, zoude bevinden in der daad alzoo te weezen” (unnumbered tenth page).

⁴⁵ Stewart, *Die Reisebeschreibung und ihre Theorie*, 37: “. . . eine selbstbewußte Ästhetik des Schlichten.”

mentioned already, wanted to establish his account as attaining a new level of detail and veracity. Thus I want to look at two excerpts connected with the Khoikhoi in part to test how Kolb achieved a sense of being authoritative. In many ways, the original *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum* attempted to be an encyclopedic text, but more than this, Kolb wanted to make his account alive so that readers could partake in his reactions. The two texts I have chosen are in some ways arbitrarily picked out, since the section on the Khoikhoi is long and rich in details. The first is a single episode that sheds light on how Kolb communicated with informants. The second is a longer description that allows one to delve into the question of how Europeans reconstructed Khoikhoi belief systems. Both excerpts share important themes: first, the force of personal experience, reinforced by the inclusion of Khoikhoi voices; and second, the competing aims of showing the Khoikhoi to be both like and unlike Europeans. Though these themes involve techniques of textual or literary construction, they also speak to the kind of information gathered in the volume.

Kolb's book offers several fascinating glimpses into the language and people mix at the Cape, including mostly oblique references to how he was able to communicate with the Khoikhoi he met. He was not able to learn the language (though he tried), and so it seems that he usually traveled with at least one translator. He tells one particularly evocative story about interaction with the Khoikhoi later in Part One of *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*, in a section on the waters at the Cape (Letter XVIII). Here he describes the warm baths found in a cave in the Swart Berge (*Schwartzen-Berges*, north and east of Stellenbosch). This incident took place in 1708, at a time when no one knew about the baths and their healing properties—now when you arrive there, says Kolb, you will find at least twenty people in the water.⁴⁶ But when he first made the trip, he found that all travelers ended up living like the Khoikhoi (i.e. in moveable structures, hunting game to eat, cooking over fires, etc.)—a remark that could be interpreted as one of the ways Kolb suggests that Europeans are not so different from the Khoikhoi. In addition,

⁴⁶ Part of the reason for the popularity of the spot by the time Kolb left the Cape, was that his friend Ferdinand Appels was given permission to develop the place a bit and build a house where people could at least use the kitchen. Permission to develop the spot was given by the Council of Policy at the Cape in 1710. See *Suid-Afrikaanse Argiefstukke: Resolusies van die Politieke Raad, Deel IV, 1707-1715*, transcribed and edited by A.J. Böeseken (Cape Town, 1962), 135. On the warm baths generally, see CBSH, 379-86.

Kolb discusses several good reasons for carrying wine, brandy and tobacco with one on trips like this: first, these things are good for the stomach (in proper doses), but second, the Khoikhoi one met on such journeys traded sheep or cattle for these products. The Khoikhoi expected to smoke a pipe of tobacco when they met Europeans also as a mark of courtesy. On this particular occasion, Kolb was camping at the warm baths when four Khoikhoi men arrived and approached him to pay their compliments. They also honored him with a rabbit they had killed with their sticks on the way there; in return (as a counter-gift) they asked for brandy and tobacco. Note how Kolb uses the language and usages of polite society here, but does not suggest that there was anything laughable in the situation. The Khoikhoi said that they had been traveling nearly thirty miles in the hopes of finding him and getting some tobacco, since they had neither seen nor tasted it for a very long time. Kolb was happy to oblige them, and after they had smoked a while, the Khoikhoi gathered some wood, made a fire and stayed with him that night. They told him stories, first about a Portuguese ship that had been wrecked on the coast by De la Goa Bay some years earlier, and which Kolb had heard about. He seems to take this verifiable element as a reassurance that he could believe the other things they told him. The Khoikhoi said that the ship could still be seen, but was now so full of sand that it was no longer possible to get goods out of it. In addition, they described their land to him, and, he says, many other remarkable things about their way of life, which would be described elsewhere in his book. He enjoyed their company and their stories so much, that he gave them all another piece of tobacco when they set off on their way again.⁴⁷ If Kolb had several Khoikhoi translators with him, it is even more likely that he would have learned a lot from an encounter like this. His ease in this situation also seems rather remarkable, and if one can speak of his general attitude toward the Khoikhoi,

⁴⁷ Kolb writes, "Einsmals kamen ihrer 4. zu mir, welche erfahren hatten, daß mich bey dem warmen Bad aufhielte, und machten ihr compliment; verehreten mir auch einen Hasen, den sie unter Wegs mit ihren Küris oder Stöcken todt geschlagen hatten. Diese verlangten nichts anders zur GegenGifft, als nur Brandwein und Toback; sagten auch, daß sie sonderlich darum einen so weiten Weg von ungefähr 30. Meilen, nach mir zugekommen wären: und bathen, ich möchte doch ihren Tobacks-Hunger sättigen, da sie schon eine geraume Zeit herwärts keinen gesehen, geschweige denn gehabt hätten. Da ich nun ihre Bitte erfüllt und ihnen Toback gegeben hatte, brachten sie Holz herbey und blieben selbige Nacht bey mir; machten auch nachgehends in der Nacht eine Erzählung von dem Portugiesischen Schiff, welches vor einigen Jahren bey der Bay de la Goa gestrandet: und sagten daß man noch etwas davon sehen könnte, aber wegen des

this friendly exchange of stories and personal products is it.⁴⁸ But he also records passages that are remarkable for their insensitivity, and even in this pleasant encounter by the warm baths, one wonders how aware Kolb was that the exchange taking place had been translated at least twice—once from one Khoikhoi man to another (most likely from a different tribe), and then into German or Dutch that Kolb could understand. At other points in the book he suggests that Khoikhoi occasionally deliberately misled Europeans who were questioning them about culture (Ziegenbalg, for example)—but this in itself indicates that Kolb did not think that he had been fooled.⁴⁹ It was certainly enough, however, for most of Kolb's eighteenth-century audience to hear this story and grasp that Kolb had had real conversations, with real Khoikhoi, outside of the major European settlement, and yet in terms that were not so foreign after all to exchanges in sitting rooms across Germany. But today we would like to know: where did these four Khoikhoi come from and to which tribes did they belong? Were they really seeking Kolb, and if so, why? If we read these Khoikhoi men as cultural brokers with personal reasons for accompanying this European man on his journeys, could we suppose that Kolb had become known as the man who was recording everything there was to know about the world at the Cape? Might there have been prestige or fun involved in seeking out this man and telling him stories? These questions cannot be answered fully, but it is clear that these cultural brokers enabled Kolb to write a deeper and more complex account of the Khoikhoi than any that had gone before him, and helped make this book authoritative.

At the beginning of the section devoted to the social life and customs of the Khoikhoi, Kolb first lays to rest two persistent myths about them:

hinein geworffenen vielen Sandes, könnte man nun nichts mehr heraus bekommen. Weil mir nun von demselbigen Schiff bewußt war, daß es viele Kostbarkeiten geführet hatte, war mir ihre Erzählung, wie auch ihres Landes Beschreibung, samt andern vielen merkwürdigen und zu seiner Zeit vorkommende Sachen, ihre Lebens-Art belangende, desto angenehmer: und gab ihnen noch ein Stück Toback mit auf den Weg" (CBSH, 285).

⁴⁸ An interesting parallel might be drawn to G.A. Robinson, Protector of the Aborigines (in Australia) in the 1840s: see Inga Clendinnen, "Reading Mr. Robinson," *Australian Book Review* 170 (1995): 34-42. I thank Rhys Isaac of Latrobe University for bringing this fascinating article to my attention.

⁴⁹ During the first thirty years of the colony, official translators for the VOC administration—especially Eva, Harry and Doman—held considerable status. Greater familiarity among Khoikhoi and Europeans meant that less dependence had to be placed on the very few individuals who were at first able to achieve bilinguality. Things had changed by the eighteenth century. Kolb, for example, seems to have traveled with three or four translators. On the early translators, see Elphick, *Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1985), esp. 103-110.

that they eat raw intestines and that they wear entrails around their necks. He says that he has never seen any of them wearing entrails. However, they do rub themselves with sheep's fat or butter to protect their skin and as a sign of wealth. Also, the women wear many leather anklets (*CBSH*, 482-83) and the men sometimes wear the bladders of wild animals (inflated) in their hair to show their prowess as hunters (*CBSH*, 485)—but never stinking entrails just for the fun of it. Furthermore, they do eat intestines, but only after cleaning them thoroughly and cooking them. Kolb even says that he tried the dish and it was good (*CBSH*, 367). Though the issues of wearing entrails and eating intestines may seem like rather silly details to address, these were two of the things that eighteenth-century Europeans were most likely to have heard about Khoikhoi.⁵⁰ Kolb's rejection of these accepted beliefs, based on his personal experience, was one way that he established his work as being at a new level of veracity in observation, but more importantly he also completely overturned the commonly held assumption that the Khoikhoi believed in no god or gods at all.

But it is not just veracity that he was aiming for; Kolb also crafted his description of the Khoikhoi to talk back to European culture. In other words, his narrative was part of the emerging trope of the Noble Savage, influenced directly by Baron de Lahontan's narrative of travels in Canada (which Kolb mentions in the preface to his book).⁵¹ It is doubtful whether Kolb fully agreed with the kind of skepticism expressed by writers such as Lahontan, but he was certainly struck by the idea that a “savage” could answer questions about the customs of his own people and that his answers could call western civilization into question. Kolb recounts several stories in which Khoikhoi raised in European households finally reject European clothing, dwellings, and religious beliefs and return to their ancestral kraals. In the text, Kolb expresses an inability to understand why the Khoikhoi would choose to reject the civilization that had been bestowed on them, and with it the Christian

⁵⁰ See the excellent article by M. Van Wyk Smith, “‘The Most Wretched of the Human Race’: The Iconography of the Khoikhoi (Hottentots) 1500-1800,” *History and Anthropology* 5/3-4 (1992).

⁵¹ Lahontan, *Nouveaux voyages de M le Baron de Lahontan dans l'Amérique septentrionale*, 2 vols. (The Hague, 1703). See also Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Civilizations: Culture, Ambition, and the Transformation of Nature* (New York, 2001), 135, where he adeptly summarizes Lahontan's work: “The mouthpiece for his [Lahontan's] freethinking anti-clericalism was an invented Huron interlocutor—a sort of sober Pookie called Adario, with whom he walked in the woods, discussing the imperfections of Biblical translations, the virtues of republicanism, and the merits of free love.”

revelation that had been granted them. In particular, he was surprised that they laughed at people who tried to talk to them about God, and he was similarly puzzled by their unwillingness to talk about their own beliefs.⁵² He often states that the Khoikhoi were not stupid people, and yet he was equally certain that Christianity was not foolishness and that the Khoikhoi should accept its truth. Many unexplained and unresolved pieces of dialogue and interaction serve to oddly subvert the author's controlling assumptions, which would seem to be that Europeans possess a higher degree of civilization and their religion is the only true one. It could be argued that one of the reasons Kolb set out to try to understand the Khoikhoi point of view was because he was unable to make them accept his. But like most people, Kolb had to use what he knew to explain what he did not understand, and this give-and-take can be seen in his reconstruction of Khoikhoi religious beliefs.

First, it should be noted that in contrast to the paragraph, or at most a page, that previous authors spent on explaining Khoikhoi religion, Kolb devotes a whole chapter (thirteen large pages) to his explanation. In this chapter he deals only with their concepts of God and various worship practices, but in the rest of the section on the Khoikhoi he makes it clear that he understands various rites of passage and other practices to be connected with religious observation as well. In Kolb's explanation, the one God of the Khoikhoi is called the Great Captain, that is Gounia, or sometimes Ticqua Gounia, God of all Gods. They also call the moon Gounia, and they honor the moon as the visible manifestation of the invisible God (*CBSH*, 408). Kolb gives an animated description of the Khoikhoi dancing before the new and full moon, which he sees as their worship service:

It is especially rare and unusual to see what strange grimaces these people make at the same time. At times they lay themselves on the ground with their bare bodies, as they are accustomed to always being, and they yell and sing with full voice a number of unintelligible words. At times they stand up again and look to the

⁵² He quotes an informant when he is trying to understand the Khoikhoi practice of honoring certain places. Kolb says that he asked a Khoikhoi man called Kamma (whom he persuaded to talk by offering him a pipe of tobacco) to tell him why he had been dancing in apparent joy on the top of a certain hill. Kamma replied that he had been sleeping there the night before when a lion had passed by and had not smelled him and attacked him. He was therefore dancing to thank whoever had saved him. Kolb then tried to persuade Kamma that it was in fact God's holy angel who had protected him, but all Kamma would say is, "Kamme niet verstaan" or "Kamma doesn't understand" (*CBSH*, 419), and as soon as he finished the pipe he jumped up and walked away. So much for being drawn into a long conversation.

moon with hefty cries, and sing out these words: Mutschi Atzé, that is: Be greeted or welcome/Senihar eatzé, that is: Make it so that we may get much honey; Choraqua-kahá chorí Ounqua, that is: Make it so that our cattle may find much to eat and give much milk . . .

When they are tired of yelling and dancing, they stand up straight, look at the moon and murmur a few unintelligible words somewhat softly; but still clapping their hands, and stamping their feet for joy, so that it shakes; turning and moving their bodies at the same time, now to this, now to that side, now forward, now backward, indeed so that one cannot understand what they actually want to indicate with that: next they begin to sing their Mutschi Atzé again, and once more yell so strongly, that one must hold the ears closed if one is near to them.⁵³

Notice that Kolb's understanding of this event is predicated on what he knows: Europeans have worship services and pray to God, and Kolb sees an analogous event in this singing and dancing.⁵⁴ Furthermore, when he speaks about the moon as the visible manifestation of God, under which the Khoikhoi recognize the invisible God, one can hear faint echoes of the Christian, and for Kolb Lutheran, ritual of holy communion, where the bread and the wine blessed by the minister are seen as physical attributes under which the body and blood of Christ should be understood. Also, unlike previous authors, Kolb does not simply call this event "raving." And though he does not understand all that is said or done, he has either listened or made inquiries to find out what sorts of things the Khoikhoi sing out before the moon. Finally, it should be mentioned that Kolb connects this singing and dancing before the moon to ancient Jewish practices of praising God (part of the ongoing argument about what happened to the lost tribes of Israel).

Kolb's explication of Khoikhoi religion does not end with his account of the position of the moon in their beliefs. He also touches on three other significant points: the existence of an apparently lesser God or Captain, whom the Khoikhoi believed to cause harm, their veneration of the praying mantis, and the practice of considering certain hills or groves of trees as special, if not precisely hallowed. Kolb found out about the lesser Captain by asking Khoikhoi whether they had cause

⁵³ My translation from Kolb, *CBSH*, 411.

⁵⁴ In the 1920s and 1930s, the ethnographer/anthropologist Dorothea Bleek also believed such singing and shouts to be prayers, mainly for food. She translated one of these in this way: "Ho, Moon lying there,/ Let me kill a springbok/ To-morrow,/ Let me eat a springbok;/ With this arrow/ Let me shoot a springbok/ With this arrow;/ Let me eat a springbok,/ Let me eat filling my body/ In the night which is here,/ Let me fill my body." Partially quoted from I. Schapera, *The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa: Bushmen and Hottentots* (London, 1930), 172. See also Elizabeth Elbourne, "Early Khoisan Uses of Mission Christianity," in *Missions and Christianity in South African History*, ed. Henry Bredekamp and Robert Ross (Johannesburg, 1995), 76.

to fear Gounia, the Great Captain. The Khoikhoi answered that they had no cause to fear the Great Captain, who always did good things, but there was a lesser Captain, called Touqua, who caused them harm, and who they therefore feared and served (*CBSH*, 414). Kolb says that he follows Böving in (predictably) assigning this figure the position of the devil in Khoikhoi religion.

On the other hand, the Khoikhoi practice of honoring the praying mantis as an omen of favor and good fortune is completely foreign, bizarre, and foolish to Kolb.⁵⁵ After describing how the Khoikhoi dance, sing, feast, and sprinkle an herb called *buchu* on their heads when one of these insects enters their kraal or huts, he then describes a confrontation between a German settler's son and the Khoikhoi who lived nearby and worked on the farm. The son caught a praying mantis and threatened the Khoikhoi that he would kill it. According to Kolb, they answered the boy (in pidgin Dutch): "You have caught this little creature, and now you want to just kill it, is that right? Just wait, if you do that, we are all going to walk."⁵⁶ Though Kolb may not be quoting directly, I want to highlight this inclusion of the voices of the Khoikhoi in his account. It is a brilliant strategy for giving his work the feel of immediacy; it is also a technique used more in Kolb's work than in any others. This suggests his superior desire to learn by listening, even in a situation that he considered strange. Furthermore, his mention of *buchu* in this situation reminds one of his description of this herb in the section on plants. Kolb was not a trained botanist, and learned most of what he knew while he was at the Cape. The first aim of his descriptions was clearly to give an idea of what the living plant was like, and to describe various uses of it, including simple decoration. He begins with the Latin phrase name, "*Spiraea Africana odorata, foliis pilosis*" and translates this into German as, *odiferous African Spiraea*, with hairy leaves—called *buchu* by the Khoikhoi.⁵⁷ He then connects the plant to

⁵⁵ See Schapera, *The Khoisan Peoples*, 177-78; also the very interesting article by Sigrid Schmidt, "Die Mantis religiosa in den Glaubenvorstellungen der Khoesan-Völker," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 98 (1973), 102-27. Schmidt looks at both the historical and the modern position of the mantis in Khoisan beliefs. She suggests that though the mantis often was given the name of the High God in Khoisan folk beliefs, this did not mean that it was identical with God, but instead acted as an oracle—that is, the mantis brought omens and could also carry certain prayers to God.

⁵⁶ "Gy dit Beest fangum zoo, en nu dood makum zoo, is dat braa? Wagtum, ons altemaal daarvan loopum zoo" (*CBSH*, 417-18).

⁵⁷ Kolb writes, "Diese Gattung der Spireae, wird von den Hottentotten Buchu genennet; welche sie im Sommer, wenn die Kräuter dürr zu werden anfangen, und vollkommen verblühet haben, häufig sammeln und gantz dürre werden lassen, daß sie selbige zur

certain social practices of the Khoikhoi: in the summer, when the herb has finished blooming and begins to dry out, the Khoikhoi collect the plants, dry them completely and then grind the plants down to a fine powder. The Khoikhoi sprinkle their heads with this powder both for cosmetic purposes and when they have headaches. Kolb then adds two further points: first that buchu powder has a function similar to hair powder in Europe, and secondly that it smells good. This description also shows that Kolb was not interested in enforcing points of difference between Europeans and the Khoikhoi; rather he draws upon what he saw as a common practice: the cosmetic use of a perfumed powder. This is a major theme of Kolb's book as a whole, and perhaps one of the reasons that it had such a strong resonance all across Europe in the eighteenth century.

And finally, Kolb's description of Khoikhoi religion also turns back on the European audience and criticizes their lukewarm-ness and lack of faith. Indeed, one of the main themes in his description of the social life and customs of the Khoikhoi is that they shame Europeans in many ways—including the way that they serve God. Here we seem to see again the glimmerings of Kolb's Pietist background which emphasized so strongly the need for personal conversion to the will of God. Kolb writes:

Who then would now be able to deny that this dancing, singing and shouting at the time of the new and full moon is not a worship service? I for my side am completely sure of it, and I know as an infallible truth, that in the manifestation of their zeal, which they show at that time, they shame millions of Christians . . . [who] are so lukewarm, cold, lethargic and listless when they complete the same [worship of God], that it is not only a scandal before God, but also before such blind heathens . . . (CBSH, 412).

Kolb believed that the greatest barrier to bringing Khoikhoi to the Christian faith was not the lack of missionaries or the language barrier, but instead the horrible example that the Christians set for these people.

VII. *Textual Afterlife*

At this point I want to turn away from content and finally focus on what might best be called issues of distribution surrounding the book—

Pulver zerklöppfen können: mit welchem sie so wohl zur solchen Zeit, wenn sie Kopfschmerzen, als auch sonst zur Zierde, eben gleich wie wir etwa die Haar-Pulver gebrauchen, den Kopff bestreuen, und sich schön machen. Es sieht dieses Pulver Goldgelb aus, und riechet sehr wohl" (CBSH, 254).

or the clearest indications we have that it did indeed become the authoritative book about the Cape. I have already mentioned that *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum* was translated into Dutch, and published shortly after Kolb's death in 1726 and 1727. This version was a nearly exact translation, with a new foreword by the author, in two deluxe volumes with more maps and illustrations than the original, executed in ways that were more technically sophisticated than the original. After the Dutch version, however, all subsequent translations were also abridgements.

In 1731, the first English translation, done by Guido Medley, appeared in London, published by the print shop of William and John Innys. This shop was quite closely connected to the Royal Society and specialized in books on science and medicine as well as natural and experimental philosophy. Hans Sloane, President of the Royal Society at the time, was a patron of the book, but it seems that Medley was never himself accepted as a fellow of the Society. The book was subsequently reprinted in 1738 by the same firm. The English translation was published in two small volumes: the first deals briefly with the topography of the Cape, and then concentrates on the section on the Khoikhoi; the second is concerned with the flora and fauna of the Cape. Though Medley praises Kolb for the exactness of his account, he is probably the first author to also criticize Kolb for the great length of his work. Medley writes, "He [Kolb] is very tedious in some Relations, and here and there runs out in Reflections that are neither very entertaining, nor very much to the Purpose."⁵⁸

In 1741, the first French translation appeared, done by Jean Bertrand, published by the Amsterdam firm of Jean Catuffe. The French translation is divided into three beautiful little volumes: the first deals with the description of the Khoikhoi; the second deals with various aspects of geography, such as topography, geology, winds and water, as well as the layout of the European colonies and their habits of government there; the third describes the natural history of the Cape region. This translation was reprinted twice in 1742 and 1743. Bertrand too acknowledges that he cut those of Kolb's stories that seemed too long or dull, but he does not call Kolb's intellect into question, as Medley did. Instead, he goes to some trouble to emphasize that Kolb was an educated man

⁵⁸ *The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope*, vol. I (London, 1731), xvii. On the English translation, see Linda Merians, *Envisioning the Worst. Representations of "Hottentots" in Early Modern England* (Newark, DE, 2001).

of good taste, who was supported by an aristocratic patron, and therefore not just an adventurer out to make a quick buck.⁵⁹

In 1745, the Monath firm decided to retranslate the French version into German, indicating that the original, though very popular, was just too long-winded for many readers. In Monath's preface to the new edition, he states that after the popularity achieved by the French translation, he thought it wrong that non-Germans should be benefiting so much from Kolb's work while nothing similar existed for the pleasure of his compatriots. It is significant that Monath emphasizes Kolb's nationality, since this is probably the only time that happened.

After Monath's translation, a new vogue started among those publishing travelers' accounts: multi-volume collections of all the "best" narratives, in abridged forms so that readers would not have to spend a great deal of time to gather information about places and people. One of the first of these was published in London by Astley and Green: *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels* (1745), quoted at the beginning of this essay. The purpose of the collection was not to unearth new material, but rather to compile what the editors considered to be the best accounts of the various regions of the world. This series was translated very quickly into French and German, with a lot of intrigue and back-biting going on among the publishers. The French version, under the direction of the famous Abbé A.F. Prévost, was called *Histoire générale des Voyages, ou Nouvelle Collection de Toutes les Relations de Voyage Par Mer et Par Terre . . .*, beginning publication in 1746; the German version was called *Allgemeine Historie der Reisen zu Wasser und Lande: oder Sammlung aller Reisebeschreibungen . . .*, beginning publication in 1747. Kolb's work appeared in all of these, drastically reduced. The effect of this, on the one hand, was to distill the information in his narrative into a chunk that was easily readable and could be quickly absorbed, catering to the new, enlarged and perhaps less educated reading public. But on the other hand, the nuances of Kolb's work, the doubts expressed, and the reluctance to pass judgments and tie up all loose ends, are all lost; the resulting narrative seems brash, and, with regard to the Khoikhoi in particular, less balanced and respectful.

The primary audience for Peter Kolb's work probably was learned men and the readers of the literary journals—who were not necessarily

⁵⁹ On the French translation, see François Fauvelle-Aymar, *L'Invention du Hottentot: Histoire de regard occidental sur les Khoisan (XV^e-XIX^e siècle)* (Paris, 2002), 239.

identical.⁶⁰ As mentioned earlier, Kolb himself speaks of the fact that a great deal of fuss was made among learned men over the letters that he sent back from the Cape. Another way that the Republic of Letters communicated was through the learned or literary journals that started being published in the late seventeenth century and became a mainstay of the Republic of Letters in the eighteenth century. The main purpose of the journals was to share reviews of books (usually called *extraits*), though some journals included articles on questions (theological, philosophical) as well as sharing discoveries (scientific, archaeological or geographical). The journals allowed scholars to gather information about what was going on in the Republic of Letters more rapidly than simply through their own correspondents. Furthermore, as the production of books increased during the century, it allowed learned men (the main audience) to gather knowledge quickly about books they either could not afford to buy or would not have time to read.⁶¹ The great majority of the journals were in the French language and many were printed in the Dutch Republic (either in The Hague or in Amsterdam) where there was a large population of immigrant Huguenots and greater freedom of the press. There were also important journals in Latin, as well as some in German, Dutch and English. However, the French journals certainly helped boost the position of French as the international language of Enlightenment, beginning at an early stage in the eighteenth century.⁶²

Reviews of Peter Kolb's works appeared in the learned journals of this period. These essays were not critiques, however, but usually summaries of the book. It is possible to get some sense of what the authors found most interesting in Kolb's writings by noting what they chose to mention and what they chose to skim over or leave out completely.

⁶⁰ Around 1700, there were about 100,000 people in Germany who had completed a higher education and therefore certainly formed the reading public. Contemporaries, however, complained that the book market was aimed almost entirely at learned people. See Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, 105 and 104. In 1690 Adrian Beyer, a legal scholar who was concerned with reforming the book trade, claimed about the book market: "Seine Wahren sind von = und vor niemand als Gelehrten/ kaufft iemand von and'n Professionen zu Zeiten ein Teutsch= oder bey anderen Nationen in seiner Mutter = Sprach gesteletes Büchlein/ so geschiehets zufälliger Weise und selten/daß daruf keine Rechnung oder Staat zu machen."

⁶¹ Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning. Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680-1750* (New Haven and London, 1995), 55-56.

⁶² Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*, 55, 58, 60. See also, Hostijzer and Lankhorst, *Drukkers, boekverkopers en lezers tijdens de Republiek. Een historiografische en bibliografische handleiding*, 2nd ed. (The Hague, 2000) 140-43.

Using the Rare Books collection of the University of Minnesota, I have only been able to look through ten journals with complete or nearly complete runs for the period from 1719-1746, and therefore my conclusions are necessarily incomplete. Reviews of Kolb's work may be found in two major German journals: *Acta Eruditorum* (1720) (published in Latin) and the *Deutsche Acta Eruditorum* (1720) (published in German); however, these journals do not review any of the later translations. Unfortunately, I have not been able to consult any Dutch-language journals or French ones focused on Dutch subjects, and I have not found any reviews of the Dutch translation in the other journals I have perused. For the English translation, I have not found reviews of the work as such, but authors in the *Grub Street Journal* (18 February and 4 March 1731) picked up on some of Kolb's stories about the Khoikhoi; the *Gentleman's Magazine* mentions the stories in the *Grub Street Journal* and the *Weekly Register*. These English journals were not pitched solely at a learned audience, and therefore probably reached more people—especially since they were all weeklies. The French translation, which one might have expected to resonate more loudly in the learned journals, was only reviewed in one French journal, the *Journal des Scavans* (1741). Nevertheless, this was the oldest literary journal and therefore the best established and most prestigious. Notices for the publication of the French translation also occurred in volumes 25 and 26 of the *Bibliothèque Raisonné*, but it was not reviewed.⁶³ All of these journals may have been read widely across national borders in the Republic of Letters, but it seems clear that journals based in particular countries did not review books published in other countries.

As noted earlier, one thing these journal reviews seem to have in common is a primary fascination with the Khoikhoi, followed by an interest in the plants and animals of the Cape. In general, the *Acta Eruditorum* and the *Journal des Scavans* seem to highlight more traditionally scholarly material, and do not delve much into speculations about Biblical connections or ways that Khoikhoi customs might be compared to those of Europeans. It could be argued, therefore, that these two journals were aimed particularly at traditionally scholarly groups. On the other hand, the *Deutsche Acta Eruditorum*, the *Grub-Street Journal* and the *Weekly Register* focus on exactly this sort of religious and social material. German readers appear to have enjoyed Kolb's observations about

⁶³ I have also been able to look through the *Bibliothèque Ancienne et Moderne*, *Bibliothèque Française* and *Mercure Historique et Politique*.

physical things and the ways he tried to connect them to stories from the Bible.⁶⁴ English readers in the 1730s enjoyed the portrayal of the social lives and customs of the Khoikhoi and the ways that the words could be used for laughter-inducing comparisons with English society.⁶⁵ The material highlighted in these journals may indicate that the editors were trying to reach a larger pool of less highly educated readers, or less serious scholars. Thus it seems appropriate, first, to note that based on the evidence from the journals too, Kolb's work had quite a large appeal; and second, that this evidence also makes one question the parameters of the Republic of Letters.

In conclusion, then, Kolb's book provides an excellent case study for the construction of a text that became authoritative over the course of the eighteenth century. Kolb himself was well-educated, and yet of a low enough social class that he had to be ambitious to gain patronage and to achieve any sort of recognition. His book on the Cape reflects his own polymathic interests, as well as coverage of those topics that he would have known to be important to his European audience. His education allowed him to employ rhetorical devices that imbued his account with a particular sense of veracity. Indeed, the naïve and yet authoritative voice of this eye-witness still retains much persuasive power. In personal terms, it is difficult to know whether Kolb achieved the recognition he sought in the Republic of Letters, even after the publication of *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*. At the end of his life he held a secure position as the rector of the Latin School in Neustadt an der Aisch, but he was not well-off, and there is also no evidence that he was the center of a correspondence network. Nevertheless, after his death, the fame of his book spread as it was translated and abridged. It was successful because it tapped into currents in European thought about travel and foreign peoples—currents that reveled in the exotic and yet desired to see commonalities. Kolb's exhaustive construction of the social life and customs of the Khoikhoi, who, in his hands, were at once primitive and perspicacious, was irresistible.

⁶⁴ For the later eighteenth century, Stewart notes that contemporaries emphasized that the genre of travel narratives was free from class- or profession-specific ties: *Die Reisebeschreibung und ihre Theorie*, 191.

⁶⁵ “Strange! The different nations entertain of the same thing! the force, the witchcraft of custom! To be piss'd upon in Europe is a token of the highest Contempt; To be piss'd on in the Hottentot Ceremonies is a token of the highest honour. Pissing is the glory of all the Hottentot Ceremonies,” *Grub-Street Journal* 59 (18 February 1731).