

Soppangheid for Kaaps: Power, creolisation and Kaaps Afrikaans

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Abstract

In this contribution, the dignity of speakers of Cape Afrikaans (Kaaps) is discussed with reference to the need for bi-dialectic tuition at school and Afrikaans poetry written in the Cape eye dialect. It is argued here that, besides Standard Afrikaans, a greater awareness of language varieties must be cultivated in education and the media so that learners develop the ability to control a variety of language registers. Further the manifestation of Kaaps, as eye dialect, is discussed at the hand of poetry examples. Here it is found that poets often stereotypically affirm topics in their poetry written in dialect format. The hope is expressed that the dignity of Kaaps Afrikaans in poetry can be attained with multiple rhetorical strategies. The *soppangheid*, dignity, of Kaaps is not only a linguistic issue, but can also serve as a confirmation of the dignity of all Afrikaans speakers.

INTRODUCTION

The 2012 symposium on Kaaps closely matches a few other events where similar matters were discussed. I am thinking of the Roots Symposium of 2009, as well as the symposium of Prof. Kwesi Kwaa Prah's Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) which took place in January 2011 and of which the proceedings were published in Afrikaans as well as English. I shall thus not repeat the aspects which were

extensively discussed at those events. The same applies to my previously published contributions on the topic, for example issues such as the development of a creolised society and linguistic hybridity, the establishment of Standard Afrikaans as a conscious ethnic construct and my call for a "more multi-faceted Afrikaans".¹ Yet, these matters are applicable as background to the matters to be discussed here. Initially, I discuss the need for dignity for Kaaps Afrikaans and the necessity for bi-dialectic methods

¹ Compare among others my unpublished contributions "Verandering en toekoms: om 'n kreoolse Afrikaans te bedink" (2009) and "Om kreools te wees: Achmat Davids en die geskiedenis van Afrikaans" (2012), as well as the published article "Om 'n veelkantiger Afrikaans te bedink" (2012).

of tuition at school. In the second part of my presentation I will broadly discuss the manifestation of Kaaps in the Afrikaans literature. In closing I argue that the promotion of the dignity of spoken Kaaps Afrikaans does not necessarily require the informal orthographies which we see in dialect poetry.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS: STANDARD AFRIKAANS

I would like to first make a few introductory remarks about Standard Afrikaans before I expand on my perspectives on Kaaps Afrikaans. It is not unusual at intervals to hear sharp public comment on the continued status of Standard Afrikaans. From formal and informal comments one often gains the impression that on the one hand Standard language is elevated to an untouchable gem that, by way of speaking, should be defended until death. On the other hand, one hears a demand that the standard language must be expanded so that socially and politically marginalised varieties can be sensibly standardised. By the way, in the midst of all these views, I do not hear a single opinion promoting the total rejection of Standard Afrikaans. This 2012 symposium, I presume, therefore wants to promote firstly an awareness of a specific regional variety (and language varieties in general) and secondly, determine the processes of re-standardisation.

I would like to repeat my view that I have stated elsewhere, namely that Standard Afrikaans is an exceptional achievement (cf. Willemse 2012:66). The codification of Afrikaans grammar, the compilation of several general and technical dictionaries, as well as the expression of Standard Afrikaans in the media, education, the justice

system and formal spheres of usage attained over the past century, are indeed impressive. While I make this statement without irony, I must add a qualification. These standardisation processes were not always guided by linguistic considerations. Think of the active dutchification and germanisation of Afrikaans and the language family metaphor which reveal an underlying eurocentrism, an ideology which considered non-white speakers to be inferior. Later an ethnically chauvinistic state advantaged and supported the language (and some of its speakers) in all manner of ways. The choice of the varieties in which (theoretically putative supra-dialect) Standard Afrikaans was established, the selection processes for in- and exclusion were not value free. It was sometimes aimed in such a way that significant sections of the Afrikaans-speaking community, mostly non-white speakers were continuously excluded. Both our discussion, today, as well as this ongoing debate, are enough proof that important questions are being raised about the future and general acceptance of Standard Afrikaans.

KAAPS AFRIKAANS

Kaaps Afrikaans is the result of the earliest language adaptations which took place in South Africa since the 17th century. It is also this form of Cape Dutch, then called Hottentot Dutch, which took shape in South African literature since the first decades of the 19th century. Even though this language form in the early years was subject to ridicule, there were observers like Hubertus Elffers who considered it in his little textbook *The Englishman's guide to the speedy and easy acquirement of Cape Dutch* (1908) as "a speech unalloyed with

foreign elements, which provides easy vent for all sentiments and every feeling, though confined to the narrow limits of a patois” (quoted in Davids 2011:87). The point Elffers makes, that this language form encompasses people’s whole lives, is relevant to me.

Adam Small would formulate a similar insight nearly seventy years later in his foreword to a revised edition of his collection *Kitaar my kruis* (1973). Even though his verdict is poetic hyperbole (can the first human cry be in any language?), it makes sense to quote it here in full:

Kaaps is ’n taal in die sin dat dit die volle lot en noodlot van die mense wat dit praat, dra: die volle lot, hulle volle lewe ‘met alles wat daarin is’; ’n taal in die sin dat die mense wat dit praat, hul eerste skreeu in die lewe skreeu in hierdie taal, al die transaksies van hul lewens beklink in hierdie taal, en hul doodsroggel roggel in hierdie taal. Kaaps is nie ’n grappigheid of snaaksigheid nie, maar ’n taal (Small 1973: 9).

Kaaps is a language in the sense that it carries the whole fate and destiny of the people who speak it: the whole fate, their whole life ‘with everything therein’; a language in the sense that the people who speak it, give their first cry in this life in this language, all the transactions of their lives are concluded in this language, their death rattle is rattled in this language. Kaaps is not a joke or a comedy, but a language (Small 1973: 9).

Our discussion today can, in the light of Elffers and Small, not be about language form as language form only, because the recognition of people in our social dispensation is in the final instance a matter of underlying importance.

Kaaps, and its antecedent Cape-Dutch, is probably the most stigmatised Afrikaans variety. It is associated with, for example, the so-called ‘typical humour of the coloured person’. Think of the many Gatiepie jokes where the protagonist is often given the inherent ability to utter witticisms, sometimes indicating insight and commentary. Our Gatiepie is often, like the Blackface figure of American pop culture, portrayed as the socially inferior Other. In the dominant imaging, the Kaaps speaker is considered naïve, shufflingly submissive, and half-skilled with an inability to understand or appreciate complexity.

The version of colloquial language in informal orthographies in the South African literature extends back to the beginning of the 19th century when Charles Boniface performed his *De nuwe ridderorde of De temperantisten* (1832) and Andrew Geddes Bain his *Kaatje Kekkelbek, or Life among the Hottentots* (1838). Already in *De nuwe ridderorde* the Khoi characters, Manus Kalfachter and Grietje Drillbouden, were portrayed as comical and saucy. These stereotypical linkages would not really change over the years.

This attitude originates in the political and social imbalances of our society. Kaaps and its predecessors were spoken by people who were not in the dominant stratum of society. What the norm is, and whose language form is considered polished and acceptable, is determined by social power and economic interest. This stigmatisation thus initially takes place from outside. When Boniface and Bain wrote their texts, they founded a discourse where non-Cape-Dutch speakers were linked to a low social order, comicality, stupidity and the despised language variety.

Fortunately, there is another side to this. The speakers do not themselves

make this link. In fact, we have a good example of how speakers of this language variety consider their language form. We see this when the form of Kaaps which today is known as Arabic Afrikaans, is used. Achmat Davids in his important study, *The Afrikaans of the Cape Muslims* (2011), convincingly indicates how this creolised form of European, Southeast Asian and indigenous languages was used with *soppangheid*, dignity, in everyday interaction in the madrassah and the mosque. Here we thus have one language form viewed from two diverging perspectives depending on the social position from which it is judged.

But this is the history.² What should we do today, or put differently: how does Kaaps achieve dignity?

THE DESTIGMATISATION OF KAAPS IN THE CLASSROOM

The different processes of standardisation or the expansion of the standard language takes place simultaneously on different levels: the print media and other media shape established specific language behaviour while rule-writing institutions write rules and the education system offer training.³ But for the purposes of this contribution I would like to focus on one aspect. Although the media must play a role to make people conscious of the destigmatising of Kaaps and other language varieties, education in my view is the most important sphere for the deployment of a more broadly constituted Standard Afrikaans. Often the

first cases of language disempowerment take place in the classroom. This language disempowerment in the face of the reigning standard language is not a matter limited only to South Africa or Afrikaans. Just think of the continual debates about the acceptance of language varieties reigning in the USA or the Caribbean islands (cf. Alexander (1980); Hairston (1992); Hollie (2001); Kynard (2007); Molloy (2007); Smitherman (1991); Toohey (1986); and Wilson (2012)).

Here, just as in countries like Jamaica or many American cities, teachers know that their students' non-standardised language varieties are stigmatised economically, culturally and even politically. They also know that, if they do not promote the standard language, the students who speak the variety, in the current case, Kaaps will be exposed to mockery and low performance expectations. Their pragmatic choice is thus the small, accumulative actions which disempower students from early on ("Speak correctly!" etc.). These are actions which give rise to students (and also adults) often losing the confidence to speak their mother tongue. How often do Kaaps speakers not prefer to use English in formal situations rather than Afrikaans? Often the cause is a deficient self-esteem: that they do not feel themselves competent to speak Standard Afrikaans. The real reason, we must realize, is the total disempowerment of first language speakers and along with it, the disempowerment of people to reach

2 That does not mean this matter is hereby dealt with. There is work to be done. For an enterprising student, Michel Foucault and the linkages he makes between discourse and power/knowledge would clearly be relevant in an extensive study about the nature of Cape Dutch or Kaaps and how its language form is reflected in (South)African literature.

3 Besides the aspects mentioned here, Ana Deumert reports inter alia that persons that speak different varieties, move closer to a standard language by mutual concession.

their full potential. We must thus ask ourselves if our curricula, our teaching practices accept and legitimise students' language identity.

This view does not imply that we must stop teaching Standard Afrikaans at school. Not at all. But it does mean that a greater awareness of the legitimacy of language varieties must be cultivated in education and the media. How do we create a positive attitude?

Teachers must be equipped with skills to value and promote an awareness of the place and dignity of non-standard Afrikaans. Once again it is about the empowerment of people and therefore the social and cultural experiences that these varieties reflect which must also be meaningfully integrated in the classroom. Further, the tuition of a comprehensive history of Afrikaans and all its speakers is indispensable. (Even today, after nearly two decades of democracy, the history of Afrikaans is not really taught multi-dimensionally.⁴) This means that over a school career, all learners should be equipped bi-dialectically (or even multi-dialectically). While the existence and validity of different language varieties are acknowledged, the importance of suitable language registers for different speech activities and circumstances should be also taught.

The result of a bi-dialectic approach in which the dignity of language varieties is emphasised, is that the dignity of their speakers is increased, while an

extended standard language stabilises this recognition at formal levels. We must remember that the vibrant future of Afrikaans does not lie in boardrooms, but that it is already taking shape on our multilingual urban streets like those of Cape Town and its townships.

EYE DIALECT IN AFRIKAANS POETRY

The rest of my presentation will deal with Cape dialect in Afrikaans literature. The use of dialect in literature has always been a controversial issue. A general characterisation of this rhetorical strategy is that the spoken language is presented through an informal orthography. This so-called 'eye dialect strategy' is not an exact phonetic transcription, but an idiosyncratic creation of the writer to place the emphasis on the deviating language pronunciation of his character speaker.⁵ Eye dialect thus really needs the standard language, because it is always created in contrast to the standard language, and often along with that carries meanings of inferiority and social exclusion (cf. Bowdre 1964:7).

I think that Kaaps, as it occurs in Afrikaans literature, often does not overcome the hazards of dialectic language usage. The versions of Afrikaans oral narrative forms in informal orthographies extend far back as indicated above until at least Boniface

4 This statement depends on the central place that practitioners of the Afrikaans philology played in the historiography of Afrikaans and Afrikaner nationalism and the effect their views had on school and university textbooks. The influential research of Hans den Besten, Paul Roberge and Ana Deumert about the origin of Afrikaans have not really been disseminated through local historiography of language or popular views. Especially Den Besten's work on the importance of Khoi influence should be mentioned here, and the importance that Roberge and Deumert attach to Kaaps Afrikaans, ought to receive greater emphasis.

5 The concept 'eye dialect' is a creation of the American linguist George P. Krapp and is differentiated from regional varieties. Eye dialect refers to the pseudo-phonetic spelling of standard lexical items to indicate social differences (see Bowdre 1964:2-3).

and his farce *De nuwe ridderorde of De temperantisten* (The new Knights' Templar, 1832) and his Khoi characters Manus Kalfachter and Grietje Drillboutsen who were represented comically. Already, in this farce, alcohol abuse, sauciness, stupidity and low social order portrayal play a prominent role.

Afrikaans writers like G.R. von Wielligh, I.D. du Plessis, Uys Krige, Van Wyk Louw, Boerneef, Peter Blum and André P. Brink all created some or other written form of colloquial language. Others who dared to write the Kaaps dialect form of Afrikaans were columnist Abdullah Abdurahman (under the pseudonym of Piet Uithalder in the A.P.O. mouthpiece) and prose writer S.V. Petersen respectively. Although

Abdurahman and Petersen were classified as Coloured, it is only Adam Small who realized that the connection between Coloured people and the Kaaps language variety had become practically inextricable (see Willemse 2007:168-69).

At this stage, I would like to point to a few outstanding aspects of the use of Kaaps as eye dialect, as found in a few poems. Firstly, I take Adam Small's poem "Oppie Parara" (On the Parade) from the "Dice" section of *Kitaar my kruis* (Guitar my Cross) The poem is well-known and I shall only quote relevant verses. The narrator is unnamed and reports in the standard variety a sale between two figures, the green hawker and his potential client:⁶

Die witvrou kannie
lag
en sy beveel:
ek wil niks hê nie,
die koelie
streng-formeel

The white woman
doesn't laugh
and she orders:
I want nothing
(to) the coolie —
strictly formal

These figures share one space, namely the historic Cape military parade ground, the 'Parade' which has since become a public market, among other things. They come from two different South African backgrounds: the one is a "coolie", the other a white woman. The term "coolie" recalls a person of Southeast Asiatic background with the attendant meanings that indicate his social place as a (non-white) lower class

manual labourer and implies a history of bondage, contrasting it to the (white) "madam" with all the implied South African meanings of social advantage. At first glance it is an interaction about the sale of the fruit, but it becomes a clear play on words challenging the apartheid prohibition on black-white sexual liaisons. The tension in the poem is borne out by the differences between the Kaaps variety and Standard Afrikaans.

⁶ An unknown colloquial variety may also be suggested here, cf. the use of "kannie" in the line "Die witvrou kannie lag", an orthographic representation that is not used elsewhere in the poem

Ma' mêrim, pô-pô, pô-pô en banana
 en juicy drywe yt die hartjie van die
 Kanaän
 of hoe fancy die mêrim so 'n vy
 kyk net hoe uitgaswel is hy
 van bo tot onner ytgady
 moenie blush nie mêrim
 ons het die blaaf daarby
 of miskien
 Ek wil niks hê nie hoor!
 Ma' mêrim

But Mêrim, paw-paw an banana
 an' juicy grapes from th' heart of th'
 Canaan
 or how does th' Mêrim fancy such a fig
 look how swollen he is
 bulging from top to bottom
 don't blush Mêrim
 we've the leaf as well
 or maybe
 I don't want anything, hear!
 But Mêrim

Important here is that Kaaps is not just seen as the variety of 'Coloureds', but also more broadly as that of a worker of Southeast Asiatic background ("a coolie", thus a so-called Indian or Asian).⁷ For my perspective it is, however, pertinent that the poem at this point breaks the stereotype: not the language of

'Coloureds' but of people from a working class background.⁸ Furthermore, in this case Kaaps is the sign of the challenger, a self-conscious challenge to the white social order, where all the stereotypes of subservience, lack of intelligence and hedonism are turned on their heads.

Haai mêrim haai
 sure mêrim wil nie try ons guavas
 ons guarantee hulle mêrim
 hulle's baie goed vi' die nerves!
 Die vrugtevent se stem trek agterna
 polisie, polisie
 ag nai mêrim, moet nou nie so
 spiteful wies nie
 sê tog decently goodbye
 raai
 die kaalgat perskes blow nog vi'
 mêrim

oh Mêrim oh
 sure Mêrim doesn't wanna try our
 guavas?
 we guarantee 'hem Mêrim
 they're very good f'r 'he nerves!
 the green hawker's voice trails off
 police, police
 oh no Mêrim, don't be so spiteful
 please say decently goodbye
 imagine
 'he nectarines 're blowing kisses f'r
 yeah, *Mêrim*

7 An alternative interpretation is also possible, namely that the white woman figure does not know the difference between 'coolies' and other members of the non-white workers community and uses 'coolies' as a generalization which would in itself will be poignant commentary on social relationships.

8 Thus: confirmation of stereotyping or stereotype destruction with reference to the discourse established around the connection between die Kaaps colloquial language, low social order and Khoi descendants or non-white Cape Dutch speakers since Boniface.

Other Small poems like “Die Here het gaskommel” (The Lord has rolled the dice) also from the “Dice” section of *Kitaar my kruis* do not escape stereotypical imaging. Here Kaaps is linked to a lower social order narrator, alcohol abuse (“’n kannetjie Oem Tas”), hedonism (“’n sigaretjie en ’n kannetjie

Oem Tas / en ’n lekker meid en lekker anner ding”) and the old stereotype of acceptance of a preordained lot (a “can’t worry” feeling which serves the speaker, probably ‘an ordinary man in the street’ die “skollie-pêllie”), as protection against the onslaughts of life.

Lat die wêreld ma’ praat pèllie los en vas
’n sigaretjie en ’n kannetjie Oem Tas
en dis allright pèllie, dis allright
ons kannie worry nie

’n sigaretjie en ’n kannetjie Oem Tas
en ’n lekker meid en lekker anner dinge
oe!
lat die wêreld ma’ praat pèllie los en vas
wat daarvan

Let ‘he worl’ chat, pal loose ’nd fast
a smoke an’ a jug Oem Tas
an’ its allright pal, its allright
we can’t worry

a smoke an’ a jug Oem Tas
’nd a good filly ’nd nice other t’ings
oh!
let ‘he worl’ chat, pal, loose and fast
so what

The additional strategies are those of repetition, especially repetition of the line “lat die wêreld ma’ praat pèllie los en vas” and the phrases “dis allright” and the question “wat daarvan” while

the doomed resignation (“en die dice het verkeerd gaval vi’ ons”) are linked to a mythical destiny (“daar’s mos kinnners van Gam en daar’s kinnners van Kain”) over which the speaker has no control:

wat maak dit saak
soes die Engelsman sê it cuts no ice
die Here het gaskommel
en die dice het verkeerd gaval vi’ ons
daai’s maar al
...
Nevermind
daar's mos kinnners van Gam en daar's
kinnners van Kain
so dis allright pèllie dis allright
ons moenie worry nie

what does’t matter
as the Englishman says it cuts no ice
the Lord has rolled the dice
which has fallen wrongly for us
that’s all
...
Nevermind
there are childr’n of Ham and childr’n
of Cain
so it’s okay, pal, it’s alright
let’s not worry

It is exactly this conspicuous link between the reigning stereotype and the Kaaps language variety which is opposed

in my only published poem in Kaaps, “fokkie dice pèllie” (from *Angsland*, 1981).

fokkie dice pèllie.
lat die wêreld praat pèllie, los e' vas.
'n y-kei forty-seven enne hêndgrenyt
pèllie
— dan's als ólright.

fok daai lekke dinge
pèllie
— freedom for the people
for the people suffer.

naai pèllie it cuts ice:
oralste val ous yt ve'sters
jump va' stêrkyses ...

soe, ons sil worrie pèllie.

die here het gaskommel:
— hier's djou splinterbom;

kô lat ons march
for: freedom isn't

free.

verstaan djy pèllie?

fuck d' dice ol' pal.
let da worl' talk pal, loose a' fast.
a AK-47 a' a hand grenade
ol' pal
— than all's all rite.

fuck t'em nice t'ings
ol' pal
— freedom for da people
for da people suffer.

no pal it cuts ice:
everywhere guys fall out'a windows
jump fro' staircases...

so, we'll worry ol' pal.

da gods shuffled:
— here's you's frag bomb;

come let's march
for: freedom isn't

free.

d'you understand, pal?

Here a political activist narrator speaks out against the hedonism and resignation in “Die Here het gaskommel”. The two poems are representative of two diverging world views. In “fokkie dice pèllie” the stereotypical associations — unbridled hedonism, cheerlessness and resignation — associated with Kaaps are rejected in favour of a rebelliousness where “freedom isn't // free” and the divine destiny is reversed with militant action: “die here het gaskommel: / — hier's djou splinterbom”. In this regard

it is also relevant that the capital letter of “Here” (Lord) in the Small poem is replaced by a lowercase “here” where thus, besides the reference to the Divinity, it also references human social order (“the gods” in the sense of ‘the men’, the rulers) is implied.

Yet, in spite of a few examples like these, I am of the opinion that in general an in-depth critical tradition about the use of Kaaps in literary works has not arisen. In a published analysis of Kaaps as poetic expression among black

Afrikaans poets which I wrote twenty-five years ago, I found that many of the acolytes of Small in the 1980s revealed a formulaic style:

The poems were often inhabited by different working class or proletariat characters (chiefly men) who were witnesses of a recent incident and related it in a comical way. For effect the poem depended on colloquial language and the oral strategies of repetition for emphasis. Comedy and wittiness formed an indispensable facet of the poetry ... the “cognitive ideological intention” ... depended on the portrayal of township life and introduction to working class people ... and the acceptance of ingrained

stereotypes. (Willemse 2007:170-71; cf. 166-75)

In many cases of poets who turned to the use of Kaaps in contemporary Afrikaans poetry little has changed regarding their use of this language variety. Compare for example the work of Loit Sôls in *My straat en anne praat-poems* (My street and other oral poems, 1998) where many of the poems contain all the familiar stereotypes: the poetry becomes the bearer of a predictable destiny and the (non-white) speaker is reduced to joker and clown. Thus the reader of the opening poem “Voowoot” (Foreword, Sôls 1998:7) is instructed “how to understand” this poetry and thereafter: “now laugh yourself to death”.

Hoit, my naam is Loit
en ek sal laik om
een ding te avoid
en dais confusion

Sóés hiés vi' jou 'n idea,
sonne om djêm om jou mon te smee,
van hoe om dié poetry te vestaan:

Broer raak brôê hiê,

Goodbye vi' nou
en liees ma' lekke nuh.
En oh yes, hiés 'n bietere idea:
liees ma' lieerste hatop,
lieesit virrie vrou
en lag vi' jille klaa.
Ek gan nou lekke hys toe
na my smoke-snoek en my katkop.

Hoit, my name's Loit
and I'd like to avoid
one t'ing
and that's confusion

So for you, here's an idea
Without unde-estimating you's
Of how to understand t'is poetrie

Brother becomes bro' here

Goodbye fo' now
And hav' a goo' read, hey.
And oh yeah, here's a betta idea
Rathe' read 't out loud
Read 't to th' wife
And laugh you'selves dead
I'm gonna go hom' now
To my smoked fish, 'n d half a loafy.

Sôls's poem as performance serves one purpose only: that of farce. The Kaaps colloquial language becomes a further confirmation of the discourse of disadvantage and exclusion linked to the underestimated, poor, happy-go-lucky, indifferent 'coloured' stereotype. There is no real difference to the language usage and the discourse established by Boniface and Bain in the early 19th century, except that these characters now, at their own expense, exhibit and proclaim their sauciness and backwardness from the (white?) middle

class norms to their (presumably white?) Afrikaans readers.

One finds a more positive rendering of Kaaps in Ronelda S. Kamfer's poem 'owners' response' where she reimagines the context of Kaaps creatively, undertaking an interesting play with place and time over centuries. The narrator in this case is Autshumao, 'Harry' the (Khoi) beachcomber. The poem breaks totally with the formulaic style I have previously described and forces the reader to consider anew the value of Kaaps as colloquial and written language.

toe ek klein was het my dêrra my 'n
 storie oovetel van 'n groot stêk
 siedier wat onner die wate lewe die dier
 het alles geown wat lielik
 wreed en moorerag is toe eendag besluit
 al die siediere die visse
 die slange die krappe alles wat onner
 wate woon om die wrede
 seemonste in 'n strik te vang siegras en
 bamboo is gevat en gevleg
 ennie stêk seemonste is vasgebin hy het
 baklei om los te ko als
 tevergeefs toe hy vas en hulpeloos is was
 die res van die siediere
 baie bly hul grootste vrees was nou vas
 (from: 'owners' response', Kamfer
 2011:28).

when I was small my dêrra retol' me a
 story of a big stron'
 sea creature tha' lived unde' 'he wate' th'
 animal owned everythin' that
 was nasty, cruel an' murd'rous until on'
 day all th' sea creatures th' fish
 th' snakes and crabs everythin' which
 lived unde' wate' decided to catch
 th' cruel sea monster in a trap 'hey took
 seagrass an' bamboo an' plaited it
 an' the stron' sea monste' was tied up he
 fough' to escape but
 to no ways' when he was caught an'
 helpless the rest of th' sea creatures
 wer' happy tha' their greatest fear had
 been trapped

My conclusion is that most poets who use this variety of Afrikaans in their work limit it mostly to a formulaic application and thereby confirm the stereotypes built up around Kaaps. This is one of the greatest dangers of dialect poetry or dialect writing in general. The poetry becomes an empty gesture

without impact which usually has a limited number of functions, chiefly to place emphasis on differences in accent and pronunciation or other perceived social deviations.

I would like to suggest that the promotion of the dignity of Kaaps Afrikaans does not need the informal

orthographies, eye dialect, we see in contemporary poetry. There are a wide variety of literary and rhetorical strategies which writers can use, for example typical speech rhythms, idiomatic language, specific regional lexical items of semantic variance, suitable imaging, different language registers or stylistic awareness, the tension between colloquial and formal usage, puns, aspects such as syntactic and morphological exceptions and yes, also phonetic variation.⁹ Even punctuation can play a role to convey the regional details of a fictitious character or speaker. And as every writer knows: less is more. To fall back on the informal orthography of Kaaps as eye dialect in search of black authenticity is, in my view limiting rather than expansive. And for our discussion today the question is simple: does it promote the dignity of Kaaps as spoken variety?

CONCLUSION

In closing: I have accepted in this presentation that Kaaps as a spoken variety must be valorised and dignified, but I could just as well begin with two basic questions: why Kaaps and why at this historic point in time? How we answer these questions refers to our laying off of old social categories, the establishment of a broader Afrikaans language community, and our place in a developing South Africa. The dignity of Kaaps in the last instance is not a linguistic issue, but is really about the dignity of all Afrikaans speakers.

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⁹ These rhetorical and technical writing strategies are recommended by different writers in writing programmes, see Toohey among others.

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