

# On *Woordeboekapartheid* [Dictionary Apartheid]: A Critical Archaeological Genealogy of a South African Lexicographic Phenomenon with Reference to Kaaps, Dutch, and Afrikaans

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## Abstract

The phenomenon of *woordeboekapartheid* [dictionary apartheid] is investigated in this article in relation to the lexicographic tradition in and on Afrikaans. *Woordeboekapartheid* is firstly conceptualised within the context of raciolinguistics, *taalapartheid* [linguistic apartheid] and “critical lexicography”, with the archaeological genealogical orientation to historiography structuring the analysis. The launch of the *Drietalige Woordeboek van Kaaps* [Trilingual Dictionary of Kaaps] is secondly positioned as key site of problematisation – focusing on the ways that this dictionary project becomes an avenue through which *woordeboekapartheid* finds expression via an ideological fixation on race (specifically “Colouredness”) and troublesome lexicographic research. These two “problems” of ideology and methodology are thirdly traced back to two preceding periods of Afrikaans lexicography, namely the Dutch-Afrikaans and the Afrikaner-Afrikaans periods. I conclude by noting the implications of the recent developments surrounding Kaaps(e Afrikaans), especially how it represents the fulfilment of *woordeboekapartheid* ideals along racial and ethnic lines that have characterised Afrikaans lexicography since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Keywords:** South African Lexicography; Critical Lexicography; Raciolinguistics; Linguistic Historiography; Language Ideology; Afrikaans; Dutch; Kaaps; *Dictionary Of The Afrikaans Language*; *Trilingual Dictionary Of Kaaps*.

*woorde wat wil boek  
is soos bye wat korf  
nes boermense dorp toe trek  
vir beskerming teen die dood  
van verlore te raak sonder 'n horison  
se verwagting*  
(Breytenbach, 2016, p. 14).

[words that want to book  
are like bees that hive

like farm-people move to town  
 for protection against death  
 of getting lost without a horizon's  
 expectation]

## 1. Introduction

In the history of South African lexicography, 2021 can be regarded as a watershed year. Two events took place within a few months of each other that profoundly changed the trajectory of the dictionary as a socio-cultural object within the overarching Afrikaans language community. The first is the announcement of the launch of the *Drietalige Woordeboek van Kaaps* (DWK; Trilingual Dictionary of Kaaps), Standard-Afrikaans and English, which aims to record and thereby promote Kaapse Afrikaans, or Kaaps for short – one of Afrikaans's three main dialect continuums. The second is the publication of Volume XVI of the *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* (WAT; Dictionary of the Afrikaans Language), in which a more systematic attempt was made to include Kaaps lexemes than before. These two events can, at first glance, be read as complementary relative to each other. However, the possibility of tension between the two language forms was raised by the leading Afrikaans lexicographer Rufus Gouws (in [Cloete, Odendaal and Gouws, 2021](#)) during a panel discussion on Volume XVI. In this article I argue that when the discourses circulating around the DWK are scrutinised, a significant tension can be gleaned from it which is emphasised by the project. In particular, this tension underlies the argument for Kaaps as inherently separate from Afrikaans: the idea that Afrikaans is not a “house with many dwellings” ([Links, 1992](#)), or at least that Kaaps does not constitute one of those dwellings. I propose the term *woordeboekapartheid*, or “dictionary apartheid,” to capture this tension conceptually. However, instead of examining *woordeboekapartheid* as a new or unique phenomenon, I approach it as a characteristic dimension of lexicographic discourse relative to Afrikaans broadly construed. Through the article, I map the long, complicated run-up to the “announcement” of the DWK project, thereby providing a critical archaeological genealogy of *woordeboekapartheid* as a phenomenon in South African lexicography. The overarching aim of the article is consequently to discuss the discursive developments surrounding the DWK project critically by historicising the framework of thought that underpins it.

## 2. Critical lexicography, archaeological genealogy, and *woordeboekapartheid*

A critical-theoretical attitude towards the dictionary is both a new and an old phenomenon. Although there are established research traditions that reflect critically on certain facets of the lexicographic object - such as the investigations into “linguistic sexism” in Afrikaans (see [Hauptfleisch, 1989](#); [Beyleveld, 1992](#); [Beyleveld and Van Jaarsveld, 1991, 1994](#)) - a deliberate turn to and immersion in “critical theory” and ideology critique in relation to lexicography is still relatively underexplored (see [Kachru, 1995](#); [Chen, 2019](#); [Sear and Turin, 2021](#); [Fuentes-Olivera and Tarp, 2022](#); [Turin and Oliveira Ferreira, 2022](#); [Chen, 2024](#)). I approach such a form of critique by drawing on Michel Foucault's orientations towards historiography. Foucault's historiographical research is characterised by two approaches: the first, archaeology, represents his early research (see [Foucault, 1967, 1970, 1972, 1973](#)) which investigates “layers” or structures of thought linked to specific zeitgeists; by contrast, his second approach, genealogy ([Foucault, 1977, 1978, 1980](#); also known as writing a “history of the present”; see [Garland, 2014](#)), is concerned with the study of the development of ideas over time. A synthesis of both orientations grounds my analysis. In this way it differs from other approaches to the historiography of Afrikaans lexicography such as, for example, undertaken by Werner [Gericke \(1991a\)](#), [Rufus Gouws \(1995, 2003, 2008\)](#), [Gouws and Fritz Ponelis \(1992\)](#), [Willem Botha \(2003\)](#), [Frikkie Lombard \(2004\)](#), [F. F. Odendaal \(2006\)](#), and [Gerda Odendaal \(2016a, 2016b, 2017, 2023\)](#). The emphasis on ideology

critique brings my article closer to approaches to the critical study of the development of Afrikaans historical linguistics, such as studies by Paul Roberge (1990), Ian Kotzé and Johanita Kirsten (2016), Mariana Kriel (2018), Camiel Hamans (2021a), and my work elsewhere (Staphorst 2024b, 2024c, 2024d, 2024e). A central dimension of Foucault's genealogical orientation is the "problematization" of a certain question in the present. This "problem" consequently structures the investigation. In this article, the "problem" is the already outlined question of the DWK project's positioning of Kaaps in relation to Afrikaans by means of the dictionary, and how this relation is further entangled with the question of race. Hence *woordeboekapartheid* [dictionary apartheid] is the term I want to conceptualise as encapsulating this discursive development.

The term *taalapartheid* [language apartheid], and the English loan translation "linguistic apartheid", have been used repeatedly over the past three decades in the context of reflections on the South African university landscape (see Giliomee and Schlemmer, 2006; Greenfield, 2010; Orelus, 2014; Du Plessis, 2017; Moll, 2018). With reference to the complexities surrounding "language issues" on the campuses of particularly historically Afrikaans universities, the term is used to identify contexts where language plays a decisive role in the creation of "separate" or de facto *apartheid*-spaces. However, there is another meaning that is specifically related to Afrikaans's entangled history with apartheid. To my knowledge, the term was coined by Jan Esterhuysen (1986) in the context of the ideological stranglehold that Afrikaans experienced during apartheid under the influence of Afrikaner nationalism. In this sense of the word, it does not refer merely to a phenomenon of spaces linked to differentiated language use - although it can form part of it. Rather, it refers to a complicated ideological system through which Afrikaans's history, nature, and core linguistic community have been shaped discursively to reflect the white Afrikaner, with all other Afrikaans speakers labelled as inferior. According to the *taalapartheid* perspective, the Afrikaner forms the centre of Afrikaans, with all other members of the language community being only peripheral subjects. Although Esterhuysen's contextualisation of the term is limited to the subject of Afrikaans at school level, he also refers to other tools of the language, such as the dictionary, which reflect the *taalapartheid* ideal. In this article I use the term *woordeboekapartheid* [dictionary apartheid] as a descendant of *taalapartheid*. Rather than viewing the dictionary as a symptom of linguistic apartheid, I approach it as a space in which and through which a specific form of linguistic apartheid is expressed historically as well as in the contemporary moment. I therefore propose *woordeboekapartheid* to be part of the growing body of critical linguistic scholarship known as raciolinguistics, or the sociolinguistics of race (see Alim, Rickford, and Ball, 2016; Rosa, 2016; Rosa and Flores, 2017; Flores and Rosa, 2023; Pak and Hiramoto, 2023). This burgeoning field of inquiry searches for and conceptualises new avenues through which the ways in which language and race are discursively entangled can be explored.

### 3. Kaaps(e-Afrikaans)

The recent turn in South African linguistics as it relates to the study of Kaaps should not, in principle, elicit any criticism (see Hendricks, 2012; De Vries, 2015; Le Cordeur, 2015; Dyers, 2016; Kotzé, 2016; Hendricks, 2016; Hendricks and Dyers, 2016; Van Rensburg, 2016b; Willemse, 2016; Cooper, 2018; Roman, 2019; Saal and Lawrence, 2019; Alim et al., 2021; Hoogervorst, 2021, Basson, 2022a; Hendricks, 2023; Ribbens-Klein, 2023; Toyer and Peck, 2023; Basson, 2024; Hendricks, 2024; Staphorst, 2024a; Basson, 2025 for examples of this turn over the past decade). Kaaps is after all an important dimension of the Afrikaans linguistic community on the one hand and the South African linguistic landscape on the other. And this turn does not imply that no linguistic attention was paid to Kaaps before (see, for example, Klopper, 1976; Hendricks, 1978; Klopper, 1983; Kotzé, 1983), but simply that there is currently a more concerted emphasis on the language form and the promotion thereof in academic research. Elsewhere, I (Staphorst, [accepted for publication](#)) discuss the history of the academic and activist culture around Kaaps at greater

length. It should also be noted that Kaaps has been enjoying a greater level of prestige beyond the halls of academia – specifically as a result of the so-called Afrikaaps socio-cultural movement since 2010 (see [Valley, 2010](#); [Van der Waal, 2012](#); [Van Heerden, 2016](#); [Becker, 2017](#); [Stroud and Williams, 2017](#); [Holtzman, 2018](#); [Staphorst, 2022](#); [Eriksen and Oppelt, 2025](#)). Discussing this broader movement, however, falls outside the scope of this article. One of the embodiments of the academic turn is the already mentioned lexicographic project embodied by the DWK. And it's when metatextual descriptions of and already published excerpts from the DWK are scrutinised that a more critical attitude becomes justified. Although not yet a completed and published dictionary, there are enough of the mentioned metatextual descriptions and extracts available to inform an academic discussion. In what follows I analyse the connection between the DWK and *woordeboekapartheid* in relation to two ideas that ground the project with reference to published extracts from the dictionary.

The first of the two underlying ideas is the assumption that Kaaps is a language independent from Afrikaans. This notion was expressed in an opinion piece that preceded its launch: “Kaaps is not coextensive with Afrikaans, but distinct from it” ([Williams, 2021](#)). After the announcement of the project, this idea was pursued further in media statements and interviews: “[d]aar is ... ’n nuwe generasie taalkundiges wat [bulle, die DWK-leiers,] moet oplei en die pleidooi van die Kaapssprekers verskillend, vernuwend [sal moet] aanpak. Dit is hierdie generasie wat op die Kaapse front, en nie noodwendig op die Afrikaanse taalfront nie, Kaaps ontwikkel as ’n taal uit eie reg [there is ... a new generation of linguists whom [they, the DWK leaders,] must train and approach the plea of Kaaps speakers differently. It is this generation that on the Kaaps frontier, and not necessarily on the Afrikaans language frontier, develops Kaaps as a language in its own right] ([Williams cited in De Vries, 2021](#); all translations into English are my own unless stated otherwise). Further, in an academic interview with the Comité International Permanent des linguists (CIPL), the following definition of Kaaps is provided: “Traditionally Kaaps is wrongly seen as a sort of dialect or substandard variety of Afrikaans” ([Williams cited in Hamans, 2021b](#)). And finally, in a reflection on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Kaaps symposium held in 2024, it is noted that: “Kaaps has its own future [separate from Afrikaans]” ([Williams, 2024](#)). From the first opinion piece published in March 2021, the media interviews in September 2021, the post on the CIPL website in October 2021 and the reflection on the Kaaps symposium of 2024 there is a clear development in the line of reasoning: an increasingly assertive idea of Kaaps as an “independent” language distinct from Afrikaans – a position, it should be noted, that is made in the absence of and with no reference to peer-reviewed linguistics research.

What then is Kaaps according to the DWK? The second idea I want to focus on relates to this “definition” and in particular what the historical relationship between Afrikaans and Kaaps might be. According to this project, Kaaps is “a language created in Settler Colonial South Africa, developed by the 1500s” ([Haupt, 2021](#)). This is temporally impossible, considering the onset of formal settler colonialism in South Africa was 1652, and in earnest from 1657 with the first “*Vrijburgers*” [Free Citizens] settling permanently in what is today known as Cape Town (see [Groenewald, 2024](#)). There was no “Settler Colonial South Africa” as such that existed in the 1500 s. The invocation of the period most probably refers to the research of [Gabriël Nienaber \(1994\)](#) and [Christo van Rensburg \(2016a\)](#) on the origins of Orange River Afrikaans, which they argue started in 1595 with the onset of contact between Dutch seafarers and Khoekhoen at the Cape. The use of very limited data in supporting this argument of Afrikaans’s origin has led it to being treated with skepticism (see [Roberge, 2024](#)) – but even if accepted, it refers to another variety of the language, and not Kaaps. As has been argued elsewhere, in this moment the project appears, perhaps unknowingly, to appropriate the history of Orange River Afrikaans (see [Staphorst 2024b, 2024c, 2024d, 2024e](#)). Furthermore, the project argues that to acknowledge Kaaps is:

[...] imperative especially because Afrikaner nationalists appropriated Kaaps in order to create the dominant version of the language in the form of Afrikaans. A ‘suiwer’ or ‘pure’ version, claiming a strong Dutch influence, Afrikaans was formally recognised as

an official language of South Africa in 1925. This was part of the efforts to construct white Afrikaner identity, which shaped apartheid based on a belief in white supremacy.

From this point of view, Afrikaans is merely an artificial construction, a hijacked version of Kaaps. That Standard-Afrikaans is an “artificial” language and largely discursively linked to the Afrikaner as a result of Afrikaner nationalism is a well-established fact (see [Webb and Kriel, 2000](#); [Beukes, 2007](#); [Willemse, 2018, 2021](#); [Hamans, 2024](#)). Furthermore, the role that the Dutch language has played historically as a resource in the post-war standardisation project has also been researched (see [Uys, 1983](#); [Van Rensburg, 2021](#)). At the same time, this charge of artificiality must take into account that all standard languages are artificial and idealised language forms to a greater or lesser degree (see [Van Rensburg, 1989](#)). However, what is not in line with the broader consensus of Afrikaans’s history of standardisation is the idea that Kaaps was hijacked. The opposite was the case according to the eastern border hypothesis – the consensus view in Afrikaans historical linguistics (see [Van Rensburg, 2021](#)) – according to which Afrikaans’s eastern border dialect, spoken predominantly by white speakers, was used as basis for standardisation. Rather than appropriate Kaaps, Afrikaner nationalists excluded it, or at the very least did not pro-actively include it in their standardisation programme throughout the 20th century (see [Kriel, 2018](#); [Hamans, 2024](#)).

Of greater importance to my discussion, however, is the incompatibility of this idea of Kaaps as Standard-Afrikaans’s supposed source lect with another charge against Standard-Afrikaans’s relationship with Kaaps:

Not one iota of progressive and transformative reparation has been gestured, save for the inclusion of fewer than 100 words in the HAT! We’ll take that, of course, even if it is still just neoliberal lip service wrapped up as nonracial transformation ([Williams, 2021](#)).

In this statement a frustration with what is perceived as a lack of representation of Kaaps in Standard-Afrikaans is expressed – with the supposed absence of the language form in standard dictionaries, such as the *Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaans Language* [HAT; Pocket Dictionary of the Afrikaans Language], as an example. Two remarks can be made about this. Firstly, although the WAT has from the outset had the task to record Afrikaans in its widest possible sense, not all forms of the language, such as Kaaps, always received sufficient coverage. Despite this history there has been a more concerted effort to address this imbalance in representation in the recent past (see [Odendaal, 2023](#)). Secondly, this statement appears to contradict the earlier claim regarding the supposed hijacking of Kaaps. If it were the case that Standard-Afrikaans is merely an appropriated version of Kaaps, Kaaps will have a pervasive presence in Standard-Afrikaans, and consequently there will be little reason to bring Kaaps into the conversation beyond the question of recognition. There will be many more than the mere 100 words that is argued to be included at present, and all that will be needed is to highlight the Kaaps basis of Standard-Afrikaans.

The DWK therefore positions itself as an answer to the “problem” of the disregard of Kaaps as a “unique” language on the one hand and its hijacking through Standard-Afrikaans language resources on the other. Looking at the examples presented by the project can provide insight as to how these two ideas guide it. I briefly focus on a word that has been highlighted in the project’s literature and media liaisons ([Williams cited in Van Heerden and Williams, 2021](#); see also [Van Zyl, 2021](#)) which reflects the purported difference between Kaaps and Afrikaans:

*Die woord “anneste”, ‘n byvoeglike naamwoord, het nou nie so ‘n diep geskiedenis van ontwikkeling nie, maar ek hou baie van die woord, want dit help my om in Kaaps te beskryf dat iets nie “anders” lyk nie maar “anneste”. Dit is uniek Kaaps en as gevolg van taalkontak en leksikofonetiese manipulasie verwys dit ook na die kulturele betekenispraktyke wat Kaapssprekers beoefen in die vorming van woorde.* [The word “anneste,” an adjective, does not have such a deep history of development, but I really like the word, because it helps

me to describe in Kaaps that something does not look “*anders*” [different] but “*anneste*” [diff’ent]. It is uniquely Kaaps and due to language contact and lexicophonetic manipulation it also refers to the cultural meaning practices that Kaaps speakers practice in the formation of words].

The central assumption that guides this statement – namely that “*anneste*” is unique to Kaaps speakers – can be critiqued, considering it is merely a variant form of a commonly used word that can be encountered across the Afrikaans language community. The following article for *anders/anderster* is extracted from the [electronic WAT](#):

*anderste, anderster b.nw. en bw. Geselstaalvorm van anders.*

1 *Sien betekenisomskrywinge by ANDERS: Hy is glad anderste vanaand as al die ander aande (Jochem van Bruggen). Sy kleur is anderster (Leipoldt). Dis anderster as die boekevat by oom Tys (Jochem van Bruggen). Alles aan haar was so anderster (P. C. Schoonees). Hy lees nou glad anderster as flus (Jochem van Bruggen). Ek sal dit anderster sê (Leipoldt). Dis net die hoë mense wat anderster wil maak as ander mense (Jochem van Bruggen). Versukkelde kinders lyk mos anderster (Jochem van Bruggen).*

2 (attributief) *Hierdie waterryery is ‘n anderster werk as dié waaraan Antonie totnogtoe gewoon was (A. H. Jonker). Asof ‘n skaap vandag ‘n anderster dier is as vroeër! (A. H. Jonker).*

3 *In verbinding met oor. (gewestelik, veral Namakwaland) Danig (met): Mnr. S. is mos geheel anderster oor my kêrel (d.w.s. my seun).*

[diff’ent, diff’ent adj. and adv. Colloquial form of different.

1 See differences in meaning under DIFFERENT: He is completely diff’ent tonight from all the other evenings (Jochem van Bruggen). His colour is diff’ent (Leipoldt). Its diff’ent from the Bible-reading session at uncle Tys’s (Jochem van Bruggen). Everything about her was so diff’ent (P. C. Schoonees). He now reads completely diff’ent than a moment ago (Jochem van Bruggen). I would say it diff’ently (Leipoldt). Its just the high people that want to do diff’ently than other people (Jochem van Bruggen). Struggling children do look diff’ent (Jochem van Bruggen).

2 (attributive) This water-riding is a diff’ent work than that which Antonie was used to up until this point (A. H. Jonker). As if a sheep is today a diff’ent animal than before! (A. H. Jonker).

3 In conjunction with about. (regional, especially Namaqualand) Intimately (with): Mr S is after all completely diff’ent about my boyfriend (meaning my son).]

Labelling “*anneste*” as an adjective corresponds with its use in Standard-Afrikaans. The other (indirect) labels, however, cannot hold. The prominent writers quoted in the excerpt, including C. Louis Leipoldt, Jochem van Bruggen, and Abraham Jonker, were all white Afrikaans-speaking men who were writing in the early to mid-20th century. Furthermore, P. C. Schoonees, the WAT’s second editor-in-chief, is also quoted. Although *anderstelandster* is labelled as a “colloquial language,” it is clearly part of Standard-Afrikaans’s literary tradition. The only possible uniqueness of “*anneste*” relative to “*anderstelandster*” is on a phonetic level. But even here a closer analysis proves that there is very little uniqueness to it. “*Annerster*,” for example, can be heard in Griqua-Afrikaans, a sub-variety of Orange River Afrikaans: “*Want die Hollands tyd was mos annerster*” [Because the Dutch period was diff’ent after all] (cited in Nieuwoudt, 1990, p. 119). The assimilation that leads to the pronunciation “*annerster*” rather than “*anderster*” can also be heard in Griqua-Afrikaans. However, assimilation is also a common phenomenon across all Afrikaans variants. Hence the adjective “*Annerlike*” [Otherly] in the title of a dictionary of regional lexicon: *Annerlike Afrikaans* (Prinsloo, 2009).

The dropping of certain sounds from words, particularly of [r] in words such as “*anderster*,” has been described as characteristic of Kaaps (see Van Rensburg, 2016b). However as with the assimilation that changes “*anderster*” to “*annerster*,” it must be asked whether this

dropping is also wholly unique to Kaaps. It has been highlighted (Ponelis, 1984, cited in Nieuwoudt, 1990) that the presence of word-final [r] in words such as “*anderster*,” “*liewerster*,” “*oralster*,” and “*rusper*” in Standard-Afrikaans results from hypercorrection – with recent research indicating that r-dropping is a common phenomenon in spoken Afrikaans (Wissing and Pienaar, 2020). This supposed standard pronunciation is therefore not the norm, but rather an idealised form of the language. This reflects why “*anderste*” is included in the WAT alongside “*anderster*” without motivation. To speak of r-dropping is contestable, and in this case we should rather be speaking of r-insertion as the variant, with the phenomenon directly related to the artificiality of Afrikaans’s standard variant. Therefore, to position Kaaps’s supposed “*anneste*” against Standard-Afrikaans’s supposed “*anders*” deserves to be critiqued, and a question that could rather be raised relates to the frequency of “*annestelanderste(r)*” relative to “*anders*” as expressed in the speech community. The division between “*anneste*” and “*anders*” cannot hold, however, and can only be sustained through the mythologisation and essentialisation of language on the smallest possible level.

The example of “*anneste*” originates, as mentioned earlier, in metatextual comments on the DWK. Published extracts point to the troubling division and creation of binary opposites between supposedly Kaaps and Afrikaans words as being the norm in the proposed dictionary itself. In the mentioned post on the CIPL website, articles for five supposed Kaaps verbs which are contrasted with their supposed Afrikaans and English counterparts are presented. I quote one:

**doep** ww (phonemic translation) (style marker) 1 om iemand of kos innie wate te stiek: *Die dag vannie doep, oppie beach toe hope ek ós lyk soes mense inne Bresson photo* (Trantraal, *Alles het nie kom wód*). St. Afri: om iets in n vloeistof te plaas: *Johnny plaas sy brood in die water om dit te kou*. St. Eng: to place a person or an object in water: *On a warm Sunday, the minister decided to baptise John* (emphasis in the original).

The binary between “*doep*” [Kaaps] and “*plaas*” [Afrikaans] can be critiqued, seeing that Standard-Afrikaans includes the word “*doep*” [written as “*doop*” in Standard-Afrikaans]. And just as it concerns the word “*anneste*,” “*doop*” is part of Standard-Afrikaans’s literary tradition. In the [electronic WAT](#) the following example sentences are included: “*Die ondergaande son het die landskap in purper en goud gedoop (Sangiro); Nadat Jesus gedoopt was, het Hy dadelik uit die water opgeklim (Matt. 3:16); En hulle het altwee afgeklim in die water, Filippus en die hofdienaar; en hy het hom gedoop (Hand. 8:38)*” [The setting sun baptized the landscape in purple and gold (Sangiro); After Jesus was baptized, he immediately got out of the water (Matt. 3:16); And they both climbed into the water, Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him (Acts 8:38)]. Beyond pronunciation, there is no difference between the Kaaps “*doep*” and Standard-Afrikaans “*doop*,” neither in meaning nor in use in the literary tradition.

The question that deserves asking is where this preoccupation with the creation of Kaaps as an “independent” language - removed and isolated from Afrikaans – comes from? The answer lies in an opinion article penned as a preface to a special edition of a literary magazine that appeared a few months after the announcement of the DWK project. In this the following statement is made relative to it: “This work is a massive step in the direction of becoming as a people” (Coetzee, 2021). The possible value of Kaaps as a language of and for the “so-called coloureds” (ibid.) are highlighted, with Kaaps, it is implied, being a “coloured language.” I suggest the reason behind this particular fascination in Kaaps lexicography has its origins in the two earlier lexicographic traditions surrounding Afrikaans which will be discussed next. This fascination is further intricately connected to the questionable approach to language and lexicography as such evidenced earlier – the ideological fixation on race is therefore entangled with contestable linguistic research. And this intertwined relationship of ideology and research can be traced to the earliest published reflections on Afrikaans.

#### 4. Dutch-Afrikaans

Although professional Afrikaans lexicography only started in 1926 with the initiation of the WAT (see [Gericke, 1991b](#)), the preceding century saw the establishment of a tradition of linguistically oriented writings and commentaries published with the Afrikaans lexicon as topic. I say “linguistically oriented” seeing that many of these studies and commentaries were not necessarily informed by scholarly insights of the day. Hence the lexicographic compilations of this era are often characterised as “glossaries,” rather than dictionaries proper. Furthermore, most of these studies were recorded and published by Dutch authors and in the Dutch language, with the result that the perspectives contained therein mainly represent those of outsiders - something that is crucial with regards to my characterisation of this era as one reflecting a paternalistic attitude towards Afrikaans. In the section that follows, I examine three texts from this period, namely those of Antoine [Changuion \(1844b\)](#), Theodoor [Tromp \(1879\)](#), and Nicolaas [Mansvelt \(1884\)](#).

Changuion’s “*Proeve van Kaapsch Taaleigen*” [Examples of Cape Linguistic Unicities] is widely recognised as the first full-fledged Afrikaans glossary. It represents the first attempt to record Afrikaans, or as Changuion calls it, the “*Kaapsche spraak*” [Cape speech]. Hence it has been described as “*die kosbaarste bron uit die eerste helfte van die 19de eeu*” [the most precious source from the first half of the 19th century] ([Van der Merwe, 1971](#): viii). This compilation does not, however, represent an innocent attempt to encapsulate the supposed uniqueness of Afrikaans to Changuion’s Dutch ear, but formed part of a “*regstellingsprogram*” [corrective program] relative to Dutch in Cape schools. First, “*Proeve van Kaapsch Taaleigen*” was preceded by *First book of exercises for the use of the Dutch classes in the government schools* ([Changuion, 1843](#)); secondly, his “*Proeve*” was attached as an addendum to his *De Nederduitsche taal in Zuid-Afrika hersteld* [The Dutch language restored in South Africa] ([Changuion, 1844a](#)). From this it is clear that Changuion lobbied for Dutch, and not for the recognition or promotion of Afrikaans as such:

*Het hoofdoel van de volgende verzameling, gelijk men al dadelijk uit den titel van ons werk kan afleiden, was om het Nederduitsch, voor zoo ver de taal, die in deze Kolonie gesproken wordt, dien naam dragen mag, van deels geheel vreemde, deels verminkte woorden en spreekwijzen te zuiveren, of althans den weg daartoe aan te wijzen* [The main goal of the following collection, which can immediately be gleaned from the title of our work, was to purify Dutch, in so far as it is spoken in this Colony, of its partly completely alien and partly mutilated words and idioms] ([Changuion, 1844b](#), p. iii).

Because of this attitude, I describe his approach as paternalistic. Changuion considers it his duty to “purify” the Cape language of “strange,” “mutilated” Dutch (see [Noordegraaf 2003a, 2003b](#)). He motivates this attitude in part when he reflects on the nature of Afrikaans in relation to Dutch: “*het voorwerp onzer beschouwing [is] een tak, die allengs van den moederstam losgemaakt, en eindelijk geheel afgehouwen, in een ander werelddeel wortelen geschoten heft*” [the subject of our consideration [is] one branch, which has been detached from the mother stem, and finally cut down completely, which has taken root in another part of the world] (*ibid.* iv). The Dutch linguist’s right to insist on correction is therefore based on the view of Afrikaans as merely a renegade shoot, a branch that has been “detached” from the “mother stem.” This image of the Dutch language as “mother stem” is further connected by Changuion to the idea of the Netherlands as “fatherland:”

*Dat denkbeeld bezielde den schrijver met ijver, en zoo dikwijls het hem voor den geest kwam, gevoelde hij zich nader aan zijn vaderland; en welk Hollander, die een reeks van jaren in de vreemdelingschap heeft doorgebregt, kent de kracht niet van het gezegde:*

*Est aliquid patriis vicinum finibus esse*

[This idea inspired the writer with zeal, and as often as it occurred to him he felt closer to his native country; and which Dutchman, who has spent a number of years as a foreigner, does not know the power of the saying:

It is something to be near to one's country]  
(Changuion, 1844a, p. iv; emphasis in the original).

The Cape speaker of mutilated Dutch, Changuion asserts, is simply alienated from their ancestral homeland. Despite this generalisation, there is an implicit distinction between who Changuion considers to be part of this Dutch nation and those he does not. In his explanation of the supposed nature of Afrikaans, he makes a distinction between “high” and “low” forms of the language, and his discussion is focused on the “lowest” forms:

*Wij hebben onnoodig geoordeeld om in alle voorbb. de platte Kaapsche spraak na te boot-  
sen; deels omdat dit tot opheldering van het woord waar het om te doen was niets bijbrengt,  
en deels omdat die taal in hare zuiverheid alleen door Hottentotten en ander gepeupel  
gesproken wordt; eindelijk ook, omdat we onze onbedrevenheid daarin gaarne erkennen*  
[We have judged it unnecessary to mirror the low Cape speech in all examples; partly be-  
cause it offers no clarification of the word, and partly because the language in her purity is  
alone spoken by Hottentotten and other rabble; finally, too, because we have to acknow-  
ledge our inexperience in it] (Changuion, 1844b, p. v).

Here we get a glimpse of what I describe as his two-nation perspective on Afrikaans speakers - firstly, there are the estranged Dutchmen, who still have a sensitivity for a “restored” idiom and for what the “higher” articulation of the “*Kaapsche spraak*” is capable of expressing; secondly, the “Hottentotten and other rabble” [with “Hottentotten” being an antiquated term that historically referred mostly to the indigenous Khoekhoen, but later also referred to “coloured” South Africans more generally] who speak the “purest” form of Afrikaans and consequently are not necessarily traceable to the bosom of the Dutch mother stem and Netherlandic fatherland. This focus on the supposed “low” forms of the language appears to have been a deliberate strategy. Although he states that the purpose of the “*proeve*” was not to compile a “Lexicon Anti-barbarum,” Changuion is aware of the injustice that “civilized” speakers may feel towards the compilation: “‘Zoo,’ zullen zij zeggen, ‘spreken wij aan de Kaap niet.’ *Wij antwoorden, dat de beschaafde spreker overal het gewestelijke weet te vermijden*” [‘In that way,’ they will say, ‘we do not speak at the Cape.’ We reply that the civilised speaker overall knows to refrain from using regionalised language] (ibid. iv; emphasis in the original). The inclusion of the glossary in a didactic text with the express aim of promoting Dutch can therefore be regarded as a form of discrediting Afrikaans. It represents an attempt to slander the language by exploiting descriptions of it as defective and as being associated with “Hottentotten and other rabble,” consequently promoting Dutch supremacy.

Here I bring this ideological content of Changuion’s argument in relation to his research practice. An important point of critique that has been raised against Changuion is the geographical area from which he collected his data: Cape Town (see Coetzee, 1951). He does motivate that he did not have the opportunity to visit other parts of the Cape Colony, and he consequently admits that his discussion does not address all the facets of the “*Kaapsche spraak*.” Beyond this geographical limitation, what later research (ibid.) on Changuion’s material has evidenced is that much of what he describes as being “low” forms of the language that could only be heard from the mouths of the “Hottentotten and other rabble”, is in fact found across all variants – and today forms part of the standard. Two prominent examples can be discussed briefly:

1. Tegen de Hottentotsche spreekwijzen: ek is, ek heef, ons het, in plaas van ik ben, ik heb, wij hebben behoeven wij beschaafde sprekers wel niet te waarschuwen [Of the Hottentot forms of expression: I is, I hab, us hab, instead of I am, I have, we have we do not have to warn civilized speakers].
2. Het gebruik van gaat voor gaan, bv. ik zal hem gaat halen. Dit laatste is een hottentotisme [The use of goin’ for go, for example. I will goin’ get him. This last one is a hottentotism].

In both of these instances ideology has trumped sound research. Not only is Changuion incorrect as it relates to attributing certain speech patterns to the “Hottentots” when it is in fact common across speakers of all variants, but the framing of their speech patterns as uncivilised illustrate the ideological bias that undergirds this lexicographic project as a whole. A similar pattern emerges as the one identified in relation to Kaaps – the ideological presupposition of distinctiveness and race leads to a contestable conclusion on the nature of the language and how it is textualised in and through the lexicographic project.

Changuion was, however, not alone in this view of Afrikaans. Whereas he focused on the language as spoken within Cape Town, a memoiristic text published by Tromp in 1879 includes similar views albeit on the language as spoken in the Transvaal republic: “*De Afrikaansche taal, die tot stam de Oud-Hollandsche taal heeft, is zeker wel het leelijkste en meest vermengde dialect, dat ooit bestond*” [The Afrikaans language, which has the Old Dutch language as its root, certainly is the ugliest and most bastardised dialect that ever existed] (Tromp, 1879: 172). In his discussion of Tromp’s views, Nienaber (1950: 45) singles out Tromp’s underlying Dutch-centric view of Afrikaans and the broad South African socio-cultural realities as grounds for these and similar statements that permeate Tromp’s writing: “[d]ie heer Tromp skryf vir sy eie volksgenote en beoordeel die taal van hierdie land volgens die maatstaf van patria” [Mr. Tromp writes for his own countrymen and judges the language of this country according to the criteria of patria]. Although I agree with this assessment in broad strokes, I would argue Nienaber misses an important factor that also influenced Tromp’s comments: the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* [Fellowship of True Afrikaners] (GRA). Tromp’s writing appeared a few years after the establishment of the GRA, and he opposed the promotion of Afrikaans in the sense that the GRA did at that time. He quotes long passages from GRA literature and summarises his view as follows:

*Dat de taal belangwekkend en de aandacht overwaard is, is zeker, maar dat zij leelijk, misvormd en wanluidend is, is nog zekerder. Het is dan ook bepaald jammer, dat degene, die zich de moeite wilde getroosten, regels en genootschappen tot instandhouding er van in het leven te roepen, zijn tijd en inspanning niet liever ten koste legde aan eene poging, het hoog-Hollandsch (dit is de naam, dien men in Afrika aan onzen taal geeft) tot zuivering van het Afrikaansch, en ter vervanging daarvan in Zuid-Afrika, ingang te doen vinden* [That the language is interesting and worthy of attention is certain, but that it is ugly, misshapen and indistinct is even more certain. It is therefore a pity that those who wanted to take the trouble to create rules and societies to maintain it did not prefer to spend their time and effort on an attempt to introduce High Dutch (this is the name given to our language [i.e. Dutch] in Africa) to purify Afrikaans and replace it in South Africa] (Tromp, 1879, p. 175).

Here we find the same paternalistic attitude towards Afrikaans that is reflected in the work of Changuion - especially the emphasis on Dutch as a pure language form that is being displaced through the promotion of Afrikaans. The recording of and reflections on Afrikaans by Tromp represents therefore a type of anthropological inquiry, but not an improving one. It forms part of an argument for the purification of Afrikaans and ultimately the maintenance of Dutch.

A final figure, Mansvelt, differs from Changuion and Tromp in a number of respects. Although a Dutch speaker who lived in South Africa in the 19th century and who in his role as an educator was confronted with the Afrikaans of his pupils, his writings do not reveal an inherently superior attitude towards Afrikaans. On the contrary, his views are in line with what is known in language policy studies as the “language-as-resource” view (Ruiz, 1984):

*Ook in den omgang met mijne leerlingen en bij ‘t onderwijs in de klas bemerkte ik spoedig, hoe noodig het was, de eigenaardigheden van ‘t Kaapsch-Hollandsch te kennen, ten einde daardoor beter in staat te zijn, mijn leerlingen te begrijpen en hun omgekeerd de vele hun onbekende woorden en zegswijzen in ‘t Nederlandsch te beter te doen verstaan*

[Also in my dealings with my pupils and in my teaching in the classroom I soon noticed how necessary it was to know the peculiarities of Cape Dutch, in order to be better able to understand my pupils and conversely to make them better understand the many words and expressions in Dutch that were unknown to them] (Mansvelt, 1844, p. iv).

Knowledge of Afrikaans is an asset in the classroom according to Mansvelt - a resource that he as an educator could use to “better [...] understand [his] pupils,” and by implication to devise an improved pedagogical strategy. This positive attitude is also reflected in the composition of his glossary. It still represents an outsider perspective, but the list served “to benefit Afrikaans and not to benefit Dutch” (Gouws, 2007, p. 316). At the same time, the following excerpt differs from this position in that it nevertheless testifies to a paternalistic gaze:

*Een ieder die eenigszins met 't Kaapsch-Hollandsch bekend is, zal terstond ontdekken, dat er hier geen melding gemaakt wordt van zoo vele Engelsche woorden die men dikwijls, al of niet geradbraakt, in 't dagelijksch gesprek hoort bezigen. Daar zulke woorden of uit traagheid of uit een beklagenswaardige modezucht alleen gebruikt worden door hen, die liever een vreemd dan een eenvoudig Kaapsch of Nederlandsch woord gebruiken, heb ik gemeend, dit werkje niet te moeten ontsieren door er een aantal meest mismaakte woorden in op te nemen, die men onvervalscht in elk Engelsch woordenboek kan vinden. Zulke halfnaatjes op taalkundig gebied Afrikaners te noemen, zou onrecht zijn tegenover degenen die er prijs op stellen, een zuiverder taal te spreken* [Anyone who is at all familiar with Cape Dutch will immediately discover that there is no mention here of so many English words that one often hears used, whether broken or not, in daily conversation. Since such words are used either through indolence or from a lamentable fashion only by those who prefer a foreign word to a simple Cape or Dutch word, I have thought that I should not disfigure this work by including a number of the most deformed words that one can find unadulterated in any English dictionary. To call such *halfnaatjes* [half-breeds] *Afrikaners* in linguistic terms would be an injustice to those who value speaking a purer language] (Mansvelt, 1844, p. v; emphasis in the original).

Herein Mansvelt expresses a unique view of Afrikaans in relation to English – one that in the writings of Changuion and Tromp are reserved for the relationship between Afrikaans and Dutch. Where the Afrikaans word represents a “mutilation” of the Dutch lexicon according to Changuion and Tromp, Mansvelt considers the presence of the English word in Afrikaans as a similar phenomenon of linguistic bastardry. The emphasis has shifted, but the need to classify and consider one as inferior remains present. What makes this quote important is the word used to describe these phenomena: “*halfnaatjes*” [half-breeds], which links the influence and presence of English in Afrikaans to a racialised understanding of miscegenation. And such “*halfnaatjes*,” Mansvelt continues, is linguistically no “Afrikaner.” The Afrikaans word is thus linked to the (white) Afrikaner, and the choices of what is included and excluded in his glossary were determined by an ideal of what is and should be classified as “purely” Afrikaans and “purely” belonging to the Afrikaner. His glossary, although approving of Afrikaans where both Changuion and Tromp were staunchly opposed to it, is nevertheless engaged in a power struggle, with the omission of English serving the ideal of a “pure” Afrikaans that is tied to the Afrikaner.

Between these three authors and their texts we find the basis for what would become characteristic of *woordeboekapartheid*: an ideological fixation on race which is coupled with highly questionable research practices. Firstly, in the case of Changuion we find the unjustified binary between supposedly civilised and uncivilised speakers along mostly racial lines; secondly, in both Changuion and Tromp we see a fixation on lambasting Afrikaans in service of Dutch, arguing for the rediscovery of the supposedly natural link between the Afrikaners and the Dutch language; and thirdly in Mansvelt we hear an affirmative argument for Afrikaans, but one that approaches it through an ideal of racial purity linked to the Afrikaner. These ideas would go on

to permeate the Afrikaner-Afrikaans tradition that will be discussed next, but which also has echoes in the contemporary discourse surrounding Kaaps.

## 5. Afrikaner-Afrikaans

Of the three lexicographic traditions I analyse in this article, there has been one whose apartheidness has been identified and critiqued from within: the Afrikaner-Afrikaans tradition (see [Botha, 2003](#); [Gouws, 2008](#)). There are many possible reasons for this, but in relation to the Dutch-Afrikaans and Kaapse-Afrikaans traditions, the following can be highlighted: where the Dutch-Afrikaans tradition, just like the Dutch-speaking South African linguist, had largely disappeared from the South African linguistic landscape by the early 20th century, and the Kaapse-Afrikaans tradition is currently being established, the hegemony that Afrikaner-Afrikaans lexicography had during apartheid's heyday has largely dissipated. Consequently, this tradition had to come to terms with the unjust power of its hegemony and the reckoning with that hegemony took place during the same period as South Africa was transitioning from an apartheid state to a non-racial democracy (as reflected in the policy change of the Bureau of the WAT; see [Harteveld and Van Niekerk, 1995](#); also [Hauptfleisch, 1993](#)).

Its hegemony enjoyed expression first and foremost through labelling. The first eight printed volumes of the WAT is saturated with loaded words, with the insensitive labelling of those words that are especially striking. In a brief discussion of the treatment of the word “*kaffir*” and its derivations in Volume V, Max [du Preez \(1988, p. 7\)](#) articulates an impression of Afrikaans that few would be able to dispute after reading those articles: “*Afrikaans [het] ‘n sterk rassistiese onderbou [...] nie minder as 303 woorde wat [daarmee] begin, word behandel. En die goue draad wat deur al die woorde loop is dat [dit] gelykstaan aan minderwaardig, sleg en lui*” [Afrikaans has a strong racist foundation [...] No fewer than 303 words that start [with “*kaffir*”]. And the golden thread that runs through all the words is that [it] is equal to inferior, bad and lazy]. Du Preez’s critique should not be regarded as a charge against Afrikaans as such (after all, he writes in the language), nor that he advocates for the linguistic “cleansing” of insensitive words. Rather, the emphasis of his argument is on the insensitive approach by the WAT: “[*d*]ie woordeboek is in 1968 gepubliseer, maar is steeds die geldige, amptelike Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal Deel V” [[The] dictionary was published in 1968, but is still the valid, official *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal Volume V*] (ibid.). This view of Du Preez, as well as that of K. [Scholtz \(1986; cited in Botha, 2003\)](#), was according to Willem [Botha \(2003\)](#) the driving force behind the creation of an editorial policy that sought to guide a sensitive approach to problematic language. For example, in a review-essay of Volume IX, which appeared after the policy change, Ilse [Feinauer \(1996, p. 259\)](#) highlights the following: The lemma “*loshotnot*” [loose hottentot] is labelled as follows: “*oorspr. wsk. rassisties, en tans mntl. deur sommige so aangevoel; geselstaal*” [originally probably racist, and currently possibly by some felt to be so; colloquial language]. This differs drastically from the approach to similar lemmas in previous volumes. She believes that “[*a*]lhoewel die etiket dalk ietwat sterker gestel kon word, is daar in die definiensgedeeltes en in die voorbeeldmateriaal geen rassistiese komponente nie” [although the label could be somewhat stronger, there are no racist components in the definition sections and in the example material]. When the lemma is consulted in the [electronic WAT](#), it appears that a further refinement has since been included. Its labelling as “probably” racist and as “possibly by some felt to be so” has been omitted. Currently only the following is included: “*rassisties; geselstaal*” [racist; colloquial language].

Secondly, harmful language. Where labelling a given lemma reflects the dictionary and lexicographer’s assumption of its appropriateness, another image can be gleaned from the use of harmful language in the text itself. The label therefore represents an accompanying impression of the language, while the use of the language by definition and choice of sample material betrays the perspective of the linguist compiling the dictionary. In the case of the WAT, the examples discussed by Du Preez and Feinauer can be returned to. In a review

of Volume II, F. J. Potgieter (1956, p. 36) raises the following: “*die definisie ná ‘delwerskaffer’, nl. ‘kaffer op ‘n delwery’ [hinder]. Kan die woord [...] om klaarblyklike redes nie maar liever opsy gelaat word behalwe in sy historiese gebruik en waar dit voorkom in samestellings [...] nie?’*” [The definition after ‘diggers’, viz. ‘kaffer on a digging site’ [is frustrating]. Could the word [...] not be avoided for obvious reasons except in its historical use and where it appears in compounds?]. In Feinauer’s (1996, pp. 259–260) discussion, the transformation of the WAT is noted: “*Die WAT het bepaald ver gevorder indien hierdie lemma [soos bo beskryf] vergelyk word met die gedeelte in WAT IV waar ‘n Los Hotnot inderdaad as uitdrukking binne die artikel van die rassitiese term aangetref word. In deel IV is die enigste etiket wat naas die lemma gegee word, (geselstaal)*” [The WAT has certainly advanced if this lemma [as described above] is compared to the passage in IV where a *Los Hotnot* is indeed found as an expression within the article of the racist term. In Volume IV, the only label given besides the lemma is (colloquial language)] (emphasis in the original). Therefore, along with the insensitive labelling of words, the use of the language within the dictionary reflected a cultural consensus on the acceptability of those words.

Thirdly, definition - something that both flowed from the first two discussion points, but which is also underlying to them. The power of definition in relation to hegemony is clearly evident in the article on “Afrikaans” included in Volume I: “*Die taal v.d. Afrikaner, wat in hoofsaak uit Nederlands ontwikkel het; amptelike taal v/d Unie van S.A. saam met Engels*” [The language of the Afrikaner, which mainly developed from Dutch; Official Language of the Union of S.A. alongside English] (Schoonees, 1970, p. 89). A central emphasis in this definition is the appropriation of Afrikaans as possession of the Afrikaner; the discursive boundary of the language as Afrikaner property – a view, as discussed earlier, that can be found reflected in Mansvelt’s Dutch-language glossary. That this fact is highlighted as the first aspect or quality of the language, before the origin and status is mentioned, emphasises the centrality of this connection between the language and its supposed owner. Against this semantically unmarked form of Afrikaans, the lemmas “*Kleurling-Afrikaans*” [Coloured-Afrikaans] and “*Bantoe-Afrikaans*” [Bantu Afrikaans] have their own articles. The definitions of these language forms are, as expected, attributed to the ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ grouping in question. It is important to mention that this view of Afrikaans was the dominant one amongst Afrikaans linguists (see, for example, the dialectical classification of Afrikaans according to supposed ethnic “peoples” in the work of Stephanus Boshoff (1921)). But unlike the average linguistic study, the dictionary - and in particular the WAT as “*kroonjuweel*” [crown jewel] (Gouws 2008, p. 160) of Afrikaans dictionaries – is a general, authoritative, and therefore particularly influential normative linguistic resource.

In his discussion of *taalapartheid*, Esterhuysen raises the issue of Afrikaans as “*Boere-taal*” [Boer-language] and the language of “*gekleurdes*” [coloureds] as “*Kleurling-Afrikaans*” [Coloured-Afrikaans] which was discursively maintained through Standard-Afrikaans linguistic resources such as dictionaries – a view that has a direct antecedent in Changuion’s emphasis on the supposed speech patterns of the “Hottentotten and other rabble”, with “Coloured” in many ways being a marker of an ethnicity descended from the “Hottentotten”. Kaaps in particular is a language form that has been debunked as a “*Kleurlingtaal*” through empirical research (see Klopper, 1983). An important aspect of Esterhuysen’s critique of this process of appropriation and discrimination in the language is the idea of the existence of a homogeneous “*Kleurlingtaal*” [Coloured-language] as such:

*In die lig van die feit dat die sogenaamde “Kleurlinge” sosiaal, antropologies, religieus, wêreldbeskoulik en kultureel oor die wydste moontlike spektrum strek, bestaan daar eenvoudig nie ‘n variant wat oorkoepelend as Kleurling-Afrikaans beskryf kan word nie. Die reïfikasieproses is opsigtelik. Hier word ‘n linguïstiese mite opgeteken – en op die wyse met akademiese fatsoenlikheid bekleed – wat aan ‘n ideologiese gevoelde behoefte legitimititeit moet verleen* [In light of the fact that the so-called “Coloureds” can be found across the widest possible spectrum of social, anthropological, religious, worldview and

cultural differences, there simply does not exist a variant that can be described as *Coloured-Afrikaans*. The reification process is conspicuous. Here, a linguistic myth is recorded - and in this way clothed with academic decency - which must give legitimacy to an ideologically felt need (Esterhuysen, 1986, p. 37; emphasis in the original).

I want to highlight that although Esterhuysen reaches a conclusion similar to my own, namely that such a process of definition forms part of a discursive power struggle, he does not consider the other dimensions of the dictionary as a particular text genre in his discussion. The definition of “Afrikaans,” and the “related” language forms of the “*anderskleuriges*” [differently-coloured], is decisive, but simply forms one thread in the entangled yet fine lexicographic web. Labelling and the use of language are equally important, and they represent the practical approach to linguistics that scaffolds the ideological dynamics that make the dictionary a vehicle for an apartheid epistemology.

## 6. Implications

Against the backdrop of the Dutch-Afrikaans and Afrikaner-Afrikaans traditions of linguistic thought and lexicographic practice, the DWK project embodies in many ways the fulfilment of the *woordeboekapartheid* ideal that started in 1844 when the “Hottentotten and other rabble” were discursively separated in Changuion’s words from (civilized) white Afrikaans speakers. The “so-called coloureds” - whom the Afrikaner-Afrikaans lexicographers tried obsessively to de-scribe out of the Afrikaans linguistic record (in an unjustified and linguistically unsound manner) - now have their “own language” and dictionary alongside that of the Afrikaner and “their language,” Afrikaans. An argument could possibly be made for seeing this as an act of social justice and empowerment. However, the contestable and often demonstrably incorrect approach to the supposed split between Afrikaans and Kaaps coupled with the emphasis on discrediting Afrikaans and the Afrikaner’s relationship with the language implies a power struggle that goes beyond mere mythologisation through essentialisation. It reflects a paternalistic attitude towards “so-called coloureds” as an idealised, pure community in relation to other speakers of Afrikaans through emphasising the supposed “real” history of the “real” language, Kaaps, which suffered under the yoke of Afrikaans and the Afrikaners. It positions the “so-called coloureds” as “pure” and their “language” as less artificial than the “stolen” Standard-Afrikaans. This reflects a dark ideological turn.

In an enthusiastic reflection on the DWK project shortly after its launch, the following positive vision for the future was sketched: “*Op ‘n dag sal Kaaps en Standaardafrikaans, soos Britse en Amerikaanse Engels, op gelyke voet staan*” [One day, Kaaps and Standard-Afrikaans, like British and American English, will stand on an equal footing] (Loots, 2021). Although a striking image of equality, the underlying socio-political dynamics that led to a “British” and “American” version of English - namely revolution, war, and strife - seems not to be reckoned with. What is more, this particular development relative to Kaaps and Afrikaans raises the question as to whether the current debate on the possible restandardisation of Afrikaans to recognise and promote more of Afrikaans’s Kaapsness is still feasible? Is the WAT, for example, not guilty of “re-appropriation” through the inclusion of Kaaps data in a dictionary for a language that is supposedly separate from Kaaps? And will a Kaaps-influenced restandardisation programme (see Van Rensburg, 1991; De Wet, 1997; Ponelis, 1998; Louw, 2012; Odendaal, 2012, 2014; Van Heerden and Kotzé, 2018; Basson, 2022a, 2022b, 2024; Staphorst, 2024a; Basson, 2025) relative to Afrikaans’s standard variant not be guilty of the same charge?

## 7. Conclusion

Through this article I wanted to comment critically on the present developments surrounding Kaaps and Afrikaans, as expressed in the context of lexicography - a critique that is encapsulated through the concept “*woordeboekapartheid*.” At the same time, I do not want to suggest these recent events are unique against the backdrop of the broader history of

linguistic consciousness about and in Afrikaans. Such an approach can easily lead to notions of exceptionalism, as opposed to a historicised outlook that can bring the entanglement of the present with and through the past to the fore. The argument in favour of the “uniqueness” of Kaaps is therefore not new when read through such a historically grounded perspective. Rather, it represents the fulfilment of the *woordeboekapartheid* ideal that over almost two centuries has characterised the lexicographic discourse about and in Afrikaans. Consequently, I hope that through this article a critical, fearless, and open discussion about the lexicographic future of Kaaps in particular and the wider Afrikaans language community in general could be realised. And that it may be a starting point for further critical lexicographic research - especially as it relates to *woordeboekapartheid* as raciolinguistic phenomenon.

*woorde wat boek breek oop  
op soek na die geswolle stilte  
van bybetekenisse  
terwyl voëls en sterre hul teen die ruite  
van vertolking  
te pletter vlieg*  
(Breytenbach, 2016, p. 14).

[words that book break open  
in search of the swollen silence  
of associations  
whilst birds and stars  
fly themselves to pieces  
against the windowpanes of interpretation]

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This article’s central critique of the lexicographic discourse surrounding Kaaps is based on a subsection of my MA dissertation, Ongehoord: *Voices unaccented; voices unharmonized. Afrikaans and South Africa’s First Peoples in discourses of higher education transformation*. It was completed at Nelson Mandela University under supervision of Mariana Kriel and co-supervision of Marisa Botha. The financial support of the Mandela Rhodes Foundation and South Africa’s National Department of Arts and Culture towards completion of my MA research is greatly acknowledged. The opinions expressed herein remain my own.

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