

David Kramer – an unauthorised biography

and

**Creative Nonfiction: Writing an Unauthorised Biography of David
Kramer**

by

Mario Maccani
(student no: 28599102)

submitted towards the requirement for a
Doctor of Philosophy degree
in the subject
Creative Writing

in the Faculty of Humanities
of the
University of Pretoria

Supervisor: Prof. HJ Pieterse

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ABSTRACT

This study is comprised of two parts: an unauthorised biography of the South African musician David Kramer, as well as a reflective look at the process of writing this biography. In this regard the following aspects were looked at closely: finding an appropriate style, biography versus propaganda, conjecturing, the bilingual nature of the text, problems of research, ethics, influences, make-believe, approach to the subject, intertextuality, and fictionalisation. The central question of the biography is to highlight the success of a fellow Worcester (the author's hometown) boy. The central research questions of the thesis are the fictionalisation of the nonfiction text, intertextuality, and the question of a text written in both English and Afrikaans.

With regard to the aforementioned fictionalisation, a biographical text is classified as “nonfiction”, because it deals with a real person and real events. However, a text such as *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography* presents an alternative perspective, in that the narrative often moves into fiction, or “creative nonfiction”.

Written texts are traditionally divided into two fields: fiction or nonfiction. Nonfiction is deemed to be fact, truth, whereas fiction is the fruit of an author's imagination. But perhaps the notion of truth versus untruth is too limited, and one should include the words “objectivity” and “subjectivity”. Some texts incorporate both elements, be they newspaper editorials which are mostly opinion, advertisements which are highly subjective, or biographies such as Taraborrelli's *Madonna – An Intimate Biography*,

which often reads as a novel. This doctoral thesis looks at *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography*, which is at times “faction”, to illuminate the sections where the text fell somewhere between fiction or nonfiction.

In attempting this exercise, intertextuality was useful in two ways. Firstly, to ground the text in a reality the reader could believe, as it brought “real” things to the text, such as song lyrics, photographs, et cetera, all things which brought some credibility to the truth of the text, and secondly to place the events being described in a certain timeframe.

The use of English and Afrikaans in the biography was to reflect that Kramer uses both languages in his songs, and furthermore, to give an idea of the South Africa at the time of Kramer’s early success: the divides of English/Afrikaans, white/black, liberal/conservative.

Key words: David Kramer, propaganda, conjecturing, bilingualism, research ethics, influences, make-believe, approach to biographical subject, intertextuality, fictionalisation, fiction, nonfiction, creative nonfiction, faction, fact, truth, objectivity, subjectivity, novel, biography, text, writing process.

SAMEVATTING

Hierdie studie behels twee gedeeltes: ’n ongemagtigde biografie oor die Suid Afrikaanse musikant David Kramer, asook ’n terugkykende blik na die skryfproses van hierdie biografie. In hierdie opsig is daar gekyk na die volgende aspekte: die soeke na ’n gepaste styl, biografie teenoor propaganda, gissing, die tweetaligheid van die teks, probleme met betrekking tot navorsing, etiese waardes, invloede, verbeelding, benadering tot die subjek, intertekstualiteit, en fiksionalisering. Die sentrale tema van die biografie is om die sukses van ’n mede Worcester (die skrywer se tuisdorp) seun te verhelder. Die sentrale navorsingsvrae van die proefskrif is die fiksionalisering van die niefiksie teks, intertekstualiteit, en die kwessie van ’n teks wat in beide Engels en Afrikaans geskryf is.

In verband met die voorafgenoemde fiksionalisering, word ’n biografiese teks as “niefiksie” geklassifiseer, siende dat dit te make het met ’n werklike mens en werklike gebeure, maar ’n teks soos *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography* het ’n alternatiewe perspektief, in die sin dat die narratief dikwels na fiksie beweeg, oftewel “kreatiewe niefiksie”.

Geskrewe tekste word tradisioneel in twee kampe verdeel: fiksie of niefiksie. Niefiksie word gesien as feit, waarheid, terwyl fiksie die vrug van ’n skrywer se verbeelding is. Maar miskien is die idee van waarheid teenoor onwaarheid te eng, en moet mens die woorde “objektiwiteit” en “subjektiwiteit” insluit. Sommige tekste inkorporeer beide elemente, soos byvoorbeeld ’n redaksionele kommentaar in ’n koerant wat grotendeels opinie is, advertensies wat hoogs subjektief is, of biografieë soos Taraborrelli se

Madonna – An Intimate Biography, wat dikwels soos ’n roman lees. Hierdie doktorale proefskrif neem *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography*, wat soms “faksie” is, in oënskou om die gevalle waar die teks iewers tussen fiksie of nie-fiksie geposisioneer is, te verhelder.

Intertekstualiteit was in twee opsigte handig tydens die skryf van hierdie teks. Eerstens, om die teks vas te grond in ’n werklikheid wat die leser kan glo, omdat dit “regte” dinge na die teks bring, soos liedjie lirieke, foto’s, ensovoorts, alles dinge wat geloofwaardigheid na die waarheid van die teks gebring het, en tweedens om die gebeure wat beskryf is in ’n sekere tydperk te plaas.

Die gebruik van Engels en Afrikaans in die biografie is om te reflekteer dat Kramer beide tale in sy liedjies gebruik, en nog meer, om ’n idee te gee van die Suid Afrika tydens Kramer se vroeë sukses: die gaping tussen Engels/Afrikaans, wit/swart, liberaal/konservatief.

Sleutelwoorde: David Kramer, propaganda, gissing, tweetaligheid, navorsingsetiek, invloede, verbeelding, benadering, intertekstualiteit, fiksionalisering, fiksie,iefiksie, kreatieweiefiksie, faksie/faction, feit, waarheid, objektiwiteit, subjektiwiteit, roman, biografie, teks, skryfproses.

Foreword

In 1982 I crammed into a Cape Town bookstore along with a horde of other fans, excited at the prospect of seeing David Kramer up close and possibly exchanging a few words with him. It was the book-signing of David's *Short Back & Sides*.

Of course I had seen David before, in concert at venues such as the now defunct *The Space* in Long Street, and around the hometown we both shared: Worcester. But this was different. David was now a star, and to me it seemed he had taken my Worcester with him. Magazines often mentioned the fact that he was born and raised there, and the town became part of David's lore. I was delighted that audiences liked his songs which described the very streets I had grown up on.

Even though David was to a large extent the same person I remembered from Worcester, there was now an aura around him. When standing in his company, you were aware that newspaper articles were written about him, that his voice was on the radio. My art teacher, Timo Smuts, had hosted dinner parties, where I had chuckled as David sang a song about kissing Sannie van der Spuy at the same swimming pool I frequented. After high school when we both found ourselves in Cape Town, I saw him wearing his armbank chic, as did a handful of the arty set. This attire was not new. In Worcester at the time, army greatcoats were high fashion in the winter, and velskoene were a must for boys, any season. Khaki shirts and trousers like those worn by farm workers were this avant-garde

group's idea of haute couture. So I truly felt that David was presenting me and my Worcester to the world.

There was something else, just out of the corner of my eye. By now the New Wave music scene had reached South Africa, with its philosophy that one didn't have to be American to have a voice. In addition, Mad Max had burst onto the cinema screens in 1979, and this non-American landscape had enthralled many. The time was riper than ever for a South African audience to appreciate a South African artist for what he or she was. And there was no mistaking David's South Africanness.

I remember the phenomenon of "Hak Hom, Blokkies". On the one hand I was glad that David was getting a lucky break, but on the other I was convinced that this song was just a novelty, and soon David would slip back to the folk scene from where he came, a handful of people (mostly friends or family) politely clapping. I was proved to be very wrong!

In 1986 I went back to study, this time at the University of Cape Town. I enrolled as a BA student, and in order to pay for my tuition fees I took a job at Campus Control, UCT's security section. Part of this job meant having to patrol the campus. One day whilst strolling through the university's theatre complex, Baxter Theatre, I came across a production being put through its paces. It was David's "District Six". I was surprised, and followed the "Broadway" part of Kramer's career as his musicals became successful internationally.

I was not as much a fan of the “musicals-David” as I was of the original poorwhite-bywoner-traveling-the-platteland-David, but I was glad for him, and those whose stories he was telling.

I dabbled with music myself, but very much as an amateur in a bedroom, recording three albums. As a fan of music, rather than a musician, I was constantly on the lookout for new sounds, new ideas. At that time there were virtually no international musicians to be seen on South African stages, so I settled for something else: auto- and biographies. I became a regular at the library in the Cape Town Town Hall, vicariously living through Elvis, the Stones, Jim Morrison, and many others. I often found myself wishing there was a Kramer biography, and this was when I first began toying with the idea of writing about David, although it was a very distant thought at that stage.

I began teaching English in South Korea and then Taiwan, living abroad for twelve years. During this time I enrolled at UNISA and completed my Masters degree in Creative Writing. By now the notion of putting something of David’s life on paper was becoming serious. I returned to South Africa a few times to visit family, ride the Argus, push my albums out on radio stations, and do research on the life and career of David Kramer. I went back to Worcester a few times, visited the graves of my parents, walked through the streets David and I had trod, feeling a tug at my heart when I saw boys wearing my old school uniform go by. When David attended high school, he went to Worcester Boys High, which later amalgamated with Worcester Girls High, becoming Worcester High

(now known as Worcester Gymnasium). I chatted to people in town about David, and there was always a sense of pride, as though the whole of Worcester had had a hand in his success. Many of the older folk were keen to talk about David's father, who had been injured in WWII.

The only problem was, being a Worcester boy gave me a certain "in", but when I indicated that I was thinking of writing something about David, as I felt I should mention, I sensed the laager being drawn in. There was that mistrust of some guy with a pen and notepad, as well as a protectiveness toward their favourite son. An example of this: I spoke to the Siddles, whose son Jamie had been a classmate of mine, and his brother Crispin a chum of David's, but the doors were very politely pulled shut when I fished for information about David. And I'm glad it was, as I wasn't comfortable snooping about, abusing my "in".

I left the Siddles, and walked past the house David and his brother John had grown up in. I looked at the garden, the front door, the roof, trying to establish some clue that this was a special place, a place of magic, where a boy could somehow breathe different air, which made dreams come true. As I stood there, aware that I was an imposter with my sneaky, private detective motive, I heard voices of children in a yard nearby, playing some game I couldn't quite pinpoint. But it reminded me so much of the games I used to play on the other side of the railway line in Hospital Park. It was so precious to me, and this mood, something almost tangible, is what I wanted to use as the starting point for my book.

It was clear to me that I wanted to tell the story of David, as well as myself – there would thus be an autobiographical undertone to the text, a melancholy trip down memory lane to the Worcester of my childhood, and to the South Africa that shaped (and still shapes) me. Thus, in the biography, I hope to move between fictional and factional writing, objective and subjective viewpoints. The fictional passages will help me to “create data” where information is unavailable, as this is an unauthorised biography, and the factional passages will hopefully ground the biography as a reality a reader can accept as plausible. This will lead to certain passages being more subjective than others. These passages will have to be reigned in, as they are not parts of, say, a poem, but rather passages to illustrate a real life. That being said, though, sometimes more can be said or inferred by being subjective about a subject’s character and motivations, and the matter of subjectivity as a useful tool cannot be denied.

Let me return to the biography. My thoughts began to gain clarity. I knew that I wanted to expose Kramer’s life from the Worcester that I knew, because it was the rural aspect that I was so attracted to in the early part of his career. I knew that there would be an element of autobiography to the intentioned text, as it was the Worcester and South Africa of my own early years that I saw in Kramer’s work, which motivated me to want to write about him. Those early songs and album covers really spoke to me on a level no other musician had, as I knew the ambience this art had been created in. There was an intensity to my relationship to the music and album artwork of Kramer’s early career, because I recognised many of the Worcester aspects from a first-hand experience, names of cinemas, restaurants, and so on.

I made up my mind to write a biography which would at times be fictitious. This was a way in which I could get around the fact that Kramer wasn't prepared to assist me in this project. When I spoke to him on the phone in 2008 he wasn't willing to participate in an authorised biography, but he gave me permission to write this unauthorised biography.

Seeing that Kramer wouldn't allow an authorised biography, I faced a serious problem, in that a huge source of information would not be available to me. There was an upside to this, though: if I had access to Kramer, I might have come under his spell and written little more than a public relations job. Seeing that I was on my own, I started with myself, my memories of the town we shared as boys, Worcester. I also began tracking down mutual acquaintances and conducted interviews, either by telephone, personal or correspondence.

In 2008 I enrolled as a PhD student at the University of Pretoria. I would finally get to write a Kramer biography as the creative part of my thesis. I began putting my notes into some semblance of order. I interviewed people for this book, dug up old newspapers, magazine articles, and went to the internet. To a large extent I wrote of the Worcester that I remembered from my own childhood. When I wrote about David's time at Leeds University, for example, I referred to the interviews I'd had with the university staff as a starting point, and then let the creative, fictionalisation process begin.

Therefore, for the biography I knew that I wanted to champion a local boy, in a manner which would have hints of autobiography. With regards to the academic part of the study the research question also became clear. I was interested to see whether it would be possible to write a text traditionally seen as nonfiction, such as a biography, as a piece of fiction. I soon realised that this would not be possible, as the piece still had to be grounded in fact. In my research I came across Root's (2003:243) term "creative nonfiction", where it is possible to have both fiction and nonfiction elements to the biography, and this was the lightbulb moment for me. There are other elements to the study, such as intertextuality, bilingualism, et cetera, but it is the fictionalisation of the text which is the central research question.

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Chapter 1

The street was quiet: no cars, no children racing on bicycles. Walking along was a teenage boy. He was slightly built, but had an air of purpose about him. His straight dark hair was as long as the school rules would allow, with a fringe that fell to his eyes. He was wearing his school uniform: grey trousers, light-blue shirt, and school tie. The tie was navy-blue, with light-blue and white stripes running diagonally. It was the Worcester Boys High School uniform.

The houses here were old and rustic. Most had roofs of corrugated zinc, and there were usually smooth cement stoeps in front of them, with old chairs, now empty, in the shade. Some of the houses had wooden shutters which could be pulled closed over the windows against the glare of the South African sunlight.

The trees in the large yards were ancient, with gnarled stems and dark leaves. The smell of rotten fruit on the ground was heavy in the dry late-summer air of Worcester. There were loquat trees in the yard of the house David was walking past now, the fruit bright yellow against the dark leaves, but where they lay on the ground they were brown and soft, lying between dried-out leaves. This house also had a stoep, in front, and running along the side. It was red, and David wondered how they managed that, whether it had been painted red, or had something been mixed into the cement when it was made?

Behind the roofs and trees, in the distance, were pale-blue mountains which towered into an even paler sky. It seemed that in any direction one looked in Worcester, there were mountains. In the winter the snow came and it always surprised David just

how low the snow lay, how beautiful it looked. Slowly, as the snow thawed in the warming weather, waterfalls would appear on the side of the mountain.

“Hey, Sweetpea!” someone called. “Howzit.”

David Kramer looked up. He saw the caller on the other side of the street and broke into a grin. When he smiled he was pure charm, soulful eyes alive with warmth, stretching from ear to ear. It was easy to understand why girls were attracted to him. It was because his mother and her friends also considered him cute, that they called him Sweetpea, after Popeye and Olive Oyl’s baby.

“Howzit,” David replied.

Through the small-town quiet came the sound of a saw. Someone was playing it. One put the saw over one’s lap and rubbed the edge with a bow, the same bow used to play a violin. The blade was bent up or down to make the tune. The mournful music reached the boys, exaggerated tremolo notes trembling on the fruit-scented air.

“What *kak* is that?” the boy across the street scoffed, but David listened intently, captivated.

Yes, it was overly-sweet kitsch, but it was a kitsch so bad that it had gone full circle, and was now beautiful in its own way. Most of the pop music David heard on the radio was beamed in from outside South Africa, LM Radio from Mozambique, or if you wanted the really heavy stuff you tuned in to Swazi Music Radio. This could only be heard at night on medium wave, and sometimes the signal was very faint, but they played music like Audience’s album *House on the Hill*.

At the time, the Worcester teenagers were playing 7-singles at parties, black vinyl records which were seven inches in diameter. According to www.rock.co.za, the pop hits for 1969 were:

- Suspicious Minds - Elvis Presley
- Don't forget to Remember - The Bee Gees
- You can Cry if you want to - The Troggs
- My Sentimental Friend - Herman's Hermits
- Crimson and Clover - Tommy James and the Shondells
- Cry to Me – The Staccatos
- Time is Tight - Booker T and The MGs
- Sugar Sugar - The Archies
- Saved by the Bell - Robin Gibb
- Jesamine - The Casuals

A big hit of 1969 was Peter Sarstedt's "Where Do You Go To My Lovely?", and it was one of the songs you *had* to be able to play if you had a guitar.

"Okay, check you," the friend said in the typical Worcester colloquialism.

"Check you," David replied.

David went on his way, walking through the streets towards Western Furniture, the shop where his father worked.

David passed a music store, and went in to look at the guitars.



Downtown Worcester.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/capelight/183665053/in/set-72157594189985584/>

Chapter 2

Solly Kramer worked for his father as a salesman at Western Furnishers. Like many other young men at the time, his life was interrupted by World War II. When he came back from the war he walked with a limp from an injury he suffered in the fighting. He settled back into his routine, until he met a young woman.

He courted Frances Miller and soon she accepted his marriage proposal. They moved into a middle-class suburb called Langerug, on the edge of town. From home it was a short walk before Solly found himself in the veld. There were almost no flowers, only round, brown-green bushes, and a few clumps of tall eucalyptus trees. The tough bushes could withstand the hot wind that blew in summer or the biting chill that came down from the mountains in winter.

It was a very different landscape to the one which the inhabitants of Langerug were trying to cultivate. Their gardens were attempts at recreating a slice of Europe, green lawns surrounded by bright flower-beds, sprinklers rotating on the lawns, chip-chip-chip-chip. Children ran about, trying to duck under the spray, their laughter ringing out in the peaceful quiet of Worcester in the 50's.

Solly was a diligent worker and he did his best to take care of his family. During the week he worked long hours and on Sundays he enjoyed a game of golf. Sometimes he and Frances went to the Worcester yacht club to relax and catch up on the local gossip.

Their firstborn was a boy. They named him John. At an early age John exhibited a love for drawing. Then came a second child, another boy, on 27 June 1951. This boy they named David.



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/capelight>



This old cinema slide was a great find. It would have been projected in one of the two local bioscopes in Worcester (South Africa). It shows an interior shot of what the then 'new' Western Furniture shop looked like in the late 1930's. This is the only interior shot of the store that I have seen. The store belonged to Mr Harry Fox of Cape Town and my grandfather was the local manager. I think that's my grandfather serving a customer in the background.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/capelight>

Chapter 3

Worcester was about an hour and a half's drive from Cape Town before the new tunnel was built. The drive went through the Brandwacht Mountains, the narrow road winding up and up. Solly loved the name: The Fireguard Mountains. He and Frances would load up the Austin and take the family on rare trips to Cape Town where they could swim in the ocean. More regular were the drives around Worcester. A favourite spot was the Karoo Gardens. On these ventures John and David went nearly mad with boredom. While their parents read the *Sunday Times*, sitting in fold-up camping chairs, the boys were wondering when they were going home.



Drawing by David Kramer, (p.47 *Short Back and Sides*)

The Karoo gardens were on the foothills of the surrounding mountains. The boys would walk around, the smell of the dusty dry air rich with the aroma of the succulents native to the area. They were ugly plants, the boys thought, with thick, spiky leaves. Sometimes there would be an orange flower on top. The soil was a powdery orange-brown. The call of birds would travel for miles on the clear hot air.

One time, it was dead quiet. John and David set out to investigate. They walked to the edge of the plateau where their father had parked the car and gazed out over Worcester which lay sleeping below them. From up here the boys could see the grey ribbon of road far below. A vehicle came along the highway, a small speck in the distance, too far away for them to hear it.

“Look, there’s a road,” David told John. “With a car.”

“That’s the N1,” John informed his younger brother. “It goes all the way to Johannesburg.”

“To Johannesburg?!” David gasped.

“Where they get the gold.”

David stared wide-eyed at the road far below, and the car moving along it. Johannesburg! David could not get enough of this road and the idea that it went as far away as the city of gold. He didn’t have words to describe the emotions he felt, but it was something wonderful.

From then on, David couldn’t wait for his parents to take them on picnics to the Karoo gardens. He would drag his fold-up chair so that it faced down the slope of the hill and watch the N1 highway far below. He pretended that he was driving to Johannesburg. He had conversations with people in his head, all kinds of exciting, glamorous people.

At this time David and John attended Worcester Boys Primary School, until John went on to high school. Both institutions were about fifteen minutes walk from home, which was on De Vos Street. The houses had large gardens in the front, and the pavements were lush lawns. In the yards were trees with neat holes around them, the grass carefully cut away. The gardener trimmed the edge by stepping down on a spade, slicing off the excess grass.

David would cross the big road all by himself, walk down the slight incline, and there it was: Worcester Boys Primary. The primary school and the high school were next to one another in those days, and the boys wore similar uniforms. To one side of the primary school was a church, and in front were the workshops for the blind. The workers made furniture from cane, and this is where the teachers got their weapons: cut-offs from the workshops.

David often saw blind people walking along the streets of the town. Sometimes they had Labrador guide-dogs, but usually they guided themselves with a white stick. They'd let the tip slide along the water furrows which ran alongside the roads. These furrows carried water from Hospital Dam down to the old part of town. It was great to play in the sluices, barefoot and splashing. The water trembled over the children's hands as they tried to dam up the water. Sometimes small tadpoles would slip by and the kids would shriek with horror and excitement.

David's first teacher, in Sub A and B, was Mrs Bybee. The two classes were put together in one big classroom. It was right next to the principal's office and all the students had the feeling that there was a looming presence of authority over them. When

the bell for break rang, they raced past the principal's office before he could see them, and somehow catch them out on something they had done or had forgotten to do.



The shoes David is wearing could well be his first pair of school shoes, quite possibly Bata Toughees. (p.10 *Short Back and Sides.*)

In Standard 1 and 2 he was in Miss. Dryer's class. She was sweet-natured and soft-spoken, and would always praise her charges when they read well. Reading was easy for David. Miss Dryer taught them a poem that he loved:

Fatty and Thinny went to bed.
Fatty rolled over, and Thinny was dead.

One Saturday afternoon in Standard 2 Solly called the boys to the kitchen table, where he was doing the books.

“Look,” he grinned. “It’s the new money.”

“Wow!” John exclaimed, taking one of the notes in his hands.

David stood on his toes and also leaned over the table.

“Let me see! Let me see!” he demanded.

Up until then the currency in South Africa had been the British Pound. The boys held the strange rands in their hands, crisp and neat. John took a coin and turned it over, inspecting it on both sides.

South Africa became a republic in 1961, and the children in Worcester were taught that South Africa had beaten the mighty United Kingdom, freeing herself from the shackles of the Commonwealth. There had been a big deal about that, and children from all the schools had lined High Street, waving small flags. But it was only white people lining the streets, freshly scrubbed and hair neatly brushed.

The previous year 69 people had been killed in Sharpeville by the police. The Pan African Congress had organised a protest against the carrying of pass books. A group of between 5,000-7,000 people had converged on the Sharpeville police station to offer themselves up for arrest for not carrying the books.

Since then there had been a vague, nagging sense of unease. David watched his father count the new money, doing grown-up work. It didn’t feel the same anymore.

Sometimes his parents spoke in hushed tones, using words like “government, ANC, and Mandela”.

Suddenly there was a commotion outside. It sounded like the lady next door. She was screaming.

“And now?” Solly wondered out loud, getting to his feet.

They rushed outside. David stood squinting for a moment in the bright sunlight. Then he saw the woman in her front garden. She was on her knees, cradling her son in her arms. The boy was about five years old. He was lying on the ground, his shoulders and torso in his mother’s lap. She shook him.

“Wake up!” she was screaming.

David and John went closer, but only by a few steps. They watched as Solly and Frances ran over to the neighbour’s house. It was horrible, but David couldn’t look away. He was close enough to see that the little boy’s eyes were rolling around left to right.

“That’s a scorpion sting,” Solly informed his neighbour. “We have to take him to the hospital.”

“Garth isn’t here ..!” the woman wailed. “He’s out!”

“I’ll take him in my car,” Solly decided. “Wait here.”

He looked over at the boys.

“Get my keys, John. Shake a leg, now.”

John dashed into the house to retrieve the car keys.

Solly picked the lad up and carried him to his driveway. Frances opened the car door and her husband placed the boy in the backseat. His mother sat down next to him.

John came running up with the car keys. Solly got in and started the car. David and Frances watched as Solly reversed out of the driveway. The car disappeared from sight.

Later when Solly returned, David and John crowded him in the living room as he dropped his keys on the table next to his favourite chair, right where he always put them.

“What happened, Daddy?”

“He’s going to be alright,” Solly shared, sitting down with a sigh.

“Where did the scorpion sting him, Daddy?” John wanted to know.

“In South Africa,” Solly teased.

“Daddy ..!” John whined, pretending to be angry. “Where?”

“On his foot.”

Frances was still standing, her arms folded. She had a worried frown on her face.

“You boys must be careful,” she admonished.

In Worcester the kids ran around barefoot, and it was par for the course to come home with bleeding toes or cuts under their feet. They were always treading on nails and thorns. And when they walked through the bush, God alone knows what was waiting for them in those dark shadows under the khaki-green bushes.

Chapter 4

One of the most important things that happened to David in standard 3 was hearing Jeremy Taylor on the radio. It was one of the big hits of that year:

Ag Pleez, Deddy

Ag pleez, Deddy, won't you take us to the drive-in?
All six, seven of us, eight, nine, ten!
We wanna see a flick about Tarzan an' the Ape-men,
An' when the show is over you can bring us back again.

Chorus: Popcorn, chewing gum, peanuts an' bubble gum,
Ice cream, candy floss an' Eskimo Pie!
Ag, Deddy, how we miss nigger balls an' liquorice,
Pepsi Cola, ginger beer and Canada Dry!

Ag pleez, Deddy, won't you take us to the fun-fair?
We wanna have a ride on the bumper-cars.
We'll buy a stick of candy floss and eat it on the octopus.
Then we'll take the rocket ship that goes to Mars.

Chorus.

Ag pleez, Deddy, won't you take us to the wrestling?
We wanna see an ou called Sky High Lee.
When he fights Willie Liebenberg, there's gonna be a murder,
'Cos Willie's gonna donner that blerrie yankee.

Chorus.

Ag pleez, Deddy, won't you take us off to Durban?
It's only eight hours in the Chevrolet.
There's spans of sea an' sand an' sun an' fish in the aquarium.
That's a lekker place for a holiday.

Chorus.

Ag pleez, Deddy...

Voetsek!

Ag sis, Deddy, if we can't go to bioscope
Or go off to Durban, life's a hang of a bore.
If you won't take us to the zoo, then what the heck else can we do
But go on out and moer all the oukies next door?

David loved the South Africa of the song. The film in his head clearly saw the images, almost as if he and his family were watching it in a drive-in like the song's. What also got David's attention was the delivery. Jeremy Taylor sang in an accent which, even though David didn't know anyone who actually spoke like that, appeared to be the accent of working class men in Johannesburg. After all, almost every time someone told a joke in South Africa, it was delivered in this accent.

The pop charts of 1962 were (www.rock.co.za):

- I can't stop Loving You – Ray Charles
- Telstar – The Tornadoes
- Peppermint Twist – Joey Dee & The Starlighter
- I Remember You – Frank Ifield
- Good Luck Charm – Elvis Presley
- The Locomotion – Little Eva
- Speedy Gonzales – Pat Boone
- The Young Ones – Cliff Richard & The Shadows
- The Stripper – David Rose
- Can't help falling in Love – Elvis Presley

In 1962 Worcester had no traffic lights, or robots, as they were called by the locals. Even High Street, the most important street in the town, had none. The joke in town was that if there was a robot and it turned green, the cows would eat it.

When David walked down the hill from Langerug to High Street, he would find himself at the western side of town. Here High Street ran into The Drostdy, one of the high schools. Drostdy was the arch enemy of Boys High, which David would soon be attending. Turning left, David strolled on past the Shell garage. A little further along was the Caltex. He crossed over Porter Street, and now the Mobil garage was to his left, next to the *Worcester Standard*, the weekly newspaper. Across the road was the Koffiehuis Café with the fish and chips shop, Madeira, next to it. Mr. De Nobrega had been the first shop owner in town to get one of the Curly Whip ice cream machines, and the town flocked to his shop, anxiously watching as he pulled the lever, letting a thick, delicious flow of ice cream ooze down into the cone. He would move the cone around and around, letting the ice cream pile up. One, two, three turns. You could have a Flake in the cone, so that the ice cream covered it, with a cherry on top.

The boys in David's class generally agreed: Tex and Lunch Bar were the two best chocolates. Kit Kat was also pretty good. And don't forget about Chox. Those were yummy!

But today David had no money, and in any case, it was too cold for ice cream. Well, not really. It could never be too cold for ice cream. Now that it was winter, the boys weren't barefoot anymore, except when they played rugby.

Tomorrow would be the last test match between the Springboks and the Lions. The 1962 tour had not been kind to the British Lions. They had lost the three previous

tests, and everybody expected another Springbok victory the next day in Bloemfontein. David had heard his parents muttering something about Nelson Mandela being on the run, their faces troubled, but it was the rugby that everybody was discussing. Mannetjies Roux, Jannie Engelbrecht, Mof Myburg, Avril Malan. These were the names all the boys were banding about. And of course, the captain, Johan Claassen.

Suddenly David's attention was caught by an unusual sight at Droomer's Garage. It was one of the men who filled your car with petrol. He was sitting on the concrete platform where the petrol hoses were. There were no cars now, so he had some free time. He held a homemade guitar. The body was made from a Castrol Oil tin. The big hit that year was Little Eva's "The Locomotion", which would later be a hit for Grand Funk Railroad, and also a massive hit for Kylie Minogue. But this music was nothing like what David heard on the radio, unless by chance it was tuned to Radio Xhosa.

The petrol-pump attendant was stomping a foot as he sang one line again and again in a rather high, sweet voice. The guitar line was just a few notes, and the last part of the riff was the same note, played a few times rapidly. David watched, taking it in.

The man grinned widely at David, tilting his head forward slightly to indicate he was singing the song to David now.

"Jy, kaffir!" someone shouted from inside the garage. "Hou op met raas en kom help my."

David started. The tone of voice was exactly the same as the bullies who called to him. "Hei, jy! Rooinek!"

The musician reluctantly put down his guitar and went over to the service centre, disappearing into the gloom. David had a good idea how the man felt. He went on his way.

“Daddy, can I get a guitar?” he asked his father that night.

“A guitar?!” Solly asked, surprised.

Solly’s hand hovered over the bowl, ladle in his hand, the food forgotten. He looked at his youngest son in wonderment.

“A guitar?” he repeated, and once again David nodded his head emphatically.

“He wants to be Elvis Presley,” Frances teased.

“His hair’s too short,” John pointed out, and they all laughed.

“I’ll think about it,” Solly said.

“Please, Daddy ..!” David begged.

“I said, I’ll think about it,”

David knew it would be prudent to drop the subject. For now.

Saturday morning. The winter rains had come and gone, but it was still bitterly cold. The mountains were capped with snow. As David came gliding down the slight hill past school on his bicycle, he saw there was a high school rugby game in progress. He took a quick look. He hoped for their sake they weren’t playing Drostdy, because if they were, they were probably going to lose again. Parents were standing on the edge of the field, huddled in warm coats. There was a commotion, rising, subsiding, and then rising again. That could mean that Boys High were close to scoring a try, but more likely it was Drostdy that were about to score.

David turned in at the gates. He was hoping to see one of his friends. There were quite a few cars parked in the school grounds, behind the boarding school, and next to the metalwork shop. David stopped his bike and looked about, legs straddling the Raleigh.

From one of the cars came the sound of music. It was The Briels.

“Dit het gebeur op die trein naaaa Pretoooriaaaaa...,” sang Sannie Briel.

It sounded more like a church hymn than a song heard on the radio, but there it was, the heartbreaking song of poverty, an armbank meisie trying to get to the capital, Pretoria, to see her dear dying mother.

Dit het gebeur op die trein na Pretoria
Die weer was bitterlik koud
In 'n hoekie sit 'n meisie
Sy lyk vir my skaam en benoud

Die kondukteur die vra toe haar kaartjie
Sy het nie geld om een te koop
Maar ek moet gaan na Pretoria
Al moet ek ook daarheen loop

My Moeder die lê daar op sterwe
en ek's haar enigste kind
en ek moet gaan na Pretoria
As ek haar ooit nog lewend wil vind.

David knew about The Briels. Their forced rhyme-schemes, images of poverty, and low-budget recordings made them “real”, and “the people’s musicians”, according to their fans. They were well known for their slow tear-jerkers, until they seemed to become a parody of themselves, turning out the same melancholy self-pitying records time after time. He remembered looking at one of their albums at the OK Bazaars.



<http://www.jump.co.za/product/frans-en-sannie-briel-9094027.htm>

On the cover were Frans and Sannie, somewhere in the bush. It looked like it was the Transvaal. The couple seemed more like undertakers than singers. The foliage was tall, dry grass - a bleak and depressing picture. David had flipped through the records and found another Briels record, also on the Pêrel label. There were tracks such as:

- Die Dag As Ek Sterf,
- Drie Wit Kruisies,
- Die Sterwende Kind Se Boodskap,
- Saans Deur Die Tralies,
- Ter Nagedagtenis Van 435 Mynwerkers – Deel 2,
- Mammie Is Alles Verby?,
and
- Vou Jou Handjies.

The titles of these songs say much of their oeuvre:

- The Day I Die,
- Three White Crosses,
- A Dying Child's Message,
- At Night Through the Bars,
- In Memory of 435 Mine Workers – Part 2,
- Mummy, Is It All Over?,
and
- Fold Your Little Hands.

The Briels's obsession with strife and death are clear in these titles. Particularly interesting is the song dedicated to the mine workers who died in a gruesome mining accident. This shows that The Briels had a deep affinity for working men and women, people who toiled hard, in dangerous conditions, workers who, when they workers died, they were not forgotten and pushed to one side, as possibly the mine owners did, but were praised, their life of struggle commemorated in song.

On 21 January 1960, 435 miners and 70 horses died when a tunnel in the Coalbrook coal mine collapsed. The implicit message was that the working men and women were gunfodder for the wealthy ruling class.

David was intrigued by this. To him the songs were ruined by overbearing sweetness, kitsch, but yet, there was something about The Briels. How did they become the champions of the people? It wasn't enough for David to scoff and declare that their fans adhered to the law of the lowest common denominator – surely the majority have the rule, whether David might think of their tastes less than his. And all things being said, David felt, they sure had a knack for writing songs in their particular genre.

How much of it was true and how much was myth, he wasn't sure, but it was pretty interesting, either way. The story went that Frans and Sannie Briel were orphans, and when they grew up they got jobs at Yskor. Sannie even operated a crane! David figured she was a hell of a lady.

He didn't see any of his friends, so he got back on his bike and made his way to Western Furniture. When he got there he leaned the bike against a wall and made his way inside.

“Hello, Daddy,” he greeted.

Solly nodded his head. He was busy with a customer.

David noticed an elderly man close by. It seemed as though he was Saturday window-shopping. The man was a coloured, and he looked as though he was a farm labourer. He was wearing his weekend best, but the clothes seemed to be second-hand, maybe donated by the chap's church. He had a grey goatee, and his face was very wrinkled. He wore a black hat with a band of black satin around it. What immediately caught David's attention was the guitar he held by the neck.

“Kan jy daai ding speel?” David asked.

The man looked down at the guitar.

“Laat ek vir kleinbaas wys,” he offered.

The man bent over slightly and lifted his right leg, standing on the toes of his right foot. He put the guitar on his thigh and pressed it against his waist. David realised that although there was a chair next to him, he didn't sit on it, as though he felt it would have been disrespectful.

David watched as the man tuned the guitar. First the thick string on the top. Then the next, and so on. Finished, he strummed the guitar. To David it sounded perfect, but the man wasn't satisfied. He turned one of the machine heads a bit, then another, and finally he was ready.

By now Solly had come over.

“Can he play something, Daddy?” David asked.

“Of course,” Solly replied. “Toe, laat ons hoor.”

The man grinned widely, beaming at them. He took a breath, and strummed the first chord, pressing the guitar against his chest, but Solly pulled a nearby chair closer.

“Sit,” he told the man. “By the way, wat's jou naam?”

“Klaas, Baas,” he answered, still hesitating about sitting on the chair. “Ek is Klaas van Rooyen, van die Plaas Koelfontein.”

“Nou ja, Klaas, speel. Laat ons hoor.”

Klaas sat down, shifted the guitar in his lap, and began playing. It was an up-tempo number, typical of the boermusiek style. Kadoom-chic, kadoom-chic went the beat. Klaas tilted his head back and hollered in a nasal voice.

“Wit brood en jam, wit brood en jam ..!”

C major, G 7th, and back to C major.

“Lita, o, Lita, kom eet tog saam met my ...”

By now the few people in the store had ambled over and were watching Klaas play, smiles on their faces.

“O, wit brood en jam, wit brood en jam ..!”

David realised there was something else in the smiling faces. It was as though they were watching a performing monkey. David wondered whether Klaas was aware of this. If he was, he didn't show it.

“Lita, o, Lita ... Jy het die pot, en ek het die lepel ...”

There was a roar of approval from the small audience, and Klaas let out a naughty cackle. David didn't see what was so funny.

“Wit brood en jam, o, wit brood en jam ..!”

The song went on its bumpy way, and then came the last chord, some snazzy augmented arrangement that would have been at home in any jazz number.

“Wat se liedjie is daardie?” Solly asked. “Ek ken hom nie.”

“Dis my eie liedjie, Baas,” Klaas replied.

“Jou eie liedjie ..!” Solly exclaimed, surprised.

David took the words in. This was amazing, that you could make up your own songs, and have people enjoy them.

“Dan is jy mos 'n talentvolle kêrel, Klaas,” Solly said.

“Ooeeee ..!” Klaas laughed in a high voice, clearly delighted at the praise.

When he laughed he displayed a big pink mouth without teeth. He beamed at the people around him. Then he stood up.

“Hoe weet jy wat die chords is?” David asked.

Klaas sat down again and formed the A major chord.

“Hierdie is A,” Klaas informed David. “En hierdie is B.”

David watched as Klaas played the chords.

“So daar is sewe chords?” David asked. “A, B, C, D, E, F en G?”

“Dis hy,” Klaas replied. “Saam met die minors, en so aan.”

“Miners?”

Klaas formed A minor and strummed the strings.

“Ek hou van daai chord,” David declared.

“Dis A minor,” Klaas told him. “Hier, laat Kleinbaas probeer.”

Klaas got up and handed David the guitar. David sat down, the guitar in his lap. His fingers were clumsy, and he didn’t know how to form any chords. Klaas took his fingers and placed them in the right places. David strummed. It was awful.

David beamed from ear to ear.

“A minor ..!” he grinned.

After that David’s nagging was relentless. He wanted a guitar. Please, could he get a guitar. Please, please, please. He nearly drove Solly mad.

David was small for his age, but what he lacked in bulk, he more than made up for in tenacity. Like Solly, he was a pretty nifty sportsman and did well on the tennis court, running down every ball like a terrier. Eventually his persistence paid off.

Solly stood in the showroom of Western Furniture, his hands on his hips, a frown between his eyes. Ask him anything about the furniture in his shop, and he could tell you, but he had to admit to himself that when it came to guitars, he was in the dark. And now his youngest son wanted one.

“What do you know about guitars, Bruce?” Solly called over to his salesman.

“You play guitar, don’t you?”

“A bit. Why? Are you thinking of becoming a rock and roller?”

Bruce flapped his legs about and hunched up his shoulders, presumably mimicking Elvis Presley. Solly chuckled.

“No, David wants one,” he replied.

“If David’s really serious about music, then I suggest you get him a good guitar. You get what you pay for.”

Solly nodded his head, taking Bruce’s words in. Then he went over to his desk and sat down. He looked up the number of the agents in Cape Town and called them.

“S & G Importers. May I help you?” answered a young woman.

“Yes. This is Solly Kramer from Western Furniture. Could you put me through to Martin Schneider, please?”

“You’re going through.”

There was some static on the line, and then a booming voice.

“Schneider. How may I help?”

“Martin? Solly here. I’m looking for a guitar. For my son, David.”

“Sure. What do you have in mind?”

“Well, I’m open to suggestions. You’re the expert. Give me some ideas.”

“That depends on how much you’re willing to spend, Solly.”

“Well, he’s never played before, but he’s been driving me crazy with guitar this and guitar that. At any rate, I thought I’d give you a call ...”

“Uhm, you might want to get him a nylon-string guitar. It’s easier on the fingers, if he’s a learner.”

“Fine. What else do you have?” Solly wanted to know.

They discussed the matter for a few more minutes, Solly getting as much information as he could.

“Okay, thanks a lot,” Solly said once he had decided on a guitar for David.

One day there was a delivery at the store. It was David’s guitar. Solly was eager to get home that night to give David what he had been nagging for for so long.

When he came home he parked the car and went inside. Frances was in the kitchen, and saw the big box in his hands.

“What on earth is that?” she wanted to know.

“David’s guitar,” Solly replied with a grin.

Solly went to David’s bedroom, Frances close behind. David was lying on his bed, reading. It was Enid Blyton’s *The River of Adventure*. He looked up and saw his parents in the doorway and the large cardboard box under his father’s arm. He knew exactly what it was! He jumped up, the book forgotten. Kiki the parrot, along with Jack, Philip, Dina and Lucy-Ann, would have to wait.

“A guitar! Thank you, Daddy!”

Solly watched as David laid the box on his bed, opened it, and took out the brand new guitar. It was almost as big as his son. David sat down on the edge of the bed and put the guitar in his lap, his head bent over the new possession as he gripped the neck. He tried to make a chord, but the sound was horrendous.

“There’s a book in the box,” Solly informed David.

David peered into the box, and yes, there it was. *100 Guitar Chords*. He took it out, opened it, and looked at the photographed hands in the pictures. He copied what he saw with clumsy fingers. Solly and Frances left the room but David was hardly aware.

“I’m sure this fad will soon blow over,” Frances told Solly.

The guitar, once he had it, was somewhat of an anticlimax for David. It made an awful sound, and the strings hurt his fingertips when he tried to make a chord. Whilst the music wouldn’t come, David posed in front of the mirror, adjusting the height with which he held the guitar over his chest. He decided that really low, over his hips, was the coolest pose, and when he was red-hot on a stage somewhere, that would be the pose for him.

He practiced playing chords, and bit by bit the strings didn’t buzz too badly anymore, but he was still a way off from where he could change from one chord to another in an effortless, smooth action.

Chapter 5

Standard 4 was nothing to write home about for David. He heard his parents speak about the arrest of senior African National Congress members at Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia, Johannesburg. Mauritius and Cameroon barred both South Africa and Portugal from their sea- and airports. When South Africa wanted to buy submarines from the United States, the request was a difficult one for the US, as America was aware of the unpopularity of South Africa's apartheid policies.

In the winter of that year the Australian rugby team travelled to South Africa. The test series was a draw, two matches each.

Towards the end of 1963 the South African cricket team also took the long trip 'Down Under'. The 5 match series came out even, a win a piece to each team, the other 3 matches drawn.

The Beatles had a very good year, with three big hits: "From Me to You", "She Loves You" and "I want to Hold your Hand". Cliff Richards and The Shadows also fared very well, charting with three hits of their own: "Bachelor Boy", "Summer Holiday", and "Foot Tapper" (without Cliff Richard).

David was slowly making inroads with the guitar, trying to copy the songs from the radio with limited success. Like most boys learning to play the guitar, "The House of the Rising Sun" was the first song he learnt.

Without a doubt, the most nauseating song of the year was "I Like It!" by Gerry and The Pacemakers.

“I liiiiike it... I liiiiike it ..!” yelled Gerry in his irritatingly high, apparently cockney voice.

Cor blimey, guv!

That’s what Billy Bunter and the other characters from the annuals said. *Beano* and *Hotspur* were comics from Britain. Each year a thick hardcover “annual” came out, which Worcester boys eagerly awaited.

Wotcher, mate.

Skid Solo raced to another chequered flag, Billy the Cat jumped from rooftop to rooftop, and Dennis the Menace did his best to be wilder than the Bash Street Kids. Roy of the Rovers was another favourite, scoring match-winning goals in the final seconds of each game.

David grew his hair as long as he could, which wasn’t any great length. Inevitably, his endeavours to look like a Beatle were cut short by school rules. The best David and his chums could do was to instruct the barber not to cut their fringes. However, more than one boy pushed it too far, letting his hair grow until it fell to his eyebrows. Whilst this was the desired level of hip, it was beyond what Worcester Boys Primary would tolerate, and the troublemaker would have to go back to the barber. A few unlucky lads were made to sit on top of their desks while their teacher hacked off the offending fringe with a pair of blunt paper scissors.

The last year of David’s primary school was spent with Mr. Ellis, a quiet, gentle man, except when it came to the weekly spelling tests which happened every Friday, without fail. There would be ten questions, and only two were allowed to be wrong. If you tried to change a letter while writing the word, it counted as an error. Three mistakes,

and you got cuts. The boys who failed the test had to line up at the front, and bend over when their turn came. The cane would come swishing down, delivering a tremendous whack!

Mr. Ellis's eldest son, Johan, would later become a Springbok water-skier. His other son, Flippie, turned out to be a very good squash player.

Mr. Ellis was also a part-time photographer, and many people in Worcester went to his studio in High Street to get their portraits done. It was opposite the library where David and his friends discovered *The Secret Seven*, *The Famous Five*, *the Castle of Adventure*, and the Afrikaans stories about Trompie, and Sias en Mias.

Failing the weekly spelling tests was bad, but even worse were the constant threats from the Afrikaans students. Every morning before school the boys would gather in the playground. The English kids would make a line, holding hands, as would the Afrikaans. Then, yelling and screaming, the two lines would run straight at one another. Almost every time the English line would break. The Afrikaans kids were huge, especially the ones in the special box. If you failed three times, you went to the special box. They were a group of separate classrooms, more like the offices found at a construction site. Some of the students were as old as fifteen, and they were nothing but raw power. David was very wary of them.

Worcester was a very Afrikaans town. Worcester High was to be the English-medium school and Montana the Afrikaans equivalent. However, of the six matric classes at Worcester High, five were in fact Afrikaans-medium.

“Jy, jou fokken rooinek ..!” someone would call, and one would have to run for one's life.

The Nobel laureate JM Coetzee makes the following remark about growing up in Worcester in his memoir, *Boyhood – Scenes from Provincial Life* (p. 69):

What he hates most about Worcester, what most makes him want to escape, is the rage and resentment that he senses crackling through the Afrikaans boys. He fears and loathes the hulking, barefoot Afrikaans boys in their tight short trousers, particularly the older boys, who, given half a chance, will take you off to some place in the veld and violate you in ways he has heard leeringly alluded to – *borsel* you, for instance, which as far as he can make out means pulling down your pants and brushing shoe-polish into your balls (but why balls? Why shoe-polish?) and sending you home through the streets half-naked and blubbing.

“Ma ...!”

“What?” Frances Kramer replied from one of the other rooms.

“Can I go to the swimming pool?”

David was walking down the passage, and now he stood in the doorway of the bedroom. The cupboard doors were open so his mother could put away freshly-ironed shirts. She turned to face David.

“Have you done your homework?”

“Yes.”

“Ok, then.”

“Thanks.”

“Be home by five ...” she called after his disappearing back. “And take one of the old towels.”

David pulled his bicycle away from where it leaned at a crooked angle against the wall, next to the garage. He cycled past the park, then over the bridge which crossed the

railway line. At the top he could see the drive-in theatre to his left, rows and rows of humps with poles which looked like parking meters, and the big white screen. Soon he was peddling alongside the tracks.

This was where the men who worked for the South African Railways and Harbours lived, Hospital Park. The pavements were wide, but with no grass or flora, just big, red-brown rocks the size of one's fist. All the houses were exactly the same. The fences were made of wire and pipe, with only an occasional flower trying to add some warmth to the bleak place. The weeds, on the other hand, flourished, tall, thin and dry, which one had to grab with both hands to pull out of the ground.

Outside one of the houses he saw an orange Railways bakkie parked in the driveway. The occupant was probably a foreman who worked far away from home. One benefit was that he could use a Railways pick-up truck to commute between home and work. After his few days off, he would return to the middle of nowhere, black workers sitting in the back of the bakkie as they drove deep into the scorched semi desert.

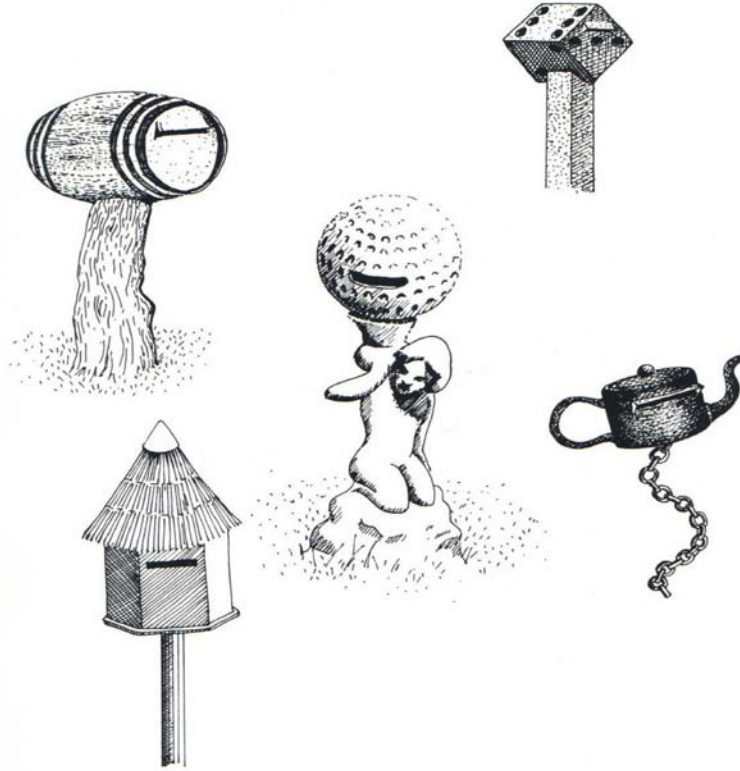
As David cycled, shunters were moving train coaches to his right. A locomotive slowly chugged up and down, white steam billowing from its funnel as it worked hard. The men were arranging the coaches, making up the train. One of them was hanging from the side of a coach as it free-wheeled. It had been given a nudge by the locomotive. Then with a crash it collided with the other coach. The man hanging from the side rocked a bit, but he didn't fall off. He must be as strong as an ox, David thought. Then the shunter jumped off fleet-footed and ducked between the two coaches, completing the coupling. Later, the steam locomotives would be replaced by sleek diesel brutes, but when David was still a boy he could sometimes hear the sound of the steam being released in huge

whooshing blasts from the black old faithfuls. The crashing of the coaches being strung together would travel for miles in the quiet summer air at night.

Ahead lay a steep hill. He had to get up and stand on the pedals, grimacing as he pulled the handlebars with all his might and mashed the pedals. In those days very few bicycles had gears, most were single-speed. On the hill slopes were row after row of small, identical houses on either side of the road. This was Station Hill. Each house had a tiny garden in front. One of them had an open front door and David caught a glimpse of a small gloomy kitchen. He assumed the table had four matching chairs, also with chrome legs. There would be a stainless steel strip that ran around the table top to disguise the fact it was made of cheap pressed wood. The wood pattern would be irregular grey shapes, with occasional red and yellow patches thrown in for variation. This set could well have been purchased from Western Furniture where David's father worked.

But what really caught David's attention was the post box in front of the house. It was a length of chain which miraculously stood erect, twirling upwards, with a golf ball, the size of a soccer ball, at the top. In the golf ball was a slit, through which the postman was to slip mail. David had to stop and take a closer look.

He pulled the brakes, came to a halt, and leaned the bike against the curb. He walked over to the house and stood at the wire fence, peering at the post box. He tried to see how it was that the chain could stay upright by itself.



Drawing by David Kramer (p. 56 *Short Back and Sides*)

A man came to the doorway of the house. The stranger was wearing baggy grey pants with pleats at the belt. His short-sleeved shirt was also oversized. His hair was cut very short at the sides. The kids in Worcester mockingly referred to this haircut as “whitewalls,” but only when they were sure no adult was in hearing distance. David assumed that his name was something like Piet van der Vyver. Or maybe Koos Malan.

“Middag, Oom,” he greeted, automatically speaking in Afrikaans. “Hoe staan hierdie ketting so vanself op?”

The man chuckled. Die klein rooinek praat nogals goed Afrikaans, he thought to himself, hands in the pockets of his trousers.

“Dis ’n secret,” he grinned.

The man looked a lot like the “Ruiter in Swart”, a cowboy who featured in photo-comic books which David sometimes paged through at Pandora restaurant next to the 20th Century bioscope. Ben was his name. He went from town to town on his black stallion, Satan. He wore only black, from head to toe, hence his name. He always stuck out his lower jaw when he punched a man, and it only took one jab before the guy was lights out. Even when he fought a whole gang of ruffians, his wide-rimmed black hat never came off. The way his jaw protruded showed that he was manly, not only in the way he could throw a knife into a tree twenty paces away, but also in a dependable, honest manner. It was no wonder that in each adventure a girl would go mad for him. But the “Ruiter in Swart” never stayed. He was restless, a loner. It would be with a very serious look in his eyes that he would tell the beautiful girl he had to leave because the road called his name. He looked into the distance, his eyes slits as though the sunlight was very bright. That’s what this man standing in the doorway of the small house looked like to David.

He knew that he was not going to get any more information out of the man, so he let it go.

“Totsiens, Oom,” he greeted.

The man nodded his head, and David went back to his bicycle. It was a struggle to get going again up the steep slope. David pushed himself forward, but the first two attempts failed. He didn’t have enough momentum. The third time he made it. He gripped the handlebars tightly and pulled. He ducked his right shoulder down, trying to get the right pedal to turn, then the left, and bit by bit he moved forward.

A few more pedal turns and he was at the crest of the hill. Now he was in another world. Here the pavements were neatly trimmed grass, the houses bigger and more

modern. It would be a stretch to call them beautiful. It seemed to David that everything in Worcester, houses included, ascribed to the type of kitsch that was particular to South Africa. David liked the wide windows and the lush green lawns of the house he was passing, but did they have to do that to the number of the house? It was lot 32, with the 2 slightly lower than the 3. From inside the house came the faint sound of a radio. South Africa had no television service, so radio was the only entertainment. Most people were glued to the serials beamed out by Springbok Radio. A commercial break was playing.

“Koue-water Omo...” David heard as he passed the house.

At this time of the afternoon it was “Die Geheim van Nantes” which entertained the audience.

After he reached the top, it was downhill, and soon he was flying down. He briefly caught sight of the highest diving board at the swimming pool. Apparently there was only one other diving board in South Africa that was as high as this monster. In Pretoria, the Worcester children told one another.

David left his bicycle in the rack without locking it. That wasn't necessary in Worcester. There was a trellis which covered the path leading up to the entrance of the swimming pool. Purple bougainvillea twisted around the wooden beams of the structure, making shade. He paid his two and a half cents, grabbed his paper ticket which the lady had torn in half, and turned right, into the boys's changing rooms.

He changed, and ran out to where his friends always hung out. Their place was close to the flat slab of cement which was the tennis court. Here they could play cricket and be as far away from the swimming pool superintendent, Mr. Rumbles, as possible. On the other side of the pool was the tuck shop.

David recognised his friends's towels, abandoned by his mates who were already in the water, swimming. He dropped his towel and ran over to the water's edge, the cement hot under his feet. Around him was that particular swimming pool smell: chlorine, and water drying on cement. His mates were in the shallow end, yelling as they played aan-aan.



The swimming pool at Worcester. Photograph: Etiennedup
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/8270787@N07/942725080/in/pool-worcester/>

Behind the diving boards is the entrance. To the left are the boys's changing rooms and to the right the girls's. Next to the girls's changing rooms is the house where the superintendent lives. In those days it was Mr. Rumbles.

Note the boy standing on the highest diving board – he has probably been standing there for quite a while, trying to pluck up the courage to jump off. Behind the photographer was the pump house, as well as a small zoo.

The game moved from the pool to the small zoo behind the pump-house. A huge tortoise was slowly lumbering about.

This was the place where boys and girls met up for steamy kisses. At that moment a couple were lying on a towel a few metres away in an embrace, the boy lying over the girl, their lips locked. David vaguely knew the girl. Her name was something Van Der Spuy.

“I saw this weird post box,” he informed his friends. “It was a golf ball, standing upright on a chain.”

“Where?”

“Coming up Station Hill,” David replied, tipping his head to one side to indicate the direction where the post box was.

“Those Nats are mad,” another of the boys declared to general agreement.

Most of the Station Hill men were Nats. They voted for the National Party and stood by their government, no matter what. In fact, the notion of questioning was seen as disloyal. Disloyal to your country and disloyal to your God. Questioning was akin to the original sin. It just wasn't done.

The order at the time was that everything was ruled by God, and that the National Party government was doing God's work. Every town in South Africa had a street called Church Street, where the Dutch Reformed church could be found. The implication was that this church, the church of the National Party, was the true church. Other religions such as the Methodists, Presbyterians, Catholics, Jews, and so on, were grudgingly tolerated. In the “proper” church it went without saying that sermons were delivered in Afrikaans.

The Dutch Reformed church in Worcester was situated across from Memorial Park, a city block of lawn with a pond in the middle where one can take a stroll, maybe

stop to look at the fat red fish slowly gliding about, or the big round lily leaves floating on the dark water. Around the pond the weeping willows were green and lush, and the succulent shrubs typical to Worcester thrived. Along the perimeter of the park, alongside the streets, were eucalyptus trees, their barks a yellow-white colour, strips of it sometimes peeling off. The park's lawn was green, but during the harsh dry summers it changed, sometimes becoming yellowish and threadbare.



Garden of Remembrance and Dutch Reformed Church, Worcester, from High Street. Photo by André Dumas.
<http://www.pbase.com/dewas/image/71004463>

David had many questions about the things he heard at school from his schoolmates.

“What’s the Ossewa Brandwag, Daddy?” he asked one evening when they were all in the living room.

Solly and Frances sat on the couch and John lay on the carpeted floor, drawing in a book. David sat in one of the big chairs.

“It’s a political movement,” Solly replied.

“What’s a political movement?” David wanted to know.

Solly thought for a while.

“Do you know about elections?”

“Yes.”

Just recently there had been elections in Worcester. Vote in the middle – Vote for Siddle, had been one of the slogans.

“In any case, where did you hear about this nonsense?” Frances interrupted, a frown between her eyes.

“At school.”

One of the Afrikaans kids had chased David around the school yard. David had ducked left and right, so the boy had been unable to grab hold of him. There was a large potted fern in front of the school building, and David ran behind it. Now he and his tormenter faced one another. When the boy moved left, David moved right. It was a stalemate.

“Die Ossewa Brandwag sal jou nog kry ..!” the boy hissed.

David frowned.

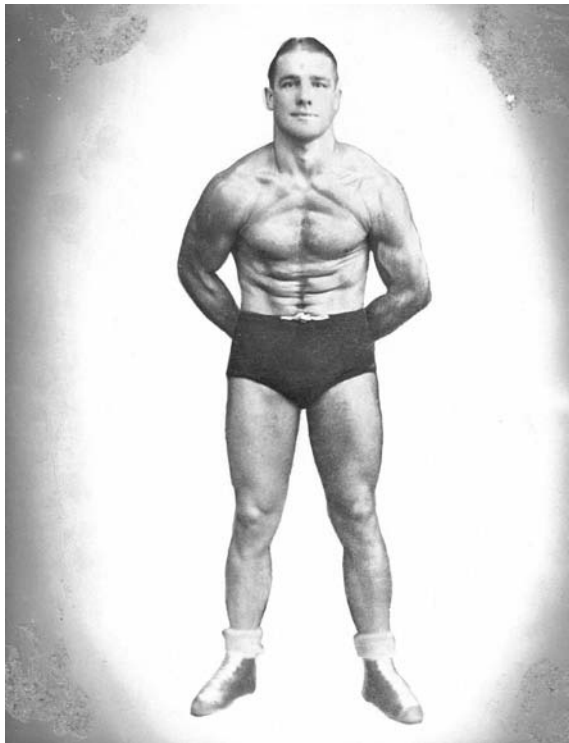
“Wat is die Ossewa Brandwag?” he asked.

The Afrikaans boy wasn’t exactly sure himself, so he ignored the question. Instead he moved to his right, around the fern, David sidestepping him.

“Robey Leibbrandt was hul leier.”

“Wie is Robey Leibbrandt?”

“Jy’s darem fokken stupid ..!” the boy snarled to cover up the fact that he didn’t know.



Robey Leibbrandt.

<http://thm-a02.yimg.com/image/e1d2ee3d6f69b164>

Then the bell rang for the end of break, and the two made their way to their respective lines with their classmates. It was the unwritten law that once the bell had rung, all hostilities were off.

“It’s a far-right political movement,” Solly tried to explain now, but he could see David’s eyes begin to glaze over.

“They agreed with the Nazis,” Solly told David.

David recoiled with shock. That was a forbidden word.

“Their leader was Robey Leibbrandt,” Solly began.

Frances put her magazine down, and watched her husband. John stopped drawing, looking at his father, waiting for him to continue. This seemed like something grown-up.

“Robey Leibbrandt’s family came from Germany. He was a strong chap, and pretty good at boxing,” Solly began telling them. “Everyone thinks he would have won the gold medal at the Olympics.”

Solly grinned at Frances.

“But he had apparently forgotten about the final bout. He didn’t arrive for the match and was disqualified.”

“Not the sharpest tool in the shed,” Frances observed.

“No,” Solly agreed. “At any rate, he joined the Ossewa Brandwacht and came back to South Africa in a submarine ...”

“A submarine..?!” John exclaimed, not believing his ears.

“Lucky they didn’t let Robey drive, otherwise they would have gotten lost,” Frances observed dryly, and Solly laughed out loud.

“Why did he come in a submarine?” John asked, his drawing forgotten.

“How did he get out?” David wanted to know.

This was a great story!

“At any rate, the Germans dropped him off, along the coast of South-West Africa, and he rowed ashore in a rubber dingy. He had some money and a radio.”

“What was he going to do?” Frances asked with a naughty giggle. “Start a radio station?”

“How does the submarine know where it’s going?” John wondered.

Solly continued.

“He was going to assassinate Smuts. That would be the sign for all his followers to rise up against the Smuts government. But he got caught.”

“How does the submarine know where it’s going?” John insisted.

The next day at school David watched his Afrikaans schoolmate in the school yard. He wondered whether this boy was also a member of the Ossewa Brandwag, a sort of Nazi?

Putting it out of his mind, he went over to the side gate, opposite the Gereformeerde Kerk. Cowboy was there, as usual during the school breaks, with his big delivery tricycle, filled with ice creams. On the side of the box was a large sticker which read “Walls Ice Cream”.

“Cowboy!” David called, and the man grinned at him.

“What can I give you today?”

“Let me look.”

It was always the same. The kids always wanted to clamber onto the wheel of the tricycle and peer into the box, staring at the different ice creams.

“A wafer,” David eventually decided.

Cowboy reached in and took out the treat, vanilla ice cream between two strips of wafer cake. David handed over his money.

“Thanks, Cowboy,” David mumbled, tearing at the wrapper.

Cowboy had a transistor radio which hung from the side of his tricycle. A woman was talking and laughing. David didn’t understand what she was saying. It was Radio Xhosa. As David listened, he noticed once more that Cowboy was a pretty sharp dresser

from his shoes to his hat. Music began playing. He and his friends all called it gumboot music because they had seen short reels at the movies of black miners, wearing hardhats and gumboots. The men would be standing next to one another in a line. They would step forward and backwards, then duck and slap the sides of their gumboots, in time to the music. Some of the gumboots had a wire circle around the ankle, which held dozens of bottle tops. Each bottle top had a hole through the centre and threaded onto the wire. The rows of wire around the gumboots made a percussive sound as the dancers stamped their feet. Then, the men would stand up straight and kick their legs high in the air, as high as their heads.

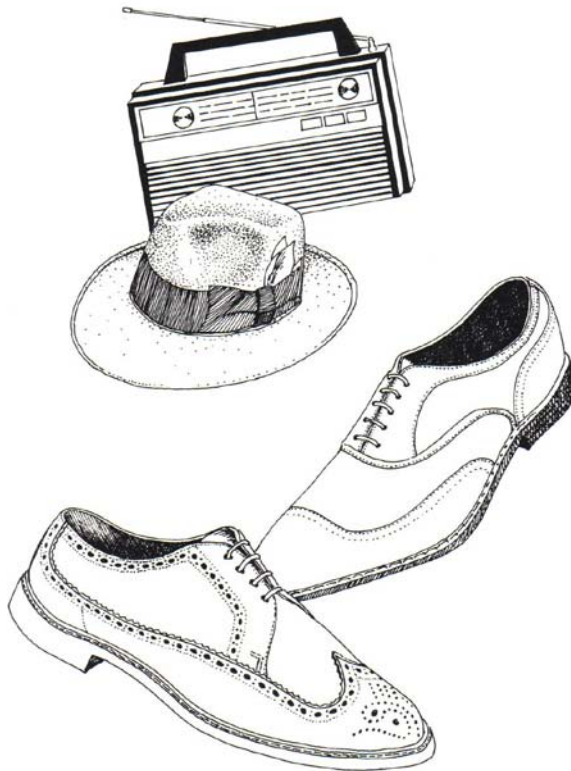
Often one of them would sing something and the others would reply. David loved it, even though he didn't understand the words.

Cowboy was known to many children in Worcester, and he became the subject of a song on David's album *Delicious Monster*.

Cowboy (1982)

He wore those Florsheim shoes and turn-ups
He was the coolest Kwezi cat
With those mirror-like sunglasses
And a big white Stetson hat
That's why we called him Cowboy
He pedalled the icecream cart
And he sang us songs like Moon River
Until we knew all the words by heart
He sold us wafers
And he told us jokes
We laughed at his Kwezi style
We were suckers for his stories
That he spun from behind his smile
The saddle was his bongo drum
The sidewalk was his stage
He'd show us the latest dance steps

When marabi was the rage
And then one day when the school bell rang
Cowboy just wasn't there
He disappeared just like that
And no-one turned a hair.



Drawing by David Kramer (p. 39 *Short Back and Sides*)

The song is rather vacuous, but the bite comes at the end, when it tells that Cowboy suddenly disappeared. Even though Cowboy had not been arrested by the security police, the event of Cowboy getting another job and not coming to the school anymore had obviously stayed in David's mind, and resurfaced as inspiration for the political barb at the end of the song. Furthermore, there is also a reprimand to David's

own audience, that they weren't in the least perturbed, or not perturbed enough to become active, by the disappearance of political activists.

But thoughts like these were still in the future. Ice cream in hand, David made his way back to the front of the school where his class always played. He stood near the flagpole, enjoying his treat. The material at the top lay limp, no breeze to move it. The children had to draw the flag in their schoolbooks. Orange at the top, white in the middle, and blue at the bottom. Oranje, blanje, blou: die meide hou van jou, the kids sang when they chased one another around in the school yard. And in the white strip there were three more flags: a small British Union flag, an Orange Free State Vierkleur, and to the right, the Transvaal Vierkleur.

Chapter 6

David and John clambered into the back seat of the car, eager to get going. Frances leaned over her seat to make sure the boys had shut the doors properly. Solly turned the key and the car started. He threw his arm over the back of Frances's seat and turned around, craning his neck as he looked out through the rear window, and reversed the car slowly out of the yard.

Worcester was usually quiet, but Sundays were especially so. Nothing moved. Virtually no cars were on the streets. If a mother called a child to come in from the heat to have lunch, her voice easily travelled across two or even three houses. It was rare to see children chasing one another. No balls were kicked. Even the leaves in the trees hung limp, motionless, only occasionally daring to rustle ever so slightly. Solly drove through the deserted streets of Worcester, down the hill towards High Street, and past Drostdy High School. Near the coloured part of town he turned right. Now they were in the veld, brown-green grass struggling in the South African heat, stubborn little bushes, and in the distance clumps of trees, mostly eucalypts.

The car windows were down so the Kramers could get some relief from the stifling heat. They passed the golf club on their left, and after a few minutes some horse paddocks on their right. A group of people was riding, moving up and down, up and down as the horses cantered. There was a flash of light as sunlight reflected off a bridle, and then the car had passed. David turned around so he could watch the riders through the rear window. The grass was green, but yellowing in places, and patches of orange-

brown soil showed through. There were a few wispy clouds in the sky, far away. The sky itself was a very pale blue, the colour washed out by the heat. Far away were mountains, a jagged thin line on the horizon. It was much too far away to see any detail. The scene gave David the impression of openness and great distances, of an old, old place.

There were ancient bushman paintings on some of the rock walls deep in the mountains. David wondered what other secrets lay in this quiet landscape. Was there a wagon, fallen down a ravine, the coach on its back, broken wheels to the uncaring sky? Would he stumble over the skeletons of the horses and driver? Perhaps there were wooden crates, cracked open, their contents long rotten away? Or maybe a large heavy metal container, the government's seal on it, opened by the force of the fall to reveal handfuls and handfuls of gold coins, worth millions and millions of rands?

“Here's the bridge,” Solly warned.

David and John leaned forward to look. It spanned the Breede River, and was very long.

“I don't trust this bridge,” Solly warned the boys. “I'm sure it's going to collapse today.”

The boys knew he was only joking, but still a chill gripped them.

“No ..!” David yelled, clutching the back of Solly's seat.

The car hit the bridge, and the sound of the tyres changed slightly. The wheels seemed to make a buzzing sound very different to the hum of the highway. When they passed each baluster of the concrete wall next to them there was a thip-sound. Thip-thip-thip as they drove.

“Did you feel that?!” Solly cried, pretending to be alarmed.

“What?!” David wanted to know anxiously.

“I swear I felt the bridge move ...”

“No ..!”

“Yes! There! I felt it again ..!”

David looked about in alarm. Was the bridge really falling? Far below was the river, now just a narrow stream of water. Round white rocks lay everywhere. The water, when David saw it through the bridge’s balusters, was brown and swift-flowing. At the bank, where the river made a bend, reeds grew as high as a man, grey-ochre in colour. This wasn’t where David wanted to die! If they fell down here, would anyone ever find them, or would they be another secret of the flat landscape, like the wagon with the gold of David’s imagination?

Solly turned the steering wheel slightly and the car zig-zagged a bit. The boys howled out, close to crying.

“Stop that!” Frances reprimanded, clearly unnerved by her husband’s antics.

Solly laughed out loud. He put his foot down and the car sped to the other side. They raced over the edge, and the boys shouted, more with relief than exuberance. Just after the bridge was a T-junction where Solly turned left, towards Brandvlei Dam. From the intersection it was just a few hundred metres until Solly turned right, into the hills surrounding the dam. He had to cross into the other lane and the boys were always nervous about this. Maybe a car would come around the bend in front of them, hitting them head-on. But today there was no traffic and Solly made it safely across. They drove off the tarred road onto soft sand.

There was a wire fence with a gate which had been left wide open. On one of the fence posts was a sign with faded letters.

“Worcester Yacht Club,” it read.

This was where the Kramers could usually be found on Sunday afternoons.

Chapter 7

In 1965 David was in Standard 6, his first year of high school.



<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=3401055161#!/photo.php?pid=1151974&o=all&op=1&view=all&subj=3401055161&aid=-1&id=582704752&fbid=52003664752>

The pop hits of that year were (www.rock.co.za):

- Crying in the Chapel – Elvis Presley

- Forget Domani – Connie Francis
- Tossing and Turning – Ivy League
- Goodbye my Love – Murray Campbell
- What’s New, Pussycat? – Tom Jones
- Unchained Melody – The Righteous Brothers
- Come back, Silly Girl – The Staccatos
- Torture – Gene Rockwell
- The Carnival is Over – The Seekers
- I need You – Ricky Nelson

But David and his crowd were much too hip to be bothered with the South African charts. Instead, David diligently purchased the *New Musical Express* every Wednesday at the CNA, which was next to his father’s furniture store. David would huddle for hours over his newspaper, devouring the articles and pictures. He dreamed of getting out of Worcester, living in London. London! Even the name gave him goosebumps.

That’s where the real bands were, as far as David and his friends were concerned.

In May of 1965 the British charts (<http://www.sixtiescity.com>) had songs such as:

- Here Comes The Night - Them
- Bring It On Home To Me - The Animals
- For Your Love - The Yardbirds
- The Last Time - The Rolling Stones
- Times They Are A-Changin' - Bob Dylan
- I Can't Explain - The Who
- Subterranean Homesick Blues - Bob Dylan.

Those were the songs that David’s crew were into, the heavier stuff, and they were not easily found in South Africa. One might be lucky to catch one on the radio, but if one were really serious about music, one had to splash out and buy the albums. And

that sometimes entailed a trip to Cape Town to the big record stores. A popular album was Bob Dylan's *Freewheelin'*, as well as *Help!* by The Beatles, with songs such as "Yesterday", "You've got to Hide your Love away", and "Ticket to Ride".

David strummed again, nodding his head to himself. He was getting it. James Munro would always be a much better guitarist than him, but at least David could play a few songs.

One of the local bands was The Offbeats. David had seen them a few times, wishing with all his heart that he could be in a group like that. They consisted of Chris Munro on lead guitar, Robert Honeysett on rhythm guitar, John (Teddy) Peltret as the drummer, and bass was played by David Smith. The Offbeats played cover songs, and some of their Beatles versions were quite good. Their bassist, David Smith had come up with the name. "The Offbeats" was the name of the second track off an album called *Beat Girl*, which was the soundtrack to a beatnik type film which had been banned in South Africa. One wonders how he had discovered this album?

David heard the doorbell ring. Frances went to answer it.

"Hello, Mrs. Kramer. Is David here?" David heard.

It was Donny Andrews.

"Hello, Donny," Frances answered. "He's in his room."

Donny went through to David's room. He was sitting on his bed with his guitar in his lap. On the table where David did his homework, Donny noticed an open sketch book. He saw that David's drawing was rather good. Like John, David's older brother, art was a big love in his life. He was thrilled to be able to take it as a subject at school.

"Howzit," Donny grinned.

“Howzit.”

“You feel like doing something?”

“Okay,” David replied.

Then he remembered something.

“Hey, check here,” he said excitedly, getting to his feet.

He opened his cupboard, took something out and put it on his head, tugging it this way and that. He turned around with a flourish.

“Check here!” he said proudly.

Donny gasped with shock. It was a Beatles wig.

“Jis, it checks nice ..!” Donny exclaimed.

David strode over to the bed, picked up the guitar and struck a pose. Donny looked at his friend in wonderment. David was one of the cool guys at school. He always knew about the newest records, songs that the Worcester kids had never heard about, and he was hip to the latest fashions. He was one of the few people in town who had a pair of boots with pointed toes. The only chink was the short hair, but now with this Beatles wig he looked just like a pop star! No wonder the girls liked him.

David played a chord. F major.

“Yesterday,” David sang with a huge grin.

E minor 7th.

“All my troubles seemed so far away.”

A 7th. D minor.

He played the whole song, and the boys grinned at one another. Then Donny pointed to the door with his chin.

“Let’s go outside,” he suggested.

David put the guitar back in its cardboard box and slid it under his bed. They went outside, got on their bikes and set off towards Hospital Dam.

The water was flat, the blue sky and white clouds reflected on its surface. They stopped under the shade of a tall tree. In front of them lay the dam that supplied the water running through the old part of Worcester. On the far side of the water were clumps of reeds.

“Let’s go over there,” David said.

They set off pedalling around the dam to the reeds. They lay their bicycles down and went to investigate. The sand was powdery under their bare feet, but as they got to the reeds, it turned to mud. The reeds were grey-brown and taller than the boys.

“Check here ..!” David called.

There were oval-shaped nests hanging from the tops of the reeds, which had been woven by birds. They had openings at the bottom where the birds went in and out. David was peeping into one of the nests.

“There are eggs in this one ..!” he whispered excitedly.

Donny came over quickly to look, the reeds swaying wildly as he pushed his way through them. He stood close to David and peered into the opening, and sure enough, there they were, two small eggs, off-white with grey and blue specks.

“Don’t touch them,” David warned. “The birds will smell you.”

“I know.”

Then there came a call.

“Hey, David!”

David looked over his shoulder and saw André du Toit and Marcelle Steyn. Both boys were on their bicycles, and like David and Donny, they were also barefoot.

“Jis,” David greeted. “Waar gaan julle?”

“Ons gaan skerpioene vang,” replied André.

“Skerpioene vang?!” David gasped, shocked.

“Ja. Kom saam.”

This was unbelievable. The Afrikaans boys were going to catch scorpions. David shuddered, no doubt remembering the time the boy next door had been stung. Yet, he had to see this. The nest finders went back to their bicycles, picked them up, and rode over to André and Marcelle.

They pedalled along the dusty track. André veered off, weaving between the bushes. There was some garbage lying about. André dismounted and the others followed his example. There was an old piece of cardboard lying on the ground. It had once been a cardboard box, but the months in the sun and rain had flattened it. André picked it up gingerly, peering underneath. Nothing.

“Daar’s nog een daarso,” Marcelle pointed out.

“Waar?”

“Daar.”

André looked at where Marcelle was pointing and saw another piece of cardboard. They went over and watched as André lifted this one as well. Once again: nothing. Just a lizard that slithered away quickly, disappearing in the undergrowth. André made a grab for it, but it was too fast. Surreptitiously, Donny softly stroked his toe over David’s bare foot, and David jumped with fright, lifting his feet high, shouting.

Donny laughed, and the other boys realised what he had done. David also chuckled, but his eyes scanned the ground around him nervously.

“Oh, you doos,” he playfully scolded.

They kept looking, and when Marcelle pulled away an old newspaper, he shouted excitedly.

“Hier’s een ..!”

The boys pushed against one another to look. There it was: pale orange, about four inches long. There seemed to be a glassiness about its body. André took an old cigarette packet from his pants pocket, Paul Revere 20. He opened the box, then stepped forward and crouched over the scorpion. He tapped the ground close to it with his finger, and the scorpion lifted its tail in short, angry jerks. David could see the sting, the curved point. André moved his hand behind the tail, took hold of the sting between his thumb and forefinger and lifted the scorpion up. David could not believe his eyes. André dropped the creature into the cigarette packet. It was a tight fit. He had to move the scorpion back and forth to let it slide down into the small box. Then he let go of the sting. The scorpion was not completely in the packet, and André had to be careful as he brought the lid down, shutting it. They could hear the scratching of the scorpion inside. André put the packet into his shorts pocket.

“Lekker!” he chuckled.

David shook his head with an elaborate stage-shudder.

“Thanks, but no thanks,” he said, and they laughed. “Hey, I have to go home.”

“Me too,” replied Donny.

David cycled home. When he got back he saw a small yacht in the driveway. It was a Dabchick, just like the children sailed at the yacht club. He leaned his bicycle against the garage wall and approached the Dabchick to take a closer look. His father opened the back door and came outside. He had a grin on his face.

“I thought you’d like to have your own yacht,” he said, much to David’s surprise.

Frances joined them outside.

“Remember to be careful on that thing,” she said.

“I will, Mummy,” David promised.

Solly and Frances watched as David potted about the little boat. Solly felt great. It was wonderful to be able to buy his son an expensive gift like this.

By the end of that month David had sold the Dabchick.

The front door slammed. David sat on the edge of his bed. He was in deep, deep trouble now. Deep, deep trouble. He put down his new electric guitar, laying it on the bed.

“David!” Solly bellowed. “Come here ..!”

David heard his father’s footsteps coming down the corridor, and turn into the kitchen. A chair was pulled out, followed by the sound of Solly sitting down. Even that sounded angry. Deep trouble.

“David ..!” Solly shouted impatiently.

Like a man being led to the gallows, David trod his weary way to the kitchen. The house was silent. John had disappeared somewhere, probably to his room. Far enough to be out of the storm’s range but close enough to enjoy the devastation. When David got to

the kitchen, Solly and Frances were waiting for him. Frances stood with her arms folded.

Solly was sitting at the kitchen table.

“What’s this I hear about you selling the boat?” Solly charged.

David didn’t reply. What was there to say?

“I’m talking to you, young man ...”

David shrugged his shoulders.

“I wanted a guitar ...”

“A *guitar*?!”

“Yes ...”

“You’ve got a guitar!” Solly bellowed. “And who the hell told you you could sell the boat?!”

He got to his feet, the chair making a scraping sound as it was pushed back.

“Solly...,” Frances tried to calm him.

“Now you listen to me, young man, you’re going back to that buddy of yours, and you’re going to get back that boat ...”

“But, Daddy ...”

“No buts.”

Now things were really going south for David.

“I don’t want a boat! I want a guitar!” he tried to explain.

“Who do you think you are? John Lennon? You’re taking back the boat!”

David took a deep breath and dug his heels in.

“But it was *my* boat. And if I wanted to sell it, I could ...”

Solly’s face went even darker.

“What?!”

“You gave it to me. It was mine,” David hurriedly pointed out as he tried to make his case. “I could do what I wanted with it.”

Solly’s face was a dangerous shade of red. He took a breath, but David quickly continued.

“And I got exactly what you paid for it. We didn’t lose any money.”

David watched his father’s face contort. Solly frowned as he digested this information.

“I’m grateful for the gift, Daddy, but I would rather have a guitar.”

Solly bit his lip. His eyes bored into David’s. It was dead quiet. Outside a car drove past the house. Solly continued glaring at his youngest son. David squirmed.

“But you have a guitar,” Solly eventually repeated.

“This is an electric guitar.”

“An electric guitar?!”

“Yes ...”

“And do you think you’re going to make all that damn noise here day and night?”

David shrugged his shoulders. He was smart enough to know this was a rhetorical question, and to answer it would only enrage his father more.

Suddenly David’s luck changed. From the neighbour’s house came the strains of the Beatles singing their current hit.

“She’s got a ticket to rah-heed ...”

“I can play that song,” David pointed out, laying his credentials as a guitarist on the table.

Solly shot Frances a glance. She shrugged slightly and did something with her eyebrows which could have meant anything. But it was clear that this made an impression on his parents.

“Wait,” he said.

He dashed to his room and picked up the offending guitar. He ran back to the kitchen, listened to the music coming from over the fence and after a few bars, he began to strum along. He had to look at the neck to see where his fingers were going because the first chord was a bit tricky, F#minor. A ticket to - Dmajor - rah-heed ...

The electric guitar made a tinny sound, but his parents could hear that he indeed could play this tune. When the song ended David looked at them, waiting for their response.

“Well,” Solly muttered, still irked, but clearly proud of his son.

He looked at Frances. Let her say something.

“If this is what you want, David,” she began.

“Oh, yes!” David affirmed.

Frances nodded her head slightly, but she wasn’t finished.

“The moment you don’t do your homework, that guitar goes,” she threatened.

David grinned widely.

“I’ll do my homework,” he promised, mentally crossing his fingers - he had done absolutely no homework yet today.

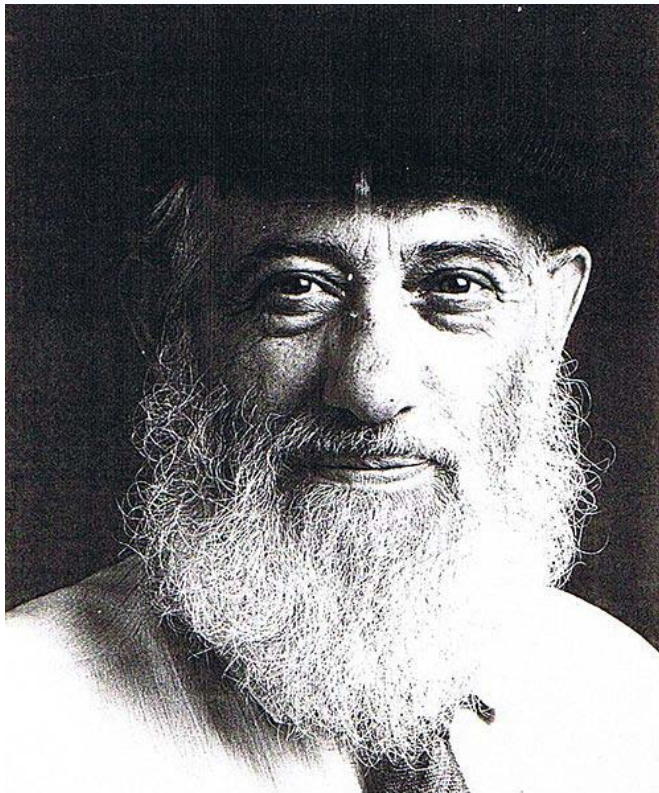
“You have to study. You’ll never get anywhere with this music nonsense,” Frances warned.



This is David's playing a nylon-stringed "Spanish" guitar, easier to play for beginners (steel strings hurt the fingers of the hand forming the chords). (p.37 *Short Back & Sides*)

Chapter 8

David had a few music lessons from Cromwell Everson, a Worcester musician who wrote the first Afrikaans opera, *Klutaimnestra*, which consisted of four acts. His other works include an incomplete symphony, a piano suite, five sonatas, a trio, a set of inventions, four song-cycles, as well as miscellaneous movements for the piano, guitar, and string quartet.



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Cromwell_Everson_000.jpg

However, David learnt most of his craft from his friends.

He leaned over his guitar, closer to James Munro. James was home from the army for a weekend, his hair very short. David frowned as he watched James's fingers on the fretboard. He looked down at his own hand and moved his fingers.

"The next string," James said. "Your little finger."

David moved his little finger and strummed the strings lightly. It sounded okay. He was getting better. At least the strings weren't buzzing anymore.

"There you go," James praised. "C 7th."

David and James played a few more songs, David singing in his raspy voice. A singer, he was not. But then again, neither was Dylan.

"Okay, I've got to go home. I've got to do my homework," David sighed.

Munro walked with David to the front door.

"Okay, check you," Munro greeted.

"Check you."

Walking home with his guitar, David was floating. He had been accepted into Worcester's coolest band, The Offbeats.

He and Donny had been playing in a band called The Creeps. Donny had a homemade electric guitar which he painted a very bright orange. But, when James Munro finished high school and had to enter the army, there was a vacant spot for a guitarist in The Offbeats. David auditioned and was accepted. Auditioned is perhaps too weighty a word. He offered his services, saying he had an electric guitar, and as there weren't really any other guitarists in Worcester, he was accepted into the band.

He was only fourteen and the other guys were much older than him. They had been playing together for quite a while so there was already a camaraderie within the

group. They had in-jokes and were quite comfortable with one another. David tried hard to fit in but he didn't have to worry, because they were a friendly bunch.

It may be said that The Offbeats realised that whatever David lacked in musicianship, he more than made up for it with the style he brought to the group. He was good-looking and the girls adored him. He was also very trendy, from his Chelsea boots up to the Beatles wig he wore when they played parties.

The Offbeats had quite a reputation. They had even made it to the finals of the Battle of the Bands at The Luxurama movie theatre in Cape Town! Their equipment was pretty slick too, much of it having been made by Alex Munro, their genius sometimes-drummer/technician. At other times Ian Walters sat down behind the drums. The other members were Teddy Peltret and Robert Honeysett, whose father was Worcester's fire chief.

They were invited to play at local parties, which were very popular in the 60's. Discotheques had yet to be invented. Some of the biggest parties The Offbeats played were for Dr. Domisse's daughter, Anne, and the architect Revel Fox's daughter, Grethe. Grethe Fox went on to become one of South Africa's most famous actresses, her blonde hair and wide smile giving her a fun kind of sexiness.

When The Offbeats weren't playing at parties, they were the entertainment at the Friday night debates held at Worcester Boys High. These debates were hugely popular, because, one suspects, this was one of the few times boys and the girls could get together. The air hummed with sexual electricity as each sex eyed the other, anxious for a break when they could enjoy a clinch in a darkened corner. The Offbeats played a dance track or two, but the highlight was their slow song, the so-called blues number.



This haircut was David flirting with a caning: too long, especially at the back. But it *did* mark him as extremely hip. (p.37 *Short Back & Sides*)

The Worcester of David's teenage years was one where he played cricket in the yard, carefree, and yet on the other hand he was aware of a life outside, somewhere he could escape the hideous kitsch and narrow-mindedness of his hometown. In "Just my Father's Son" David reflects on those days with a mixture of bitterness and fondness, as he refers to the town in the Boland he grew up in as

a place I couldn't wait to leave.

Although there is something disloyal about this sentiment, it was understood by many of the Worcester teenagers of the time. All the cars drove past Worcester on their way to the bright lights of Cape Town or Johannesburg. Staying in Worcester was to die. Also, it was also understood that David was referring to the narrow-mindedness of the

townspeople who were more than happy to continue with the political and social status quo as it was.

David gives insight to his mood at the time, as well as his view of the country as a whole in these lyrics also from “Just my Father’s Son”:

I grew up with Dylan and the Beatles
And trying to sing the blues
It was haircuts and hidings and cadets
And sport ruled the day
You didn’t belong singing Beach Boy songs
If the guitar was all you could play.

Worcester in the 60’s was a place where boys would be caned if their hair length infringed on the school rules. In an effort to make men out of the boys, they had to join the cadets. On cadets day the lads had to come to school in their brown shirts and march up and down the rugby fields with a rifle. Left arms were at a military 90 degrees, the butt of the rifle pressed against the palms of their upturned hands, the barrel against their shoulders. The right arm swung briskly in time as they marched in a healthy, reassuring, masculine way.

Later in “Just My Father’s Son” David refers to the Good Hope Café, which was an actual restaurant in Worcester. Behind the Good Hope was a billiards hall where the high school kids would sometimes hang out.

Behind the Good Hope Café in High Street
We played snooker in the afternoon
Joking and smoking and swearing
Just like old men in that dark saloon
So it was rugby and religion

And traditions that die hard
We played electric guitars in my father's garage
And cricket out in the yard.



Photograph: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/capelight>.

To the right of Good Hope Café was The Scala movie theatre. David would sometimes play there with The Offbeats between the serial and main feature. Their rival group, The Jets, would be over at the 20th Century cinema, next to Pandora restaurant, doing the same thing. David's life consisted of school, trying to learn the new songs for The Offbeats, and Renaye Lange.

Chapter 9

David first saw Renaye at the swimming pool with her friends. They were diving into the water from the side of the pool, elegant arches, hands held together over their heads: very feminine, very graceful. They would pull themselves out of the water and dive in again. There was *something* about that girl, David thought as he watched surreptitiously.

The next time he saw her was late one afternoon as she was walking along Meiring Street, the trees throwing long shadows over the sidewalk. She was on the other side of the street. Her brown hair was tied up, as she was still in her school uniform. With her hair pulled back her jawline was even more elegant, her ears more delicate. The summer sun had burnt her hair a lighter shade, a lovely imbroglio of brown and tawn. She had beautiful eyes. Her skin was flawless. David felt his heart give a squeeze. There was definitely something about her.

The water in the swimming pool twinkled. The diving boards towered up into the clear sky. The boys were sitting on their towels, their hair still wet. Further away was a line of trees through which they could see bits of houses: roofs and windows. Behind them, in the distance, blue mountains rose into a pale blue sky. The sound of coaches being shunted back and forth, slamming into one another, faintly reached the boys.

“Hey, Gaigher, who’s that girl?” David asked the boy sitting next to him.

Oratio Gaigher looked in the direction David was pointing with only a small gesture. He didn’t want to broadcast to the whole world that he was talking about her.

“Dunno,” Oratio replied.

“That’s Renaye Lange,” Raffaele Barocci informed them, munching on his Lunch Bar.

“Renaye Lange?” David asked, perking up.

“Yes,” Raffaele said, nodding his head. “I think her father owns the Coke factory.”

David set about meeting her. One Saturday night there was going to be a party, and David mentally prepared himself. He practised lines in his head, and he lay out his clothes on his bed, checking to see that it went together well. Unsatisfied, he tried a few combinations.

By the time Saturday came he was a nervous wreck. However, he needn’t have bothered, because Renaye didn’t arrive at the party. David kept his eyes riveted on the door, but she didn’t come.

“Well then, I’ll chat up some other girl,” David said to himself, rather miffed and very disappointed.

This was not as pleasureable as he had hoped, and he left the party somewhat dejected.

He was determined to forget all about the girl with the pearl-like skin. But she was all he could think about. School was spent watching his watch – he couldn’t wait for school to be over so that he could rush to the swimming pool where he might see her again.

He orchestrated his moves and eventually he was in the same room as her, then speaking to her, plying her with his charm. He walked her home, and a few blocks from

her house he reached out and took her hand. His heart was thumping. What if she snatched her hand away? What if she said something belittling? Or, heaven forbid, slapped his face?

But the beautiful Renaye did nothing, only moved her hand more comfortably in his. David was walking on air.

Soon they were meeting at dances, the swimming pool, and through the various social events that were organised. In the afternoons David would go to her house for coffee. ‘Going for coffee’ was a loose term which generally meant visiting, and often David was accompanied by a friend or two. Sometimes these visits included doing homework, or at least discussions about doing it. It was rare that any real, quality work was done.

The dozens of glass bottles clinking by on the conveyor belt made a heck of a racket. They were distinctive Coca Cola bottles, filled with the world-famous drink, the flamboyant logo painted in white on the sides.

Through huge open doors David could see glimpses of the yard at the back of the bottling company where rows of red trucks were being loaded with cases of soft drink. He was still in his school uniform, as was Renaye. As he followed her past the rattling bottles he noticed how the workers greeted her, as though she was a visiting princess. It was obvious she was the boss’s daughter.

“Where’s my father?” Renaye asked one of the men in blue overalls.

“He’s in the yard, Miss Renaye,” the man answered.

Renaye beamed her mile-wide smile at the worker, and led David through to the yard. Once outside, they saw Mr. Lange speaking to one of the workers. He caught sight of his daughter and broke off his conversation. He also noticed she had a boy with her.

“Hello, Daddy,” she greeted. “This is David Kramer. I wanted to show him how we put the Coke in the bottles.”

“Good afternoon, Mr. Lange,” David greeted.

Louis Lange shook the offered hand and gazed into David’s eyes. Earnest youngster, he decided.

“So you’re a Kramer?” he inquired.

“Yes, Mr. Lange. My father’s Solly Kramer ...”

“Oh, so you’re Solly’s boy!”

David relaxed a bit. It was clear that his father’s name got him some mileage with Renaye’s father. Mr. Lange waved an arm.

“I see you have a camera. Are you a photographer?” he asked.

David nodded, touching the camera hanging off his shoulder.

“Yes, Mr. Lange. My brother John is more the photographer, but I also like taking the odd picture or two. I’m hoping to get some interesting shots here in the factory.”

“Well, enjoy your tour. Remember to tip your guide. Maybe a coffee at the Koffiekamer ...”

Renaye blushed a bit and David’s grin widened even more. It seemed as though he had been given the green light.

“See you later, Daddy,” Renaye said, and, grabbing David’s hand, she continued her tour of the bottling plant.

David and Renaye spoke and spoke and spoke. About everything under the sun, from politics to which pop records were cool and which ghastly. She was surprised at how well he could draw, and she knew that he would some day make his living by doing something creative. He, on the other hand, was delighted by her sharp mind, her ability to go to the core of a problem or an argument.

Of course, at first their relationship was not all smooth sailing. They were both shy, and David was somewhat of a dreamer, whereas Renaye was more pragmatic. It was also the first time for both of them to be serious about a member of the opposite sex, although their relationship was an innocent teen one. David was allowed a lengthy goodnight kiss, and that was it.

This was all new to them, and when they had their first argument, it, and the make-up that followed, was clumsy and heartbreaking in its naïvity. But bit by bit they got better at it, and soon they were fitting together rather well.

Chapter 10

David's crew were gathered in the loft above the garage of Reverend Jones's house. This was one of their favourite haunts. They had thrown Buck Jones's younger brother, Mark "Mossie" out. He was much younger than the others and had to make way for their seniority. On the den wall hung an abstract painting of John Kramer's, very similar in style to that of Piet Mondriaan.

"Where are you going?" David asked one of the boys.

"Voortrekker Hoogte," came the reply.

There was a glum silence. In a few months's time they would finish high school. Then it was off to the army for a year.

There were so many conflicting emotions. On one hand they still felt like kids and on the other there was a cocky sense of wanting to be seen as someone responsible. They were still playing children's games, chasing one another around the swimming pool while Mr. Rumbles shouted at them not to run. Some of the boys in Worcester had begun making their own fandangled bicycles. They welded one frame on top of the other. To make a bike like this, you had to reroute the chain up to the top set of pedals. The rider perched precariously high up in the sky on the top frame. Getting on and off was pretty tricky, and if the police saw you, you were in trouble.

As David and his friends prepared for their military service, the question of ethics arose: should they register as conscientious objectors?

It was one thing to bleat the national anthem with all the other kids during assembly and important events, but it was quite another to actually die fighting for a cause you didn't believe in.

Die Stem van Suid-Afrika
(CJ Langenhoven)

Uit die blou van onse hemel, uit die diepte van ons see,
Oor ons ewige gebergtes waar die kranse antwoord gee.
Deur ons ver-verlate vlaktes met die kreun van ossewa -
Ruis die stem van ons geliefde, van ons land Suid-Afrika.

Ons sal antwoord op jou roepstem, ons sal offer wat jy vra:
Ons sal lewe, ons sal sterwe - ons vir jou, Suid-Afrika.

David was wracked with doubt and guilt. Wasn't it wrong for him to become a conscript? While he felt it was his duty to partake in this period of military service, he knew the army was part of an apartheid government which he despised. These emotions touched him deeply and would affect his future writings, evidenced in songs such as "Dry Wine" or "Driver, Driver".

Driver, Driver (1986)

It must be nearly midnight
And still we've not yet arrived
At the journey's end you promised us
When we left here at five-to-five
You said you knew the way
You reassured our fears
But why is your hand sweating now
As you try to change the gears

Driver, Driver, Driver
I'm sure that we are lost

*Tell me why they're burning down
The bridges we've just crossed*

I'm looking for direction
I'm trying to speak my mind
Some say I'll need correction
Others say I'm just the liberal kind
But I wonder where we're going
And I wonder what we'll find
Seems there's no way of knowing
The chances we leave behind

*Driver, Driver, Driver
I'm sure that we are lost
Tell me why they're burning down
The bridges we've just crossed*

Well I'm trapped in my situation
I'm chained like a pet baboon
I watch the dust clouds rolling
As I sit here in my room
Acting the repentant sinner
Who fears impending doom
Preaching to the converted
On a Sunday afternoon

*Driver, Driver, Driver
I'm sure that we are lost
Tell me why they're burning down
The bridges we've just crossed.*

The boys streamed out of the school grounds, laughing and cheering. School was over for ever! They slowly made their way in groups of twos and threes, not quite sure what to do next. It was a strange sensation. After twelve years, there would be no more school. The feeling of freedom was tinged with a sense of trepidation. "Reality" was about to start.

The holidays were similar to past years, but perhaps a bit subdued as the boys ticked off the days they had left before reporting to the army.

All too soon that day came, and David joined dozens of other teens at Cape Town station. They milled about on the platform, making small talk. Parents and girlfriends were told to say their goodbyes at the station entrance, and there were many tears. A sergeant and two lance-corporals herded the conscripts together, calling their names from a list. Everything was done in Afrikaans.

Orders were barked as the recruits boarded the train with their single bag of belongings.

The journey took the rest of that day and night. David watched the landscape through the coach window. There was a white circle on each pane, about as big as a coffee cup, and in the middle was a leaping springbok. Through the logoed window the view was sparse: large open spaces. As they lumbered deep into the Karoo, the hills remained the same. The tips were hard, craggy rock, on top of a large mound of sandy slopes, the result of many, many years of erosion. They came in several shades of tan, ochre, grey and faded green. The horizon was always flat and far away, pressed down by a wide empty sky.

The train rumbled on, hour after hour, swaying and rocking. The young men chatted to those they knew and made tentative conversations with the new faces they were thrown together with. There were all types here: the braggarts, the quiet, the ugly-enough-to-scare-away-ghosts, but one thing they all had in common was the slight fear in their eyes.

As the hours passed, the sun began setting. The conscripts were given a pre-packed meal served in a cardboard bowl, along with a white plastic fork. David pulled off the round lid with a little anxiety. In the container was rice with a red-brown sauce on top. He assumed it was beef stew.

“Excuse me, I’m a vegetarian,” one of the soldiers complained.

A bombardier rooted himself before the vegetarian soldier.

“So you can’t eat this?” he asked, pointing his chin to the beef stew and rice.

The tone of his voice was considerate and caring, allowing the young intake to sigh with relief. It seemed that someone would understand his predicament. Maybe it wasn’t going to be so bad after all.

“Yes, I’m a vegetarian ...,” he began.

The bombardier stuck out a thick, muscular arm, grabbed the food from the boy’s hand, and passed it over to the conscript next to him.

“Hierso,” he said, switching to his native Afrikaans. “Komplimente van die Suid-Afrikaanse Weermag. Sê dankie vir jou maatjie.”

The lad looked at the food in his hand, then at the senior officer, and finally at the unfortunate vegetarian next to him.

“I ...,” he stammered.

“Wat?” inquired the bombardier.

Everyone was staring, eyes like saucers in their heads. They knew trouble was coming.

“Nie goed genoeg vir jou nie?”

“Nee ...”

“Nee, *Bombardier*, jou klein kak!”

“Nee, *Bombardier* ..,” came the weak echo.

The bombardier bent forward, his face an inch away from the young conscript’s. His face flushed red as he worked himself into a rage.

“Ek moet op my moeë voete staan terwyl jy op jou fokken gat sit?!” he bellowed.

“Staan op!”

The recruit jumped to his feet, his eyes huge, his face white. In both hands was a tub of rice stew. The bombardier turned and glared at all present in the compartment.

“Julle almal, staan op! *Donners!*”

There was a rustle as everyone jumped to their feet. They weren’t sure what to do with the food, so they held the cardboard bowls in front of them.

“Die President het spesiaal gevra dat julle hierdie gesonde kos kry, omdat hy julle lief het, omdat hy bekommerd oor jul gesondheid is. Hierdie heerlike dis is in die President se woonhuis voorberei, deur sy liefdevolle vrou. Maar wat maak julle? Julle trek jul neuse op vir hierdie wonderlike maal!”

He turned and faced each boy, his hands on his hips. Then his voice dropped to a whisper.

“Julle is verraaiers,” he stated as though the realisation had just come to him, taking a step back in shock and disgust.

The boys began shaking their heads in denial, and one or two opened their mouths to protest.

“Ek ken ’n verraaiër wanneer ek een sien,” the bombardier informed them. “Ek is hoogs opgelei.”

He slapped his upper arm.

“Sien julle hierdie?”

He turned around so everyone could get a good look at the two chevrons sewn onto his shirt. The boys nodded their heads.

“Hierdie,” he said, slapping the chevrons again, pushing out his chest. “Is aan my toegeken deur die President. By sy huis.

“Ons was in die kombuis gewees. Die President se vrou het vir ons koffie gemaak. Met Ouma beskuit. Twee stukke.

“Hoekom twee?”

The boys were silent, too afraid to speak.

“*Hoekom twee stukke beskuit?!*” he bellowed.

“Omdat Bombardier twee strepe gekry het ..?” a voice piped.

The bombardier whirled about.

“Presies!” he called out.

His eyes were like an eagle’s as he lurched towards the boy who’d dared to speak, stopping inches away from him.

“Jy,” he declared. “Is fokken slim. Jy gaan ver kom.”

He stepped back half a pace and contemplated the figure before him.

“Het jy jou land lief?”

“Ja, Bombardier ...”

“Is jy ’n verraaiër?”

“Nee, Bombardier!” came the horrified reply.

The lad stood to attention with only one arm at his side, his hand clutching the plastic fork. The other hand held the tub of food. He was unable to blink.

“Troep, jy mag sit,” came the bombardier’s permission. “Die res van julle, sak vir twintig!”

The boys stood for a few confused moments, then scrambled about finding a place to put their tubs of rice and beef stew, before they fell to the floor and began doing push-ups.

“Troep, hoeveel push-ups het die verraaiers al gedoen?” asked the bombardier.

“Ek weet nie ..,” the boy stammered from where he sat.

“Jy weet nie? Dan moet jou maatjies weer van voor af begin.”

One or two of the chaps doing push-ups craned their necks to glare red-faced at the boy sitting down. They were looks that could kill.

“Waar is die gay een?” the bombardier wanted to know.

Everyone knew that he meant the vegetarian.

“Ek is nie gay nie, Bombardier,” the boy gasped as he did his push-ups, but the bombardier ignored him.

There were sniggers, which soon turned angry.

“Moffie, hoeveel push-ups het julle al gedoen?”

There was a moment’s silence as the vegetarian tried to digest the new bit of cruelty that was flung his way. He had thought that the kid sitting down was supposed to do the counting.

“Ek weet nie, Bombardier,” he reluctantly confessed.

“Begin van voor af,” instructed the bombardier.

“Aag nee, fok ..!” someone swore angrily.

One of the boys counted out loud as they started the new set of push-ups, the others chiming in. This was a good idea.

“Een, twee, drie ...”

“Sak vir twintig” was a phrase that the conscripts were going to hear many times. But for now they gritted their teeth, hating the people who had gotten them into this mess.

Bombardier Fourie hounded them, effortlessly painting them into corners with his slippery tongue. No matter what you said, he twisted it so you came out sounding like a communist who wanted to place a bomb in the Houses of Parliament. A traitor. It was never quite clear what was being betrayed, just a vague mish-mash of disloyalty to South Africa, God, and all things good.

Mid-morning the following day the train stopped at yet another station. This time there was a commotion as the order came to disembark. The boys took their belongings and shuffled towards the doors. Bombardier Fourie was close by.

“Kom, manne,” he called enthusiastically. “Ons gaan oorlog toe! Die helfte van julle sal sterf, maar dit sal glorie aan jul families bring. Glorie, sê ek!”

The boys trembled visibly. Bombardier Fourie slapped one of the lads heartily on his slender shoulders.

“Wat is jou naam, troep?”

The conscript had trouble speaking at first, spluttering a few non-sensical syllables.

“Anton van Dyk, Bombardier,” he finally managed to answer.

“Jy moet vir my jou adres gee, Van Dyk. Ek wil persoonlik vir jou ouers vertel van jou dood. Dis die minste wat ek kan doen.”

Apparently Bombardier Fourie wasn't expecting a reply, because he moved away to make sure his charges were all there.

“Maak 'n lyn,” he ordered. “A straight streep.”

The boys shuffled their feet, not knowing what to do. Bombardier Fourie watched them for a moment, building himself up into a high rage. Then hot, furious air burst from his mouth. He pointed to the ground, drawing an imaginary line where he wanted his troops to stand. And he wanted it done before the oxen outspanned for the night, or they would be eating barbequed testicles tonight. The boys jumped into action, pushing one another out of the way as they desperately tried to stand in a straight streep. Finally there was a line, more or less. Bombardier Fourie tucked his clipboard under his arm and moved down the line, inspecting his troops, his face black with rage. He stopped at the front and turned to face the ragged line. He glared at the ashen faces saying nothing, just glaring with fury. Finally he whispered.

“Ek het, uit die goedheid van my hart, geoffer om hierheen te kom, om myself oor julle te ontferm,” he informed the attended boys solemnly. “Dis die minste wat ek vir my land kan doen.”

He dropped his chin and shut his eyes, a slight frown forming on his forehead as he apparently prayed or contemplated the joys of being a South African lucky enough to serve in the South African Defence Force. He raised his head and looked at them with sad eyes.

“En al wat ek terug vra is dat julle my waardeer, respekteer. My miskien na jul huis toe uitnooi sodat ek jul suster kan steek. Maar nee.

“Die kos wat ek vir julle voorberei het, was in my gesig teruggegooi.”

David was dying to point out that yesterday Bombardier Fourie told them that the food had been prepared by the President’s wife, and now he was singing another tune, but he bit his tongue.

Bombardier Fourie sighed and shrugged his shoulders.

“Maar dis wat jy kry van kommuniste ...”

He slowly moved down the line, peering into each worried face, searching for a communist. He stopped in front of one lad, glaring into his eyes. The boy stood dead still, not even breathing. The bombardier moved on. He came to a stop in front of another chap.

“Waar kom jy vandaan?” he asked.

“Kaapstad, Bombardier.”

“Is jy ’n kommunis?”

“Nee, Bombardier,” the boy answered.

“Moenie vir my vertel dat bokdrolle rosyntjies is nie, troep! Jy is’n Kapenaar, en Kapenaars is kommuniste.”

Moenie vir my vertel dat bokdrolle rosyntjies is nie, David thought, making a mental note. That was brilliant. Don’t tell me that buck droppings are raisins. He had to remember that line.

Everything was done in Afrikaans, and each day was a living nightmare. Yet, in some ways it was perhaps the best year of his life owing to the surreal day-to-day events, the

camaraderie, the regime of exercise which made the young men as fit as ever. The lack of responsibility was wonderful in its own way, as the military decided everything for everyone: when to eat, what to eat, what to wear, when to bath, when to sleep.

When they went on runs, the bombardier decided how far they should run, and how many times they should repeat the exercise, seeing as they had done it fast enough, or in an eye-pleasing manner, or any other silly excuse just to have to redo the run. Cleaning one's weapon was similarly easy. Just do exactly what the bombardier said. Grip the stock with your left hand in a manly manner. In a manly manner, asshole! Open the breach with your right, whilst holding the barrel down. Why? So that you don't shoot my fucking head off, that's why. En doen dit fokken mooi, troep!

The almost exclusive use of Afrikaans in the military had quite an effect on David as he realised that when he used it, it seemed as though he could become another person. It was ironic, because while he saw it as the language of the oppressor, it was also the tongue of the everyday-person, the "real" person, it seemed to speak for those who were disenfranchised due to apartheid and/or poverty.

One of Worcester's most famous sons, JM Coetzee (1997:125) says the following about Afrikaans in his memoir *Boyhood – Scenes from a Provincial Life*:

“When he speaks Afrikaans all the complications of life seem suddenly to fall away. Afrikaans is like a ghostly envelope that accompanies him everywhere, that he is free to slip into, becoming at once another person, simpler, gayer, lighter in his tread.”

As the year went by, which it seemed to do quickly, David's political thoughts began to crystallise. The so-called terrorists that the government was warning the soldiers

of, were in fact other South Africans who actually considered themselves freedom fighters, people who felt they had no other route to liberty. They were denied the vote by the current government, and were considered less than human according to the ruling party's interpretation of the Bible. Apartheid was justified as the will of God. It's no wonder David makes an oblique reference to this in "Driver, Driver":

I watch the dust clouds rolling
As I sit here in my room
Acting the repentant sinner
Who fears impending doom
Preaching to the converted.

Like the so-called terrorists, David saw himself also as an outsider. Hence the rather bitter lines he uses to describe himself in "Driver, Driver". He was, after all, one of those people who wondered whether "terrorists" was the best word – wouldn't "freedom fighters" be more appropriate? So, he as a liberal was just as unwanted as the "terrorists" in the South Africa of that time.

Some say I'll need correction
Others say I'm just the liberal kind

Bombardier Fourie and his nefarious tongue was a rich source of frustration as well as inspiration for David. He drove the boys mad with his considerable ability to change things to suit himself. If you were a vegetarian you were gay, if you were from Cape Town you were a communist. These things were said as though they were universal truths, something that need not be explained. *Everyone* knew that vegetarians were gay.

As time went by, David came to realise that Bombardier Fourie was intelligent, and one of those rare beings: a born leader. Listening to him talk to the other ou manne, it was clear he also had reservations about the role of the church in their lives: about not being able to watch a film on a Sunday; about sports isolation due to apartheid. But what were his options? Be all soft and liberal and let things slide into chaos? No. This was the time to stand up and be counted.

David was taught how to clean, load and fire his weapon, he was made to pull the pin from a live hand grenade and toss it over a wall of sandbags into an open clearing, his heart thumping in his chest as he waited for it to explode into a million pieces. He saluted anyone with rank, because he had to, feeling ridiculous each time.

The time was flying by, and soon there was talk of “min dae, baie hare.” Their 40 days had come around. The whole day the camp reverberated to the sound of Cliff Richards singing “I’m gonner give yooo... forty day-yeez... to GET BACK!”

When the conscripts were initially given their new kit the material was hard and dark, but as the months passed, the uniforms had softened and faded. Now David wore his fatigues with some pride. They, like David, had some wear and tear behind them.

The food had been terrible, their nights often interrupted to go on runs, they had learnt how to assemble and fire rifles whilst being barked at by a rabid bombardier, but they had made it. They had come out in one piece, and now the summer skies were back. Soon they would be going home.

Chapter 11

In 1971 the big hits in South Africa were (<http://www.rock.co.za>):

- I hear you Knocking – Dave Edmunds
- No Matter What – Badfinger
- If not for You – Olivia Newton-John
- Butterfly – Danyel Gerard
- I did what I did for Maria – Tony Christie
- Mammy Blue – Charisma
- Co-Co – The Sweet
- Knock Three Times – Dawn
- Look out, here comes Tomorrow – The Dealians
- You – Peter Maffay.

However, David was going to be right in the middle of a trendier hit parade. He was going to Britain! He had been accepted as a student at the University of Leeds to study Textile Design.

David had always looked up to his older brother. John had to a large extent influenced David's way of seeing the world. By the time David left for the UK, John was already at art school. Besides painting, John was always taking photographs, capturing images he found interesting.

Below is a photograph taken by John Kramer of a shop in High Street, Worcester. It's a good example of the eye for small-town nostalgia he shared with David.



K.B. Fakir & Co, corner of High Street and Stockenström (sic) Street, Worcester, 1972.

Photograph: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/capelight>

This was Bakka's Cafe and it was one of my favourite places in the 1950's. Once you got past the rows of tomatoes, lettuce, pockets of oranges, boxes of grapes, watermelons, pineapples, coconuts and bags of unshelled peanuts you got to the sweet counter. There behind the glass counter at my eye-level was a colourful display of pink Star sweets, Niggerballs, Chappies and Wicks bubble gum and Sunrise toffies (sic) with ECB (extra cream and butter). There was liquorice, sour sweets, marshmallow fish and peppermints. All these could be had for 1d each in the 1950's. More expensive items were slabs of Nestle and Cadbury chocolate. Here you could buy ice suckers, Eskimo pies and wafer ice creams.

In racks nearby were the Dell comics; Little Lulu, Donald Duck and Uncle Scrooge and Woody Woodpecker. Superman comics printed in black and white were also available. Magazines like Life and the Saturday Evening Post was our window to a wider world. Bakka also had a showcase on the side of the shop facing Stockenström Street displaying all sorts of items a boy was interested in. There were knives and daggers, throwing tops, nail clippers, novelty items and at Guys Fauwkes (sic) time on the 5th November, Rondin fireworks and Big Bang crackers.

In the street is Bakkas (sic) truck (Dodge or Ford?) that hawked fruit and vegetables to the surrounding suburbs. On certain days of the week it would arrive carrying (sic) its load of cabbages, potatoes and carrots to be weighed out on a large scale mounted on the back.

[Author's note: In the picture one can see a bit of Kramer's Furnishers sticking out from behind the buildings]

As John's style progressed, it evolved into his own brand of photo-realism. What David would later write about in his songs - rural scenes - was what John was painting: shops with their large adverts for Coca Cola on the walls, typical houses of the area, corrugated zinc roofs and cement stoeps. Interestingly, there were almost never people in these paintings.



Painting by John Kramer. www.johnkramer.net



Painting by John Kramer. www.johnkramer.net



John Kramer. www.johnkramer.net

John had quite a sharp eye and was known for his dry observations, and this rubbed off on his younger brother. For example, John took the following photograph, and wrote: (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/capelight/260156683/in/set-72157594306867813/>)

Not sure if I want to buy my sweets and chocolates next to an undertaker. I like the play of the 'Take Aways' and 'Undertaker' though ...!



Photograph <http://www.flickr.com/photos/capelight/>. (Possibly John Kramer.)

Like John, David had taken art as a subject whilst at high school. Art classes had been in the afternoons after regular school hours, at the Hugo Naude Art Centre. Pieter Hugo Naude had been one of Worcester's well-known artists.



Painting by Pieter Hugo Naude - Mountain Landscape with River.
http://www.johansborman.co.za/index.asp?page=artist_detail.asp%3Fid%3D25

Now that David had completed his compulsory military duty, he was free to do as he pleased. He could leave for Europe, grow his hair and see the bands that he had only heard of: The Rolling Stones at The Roundhouse, Bob Dylan at The Marquee! Of course, if he was so inclined, he could watch Manchester United win a match at Old Trafford, or even the men's tennis finals at Wimbledon. The UK was where everything happened!

David received a bursary from the Hex Tex textile company. This was perhaps a good indicator of David's solid financial sense, possibly inherited from Solly. Hex Tex would provide the money for him to study, and there would be a job for him when he completed the course. It was a win-win situation.

Before David had left for the army he had had a few passport photographs taken. It was his standard 5 teacher, Mr. Ellis, who took the photographs. David sat down and grinned widely.

“Don’t smile,” Mr. Ellis muttered from behind the camera.

David tried to pull in his smile but there was still a shadow of it on his face - this was too exciting, too wonderful. He was going to get a passport, and he was going to go to England!

“Okay,” Mr. Ellis said, stepping out from behind the camera. “You can collect your shots tomorrow.”

“Thank you,” David replied.

Frances had found the necessary forms to complete and she helped David fill them out. Name. Address.

By the time David returned from his military service, his passport was waiting for him. He was ready to go. Frances helped him pack his luggage. If it was up to him, he would have taken his guitar and one t-shirt.

Departure day arrived. They all piled into the car. Solly drove over the mountains of the Du Toit’s Kloof pass towards Cape Town. The sound of the car in the mountain’s tunnel was eerie and a bit frightening. As they made their way down the other side of the winding pass they saw glimpses of Wellington far below.

At the airport Solly parked the car and they all got out, stretching after the long drive. Solly found a trolley and heaved David’s luggage onto it. This was a serious occasion, so they were all well-dressed, except John, who took a more bohemian attitude to clothing. Solly pushed the trolley, one of the wheels making a clack-clack-clack noise. Inside the terminal they looked around, trying to get their bearings.

“Over there,” Frances said, pointing.

They moved off again. David joined the queue at the check-in counter. He handed over his luggage, along with his ticket and passport. He eyed the scale nervously, praying that it wasn't over the weight limit allowed. The young woman scribbled with a pen, muttering to herself, then handed him a slip of paper, along with a beautiful smile.

“That’s your boarding pass. Boarding time is at 11:20. Gate 3.”

David grinned back. Boarding pass! Gate 3! It all sounded so international!

“Thanks,” he beamed.

When it was time for him to board he made his way to the gates. Frances hugged him and kissed his mouth.

“You take care, now ..,” she said.

David beamed. He shook his father’s and brother’s hands, turned and went through the gates, showing his boarding pass. On the other side he turned back and waved, before the crowd swallowed him up.

When they touched down in the UK, it was freezing. David took out a jacket from his hand luggage and shrugged into it. He followed the other passengers towards the immigration desks. On board the plane it had been mostly English and Afrikaans, but now with all the travellers swarming about inside the terminal building David’s ears were bombarded with snippets of different languages. Once through customs, David retrieved his bags from the carousel. He loaded them onto a trolley and made his way to the foyer.

He was in London!

David frowned slightly as he looked at the map of the London Underground. You are here, said the inscription, with a red arrow pointing to the spot on the map where he was standing. It was his second day in London and it was still all very new.

“OK,” he muttered over the din around him. “Camden Town. That’s where I am. I’ve got to transfer at Leicester Square, to the blue line. The next station is Piccadilly Circus ...”

When the train came down the line David inched forward, pushed on by the crowd. He got onto the train and grabbed an overhead strap, clinging on for dear life. When the train began slowing down he peered through the window, craning his neck to see where he was. Mornington Crescent. Good. He was going the right way. People shuffled off and others rushed in to take their place. It was all a blur: the faces, the accents, David only catching a few words here and there.

There were the obligatory things to do and see in London, and David felt compelled to go through the list. Piccadilly Circus – done. Trafalgar Square – done. But this was the best so far: his visit to the *New Musical Express*. He had bought this newspaper every Wednesday at the CNA, and now here he was, standing on the pavement in front of its very offices. David took a deep breath and stepped forward, pushing the doors open and entering the building. He took the elevator up to the third floor, stepped out, and there it was, bustling and noisy, the offices of the *New Musical Express*. Above the entrance were the big red letters David knew so well: NME.

“May I help you?” a voice asked.

David turned and saw a tall young man in his late twenties in what can only be described as groovy threads. The velvet bell-bottom pants were so wide that it seemed as

though he was wearing a skirt. David realised that the man wasn't really that tall, it was the 3-inch soles of his platform shoes that made him seem so.

"I, er, I'm just visiting," David mumbled. "I always get the NME back home ..."

The man took David's accent in.

"Where you from, then?"

"South Africa."

"South Africa?"

David watched the expression on the face opposite him. South African - wonder what makes him tick?

Another man strode up to them, also attired in groovy threads. But unlike his colleague, he wore sandals, man. With his long hair and beard he looked a lot like Jesus.

"Have you finished with the Floyd layout, Andy?" he asked.

"Of course," the man in the three-inch platforms replied. "Simon's developing the prints. Then all I have to do is drop the pics in."

"Bring it to my office when it's done," the older man ordered, far more severely than Jesus would have done, and strode off in a wave of hair that reached his jeans.

"Fuck!" Andy swore under his breath. "The Floyd layout ..."

"I thought you finished it?" David inquired.

"First rule of journalism, my son: always lie."

David chuckled.

Andy eyed the camera David had slung over his shoulder.

"You could well be my saviour," he muttered. "What's your name, my lad?"

"David Kramer."

“Wrong. Your name is Simon Bough, photographer. Come with me.”

David followed Andy down a passage.

“I’m Andy Gophin,” Andy introduced himself. “And I forgot to arrange with Simon for today’s shoot.”

“You’re in deep shit,” David pointed out.

“Not at all. Simon is right here, behind me, and he’s going to take brilliant pics.”

David had read many of Andy Gophin’s articles. And here he was, actually talking to the man himself! No-one was going to believe this story, he thought. They entered a tiny office cluttered with a desk, filing cabinets and piles of paper. Not to mention the members of Pink Floyd.

David felt faint.

“Right, lads. Let’s take the pics, and then we’re good to go,” Andy breezed with a wave at David.

He moved in behind his desk and began hammering at the keys of an electric typewriter. It was clear that David had to take over from here.

“This way, lads,” David mumbled, hoping he sounded Swinging London.

He left the office, went down the corridor, not having a clue what he was supposed to do.

“Crazy weather we’re having, isn’t it?” he asked.

There was general agreement to this statement.

“Oh, yes. Hot one moment and freezing the next.”

“You guys have any plans for the rest of the day?” David wanted to know.

“Got to get back to the studio. Lay down a few tracks.”

“Hope it goes well,” David said. “Maybe Mrs. Floyd can come over and sprinkle some magic dust.”

He shuddered. What the hell had just fallen out of his mouth? There was a moment’s silence, and then the band chuckled. Someone slapped David’s back.

“You guys have a title for the album yet?” David wondered.

“Dark Side Of The Moon.”

David raised his eyebrows.

“That’s a great title,” he complimented.

“Thanks.”

When he reached the foyer he pressed the elevator button, the members of Pink Floyd watching with him as the numbers above the elevator changed. The doors opened and they filed in. David pressed the button for the top floor. They reached the tenth floor and the doors opened again. They trundled out and David found the door leading to the rooftop, his heart pounding in his chest. If this door was locked he was screwed!

The handle turned and the door opened. He led the band out onto the roof. His hands were trembling as he took off the lens cap and squinted with one eye at the rooftops around him.

“So what do you want us to do, then?” one of the band members asked.

David had to think about this for a moment.

“Nothing,” he replied, daring to look at the band. “You’re Pink Floyd, do what you like.”

The group absorbed this, and then burst out laughing. Yes, they were Pink Floyd, and they were too cool to pose. David focused and snapped, moving about on the roof.

Each member relaxed and strolled about, looking out over the roofs around them. Then a miracle happened: the band was standing at the wall together. They had been looking over the wall, but had now turned to look in David's direction again. As he snapped, a flock of pigeons flew past, close to the group. It all happened too fast, and David was unaware of it.

“That's it, lads,” he said, grinning feebly at them.

And with that Pink Floyd was out of his life. They opened the door and left the roof. David stayed behind, fiddling with his camera, trying to settle his mind. When he went to the foyer to get the elevator, Pink Floyd was gone. David went back down to Andy's office and showed him the roll of film.

“Where do I develop this, Andy?” he asked.

“End of the corridor. Just make sure the red light isn't on.”

David walked down the corridor and found the darkroom. He went in and developed the film, having to look around a bit for the chemicals, as this was a new and strange place to him. He printed a proofsheets and wiped off the excess water with a squeegee. Then he pored over the proofsheets, frowning slightly as he mentally eliminated the bad shots. When he saw the picture of the group with the flock of pigeons, his heart skipped a beat. He knew he had a winner.

He printed the pictures he considered to be the best and went back to Andy's office. The reporter flicked through the pile of photographs. When he reached the last one, David smiled as he saw Andy's reaction.

“Fucking hell! This is far out!”

Andy looked up at David, a wide grin on his face.

“Take a seat. Let me finish this, and then I’ll be with you.”

David sat down on one of the chairs which very recently had held the behind of one of the members of Pink Floyd. Andy left the office and David heard him speak to someone else, whom David guessed was the layout artist. Andy came back with a flimsy sheet of paper in his hand.

“Just want to run the trannies past the editor. Give me the film.”

David handed over the roll of film.

“I want that back,” he warned.

“I’ll guard it with my life. You have my word.”

“Your word means nothing,” David pointed out.

“True,” Andy agreed, and dashed out of the office.

He returned ten minutes later, beaming.

“I have done a great job, and I am wonderful,” he informed David.

“My film ..,”

“Will be returned to you once they’ve finished with the layout. They need to get the pics to the correct size.”

Andy plopped down behind the desk and looked at David, still beaming.

“Once the editor fell in love with your shot, I confessed that I had found this amazing new talent.”

David grinned back at Andy.

“Therefore, tonight you shall accompany me to The Marquee. When you get to the door just say the magic words *Andy Gophin* and *NME*. In that order.”

That night David got his precious roll of film back, and saw The Yardbirds play a sizzling set. Backstage he hung on to every word as Eric Clapton spoke about his other great love: fishing.

“Good luck at Leeds,” the god of guitar said to David by way of saying goodbye, and David walked back to his room flying high.

When he arrived in Leeds two days later, he was exhausted by all his adventures. Unpacking was easy, as he had very little belongings. Registering was not quite so simple.

He woke up early the next morning and looked about, disorientated. Then it all came back to him. He was in Leeds, on campus. He washed, got dressed, and set out. First things first: he was starving. At a tea shop he had a pie and chips with a steaming cup of tea. Now he was ready to face the day. He had to go to the admin building, he was told by a girl with an accent so broad David could hardly make out what she’d said. After a few false starts, he located the administration building. There were long lines, and he queued up with dozens of other students. He craned his neck to see which forms his fellow students had in their hands. He noticed they all had a green form. What was that?

“Excuse me. What is that green form?” he asked timidly.

“It’s the Curriculum form.”

David was blank. Curriculum form?

“You need to choose your subjects from this form.”

David sighed.

“Shit, shit, shit!” he thought.

“Where do I get this form?”

“Room 113.”

“Where’s room 113?”

“Down that corridor.”

“Thanks.”

David left the queue he had been standing in for nearly half an hour and trudged towards room 113, where there was another line. Eventually he made it to the front and asked for a Curriculum form. He took it to a corner and started to read. He ticked off the subjects. Luckily he had perused a handbook whilst in South Africa, so he remembered which subjects he wanted to do. He went back to the main hall and rejoined the queue.

“Over here, mate,” the student he had spoken to earlier called.

Relieved, David retook his place in line.

“Thanks,” he said.

“After this you need to get your student card. I’ll show you. Follow me,” he was told.

“Thanks. I appreciate it. I’m totally lost,” David said. “I’m David, by the way. David Kramer.”

“I’m Mark Knopfler.”

By the end of the day he was registered. He had a student number, a student card, and his class schedule. And he had a new friend who knew the campus like the back of his hand. Like David, Mark was crazy about music.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za/popups/press/interview.htm>

For the next few days David set about getting to know his whereabouts. It was a lovely campus, and he savoured the names as he passed the residences: Bodington Hall, Oxley Residences, Lupton Residences, North Hill Court, James Baillie Park.

That Friday David made his way to a nearby pub, hoping to make a few friends.

“Mind if I take this seat?” a voice asked.

David turned to see who was speaking to him. A young man was sitting down on the stool next to him. It was a black man. David had never sat next to a black man in a bar before. The other thing that David took in was how posh his voice was.

“Not at all,” replied David.

They nodded at one another.

“Are you a student, too?” inquired David.

“Yes. And you? By the way, where are you from?”

“South Africa?”

“Oh, really?”

The young man gave David a look, and David had a fair idea what was going through his mind.

“So what are you doing, then?” he asked.

It seemed that David had been forgiven for being a white South African.

“I’m doing textile design. And you?”

“Accounting.”

He gave a shrug, which David took to be an oblique apology for choosing such a boring career. David chuckled.

“So what are you having?” he asked.

“I’d love a beer. I’m Jody, by the way.”

“David.”

They shook hands, and David ordered beers. The bar was filling up, and already the barman was a bit harassed. When the drinks arrived David took a sip, and put his glass down with a horrified frown.

“This beer is warm ...” he complained to the barman.

The barman gave him a glance, but then continued serving his customers. What was this fool on about?

“Beer should be warm,” Jody informed David.

David made his eyes big as he looked at Jody.

“No, it should most certainly not!” he argued.

“So how do you drink it in South Africa?”

“Chilled.”

“Brought to you by a houseboy dressed in a white waiter’s jacket ...”

David chuckled, tilting his head, acknowledging Jody's barb. It was true, after all.

"And a pair of pants," David pointed out. "Madam might be disturbed."

Life in Leeds was great, Jody showing David the local student haunts. Many a night was spent discussing politics, music and fashion in one of the countless pubs. However, Jody constantly surprised David by taking him to places he would never have bothered with.

"Get up, we're going out!" Jody called from outside David's room one Saturday morning, banging with his fist on the door.

David opened the door cautiously.

"What ..?" he wanted to ask.

"You're dressed? Excellent. Let's get going."

David followed the tall figure of Jody, grumbling about rather wanting to sleep. Jody had procured a car from somewhere. This was his true gift, being able to get things, borrow things, find things. The two drove off, and soon found themselves at Kirkstall Abbey, a rustic old cathedral.

"Completed between 1152 and 1182," Jody informed David. "A unique example of early Cistercian architecture."

"I thought you were an accountant?" David queried.

"Only when I sit behind a big desk," replied his host with a wink.

The wink could have meant any of a million things, and it was typical of Jody's left, left sense of humour.

Finally David was free from the constraints of school, the army, and South Africa. He could grow his hair as long as he wanted, wear what he wanted, and socialize with

whomever he pleased. Whilst England had its fair share of racism, it was far easier to socialise here with an exotic mix of people from all over the world than in South Africa where apartheid was still alive and strong. His neighbour to the left was from Norway, and the chap on the right was a Pakistani, the shyest person David had ever met. But his cooking was a delight, and David always accepted Imraan's invitations.

Imraan had insisted that David eat dinner using only his right hand, and David had agreed. It was Imraan's home, after all, and it was also part of his overseas experience, he told himself. The one thing that brought Imraan out of his shell was cricket, and he and David agreed to disagree on who the greatest cricketing nation in the world was. He did, though, teach David a great deal on the more delicate points of the game, which made David appreciate and enjoy the games he saw on television even more. After some time, David grudgingly agreed that the spin-bowler was a necessary and undervalued part of any team.

Whilst Imraan was passionate about cricket, Henry was a soccer fan.

Henry was another South African, and he often came around. Actually, his name was Hendrik. Hendrik van der Spuy.

He insisted that David join him when he went to watch Leeds play at Elland Road. This was quite an eye-opener for David, witnessing the passion of the supporters. There was full-throated singing, urging "The Whites" on, and David could not help but get sucked up in the excitement, and he became a Leeds United convert. But his first love was still music.

David was desperate to see as much live music as he could, and whenever he got the chance he took the train down to London. He would drop in on Andy Gophin at the

NME, and visited venues like The Roxy and The Marquee. Even though he was studying to be a textile designer, he still harboured serious thoughts on being a musician.

For anyone visiting London, a trip to Wembley stadium to see one of the bands was *de rigueur*. This was where the supergroups played. Rod Stewart was hot at the time, and easily filled the stadium with thousands of yelling fans whilst he pranced and preened, always with a long, flowing tartan scarf. When he kicked footballs into the audience the masses went wild, but David had difficulty understanding the chants called out.

The accents in the UK were confounding. From the east end of London to the thick burs from Scotland, David often nodded his head without having a clue what the person was saying.

Another thing that was new to David was the protests, and the tolerance the authorities had for the protestors. When the prime minister, Mr. Edward Heath declared that in his opinion it was in order for Britain to sell arms to South Africa, there were gatherings outside the South African embassy in London. The Leeds University campus was not unaffected. Students thronged together with banners, making their displeasure at Mr. Heath's statement clear. To David's surprise and relief, there were no riot police wading into the crowds, wielding batons.

Snow was also new to David.

Someone hammered at his door.

“What?” David asked.

“Come on!” a voice called. “It's snowing!”

David got up from the table, leaving his drawing. He grabbed a jacket and went outside. Henry was waiting for him, a huge grin on his face.

“Snow!” Henry laughed, his arms outstretched.

David looked about in amazement. Everywhere he looked it was white. Just like a Christmas card. They tip-toed about gingerly, getting used to walking on the snow.

“We’ve got to have a Christmas dinner ..!” Henry declared. “With real South African food!”

Henry’s enthusiasm was infectious and David grinned back.

Christmas dinner was a huge success. There was roast meat, carrots and potatoes, perfectly, crispy golden on the outside and soft and fluffy on the inside. Someone had made a potato salad with Cross & Blackwell mayonnaise. Paper hats were bought for guests, and everyone had a great time pulling the crackers apart, laughing at the silly little gifts inside.

David was happy to oblige when someone asked him to play a song or two. He took out his trusty guitar and made himself comfortable.

“What would you like to hear?” he asked, a huge smile on his face.

“My Ding-A-Ling ..!” someone called out, and there were hoots of laughter.

Chuck Berry had been number 1 in November with his naughty song about people playing with their ding-a-lings. (The song had been banned in South Africa.)

When I was a little biddy boy
My grandmother bought me a cute little toy
Silver bells hanging on a string
She told me it was my ding-a-ling-a-ling
Oh
My Ding-A-Ling My Ding-A-Ling I want you play with My Ding-A-Ling
My Ding-A-Ling My Ding-A-Ling I want you play with My Ding-A-Ling ..!

Everyone shouted the chorus together as David strummed, and their laughter carried on until late into the night.

“I’d give my right arm to write a song like that ..!” David chuckled.

“I’d give my right arm to be ambidextruous,” said Mark, and there was more laughter.

Mark Knopfler introduced David to the music scene at the student’s union. It was on one of the walls that David saw the first picture of Nelson Mandela. Underneath the photograph were the words to “Nkosi Sikelel iAfrika”, in English, and David was astonished to read that they meant *God bless Africa*. What a beautiful sentiment, he thought, to words he had been told by teachers and other voices of authority to mean something terrible, hatred, evil and destructive.

He looked at the large picture of Mandela again. In South Africa all images of him were banned, and it was taboo to even mention his name, if you knew what was good for you.

He turned his attention back to Mark. Here at the student’s union anyone could play, either covers or originals. The atmosphere was very laid back and easy-going, but the experience was a revelation for David. He watched Mark step up to the microphone and play a song that was simply stunning. And to top it off, his guitar skills were exceptional. He had a style of his own. David realised that he was still light years behind, just another weak Dylan imitator.

Mark’s song ended and there was appreciative applause from the audience. As Mark stepped off the tiny stage, David walked over to him.

“That’s a great song,” he said.

“Thanks.”

“What’s it called?”

“The Sultans of Swing.”

David nodded his head.

“It’s going to be a huge hit one day,” he prophesised. “Then you’ll escape these dire straights.”

Mark laughed.

“That’s a great name for a band!” he said. “Do you mind if I nick it?”

“Be my guest,” David replied.

David regularly met with Mark and they played their own compositions to one another. Mark, even then, was clearly a very polished and mature songwriter, so when he complimented David on his songs, David was very flattered.

“That’s a great song,” he told David, and David couldn’t help beaming.

“Thanks.”

“Although you should drop the Dylan stuff. That’s been done, by Dylan, and he does Dylan better than anyone else can.”

David felt crushed. He knew that Mark was right, but he also knew that he didn’t have the answer. It was all so easy for Mark, the way he turned out songs with lovely melodies and great lyrics, all in a style of his own. Mark saw the look on David’s face.

“Come on. Play something else,” he urged.

David thought for a while.

“Ok. I’ll play this song in English, but it’s actually written in Afrikaans ...”

“Afrikaans?” Mark exclaimed eagerly. “That’s great! Now you’re talking.”

David played a verse of the song, translating. Then he continued in Afrikaans.

When he stopped, he explained the lyrics to Mark.

“It’s about a guy who lives on the west coast of South Africa, and he eats biscuits and biltong ...”

“What’s biltong?”

“Dried meat. Jerky, I think you guys call it ...”

“God, that’s brilliant!”

Mark slapped David’s skinny shoulder.

“That’s what you should be doing!”

“You don’t think it’s a bit, er, unsophisticated?” wondered David.

“Not at all. That’s the nature of what you’re trying to say, and the song reflects the audience you’re playing for, if I understand you correctly.”

It felt great. Mark got him and what he was trying to do.

“Tomorrow we’re going to busk at the Black Prince,” Mark informed David.

“The Black Prince?”

“It’s a statue in the City Square.”

The next day they stood at the base of the statue of a man in armour on a horse, and Mark made David one of his un-Dylan songs.

“Remember, no Dylan,” Mark warned.

David strapped on his guitar, took a deep breath, and began playing to the people passing by.

“Ek is ’n Weskus klong ..,” he hollered as he played a very basic, strong, beat on his guitar. I am a West Coast lad ...

David was delighted when someone tossed a coin into his guitar case, even though the person had no idea what David was singing about. Mark gave him a thumbs-up sign from where he stood watching.

David did well at university. Design came easy to him. He became increasingly well-versed with curtains and dress-material, and his eye began to pick out interesting ideas for his own material designs. He still drew all the time, in his rather naïve style, but his focus was now more on the designing of reams and reams of material, be it for towels, curtains, shirts, and so on.

His closest friend was Arthur Lewis. Arthur was a fervent Leeds United supporter, and the brother of two very pretty sisters, but it was his sharp wit that made him such a valuable friend to David. He had given David a small volume called *Hitler, my part in his downfall*. David had known of Spike Milligan, through the Goon radio shows as a boy in South Africa, but he had been unaware of Milligan’s war memoirs. David and Arthur recited reams of dialogue to one another, ending up in stitches. Arthur would also repeat Monty Python sketches, imitating the voices perfectly, but it was the Milligan gems that he loved the most.

The two often sat at their desks, heads bent as they worked on their designs, giggling as they repeated Milligan jokes, trying their best to get the Peter Sellers accents right, always failing, which seemed to make it funnier for the two.

However, not so light-hearted was the politics of the time in Britain. David was surprised that there was racial tension in the United Kingdom, that even here people of colour were trying to carve out a life where they would not be negatively stereotyped.

“You’ve got to be kidding,” David said.

Henry was a serious young man, and one could take what he said to be the truth, but this was too ridiculous. Surely he was joking, or had his facts wrong.

“Not at all. January the first, it goes into play,” Henry replied.

“But how ...”

“Heath’s government are adamant they’re not going to give in to the miners, and they want to make the coal stretch as long as possible, and they say in that case there will be a three-day working week. Except for hospitals, and such,” Henry explained.

“But the logistics ...”

“Are a nightmare. God only knows how they’re going to get it done.”

David pondered Henry’s words.

It seemed impossible. How did Britain get into such a predicament, and how were they going to get their way out?

In the following weeks the three-day week came into being, and still the miners did not give in. David started hearing the name Arthur Scargill, and depending to whom one spoke, he was either a hero or a villain. The prime minister, Edward Heath, fared less well, and many of the people David spoke to couldn’t stand him, blaming him for the conditions they found themselves in. Heath, as Jody had told David, was still unpopular on certain fronts for wanting to join the European Economic Community.

When Heath called for a general election, it came as no surprise to David that he lost to Harold Wilson of the Labour Party.

David was glued to the television set. John Cleese and the gang of *Fawlty Towers* were hilarious. Sybil was in hospital to have an ingrown toenail removed, and due to her absence, so it seemed, all was falling apart, like the moose head.

But as David watched, his mood changed. The major referring to Indians as wogs, and other racial slurs, was not funny. And as the story progressed, with the German guests becoming upset by Basil's repeated mention of the war, "highlighted" by his goosetep walk, David was becoming more and more surprised. This was not what he had expected to find in Britain.

Also, around him in his everyday life, the mood was decidedly bleak. Young people seemed to have no faith in the future, knowing that they were destined to end up like their parents in dead-end jobs, if they could find employment, and all around the country, it seemed to him, that there were protests and strikes.

"You've got to see this band," Andy enthused.

David had taken the train down to London, first stopping at The White Rose for a beer close to Leeds station, and as he always did when he visited London, he had dropped in on Andy Gophin at the NME. At first he hadn't recognised Andy. Gone was the long hair, gone were the flared jeans. Now he followed Andy down some dirty steps into a club. The walls of the stairwell were covered with graffiti written or drawn with thick felt pen. To his horror he saw the name of Eric Clapton struck out by three harsh black lines.

But that horror was nothing compared to what he experienced when he entered the club. Girls with gharish black eyeliner, skirts made of black dustbin bags, and boys with spiky hair jumping up and down in what seemed to be their tribal dance. A youth bumped into David, and David could not believe his eyes. The young man had pierced his cheek with a large safety pin. But the most shocking was seeing a green-haired Johnny Rotten snarling into a vintage '50's microphone, his shirt in tatters, a row of handcuffs used as a belt to keep up his tartan trousers which seemed to be tied together at the knees.

“I am an anti-Christ!” declared Johnny. “I am an anarchist!”

David walked away from the concert a changed man. In the following weeks and months the images of that experience stayed with him, and whilst he was shocked by what he saw, he knew that everything he had been absorbing as a musician was suddenly totally irrelevant.

Time marched on, and all too soon David's studies were at an end. In July 1974 he was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree in Textile Design. His grade was 2.1. The subjects he'd taken were:

Textiles 1A
Fine Art 1
Management Studies A1
Fine Art 2
Management Studies A2
Textile Design 2
Yarn Manufacturing 2A
Textile Testing 1A
Fabric Structure 1A
Historical & Contemporary Fabric 1
Knitting 1A
Textiles 2A

He packed his belongings and with a final look at the room he had called home for the last few years, set off for the airport.

His time in the north of England had been interesting, the music, the culture he found himself in, the vibrant political scene. It had been a time when Edward Heath's conservative government had been very unpopular during the miner's strike, as well as the three-day weeks the government created in an effort to save electricity.

David was sad to say goodbye to England but also excited about going home. Eating home cooking. Hearing the accents he knew so well talk about the weather and rugby matches of the past weekend. And of course, South African sunshine on his face.

His flight took off from Heathrow and he watched the scene below him as the plane banked up and away. Below were rows of semi-detached houses with chimney pots. Just like a postcard.

When David disembarked in the Mother City the heat hit him. He grinned widely. He was back!

Chapter 12

The time that David had spent in Britain had been good for him, but now that he was back in South Africa, he saw his homeland through new eyes. He was amazed at what lay in front of him. Here was rich material to fuel his songwriting. He was brimming with creativity. Everywhere he looked he saw or experienced something which inspired him. He began penning songs from a South African perspective. No more lyrics about the streets of London, or being down on his luck in Louisiana.

David was no longer interested in writing and performing music that tried to emulate the American and British experiences. Instead, he threw himself into the vibrant tapestry of his South African lifestyle, the good and the bad. Songs such as “Bellville Blues”, “Signal Hill”, and so on, flowed from David’s pen. This new direction in David’s songwriting gave him the ammunition to talk about the life he was intimately familiar with, along with the possibility to speak of and for the unheard, the invisible everyday person of the South African platteland. A song such as “Montagu” was rooted in a place he knew, geographically and culturally. In this song he refers to the muscatel from the area, he speaks of the habit of the rural people often being curious about one’s family roots – who one is related to by birth or marriage. He also mentions the ubiquitous café found on the corner with its Coca Cola or Springbok tobacco advertising painted on the walls. In these songs David could mix a certain amount of romanticism in his subjects and temper it with political realism. In “Tjoepstil”, for example, his politics are somewhat

harder. He surprisingly takes the side of a policeman, a protagonist who is reviled, but called for when trouble arises.

Some critics would accuse David of being an armblank wannabe, or even worse, a pretend-coloured farm labourer, milking the poverty-stricken from the comfort of his middle-class armchair.

His image too, underwent a dramatic metamorphosis. Here David again looked to the poor-white images of days gone by and the coloured labourers from the surrounding grape farms of his youth in Worcester. Baggy trousers and sensible brown or black shoes, white shirt and tie flapping in the breeze, topped off with what would become classic Kramer: the middle-part hairstyle. The shoes were like the ones worn by boys during their school years, and portrayed a message not only of poverty, but also a lack of sophistication, part of the South African kitsch that Kramer tapped into. In later years David would sport a pair of red shoes, which became his signature look. The baggy pants were usually khaki, like those worn by working men, especially farmers, and David often rolled up his shirt sleeves, all part of the myth of rural hard work and honesty. (Of course this image could easily have been transferred to the Australian outback.) His look was the visual equivalent of his sound, which he labelled *blik* (tin). Later, when David started his own record label, he called it *Blik*.

Regarding the artist and his awareness of image, Clarkson (2003:172) quotes the musician Sting to highlight the importance of image in the industry:

A certain amount of inspiration and the enjoyment of what you do. That's the prime mover. But then again there is what you might call strategy, where you look at the market and see what sells, and you see what image

is required. To a certain extent you taper your creativity to that particular mode.

Further, regarding image and the parameters it puts on an artist, Needs (2005:9) has this to say about The Clash:

In 1977, you had to be careful what you said. Despite its anarchistic manifesto, punk rock had its own unwritten list of qualifications for acceptance, especially within the ranks of its originators and elements of the media.

If you were a working class teenager from a council estate – preferably from a broken home with an alcoholic mother – and survived on a crap job or the dole, you were considered okay. The shittier your circumstances, the better. But if your background was comfortable middle-class, you'd attended a good school and were maybe tipping the scales in terms of age, there might be credibility problems. It was like you had *no right* to be a punk.



David in High Street, Worcester. (p.44 *Short Back and Sides*)



David in front of the Impala Café, Worcester. (p.16 *Short Back & Sides*)
The Impala Café was opposite Rusbank Gallery, an antique store owned by Mrs. Heller.

David moved back into his room in his parent's house. Soon he had a new routine: have breakfast made for him by Frances, a luxury he couldn't get enough of.

"Ma, I can't tell you how good it is to have breakfast made for me," he told her with a kiss.

"Hotel Frances gets its fifth star!" she declared, and David nodded his head with a laugh.

"It sure does!"

His days consisted of going to work at Hex Tex, either Solly or Frances driving him to work. Then after work he met friends. There weren't any clubs, so it was all fairly low-key and quiet. Occasionally there was a party on weekends to liven things up. Usually his evenings were spent with Renaye, either watching television or going for walks. South Africa had only recently received television services, and even though the shows available were very limited, this was where most families were now to be found in the evenings.

David saved all his money, as he had a pressing problem: he was without a car. He appreciated his parents driving him to work and back, but he didn't want to be a

burden to them, and he felt decidedly like a baby. Hex Tex was on the outskirts of town, much too far away to walk. There were no buses in Worcester that went that way. The only buses seemed to be the ones running between the coloured townships and the town centre. Yet, almost every day that either Solly or Frances drove him to work, he passed coloured people walking or cycling to work, and he was filled with a feeling of being a spoilt white boy. This hardened his resolve to be able to buy a car, and he was aware of the irony in this, that this only made him more of a white middle-class man, more removed from the people who had to walk miles to work. Of course, they would also rather drive a car of their own, but that was probably not going to happen to them in their lifetime.

Soon David was able to buy a white Cortina. Now his world suddenly expanded. Drives around Worcester were possible, and weekends to Cape Town for him and Renaye were regular features in his life.

On the workfront his job as a textile designer was interesting, and in his private life he discovered some Africana to boost his music every day. His pen was flowing freely with lyrics, words rich with his surroundings. His sketches were of springbok and antelope horns, post boxes in the shape of golf balls: images taken from the vast variety of examples of bad taste he encountered growing up in South Africa. These images were intertwined in his lyrics, and even the sound of his music was changing – his music was now more driven by a hard, unsophisticated beat, similar to the boeremusiek he and his friends had so scoffed as teenagers. He was riding a wave of creativity: his music, his look. He now tossed aside the hippie clothes of the past and embraced the look of the farmers he saw in and around Worcester.

Gone was any desire to emulate The Beatles. David discovered a fascinating tableau, one which had always been there, but he had never noticed, blind to the beauty of his own culture. Now it was the sounds of Die Lydenburg Vastrappers, David de Lange, or Die Oudag Boereorkes that David used as reference points. Of course, he also absorbed the visual aspect of these musicians.



David de Lange. <http://www.boeremusiek.org>.



Oudag Boerorkes. <http://www.boeremusiek.org>.

A photograph from *Short Back & Sides* shows David sitting on a bar counter.



(p.68 *Short Back & Sides*)

This could be any bar of the many Royal Hotels scattered throughout South Africa. David's heart must have pounded when he went inside to have his picture taken. He was like Daniel walking into the lion's den. The manne in the hotel would have had his heart for lunch if they chose to remember that this skinny guy sitting at the bar once sang about dry wine:

Dry Wine

Half asleep I dream in the dark
Trusting the locks on the door
And the dog's warning bark
Outside in the street a drunkard
Stumbles and sings
In the next door flat

A telephone rings and rings
But nothing disturbs the suburb's quiet
Not the sirens or the news of a township riot
Knowing it all from the distance of headlines
I express my opinion
With a mouthful of dry wine
A woman with red fingernails
Is playing with her diamond
Gazing through the restaurant window
At the lights on Robben Island
Her hair's cut in the latest style
Her eyes are painted blue
She's probably thinking
Now where in the world
Could I find a better view
Her husband asks the waiter
Are these prawns from Mozambique?
The waiter just nods his head
He smiles but doesn't speak
Knowing it all from the distance of headlines
I express my opinion
With a mouthful of dry wine
An old lady in a Sea Point flat
Lives with her dreams and dread
She can hear the disco music
As she lies in her bed
And in the servants quarters
She can hear them laugh and sing
In the next door flat
A telephone rings and rings
Perhaps I'm like a deaf man
Who has seen the lightning flash
Or maybe I'm just like the blind
And I'll only hear it crash.

Ashtrays with the hotel name printed on them, sheets of copper beaten to represent elephants charging in front of the fireplace, a crazy-paving path in the garden, the skin of a springbok on the floor, a doilie with red and blue beads covering a sugar bowl, wagon wheels, keys carved out of wood for 21st birthday gifts, all became sources of inspiration rather than annoyances and they filled David's notebook. A Ford Cortina

with a “dog with a head that nods in the back window” and small rugby boots which dangle “from the rearview mirror” became ideas for a character’s taste in songs like “Bellville Blues”.

Sometimes he couldn’t resist a barb, as in “Suburban Dream”:

And round the back
There’s a braaivleisplek.
For the girl there’s a separate loo.

David was content to play at small parties, strumming his acoustic guitar. Sometimes he was joined by Danny Tromp, a coloured bricklayer whose lyrics often reflected farm life.

One of David’s more popular songs amongst the Worcester crowd was of a girl called Sannie van der Spuy, with whom the hero of the ditty had a “vry”. The swimming pool in Worcester had its special places where couples could kiss and cuddle, so when David sang this song to the guests at Timo Smuts’s Worcester home on the Rabie farm, they all chuckled, the lyrics resonating with them.

Timo Smuts gave David his first pair of red velskoene, and sometimes hosted parties where David could air his music. These audiences loved the dichotomy, the love/hate relationship of the items David referred to in his songs and the between-song banter. The embroidered Bible texts, the little Zulu assegais with *Durban* written on them, which were so infuriating, were also *him*, his cultural DNA, like it or not.

After David finished working off his bursary at Hex Tex mills, he intended move to Cape Town.

Leaving Worcester was not unusual. At the time many Worcester young adults left after they finished their schooling. As David explained in “Just My Father’s Son” from the album *Delicious Monster*:

I wore an army greatcoat and tackies
with my Texans rolled in my sleeve
Just my father’s son, with my father’s name
In a town I couldn’t wait to leave.

It’s true that most kids couldn’t wait to leave Worcester, to chase some romantic dream they had. It’s also true that the teenagers wore army greatcoats when they went to dances, and tackies were the hip shoes, either white tennis shoes or black sneakers which came up to your ankle. Dances were held at places like the M.O.T.H hall, the Good Hope Café, or at private parties.

But before David left for Cape Town, there was a question of marriage.

Chapter 13

When David went off to Britain to study, the friendship between him and Renaye had to continue in the form of letters, phone calls and the occasional trip back to South Africa. They would have to see how things stood when he returned with his degree tucked under his arm.

David borrowed his father's car and drove through the streets he knew so well. It had been raining. It would be one of the last rains that winter. Spring was on its way. David noticed marks on the wet road where brakefluid or petrol had dripped from a car, making rather pretty patterns on the road.

He stopped outside the Lange's house, walked up the garden path and knocked on the door. He was nervous. This would be the first time he would see Renaye in quite a while. The door opened.

"David, oh how nice to see you!" cried Renaye.

She drew him closer into a hug.

David had been worried that the time and distance apart might have affected their friendship, that they would have become different people, and the bond between them might have disappeared, but it was soon clear that the old spark was still there.

In fact, as the days went by, it was obvious that they were even closer than before. David visited often, and soon they were courting. He divided his time between work and Renaye, the woman with the tawny hair and lovely smile.

Renaye did find him different in one way: he was still the same charming man she had known, but now he had periods of moodiness, of being quiet and withdrawn. When she asked him about it, she accepted his reply that he sometimes found himself yearning for something, a something he couldn't define, and this seemed to suck his soul out, away.

She took it to be something bad and good: his desire for more made him withdrawn at times, but she knew it was this very desire which would make him excel in whatever he did with his life.

At first their relationship had rocky moments, until she realised that he was faithful to her, to them, but that he needed space, and that sometimes he would stay away for a day or two. This was either because he was on a creative high, or because he felt trapped and frustrated, and really not good company.

However, the times they were together were wonderful. David was a caring and attentive lover, obviously happy to be in her company. He delighted in taking her on picnics in the mountains around Worcester. They would swim in the streams, make a barbeque or enjoy packed meals, and be totally happy in one another's presence. Many times they were alone, just the two of them, and even though they sometimes went without talking with what seemed to be forever to Renaye, their was such tenderness and communication, even in these silences, that she felt herself falling ever deeper in love.

When David asked her to marry him, she said yes, and he was ecstatic. He had planned a very romantic occasion, a picnic with flowers and wine, but this opportunity had never had the chance to arise. One evening, driving Renaye back to her parent's house, David heard the words blurt out from his mouth.

“Renaye, will you marry me?”

He was dumbstruck. What had just happened? What about the plans he was hatching for his romantic picnic? But he needn't have been worried. Rennaye threw her arms around his neck, so that David had to grip the steering wheel hard so as not to run off the road.

“Yes! Of course!” she cried.

David was not a Jew, as his mother was not a Jewess. Frances was a Gentile, which meant that her two sons weren't Jewish. This meant that David and Renaye could not have a traditional Jewish wedding.

The preparations were too much for David. When he was asked for his advice on potential invitations, or table decorations, his eyes glazed over, and with a non-committing reply made his escape.

“I'll leave that up to you. You're so good at this type of thing ...”

He had a sneaking suspicion that Renaye actually *liked* this business! There were a million things to take care of, and he was quite happy to leave it in the capable hands of his mother and future mother-in-law, leaving Renaye in the executive position of Final-Decision-Maker.

And then the big day arrived. The weather was perfect, blue skies without a cloud, not unbearably hot, as Worcester could sometimes be.

David was dressed in a new suit. He looked rather handsome. Standing next to him was Renaye, and she was simply stunning.

“Good heavens, Renaye,” yet another guest said, sidling up to her. “You look beautiful ..!”

This was a civil wedding, held in the magistrate's offices. The room was crammed with family and friends.

"Take your seats, please," a voice called out.

There was a rustle as people sat down on the wooden chairs. The ceremony began, and soon it was over.

"You may kiss the bride," the magistrate said.

The wedding ceremony itself had been a touch dry and official, but the reception was something very different. Speeches were delivered and toasts were made, causing either tears or laughter.

David and Renaye opened the dancing. Renaye's father cut in, so that he could dance with his daughter.

The banquet was sumptuous, and as the drinks flowed David's school chums became more boisterous. All in all, the event was a resounding success.

The newlyweds settled down in Cape Town. David continued his work as a textile designer but never stopped playing guitar, writing notes in his scrawling handwriting, ideas for songs, characteristics of people he had seen, and names of small towns in the middle of nowhere.

He and Renaye settled into their routine and soon there was a new dimension to the lyrics David was writing.

The imagery of his songs up to then had been to a large extent of the rural world, the poor working people. Now there was a subtle shift. David began to make references to the city he found himself in, Cape Town, mentioning places such as Parow Valley. His lyrics started having more bite. Robben Island is a stone's throw from Cape Town, the

seed for “Prisoners of War”. Any song that David wrote concerning his political views had to be extremely oblique, otherwise the censor board would have clamped down harshly - at the time it was illegal to even have a picture of Mandela in one’s possession. Kramer’s pen shows some clever twists, crafting lyrics with more depth than the average protest songs of the time:

Prisoners of War

The Italians built the road
That bumped down to the sea
To the old beach house
Near the river mouth
It was 1943
And they cracked the rocks with fire
And they sweated and they swore
And the sun beat down like in Italy
On these prisoners of war

My father fought in Egypt
He was twenty-five years old
Where the days were white and hot as hell
And the nights were black and cold
With the Allies for our freedom
Against Rommel and the Afrika Korp
Until a bomb exploded and all his dreams
Became prisoners of war

Every summer we went down
To the house at the lagoon
Every summer I turned brown
And played war games in the dunes
Every summer our new regime
Passed another law
As the boat sailed for Robben Island
With more prisoners of war

I came back from Angola, it was 1975
My heart was hard
And my mind was scarred
I’d forgotten how to cry

Wearing civvies for the first time
Just trying to be me
I walked the road the Italians built
That leads down to the sea
And the question I was asking was:
What were we fighting for?
Cause in the end we had all become
Prisoners of war.

In this song David writes:

My father fought in Egypt
He was twenty-five years old
...
a bomb exploded and all his dreams
Became prisoners of war.

This was indeed so. Solly Kramer did fight in World War II, and he was injured in the leg, causing him to walk with a limp. The “road the Italians built” is loosely based on Du Toit’s Kloof pass, where the N1 highway runs from Paarl to Worcester, as well as Mitchell’s Pass, the twisting mountain pass which joins Wellington and Ceres. Along the road there is a white cross, erected by the Italian prisoner of war soldiers as a memorial to the workers who lost their lives during construction of the pass. (To this day there are still large Italian communities in towns such as Worcester, Ceres, et cetera, in the Boland area of South Africa.)

The Robben Island referred to in the song is the island where Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners were kept, and Angola points to the so-called border war, where all white South African boys had to go to as part of their compulsory military service after they left high school, from 1966 until 1989.

David was playing at parties and folk clubs. He handed out copies of cassettes which contained some of his songs, trying to get himself known. To many who saw him at the time it seemed he had achieved just about all he could in South Africa, a singer of folksy songs, accompanying himself on an acoustic guitar. The shows he was playing were fairly low-key events, a few dozen people at most, usually the same faces.

And then came a momentous change in Kramer's life.

“Are you sure?!” David asked, eyebrows raised in surprise and wonder.

Renaye nodded her head, her rich brown hair tumbling over her shoulders. Her eyes shone, looking deep into David's. She wanted to see exactly how this news resonated with him.

It was mid morning, quiet outside. Just the sound of a solitary car in one of the nearby streets, the engine rising and falling as it made its way along the lower slopes of Table Mountain.

“I'm sure,” she replied. “Dr. Shapiro told me so this morning.”

David wrapped his arms around her and whooped with joy.

“A baby!” he shouted. “We're going to have a baby ..!”

David and Renaye drove back home to visit their parents. As David drove down the Worcester side of the Brandwacht Mountains he found himself in familiar countryside. He looked at the short squat bushes with their unusual green colour. When people were told the shrubs were reddish green, they never believed it, but the foliage covering the rolling hills was indeed reddish green. David drove past Worcester West, mountains

towering up in the near distance, turned right at the drive-in cinema, and crossed the bridge that went over the railway line.

He wanted to stop at a café to buy some fruit. On their way there he drove past an old age home. There was an elderly man sitting on the stoep. The last rays of the day's sun were falling over the stoep, casting long shadows. David wondered what things he had seen in his life. The image made a strong impact on David. His imagination kicked in: to him this old man was an ex-rugby player, a hero from a bygone era.

Long after David and Renaye had returned to Cape Town, the memory stayed with him, and he wrote notes which morphed into lyrics. "Hak Hom, Blokkies" was beginning to take shape.

The song was not the only thing developing. The baby was growing, and Renaye was becoming very pregnant. She started walking in that characteristically heavy manner: legs slightly apart and leaning back against the weight of the new child forming inside her. She bloomed. Her skin became more delicate, and her hair shone. There was a look of pure joy and excitement in her large eyes. She was always beaming. Everyone who saw her remarked what a beautiful mother she was.

David, on the other hand, became increasingly nervous as the birth date came closer, veering from wild joy to bouts of worry. What if something was to happen? What about the future? Would he be able to provide for his family? Would the child have all its fingers? And toes?

When Jesse Kramer was born there were joyous celebrations in Cape Town as well as Worcester. The Kramers and the Langes drove to Cape Town, eager to see their granddaughter.

David and Renaye were doting parents but it was the grandparents who did the real spoiling. Jesse was blissfully unaware of all the fuss and gurgled and giggled at the world around her.



Jesse (21), Amy (18), and David
Courtesy Huisgenoot 27 Sept 2001

Chapter 14

In 1980 David began recording his first album, *Bakgat!* (MOULP[L] 10). Some of the music was recorded live at the Barleycorn club, and some was laid down at Hi-Z Studios.

Apart from David, artists on the album included folk musician Edi Niederlander, and Richard Devey, who also drummed for the punk rock group The Safari Suits.

For the next few years Niederlander would play bars and restaurants. Her solo album *Ancient Dust of Africa* was released in 1986.

The other musicians were Phil Smiedt, Gary Horne and Marco Celotti. Like Niederlander, Celotti supplemented his income by working as a salesperson at Paul Bothners, a popular musical instrument retailer in Claremont.

Also in 1980, Phil Smiedt's band, Zebra, won a Sarie for *Uncertain Age*, in the Best English Album of the Year category.

One of the session musicians was Zayn Adam, who was well known to South African audiences, having had hits such as "Give A Little Love".

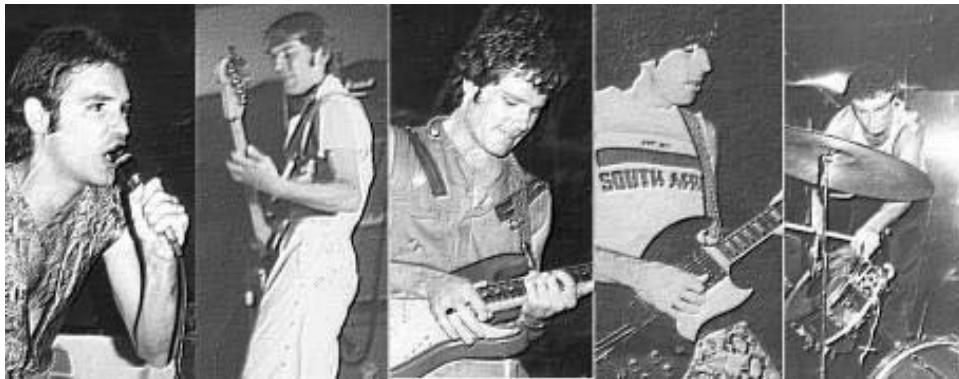
Devey's band, The Safari Suits only lasted a fiery year: from 1978 – 1979, but these were the beginnings of writings from a South African viewpoint, rather than merely emulating American or British lyrics. At that time, the Safari Suits were not afraid to use words such as "braaivleis" or "rugby". As guitarist Steve Moni points out:

We want to show people that a South African group can play without being ashamed of its South Africanism.
(http://www.rock.co.za/files/safari_suits.html)

David would also make references to this part of the South African milieu, and he began attracting an audience which stretched from the liberal left to the right.

The Safari Suits were harsher in their music and opinions than what was usually heard on stages at the time, as evidenced by their song *Whites Only*, and such intensity could not last very long. They morphed into The News, and then faded away. When Guillaume Rossouw left the Safari Suits, David auditioned for his spot.

Like Trevor Rabin of Rabbitt and Yes fame, Steven Moni's father was also a conductor: he was the conductor of the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra. (Not to be confused with Walter Mony.)



Guillaume Rossouw, Graham Handley, Paul Jarvis, Steve Moni, 'Dish' Devey
http://www.rock.co.za/files/safari_suits.html

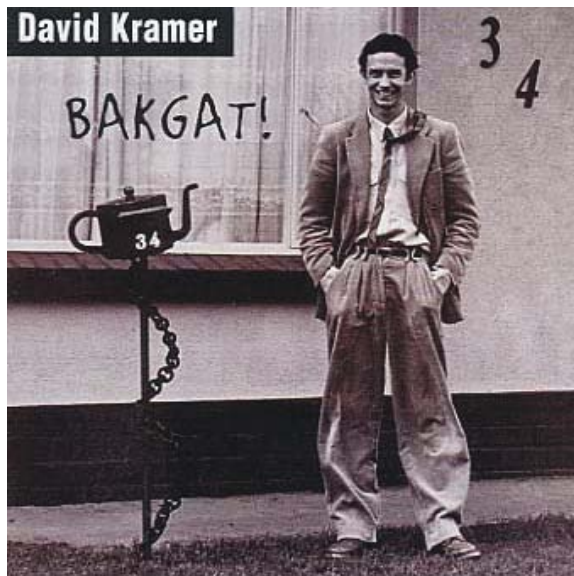
At this time there was the beginning of a mood that one could make South African music, which addressed South African issues.

The album cover photograph of *Bakgat!* was taken by David's brother John, and shows him in typical early Kramer attire. He is standing in front of very common middle-

class suburban house. The numbers marking the address are arranged at an angle on the wall. David refers to this way of numbering homes in “I Had a Dream” on his debut album, *Bakgat!*:

Well I dreamt I bought an Ideal Home
With these Cape Dutch gables
And classical pillars from Rome
It had a golf ball letter box
And statues of garden gnomes
With a number on the wall
Sort of artistically skew
Painted in chrome.

This house in front of which David is posing, tie at a jaunty angle, doesn't have a post-box shaped like a golf ball, but it does have one made from a large kettle, partly mounted on a chain which curves upwards. Critics of the song, and other like it, argue that it shows nothing of David, but is merely a list of South African kitsch. At the end of the song, some listeners might ask: “So what?”



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za>

The album was released in 1981 by Mountain Records. The songs on the album were:

1. Is Jy Bang?
2. Krisjan Swart
3. Bokkie, Bokkie
4. Onner Oppie Plaas
5. Tjoepstil
6. Koba
7. I Had A Dream
8. Biscuits en Biltong
9. Annette van der Wa
10. Frikkie
11. Bellville Blues
12. Botteltjie Blou

Somewhat surprisingly, on this debut album David tempers his more hardened political views. This could have been due to the fact that he was now a family man and was trying to build a career in music for himself. Perhaps he was wary of stepping on too many toes. In fact, a song such as “Tjoepstil” is a Kramer that berates the soft liberals for their hypocrisy - whilst often ridiculing and despising the South African Police (as they were then known), this liberal middle-class is quick to ask for help from these very same policemen when they are in trouble or danger.

Tjoepstil

You call me a rock spider you call me a gé
You like to mock the things that I say
Don't ever come out here to Parow Vallei
Cos if I should catch you alone one day
Then you'll keep tjoepstil
Then you'll keep tjoepstil

I've got sideburns down my cheeks
I haven't had my haircut for nearly two weeks
Call me a crunchie and I'll take you outside and
I'll show just how the crunch is applied
Then you'll keep tjoepstil
Then you'll keep tjoepstil

I'm a staff sergeant in the SAP
You and the press point your fingers at me
But when the black man crawls through your window at night
You call for me quickly cos then I'm alright
Then you'll keep tjoepstil
Then you'll keep tjoepstil

You and your friends
In their faded blue jeans
You think you know what everything means
You've got the big mouths
You've got the degrees
But when the shit starts to fly
Then you run overseas
Then you'll keep tjoepstil
Then you'll keep tjoepstil
Tjoepstil!

Another song on the album is “Krisjan Swart”, which lifts its geography directly from Worcester, and also has an element of glorifying the Afrikaners portrayed in it, which was somewhat puzzling for David’s early (mostly liberal, English-speaking white) audience. The lyrics are in Afrikaans this time.

Krisjan Swart

Bokant die stasie daar woon Krisjan Swart
Tussen die spoorweg en die Nasionale pad
Op die muur van sy stoep hang die horings van 'n bok
In sy agterplaas groei 'n perskeboom
Langs 'n groot ou duiwehok
Op daai duiwe is hy trots
Hulle maak sy hart so bly
Die silwer bekere op sy pelmet staan so in 'n ry
Ja, hy is Krisjan Swart
Hy's wyd en suid geken
Vir sy duiwe wat so vinnig vlieg
En pryse vir hom wen

Krisjan se vrou is lekker rond en vet
In haar hare dra sy curlers in haar mond 'n sigaret
Pantoffels aan haar voete kook sy moskonfyt
Met haar een oog op die tuinjong
Wat die agterplaas natspuit
Op daai vrou is hy so trots
Sy maak sy hart so bly
Al is sy nie jonk nie
Kan sy nog lekker vry
Ja sy is Wilmina Swart
Hulle ken haar wyd en suid
Vir haar melktert en mosbolletjies
Haar beroemde boerbeskuit

Krisjan se dogter is met 'n prokureur getrou
Hy't vir haar 'n groot wit huis in Riebeeckpark gebou
Die kaggel in die sitkamer is mooi met klip versier
'n Skildery van Tafelberg hang netjies teen die muur
Op daai dogter is hy trots
Sy maak sy hart so bly
Al is sy nie mooi nie
Het sy haar man gekry
Sy is Johanna Swart
Die vrou van die prokureur
Haar lippies en haar vingernaels
Is dieselfde bloedrooi kleur

Krisjan se seun is lekker fris gebou
Maar sy stem is 'n bietjie hoog
En sy broek is 'n bietjie nou
Sy hare dra hy lank en hy speel ook die kitaar
Krisjan vra sy vrou: waar kom die seun van 'aar?
Op daai seun is hy nie trots nie
Hy maak sy hart so seer
Kan ek tog sy pa wees?
Wil Krisjan redeneer
Ja hy is Krisjan Swart
Hy't ook sy pa se naam
Maar sy hare en sy kitaar speel
Maak sy pa so skaam

Bokant die stasie daar woon die Swart gesin
Krisjan drink net brannewyn Wilmina drink net gin
En hulle sit daar op die stoep in die skemer lig so flou
Hulle kyk hoe vlieg die duiwe sirkels teen die blou.

There is not much to critique about this song. It describes a man, Krisjan Swart, who gets much satisfaction from flying his pigeons. His plump wife bakes rusks and generally takes care of the house, and all is well. His daughter has done well because she has married a lawyer, but his son seems to be somewhat effeminate. Perhaps, one might wonder, the song would have been more poignant if it were simply about the man and his birds, and the joy he gets when he sits on his porch and watches them in the blue sky, as the last two lines suggest? About what has not been said?

Regarding the places mentioned: there is in actual fact an area between the station and the N1 national road, loosely known as Hospitaal Heuwel (Hospital Hill). The street that goes up towards Hospitaal Heuwel from the railway line is Hospitaal Pad. On the other side of the railway line it is known as Porter Street. To the left are the so-called railway houses, made of red brick, where workers for the South African Railways and

Harbours live with their families. They are mostly lower income earners. A handful of the railway workers take great pride in their pigeons, racing them on weekends.

And as the song says, once you pass through this area, you are at the N1 national road. Although in reality there is still Hospital Dam lying between you and the highway.

In “n Man Stap” (2004) Kramer writes of the Scala cinema theatre as well as the Pandora restaurant. These two places did exist when he was growing up in Worcester. In fact, he played with his band at the Scala cinema during school breaks. The song “Just My Father’s Son” says:

Behind the Good Hope Café in High Street
We played snooker in the afternoon.

The Good Hope Café also existed, in High Street, and at the time when David was a high school student there was a billiards hall behind it. Many afternoons were spent teasing Brummer, the boy with the cleft palate. Brummer would later be immortalised as Budgie in “Budgie and The Jets”. These buildings existed when Kramer was a boy in Worcester. The song has the intriguing line:

En die laaities sit sonder werk,
hul voete in die sloot.

The “sloot” referred to are the furrows that run through the old part of Worcester. They run alongside the streets, carrying water from Hospital Dam, which is used for

gardening. The dam is called Hospital Dam, because of its proximity to what was once a hospital, but is now a primary school for partly-sighted children.

In “Suburban Dream” David writes the lines:

Well I bought a house.
It’s a beautiful house
In Marais Road Panorama.

The relatively affluent suburb of Panorama still stands in Worcester.

Bakgat! didn’t make any particular waves, as it was banned by the SABC, therefore receiving no airplay. It increased David’s profile slightly, but he was still a textile designer who played gigs over the weekends for fun.

Roger Lucy recorded a version of the Kramer composition “Dry Wine” live at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg. This song was included on his *Half A Live* (3rd Ear/Warner WIC 8000) album, released in 1980. This record was similar in format to *Bakgat!*, in that one side was recorded live and the other in a studio. Largely due to the inclusion of “Dry Wine”, Lucy’s album was removed from the shelves of music stores by the security police.



S.A.U.K. S.A.B.C.

HUISHOUDELIKE KORRESPONDENSIE/INTERNAL CORRESPONDENCE

Memo No. 562

DATUM DATE: 29.01.81

ONDERWERP SUBJECT PLATE VOORGELÉ VIR KEURING/RECORDS UNDER CONSIDERATION

LANGSPEELPLAAT

Neem asseblief kennis dat die volgende ~~rekords~~ aan die komitee vir keuring voorgelê is, en mag dus, tot verdere kennis, in geen programme van die S.A.U.K. gebruik word nie.

LP ~~has~~ **has**

Please note that the following ~~records~~ **has** been submitted to the committee for consideration, and therefore may not be used in any programme on the S.A.B.C. transmissions, until further notice:

THE ENTIRE ALBUM: **"BAKGAT"**
ARTIST: **DAVID KRAMER**
LP NO: **MOUNTAIN RECORDS MOULP(L) 10**

Timus Esterhuizen
Timus Esterhuizen

HOOFPSTELLER: SPRINGBOKRADIO/
CHIEF COMPILER: SPRINGBOK RADIO

AFSKRIFTE AAN/COPIES TO:

Direkteur : Radioprogramme/Director : Radio Programmes
HOOF : Afrikaanse Diens/Head : Afrikaans Service
HOOF : Buitelandse Dienste/Head : External Service
SUPERINTENDENT: Bantu Musiek/ Superintendent : Bantu Music
HOOF : Sotho Dienste/Head : Sotho Service
HOOF : Musiek/Head : Music
HOOF : Streekdienste en Radio 5/Head : Regional Services and Radio 5
HOOF : Engelse Diens/Head : English Service

Organiseerder : Oudioteke/Organiser : Audio Libraries
HOOF : Engelse T.V./Head : English T.V.
HOOF : Afrikaanse T.V./Head : Afrikaans T.V.
Direkteur : T.V./Director : T.V.
Organiseerder Musiek T.V./Organiser : Music T.V.
Organiseerder : Verskeidenheid Afrikaanse T.V.

KEURING
P.W. HATAL (2)
R.M. WESTER: CAPE (1)
JOHN KOOB (1)
LEALLING (1)
EKSTRA (*)

When *Bakgat!* was released, the hits in South Africa were
(<http://www.rock.co.za>):

- Stars on 45 – Star Sound
- Johnny & Mary – Robert Palmer
- Bette Davis Eyes – Kim Carnes
- Don't Worry, Be Happy – Bobby McFerrin
- Banana Republic – Boomtown Rats
- All Out Of Love – Air Supply
- This Ole House – Shakin' Stevens
- I Owe You Nothing – Bros
- The Race – Yello
- Kids in America – Kim Wilde

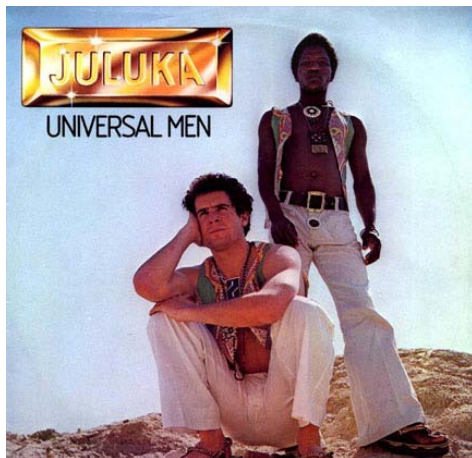
This was the beginning of the 80's. It was the time of the New Romantic look, where boys had haircuts like characters from Enid Blyton books: short back and sides, with an extravagant fringe which flopped over their eyes. They wore frilly shirts as though they fancied themselves to be either pirates or Rhett Butler from *Gone with the Wind*.

In the UK the top songs for that time were (<http://www.sixtiescity.com>):

- Imagine – John Lennon
- Shuddup You Face – Joe Dolce Music Theatre
- Jealous Guy – Roxy Music
- Stand & Deliver – Adam & The Ants
- Making Your Mind Up – Bucks Fizz
- Runaway Boys – Stray Cats
- In The Air Tonight – Phil Collins
- Flash – Queen
- De Doo Doo Doo De Da Da Da – The Police
- Super Trouper – Abba

Incidentally, there would be quite a few John Lennon songs on the charts that year, as the public responded to his murder. Towards the end of 1980 the ex-Beatle was fatally shot by Mark Chapman as he was making his way towards the doors of his apartment in the Dakota Building. (The Roxy Music hit, “Jealous Guy”, is a John Lennon composition.)

Also in 1981, Juluka released their second album, *African Litany*. They had previously released their debut album *Universal Men* in 1979. *African Litany*’s lead single, “Impi”, tells the story of the defeat of the colonial British army by the Zulus at the Battle of Isandlwana, and so was banned by South African radio but it still managed to become a hit on the campus circuit, as well as with black listeners. *African Litany* garnered Juluka their first international attention.



<http://www.talkingleaves.com/pithouse.html>

Kramer must have been aware of, and maybe inspired by Juluka, as they made waves with their truly South African music. It was an exciting example of music which crossed over many divides.

According to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnny_Clegg, Jonathan (Johnny) Clegg was born June 7, 1953 in Rochdale (near Manchester), Lancashire, in the UK.

He was sometimes called *Le Zoulou Blanc* (“The White Zulu”), and an important figure in South African popular music history, with songs that mix Zulu and English lyrics, with African, European, and Celtic music styles. Clegg had been brought up in the UK, Israel, Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe), and Zambia, before finally moving with his family to South Africa. In his teenage years he became interested in Zulu street music and took part in traditional Zulu dance competitions, which was very unusual for a white boy at that time.

As a young man Clegg studied anthropology, a subject he also taught for a while at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. He formed the first racially mixed South African band, Juluka, with gardener and Zulu musician Sipho Mchunu. By the end of their career, Juluka had two platinum and five gold albums, becoming a South African as well as an international success. They disbanded in 1986, when Mchunu’s father asked him to return home to herd the family goats.

The South African Broadcasting Corporation was the monolith of the airwaves at the time. There were only a handful of radio stations and they fell, directly or indirectly, under the mantle of the SABC. Television services had been launched in 1974, but radio was still an important part of the South African psyche. Many people had been raised doing their homework with afternoon radio-dramas in the background: *Dans van die*

Flamink, Wolwedans in die Skemer, Die Geheim van Nantes, So Maak Mens. And who could forget *Hospitaaltd*? The show always kicked off with the theme song:

Vanaf Maandag tot Vrydag, om half een,
vir Moeder, Vader, en dogter en seun,
is daar 'n lied en 'n glimlag vir jou,
by Hospitaaltd, ont-hou ...!

To a very large extent the South African entertainment scene of the time was dictated by what was happening in London and the United States. It was a time when local artists were striving to reproduce what was coming in from abroad. The idea of making indigenous music, other than for a black audience or the so-called boeremusiek market, was inconceivable.

The SABC was in a position to allow certain music not to be played, and decided which music should be played on, say, Radio Xhosa or Springbok Radio. The government had the authority to censor films, books, records, magazines, et cetera, and even declared that South Africans could not watch movies on Sundays, as this was deemed immoral. The mood of the time is summed up by Kramer in “Bokkie, Bokkie” (1980):

I grew up under the heavy hand of the cane and the dominee.

In the greater scheme of things, to some these lyrics seemed to speak of the oppression by the government at the time, when the police and army were becoming

more and more aggressive in their efforts to quell any unrest, and it seemed to address the problem of where English-speaking people positioned themselves in this status quo.

As for the use of Afrikaans as well as English, on *Bakgat!*, in “Kom Dans” Kramer says, almost in an example of *ars poetica*:

I speak official languages
Both English and Afrikaans
Adverts daub the walls
Say ‘Kom Dans. Come and Dance’.

Afrikaans was considered to some degree as the language of the government, the police, and the army: the oppressor. But in the area where David grew up, Worcester and its surrounding vineyard farms (Slanghoek, De Doorns, Rawsonville, Hexvallei, and more), Afrikaans was also spoken by the labourers in the fields, the very people oppressed by the apartheid laws. These workers were an inspiration for Kramer, in their life stories, as well as their dress. Both colour groups communicated in Afrikaans, more specifically, in the everyday ‘plat’ (flat) type of Afrikaans which Kramer used.

The Afrikaans of Kramer’s songs was never that of canonised Afrikaans poets such as Breyten Breytenbach or N.P. van Wyk Louw. In fact, this might be one of the reasons that his songs were so readily accepted by a larger audience – the lyrics to a Kramer song are far easier to follow than a van Wyk Louw poem. It was also a somewhat more Cape Afrikaans than the Natal, Transvaal or Orange Free State Afrikaans, (The four provinces at the time.) Kramer would pronounce the word “hande” (hands) as “hanne”, illustrating his typical Cape accent. “Hanne” (1983):

Kyk die hanne,
die twee hanne van my.
Waar het ek die twee hanne gekry?

The Afrikaans Kramer used was one which many people could relate to. Whilst he was at times political, it was almost always in English.

Kramer's image during the era of *Bakgat!* was similar to many successful stage artists, in that he presented his audience with an identity they could sum up in a few mental brushstrokes: the hair parted in the middle like the mine workers in the years when the National Party came to power, the baggy khaki trousers reminding one of days gone by, a mixture of colonialism, braais, sunny skies and Chevrolet, often a tie, and later the cheap red shoes with the soles made from motor car tyres.

The clothes depicted a person down on his luck, a Sunday best that had seen better days. Soon Kramer incorporated a bicycle into the visual milieu. It was a "dikwiel" (thick wheel), and in Kramer's world it was the method of transportation which implied extreme poverty.

The visual side of Kramer offers the viewer a kitsch which is very South African: a mixture of bad taste and low-income aesthetics. Around this time Punk Rock introduced kitsch as an alternative which could be beautiful. Groups like The B52's, who were big on the scene, also tapped into the world of kitsch, especially 50's kitsch.

Kramer offered a retro look, softening the reality, romanticising many unpleasant aspects of the world from which he came. But instead of alienating a more critical audience, many were charmed by his mixture of kitsch and rural images. They felt that he

was referencing a South Africa they knew well, with just enough tongue in cheek to make it witty and charming, hip. But when Kramer became mainstream after his breakthrough single “Hak Hom, Blokkies”, this new mainstream audience didn’t see Kramer as having a faint ridiculing element to his look. Rather, they thought, incorrectly, that he was one of them, someone who leaned to the right.

Chapter 15

David's spirits were low. The album he had fought so hard for to make was going nowhere. Those that did get to hear it were rather underwhelmed. He had a loyal, but tiny following, and it seemed to him that he had failed himself, as well as his admirers. All in all this put a huge amount of pressure on his shoulders.

To make things worse, his brother John was making huge strides in the art world. His recent exhibition had sold out. John had found his own style, and an appreciative audience, who not only understood and liked what he did, but also actually purchased the paintings, making it possible for John to paint full-time. John had made the difficult transition from part-time painter to bona fide artist, and whilst David was delighted for his brother, he yearned for the same to happen to him.

Even though *Bakgat!* was selling slowly, Kramer went back into the studio, even though he was not at all optimistic about the results. This time he used B&S Studios, situated in Wale Street, Cape Town, a mere stone's throw away from the Houses of Parliament.

He drove up Adderley Street and turned right into Wale Street, with the large statue of General Smuts on the corner, sitting on a rock, gazing out over the supposed bushveld before him. David passed Saint George's Cathedral on the left, crossed two streets, and there was B&S on the left. He got out of his car, and above the noise of the traffic he heard something else. It was the sound of people shouting. Then he saw it. People came running into Wale Street, covered with something purple. David couldn't

believe his eyes. What on earth was happening? As he watched the frightened crowd spill into Wale Street, stopping the traffic, a large police truck came into view as it chased the protestors, spewing purple dye from a large nozzle, which looked like a fire truck's nozzle.

People fled in all directions, shouting, weeping, covered in the purple mess which David's mind struggled to comprehend. The police were also running about, some with whips in their hands, forcing the tattered crowd to disperse. Right in front of David a man fell to the ground, and as he struggled to get up, a policeman was on him, thrashing with the thin plastic whip.

And then it was over, the protestors gone, the police gone. All that was left were the dazed motorists sitting in their cars, the traffic having come to a standstill. Slowly one car began moving forward on the wet tarmac, then another. Soon it was as if nothing had happened.

Shaken, David entered the recording studio. David's co-producer, Paddy Lee Thorpe, was waiting for him.

"Ready to go?" he asked.

David nodded his head.

"Hi, David," the receptionist greeted.

She saw that something was wrong.

"What's the problem?" she enquired.

"There was a protest outside," David explained. "And the police were very heavy-handed, as usual."

Eddie Wilkinson came out of the studio into the reception area, and heard David's words.

"A protest?" he asked.

Eddie was to play concertina on the session.

"Yes," David replied.

He told them what he had seen, and slowly he felt himself get most of it out of his system, and after a few minutes he was ready for the job at hand. He had always been good like that, being able to focus on what had to be done. He would think about the day's events later, at home, when he was able to decompress.

"Ok, let's get started," he suggested, and soon the session was under way.

All the musicians went into the sound-proofed studio and took their places. David sat down on a chair. Paddy went into the control booth and oversaw proceedings.

Things had cooled somewhat between David and Paddy now, but David accepted this as a small price to pay for more say over his music. He had insisted that on this album he was to be co-producer. He was not going to give any more of his control and revenue away than what he absolutely had to. This was typical of David, stubborn as a mule when it came to his music, especially the business side of it. It was only his second album, and he was a very, very small speck in the musical sky, but even then David treated himself and his career as though it were a multi-million dollar affair.

Jerry Barnard was the engineer for the album, so he placed a microphone in front of David's mouth, and another near his guitar. He miked up the rest of the band and they did a few sound checks, Jerry now in the control booth, watching the band through the

glass partition between the studio and the control booth. It was a relatively straightforward setup, and soon Jerry was satisfied with the sound quality.

“Ok. We’re good to go,” he told David through a microphone from his mixing desk, his voice sounding rather tinny in David’s headphones.

“What’s the first song?”

“Montagu,” David replied.

He couldn’t help grinning. The excitement of being creative, of actually putting his songs on tape was wonderful.

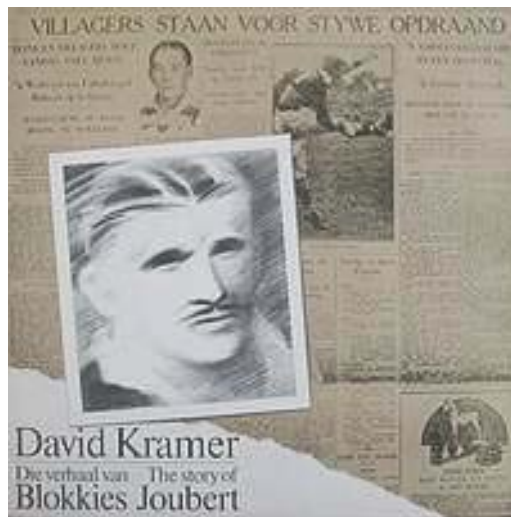
The tapes ran and the musicians played, and it took only two takes to get the song “Montagu” down.

“Montagu” was typical Kramer. There were no complex arrangements, no string section, virtually no backing vocals. The song consists of a rhythm section comprising drums and bass guitar, and David on guitar and vocals. A smattering of concertina could be heard. The bass guitar was also stripped down to just the basic notes being played on the beat of the snare drum. David played acoustic guitar, and the only variation of this on the album was when he played a metal-bodied resonator acoustic guitar. This guitar was like a normal acoustic guitar, except that the body was made of metal, with a “resonator”, which vibrated and made for a louder sound. The sound was somewhat harsher, but not necessarily in an unpleasant manner. (Mark Knopfler was one of the more famous players of such a guitar, especially in his solo career, away from Dire Straights.)

Once again on this song the listener is given an image of rural South Africa, in this case in praise of the town of Montagu and its muscadel wine. The lines rhyme, in what would become known as Kramer’s forced-rhyming schemes. In later interviews

David would explain that he was influenced by the simple nature of blues music lyrics, as well as the actual making of the music, everyday-people making music with whatever was at hand. He said that he wanted to make something like a South African version of blues. Of course, his songs rarely portrayed a difficult lifestyle heard in American blues, and were rather happy-go-lucky songs of an almost Charlie Chaplinesque figure.

The album was produced by Paddy Lee Thorp and David Kramer, and engineered by Jerry Barnard, except for the breakout song, “Hak Hom, Blokkies”, which was engineered by Dave Gordon and Scotty Scott at UCA Studios. All songs were written by David.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za>

The songs on *Die Verhaal van Blokkies Joubert* are:

1. Blokkies Joubert
2. Die Royal Hotel
3. My Hands are Shaking
4. Piet Bedien
5. Montagu
6. Friends of Mine
7. Hak Hom Blokkies

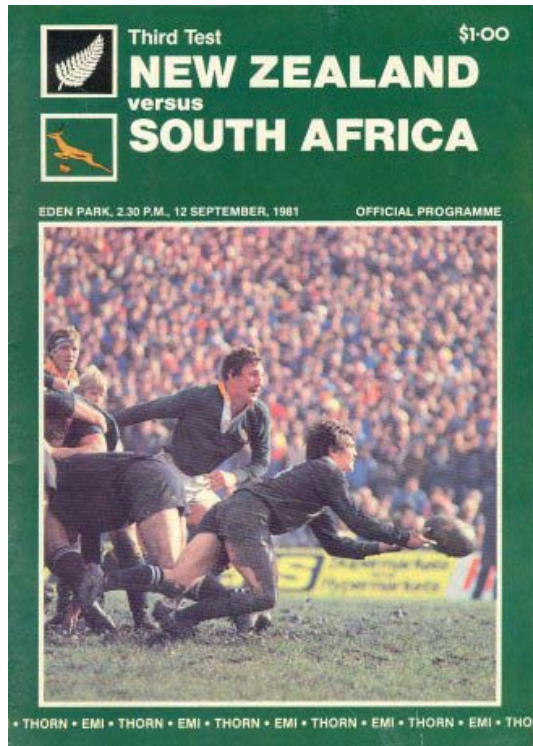
Die Verhaal van Blokkies Joubert was released in September 1981. (Mountain Records [MOULP (E)11]) “Hak Hom, Blokkies” was lifted from the album as a single. The album recording went quickly and smoothly as David was very familiar with the songs, having road-tested them in concerts around Cape Town. He had played venues such as The Space in Long Street, the Yellow Level at the University of Cape Town, and The Barleycorn Folk Club, amongst others. The music was mixed just as quickly, the artwork approved, and soon David had his second record in his hands.

But even so, he was still a married man with a baby, and a middle-of-the-road job. Very few people at that time thought of him as a musician. He was just the charming young man with the unusual hobby. David was becoming increasingly frustrated at being turned away at almost every door he knocked on. He tried to give cassettes of his demos to record company executives, but no-one was interested. Live venues were also almost non-existent. The only live music to be found was a band playing cover versions at a hotel or discoteque. One of these bands, Void, would soon cut their “American” long hair, morph into e-Void, and become huge with their mixture of electro-pop and African imagery. Yet still David was getting nowhere.

Mountain Records released the album and it was expected to go the same way as its predecessor: banned from the radio by the SABC. However, the winds of change soon blew over David’s career.

On August 15 the Springboks ran out on the field for the first test in Christchurch, New Zealand, fielding players Naas Botha and Errol Tobias, et al. Naas Botha was the kicking sensation and Errol Tobias the first black man to become a Springbok rugby

player. For the first test, captain Wynand Claasen was somehow omitted from the team. They lost the test 9-14.



<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/1/16/AB196TestProgramme.jpg>

The tour was a volatile affair, with protesters doing their best to have the tour stopped, due to their objections toward the apartheid policies of South Africa.



<http://www.wcl.govt.nz/wellington/tour.html>

By the early 1980s pressure from protest groups in New Zealand, such as HART (Halt All Racist Tours), came to a boiling point when the New Zealand Rugby Union proposed a Springbok tour for 1981. The Australian Prime Minister refused permission for the Springbok's aircraft to refuel on their territory en route to New Zealand. Protesters dropped flour bombs on the players from low-flying airplanes. There were some very ugly scenes. It was clear that South Africa was not wanted as long as apartheid continued.

In South Africa there was a fever of indignation at the protesting. (Of course, there is the irony that the riots and the government's reactions in South Africa at that time were far uglier, with many people being killed or detained.) The international critics didn't understand how things were in South Africa; they shouldn't allow sport to be ruined by politics. Such thinking was the consensus of many white South Africans, Kramer's future audience. There was a sense of the laager being drawn into a circle against those that were attacking South Africa. And then radio stations began playing

“Hak Hom, Blokkies”. It was just what the dejected rugby fans needed to hear, especially the line:

We played a gentleman’s game
but it’s all been spoiled by politics.

By the time the Springboks won the second test 24-12, David had a hit on his hands. South Africa lost the third and final test 22-25, but “Hak Hom, Blokkies” became a huge hit, as did the entire album. *Die Verhaal Van Blokkies Joubert* went on to become a triple gold album, selling 150,000 copies. Suddenly, David had arrived.

Hak Hom, Blokkies

The moustache on his lip is pencil thin
Like the middle path through his hair
And although his friends call him Blokkies
His wife calls him Joubert

Ag, Christina, Christina, he thinks to himself,
You never could understand
What it feels like to dummy and to sidestep
With a leather ball in your hands

Man, it’s hard to believe this is Blokkies Joubert
The hooker in the Springbok scrum
’Cause he’s old and grey and he sits in his chair
In the slanting winter sun
But he made his name with that wonderful game
That he played in 1931

Well, he sits in the lounge of the old age home
Just north of Beaufort West
And he watches a TV programme of the Springbok rugby test
As the images flicker upon the screen he can hear the manne call
They say hak hom, hak hom Blokkies, Blokkies hak daai ball

En ons sê:

Druk hulle, druk hulle Blokkies, druk hulle mannetjies flou
Hak hulle, hak hulle Blokkies, hak hulle bolletjie gou
Lig julle knieë, druk julle drieë daar agter die doellyn nou

He sits there in the afternoon sun,
His memories come and go
He can clearly remember Bennie Osler
And Boy and Fanie Louw
Yes, there they stand with the rest of the team
In the photograph on the wall
And if you ask him he will show you
Where they signed on his rugby ball

En ons sê:

Druk hulle, druk hulle Blokkies, druk hulle mannetjies flou
Hak hulle, hak hulle Blokkies, hak hulle bolletjie gou
Lig julle knieë, druk julle drieë daar agter die doellyn nou

Ja, ons ouens was rof in die ou dae
But we played a gentleman's game
But it's all been spoiled by politics
Never going to be the same
So he drifts back to the old days as he hears the manne call
They say: hak hom, hak hom, Blokkies, Blokkies hak daai ball

En ons sê:

Druk hulle, druk hulle Blokkies, druk hulle mannetjies flou
Hak hulle, hak hulle Blokkies, hak hulle bolletjie gou
Lig julle knieë, druk julle drieë daar agter die doellyn nou

En ons sê:

Druk hulle, druk hulle Blokkies, druk hulle mannetjies flou
Hak hulle, hak hulle Blokkies, hak hulle bolletjie gou
Lig julle knieë, druk julle drieë daar agter die doellyn nou.

Here are the chords to the opening lines of *Hak Hom, Blokkies*:

D A G D
The mustache on his lip is pencil thin like the middle part through his hair,

D
A
G
D
 and although his friends call him Blokkies his wife would call him Joubert.
D
A
G
D
 Ag Christina, Christina he thinks to himself, you never could understand
D
A
G
D
 what it feels like to dummy and to sidestep with a leather ball in your hand.
G
D
A
D
 Man it is hard to believe this is Blokkies Joubert, a hooker in the Springbok scrum,
G
D
A
D
 because he's old and he's gray and he sits in chair in the slanting winter sun.
G
D
A
D
 But he made his name with that wonderfull game that he played in 1931.

The music was unsophisticated, and featured some concertina, a la boeremusiek. David sings with a flat delivery, as he had heard the farmworkers sing when he was a child growing up in Worcester. (In fact, one of the people the author spoke to about Kramer, thought that Kramer was a “coloured”. Admittedly, the person was twenty years old at the time of the conversation, and too young to know much about Kramer, his face or his music, but what he had heard made him assume that David was not white.)

The music of the hit song was very similar to other Kramer songs, in that it had a steady beat, modelled on the South African music known as boeremusiek (farmer’s music). It has three chords, D, A and G, and they are all major chords. There are no augmented chords or diminished sevenths to be found on this record. The record begins with the sound of a large audience, a rugby audience, one assumes, as well as a band comprising drums, bass, guitar and concertina. The concertina is heard throughout the song.

The song is in English, but the chorus is in Afrikaans:

En ons sê:

Druk hulle, druk hulle Blokkies, druk hulle mannetjies flou
Hak hulle, hak hulle Blokkies, hak hulle bolletjie gou
Lig julle knieë, druk julle drieë daar agter die doellyn nou

The recording is not perfect, as can be heard when Kramer sings the lines:

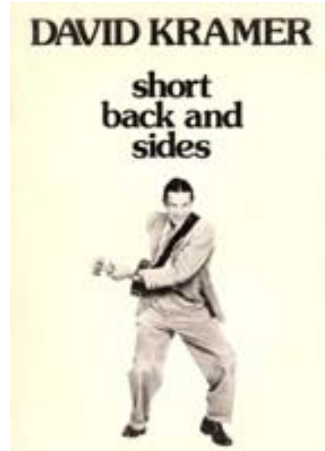
Man, it's hard to believe this is Blokkies Joubert
The hooker in the Springbok scrum
'Cause he's old and grey and he sits in his chair.

The backing harmonies are not quite in synch with David's voice. In later years, using computer software such as ProTools, this glitch could easily have been remedied. However, at the time of the recording it would have taken too much time (money) to re-record the backing harmonies.

Most people loved the song, but there were a few who found it rather shallow, and adding to the notion that Afrikaans music seemed to cater to the lowest common denominator. But those critics were by far the minority.

Overnight David's career was like a match-winning try against the All Blacks at Newlands or Ellis Park. He was on the radio, in magazines, and the South African public adored him. Editorials loved him. He made good copy with his interesting look and family-friendly smile.

He was also a shrewd player, and within months of "Hak Hom, Blokkies" becoming a hit, Maskew Miller had *Short Back and Sides* on the shelves (1982), a collection of photographs of David, his lyrics and drawings, along with some of his musings.



This book went a long way in creating the David Kramer persona. People could read his thoughts and see how he tapped into familiar elements from their daily South African lives. David was involving himself in his own star-making mechanisms, and it worked like a charm.

The public was becoming acquainted with the “blik” (tin) sound, as well as the “blik” look, there was something wholesome about it, something for the whole family to enjoy. David, the writer of subversive political songs, was shelved for the time being. Whereas *Bakgat!* had been banned by the SABC, *Die Verhaal Van Blokkies Joubert* was often heard on the radio. Quite often, in fact. When he agreed to do a commercial for Volkswagen, David’s voice was heard even more on radio and his face seen more frequently on television.

In the advertisement David is in the middle of nowhere, a typical Kramer image: big open skies over a flat landscape, covered with khaki-green bushes. He is depicted as some kind of travelling musician, with a dikwiel bicycle (read: down on his luck), and a guitar slung across his back. He is pushing his bike along a dusty road, truly rural. Of

course, he is wearing what had by now become his trademark red velskoene. A Volksie bus appears and stops to offer David a lift, which he gladly accepts. They set off, the bicycle apparently stowed away somewhere in the implied huge packing space of the VW bus. He entertains the family with his guitar and all goes well. He reaches his destination, and the family bids him farewell. Alas, they forget to unload the bicycle and David is seen running after the bus, frantically waving his arms, the scene played in fast motion for comic effect.

http://kr.youtube.com/watch?v=C_Q383K58nM&NR=1 shows the original advertisement.

Lyrics to the Volksie bus advertisement

After hours of pushing this bike,
There's nothing I like better
Than when an ouk offers me a lift
'coz when I'm moeg and tired
I get really inspired
When he's riding in a Volksie bus!
I can play my guitar
'coz it's bigger than a car
Stretch my legs and tap my feet
There's power to spare
You can grease back your hair
Be the main man (Afrikaans 'man') on the street
It's easy to drive
You can really come alive.
And there's room for all of us
It's lekker for me
To join a family
Riding in a Volksie bus
It's lekker for me
To join a family
Riding in a Volksie bus!

The campaign was so successful that Volkswagen created another, longer commercial, with David once again composing and performing the ditty that accompanied the visuals. Cf. <http://kr.youtube.com/watch?v=03Ny3U63QwY>.

It should come as no surprise that Volkswagen also rolled out another version of the television commercial, this time *sans* Kramer, instead Jeremy Taylor's "Ag Pleez, Deddy" being adapted to sing the praises of the Volksie bus. Of further interest, Volkswagen roped in the services of Slash (the guitarist for Guns 'n' Roses) to feature in another of their campaigns in which he plays a special 'Volkswagen' guitar: the black guitar has a VW emblem on the high E fret.

Cf. <http://kr.youtube.com/watch?v=Aqv9Z6W4nCY>.

Other musicians such as John Mayer have also been used to endorse VW in the USA.

1981 could be considered the breakthrough year for David Kramer. "Hak Hom, Blokkies" spent four weeks at number 1 on the Springbok Top Twenty, and David's follow-up single, "Die Royal Hotel", peaked at number 7. Not bad for an artist whose previous album had been banned by the SABC!

Die Royal Hotel

Hier sit die manne in die Royal Hotel
Ek ken mos vir almal, ek is almal se pël.
Luister ou vrind, daar agter die bar
Hoe lyk dit met nog so 'n doppie daar.

Ken julle vir Doepie, sy bynaam is Dop
Hy het vir die Springbokke doel geskop.
'n Lee bierblik kan hy maklik platdruk
Met net een hou teen sy groot voorkop.

Nou stel ek voor my ou vriend Fanie
Daar's niks ter wereld wat Fanie pla nie
Ontmoet hom in die straat se hoe gaan dit ou maat
Sê Fanie nee ek kan nie kla nie,

Hier sit die manne in die Royal hotel
Ek ken mos vir almal ek is almal se pël
Luister ou vrind, daar agter die bar
Hoe lyk dit met nog so 'n doppie daar

En hier sit die speurder, Sersant de Kok
Hy drink sy whiskey so on the rocks
'n Koel komkommer, ons noem hom op sy nommer
Hy's dubble 0, dubble 0 seven de Kock

Hier sit die manne, hier sit die manne
Hier sit die manne, hier sit die manne
Ja hier sit die manne in die Royal hotel
Ek ken mos vir almal ek is almal se pël
Luister ou vrind, daar agter die bar
Hoe lyk dit met nog so 'n doppie daar

En van die noordweste kom Karel Bester
Dra kortmou hemp en 'n khaki broek
Lank terug gebore, hare kort om die ore
Hy's lief om te lag, hy's lief om te vloek.

Hier langs die till, sit 'n man so stil
Daar's trane in sy oë
Hy's sê hy's die baas van 'n bankrot plaas
Hier ver van die klein karoo
Maar dis lekker, dis lekker, dis tog te lekker hier
Musiek op die draadloos en skuim op my bier
Luister ou vrind, daar agter die bar
Hoe lyk dit met nog so 'n doppie daar

Hier sit die manne, hier sit die manne
Hier sit die manne, hier sit die manne
Ja, hier sit die manne in die Royal hotel.

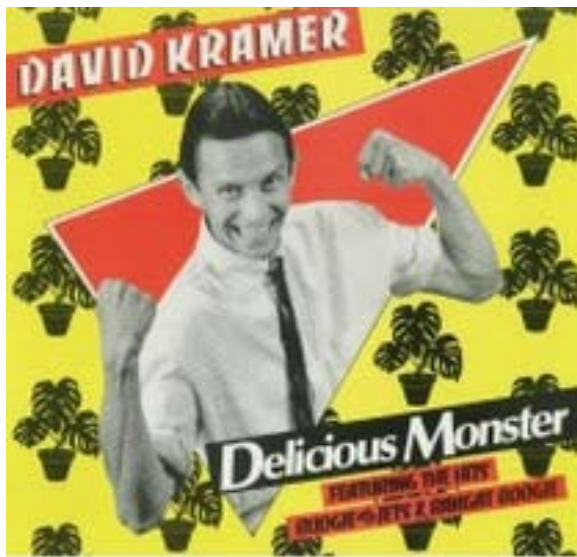
This song makes use of David's favourite images. It addresses working people from the South African rural parts, and the theme is also familiar to Kramer fans: men

drinking in a bar, in this case the bar at the Royal Hotel. The name Royal Hotel strikes a chord with most South Africans, as it would seem that every town in South Africa is graced with a Royal Hotel, usually a small, three-star hotel. Also typical of Kramer's songwriting, the song tells the stories of the characters, the bankrupt farmer, the police sergeant who always gets his man, and so on.

Chapter 16

Kramer was now a professional musician. His dream had come true. Years of hard work and dedication had paid off. David took his good luck and made the most of it.

He released *Delicious Monster* in 1982, which went gold, selling a very respectful (in South African terms) 50,000 copies. The serial number is MOULP (L)15 1982 MOUNTAIN.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za>

The tracks on *Delicious Monster* are:

1. I'm a Rooker
2. Budgie and the Jets
3. Country and Western Town
4. Ballad of an MCP
5. Father's Son
6. White Cortina
7. Bakgat Boogie
8. Cowboy

9. Suburban Dream
10. Barman (Turn up the News)
11. Oh Carol
12. Hekke van Paradise

According to David Smith, the guitarist for The Offbeats, the character Budgie referred to in “Budgie and The Jets” was a high school acquaintance of David’s.

Budgie Brummer played in the band, The Jets. They were crude and unpolished, with puny amplifiers, but there was something wild about them. The Jets had done something pretty smart back in Worcester: they started their own nightclub, if it could be called that. They named the place The Jet’s Cave.

The club was an illegal venue, a deserted hall they took over. It was a burnt-out barn, diagonally across from Frank Vos Garage. They ran power from a neighbour’s house. After shows the surrounding area would be littered with used condoms and empty brandy bottles. They were a Stones group with a Stones crowd, whereas David’s group, The Offbeats, were a Beatles group with a more civilised audience. The height of infamy for The Jets was when one of the Sunday newspapers trumpeted The Jet’s Cave as a den of iniquity, shocking readers about sex, and drugs use. At the core of this depravity was The Jets, and at the core of The Jets was Budgie Brummer. Budgie had been born with a cleft lip and palate.

Budgie was no tough guy. When the boys got together at the pool hall behind Good Hope Café, inevitably someone yanked one of his Chelsea boots off him, so Budgie then had to lurch about as he tried to retrieve his footwear. The boot would be bandied about across the pool table and until Budgie begged to get it back.

David wrote in his song “Budgie and The Jets” that Brummer played “Peter Gunn” in the key of E, because that’s how Budgie played the song. By all accounts he wasn’t much of a guitarist and didn’t think twice about using a major chord instead of a minor, just as “Budgie and The Jets” claims. The Fanie referred to in “Budgie and The Jets” was in actual fact the drummer, Fanie Immelman, not the bass player. The “breker on his 50 cc” refers to David’s pal from The Offbeats, James Munro, and the Texan cigarettes he used to smoke.

The song also makes mention of the Cumberland Hotel, which was (and is) a real hotel in Worcester. The other hotel at the time was the Brandwacht. “Budgie and The Jets” says that the band played at the Twentieth Century Fox – another fact.

Budgie and The Jets

Ja, I remember ou Budgie well
Didn’t he and the Jets play at the Cumberland Hotel?
With a Gallo guitar and a homemade speaker box
Playing the interval at the Twentieth Century Fox

Budgie played like Hank Marvin
And Duane Eddy and those ous
And he sounded like the record
When he used the tremolo
If he didn’t know the minor chord
He’d use the major one instead
He’d go down on his knees
And play the guitar behind his head

*Budgie, Budgie and the band The Jets
Always smoking Texan cigarettes
Budgie a breker on his 50 cc
He played Peter Gunn in the key of E*

One night in the Boland they held a Battle of the Bands
Budgie and the Jets were there and a few of their fans
It was a helluva night as I recall

Cause they nearly blew the roof off
The Eben Dönges Memorial Hall

Budgie played lead up on the stage like a star
Fanie on the bass and Chris on the guitar
I forget the drummer's name but he was hitting that snare
He had tattoos on his arms and Brylcreem in his hair

Budgie, Budgie and the band The Jets
Always smoking Texan cigarettes
Budgie a breker on his 50 cc
He played Peter Gunn in the key of E

It was Budgie and the Jets that night
Who walked off with the prize
In their white satin shirts
And their velvet bow ties
They came up on the stage and took
A bow with such style
A young girl screamed out 'Budgie!'
Then fainted in the aisle

I saw him the other day you know
He was standing in the square
Still wearing his tie
And grease in his hair
But he's not the same Budgie
That we knew you understand
Cause now he plays the guitar
In a hallelujah gospel band.

The song says that Budgie didn't know how to play the A minor chord – David taught him this chord. The lyrics also refer to the Eben Dönges Hall – this name is derived from the Eben Dönges Hospital in Worcester.

An interesting element of this song is that it seems to illustrate David's new influences – the events take place in his hometown, Worcester, but in the last verse he seems to be referring to the Grand Parade in Cape Town, the city David had relocated to after returning from Leeds University. Amateur pastors were at the Parade, Bible tucked

under their arms, belting out sermons to passers by, often with a musician or two to liven things up.

The lyrics showcase Kramer's skills of observation and commentary. On one level he sketches a character, but on another, deeper level, he implicitly addresses the notion of class and taste. This kitsch once repulsed him so, but now he's found inspiration in this ugliness and it's allowed him to make a very subtle political (with a small p) comment on his subjects. Ironically, those very subjects often did not notice the barbs in Kramer's lyrics, and embraced him wholeheartedly as (nearly) one of their own.

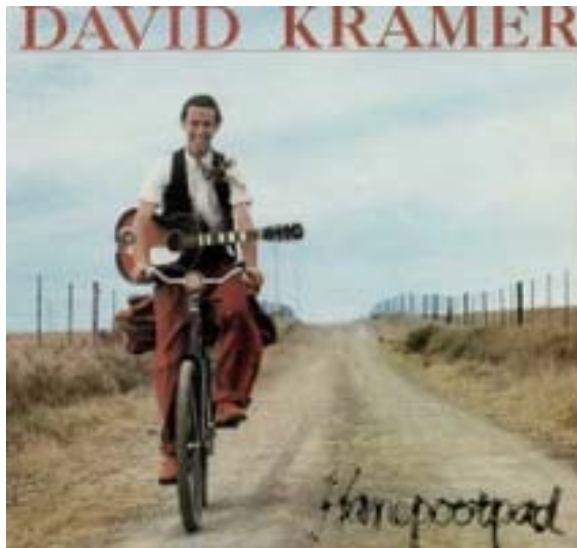
The story of Budgie has moved into the area of myth, depending on who one speaks to: according to David de Nobrega, who ran The Koffiehuis café with his father in Worcester, Budgie made his fortune during the construction of Sun City. However, David Smith of The Offbeats insists that Budgie died tragically, killed on Christmas day.

After school, Smith says, Budgie relocated to Cape Town where he worked various jobs. At one time he was a mail sorter at Goodwood post office. He then took a job as a security guard, and on Christmas day his detail was ambushed in a heist, and Budgie was fatally shot.

Critics complain that "Budgie and The Jets" is a typical Kramer song, unsophisticated, with David singing in his typical Kramer delivery, that is, rather crass and pretend low-class. The man has become more caricature than substance: his red shoes and baggy pants seem to be more important than the music to his targeted audience. That being said, Kramer's audience loved the song.

In 1983 David offered *Hanepootpad* to his loving audience. This album went double gold, selling 100,000 copies, a very good showing indeed. The serial number is

MOUKLP(L)20 1983 MOUNTAIN. Interestingly, and maybe this accounted for some of the album's success, all of the titles are in Afrikaans. There is no trace of the political Kramer on this album.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za>

Hanepootpad contained these songs:

1. Stanley en die Koei (De Vries, trad. Kramer)
2. Laat die Honne Huil (trad. Kramer)
3. Hanne (trad. Kramer)
4. Boggom en Voertsek
5. Lenie Lenie
6. Oranje, Blanje, Blou
7. Tommy Dippenaar
8. Hieronner ou Tafelberg (E Presley, V Matson)
9. Klong van Chavonnes
10. Ballade van Koos Sas



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za>

In 1984 Kramer released a studio album and a live album, which had been recorded the previous year at the Baxter Theatre in Rosebank, Cape Town. The studio album was called *Kwaai* and the live one *Jis, Jis, Jis*.



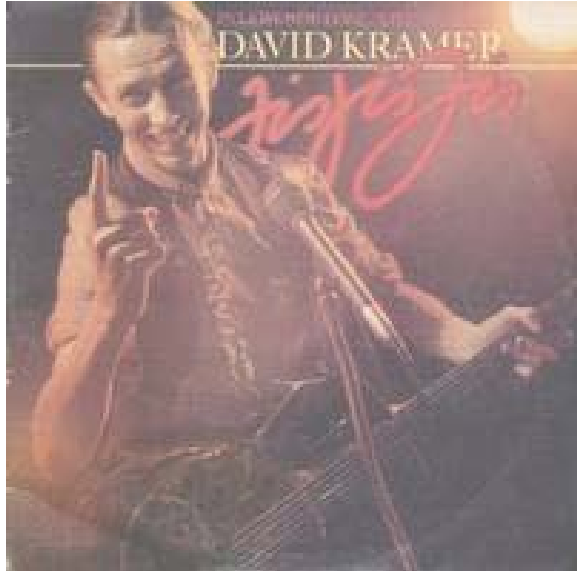
<http://www.davidkramer.co.za>

The track listing for *Kwaai* was:

1. Volstruis Foxtrot
 2. Kom Kom Kom (deur Braam de Vries geïnspireer)
 3. Bokkie (Wil Jy Dans)
 4. Piet Soek Vrou (Vir Willem Steenkamp)
 5. Tant Mina
 6. Vroegoggend
1. Stoksielalleen
 2. Die Troue
 3. O Moeder
 4. My Bure
 5. Ek Praat Die Flaai
 6. Kwaai Lappies

Kwaai featured another well-known Cape Town musician, Jonathan Butler. He went on to have a successful international career as a musician and songwriter, having his compositions recorded by artists such as Patti LaBelle, Billy Ocean, Al Jarreau, Kenny Loggins, and George Benson (<http://www.answers.com/topic/jonathan-butler-1>).

The album was engineered by Kevin Shirley (AKA The Caveman), who would later work with Journey, Iron Maiden, Rush, Led Zeppelin, Dream Theatre, and others.

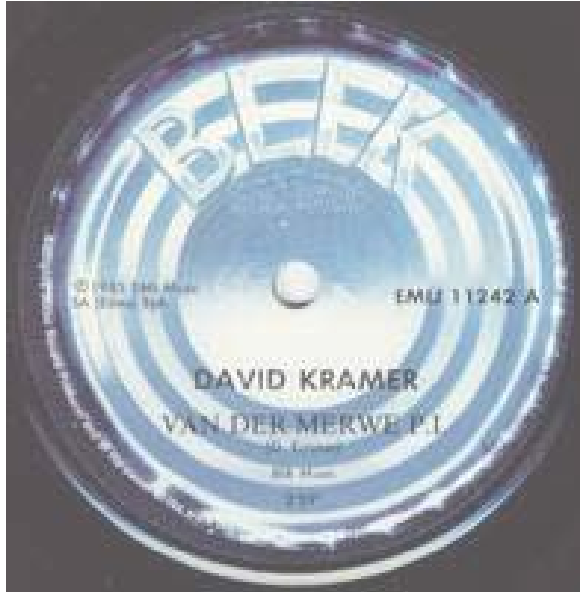


<http://www.davidkramer.co.za>

Jis Jis Jis featured these songs:

1. Hieronner / Weskusklong
2. Sannie van der Spuy
3. Krisjan Swart
4. Ballad of an MCP
5. Hak Hom Blokkies
6. Montagu
7. Budgie and The Jets
8. On the Border
9. Botteltjie Blou
10. I'm a Rooker
11. Suburban Dream
12. Stooking Boom
13. Hekke van Paradise
14. Tommy Dippenaar
15. Hanne
16. Royal Hotel
17. Tjoepstil
18. Bakgat Boogie

Whilst 1984 saw David release two albums, 1985 would see the release of a 7-single, "Van Der Merwe, PI", from the television show of the same name.



Van Der Merwe, PI
<http://www.davidkramer.co.za>

This was a good period in David's life. His career was consolidating and his second daughter was born. When Amy Kramer arrived, David and Renaye were more experienced, and things went a lot smoother this time around.

On one occasion David was stopped by a couple who recognised him inside the Gardens Centre Pick 'n' Pay.

“Verskoon my, maar is u nie David Kramer nie?”

David turned to face them and smiled.

“Ja,” he acknowledged.

The man stuck out his huge hand.

“Plesier om jou te ontmoet, swaer!” he said. “Plesier! Die naam is Johan Malan, en dis my vrou, Wanda.”

“Aangename kennis,” David replied in his English-accent-tainted Afrikaans.

“Ons is op pad huis toe,” Malan informed David. “Vereeniging toe. Die Kaap was lekker. Ons het die Coons gesien.”

“O, wonderlik ..!” his wife cooed. “So vrolik, die kleure en die musiek ...”

David had an immediate mental image of the annual carnival held in the city: groups of coloured musicians hitting the streets in a parade of traditional Cape Town music, their faces painted, adorned in bright costumes, little umbrellas held high as they danced through the streets of the Mother City. There were troupes of musicians, guitars and banjos playing wild, exciting music.

“Ek ken díe musiek glad nie. Gee vir my ’n boereorkes, en ek is gelukkig,” the man continued. “Maar ek moet sê dat die musiek wonderlik was. So opgewek.

“Nou ja, ons moet weer ry. Aangenaam om jou te ontmoet. Jy moet in die Transvaal kom speel,” Malan greeted, sticking out his hand again.

“Ja,” his wife agreed. “Kom gee vir ons ’n show.”

David was deep in thought as he went on his way, thinking about the sounds that had been right under his nose for so long: Cape music.

Chapter 17

Despite his success, David became more aware that he was feeling frustrated, stifled. He was sick of the outfit that he was becoming forced to don for each appearance, and he felt that despite the money, he was not being true to himself. He decided it was time for a change.

1996 was an unusual year for Kramer. He released three albums. The first was *Baboondogs* and the second *Laat Vir Die Dans*. These two albums could not be more diverse. *Baboondogs* was the liberal David, singing protest songs, and *Laat Vir Die Dans* was a collection of Afrikaans songs, Kramer's first collection of hits.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za>

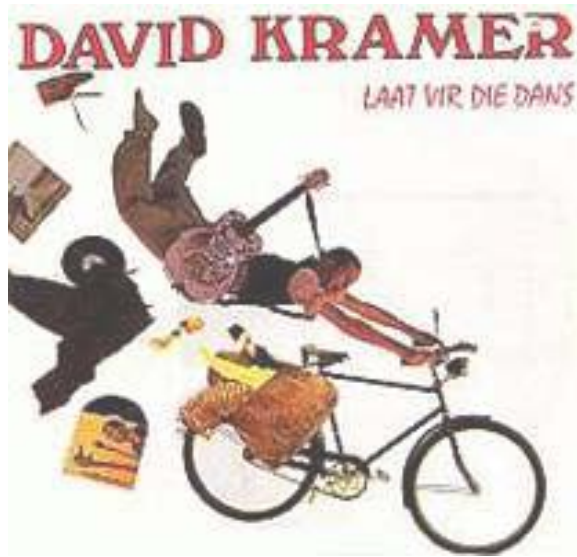
The track listing for *Baboondogs* is:

1. Mambas In The Gutters
2. Signal Hill
3. Going Away
4. So Long Skipskop

5. Driver Driver
6. Dry Wine
7. Shake My Head
8. Sitting On The Fence
9. Bobbejaan Bobbejaan
10. Born For Dreaming

He knew that he could be committing commercial suicide with the release of this album, but he couldn't deny this voice inside him any longer. He had become more brooding as the years went by, and he felt that he had to be true to himself. Life was too short not to heed one's own needs. As he had become older and more mature, he had begun thinking thoughts about his mortality, and what the point of it all was, and against these thoughts he felt he had to make his "protest" album, to hell with the consequences. The consequences, when they came, were surprisingly small, no-one really seeming to care.

It was as if all people wanted was more of the David Kramer they knew, and this they got with *Laat vir die Dans* (Late for the Dance). Once more David turned out the Kramer look. However, he was now becoming a more and more goofy worker travelling the countryside on his bicycle, and yet again the cover artwork showed more sophistication, a professional design studio behind the artwork.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za>

The track listing for *Laat vir die Dans* is:

1. Stoksielalleen
2. Hak hom Blokkies
3. Volstruis Foxtrot
4. Royal Hotel
5. Bokkie wil Jy Dans
6. Klong van Chavonnes
7. Van der Merwe P.I.
8. Stanley en die Koei (Kramer/De Vries)
9. Montagu
10. Boggom en Voetsek
11. Hanne
12. Tommie Dippenaar
13. Laat die Honde Huil
14. Brakpan Rugby Skrum

However, it was the third album which would be the beginning of a new phase in David's already successful career.

David came off the stage, sweat streaming down his face. The building was still reverberating with applause. He was wearing a khaki shirt, the sleeves rolled up to the elbows, with a striped school tie. The shirt was wet under the armpits.

Now the show was over. David could hardly bear performing live. He did them well, and once he got going it was almost fun at times. He loved the applause and when people laughed at the right times, but for days before a performance he was a ball of nervous tension, until he sometimes felt like crying. But, thank heavens this one was over now.

“Nice work,” David heard whilst he was placing his guitar in its case.

He straightened up and turned around. It was Taliep Petersen. The two artists had run into one another at a couple of gigs greeting and exchanging a few words each time. If it wasn't that the two were musicians, they would probably never have crossed paths, as Taliep was Muslim, a so-called Coloured, and David white, the two of them living in different worlds, even though they shared the same city.

David much admired Taliep's ability. Music just seemed to flow from him when he picked up an instrument. Petersen leaned more towards jazz than David, but he could still appreciate the man's talent.

“Thanks,” David replied gratefully.

He remembered the years he had begged venues to let him play, with no success. His thoughts went back to when he tried to push one of his home-made cassettes into someone's hands, how belittling and frustrating it had been, and that made this triumphant show all the more rewarding. All in all, though, David would gladly not perform live again – the nervousness, compounded by his shyness, was too much for him.

Kramer found a parking space and opened the door for Jesse. He held out his hand for his daughter to guide her to dance class. As they made their way to the dance studio near the Mount Nelson Hotel, Jesse skipped along, humming to herself.

“Hey, David ..!” came a voice.

David looked to see who it was. It was Taliep.

“Where you going?” asked Petersen, smiling his boyish smile.

“I’m taking Jesse to her dance class. Renaye’s got something on.”

David looked down at his daughter.

“She’s going to be a ballerina,” he said, mostly for the little girl’s benefit.

The weather was becoming cooler. The sun was still shining but in the late afternoons, especially when the wind came up, it was getting decidedly chilly. On this day the top of Table Mountain was hidden by a thick layer of cloud, rolling over the mountain.

“Taliep, do you have any contacts in the klopse music world?” David asked.

He had been toying with an idea for some time now.

“The klopse?” Taliep asked. “Of course. I know quite a few guys. Why?”

The klopse are troupes of musicians who take to the streets each summer and march through Cape Town, wearing colourful outfits and holding tiny umbrellas aloft as they sing their traditional songs, accompanied by banjos and guitars.

“Well, I’m looking for musicians. I want to do an album that’s more Cape. But I want the real thing, you know, not just some slick session musicians.”

“What exactly are you looking for? A choir? Or a ghoema band?”

David opened his mouth, but didn't say anything. He tried to take in this new information. He had only vaguely considered singers, not a whole choir. But now as he pondered it, a choir would be great: a typical Cape Malay choir. And ghoema? What was ghoema?

"Er ...," David began, trying to formulate his thoughts.

"I have a million ideas," Taliep declared.

David realised this was probably so. Taliep would be a mine of information.

"Look, I've got to rush, but can we get together some time and chat?" he asked Taliep.

"Sure. When?"

"I'm free tomorrow afternoon. Can we meet then?"

"OK. Where?"

"How about that coffee shop at Riverside Centre in Rondebosch?"

"Good. Two o'clock?"

"Perfect."

And so began what history would prove to be a fruitful collaboration, both artistically and financially.

When David arrived at the coffee shop Taliep was already there. They ordered their respective drinks and chatted. Time flew by. They had a second beverage each. Taliep hummed melodies and played air guitar, and David was mesmerised. Taliep was a walking jukebox.

"Can you come to my place tomorrow?" he asked.

"Sure," Taliep answered. "What time?"

“How about three?”

At 3 o’ clock sharp the doorbell rang. David rushed to the door. There stood Taliep, a smile on his face. He was armed with his guitar as well as a box full of cassettes.

“Come in, come in,” David invited, opening the door as wide as it could go.

Taliep looked around him. It was clear that David’s career was doing well. The house was beautiful. Outside the walls were painted white, and the garden was well-kept, a creeper climbing up one of the stoep’s pillars.

David led Taliep to the lounge. David’s acoustic guitar was leaning against one of the chairs.

“Have a seat,” David offered and Taliep sat down, laying his guitar-case on the floor. The carpet was Persian, with rich, deep colours.

“Ok, let me show you what I have,” David said.

He picked up his guitar and put it in his lap. Taliep watched as David played and sang, listening intently, nodding to himself. He thought he knew what David was getting at. David stopped playing.

“What do you think?” he asked.

“Hm,” Taliep muttered.

He leaned down, opened the case, and took out his guitar. He took the capo from the guitar case and placed it over the neck of the guitar. He played an A chord, but with the capo over the G fret, the chord became C.

“Do you mean something like this?” he asked.

He played David's song, but with a slightly different beat, and David grinned widely. It was exactly what he was looking for! It was the same song, but somehow it had blossomed.

"Oh, that's lovely," Renaye exclaimed, coming into the lounge, carrying a tray of coffee.

David looked at Renaye, watching her face. He saw that she wasn't simply being polite. She really did like what Taliep had done to the song. Renaye put the tray down on the coffee table in the middle of the lounge and left the two musicians to work.

David played another song and Taliep mulled it over, biting his lower lip. David waited. Then Taliep dove into his box, pulling out a cassette player and one of his tapes.

"Maybe this is the style you could arrange it in," he offered, hitting the Play button.

After just a few bars David knew this was exactly what the song needed.

"That's it! That's it!" he cried excitedly.

Taliep grinned back at him and stopped the tape.

"What's the theme of this album?" he wanted to know.

"I want it to be about District Six," replied David.

Taliep looked at David intently, taking this information in. This was a very serious topic for him, and indeed for many Capetonians who had been affected by the government's forced removal of the people who were not white from District Six in 1968.

Taliep knew that David had a political side to his work. He'd seen some of David's shows where he'd performed songs such as "No Official Reason".

With the weather comes the rain
The wind in every season
A woman next door has been detained
For no official reason.

Days blurred into weeks, David and Taliep working furiously together. The music flowed freely and soon it was time to record the album. This time David recorded in Surrey Estate, on the slopes of Table Mountain. The area was inhabited by mostly Cape Malay people, the heartland of the sounds David and Taliep were making. They managed to acquire the artistic talents of Robbie Jansen and Basil Coetzee.

Jansen was a self-taught alto saxophone musician. He was a founding member of Pacific Express, and also took up saxophone duties for Abdulla Ibrahim's (Dollar Brand) band. He was a pioneer of mixing jazz and ghoema in Cape Town, playing in the group Ghoema Kings of Cape Town.

Basil "Mannenbeg" Coetzee was another jazz musician, also playing saxophone in the group Pacific Express. He began with the penny whistle, but found his niche with the tenor saxophone.

By the time the album was released in 1986 David was already working on its next phase: putting it on in a theatre as a musical.



http://www.davidkramer.co.za/productions_past.htm

The track listing on *District Six – The Musical* are:

1. Heart of District Six
2. The Law The Law
3. This Time
4. Galiema
5. Sexy Boys
6. Kissing Like Old Friends
7. My Broetjie My Bra
8. New Year
9. So Long Goodbye
10. Hester's Complaint
11. Blind Man's Tears
12. When the South Easter Blows
13. Seven Steps of Stone

The idea came to David in bits and pieces, doing something about South Africa's apartheid past, of which the ramifications were still being felt. He was wary about not treating the subject with respect, making it into a cartoon protest, so he put it in the back of his mind to let the creative juices work at it.

At the same time he was toying with a romantic story, which would illustrate the class differences in South Africa. And then it suddenly came to him: he would set his love story against the backdrop of District Six. This would allow him to address many of the points that interested him. The political fingerwaving would be obvious, and on a more subtle level it would allow him to create a story which would show how apartheid affected people on a very basic, day-to-day level. There would also be the question of young people trying to reach their dreams, something which he could well identify with.

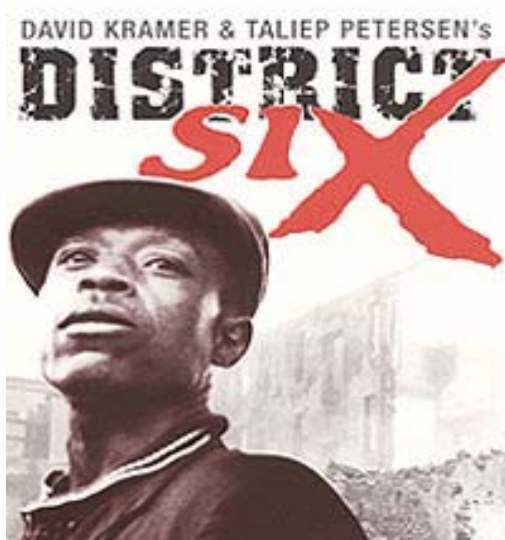
The task before him was monumental: writing a musical and putting it together. In the beginning doors were politely closed in his face, even though he was David Kramer – this was too ambitious, and potential partners just didn't see David succeeding. However, David was nothing if not stubborn in his pursuit of making this dream a reality. One might believe that it was partly fired by his wish not to perform live. The process took months of his time, but bit by bit it fell into place, and then it started to gain a momentum of its own. There were small victories, such as writing a line that worked really well, and larger ones, like getting the Baxter Theatre to accept his musical.

April 11, 1987. The theatre was packed. Cars lined the streets, every single parking space taken up.

The foyer of the Baxter Theatre was humming with excitement. This opening night performance of *District Six* was sold out, as, it would be the entire run. The patrons wore smart-casual clothes and many enjoyed a glass of wine. Voices called out as friends were recognised across the crowded foyer, and hands were shaken. There was a definite buzz about the place.

The lights dimmed and the bells rang to indicate that the show was about to begin. The audience moved into the auditorium.

No one could have dreamed that such a sad backdrop would be such a huge hit, but that's what *District Six* became. It changed the course of David's career in a profound way. It was a sensation. It was sold out, night after night, and would go on to be seen by 289,500 people in a total of 447 shows in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Edinburgh. (McCormick 2002:205)



http://www.musicals.co.za/district_six.html

The storyline to *District Six* was one that the audience strongly identified with. It was a love story: a tale of Mary and Cassiem's romance at a time when their neighbourhood, District Six, was declared a whites only area under the Group Areas Act. People of any other race had to vacate District Six.

Nines, a small-time local gangster, has a crush on Mary, complicating the love affair somewhat. There is further intrigue, not to mention romantic politicking, with the

character of Sandy, whose grandfather (both being white) wants to sign Mary to his Star Tone record label. Mary's chance of fame is scuppered by Sandy, who herself has an eye for Cassiem. When Nines finds that Cassiem and Sandy are having an affair, he informs on them to "the law".

Chapter 18

Towards the late 80's the political and cultural landscape was changing in South Africa. The so-called Alternatiewe Beweging played a substantial role, affecting music and literature, insisting that music didn't have to be insipid, commercially-driven entertainment. The Alternatiewe Beweging strived for a society which would be free from racial and sexual bias. This eventually led to the Voëlvry tour in 1989, with artists such as Koos Kombuis, Bernoldus Niemand en die Swart Gevaar, Johannes Kerkorrel, Die Gereformeerde Blues Band, as well as Die Briels all performing! (Bernoldus Niemand was also a member of the Cherry-Faced Lurchers.)

Generally seen as a movement driven by younger Afrikaans speakers, it turned upon the apartheid government, which, at the time, was quite revolutionary. These were the days when South Africa had a referendum to end apartheid. It was also a time of terrible violence in the townships, people seen as traitors were necklaced, schools burnt down. In the white suburbs boys had to practice cadets, in order to prepare for conflict.

Max du Preez wrote analytical articles in the newspaper *Vrye Weeklad*, criticising the government. Writing referred to as "Border Literature" made its appearance. P.J Haasbroek's *Heupvuur* (1974) is an example. Other writers of this genre include Alexander Strachan, Louis Kruger, George Weideman, and Koos Prinsloo.

Thanks to a large extent to the Alternatiewe Beweging, critical mass was being achieved, and South Africa was beginning to become liberated from apartheid. A new

South Africa would emerge within a few years, where freedom of speech, freedom of association would be the norm.

When the Alternatiewe Beweging came into being in the late '80s, some of the new breed of Afrikaners cited David as an influence. Of course, not all of the new musicians or members of the audience sang David's praise – many thought that he should have gone further with his protest songs, that he should have used his fame as a platform for a more vocal criticism against apartheid. (cf http://www.litnet.co.za/cgi-bin/giga.cgi?cmd=cause_dir_news_item&news_id=13657&cause_id=1270, as well as http://af.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alternatiewe_Afrikaanse_Musiekbeweging)

It was in these times that Kramer and Petersen went back to work, creating and writing their next show.

This would be *Fairyland*, which opened in the Dock Road Theatre in 1990. *Fairyland* centred around the culture and everyday lifestyles of the people in District Six.



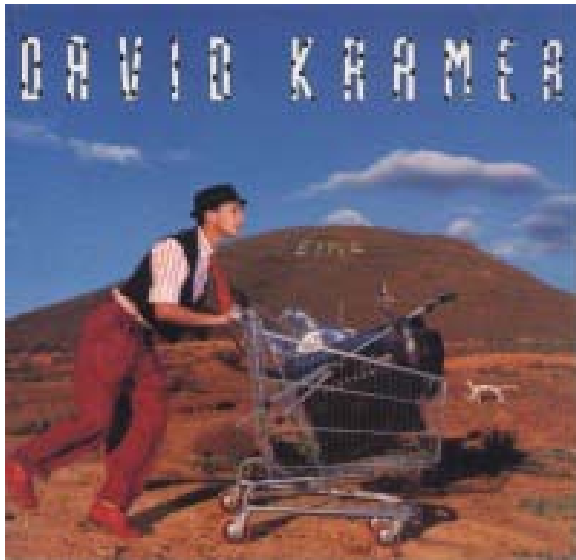
http://www.davidkramer.co.za/productions_past.htm

The tracks on *Fairyland* are:

1. Fairyland
2. Smoother Than Vaseline
3. Ah Ja Ja Hoe!
4. Teardrops
5. The Guy Who Sticks The Stars
6. Farieda
7. Sexy Suzette
8. Ken Jy Vir My
9. I Wanna Ride On Your Motorbike
10. Take Me Home (The Cape Town Song)
11. Do You Remember

Fairyland was a rather insipid show by many accounts, with very little theatre to it, more a collection of songs being sung on a not very interesting stage.

However, before *Fairyland* opened, David released another album, titled *Eina* (Ouch!).



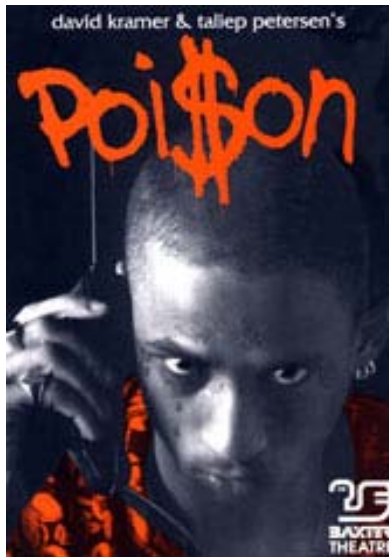
http://www.davidkramer.co.za/productions_past.htm

The songs on *Eina* are:

1. Duiwel de Wet
2. Meisie Sonner Sokkies
3. Glynnis van Rensburg Marais
4. Ou Stuk Blik
5. David Ryk
6. Matchbox Full of Diamonds
7. Piet Mockingbird
8. Mense
9. Christmas in Kakamas
10. Piesang

The songs on *Eina!* were typical Kramer, but rather sub-standard, and the album didn't fare very well. There is very little one can say about this work.

The musical *Fairyland* was succeeded by *Poison* and *Crooners* in 1992, two more musicals David and Taliep put together.

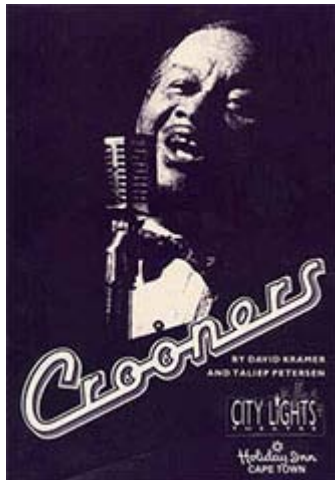


http://www.davidkramer.co.za/productions_past.htm

The word *poison* is well-known term for a certain type of marijuana in South Africa, where marijuana is better known as “dagga”. The “dagga” referred to as *poison* is from the hills of Natal, actually known as Durban Poison. Also part of the *poison* culture is the drug Mandrax, which is crushed and mixed with the “dagga”. This is known as a “white pipe”. Some people say the name refers to the white smoke it creates, whilst others are of the opinion that it is based on the colour of the Mandrax tablet. *Poison* told the story of a drug dealer looking for revenge.

Poison was staged in London, and therefore was adapted to appeal to the local audience. The British critics were not kind, though.

Crooners was a smaller production, put on at one of the hotels in Cape Town, a very low-key affair. The storyline, the little of it there was, followed a group of has-beens who take another shot at stardom, this time in a more professional manner.



http://www.davidkramer.co.za/productions_past.htm

For the next three years David was quiet, and then in 1995 he brought out *Kat and The Kings*.

The show started very small, really just a few paintings David had done as backdrops, a few props made by one of the actors, and an all-male cast. But it grew, and soon it was staged in the Dock Road Theatre, Cape Town, where *Fairyland* had also run. *Kat and The Kings* won the FNB Vita Award for Best Musical Production in 1996, as well as the cast each receiving an award for Best Performance in a Musical. David was very pleased with what the musical had achieved, and was about to end the run, when a telephone call came from London.

“David? Hi. It’s Andrew Jenkins from the Tricycle Theatre in London ...”

“Oh, yes. I remember you. We met when you came to Cape Town. How are you?”

“I’m fine. And you?”

“Fine. Couldn’t be better. I’m just about to wrap up *Kat and The Kings* ...”

“David, I have a proposition for you,” Andrew interrupted. “It’s about *Kat and The Kings*.”

“Oh?”

“Yes. We’d love to put it on here at the Tricycle Theatre.”

David was overjoyed at the words.

“That sounds wonderful. Let me come over to London in a week or so, and we can sort it all out,” he suggested.

“Great. Let me know when you can be here. It will be lovely to see you and Renaye again,” Andrew said.

Kat and The Kings was put on at the Tricycle Theatre, and it had a great run. Now David was invited to put the show on at the Vaudeville Theatre in the West End.

There was an unusual buzz in the audience, and David was worried that something was wrong. Maybe a patron needed medical assistance? He stuck his head out from behind the curtains for a moment.

“My God!” he exclaimed when he turned to face Renaye and the actors.

“What?” they wanted to know anxiously.

“It’s Mandela!”

“No!”

“Yes!”

David thought for a while. The commotion on the other side of the curtains was growing.

“Open the curtains,” he told the technician.

The curtains swung open gracefully, and there stood David, Renaye and the entire cast of *Kat and The Kings*. The audience oohed. This was all most unusual.

“Madiba,” David called. “Thank you very much for coming. I wonder if I could ask you to say a few words, so that we can get settled down ...”

The audience oohed even more. This was *most* unusual!

“Of course, my boy. Of course.”

Mandela rose to his feet and smiled at the audience around him.

“I remember David from when he sang a song about a rugby player.”

There were murmurs of agreement, and a few hands clapped.

“He has given many South Africans a lot of pleasure, and it is my understanding that this show, *Kat and The Kings*, will give many more people a lot of pleasure.”

Mandela had the people in the palm of his hands, everyone spellbound by his charisma.

“So let’s enjoy the show!”

The room erupted in applause. The curtains drew together and the house lights dimmed.

“How are we going to follow *that*?” one of the actors asked, and there were chuckles of agreement.

Such was the magic of Mandela, that that one appearance of his at the musical sealed its success. When David mentioned in conversation that Madiba had come to see the production, doors magically opened.

Kat and The Kings won the Laurence Olivier Award for Best Musical 1999 and the cast each won an Olivier for Best Performance in a Musical. Furthermore, Jody Abrahams and Loukmaan Adams were nominated for an Olivier for their choreographic contribution to the musical.

A second cast was assembled in Cape Town and they performed very successfully at the English Theatre in Frankfurt and The English Theatre in Vienna. For the next two years *Kat and The Kings* toured Holland, and a few European cities.

America was next. The original cast performed a six-month season at the Cort Theatre on Broadway in 1999, where it was nominated for 3 Drama Desk Awards.

For the 2003/04 Christmas season *Kat and The Kings* returned to the Tricycle Theatre in London. All in all, very good work all around.



http://www.davidkramer.co.za/productions_past.htm

Kat & The Kings

ACT1: Memory, Lucky Day, American Thing, Mavis, Boetie Guitar, Cavalla Kings, If Your Shoes Don't Shine, Dress To Kill, The Tafelberg Hotel, Lonely Girl, Josephine, Wild Time

ACT2: Happy To Be Nineteen, Lonely Girl (reprise), All Rock & Roll Needs To Be, Only If You Have A Dream, The Last Thing You Need, Stupid Boy, The Claridges Hotel Medley, Cavalla Kings/The Singing Sensation/The Bell Hop/Blind Date/Lonely Girl/The Invisible Dog/Hey Baby/Cavalla Kings, The Skeleton Dance, Lagunya, Lucky Day (reprise)

After this David took a bit of a breather. The year after the debut of *Kat and The Kings*, he released a “greatest hits” album, *Alles Vannie Beste* (Everything of the Best).



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za/music.htm>

Alles Vannie Beste (Everything of the Best) contains these songs:

1. Stoksielalleen
2. Laat Die Honde Huil
3. Hanne
4. Stanley en Die Koei
5. Volstruisfoxtrot
6. Lenie, Lenie
7. Meisie Sonner Sokkies
8. Piet Bedien
9. Montagu
10. Krisjan Swart
11. Bokkie (Wil Jy Dans?)
12. Spore Van 'n Trein
13. Boggom en Voertsek
14. Hak hom, Blokkies!
15. Jy's My Sweetheart
16. Druk My Vas
17. So Long Skipskop
18. Royal Hotel

Chapter 19

1997 was a slow year for David. He released another compilation album: *Klassic Kramer*. He seemed to be tired and creatively treading water.

He sometimes thought of himself as the elderly man he had seen on the stoep in Worcester, the inspiration for the old rugby player with his faded memories of glories past. Then he would shake himself out of his bleak thoughts and tell himself that soon he would be up and running with a new project. He released another collection of songs from previous albums, seemingly filling in time, *Klassic Kramer*.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za/music.htm>

Klassic Kramer offers these tunes:

1. Jy's My Sweetheart
2. The Paul Simon Story
3. Kobus le Grange Marais
4. Druk My Vas
5. Spore Van 'n Trein
6. Hekke Van Paradise
7. Botteltjie Blou
8. Budgie and The Jets
9. Royal Hotel
10. Bakgatboogie

11. Matchbox Full Of Diamonds
12. So Long Skipskop
13. Hak Hom, Blokkies!
14. Bloemfontein Blues
15. Meisie Sonner Sokkies
16. Prisoners Of War
17. Out Of The Blue

He spent the rest of his time putting together the album which would eventually become *In the Days of District Six*. The rest of his time he spent at his brother John's studio, watching the elder Kramer as he worked on his almost photorealistic paintings, or setting off with his camera, inspired by the photographs that John took.

The one good thing about this relatively quiet time in his life was the opportunity to spend time with his parents, and to reconnect with his wife in a way that he hadn't done for too long.

Solly and Frances were getting on now, although both of them still seemed quite young at heart, especially his father. Solly was still as fit as a man half his age. Worcester was the town that David had wanted to leave as soon as he could, but it was always a joy for him to go back, to drive through the quiet, if ugly streets. The primary and high school of his days were gone, as were some other landmarks, replaced by new, gharish small-town versions of things like Pizza Hut.

He would allow his parents to take him and Renaye out to the yacht club or to play a round of golf, so that they could catch up on the gossip of the past few months. Each time he returned to Worcester, it seemed that there were less and less Jews, and then one day he was shocked when Solly mentioned that the synagogue had shut its doors. Even though David was not a Jew, he still had close ties with the Jewish community, and

this news struck a chord inside him. Jaffe, Landsman, Kahanovitz, Levinsohn, Merson, all names from his childhood, were no longer to be found in Worcester.

The spring sky was blue and clear, the mountains a darker blue, and here where David lay down the blanket and picnic basket the grass was lush and very green after the good winter rains.

He tugged at the blanket again to get it straight, and stood up. He looked about him, and as always the scene delighted him. There was the stream, overgrown with trees and bushes, the mountain hardly visible through the thick undergrowth. To the other side, where the hill they were on sloped down, lay neat patches of farm, squares of different colours, and further below slept Worcester. He went over to Renaye and stood behind her with his arms around her. She put her hands on his forearms and together they looked at the town in the distance, the town they had grown up in.

“Remember the time Van Luyt built the foofie-slide?” Renaye asked with a naughty chuckle.

David chuckled as well.

It was an incident which was part of the Worcester folklore, and he and Renaye had both witnessed it. Kevin Van Luyt had decided to build a foofie-slide from the tree in his back yard. He had tied the cable to the top of the eucalyptus tree and had secured it to a peg which he had hammered into the grass. He had even remembered to first put the cable through the copper pipe, onto which he would hold when he would go down the foofie-slide. David had been impressed, knowing that he might well have forgotten about this detail.

Kevin had climbed up the huge tree, the throng of neighbourhood children watching, all envious. Then he had gone down the slide, only to realise that the copper pipe was getting too hot to hold on to. He had let go, and fell to the ground, breaking his leg.

His father had then chopped down the huge tree, which had taken a considerable time. When the mighty tree eventually toppled over, it was broken. But not defeated. In a last gesture of defiant superiority it fell over onto the Van Luyt's brand new Mercedes Benz. Not long after that the Van Luyts moved to another town.

“Yes, I remember only too well,” David said, kissing Renaye's shoulder.

She hugged his arms tighter to her.

Chapter 20

In 2000 David released *In the Days of District Six*, and presented the play *Poison* to British audiences. The album was actually work that he had done during the previous year, and the show *Poison* in the United Kingdom had left him feeling flat.

He was sitting at the breakfast nook in the kitchen, having a mug of coffee. He watched his eldest daughter busy preparing that evening's dinner. He blinked as thoughts rushed through his head. Good heavens, where had the time gone? Here was Jesse, nearly twenty years old already, a young woman. Amy would be finishing high school soon, and wanting a car to set out into the world herself. Where had the time gone, he wondered again. And what had he done in that time? His thoughts were rather bleak and morbid for a moment, his mortality feeling near at hand, but as he counted off the things he had achieved in his life, he felt slightly better. But still there was that desire to grab hold of life, not wanting it to slip by and away so very fast.

"Penny for your thoughts, Dad," Jesse said, breaking his reverie.

He smiled back at her, and shook his head slightly.

"Just thanking my lucky stars for my wonderful family," he replied.

He had nothing to do, and it was not good for him. He needed to be busy. Jesse knew the signs well.

"You should get something to do," she told him.

He nodded his head, agreeing. But what? He was not in the mood to write any new songs. It felt to him as though he had out-Kramered himself. There was nothing left

there. And at the moment his mind was blank. Try as he might, he couldn't get any ideas for a musical that held his attention for longer than a few minutes. It was a very dry period for him.

“Well, you always talk about South African blues. Why don't you go and document some of it?” Jesse suggested.

David stared at her for a moment. That was it! That was what he should be doing! He jumped up from his seat and went over to her, hugging her tightly.

“You're an angel!” he informed her. “That's exactly what the doctor ordered.”

Chapter 21

The Karoo, 2000

The grey road was as straight as an arrow with repeating white lines down the centre. On either side of the road was a gently rolling landscape, flat-topped hills in the distance. There was nothing to see, for mile after mile. As they drove, the electrical pylons next to the road went thip, thip, thip when they passed by.

Eventually there was a sign: Herbertsdale 20km. When they reached the outskirts of Herbertsdale, Jan turned off the highway.

“Let’s see what Herbertsdale looks like,” he suggested.

They were in no hurry.

Jan Horn and Kramer were on a road trip, looking for interesting musicians to help out with the documentary Jan was making. David had agreed to be the presenter. He was fascinated by the project, and joined Jan whenever he could.

David had been frustrated that critics of his work called it crass, because he felt that they missed the point. That was exactly what it was meant to be: unsophisticated music made by an everyday man for everyday people. In this regard David was very interested in tracking the South African version of American blues, music made on home-made instruments, and played for the sheer joy of setting one’s emotions free. In fact, David became so well versed in this type of South African music that the University of

Cape Town would soon confer an honorary doctorate degree on him. Now he was happy to be on the road with Jan Horn as they searched for examples of this music.

They drove through the town until Jan found a petrol station and filled up. He paid and drove off again, slowly, taking it all in.

“So what do you think of Herbertsdale?” Jan asked, turning to look at David with a smile.

“Not much different to Worcester. The same quiet streets, the same dry air,” replied David, and Jan nodded his head. “Smaller, of course.”

Up ahead David saw a Coke sign, a big red rectangle with the white script. He was hungry.

“Can you stop over there? I’m starving,” he requested.

Jan pulled up next to the café. They went in. It was deserted, only a woman sitting at one of the four white and blue Formica tables. She nodded her head as they came in.

“Goeie môre,” she greeted.

“Goeie môre,” replied David and Jan.

“Wat kan ek vir julle twee doen?”

“Ek is rasend,” Jan told her and she chuckled.

“Dan is julle by die regte plek,” she boasted, getting to her feet. “Hier kry julle regte boerekos.”

She took another look at David, and squinted slightly.

“Verskoon my, maar is u nie David Kramer nie?” she asked.

“Ja, dis ek,” David smiled.

The woman put her hand over her mouth in surprise, her eyes big.

“My aarde ..!” she said, shaking her head slightly.

As she made her way towards her kitchen, she turned back to look at David.

“Ek maak vir jou'n lekker bord kos. Jy kan gerus 'n bietjie gewig aansit,” she giggled.

“Kan ons asseblief die spyskaart sien?” Jan asked.

“Hier kry jy boerekos,” she informed him with a proud smile.

It was clear that there was only one meal available – whatever she had cooked that day.

“Lekker!” David said.

He and Jan sat down at one of the tables, the one closest to the window. They waited, looking through the large pane of glass to the street outside. There wasn't much to see: a shoe store, a house, and on the corner a general store. The pavement in front of the general store was cluttered with spades and rakes, as well as a wheelbarrow. It was Saturday, so the streets were busier than usual. Most people were out doing their weekly shopping, many of them farmers from the surrounding area.

Inside the café there were a few racks containing packets of Simba chips, chocolates and boxes of cookies. Eet Sum More, David noticed. Against the wall was a large refrigerator with *Coke* emblazoned on it. Next to it was another fridge with a big *Dairymaid* sticker on it. Overhead a large fan turned slowly. Also hanging from the roof were a few strips of sticky brown paper which uncurled lazily, dead flies stuck to them.

David watched the cars drive past the café, noticing that a good number of them were bakkies. His reverie was interrupted by Jan.

“I think we'll find something to shoot here,” Jan said.

David nodded his head.

“Hm,” he agreed.

The place was rich with small-town milieu.

“I think we have something similar to the American blues here in South Africa,” David began. “We have the poor-white Briels singing their songs of hardship, with more feeling than technique. And then there are also the coloured farm labourers, even more disenfranchised.”

“Hm,” Jan agreed. “I’m dying to find some local farm musicians and film them.”

“What I love about their music is that it’s so terrible that it actually goes full circle, and starts having a beauty of its own.”

“Like The Ramones,” Jan suggested.

“What do you mean?” David asked.

“Well, they’re not good musicians, compared to say, Led Zeppelin, but as far as rock in general goes, they’re a great group,” Jan explained. “In their look, their vibe.”

David nodded his head.

“I see what you mean. Yes, I think you’re right.”

Their lunch arrived, a hefty meal of rice, potatoes, meat, and vegetables. It was evident that a good farmer needed a lot of starch to complete a day’s work. The café owner placed the plates in front of them and stood back for a moment to watch the celebrities, a look of pride and joy on her face. David and Jan made appreciative noises.

“Ek sal nooit hierdie bord kos klaarmaak nie,” Jan said in awe.

It seemed to be the right thing to say, as the woman glowed.

Lunch was followed by a big mug of coffee, very strong and very sweet.

They got up to leave. When they paid, Jan asked the owner whether she knew of any local musicians.

“Nee, hier is nie juis ’n orkes op die dorp nie,” she said, frowning slightly as she thought.

“Wat van kleurling musikante?” David prodded.

“Kleurling musikante?” she asked, surprised.

She shook her head. Then she called to the back of the café.

“Eunice, weet jy van kleurling musikante hier op die dorp?”

“Mevrou?” a voice answered.

“Kom hier.”

A middle-aged coloured woman came out to the front.

“Weet jy van enige kleurling musikante hier op die dorp?” the owner asked again.

“Nee, nie juis nie ...” Eunice replied.

“Hulle hoef nie professioneel te wees nie,” David told her. “Al speel hulle maar net plaasmusiek, is dit OK.”

Eunice tilted her head as she contemplated.

“Nee, meneer, ek weet nie,” she said. “Dis maar net Hannes Coetzee waarvan ek weet.”

“Hannes Coetzee?” David asked.

“Ja, meneer, maar hy speel maar net ons musiek.”

David looked at Jan. Maybe they should take a look?

“Waar kan ons vir Hannes kry?”

“Hy kom dikwels dorp toe op ’n Saterdag, meneer. Hy werk op ’n plaas hier in die omgewing.”

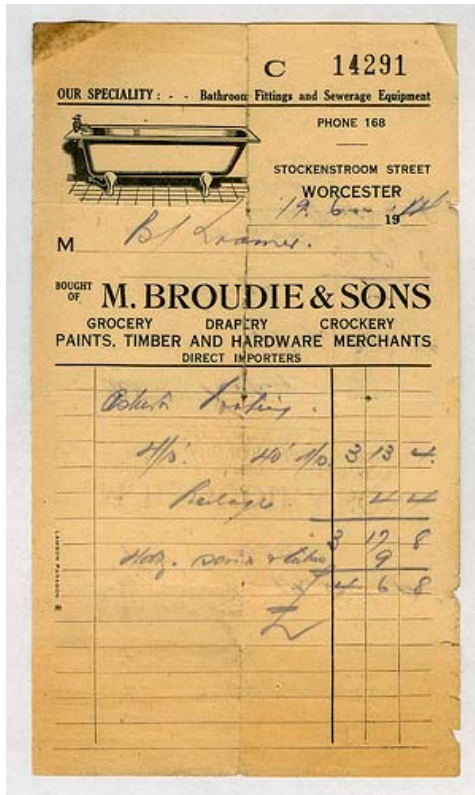
“Nou waar kan ek hom kry?”

“O, dis naby,” the owner of the café told them, pointing with her arm, eager to be of help. “Daar op die hoek, by die hardewarewinkel.”

“Baie dankie,” said David, and he and Jan exited the café.

They left the car in front of the eatery and crossed the road, making their way to the hardware store.

The interior of the shop was cool after the glare of the sun. It smelled of building supplies: wood, tools, bags of cement. The place reminded David of Brown & Brown in Worcester, and M. Broudie & Sons. He still had a Broudie invoice back in Cape Town as a memento of his childhood in Worcester.



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/capelight/233192379/>

“Middag, meneer,” greeted the clerk behind the counter. “Hoe kan ek help?”

Then his eyes opened wider as he recognised David, who smiled.

“Goeie middag,” he greeted. “Ek is David Kramer, en dis my vriend, Jan Horn.”

David stuck out his hand and the clerk shook it, smiling broadly. Then he shook Jan Horn’s hand.

“Andries Fourie,” he introduced himself.

“Andries, ek hoor dat hier somsn Hannes Coetzee kom?” David enquired. “Ons is op soek na platteland-musikante.”

“Ja, hy is hier. Hy’s hier agter iewers. Kom saam met my.”

They followed the clerk to the yard behind the store, and there David saw a man in his seventies.

Coetzee was sitting on a pile of wooden beams. His face was lined as though he had been in the heat and wind for too many years. His clothes were old yet clean. Still it was obvious he was living a hard life. His cheeks were sunken, but there was something of the hardy Karoo about him.

“Hannes ..,” the clerk called, and Coetzee stood up.

“Ja, meneer?” he asked.

“Jy speel mos kitaar, of hoe?”

“Ja, meneer.”

“Nou ja, hierdie menere wil hoor hoe jy speel. Weet jy wie hierdie meneer is?”

He nodded his head to David. Coetzee looked at him, but shook his head.

“Nee, meneer. Ek weet nie.”

“Dis Dawid Kramer ..!”

He pronounced the name as though it was Afrikaans.

“Dawid Kramer, meneer?”

“Ja, Dawid Kramer!”

Coetzee took another look, slowly recognising David.

“Die meneer lyk anders,” he said shyly.

David laughed, and touched his hair.

“Ja, ek weet. Ek is maar grys deesdae.”

They all laughed before David got back to the business at hand.

“Ek wil hoor hoe jy speel,” he began, and Coetzee raised his eyebrows in surprise.

Surely it couldn't be possible that David Kramer wanted to hear him play?

“Ja, ek speel s'n bietjie..,” he began tentatively, a smile playing around his mouth.

It was clear that he was delighted to be asked to perform.

“Nou laat ons hoor,” David grinned.

The clerk excused himself, wanting to get back to the store.

“Verskoon my tog, Dawid, maar ek moet terug winkel toe.”

“Glad nie. Dankie vir jou hulp,” David replied.

Coetzee moved behind a pile of wooden beams and returned with a very old guitar, badly scratched. He sat down again, shuffled a bit to make himself comfortable, dug his hand into his jacket pocket, and retrieved a spoon. David glanced over at Jan, who shrugged back. He didn't understand what Coetzee was doing either. Coetzee put the spoon handle in his mouth and bit down on it. Then he began playing, strumming the bass strings with his thumb and picking and tapping the top strings down, in a very percussive manner. Then, to David's astonishment, he leaned forward and pressed the spoon down on the fret board of the guitar, sliding it up and down, playing the melody with the cutlery.



<http://www.myspace.com/hannescoetzeeteaspoonslideguitarist>

It was wonderful music: crude, yet vibrant - from the heart. When the song ended, David and Jan burst out laughing with joy. They had discovered something truly amazing! They knew they had a hit. They clapped their hands and begged to hear more. Hannes Coetzee gladly obliged.

When they drove back to Cape Town, David was full of plans. The world had to see Hannes Coetzee.

“I have to get him into a studio,” he enthused.

Jan Horn nodded his head.

“What about getting him in at the KKNK?” he suggested.

“The Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees? That’s a wonderful idea.”

Hannes Coetzee was a hit at the 2001 KKNK. Within months he found himself on an aeroplane, heading for America. Once in the US he gave slide guitar workshops, with

David having to translate for Hannes and the audiences. When one of his performances was posted on YouTube, it was a minor hit. *Karoo Kitaar Blues* was released in 2001.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za/music.htm>

The songs on *Karoo Kitaar Blues* are:

1. Heideveld (Lakay)
2. Johnny Raakvat (Kramer)
3. Almal Het Iets Te Sê (Mouers, Nuwegeld)
4. Mahalla (Coetzee)
5. One Kappelala (Lodewyk)
6. Kruispad (Kramer)
7. Langarm (Jaers)
8. Die Hanetjie (Coetzee)
9. Sallie Weer Trou Nie (Mouers, Nuwegeld)
10. Die Pad (Kramer)
11. Antie Maak Oop Jou Deur (Lodewyk)
12. Jaloers Bokkie (Coetzee)
13. Kielie Mettie Mielie (Jaers)
14. Meisie Sonner Sokkies (Kramer)
15. Moenie Lujet Drinkie (Mouers, Nuwegeld)
16. Ek Ko Huistoe (Kramer, Coetzee)

Karoo Kitaar Blues is also the title of the documentary shot by Lisa Key.

Karoo Kitaar Blues follows South African songwriter David Kramer and slide guitarist Hannes Coetzee into remote regions of South Africa on their quest to find musicians who play an almost forgotten folk music. The film documents their journey into the harsh and arid landscape of Namaqualand and the Great Karoo interweaving musical performance and interviews with violinists, guitarists, piano accordionists and mouth organ players who play what Kramer describes as Karoo Blues. Little is known of the origins of this music. It is the music of shepherds and sheep shearers who are descendents of the original inhabitants of these semi-desert areas.



Karoo Kitaar Blues, 2003

Directed by Lisa Key

http://films-for-africa.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=28

As well as *Karoo Kitaar Blues*, David's solo album, *Kliphard* (Rockhard) was also released in 2001.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za/music.htm>

The tracks listing for *Kliphard* is:

1. Die Blinne Referee
2. Jolene Jolene
3. Die Brug
4. Brannewyn Babbelas
5. My Eerste Mistake
6. Weskusklong
7. 'n Man Stap
8. Kyk Hoe Lyk Sy Nou
9. So Mooi
10. Myl Na Myl
11. Koos Sas

Note of interest: it seems that the guitar on the cover of both the *Karoo Kitaar Blues* and *Kliphard* albums, is the same instrument – it's possible to assume that Hannes Coetzee had to borrow David's guitar for his album cover photograph.

Chapter 22

By 2001 David's betteries were charged again, and he had a new project to unveil. He and Renaye produced *Die Ballade van Koos Sas*. Koos Sas was a Khoisan man who became something of a folk legend when he escaped from custody after being found guilty of murder.

Born in Touwsrivier, he lived in the Montagu area, but fled into Namaqualand, trying to evade capture.

In 1917 he worked for Boetatjie Botha in Stellenbosch, the son of the local minister, but was fired after only one day. Later in the day he returned to the house and murdered his previous employer.

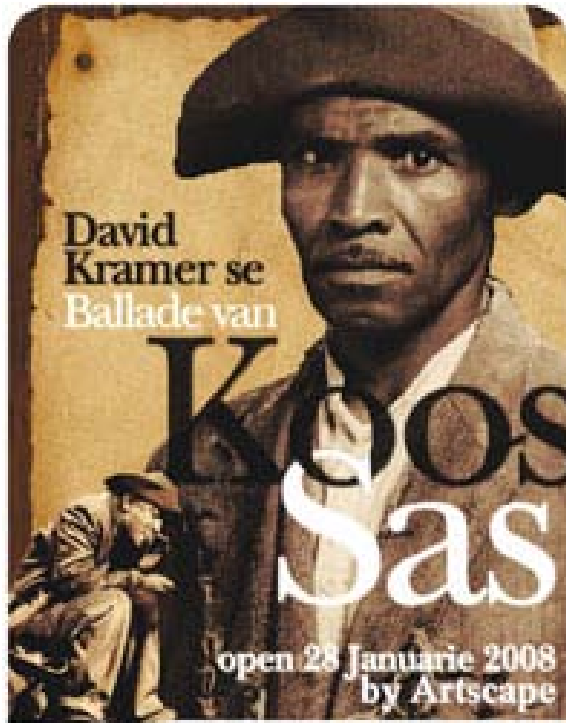
On the sixth of February, 1922, Constable Jurie Dreyer recognised Sas from a photograph which had been distributed to all the police stations. He chased Sas for two days, and on the eighth of February he shot and killed him.

After his death, one of the ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church had his body strung up, and photographed. Along with the picture was the following inscription: "Koos Sas, murderer of the son of Reverend Botha of Stellenbosch in 1917. Captured three times and escaped three times. Eventually shot by policeman Jurie Dreyer as he fled in Droodaap, near Springbok, Namaqualand. Funds from the sale hereof is (sic) for the ACVV (a social welfare organization – author's note) in Namaqualand."

After Sas was buried, Reverend Steenkamp obtained permission from the magistrate to exhume the body. He took the skull with him to Stellenbosch, and later to

America when he went to study there. On his return to South Africa he donated the bones to Professor Hercules Brink of the University of Stellenbosch, who in turn gifted it to the museum in Montague, where it was put on display as an example of Khoisan skulls. (cf http://af.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koos_Sas)

It was after seeing this display that David started toying with songs and early versions of what would eventually become *Die Ballade van Koos Sas*.



http://www.davidkramer.co.za/productions_past.htm

2001 was a very busy year for David. Apart from releasing the album *Kliphard* and producing *Die Ballade van Koos Sas*, he also directed Marc Lottering in the comedy *Cape Flats with Love*. David would again direct Lottering in future productions, *Big Stakes & Chips* (2003) and *Hallelujah!* (2006).

Chapter 23

Cape Town, 2004

David stood in the bedroom, hands on his hips as he looked about the room, trying to do a mental checklist. He wanted to make sure he had everything. He looked at Renaye and breathed a sigh of relief. She always knew where everything was.

“Is there anything else?” he asked.

“No, that’s it,” she replied.

David picked up the first suitcase and took it to the car outside. Then he came back and got the second one.

“Jeez, what’ve you got in here?” he gasped.

“Weights. I want to keep fit.”

David grunted. He couldn’t come up with a smart come-back.

Once the car was loaded and everyone was in, David locked the house and got in behind the wheel. They set off and soon arrived at the airport: David, Renaye, Jesse and Amy. They were off to Las Vegas, where they were going to showcase *Kat & The Kings*. The effects of Mandela’s visit to the show at the Vaudeville Theatre were still being felt, doors still being opened to what was by now becoming part of a theatre legend.

As usual, Renaye was an integral part of the stage productions. She had been responsible for a lot of the production work of the musicals, since *District Six*, and she was heavily involved in *Kat and The Kings*.

Amy and Jesse were joining David and Renaye, with the idea that the girls would see a bit of Las Vegas while their parents negotiated the showcase. The sun was setting when they arrived at Cape Town International airport, and by the time their flight took off it was dark. There was something exciting and romantic about this night flight.

When they landed in Las Vegas they were met by a limousine, courtesy of the Hilton Hotel, where they would be staying. Amy took out her cellphone and pretended to call David, making a joke as to how big the interior of the car was.

“Hi. Can you hear me?” she asked, holding the phone to her ear.

David pretended to take the call, shaping his hand in the sign of holding a telephone next to his ear.

“Yes. I can hear you quite well. This line is so clear. It’s like you’re right here with me,” he replied.

“It’s American technology,” Amy pointed out.

“That’s why they’re the greatest nation on earth,” Renaye said, with just a hint of sarcasm in her voice.

“Hamburgers,” Jesse pointed out, her eyebrows raised, an expression of wonderment on her face.

“Elvis,” David reminded them.

And just then a young man came gliding by on a pair of rollerblades. Renaye raised her hands, as if to say: “See? I rest my case.” They all burst out laughing.

When they reached their hotel they checked in, and then met in the lobby, eager to see some of this famous city.

“Oh, my God, look!” Amy said, pointing to the sky once they were outside on the sidewalk.

They saw a tall, round structure. It was the Stratosphere Casino. A man was falling to the ground, held in place by only a few cables. They could hear his screams of fear and joy as he plummeted to the earth.

“I have to do that,” Renaye said.

“Bye,” David declined.

Over the next few days they did a little sight-seeing, but for most of the time David and Renaye attended meetings. Renaye did, though, jump off from the top of the Stratosphere Casino, and when she met up with David again in the rather faded and run-down foyer, her cheeks were flushed with excitement.

“Oh, God, that was wonderful! Buy me clean underwear!” she exclaimed, as she hugged him tight.

Jesse and Amy also made the most of their time in Las Vegas, gambling, taking the sky-train over the city, and driving past what their guide said was André Agassi’s house.

It had been a very busy few months, putting the showcase together. Now the theatre was packed with industry heavyweights. Renaye moved about, shaking a hand here, touching a shoulder there, always smiling, and making sure she remembered the faces and names. David’s musicals had been well received in Europe, but America was new for them, so she didn’t want anything to go wrong. She desperately wanted to be accepted by the Las Vegas audience. Tonight was the culmination of months of hard work.

A bell rang and everyone moved from the foyer into the theatre, and took their seats. The lights dimmed, the curtains opened, and the show kicked off. The music was vibrant, the acting excellent. Suddenly it was over and the room reverberated with applause.

After the show, snacks and drinks were offered, and the actors and musicians mingled with the businessmen David and Renaye had invited to the performance.

All in all, things went very well, and the Kramers were promised a run for *Kat & The Kings*.



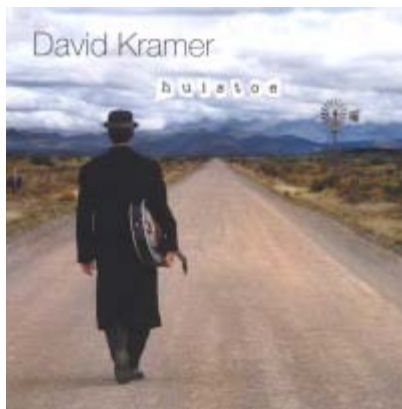
Kat and The Kings had already played to American audiences on Broadway in 1999. David was credited with the lyrics, whilst Taliep was acknowledged as being responsible for the music and arrangements. The directors of the Broadway shows were David, Jody Abrahams, Luqmaan Adams, Juniad Booyesen, Terry Hector, Alistair Izobell and Kim Louis.

Clive Barnes of *The New York Post* thought it an “extravagantly exciting musical.” He wrote: “Here is a show to be missed only at your peril.” (cf http://www.harrietnewmanleve.com/Past_Projects/past_projects.html)

The showcase had been produced by Harriet Newman Leve, Judith and David

Rosenbauer, in association with Richard Frankel, Marc Routh, Willette Klausner, Kardana-Swinsky Productions, David Kramer, Taliep Peterson, Renaye Kramer, and by special arrangement with Paul Elliott, Nick Salmon, and Lee Menzies. (cf harrietnewmanleve.com)

The year was not over yet. In that year David also released the album *Huistoe* (Home).



<http://rhythmmusicstore.com/music/605/David-Kramer/Huistoe>

The track listings for *Huistoe* are:

1. Weeskind
2. Kairo
3. Onnerwater
4. Dans Mettie Dood
5. Die Pad
6. Katie
7. Donnerweer Brom
8. Dikwiel Bicycle
9. Klipspringer
10. Bitterswaar
11. Stoomtrein
12. Ek Kô Huistoe

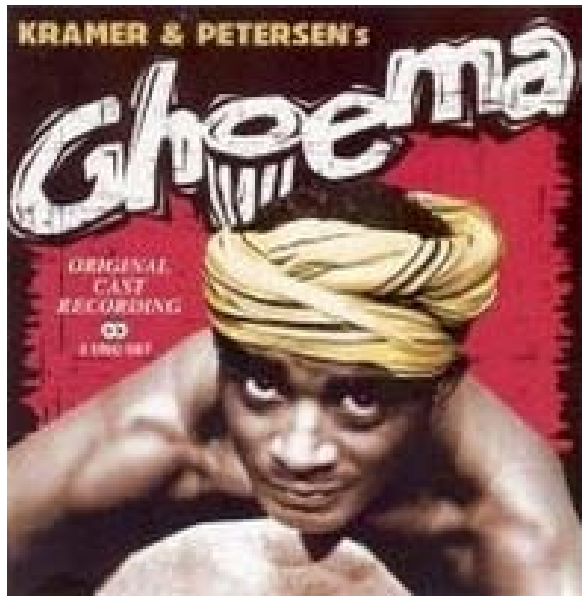
He was working hard, ideas seeming to come out of the sky for him. Once again he was toying with a Cape topic, yet again about the disenfranchised “coloured” people. The following year, 2005, he presented *Ghoema*. It would be the last collaboration between David and Taliep, and tells the story of slaves in the Cape at the time the Dutch arrived.

The title of the musical, *Ghoema*, is actually reference to a small drum fashioned from an empty wine vat and covered with animal skin at one end.

Inspired by South African history at the Cape, the revue explored the roots of slave music from as far back as 1650, when the Dutch East India Company had an enormous influence on the lives of the Cape people. The music was a mixture of the sounds from each group of slaves who were brought to the Cape by the company from countries as far away as Indonesia, India, Madagascar, and Java. *Ghoema* traces the evolution of music these people created, culminating with two Cape Flats rappers named Hot and Tot. Some Dutch and Malay folksongs were also included as well as a few newly composed songs (“Nuwe Naam”, “Blue Sky” and “Ghoema Vannie Kaap”). The show was assisted by two female narrators: Dina and Mina. They tell the story in a gossipy, romantic manner.

The song “A New Name” chronicles the way in which the colonial government confiscated some of the natives’ names, replacing them with insults, such as the month in which they were born (January, February). Or even worse, monikers like Teaspoon or Potato. (cf <http://www.britishtheatre guide.info/reviews/spicedrum-rev.htm>)

The show introduced audiences to the terms “kron-tjong” and “karienkel”, as well as a Malay choir and a Cape Coon troupe.



http://www.davidkramer.co.za/productions_past.htm

The songs from *Ghoema* are:

1. Ghoema
2. Na Batavia
3. Down At The harbour
4. The Old Spice Trade
5. Skepe Van Holland
6. Marahaban
7. Nuwe Naam
8. Oppie Plaas
9. Oewen Dat Zee
10. De Zilvervloot
11. Sal Ik Dan
12. Een Meisje Loos
13. VOC History
14. Spot Liedjies
15. Nou Is Dit Tyd
16. Achmat Samsodien
17. Blue Sky
18. Hie Kommie British Rap
19. Die Alibama
20. Swing Low
21. Pieknieklidjies
22. Als Is Onze Prinze
23. Rosa
24. Beestepote
25. Ghoema Vannie Kaap

26. Afklop



<http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/spicedrum-rev.htm>

Once again a Kramer/Petersen show took in awards:

2006 Fleur du Cap Awards

Best Lighting Design - Gert du Preez & David Kramer

Best Prop Design - Jesse Kramer

Best Set Design - Julian Davids

2007 Naledi Awards

Best Production of a Musical

Best Original Choreography - Loukmaan Adams

Best Musical Director - Taliep Petersen



http://www.davidkramer.co.za/productions_past.htm

David's daughter, Jesse, was also becoming somewhat of a showbiz person, delving into stage design. She won a Fleur du Cap Award in the Best Costume Design and Props Category for the latex Malay choir puppets she designed for *Ghoema*.

Chapter 24

The telephone rang in the quiet house. At first David was going to ignore it. He was late already. Renaye was waiting for him in Sea Point. He had promised to pick her up at five, and it was nearing that time already. Not to mention that the traffic along Sea Point Main Road was a nightmare at any time of day.

“Hello, Kramer,” David said with a hint of a sigh when he picked up the receiver.

“David, I have bad news,” the voice at the other end said. “Taliep’s dead. He was murdered last night.”

David was numb with shock as he drove to Sea Point. Renaye was waiting for him. David pulled up at the kerb. Renaye was about to berate him for being late, when she noticed something was amiss.

“What’s wrong?” she wanted to know as they got into the car.

“Taliep’s dead,” he replied.

Renaye gaped at him for a moment.

“He was murdered last night. He and Najwa were attacked by burglars. They took some money and shot Taliep.”

“How’s Najwa doing?” Renaye wondered.

“I’m sure it must be hell for her. We should go around there.”

“Yes,” Renaye agreed.



<http://www.channel24.co.za/>

The Petersen household in Athlone was crowded with friends and family, all still stunned, unable to believe the news. Part of the house was cordoned off by the police. Najwa was sitting in a chair in one of the rooms, and it was clear that whilst she was grateful for the concern shown, she would rather be alone.

Taliep had been tied up and shot execution-style on 16 December 2006. As time went by, the case took a few unexpected turns, and soon the police shifted their attention to Najwa herself. The South African media was frenzied.

On 2 December 2008 Judge Siraj Desai found Najwa guilty of murder, as well as robbery with aggravating circumstances. He sentenced her to 28 years imprisonment. Apart from Najwa, three others were incarcerated in connection with the incident. Abdoer Raasiet Emjedi was also convicted of Petersen's murder, and robbery with aggravating circumstances. Waheed Hassen was convicted of murder, possession of an unlicensed firearm and ammunition and robbery with aggravating circumstances. Jefferson Snyders, the fourth accused, was only found guilty of robbery with aggravating circumstances.



Najwa Petersen

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?click_id=3047

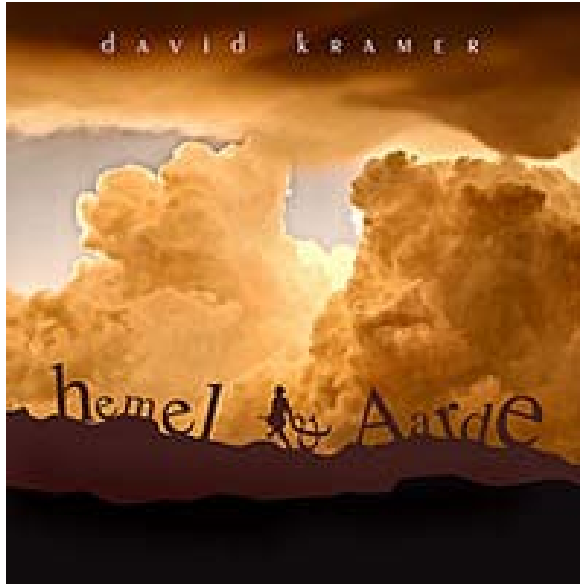
David drove to Blaauberg beach and sat there for a long time. He watched the waves rolling in, Table Mountain on the other side of the bay, but his thoughts were with his friend and colleague. He remembered the many experiences they had shared, good and bad. It was hard to believe that the always-smiling Taliep wouldn't be joining him for jam sessions anymore, tossing out melodies and ideas with such nonchalant ease.

David's thoughts turned to Najwa. He wondered what had made her do it. It was something he would never know. Maybe it was better that way, he thought.

He started the car and drove home.

Chapter 25

After Taliep's death David took it relatively easy. In 2007 he released *Hemel en Aarde*.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za/music.htm>

Hemel & Aarde contains these tracks:

1. Die Verlosser
2. Die ou Aarde
3. Bleskop
4. My bloed is 'n Snaar
5. Oom Kallie
6. Hoekom?
7. Ek het my Les geleer
8. Stofpad
9. Die Duiwel
10. Sê vir Mamma

The next year he staged *The Kramer Petersen Songbook*, a collection of their best-known songs. His next offerings would be in 2008 when he staged *Three Wiser Men*, and then

again in 2009 when he presented *David Kramer se Kaapse Breyani*. (David Kramer's Cape Breyani [a Malay dish, popular in Cape Town].)

<http://realreview.co.za> gave this review of *Three Wiser Men*:

After the success of the *Three Wise Men* last year, popular stand-up comedians, Marc Lottering, Riaad Moosa and Nik Rabinowitz, return once more under the direction of David Kramer to bring seasonal cheer as *Three Wiser Men* – one Christian, one Moslem, one Jewish.

In each half of the show, they each take a turn at the mike and end with a skit involving all three, the first a rehash of last year, in drag as their alter egos – Auntie Merle, Aysha and Beryl Rosenberg. Between acts, Donvino Prins's live onstage band provides musical entertainment.

All three have their comic shtick down pat. Rabinowitz makes some political comment, one sketch imagining what happens when the police shoot-to-kill policy is implemented; Lottering has humorous observations around Facebook and end of year parties; Riaad is the freshest with various Moslem and Indian jokes.

It is a new show, yet last time it felt more creative; there were some poignant moments and the emphasis wasn't so much on verbal slapstick. This time I had the impression I was watching highly successful comics doing their spiel – the *Biltong & Pot Roast* (of SABC 1970s) for today's generation.



Photo: Jesse Kramer

Epilogue

For the boy from a small town where a hot, dry wind blew in the summer, most of David's dreams seem to have come true. He left the town he had felt so trapped in as a teenager, went out into the world and has made his mark. He's found his own voice, his own style, and became an important reference for many of the South African artists that blossomed after him: Valiant Swart, Koos Kombuis, Fokofpolisiekar, et al. His services have been duly noted by the University of Cape Town, which awarded David an honorary Doctorate in Literature (Honoris Causa) degree.

He is a husband and a father of two daughters, both young women beginning to leave their own footprints on the world around them. David can look back on his life and career with some satisfaction. He is still active, his creativity not resting – in 2010 he staged *10 Stories* at the KKNK festival in Oudtshoorn.

Discography

- 2007: **Hemel & Aarde**
- 2007: **District Six – The Musical DVD**
- 2006: **Ghoema**
- 2004: **Huistoe**
- 2001: **Kliphard**
- 2002: **Karoo Kitaar Blues**
- 2000: **In the Days of District Six**
- 1999: **Kliphard**
- 1997: **Alles Vannie Beste**
- 1996: **Klassic Kramer**
- 1995: **Kat and The Kings**
- 1991: **Fairyland**
- 1989: **Eina**
- 1988: **Cape Town**
- 1986: **District Six - The Musical**
- 1986: **Laat vir die Dans**
- 1986: **Baboondogs**
- 1985: **The Jol**
- 1984: **Kwaai**
- 1984: **Jisjijis** (Double Gold)
- 1983: **Hanepootpad** (Double Gold)
- 1982: **Delicious Monster** (Gold)
- 1981: **Die Verhaal van Blokkies Joubert** (Platinum - Triple Gold)
- 1981: **Bakgat!** (Gold) (Released on CD in 2001)

Musicals

- 2009: **10 Stories**
- 2008: **Die Ballade Van Koos Sas**
- 2007: **The Kramer Petersen Songbook**
- 2005: **Ghoema**
- 2004: **Showcase Kat and The Kings, Las Vegas**
- 2003: **District Six**
- 2002: **Karoo Kitaar Blues**
- 2001: **Die Ballade van Koos Sas**
- 2000: **Poison (British version)**
- 1999: **Kat and The Kings, (Cort Theatre, New York)**
- 1998: **Kat and The Kings (Vaudeville Theatre, London)**
- 1996: **Klop Klop**
- 1995: **Kat and The Kings**
- 1994: **Poison (The musical)**
- 1992: **Crooners**
- 1992: **Poison (The opera)**
- 1990: **The Eyes of their Whites (Edinburgh Fringe Festival)**
- 1990: **Fairyland**
- 1987: **District Six-The Musical**

Shows

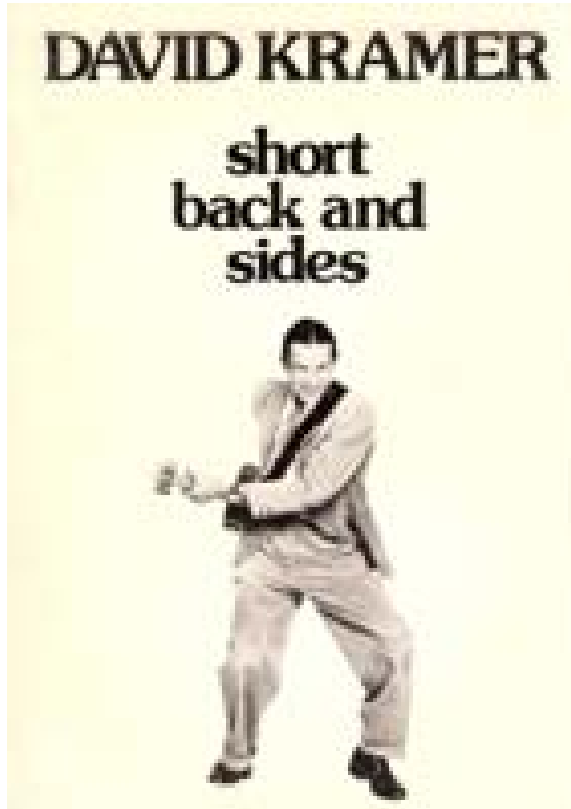
- 2009: **David Kramer se Kaapse Breyani**
- 2008: **3 Wiser Men**
- 2006: **Hallelujah!**
- 2003: **Big Stakes & Slap Chips**
- 2002 **Karoo Kitaar Blues**
- 2001: **Cape Flats with Love**
- 1991 **Concert Paul Simon SA tour (Port Elizabeth & Cape Town)**
- 1985 **Concert The Jol (Baxter Theatre, CT / Market Theatre, Jhb)**
- 1989 **Concert Eina (Baxter Theatre / Market Theatre)**
- 1984 **Concert Opskoptoer (South African tour)**
- 1983 **Concert David Kramer On Stage (Baxter Theatre, CT / Market Theatre, Jhb)**
- 1981 **Concert Musiek & Liriek (Oude Libertas Amphitheatre, Stellenbosch)**
- 1981 **Concert Live at the Chelsea Hotel (Johannesburg)**
- 1979 **Concert Januarie, Februarie, March (The Space, Cape Town)**
- 1978 **Concert Boland Blues (Baxter Theatre, Cape Town)**

Prizes and Awards

- 1990 **ENB Vita prize** for best musical (*Fairyland*)
- 1995 **ENB Vita nomination** for best music production (*Poison*)
- 1995 **PE Evening Post prize** for best director of a musical (*Poison*)
- 1996 **ENB Vita prize** for best musical (*Kat and The Kings*)
- 1999 **Laurence Olivier prize** for best new musical (*Kat and The Kings*)
- 1999 **Afrikaans Onbeperk prize** through the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival (for meaningful contribution to Afrikaans)
- 1999 nomination for three **Drama Desk prizes** as well as a **Drama League prize** in Broadway, New York (*Kat and The Kings*)
- 2001 **Herrie prize** (for his contribution to the Klein Karoo Arts Festival)

Printed Publications

- 1982 **Short Back & Sides** Cape Town, Maskew Miller Ltd



Timeline

- 1951 – David Kramer is born in Worcester, Cape Province, 27/6
- 1957 – begins attending Worcester Boys Primary School
- 1964 – begins attending Worcester Boys High School
- 1969 – matriculates
- 1970 – is conscripted into the South African Defence Force
- 1971 – begins attending Leeds University, the United Kingdom, studying Textile Design
- 1974 – graduates with an Honours degree in Textile Design
- 1975 – returns to South Africa
- 1976 – meets future collaborator Taliep Petersen for first time at UCT concert
- 1980 – first album, *Bakgat!*, is released in South Africa
- 1981 – first child, a daughter, Jesse, is born
- 1981 – has first hit single with *Hak Hom, Blokkies*
- 1984 – second daughter, Amy, is born
- 1986 – *District 6* opens at the Baxter Theatre to tremendous popularity
- 1998 – Kat & the Kings opens in the West End, London
- 1999 – Kat & the Kings opens in Broadway, New York
- 2006 – long-time collaborator Taliep is murdered by hitmen hired by his wife
- 2007 – awarded honorary Doctorate in Literature (Honoris Causa) by University of Cape Town
- 2010 – presents *10 Stories* at the KKNK festival

Creative Nonfiction: Writing an Unauthorised Biography of David

Kramer

by

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submitted towards the partial requirement for a
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in the subject
Creative Writing

in the Faculty of Humanities
of the
University of Pretoria

Supervisor: Prof. HJ Pieterse

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This thesis takes a reflective look at the process of writing an unauthorised biography. To do this the thesis will briefly look at fiction and nonfiction, before placing the biography somewhere in the middle, as a creative nonfiction piece.

In explaining the decisions made whilst writing the biography *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography* the thesis will investigate problems of research, the bilingual nature of the text, fictionalisation, ethics, influences, make-believe, approach to the biographical subject, intertextuality, and biography writing. The main areas of this study are fictionalisation, intertextuality and the use of English as well as Afrikaans in the biography.

There were three main decisions to make before the Kramer biography could be attempted: what, why, and how.

What

The biography hopes to give information and insight to the life and career of David Kramer, to illustrate some of his experiences growing up as an English-speaking boy in small-town South Africa in the sixties and seventies, and the battles he might have had as a liberal in a society of mostly conservatives.

The biography allows the reader to walk the path that Kramer had, from his childhood to his university education in the United Kingdom, and his return to South Africa. Then it chronicles his transformation from textile designer to successful musician and playwright. Some of Kramer's lyrics and drawings are included, as well as photographs of the singer, and the town he grew up in, Worcester.

Why

There is no biography available for any interested parties, and precious little information is to be found regarding the life of Kramer. Hopefully this biography will fill that gap a little. Furthermore, the author wanted to recreate his own memories, as he himself, like Kramer, was a Worcester boy. There is then an undercurrent of autobiography to the text.

How

Once it was decided to tell Kramer's story as a creative nonfiction text, the process went relatively smoothly. The next step was to choose a texture for the biography – the text tries to tell the story of Kramer in an entertaining manner, which is hopefully easy to digest, in the same manner that Kramer's work is easy to digest. Whilst a biography such as Kannemeyer's *Leroux: 'n Lewe* is a thorough work, obviously the result of intensive research, it was found to be too meandering for the target audience of *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography*. On the other hand, Shapiro's *J.K. Rowling: The Wizard Behind Harry Potter* was felt to be somewhat insipid and shallow.

David Kramer – an unauthorised biography is made possible by the luxury of having being written in recent times, where it is deemed permissible to write a biography as a creative nonfiction text. Recognition should be given to the work of the Postmodernists in this regard, where actual fact is mixed with fiction. (Koos Prinsloo included a copy of a passport in the short story “Die Affair”, from the 1992 collection *Slagplaas*, as part of his narrative.)

1.2 Chapters of the Study

Tracing the writing of the biography, the thesis investigates:

- (1) Fiction versus Nonfiction
- (2) A Brief History of Biography Writing
- (3) Comparing Biographical Styles
- (4) Findings – The Process of Writing the Kramer Biography as a Creative Nonfiction text
 - (i) Problems of Research
 - (ii) The Bilingual Nature of the Text
 - (iii) Fictionalisation
 - (iv) Ethics
 - (v) Influences
 - (vi) Make-believe
 - (vii) Approach to the Biographical Subject
 - (viii) Intertextuality
 - (ix) Biography Writing

(5) Conclusion

1.3 Conclusion

This thesis traces the problems encountered when creating a (nonfiction) biography of David Kramer which is at times fictional.

2. FICTION VERSUS NONFICTION

2.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at how a text can be presented as nonfiction, but be written with elements of fiction. These passages are then seen as something which is neither fact nor fiction, but rather “creative nonfiction”.

A newspaper editorial may be seen as nonfiction, yet it is to a large extent but the opinion of the author, rather than fact. “Classic” nonfiction, such as a mathematics book, is a nonfiction which is only dry data. If this mathematics book claims that 2, 4, 6 are even numbers, then this claim can be disproved or substantiated. On the other hand, certain texts might be classified as creative nonfiction, because whilst they give the impression of being truth, there is an element of fiction about these works, that is, opinion, innuendo, titillation, and so on. These claims do not have to stand up to scientific testing.

This thesis would like to remind that there is a difference between “truth” and “nonfiction”. There is a popular saying: “truth or fiction”, which implies that nonfiction is the truth. This is sometimes true, in the sense that the data of the non-fictional work offered is neutral and only fact, as in the case of, say, a telephone directory. However, in many nonfiction texts, such as magazine articles, auto- and biographies, et cetera, the neutrality of the text is unwittingly or deliberately tarnished by the author’s desire to load the text with implied messages regarding the subject being written about.

It must be made clear that the thesis does not wish to address nonfiction presented as fiction, as in the case of Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (1966). Rather, it attempts to make a case that sometimes a text calls itself nonfiction, and presents itself as truth, but falls short of being absolute truth, and should be seen as something other than nonfiction: creative nonfiction. However, *In Cold Blood* is considered the originator of the nonfiction novel and the forerunner of the New Journalism movement. The importance of *In Cold Blood* must be recognised, and it is worth pausing a moment for a brief look at this work.

<http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/capote.htm> says the following about *In Cold Blood*:

American novelist, short story writer, and playwright. Capote gained international fame with his 'nonfiction novel' *In Cold Blood* (1966), an account of a real life crime in which an entire family was murdered by two sociopaths. The Louisiana-Mississippi-Alabama area provided the setting for much of Capote's fiction.

'Until one morning in mid-November of 1959, few Americans - in fact, few Kansans - had ever heard of Holcomb. Like the waters of river [sic], like the motorists on the highway, and like the yellow trains streaking down the Santa Fe tracks, drama, in the shape of exceptional happenings, had never stopped there.' (from *In Cold Blood*)

Increasing preoccupation with journalism formed the basis for the bestseller *In Cold Blood*, a pioneering work of documentary novel or 'nonfiction novel'. The work started from an article in *The New York Times*. It dealt with the murder of a wealthy family in Holcomb, Kansas.

(As far as Truman Capote goes, one might also consider texts by Norman Mailer, Tom Wolfe, Gay Talese, et al.)

In trying to establish where a piece of creative nonfiction might stand, Weber (1980:2) might be of some help, in that he is of the mind that there are more than one ways of presenting a piece, either as only fact, or a piece that imbues the text with mood, nuance:

Another way of defining the subject is by reference to Donald Pizer's distinction between two kinds of documentary narrative – one exploring a factual event simply as an event (documentary narrative), the other exploring it as meaning (documentary narrative art). Pizer uses William Manchester's *The Death of a President* as an example of the first, Capote's *In Cold Blood* as an example of the second. Manchester piles up factual detail but does not impose on it, or draw from it, significant themes; Capote, through selection, arrangement, emphasis, and other literary devices, discovers some meaning or theme in his factual materials.

In Cold Blood is then an example of the standard perceptions of fiction/nonfiction being questioned, and the notion of biography also raises its head here. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principals* (Little, et al, 1933:180) describes biography as:

[1.] The history of the lives of individual men, as a branch of literature. [2.] A written record of the life of an individual.

2.2 Background

This thesis is made up of two components: an unauthorised biography on the life and career of the South African musician David Kramer: *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography*. The biography is based on research as well as the author's imagination. The second part of the thesis addresses the question of the relationship between fact and

fiction in the Kramer biography. In certain texts the lines between nonfiction and fiction become blurred. Koos Prinsloo's *Slagplaas* (1992) is an example, in that whilst the text is presented as a short story, certain characters are in fact actual people, and events described are real events – the text is well-known for Prinsloo referring to the musician Johannes Kerkorrel as his “sogenaamde vriend die pop ster (supposed friend the popstar – author's translation)”, which was seen as unacceptable by Kerkorrel. Also, Prinsloo included photographs and pictures of identity documents in his writing. This thesis charges that the Kramer biography should be seen as a sub-category of nonfiction, that is, creative nonfiction.

2.3 Fiction, Nonfiction and Creative Nonfiction

With regards to the matter of writing the Kramer biography, the first problem encountered was in which category to place the foreseen text, seeing that it would be nonfiction, but with definite tones of fiction. It is too straightforward and one-dimensional to claim that a text is either truth or not, non-fiction or fiction. These shades of fiction are often driven by the notions of objectivity versus subjectivity. It is problematic when trying to pin down the concept of nonfiction. Root (2003:244) says the following about the term *nonfiction*:

The problem with ‘non-fiction’ [sic] is that it is a one-size-fits-all garment draped over artifacts requiring something tailored.

This thesis supports this argument, and further charges that only data which can be scientifically proven should be considered as true nonfiction. But what then of texts which are not only dry data? As Root points out (2003:245):

[...] the terminology [nonfiction – author’s note] itself is still under construction. Once generic distortions start to leak, people bring in anything that might conceivably hold water. ‘Literary nonfiction,’ ‘creative nonfiction,’ and ‘lyric essay’ are some of the makeshift semantic hybrids in current use [...] - Arthur Saltzman, ‘Preface’.

Root (2003:243) speaks of the term *creative nonfiction*, and cites works such as Peter Mayle’s *A Year in Provence* or Simon Winchester’s *The Professor and the Madman*. Creative nonfiction is a useful and accurate term for placing *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography*. The creative nonfiction Root speaks of refers to a text which is factual, but which reads as a piece of entertainment.

(i) Fiction

Chambers’s (sic) Etymological English Dictionary defines *fiction* as:

[...] *n.* a feigned or false story : a falsehood : a pretence: the novel as a branch of literature. – *adjs.* Fictional, imaginative, not restricted to fact ; pertaining to fiction [...]

Whilst it might seem harsh to label a text as *a falsehood*, these definitions support the argument that if something is not nonfiction (read: truth) then it is by default fiction (read: a lie). However, this might be too simplistic, and Currie’s thoughts might help. He

(1985:385) differentiates between fiction and nonfiction in the following manner: the former tells a story whilst nonfiction asserts. Furthermore, Currie notes that a sentence from a fictional text could also be found in a nonfiction text. The question is: is it the sentence or the context which makes a text fiction or nonfiction? Currie calls this the “Determination Principle” (1985:386).

(ii) Nonfiction

The Chambers Dictionary (10th edition, 2006) gives the following definition of nonfiction:

adj (of a literary work) without any deliberately fictitious element, purely factual.

Root (2003:243) airs his frustration at the inadequacy of any definition of the term *nonfiction*:

Most dictionaries claim that ‘*non-fiction*’ [sic] is simply everything that is not a more specific and circumscribed form of writing (*not* fiction) but none explain why all the other things it’s *not* (for example, also *not* drama and *not* poetry) aren’t included in the term [...].

It would seem then that to try to pin definitions on the words “fiction” or “nonfiction” would be a fruitless argument, seeing that it would be impossible to attempt to encapsulate everything about either of the two. Furthermore, this thesis argues that the two fields sometimes overlap, and that the modern reader quite readily accepts this.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/biography> lists these examples of nonfiction: almanac, user manual, biography, autobiography, statute, photograph, diagram, dictionary, films such as documentaries, journal, memoir, encyclopaedia, essay, history, journalism, letter, blueprint, literary criticism, diary, book report, scientific paper, textbook, travelogue, and so on. (Of course, these examples can sometimes have a fictive character, such as journals, memoirs or travelogues.)

Root (2003:246) has the following to say about nonfiction:

All literary genres essentially create representations of reality and require craft and design and discovery and process, but nonfiction is unique in that it alone is required by virtually unstated definition to apply those strategies and techniques to something that already exists. It's that preoccupation with factuality, with preexisting reality, with a world outside the writer's mind, that he or she has to interpret and represent, that separates it from the other 'three genres.' [Fiction, poetry and drama – author's note]

Root here appears to say that nonfiction deals with “pre-existing reality”, but before this he warns that, in the words of Mary Blew (2003:245):

The boundaries of nonfiction will always be fluid as water.
Mary Clearman Blew, 'The Art of the Memoir'

Thus it would seem that even the previously-thought stiff and unyielding nonfiction can be subtle and many-dimensional, and an example of this would be creative nonfiction texts.

Further, with regard to finding definitions for fiction and nonfiction, Currie (1985:1) seems to throw up his hands and confess that there can be no perfect definition which keeps the two genres apart, as they do at times overlap:

What distinguishes fiction from non-fiction [sic]? Seeking an answer, literary theorists have analysed the stylistic features characteristic of fiction and the genres into which works of fiction they may fall. But while stylistic or generic features may certainly count as evidence that a work is fiction rather than nonfiction, they cannot be definitive of fiction. For the author of nonfiction may adopt the conventions of fictional writing; and it is agreed on all hands that there are certain works of fiction which, considered merely as texts, might well be nonfiction.

(iii) Creative nonfiction

As the creative part of the study is a creative nonfictional biography, the thesis looks at the relatively new category of “creative nonfiction”. Gerard (1996:1) describes how the author and journalist Bob Reiss read his account of a recent trip to the Sudan to a gathered group of people. The events of the trip were real, but the texture of the text was fictive. Gerard labels this type of text as creative nonfiction, partly because the text reads like a mental movie. One *sees* the dusty plains of the Sudan, the bad roads, the armed rebels making deals about food which people stole, rioted for, suffered without. Perhaps it is the vivid way the weather is described, for example, which turns the Reiss text towards creative nonfiction.

Gerard (1996:5) uses the word *faction*, something between fact and fiction.

He presents five points as typical of creative nonfiction. His first point is (1996:7):

First, it has an apparent subject and a deeper subject. The apparent subject may be spectacular or mundane. Unlike in a feature article, it is only part of what we are interested in.

John Steinbeck's *The Log From the Sea of Cortez*, for instance, is the chronicle of a voyage in the Gulf of California. But it is also a meditation on the creative process [...].

The second point Gerard raises is (1996:8):

[...] partly because of the duality of the subject, such nonfiction is released from the usual journalistic requirement of *timeliness*: Long after the apparent subject ceases to be topical, the deeper subject and the art that expresses it remain vital. That doesn't mean it isn't triggered by today's headlines [...].

Thirdly (1996:9):

[...] creative nonfiction is narrative, it always tells a good story. 'So often it ends thirty minutes after it begins – something is happening in time,' Gutkind says. It takes advantage of such fictional devices as character, plot and dialogue. 'It moves,' Gutkind explains. 'It is action-orientated. Most good creative nonfiction is constructed in scenes.' And, he says, just as in a good short story or novel, 'there is always a magic moment. Your readers are waiting for that magic moment to occur, waiting for a change to occur, a lightbulb to flash, something to happen.'

Gerard's fourth point is (1996:10):

[...] creative nonfiction contains a sense of *reflection* on the part of the author. The underlying subject has been percolating through the writer's imagination for some time, waiting for the right outlet. It is *finished* thought.

And his fifth point is (1996:11):

[...] such nonfiction shows serious attention to the craft of writing. It goes far beyond the journalistic ‘inverted pyramid’ style – with interesting turns of phrase, fresh metaphors, lively and often scenic presentation, a shunning of clichés and obvious endings, a sense of control over nuance, accurate use of words, and a governing aesthetic sensibility.

2.4 Conclusion

Certain texts are neither absolute fiction nor nonfiction, as they contain elements of both, and should rather be thought of as creative nonfiction.

3. A BRIEF HISTORY OF BIOGRAPHY WRITING

3.1 Introduction

Biographies are quite diverse in length, approach, tone, level of serious study, and so on.

Just what constitutes a biography? Couser (2004:3) points out that even an obituary of a few words could be thought of as having tones of biography:

Debra Taylor observes that ‘despite the fact that the obituary is such a vital component of the modern newspaper, it is not a highly valued form of journalism’ (2001:668). And precisely because it is seen as mere ‘journalism’ – at least in the USA – it is infrequently regarded as a significant form of biography. Yet the obituary is undoubtedly the most widely disseminated life-writing genre and thus the most widely consumed by the general public.

Continuing the theme of how few words are required to create a biography, Benton (2009:47) quotes AS Byatt, who asks:

What are the Gospels but a series of varying attempts at the art of biography?

3.2 History of Biography

The first known biographies were those which had been commissioned by the rulers of ancient Egypt, Assyria, Mesopotamia, and Babylonia. These biographies were not written with pen and ink, but rather gauged and chiselled into clay or stone tablets, as can be seen in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, which Hamilton (2007:13) describes as:

[...] recorded in cuneiform on clay tablets in ancient Sumer [...]

Another type of biography to consider, as Salami (2001:69) points out, is biography and historiography in an oral tradition.

Hamilton (p.21) says that biography which we are now familiar with was developed by the ancient Greeks, as in Plutarch's *Life of Alexander* and *Life of Agesilaos*, where the texts had two functions: to commemorate, and to give insight into the "soul in its adventures through life". These Classical texts were simply known as *lives*. The word *biographia* was first seen in Damascus's *Life of Isodorus*, which was written in the 5th century AD. These biographies differ from the historiographical genre as they do not simply document history, but rather they praise the subject. Perhaps the most important impact of the Greek biographers was that they developed the modern idea of the *person*. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/biography>.)

Oduntan (2001:118) makes the point that biography is sometimes used to describe history. He differentiates between biography and historiography. He describes the so-called father of history, Herodotus, as (p.118)

[...] the acknowledged pioneer of the field [...] who ignored the narrow, '...centric' approach of his age, and included Egypt, India, Babylon, Arabia and Persia in his histories.'

As in the blurring of the lines between fiction and nonfiction, it would seem, according to Oduntan that biography and history also blur into something new, that is, historiography.

Returning to the development of biography and its chief players, of Herodotus Meiggs says (1968:16):

[...] he was sometimes regarded as little more than a romantic liar: but closer study of his work against the backdrop of his times has redressed the balance and justified his title. [the father of history – author's note]

Regarding the biographical aspects to Herodotus's work, Meiggs says (p.16):

Herodotus was fascinated by the interplay of divine and human forces, revealed in the rise and fall of great characters.

This is an important aspect of biography writing, the relation and identifying of the author to the subject: his/her desire to explain a life, at even such an early time as Herodotus's.

The genres of biography and historiography merged somewhat during the Roman Empire, probably due to the influence of government. This is evidenced by Tacitus's *History and his Annals* containing very similar data to Suetonius's *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*. (Hamilton: 2007)

Hamilton (p.52) says that during the Middle Ages there was a decline in the biography genre. Most works of knowledge and records were attributed to the Roman Catholic Church. Biographies of martyrs, saints and elevated members of the Church were written by priests and monks, such as Einhard's documentation of the life of Charlemagne. By the late Middle Ages the texts became more focused on kings and knights, rather than the Church. Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* displays a good example of a biography from this era. Following this time, an element of Humanism began to creep into literature, peaking during the Renaissance. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/biography>.) Nicolson (1933:19) says that English biographies during this time, such as *Life of Guthlac* by Felix and *Life of St Willibrord* by Alcuin were

[...] a bad tradition. The centre of interest was never the individual but always the institution [...]

During the late 18th century biography would reached its 'golden age'. This was when the words *biography* and *autobiography* entered the English lexicon.

Hamilton (p.95) writes that the romantic biographer Jean Jacques Rousseau's *The Confessions* (1781-88) exploited the point of view and the confessional mode.

Benjamin Franklin would provide the archetype for the American success story. His 1791 work, *Autobiography*, would remain an influential form of biographical writing. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Autobiography_of_Benjamin_Franklin.)

By the middle of the 19th century the distinction between mass biography and literary biography had been formed. There was now a division made between high and middle-class culture. As with other genres, biography became more popular and available due to new publishing technologies. Hamilton states (p.312) that by the 20th century biographies were becoming more a part of high culture, as they were seen to be describing great people and their place in history as well as their noble causes. However, with the advent of periodicals and mass-produced texts the emphasis was now on self-made men and women. Hamilton also mentions (p.169) that film was an important medium for biography.

Autobiographies of the 20th century sometimes served as a form of therapy. In this thesis emotionally charged autobiographies such as Kiedis's *Scar Tissue* and Fraser's *My Father's House – a Memoir of Incest and of Healing* will be offered as examples where the author strays from hard fact, using Tom Wolfe's (not to be confused with Geoffrey Wolff, elsewhere in this thesis) so-called *saturation technique*, in order to reveal an emotional status quo. This makes these autobiographies, as far as the thesis is concerned, creative nonfiction.

Manovich (2001:220) mentions a new facet to autobiography, that is, the recent phenomenon of online portals such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and so on, where someone might upload photographs, a blog, video clips, et cetera, to chronicle a part of his or her life.

With regards to fictive writing which is based on fact, Hutcheon (1988) writes of a *historiographic metafiction* when a text is based on, or at least refers to, historic events. For Hutcheon such texts could only have been born from a postmodern environment. She argues that (1988:105)

[...] historical writing and historical novel writing influenced each other mutually. Macaulay's debt to Scott was an overt one, as was Dicken's [sic] to Carlyle in *A Tale of Two Cities*.

In these words she seems to be addressing the notion of intertextuality (intertextuality is discussed further in 5.9), and this train of thought is heard once again when she cites Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* and Salman Rushdie's *Shame* as examples. She says that Ondaatje's English patient found himself in World War 2, and the course of the narrative had to be true to the realities of that war. In the case of Rushdie, he had to be true to the Indian and Pakistani history in which his work is set.

Hutcheon continues (1988:106):

Historiographic metafiction, for example, keeps distinct its formal auto-representation and its historical context, and in so doing problematizes the very possibility of historical knowledge. Because there is no reconciliation, no dialectic here – just unresolved contradiction [...] To Aristotle (1982, 1,451a-b), the historian could speak only of what has happened, of the particulars of the past; the poet, on the other hand, spoke of what could or might happen and so could deal more with universals. [...] Nevertheless, many historians since have used the techniques of fictional representation to create imaginative versions of their historical, real worlds. [...] The postmodern novel has done the same, and the reverse. It is part of the postmodernist stand to confront the paradoxes of fictive/historical representation, the particular/the general, and the present/the past.

And this confrontation is itself contradictory, for it refuses to recuperate or dissolve either side of the dichotomy, yet it is more than willing to exploit both.

History and fiction have always been notoriously porous genres, of course. At various times both have included in their elastic boundaries such forms as the travel tale and various versions of what we now call sociology.

For the second of the Courtney novels, *The Sound of Thunder* (1966), Wilbur Smith finds a treasure chest of information for his novel, but is also restricted by the very Anglo-Boer War history he is tapping in to. This novel is a work of fiction, but must adhere to the realities of the Anglo-Boer War, that is, dates, places, events, and such. This novel straddles two worlds then, the reality of the war, and the reality being created by Smith.

Hutcheon also has this to say regarding history meeting fiction (1988:108):

Historiographic metafiction, in deliberate contrast to what I would call such late modernist radical metafiction, attempts to demarginalize the literary through confrontation with the historical, and it does so both thematically and formally.

For example, Christa Wolf's *No Place on Earth* is about the fictionalized meeting of two historical figures, dramatist Heinrich von Kleist and poet Karoline von Günderode: 'The claim that they met: a legend that suits us. The town of Winkel, on the Rhine, we saw it ourselves.' The 'we' of the narrating voice, in the present, underlines the metafictional historical reconstruction on the level of form. But on the thematic level too, life and art meet, for this is the theme of the novel, as Wolf's Kleist tries to break down the walls between 'literary fantasies and the actualities of the world.'

Hutcheon expands her thoughts on the line between fiction and history (1988:113):

'The binary opposition between fiction and fact is no longer relevant: in any differential system, it is the assertion of the space *between* the entities that matters.' Paul de Man

Perhaps. But historiographic metafiction suggests the continuing relevance of such an opposition, even if it be a problematic one. Such novels both install and then blur the line between fiction and history.

One might consider FA Venter's *Koning se Wingerd* (King's Vineyard) (1984) and its origins: *Koning se Wingerd* is often referred to as a Biblical novel as it is largely based on a Biblical story. In this novel the outcome is already known by the reader – there is little or no room for fabrication or other leeway. What is it then that the reader is experiencing? A sort of beginner's guide to the Bible? Where does the line between Bible and novel lie?

Hutcheon once more (1988:114):

First, historiographic metafiction plays upon the truth and lies of the historical record. In novels like *Foe*, *Burning Water*, or *Famous Last Words*, certain known historical details are deliberately falsified in order to foreground the possible mnemonic failures of recorded history and the constant potential for both deliberate and inadvertent error. The second difference lies in the way in which postmodern fiction actually uses detail or historical data. Historical fiction [...] usually incorporates and assimilates these data in order to lend a feeling of verifiability [...] to the fictional world. Historiographic metafiction incorporates, but rarely assimilates such data.

The unauthorised biography of this study will at times refer to the times it found itself in, as it has to be true to this reality, and will use the model of the historiographical writers in this regard.

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter the history of biography writing is traced, from when the lives of important men were gauged into clay or stone to modern day mass-produced paperback biographies. It is found that biography has a long tradition, and has blossomed in the twentieth century. It is impossible to sum up biography in one easy-to-read definition, as there are so many different biographies available. That being said, biography writing is now a recognised twentieth century literary form.

4. COMPARING BIOGRAPHICAL STYLES

4.1 Introduction

Two decisions had to be made regarding the Kramer biography. Firstly, to write it as a sometimes fictitious text or only based on fact, and secondly, the texture of the text had to be decided on – would it be an easy, “paperback” read, or a synthesis of literary criticism and biography, as seen in Kannemeyer’s Etienne Leroux biography (2008)? Also, this chapter looks at conjecturing: when words and phrases such as *perhaps*, *according to*, *it seems*, *maybe*, et cetera, were used in the studied texts, pretending that they were telling the truth, but actually they were factless statements disguised as fact.

4.2 Finding an Appropriate Style

Before the Kramer biography was attempted, various other biographies were referred to for inspiration as well as stylistic examples. These were mostly biographies chronicling the lives and careers of pop and rock musicians, as the subject of the biography of this thesis, David Kramer, is himself a musician. They varied in length, level of seriousness, style and attitude towards their subject. Some tried to reveal the “real” character of their subject with serious, respectful interest, whilst others were more titillating. Yet others, such as Smith’s Kylie Minogue biography, *Kylie – Confidential* (2003) were light-hearted “fluff” not to be taken serious – this is not a criticism, more an observation. This raised the very important question right at the outset of writing the Kramer biography, of what the nature of it would be – would it be light-hearted reading, or a serious academic

investigation? Early on it was decided that the text had to be an easy read. If this meant that it would be thought of as fluff, then that would be an acceptable criticism. However, it was hoped that the text would be more than just vacuous drivel, that whilst being entertaining it would also offer insight into the life and career of its subject. It was further felt that it would and should not be necessary to include racy passages.

Once the decision was made to write the biography as a creative nonfiction text, the focus became clearer. However, the texture, the “feel”, of the text still had to be decided on.

Some of the texts looked at were autobiographies, and often these texts were a result of the author wanting to set the record straight, as seen in the title of the Shaquille O’Neal autobiography *Shaq Talks Back* (2001). Other autobiographies went even further, purging resentment in a manner which was potentially uncomfortable for the reader. Fraser’s *My Father’s House – a Memoir of Incest and of Healing* (1987) was such a work. Others were more an *assemblage* of photographs, captions and paragraphs than biographies or autobiographies *per se*, as in Baltin’s *From The Inside: Linkin Park’s Meteora* (2004).

Kannemeyer, in his work *Leroux: ’n Lewe* (2008), supplies a useful foreword, in which he describes his decision-making process during the writing of the biography: his motivation, methodology, and what his agenda was, namely to write a synthesis of biography and literary critique.

The motivation for writing the Kramer biography was a desire to champion someone who shared the same hometown and similar experiences as the author, to trumpet the delight of someone making his dreams come true. Also, there was a frustration at not finding any Kramer biography on the library shelves. This biography hopes to offer interested readers some information regarding Kramer.

Apart from describing Kramer's life and career, it was also the texture of life in Kramer and the author's hometown of Worcester that was to be illustrated – the charm and frustrations the place brought upon its inhabitants. Here JM Coetzee's *Boyhood – Scenes from Provincial Life* (1997) was an inspiration.

Returning to the Kannemeyer biography of Etienne Leroux (2008): in his foreword he mentions problems he encountered, such as the fact that his subject rarely dated his letters. The problem that the Kramer biography faced was the lack of information, as Kramer was not prepared to share information, refusing to partake in the biography. Therefore, this unauthorised biography had to find information elsewhere, and at times “link the dots”. This was a large factor in the decision to write a creative nonfiction text. Information was gleaned from the internet, interviews the author had conducted, newspaper and magazine articles, the body of Kramer's work, and tapping into the author's memory of life as a boy in Worcester (and South Africa) in the sixties, seventies and eighties.

Another problem was the question of ethics – the author felt extremely uncomfortable about snooping into another’s life, especially since Kramer had made it clear during a telephone conversation that he did not wish to assist in an authorised biography. He did say that the author was “welcome to write” such a biography, but it was felt that this was less of a go-ahead than a grudging acceptance that there was little Kramer could do to stop the process. Hence the text steers well clear of any “dirty laundry”. (Not that any was found.)

Other than the technical problem Kannemeyer faced due to Leroux often not dating his correspondence, Kannemeyer (2008) speaks of his relationship with Leroux. The relationship between Kramer and the author was not intimate – Kramer was a few years ahead of the author at school. The author and Kramer saw one another in passing mostly, with various mutual friends and friends-of-friends filling the gap between author and subject. For example, the author was friends with Mark Jones, the youngest son of Reverend Jones, whilst Mark’s older brother and sister were on friendly terms with John and David Kramer. This led to the two separate groups sometimes overlapping, as in the sharing of the loft above Reverend Jones’s garage for get-togethers. There were other shared experiences – school, teachers, games, and so on – of growing up in the small town of Worcester that the author wanted to recreate. It was felt that this small-town ambience was an experience shared by many future readers, and it would be a pleasant charm to share and reminisce about.

Kannemeyer (2008) declares that his biography is not in the least a psychological study of Leroux, that he was constantly aware of the difficulty of trying to reach the subconscious of another and how problematic it is to portray this in a written work. *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography* encountered similar difficulties, and it was decided not to attempt to present the “real” David Kramer, as this David Kramer is not known to the author. However, the text does at times attempt to show the inner mechanics of the man, his moods and feelings, in an attempt to construct Kramer as an artist, and also as a man moving through his life, with its ups and downs.

Two works were studied but rejected, with regards to an emotional dimension being revealed: Fraser’s *My Father’s House – A Memoir of Incest and of Healing* and Kiedis’s *Scar Tissue*.

(i) Fraser - *My Father’s House – A Memoir of Incest and of Healing*

Sylvia Fraser was a Canadian woman, a teenager in the 1950’s, a star student, and leader of the cheerleading squad at school. As an adult she worked as a reporter. In her 1987 memoir *My Father’s House – A Memoir of Incest and of Healing*, Fraser seems to use the text as a healing catharsis, and it is important for her that her opinions and feelings be aired. At times she describes the traumatic events in a novel-like manner. This allows her to load this nonfiction text with emotion one might expect from in fiction (1987:20):

I stand in front of my vanity mirror, examining myself with Sharon Battersea’s merciless eye. My hair has been twisted into bona fide curls, even tied with a yellow ribbon. My bright-penny self, newly buffed and polished, stares back at me, and yet, and yet ... A spot clouds the mirror. I rub. It grows larger. I scrub

harder. Now I see a smudge where my face used to be. For an instant, it turns into a girl who looks like Magda, with thumbprint bruises and fangs for teeth.

At other times she is more direct regarding her sexual relationship with her father. However, Fraser employs the technique of writing these passages in italics, as though this will create some distance from her, and replicate the separate character she had created for herself to be during the times when her father molested her (1987:10):

I lie naked on my daddy's bed, clinging to the covers. His sweat drips on me. I don't like his wet-uhms. His wet-uhms splashes on me. The scroll on my daddy's headboard looks like my mother's lips, scolding: 'Don't ever let me dirty dirty catch you!' I try to count my pennies but my mind gets frightened and goes away like when the big boys at Beechnut playground push you too high on a swing and you scream to get down. I'm afraid to complain because daddy won't love me won't love me won't love me.

In this work, she is finally allowed to be an equal to her father, in the sense that she now also has a *voice*, just like he has, and she can shout him down, as an equal.

As the work is a memoir, Fraser doesn't need to be scientific or "[...] substantiated by positive knowledge or proof" (www.thefreedictionary.com/opinion). The work may be as biased as she wishes to be, and in fact, a work such as this seems to require the unabashed selfish version of the teller. However, the question then arises: just how much nonfiction is this text? The fact that the events are told in the first-person seems to heighten the feeling that this is the *truth*, but is this truth really truth which will be able to withstand serious query? Even though it is written as creative nonfiction, it should still be provable truth in order to be nonfiction.

It was felt that this type of text was too intense, too uncomfortable a read, and would be inappropriate to use as a model for describing Kramer's life and career. This would be unnecessarily shocking.

(ii) Kiedis (with Larry Sloman) – *Scar Tissue*

Anthony Kiedis, the singer for the Red Hot Chili (sic) Peppers, writes his tell-all autobiography, in which his drug misuse takes up a large part of the text. Kiedis (2004:391):

I was high, and blood was leaking out of my arm, and now I had to grab the needle through my skin and pull it out from the inside lest it get released into my bloodstream. I managed to get it out, but my next dilemma was that I had no heroin to come down from this coke with. I ended up drinking the entire contents of my minibar [...] and finally passed out. Always, you wake up to an unpleasant memory and an unpleasant body and your spirit is reduced to a pile of dirty ashes residing somewhere inside of your ass.

Kiedis (2004:164):

The more Jennifer got into heroin, the easier it got for me to get into the house, because she needed a coconspirator [sic] to cop with, and I needed her money. She didn't mind me doing the dope, because when I'd do that, I was calm and we could actually be together and melt in each other's arms and nod out watching old black-and-white movies at four in the morning, enmeshed in the blissful, deadly euphoria of the opium. But she absolutely hated it when I was shooting the cocaine. Then I'd turn into a freak and disappear. Of course, I never wanted to shoot just heroin. So when we were shooting heroin in her room, I'd sneak out to do a hit of coke. But she was the total eagle-eye.

'No, you're not. Give me the coke. Give me the syringe. You're not shooting coke!'

I came up with these horrible and deceptive ways of getting high on coke. By then my hair was so long and matted that I'd slide syringes up into the undercarriage of my hairdo and consent to a full-body pat-down. I'd previously hidden the coke in a cereal box in the kitchen, so I'd rush downstairs and shoot up before Jennifer or her sister or her mom came in.

Here we find Anthony Kiedis the loser – having to stay with his girlfriend and her mother, as he has no place else to live. As the reader follows his exploits, he or she witnesses Kiedis falling ever more into a black hole of drug abuse. He speaks of *the blissful, deadly euphoria of the opium* (p.391), and the phrase contains two opposite notions, which is possibly a key to understanding his addict-mentality: the drugs are deadly, yes, but they also bring an irresistible bliss. This gives the reader an insight into Kiedis's mechanics, and makes this gushing of self-loathing understandable, and at times one even finds oneself having empathy and sympathy for him. Of course, when he repeatedly breaks his sobriety it taxes the reader's patience and emotions.

The function of this text is, it seems, to be a vehicle for Kiedis to exorcise his demons, a Sylvia Plath-like all-revealing purge. Kiedis mentions demons a few times in the text (2004:334):

That wasn't the first time I had experienced interactions with spirits while I was doing drugs. One time during this era of relapsing, I came back to my house in the middle of the night, pockets full of drugs, ready to be the mad scientist. I was fiddling through my pockets to get my keys when I heard this crazy scream. I figured it was somebody I knew who was on the balcony screaming at me like a crazy witch. But I didn't see anybody. I stepped back from the house and said, 'Hello? Anybody there?' Again I heard that horrifying scream. I looked up on the gable above my bedroom and saw a giant hawk sitting there, staring right down at me, screaming his lungs out in this tortured human voice.

I thought that this guy did not want me to do what I was doing. And if I didn't stop it, I would probably die. [...] When you're using drugs, you're driven by this mystical black energy, a force inside you that just won't quit. And the weaker you get, the more you feed into that energy, the more it fucks with you. When your spirit becomes dark and your lifestyle becomes dark, your existence is susceptible to infiltration by dark spirits. [...] I remember when Hillel died and I was just getting clean, I had a dream lying in my bed next to Ione. It was one of those horribly vivid half-awake, half-asleep dreams. All this terrifying energy came flying into my bedroom along the top of my ceiling. There were demons and goblins and ghouls and creatures, a full-assortment platter of scary motherfuckers. I could tell that they were coming to fuck with me, to say, 'Okay, we did our job on your friend, now we've come for you.' At first I was like 'I'm not having it, you guys, you come to the wrong house.' As I was putting up this psychic fight, the granddaddy of all dark forces, this vast dark angel, came flying in and encompassed the entire ceiling of my room.

Also (2004:366):

[...] I had a dream in which I was driving at four-thirty in the morning, the darkest hour of the night. [...] then out of nowhere, a hand came out and, whoosh, grabbed on to the steering wheel and started fighting me for control of the car. I looked over to see who the person in the seat next to me was, but he was all slouched down with a hat covering his face, so I couldn't make out the demonic person. We kept driving, and I became terrified of what I was about to see. Then we drove under a streetlight, and the light illuminated the face of the intruder. And it was me.

These two works are autobiographies, and are therefore allowed this intensely intimate texture. Whilst one would expect a biography, on the other hand, to be less free in its melodrama, the interesting thing for the author of this thesis was how the autobiography can at times reflect the emotions of its readers, and also the times the reader finds him/herself in. In this regard Roberts (2002:58) adds:

[...] autobiography connects with broader questions; it is a ‘microcosmic version’ of a wider crisis, which it represents and articulates: ‘Autobiographical consciousness, for example, has been held up as a mode of healthy self-awareness which could heal some of the wounds of the nineteenth-century spirit.’ (Marcus 1995:14).

However, it was felt that that a biography of Kramer should not be so revealing, that neither the “microcosmic version” (Kramer) nor the “wider crisis” should have this potentially tacky slant. Kannemeyer (2008:11) refers to Keynes, who states that:

Permissive biography has become more common and will doubtless become even more so.

Be that as it may, it was still felt that the above two autobiographies were too graphic in nature to serve as models for the intended Kramer biography.

In writing the fictitious Kramer biography, other known examples of biographies were looked at. Certain elements were accepted whilst others were discarded.

The first consideration was that David Kramer would not agree to an authorised biography. This meant that certain information would not be forthcoming, but it also meant that there would now be a freedom to depict this life and career with some *carte blanche*, within the boundaries of decency and law. Whilst the lack of data was hampering, the author now had the luxury of writing within a fictive framework. A decision had to be made as to what was to be included and what not, in order to give a *life* to the reader that would be a fair shadow of the real David Kramer. Ironically, sometimes

the very straying away from real data, when using the process of fictionalisation, made it easier to create a version of Kramer which the author felt was a fair indication of the man.

As for presenting a real person's life with a certain amount of fancy, Eggar's at times subjective text, *Shania Twain – the biography*, was a useful starting point. Eggar (2005:161) writes of Shania Twain:

She is the wolf, and the wolf is her. Her very soul manifested in animal form.

This highly romanticised, narrative text verges on the poetic. Of course, Eggar may choose to write what he wants, in a style of his choice. It is, after all, a very subjective process. Pelser (2001:20) writes about the subjective nature of biographies:

‘Between the biographer and his subject,’ writes Edel [author's translation] (1957:7), ‘there is established from the outset a significant relationship [...] It is a relationship deeply intimate and highly subjective.’

Eggar's passage is an interesting one, as it is completely removed from what one expects from a nonfiction description, delving deeply into Wolff's *saturation reporting*, perhaps even beyond. Here it would seem that the biographer wishes to display not an event, such as a live concert, or even an abstract characteristic of Shania Twain, but rather her soul. Whilst this places the author on unsteady ground, it also gives him *carte blanche* – if he were to declare something (extremely) negative about Twain, her libel suit might well be unsuccessful, as he is surely allowed an opinion. If she, in his opinion, were a psychotic

monster, then he should be able to express his opinion without repercussion, as his opinion is not a fact which can be proven correct or incorrect, hence not libellous.

Whilst consciously often straying away from the purely factual, and creating a subjective text, such as the Shania Twain biography, the author was careful not to ignore reality. The fictive passages had to, of course, still be in tune with reality – names and dates of album releases had to be true to life, for example. Furthermore, a conscious decision was made at the start of the project to avoid the murky waters of a warts-and-all exposé, or, on the other hand, a text which attempted to make an icon out of Kramer.

4.3 Biography versus Propaganda

An example of a warts-and-all text was *Mötley Crüe – The Dirt*. This text was rejected, as it was felt that this biography strays too far into the area of presenting a cartoon rock ‘n’ roll bad boy image of the group, and becomes implausible. The rock group, Mötley Crüe, (2001) write their collective memoirs and the reader might at times wonder whether the truth is being presented, or whether the text is guilty of myth-making (2001:62):

Vince Neil: ‘We’d scrounge up enough money to buy an egg burrito from Noggles. Then we’d bite the end off and stick our dicks into the warm meat to cover up the smell of pussy so that our girlfriends didn’t know we were fucking anything stupid or drunk enough to get into Tommy’s van.’

This bragging is seen again and again throughout the text (2001:90):

Vince Neil: ‘Circling above hundreds of thousands of kids in a helicopter [...] with a bottle of Jack in my left hand, a bag of pills in my right hand, and a blond head bobbing up and down in my lap [...]

However, alongside this rather dubious passage, the book offers passages which seem so sensitive and potentially extremely private, that the reader might be tempted to believe everything offered as being true throughout the text. (2001:87)

Tom Zutaut, speaking about his time spent with Nikki Sixx, Mötley Crüe guitarist: ‘As time passed, however, the house kept getting creepier. I’d drop in and see *The Necronomicon*, a black-magic spell book, lying on the table. Nikki was getting heavily into satanic stuff and wanted to call the record *Shout with the Devil*. [...] ‘I’m kind of freaked out,’ Lita said. ‘Weird things are happening in the apartment.’

‘What do you mean?’ I asked, looking around at the freshly painted pentagrams and Gothic paintings that Nikki had on the walls and floor.’

Mötley Crüe – The Dirt also makes use of photographs in its myth-making exercise (2001:97):



This photograph of Tommy Lee is a good example of the book not telling a neutral, clean truth anymore. The authors are now more interested in the not-so-subtle hijacking of the text in order to shape the reader's opinion and emotions. Whilst the narrative is riddled with biased recollections, the reader accepts this, because to a large extent this is what the reader expected and in fact desired from this book, *Mötley Crüe – The Dirt*. The book goes one step further away from classic nonfiction by using images as a propaganda tool, as seen in the above photograph.

Whilst the photograph is more than likely true, not altered or “Photoshopped” in any manner, it is quite a loaded image, and one may refer to John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (1972) to understand the implicit value of this image. This photograph was possibly

selected for the work as it glamorises the group, presenting a decadence which would make the group rock stars in the clichéd sense: sex, drugs and rock ‘n’ roll.

Berger (1972:131) writes:

The state of being envied is what constitutes glamour. And publicity is the process of manufacturing glamour. [...] It is important here not to confuse publicity with the pleasure or benefits to be enjoyed from the things it advertises. Publicity is effective precisely because it feeds upon the real. Clothes, food, cars, cosmetics, baths, sunshine are real things to be enjoyed in themselves. Publicity begins by working on a natural appetite for pleasure. But it cannot offer the real object of pleasure and there is no convincing substitute for a pleasure in that pleasure's own terms. The more convincingly publicity conveys the pleasure of bathing in a warm, distant sea, the more the spectator-buyer will become aware that he is hundreds of miles away from that sea and the more remote the chance of bathing in it will seem to him. This is why publicity can never really afford to be about the product or opportunity it is proposing to the buyer who is not yet enjoying it. Publicity is never a celebration of a pleasure-in-itself. Publicity is always about the future buyer. It offers him an image of himself made glamorous by the product or opportunity it is trying to sell. The image then makes him envious of himself as he might be. Yet what makes this self-which-he-might-be enviable? The envy of other. Publicity is about social relations, not objects. Its promise is not of pleasure, but of happiness: happiness as judged from the outside by others. The happiness of being envied is glamour. [...] Being envied is a solitary form of reassurance. It depends precisely upon not sharing your experience with those who envy you. You are observed with interest but you do not observe with interest – if you do, you will become less enviable. In this respect the envied are like bureaucrats; the more impersonal they are, the greater the illusion (for themselves and for others) of their power. The power of the glamorous resides in their supposed happiness [...] it is this which explains the absent, unfocused look of so many glamour images. They look out *over* the looks of envy which sustain them.

This perhaps explains in part why the subject of the auto- and biographies mentioned in this thesis have been depicted as larger-than-life, an important part of the deviation from

nonfiction to creative nonfiction. It seems that there is an unavoidable icon-making in the very act of writing a biography, in that putting someone's life into the printed word implies that this life is worth writing about, that there should be a record of this life. Further, even when a biography is slanted against the subject, this negativity seems to have some star-making value. It makes the reader lose his/her sense of empathy with the subject, as the subject seems to be reduced to merely a picture, ink on paper, and not at all a human being.

The importance of this above-mentioned passage is that Berger mentions the notion of things being "perceived differently," as perception plays a part in the thesis's argument, because before the thesis can criticise a nonfiction for not being pure nonfiction, it must firstly establish just what nonfiction is, and, as Berger argues, our perception is often clouded. When Gertrude Stein claims that "rose is a rose is a rose", this is not quite right. (Stein wrote the sentence "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose" as part of the poem "Sacred Emily", which appeared in the 1922 book *Geography and Plays*. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rose_is_a_rose_is_a_rose_is_a_rose]) Using the Berger model, there are other things which come into play when we see or consider this rose. Our perception is constantly being clouded by the sum of our experiences. On an implicit level a rose could mean romance to one person but betrayal to another (the thorn which draws blood). So by the same token it would be dangerous to make a Stein-like declaration, that nonfiction is nonfiction is nonfiction. Just as the image of a rose has varying values to those who see it, so too do the words and sentences of non-fictive works have different values - different levels of *truth*.

Text and images can be slippery and carry implicit values far more potent than the explicit, and so too can film. Imagine a television commercial: we see an attractive young woman smiling at us. The voice-over speaks only six words: “Korean Air; now you’re really flying.” The image we see has nothing to do with travelling, flying, or Korean Air, other than that the woman looks Asian and the clothes she is wearing could be a uniform. But what is important is that the image is attractive. Now the viewer of the advertisement associates pleasure, desire, with the airline company called Korean Air.

Thus the image of Tommy Lee is not merely a depiction of him – it is the mood, the ambiance, which the group wishes to present. And yet, how to explain to a being from another planet that the picture is of a man, yes, but actually it’s (albeit somewhat contrived) *about* not giving a damn? A picture, as the saying goes, speaks a thousand words, and this picture is perhaps more of an advertising job for the group than an instrument to give information – it is the information beyond the frame of the photograph which is the more potent.

Once it was decided to present the life of Kramer, it was felt that it would be best to tell the story of his life using the technique of creative nonfiction: that is, telling the truth as though it was a story – a vivid narrative, rather than a mere list of facts.

4.4 Examples of conjecturing in the Kramer biography:

It must be made clear that the following is not an exercise in Critical Discourse Analysis (cf Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak [2007]), but rather it is a close reading with regard to where subjunctive markers such as *could*, *perhaps*, and so on, are used. These markers change sentences from the indicative mode (John is walking) or imperative mode (John, walk!) to the subjunctive (John might walk), where John's walking is now a possibility, not hard fact. When these subjunctive markers are used, the text moves from the domain of the factual to uncertainty, and the result of this technique is important to this thesis.

(i) Guralnick – *Careless Love – The Unmaking of Elvis Presley*

Guralnick (1999:74) writes:

But it was his relationship with Juliet Prowse, his co-star and Frank Sinatra's unofficial fiancée, with which his growing entourage was most intrigued at this time. Elvis made a big point of withdrawing to his dressing room with her every day, and before long the guys started banging on the door and yelling that Frank was on his way. One day Sinatra actually did show up, but Elvis emerged unruffled and unmussed after first telling Red to go fuck himself when he heard the same tiresome message once again. They were intrigued by Elvis' stories of Juliet's athletic limberness, Lamar perhaps most of all. 'He said Juliet liked to grab her ankles and spread her legs real wide. But then [later] he said it about another girl, too. I said, 'I thought that was Juliet.' And he said, 'Well, a lot of 'em do different things like that.'

This paragraph uses the word *perhaps*, whereby the reader is told that Elvis's friend, Lamar, was perhaps the most intrigued by Elvis's stories of his relationship with Juliet Prowse, but this is not at all verified. In fact, apart from the text being rather cagey about presenting this information as hard fact, even the incident itself is in question, as when

confronted about this by the speaker, Elvis is rather vague, in a manner which implies that he himself was lying, or at best embellishing the truth. Furthermore, the passage has more the flavour of titillation rather than academic fact. This titillation was an important consideration whilst preparing for the writing of *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography*, as there was a desire to satisfy the modern readers's needs. Ultimately, though, this type of titillation was rejected.

David Kramer – an unauthorised biography uses the word *perhaps* in the following manner (p.86):

The holidays were similar to past years, but perhaps a bit subdued as the boys ticked off the days that they had left before they had to report to the army.

(ii) Welch – *The Secret Life of Peter Gabriel*

It (now) seems is the phrase looked at in this example. When Welch speaks of Peter Gabriel's motivation, his text is guesswork, but it is presented as reliable truth (1998:79):

In retrospect it now seems as if Peter was deliberately trying to offer the last word in overkill with *The Lamb* [The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway – author's note], before retiring gracefully from the battlefield to seek pastures new.

The words *it seems* are useful words for the Kramer biography, as with this phrase responsibility for a statement can be shifted away from the author.

Chambers's (sic) Etymological English dictionary defines *seem(s)* as:

[...] to appear to be [...] the evidence shows [...] or suggests [...]

One could argue that *seems* and *appears* have the same meaning. Both words are very close to the truth, or at least a truth which the speaker/writer believes to be true. However, these two words still are allowed the leeway of not having to be 100% correct – if the statement is later proved to be incorrect, the speaker/writer can apologise with nothing more than a shrug – this was simply the way the situation appeared to him/her. To refer to a court of law again, any statement containing the phrase *it seems/seemed* will be rejected by the court. Even an expert would have to be more definite – it would either be yes or no, when giving his/her input. There would have to be a conclusion to the question raised by the court, and the words *it seems/seemed* don't bring finality.

David Kramer – an unauthorised biography uses the phrase *it seemed* in the following manner (p.96):

Something else that would have an effect on David was the virtually exclusive use of Afrikaans in the military and the realisation that when he spoke Afrikaans, it seemed as though he could become another person. It was ironic, because whilst he saw it as the language of the oppressor, it was also the tongue of the everyday-person, a 'real' person, and this language seemed to speak for those who were disenfranchised due to apartheid and/or poverty.

(iii) Smith - *Kylie – Confidential*

In the Kylie Minogue biography, *Kylie – Confidential*, Smith (2003:23) describes Kylie Minogue singing the Gerry Goffin/Carol King-written hit for Little Eva (incidentally also a hit for Grand Funk Railroad), “The Loco-Motion”, as follows:

The band knew how to play it, and Kylie knew all the words – a legacy, no doubt, of singing it a million times into her hairbrush [...]

This rather anecdotal text takes some liberty. How does Smith know that Kylie Minogue sang into her hairbrush as a teenage girl? However, this is presented as, if not pure fact, then at least as quite possibly the way it was. Smith inserts the words *no doubt* as a mechanism which bridges Smith’s imagination and the facts of nonfiction, that is, the *truth*. This innocuous phrase is slipped into nonfiction, and now blurs the line between opinion and fact.

The phrase *no doubt* is also a mechanism for Smith to enter a piece of creative nonfiction into the text, a signpost of sorts warning that this statement is from his imagination. He was not there and has no proof of something like this happening, but as a way of illustrating the personality and life of Kylie Minogue, the phrase is a useful tool, whereby a degree of fictionalisation can be brought to the text.

David Kramer – an unauthorised biography uses the phrase in the following way (p.63):

‘Jis,’ David greeted. ‘Waar gaan julle?’
‘Ons gaan skerpioene vang,’ replied André.
‘Skerpioene vang?!’ David gasped, shocked.

‘Ja. Kom saam.’

This was unbelievable. The Afrikaans boys were going to catch scorpions. David shuddered, no doubt remembering the time the boy next door had been stung. Yet, he had to see this.

4.6 The Emphasis of the Kramer Biography

David Kramer – an unauthorised biography focuses more on the early years of Kramer’s career. The second half, that is, the part of his life dedicated to writing and staging musicals, was obviously investigated, but the emphasis is on the (especially early) recordings Kramer made, and their impact on South African audiences. This is as a result of the author’s bias – it was the surprise and delight of Kramer’s success as a recording artist that motivated the author to write the biography in the first place. It was felt that the mutual experiences of the author and Kramer, the Worcester, “platteland” experiences, were mostly visible in the first few years of Kramer’s career, and the work coming from these years held more of a fascination for the author – the music, the look of Kramer, the references in his lyrics, et cetera. The biography consists of text as well as graphics: photographs, album covers, drawings Kramer did, and so on. The photographs are sometimes of Worcester: the high school, the swimming pool. The intent was to hopefully replicate the ambience of Worcester during the time of Kramer’s school days. Parts of this creative nonfiction text were absolute fiction, and at other times artistic license was taken. When the biography tells the tale of Kramer meeting the musician Mark Knopfler (Dire Straights) at university, this is a liberty, as the two were not students at Leeds University during the same period. However, it was irresistible, and it was decided to create a reality where the two actually did meet and discuss music – the prime reason for this was that it allowed the text to illuminate Kramer’s realisation that he was

still just a weak Bob Dylan imitator, and that, unlike musicians such as Mark Knopfler, he had yet to find his own voice, his own, distinctive style.

4.7 Conclusion

After consulting various examples, it was decided that the style for the biography would be easy-to-read. The text would not try to be garish or shocking. However, at times the text would try to show Kramer's mental state, his moodiness, what drives him as an artist. Next, the text would often move into the field of fiction, making the Kramer biography a creative nonfiction text. Lastly, the text would occasionally make use of inferring, to suggest information which is not hard fact.

5. FINDINGS – THE PROCESS OF WRITING THE KRAMER BIOGRAPHY AS A CREATIVE NONFICTION TEXT

5.1 Introduction

This chapter tracks the process of writing the Kramer biography, and explains the decision-making processes along the way.

Pelser (2001:28) identifies four main problems facing the biographer: ethics, authenticity, fame and empathy. Of these four points, it is perhaps a combination of ethics and authenticity which was problematic in early stages of the writing *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography* because this biography is an at times fictitious account of Kramer's life, and as such the authenticity of events might be questioned, which in turn led to the author being concerned about the ethics of writing such a manuscript. If one part of a text, a reader might ask, is found to be untrue (fictive), then surely the entire text might run the risk of being dismissed as untrue?

With regard to the fame and empathy Pelser writes of, the nature of a larger-than-life persona, a life important, a life others might want to live vicariously through, applied to the author's intrigue of David Kramer. Kramer is perhaps not a great life, as, say, Gandhi or Mandela, but there was still *something* there which captivated the author. In his essay *Minor Lives* (1979:59), Geoffrey Wolff recounts how he wrote the life story of Harry Crosby, a rather second-rate poet, someone who vanished from public consciousness with

hardly a ripple after his suicide. Wolff says that this led the *New Republic* to judge his biography as *an elegant book*, but the reviewer found it a

[...] pointless one. Geoffrey Wolff [...] knows that Harry was not a poet and that his life was neither Art nor artful.

This criticism misses the point – for a biographer to desire to tell the story of a life, there has to be something about that life which inspires the biographer. In this case it could well be that the life in question was indeed artless and without Art. Perhaps, the biographer might have wondered, this was the reason for the subject to take his own life. And therein lay the intrigue. (One might wonder whether on a certain level the writer wishes to expose something of himself, via the subject he is illustrating.) Like Wolff's desire to visit the life of Crosby for no other reason than that he was interested in it, so it was with writing about the life and career of David Kramer.

Kramer's fame and impact was a relatively small one if compared to an Alexander or a Picasso. Therefore it was rather the empathy felt by the author which played a role in the biography being written. This empathy came from a shared background: growing up in the same town and having many similar experiences, and having the feeling that somehow Kramer was speaking for the author when his voice was on the radio. The author championed Kramer, for Kramer's sake, but also for his own sake. There was a need to believe that his man, and therefore his voice, was being heard.

5.2 Problems of Research

The first problem with finding data for the biography was that the subject, David Kramer, would not agree to collaborate. When the author called him, Kramer said that he wished to keep his private life private, and that this was not yet the time for a biography on his life and career. Thus the gathering of information was seriously stunted.

The options that were available for the author were interviews with friends and colleagues of Kramer (personally, telephonically, or by correspondence), information to be taken from the internet, as well as researching printed articles on Kramer's work. It would be discovered that there was virtually no information about the private Kramer. The available information was laid out before the author, and this was a key factor in the author deciding to write the biography with a subtext of the author's own autobiography – his memories of Worcester, his experiences growing up in South Africa, his interest in popular music, and so on.

Information was gathered rather tentatively at first, mostly through telephone calls and emails, as the author was living and working in South Korea at the start of the project. Friends and contacts of the author's from his Worcester days were the starting points, at first merely establishing a list of possible people to interview. From these initial steps came useful interviews with school friends of Kramer's, such as Raffaele Barocci and Oratio Gaigher. Here a problem was encountered, in that Oratio Gaigher at first wanted to speak off the record, as he was not flattering of Kramer. However, he later agreed that if his opinions were put in a way that wasn't harsh or offensive, then his name could be used. The author strongly suspects that he was allowed this interview in the first place

after he had given his credentials as a Worcester boy, and more specifically, in the fact that his father and Oratio's uncle, Primo Gaigher, were friends. Other people were contacted by telephone, such as Crispen Siddle, whose brother, James, had been a classmate of the author's.

With regard to email correspondence, David Smith, one of the original members of The Offbeats, was a tremendous source of information, about the band and the Worcester of his and David's days. (Kramer was six years ahead of the author at school, which at the time seemed a chasm.)

Personal interviews were held with Worcester people in general during field trips to the town, as well as in-depth interviews with interviewees such as David de Nobrega, who along with his father ran the Koffiehuis café at the time of Kramer's high school years. Dion Gaigher, Oratio Gaigher's nephew was also gracious enough to grant a personal interview at his home in Pretoria.

As for information about the music scene in general, and a few titbits on Kramer, ex-McCully's Workshop guitarist, Richard Black was also kind enough to talk to the author at some length about recording conditions at the time of Kramer's early recordings, as well as to the difficulties of breaking into the music business. Mr. Black now owns and runs Street Level recording studio and music production facilities in Cape Town. It was he who told the author that Kramer had met the musician Sting during a Juluka concert at the University of Cape Town's Jameson Hall, for instance. The first meeting was formal,

with the interview being recorded on a small portable tape recorder. The second meeting was more informal, not recorded, chatting about mutual interests in music, as well as McCully's Workshop, David Kramer, modern recording techniques (specifically using the computer as a recording and editing tool) and so on. This conversation had to be committed to memory. Both of these meetings were useful, as valuable information was gathered, which could be used to understand and visualise the world of David Kramer as he went about creating his career.

As far as media research goes, popular magazine articles were looked at, but in truth they didn't add anything of use to the research, anything new, which was not known by the author.

5.3 The Bilingual Nature of the Text

David Kramer – an unauthorised biography is written in English, but at times is presented in Afrikaans.

“Yes, I'm a vegetarian ...,” he began.

The bombardier stuck out a thick, muscular arm, grabbed the food from the boy's hand, and passed it over to the conscript next to him.

“Hierso,” he said, switching to his native Afrikaans. “Komplimente van die Suid-Afrikaanse Weermag. Sê dankie vir jou maatjie.”

The lad looked at the food in his hand, then at the senior officer, and finally at the unfortunate vegetarian next to him.

“I ...,” he stammered.

“Wat?” inquired the bombardier.

Everyone was staring, eyes like saucers in their heads. They knew trouble was coming.

“Nie goed genoeg vir jou nie?”

“Nee ...”

“Nee, *Bombardier*, jou klein kak!”

“Nee, Bombardier ..,” came the weak echo.

The bombardier bent forward, his face an inch away from the young conscript’s. His face flushed red as he worked himself into a rage.

“Ek moet op my moeë voete staan terwyl jy op jou fokken gat sit?!” he bellowed. “Staan op!”

The recruit jumped to his feet, his eyes huge, his face white. In both hands was a tub of rice stew. The bombardier turned and glared at all present in the compartment.

“Julle almal, staan op! *Donners!*”

There was a rustle as everyone jumped to their feet. They weren’t sure what to do with the food, so they held the cardboard bowls in front of them.

“Die President het spesiaal gevra dat julle hierdie gesonde kos kry, omdat hy julle lief het, omdat hy bekommerd oor jul gesondheid is. Hierdie heerlike dis is in die President se woonhuis voorberei, deur sy liefdevolle vrou. Maar wat maak julle? Julle trek jul neuse op vir hierdie wonderlike maal!”

He turned and faced each boy, his hands on his hips. Then his voice dropped to a whisper.

“Julle is verraaiers,” he stated as though the realisation had just come to him, taking a step back in shock and disgust.

In the above passage, it is the last line which indicates what a large part of the reasoning was to present the text in both English and Afrikaans, to illustrate the divide in South Africa, not only between black and white, but also English and Afrikaans (read: liberal and conservative/traitor and loyal). Here the English-speaking conscripts are told, albeit jokingly, that they are traitors and the reader can assume that there was some of the bombardier’s real opinion of English-speaking people in those words.

It was also hoped that the use of these two languages would show that whilst South African society can be very fractured at times (there are eleven official languages in South Africa), often these divides are crossed by everyday South Africans. The following excerpt illustrates, where English-speaking and Afrikaans boys play together in the veld

with no animosity (to raise the English/Afrikaans issue in a not-so-one-dimensional, more realistic manner):

David looked over his shoulder and saw André du Toit and Marcelle Steyn. Both boys were on their bicycles, and like David and Donny, they were also barefoot.

“Jis,” David greeted. “Waar gaan julle?”

“Ons gaan skerpioene vang,” replied André.

“Skerpioene vang?!” David gasped, shocked.

“Ja. Kom saam.”

This was unbelievable. The Afrikaans boys were going to catch scorpions. David shuddered, no doubt remembering the time the boy next door had been stung. Yet, he had to see this. The nest finders went back to their bicycles, picked them up, and rode over to André and Marcelle.

Afrikaans is also found, of course, in the lyrics of David Kramer, and seem to be a vital part of his artistic and cultural make-up. It was felt that the biography had to address this, even though some readers might not understand Afrikaans. Of course, this mirrors Kramer’s decision to at times sing in Afrikaans, or a mixture of English and Afrikaans, thereby potentially excluding a significant part of his audience. It was felt that to ignore Afrikaans would be to ignore the times that Kramer grew up in and became successful as a musician – this language was very much part of the social and political background of the day. Nowadays, with the ANC government, English is far more predominant, and previously exclusively Afrikaans-speaking universities, for example, are having to at least be bilingual, if not converting to becoming English-medium in their classes offered.

Afrikaans was seen by many as the language of the oppressor, but ironically it was (and is) also the home-language of many black people, and many times Kramer’s lyrics seem

to speak of and for those people, if on a rather superficial, insipid manner. Of course, his early political songs are always in English, which is rather a pity.

5.4 Fictionalisation

The following excerpt from *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography* illustrates the fictional, the creative nonfiction, of the text:

There were the obligatory things to do and see in London, and David felt compelled to go through the list. Piccadilly Circus – done. Trafalgar Square – done. But this was the best one so far: his visit to the offices of the New Musical Express. He had bought this newspaper every Wednesday at the CNA, and now here he was, standing on the pavement in front of the building. He took a deep breath and stepped forward, pushing the doors open and entering the building. He took the elevator up to the third floor. The doors opened and David stepped out, and there it was, bustling and noisy, the offices of the New Musical Express. Above the entrance were the big red letters David knew so well: NME.

‘May I help you?’ a voice asked.

David turned and saw a tall young man in his early twenties in what can only be described as groovy threads, man. The velvet bell-bottom pants were so wide that it seemed as though he was wearing a skirt. David realised that the man wasn’t really that tall; it was the 3-inch soles of his platform shoes that made him seem so tall.

‘I, er, I’m just visiting,’ David mumbled. ‘I always get the NME back home ...’

The man took David’s accent in.

‘Where you from, then?’

‘South Africa.’

‘South Africa?’

David watched the by now familiar expression on the face opposite him: South Africa, apartheid, white guy, racist. But this time David wasn’t dismissed automatically. There was a strain of interest: this guy reads the NME. Wonder what makes him tick.

Another man strode up to them, also attired in groovy threads. But unlike his colleague, he wore sandals, man. With his long hair and beard he looked a lot like Jesus.

‘Have you finished with the Floyd layout, Andy?’ he asked.

‘Of course,’ the man in the three-inch platforms replied. ‘Simon’s in the darkroom developing the prints. Then all I have to do is drop the pics in.’

‘Bring it to my office when he’s done,’ the older man ordered, far more severely than Jesus would have done, and strode off in a wave of hair that reached his jeans.

‘Fuck!’ Andy swore under his breath. ‘The Floyd layout ...’

‘I thought you finished it?’ David inquired.

‘First rule of journalism, my son, is: always lie.’

David chuckled.

Andy eyed the camera David had slung over his shoulder.

‘You could well be my saviour,’ he muttered. ‘What’s your name, my lad?’

‘David Kramer.’

‘Wrong. Your name is Simon Bough, photographer. Come with me.’

David followed Andy down a passage.

‘I’m Andy Gophin,’ Andy introduced himself. ‘And I forgot to arrange with Simon for today’s shoot.’

‘You’re in deep shit,’ David pointed out.

‘Not at all. Simon is right here, behind me, and he’s going to take brilliant pics.’

David had read many of Andy’s articles. And here David was, talking to Andy Gophin! No-one is going to believe this story. They entered a tiny office which was cluttered with a desk, filing cabinets, piles of paper, and the members of Pink Floyd. David felt faint.

The above-mentioned passage illustrates the at times novel-like presentation of the Kramer biography. However, other factors had to be decided upon. From the outset of writing a biography such as *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography* it was important to decide where the author would be positioned with regards to the narrative, as well as to the principal character, i.e., David Kramer. The text was largely written by a person who grew up in the same town as Kramer, with much the same experiences as Kramer. These shared experiences became the source of information for the text, along with research and interviews. At other times the words written were pure fiction, not based on any real experience. (The author has never been to Leeds, for example.) It was the result of the author describing the reality in his mind, the *movie unwinding in his head*. This resulted in something of a tightrope act. A text which presents itself as nonfiction/truth was

presented, when in fact it often crosses over into fiction: pure imagination. This fictionalising of the Kramer story was necessary, though, in order to illuminate the essence of Kramer's life and career. Benton (2009:48) concurs:

[...] it [biomythography – author's note] reminds us also of the fact that the painstaking, historical documentation of life writing is, by its nature, incomplete and can never hope to capture the elusive 'life' without the aid of narrative imagination (Runyan, 1984:77; Denzin, 1989:25).

Pelser (2001:10) adds these remarks:

[...] a biography is usually written as a complete version of a person's life which should also be illuminated against a background of a historic timeline. Sometimes reference is made to a 'scientific biography' (if the work is based virtually exclusively on indisputable historical information). If that is not the case, a 'romanticised biography' is rather spoken of. An interesting variation of the last-mentioned is the unauthorised biography (and sometimes even almost fictitious) versions of famous people so different such as the millionaire Howard Hughes and Princess Diana. The term 'psychological biography' refers to a type of biography wherein much stress is placed on the subject's psychological development; an approach which is especially popular in the writing of literary biographies. [Author's translation]

In the above quotation, Pelser uses the term *romanticised biography*. This was a useful term, in that it was by now becoming clear that there were more options than simply either fiction or nonfiction. Roberts (2002:57) adds these terms:

[...] the objective biography, the scholarly historical, the artistic-scholarly, narrative biography and the fictional biography. There is a kind of continuum from fact collection to character construction as dialogue and settings become closer to fiction (narrative biography) and, eventually, to where writing becomes

close to the historical novel with little reference to detailed research (fictional biography).

It could be argued that all biographies have an element of fiction, that it is the nature of the genre not to be written in a totally factual manner. Roberts says (2002:57):

Obviously [...] no biography can be completely ‘factual’ and we can also add that biographies tend to use a mix of these approaches as fact, interpretation and construction take place.

The biography is, after all, not a telephone directory – there is some story-telling taking place.

Weber (1980:1) submits even more terms for this strain of writing:

[...] art-journalism, nonfiction novel, essay-fiction, factual fiction [...]. The most widely used term has been the most confusing of all: New Journalism.

As far as the creative nonfiction of this study, it should be seen as a text *based* on a life, rather than *recounting* the life. Weber (1980:2) points out that some writers

[...] consider their nonfiction primarily journalistic rather than at once journalistic and literary.

As a creative nonfiction text, *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography* certainly wishes to be both journalistic as well as literary. It is possible for such a text to exist,

because, as Weber (1980:5) points out, in the 1960s and 1970s there was quite a shift in (American) reading habits, moving towards nonfiction, as well as to nonfiction films and television documentaries. What might Weber make of the current fascination with reality television, one wonders? He mentions (1980:5) that after World War II there was a shift away from fiction towards nonfiction in magazines, because an editor of *True* magazine remarked that readers liked the articles more when they knew them to be true. He goes on to say that this type of article was seen to be useful by the readers.

During the writing of the Kramer biography the author shared Wolfe's hope, as quoted by Weber, (1980:18) that

[...] it just might be possible to write journalism that would [...] read like a novel.

Taraborrelli's *Madonna – An Intimate Biography* (2001:113) has the aforementioned texture, that it “read(s) like a novel”:

‘Oh my God, look at me!’ Madonna said, dancing around the room in her Gucci flip-flops, magazine in hand. ‘I am on the cover of *Time* magazine! Can you believe it? Just look! Can you imagine it?’ Earlier in her career, she had said, ‘I won't be happy until I'm as famous as God.’ Maybe now she was beginning to feel that she was on her way to that goal.

Truly awed by Madonna's appearance on the cover of one of the most respected magazines in the world, the incredulous assistant said, ‘No, I just can't believe it.’

Suddenly, Madonna stopped dancing. Whipping around to face the employee, she said, ‘What do you mean, you can't believe it? Why shouldn't I be on the cover of *Time*?’

‘I didn't mean ...’ the secretary began to stumble over her words. ‘What I meant was ... I'm sorry.’

‘Oh, stop your grovelling,’ Madonna said, exasperated.

Another example of a biography crossing over into fictionalisation is Cross (2001:352) writing about the suicide of Kurt Cobain:

When he put the pen down, he had filled all but two inches of the page. It had taken three cigarettes to draft the note. The words hadn’t come easy, and there were misspellings and half-completed sentences. He didn’t have the time to rewrite this letter twenty times like he had many other letters in his journals: It was getting brighter outside and he needed to act before the rest of the world woke. He signed it ‘peace, love, empathy. Kurt Cobain,’ printing his name rather than using a signature. He underlined ‘empathy’ twice; he had used this one word five times. He wrote one more line – ‘Frances and Courtney, I’ll be at your altar’ – and stuck the paper and pen into his left coat pocket. On the stereo Stipe [the singer of R.E.M – author’s note] was singing about the ‘Man on the Moon.’ Kurt had always loved Andy Kaufman – his friends used to crack up back in junior high in Montesano when Kurt would do his Latka imitation from ‘Taxi.’

He rose from the bed and entered the closet, where he removed a board from the wall. In this secret cubbyhole sat a beige nylon gun case, a box of shotgun shells, and a Tom Moore cigar box. He replaced the board, put the shells in his pocket, grabbed the cigar box, and cradled the heavy shotgun over his left forearm. In a hallway closet, he grabbed two towels; he didn’t need these, but someone would. Empathy. He quietly walked down the nineteen steps of the wide staircase. He was within a few feet of Cali’s room and he didn’t want anyone catching sight of him. He had thought this all through, mapped it out with the same forethought he put into his album covers and videos. There would be blood, lots of blood, and a mess, which he didn’t want in his house. Mostly, he didn’t want to haunt this home, to leave his daughter with the kind of nightmares he had suffered.’

These two above-mentioned examples show what Tom Wolfe called *saturation reporting*.

Weber (1980:19) describes *saturation reporting* as

[...] reporting that went to the bottom depths of the material and sought out not only what was said and done but what was thought and felt, reporting that got inside the character and scene the way novelists did [...]

There seems to be an element of art in saturation reporting, in that the text is no longer pure, dry data. Wiesenthal (2008:1) describes her writing process of her Lowther biography, *The Half-Lives of Pat Lowther*. In her article Wiesenthal relates the word *artifact* to her approach during the writing. She makes the case that an artifact is a thing which has been made: an artificial thing.

[...] the term artifact is also useful in relation to the genre of non-fiction [sic] – specifically, in relation to the epistemological ambiguity that all nonfiction writing trades in, as the forging of some form of experience into truth, or even fact-based prose. It is, clearly, in this epistemological ambiguity – in its exploitation or acknowledgement – that ethics also enters the picture. For if the line between outright artifice and the slippery nature of nonfictional ‘truth’ is any clearer for biographers than it is for, say, memoirists or poets, it nevertheless remains true that the biographical subject, or ‘I,’ too, is fortified on the one hand by ‘art’ and on the other ‘fact,’ just like the letter ‘i’ literally encased in the middle of the word ‘art-i-fact.’

The important idea in this quotation is the notion that a text which attempts to describe the life of a subject may be based on fact, and/or on *art*, as Wiesenthal calls it. This indeed applies to *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography*.

It was felt that a (sometimes) fictionalisation of Kramer’s life and career would be an easier method in giving an insight into the man and his work, to reveal, as Pachter quotes Edel (1979:4): “the essence of a life”. Pachter goes on to mention the difficulties facing the prospective biographer, under which one can hear whispered warnings of the ethics involved, as the biographer is sometimes seen as an enemy (1979:4):

But the biographer's achievement is hard won. Inundated by thousands of documents and impressions [...] or starved for the lack of them; embraced by the subject, his family, friends, and disciples, or waylaid by them at every turn, the biographer must somehow deliver a convincing life.

Regarding the fictionalisation of *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography*, Root (2003:245) has this to say:

Because my students ask me what nonfiction is (they never ask about fiction or poetry), I have created the following definition: Nonfiction is the expression of, reflection upon, and/or interpretation of observed, perceived, or recollected experience. The definition has this advantage: I can catalog [sic] every work I think of as nonfiction in the parameters of the definition. Another advantage is that, while some would claim that it could also apply to fiction, poetry, and drama, in order to distinguish those forms from nonfiction they would have to add qualifiers to the nonfiction definition (for example, 'through the means of invented characters, situations and events' in the case of fiction). This is of course my point: that the other three are not necessarily about 'observed, perceived, or recollected experience,' although they may well be, and when they are they present experience in ways that alter or camouflage or transform actuality.

It has this disadvantage: the term it's defining isn't separate enough from the familiar blanket term 'non-fiction' [sic] for someone who doesn't think of the same works I think of to be able to apply it. 'How does this definition apply to a VCR manual?' I hear someone ask. 'To a biological field survey? To a dictionary?' My term needs a qualifier or, alternatively, needs to be replaced by a word that will only call to mind my definition and no competing definitions. I search for that qualifier, that alternate term, every time I talk about nonfiction, but I never have any difficulty knowing what I'm naming when I use the term 'nonfiction.'

It would appear that Root means that nonfiction is reality. Also, he sees a difference between fiction, poetry and drama, as though they have different levels of fiction about them. This could well be. Certain texts might lean more towards fiction than nonfiction, and vice versa. Yet, whilst being a bit of both, they are at the end of the day neither. What

are they then? At first this was the conundrum of *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography*, until it was decided that it could be a bit of both, that is, creative nonfiction.

It would be wrong to lump a memoir such as Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* (1996) together with the biography *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography*, as *Angela's Ashes* never strays (one assumes) from fact, whereas the Kramer biography at times is pure fiction. Regarding the notion of fact/truth in nonfiction, Currie (1985:388) says the following:

The case of the apparently fictional autobiography presents another kind of difficulty. It is not that the community may intervene to revoke the work's fictional status; intuitively the work never was fiction at all. Is it because the story is true? No; merely being true would not be enough for us to say that the work was not fiction. Someone may write an historical novel, staying with the known facts and inventing incidents only where historical knowledge is lacking. Suppose it then turns out that these events described in the novel exactly correspond to what actually happened. I want to say that the work is fiction, even though it is entirely true.

It may be thought that the trouble arises because the author is engaging in a kind of deception; encouraging the audience, by indirect means, to assume that what he is saying is true.

This passage leads to another question that had to be answered before the writing of *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography*: that of ethics.

5.5 Ethics

The very act of noting in a public forum the life of another will repeatedly bring one back to the ethics involved in such an exercise. Pachter (1979:5) asks:

What right has the biographer to pursue his subject to the privatemost corners of his life?

Kramer would not agree to a collaboration, but he did concede that the author could write the unauthorised biography. Of course, he had little choice in the matter, which was one of the agonising points for the author, this invasion of privacy. Pelser (2001:21) writes, regarding ethics in writing a biography:

What right does a biographer have, for example, to enter the terrain of someone else's activities and privacy, or on which grounds can he justify it? [Author's translation] [...] 'The idea of a biographer as a pursuing hound - James Joyce's 'biografiend' - has been present from the start. Dr. Arbuthnot, writing in the eighteenth century of the innumerable biographical pamphlets produced by the 'unspeakable' Edmund Curll, gloomily remarked that biography had 'added a new Terror to Death'. Henry James in his famous story about Shelley's love-letters, *The Aspern Papers*, characterized the young American researcher as a 'publishing scoundrel'. The biographer as [sic] appeared in a similar role in recent novels by William Golding and A.S. Byatt. Ian Hamilton has vividly dramatised the case in his study of J.D. Salinger, where the novelist resorts to laws to defend his privacy. The long saga of Ted Hughes' battles against Sylvia Plath's biographers puts the question in its most anguished, immediate form, while Diane Wood Middlebrook's biography of Anne Sexton (1991) presses it into new areas of intimate exposure, by using the tape-recordings of some 300 psychotherapy sessions undertaken by Sexton towards the end of her life before committing suicide. All these should give us pause for reflection.

Pelser (2001:30) goes on to mention in chapter three of his dissertation that Kannemeyer points out four problematic areas for the biographer. Firstly, insufficient information or the lack of needed permission to obtain information. Secondly, biographies about writers vary tremendously; before the 18th century the emphasis was more on the legendary than the factual. Only towards the end of the 18th century was there a greater accent on

correspondence, diaries, autobiographical writings, interviews and other documents. There are thus two poles: the Victorian ideal to erect a monument in honour of the subject, or the 20th century leaning to reveal everything and to reduce the subject to a case study. Thirdly, biography writing is not a detached, cool science. There needs to be a certain relationship between the biographer and the subject. There should be an emotional involvement which will lead to a thorough text being researched and written. In the last place, Kannemeyer argues that biography writing is difficult and dangerous. How can a biographer create a satisfying and convincing image of a person, even in a thorough work?

In Pelser's article Kannemeyer mentions a particular problem *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography* faced: the difficulty in locating information regarding the subject. Even though a biography such as *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography* is sometimes fictive, it can not ignore the facts of Kramer's life. It still needs to be anchored in fact: dates, events, and such. However, this data was not always forthcoming, and at these times the author was forced to move into a fictitious version. Would this be ethical? A useful example referred to was Taraborrelli (2001:57):

Despite the uncertainty of the group's name [Emanon – 'no name' spelled backwards – author's note], Madonna's self-confidence and outlook for its future remained unshakable. However, for someone who was not a known performer, she had already developed the ego of a major – and, in some ways, difficult – star. Bray continues, 'She wanted to call the band 'Madonna.' Well, I thought that was just too much.'

'But it makes a lot of sense,' Madonna told Steve Bray during lunch at Howard Johnson's in Times Square. 'See, there's this group called Patti LaBelle and the Blue Belles. And when they reinvented themselves, they called themselves Labelle, after the leader of the group.'

Bray digested this piece of information. ‘So what are you saying?’ he asked her. ‘That you’re the leader of this band?’

Another ethical concern was the actual nature of biography, whether it would be in order to publicly dissect a real person, especially a living person. Holmes (1995:15) says the following:

(Biography) has always had the doubtful status of a maverick or mongrel art [...]

Holmes continues a few lines later:

Let me propose a simple myth of its genesis, a sort of Origin of the Species. The problematic, delightful, and disputed nature of biography derives from its original forebears, who one secret, sultry morning formed an Unholy Alliance. Fiction married Fact, without benefit of clergy. Or as I prefer to say, Invention formed a love-match with Truth. These are the Adam and Eve of our subject. The result was a brilliant, bastard form – Biography – which has been causing trouble ever since.

This line of thought is pertinent to the writing of *Kramer – an unauthorised biography*, as whilst the author was concerned by the tampering with Kramer’s privacy, he was further troubled by (at times) fictionalising Kramer’s life and career. On the one hand fictionalising can be useful to the text to give a “feeling” of the personality and/or his work, but the risk is that the text might be seen as taking too many liberties. Holmes’s mention of the balance/conflict of Invention and Truth is useful in that it acknowledges that this situation exists. Therefore it was felt to be in order to write a fictional biography – after all, others have done it.

Apart from the author's wish to respect the privacy of David Kramer, there is also the very real question of libel. (Holmes, 1995:16) writes:

The biography that Andrew Morton writes (*Diana: Her True Story* – author's note) is influenced less by John Milton than by Barbara Cartland. But the traditions of gossip, or aristocratic scandal, of piquant anecdote, also runs deep in the form and arguably goes back to John Aubrey's *Brief Lives*. It is useless to pretend it does not exist. Morton has been much mocked, both for his success and for his novelettish style. But consider the skill – which includes the circumvention of libel – with which he presents this peculiar modern image of domestic suspicion and jealousy. 'Diana has long been concerned about the influence of the Highgrove Set on her husband. When she is at their Gloucestershire retreat she routinely presses the 'last number redial' on his portable telephone. Invariably she is connected to Middlewich House, the Parker-Bowles' home.'

Continuing the conundrum of what the biographer should pen, if anything at all, Thwaite (1995:203) says:

A great deal has been said and written about the problems of the 'true representation of a fellow human being', of the impossibility of really understanding someone else's life (How intimately can we know the self of another person? as Richard Ellmann put it) and about the practical problems of finding out, of filling in the gaps, about the problems of copyright and invasion of privacy, about the unreliability of witness, spoken and written, and the constant rewriting of history by everyone, main characters and bit players alike. [...] There is simply – and most complicatedly – the problem of trying to get it right, to tell a good story, to provide a compelling narrative that neither distorts nor compromises.

Pachter's claim (1979:10) is problematic in that it desires the biographer to cast the first stone, as though the biographer is flawless:

A modern biographer may or may not choose to reveal the intimate, the amorous details of a life, but he must, if he is good at what he does, probe beneath its public, polished self. The doubts and vulnerabilities, the meannesses, ambitions, and private satisfactions that are hidden within a social responsibility yield him his greatest insights.

For the author, the above instructions were perhaps the hardest to follow, but in the end this is what he attempted, so as to be true to his reader.

For some there is a satisfaction to be had in writing an exposé or a revealing, illuminating article, but for the author there was no pleasure in barging in uninvited into the private areas of his subject in *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography*. However, after some consideration it was felt that half a biography was not good enough, and the text was made to include some of Kramer’s feelings and motivations, the good and the bad.

5.6 Influences

Another factor which shaped the writing of the Kramer biography was the influence of other biographies the author had read. In his MA dissertation Pelsler (2001:15) makes the hypothesis that

as a result of the limited biography-tradition in South Africa it is constantly necessary to fall back on especially English and American models in order to define standards. [Author’s translation]

This was indeed true for *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography*.

Regarding the fictionalising of Kramer, *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography* heeded Kaplan's (1978:2) thoughts on biography, that it

[...] makes sense, it is believable, it is a good story. The writer starts off with a number of givens – birth and death, education, ambition, conflict, milieu, work, relationship, accident. He shapes them into a book that has the autonomous vitality of any work of the imagination and at the same time is 'true to life' and true to history. In many respects biography is a feat of illusionism, sleight-of-hand, levitation; basic decisions and interpretations that appear to be the result of cautious deliberation are often made instantaneously in, and part of, the act of writing [...]

5.7 Make-believe

When speaking of how the reader perceives the text, Currie (1985:386) says that

[...] the author of fiction invites the receiver to engage in a kind of make-believe.

Currie continues this train of thought (1985:387):

[...] the author intends that the reader will read the work *as* fiction because he perceives the work to *be* fiction; that is, because he realises it to be the work of a certain intention.

It seems then, that readers *know* that fiction is artificial, and readily accept this.

An important facet of any text is its relationship with its reader. There should be an honest intention of the part of the writer that what is being written is plausible. This is especially true of nonfiction works. Then the reader will gladly partake in make-believe.

With a work such as *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography* which is neither absolute fiction nor nonfiction, the creator of such a text should be sensitive to the relationship of trust between him and his reader.

A text needs the participation of a reader to make it come alive. It is the reader who decides whether the text is believable, and perhaps this believability supersedes the question of whether the text is fiction or nonfiction.

Currie (1985:390) says the following with regard to make-believe:

There are things we are called upon to make-believe in a work of fiction that are neither stated nor conversationally implicated by the text itself. If Holmes leaves London and arrives in Edinburgh without his mode of transport being described we are clearly called upon to make-believe that he travelled there by some conventional means of transport available in the late nineteenth century, presumably by railway. [...] The question is, how do we mesh the idea of a proposition being true in a fiction with our account of make-believe? Must the reader make-believe all and only those propositions true in the fiction? It will certainly not generally be the case that the author intends the reader to make-believe all and only all the propositions true in the fiction. It is probably true in the Sherlock Holmes stories that Holmes, for all his amazing powers, is a human being in the biological sense. [...] We merely have to understand that fiction involves a two-levelled structure of make-believe. To be fiction the text must be such that what it contains is intended by its author to be make-believed. But in picking up the invitation, the reader also picks up an obligation (ideally) to make-believe certain things not explicitly stated in (or conversationally implicated by) the text.

Let us note also that works of fiction may contain sentences which are nonfiction. The author of fiction may make statements which he does not intend the reader to make-believe, but rather to believe.

This was true for *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography*. When the text declared that there is a mountain range close to Worcester called the Brandwacht Mountains, this

is indeed so. The information detailed concerning David Kramer, his date of birth, his songs, are also fact. The reader believes this to be true, and therefore acceptable from an entertainment point of view. However, the reader will not be able to gauge how much is fact when, for example, the event of Kramer going to university is sketched. The author may well know what is fact derived from research and what is drawn from the author's imagination, but the reader will not be privy to this knowledge. In a novel, especially a science-fiction novel, the reader might well go into make-believe mode, but with a text such as a biography which the reader assumes to be truth, the make-believe participation of the reader is clouded. Right at the beginning of the Kramer text the reader is informed that it is a fictional biography, but the reader will assume the text to be true, as it is based on a real person.

Currie (1985:391) uses the useful word *assert(ing)* when speaking of a text which is factual. This can be used to describe a passage which the author presents as fact, agreed upon by himself and his prospective reader. The characters and events in a novel are from the author's imagination, but they are presented as though they were the truth. Like a good liar who almost believes his own lie. This is done so that the reader's participation will be that he/she will believe the text, that it will be plausible.

Gerard (1996:4) has the following to say about the reader's involvement with the text:

The novel is a way of creating a mythic truth from your own personal myths. And the contract with the reader is that the reader is sharing your myth, and that's powerful simply because we're a storytelling species. We like stories. The

nonfiction act is similar to that, except that it satisfies our hunger for the real and our need to make sense, make order, out of chaos.

Regarding the texture of some nonfiction texts, Kannemeyer (1995:6) is of the opinion that the biographer's

[...] task is also to tell a riveting story and to move his reader. As well as the artisan there is also something of the artist in the biographer [...]. [Author's translation]

The biography, it seems, should not simply be a list of data, but it should take some license in order to illuminate the subject, the context against which and from which the subject should be measured. Circumstantial evidence may be brought to the text in order to more completely tell the story of the life being described.

5.8 Approach to the Biographical Subject

Geoffrey Wolff (1979:57) explains why he decided on writing his biography of Harry Cosby. He begins by quoting the line spoken to him by Crosby's mother, words which he at the time found rather 'scatterbrained':

It's interesting – things that are interesting interest me.

Later he expands (1979:59):

Why Harry Cosby? It's interesting – things that are interesting interest me. [Wolff playfully repeats the words used by his subject's mother – author.] It seemed to me in 1971 when I began work on my biography of Crosby that any story that had stuck to my memory fifteen years was trying to tell me something.

Wolff is explaining why he chose to write a biography of the relatively unknown Harry Cosby. It was largely because, as he uses the seemingly clumsy explanation, he found Cosby's life interesting. He is referring to Colby's mother's statement when he interviewed her about her son: that she was interested in things which interested her. This silly statement was actually attractive to Wolff, as he saw some depth in it, something of the everyday person. To Wolff it resonated with the "empty" Colby life (with its limited literary success) and suicide, and it interested him.

On the other hand, Pachter (1979:9) warns:

Balance can also be upset, conversely, when the biographer loses himself in his subject. To identify too closely with a life, to collapse into adulation, is to give up the distance that allows a writer to become something more than the agent for a reputation.

Right from the outset, the decision to write about Kramer was based on a personal bias on the author's part. Pelsner (2004:20) writes:

'Between the biographer and his subject,' writes Edel (1957:7), 'there is established from the outset a significant relationship [...] It is a relationship deeply intimate and highly subjective.' [Author's translation]

Regarding the aforementioned either hero-worship or desire to break down a subject, Kannemeyer (1995:4) notes that

Humphrey Carpenter's declaration that 'biographies are likely to be either acts of worship or acts of destruction' is apparently an exaggeration. [Author's translation]

There is some truth to Carpenter's statement, though. Recent biographies on subjects such as Michael Jackson, for example, have veered either to the far left or to the far right. There has always been a bias, with Jackson depicted either as a musical genius to be admired, or a pervert. With the writing of *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography* the author hoped to remain in the middle.

Whilst writing the Kramer biography, the author had to shelve his own agendas and try to be neutral towards the subject of the biography. (Even though it will be clear to any reader that the author is a fan of Kramer.) Guralnick (1999:xi) addresses the matter of reserving judgement towards the subject being written about (in his case, Elvis Presley):

This is a story of fame. It is a story of celebrity and its consequences. It is, I think, a tragedy, and no more the occasion for retrospective moral judgment than any other biographical canvas should be. 'Suspending moral judgment is not the immorality of the novel,' Milan Kundera wrote in what could be taken as a challenge thrown down to history and biography, too. This suspension of judgment is the storyteller's *morality*, 'the morality that stands against the ineradicable human habit of judging instantly, ceaselessly, and everyone; of judging before, and in the absence of, understanding.' It is not that moral judgment is illegitimate; it is simply that it has no place in describing a life.

David Kramer – an unauthorised biography narrates the story of David Kramer, but the text does not try to expose the *real* David Kramer, as revealed by possible clues in his work. In this regard the text agrees with the Elisabeth Eybers notion, as put forth by Pelsner (2004:2):

[...] during a radio talk in 1949 Elisabeth Eybers was of the opinion that it is a senseless activity to try to glean an autobiographical meaning from a poem. In 1963 during a talk she said that it is ‘misleading to try to reconstruct the details of a poet’s life from his poetry. [Author’s translation]’

Whilst *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography* is a sometimes fictitious account of Kramer’s life, it does try to honour the facts of the life it’s attempting to describe. The author was aware that this fictitious version of Kramer’s life and career might not be accepted by some, being criticised for not remaining true to fact. In this regard, Rompalske has this review of Bradford’s *Elizabeth: A Biography of Britain’s Queen* (1997:1):

Ever since Princess Diana teamed up with Andrew Morton to tell her story, bookstores have been flooded with profiles of the current royal family. The quality of these biographies varies, from a well-respected effort by Charles’ official biographer, Jonathan Dimbleby, to sensational “banned in Britain!” revelations from the Wales’ disgruntled ex-housekeeper. Possibly the best of the lot is Sarah Bradford’s *Elizabeth* [sic], a sweeping account of the life and times of one of England’s longest-reigning monarchs, Queen Elizabeth II.

Though her tone is respectful, the author has presented a thorough, evenhanded portrait of the current queen.

It would seem that an important criterion of a *good* biography is that it be thorough. This might lead certain critics to argue that a fictionalising of a life cannot be thorough, as it is drawn only from the author's imagination, and not at all based on research. Even though this fictitious aspect joins the dots between the data available, possibly giving insight into the subject's psyche and personality, it might be disregarded by some.

Nadel (1984:176) claims that

Biography is essentially a demythologizing form.

This is true of the Kramer biography, not in the sense of revealing the subject's flaws, but rather to supply more than simply a résumé of the musician's career. The writer was aware that as a contemporary biographer, he too, had limitations, even an ugliness to his intent. Pachter (1979:12) has this opinion:

What was suppressed before in the interest of ethical or historical coherence became therefore, by the early twentieth century, the very rough-edged core of biography. [...] Life-writing, in the aftermath of Victorianism, took on some of the aspects of *exposé*. It was a period of antiheroism, of the destruction of the public myth. At his least pleasant, the new biographer was a smug practitioner of oneupsmanship, who bled a life dry of its vitality and authority.

Addressing the role the biographer plays, Roberts (2002:173) is of the opinion:

The biographical researcher, as any other human subject, has experiences set and interpreted within biographical and other forms of time – as researchers we interpret our own lives as we interpret the lives of others and in research our own

biographical experience and feelings are involved. This emotional contact should not be seen as merely a hindrance in research but as (inescapably) part of the research relationship which should be expanded upon through the reflexive monitoring of our own self-involvement.

At the risk of stating the obvious, there has to be some motivation for wanting to write, be involved with, a life. It might be the fascination with fame, or on a deeper level, wondering how Fate intervened in a life. Or, as in the case with *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography*, it was the delight of having someone one identified with on a certain level achieving success, being able to ‘get out of the town one couldn’t wait to leave’. Perhaps there is something of the Bruce Springsteen mythology to be found in the joy of Kramer’s success: then one can get in a car and drive away, to some place that’s better. Even if it isn’t better, at least it’s away. Maybe the author’s part in the writing of the biography was that he shared Kramer’s (perceived) small-town mentality, believing that all and everything passed one by, like the N1 highway that skirts past Worcester as it makes its way from Cape Town to Johannesburg. Hence the following passage from *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography*:

One time, it was dead quiet. John and David set out to investigate. They walked up the edge of the plateau where their father had parked the car and gazed out over Worcester which lay sleeping below them. From up here the boys could see the grey ribbon of a road far below. Then a vehicle came along the highway, a small speck in the distance, too far away for them to hear it.

‘Look, there’s a road,’ David told John. ‘With a car.’

‘That’s the N1,’ John informed his younger brother. ‘It goes all the way to Johannesburg.’

‘To Johannesburg?!’ David gasped.

‘Where they get the gold.’

David stared wide-eyed at the road far below, at the car moving along it. Johannesburg! David could not get enough of this road and the idea that it went as

far away as Johannesburg. That was, it was, something he didn't have words for, but it was something wonderful.

In creating a subjective reality, the author may use techniques such as manipulating the actual font of the text for dramatic effect. Weber gives this example of saturation reporting when he describes Wolfe's writing in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. (1980:99):

The level of stream of consciousness varies considerably throughout the book. Often it involves nothing more than slipping into the idiom of the Pranksters or the acid world. The section [...] is called 'The Fugitive' and creates Kesey's growing paranoia in Mexico about the police closing in on him. It opens with a burst of typographical effects:

Haul ass, Kesey. Move. Scram. *Split flee high vanish disintegrate.*
Like *run*.

Rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrev. Revrevrevrevrevrevrevrev or are we gonna have a late Mexican re-run of the scene on the rooftop in San Francisco and sit here with the motor spinning and watch with fascination while the cops climb up once again to *come git you-*

THEY JUST OPENED THE DOOR DOWN BELOW, ROTO ROOTER, SO YOU HAVE MAYBE 45 SECONDS ASSUMING THEY BE SLOW AND SNEAKY AND SURE ABOUT IT .

Roberts reminds that this type of illuminating writing has to be done conscientiously, to present a scene as fairly and unbiased as possible (2002:172):

The researcher will continue to have multiple roles, as academic, adviser, advocate which bring the tensions that are inherent in biographical and other research. But many would go further and say there is an overriding commitment – not merely not to do harm, which is extremely important, but also to a 'democratic community' in which all voices are heard and taken into account.

Whilst one expects Wolfe to give a true reflection as possible of Kesey's personality and motivations for his actions, Wolfe should not want to raise him on to a pedestal, nor present him as a scoundrel – that will be for the reader to decide.

5.9 Intertextuality

Kristeva (1980) put forth the notion that any text, film, song, et cetera, is almost never a totally new idea, but rather based on previous ideas, that it speaks to previous works, and should be seen as a link in a chain – nothing is ever sucked out of the void. Furthermore, intertextuality can be taken a step further, in that the piece, such as a film, for example, will make (sometimes rather obvious) references to a previous film, historical event, speech, song, and so on. Kristeva herself, to a large extent, uses the intertextual model in her 1980 work *Desire in Language* when she refers to the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (p.64), for example, when she writes of him and his work:

Bakhtin was one of the first to replace the static hewing out of texts with a model where literary structure does not simply *exist* but is generated in relation to *another* structure.

This is a useful example of how a preceding text influences those that follow it. Also useful is Kristeva's mention (p.65) of Bakhtin's notion of the "literary word" which should be seen as an "intersection of textual surfaces" rather than a fixed point. This meeting place of current and past work, is a way of understanding how two works interact with one another. In fact, the same can be said of a person, in that he/she is the sum total of his/her past experiences.

Kristeva relies heavily on the ideas of Bakhtin: she mentions (p.66) his theory that

Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another.

The concept of intertextuality is important for the biography of this study: *David Kramer, an unauthorised biography*, as intertextuality is a method by which the text can be drawn back from creative nonfiction into a reality the reader will accept as true, therefore believing the creative nonfiction passages to be true as well, because the things used, photographs, pop charts, et cetera, are real. Furthermore, intertextuality places the biography in a certain timeframe, as well as the nuances of that time. It is therefore worthwhile spending some more time discussing it.

Cuddon (1998:424) describes intertextuality as

[...] a term coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966 to denote the interdependence of literary texts, the interdependence of any one literary text with all those that have gone before it. Her contention was that a literary text is not an isolated phenomenon but is made up of a mosaic of quotations, and that any text is the ‘absorption and transformation of another’. She challenges traditional notions of literary influence, saying that intertextuality denotes a transposition of one or several sign systems into another or others. But this is not connected with the study of sources. ‘Transposition’ is a Freudian term, and Kristeva is pointing not merely to the way texts echo each other but to the way that discourses or sign systems are transposed into one another – so that meanings in one kind of discourse are overlaid with meaning from another kind of discourse. It is a kind of ‘new articulation’.

Roberts (2002:78) says this of intertextuality:

The issue of ‘intertextuality’ raises questions surrounding ‘representation’. The idea of intertextuality derives from a poststructuralist view of texts as composed of references to other texts or transforming other texts and, from a postmodern perspective, a view that meanings relate to other meanings in some endless signification. Dentith points out that the term, deriving from Kristeva’s particular appropriation of Bakhtin during the 1960s, means two things. First, that particular writing uses other forms of writing and draws on and ‘reflects’ or ‘redirects’ the discourse present in society. Second, there is a radical review of subjectivity – involving the erosion of subjectivity as subjects are seen as sites where multiple texts are interrelated.

In a broader sense, intertextuality does not have to concern itself only with written texts, but can include the links between film, news events, and so on. This is especially so for the intertextuality of *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography*, where the text refers to pop songs of the day, pictures, photographs, or events of the day such as rugby tours, at cetera, to “place” the story being told in a time frame. Intertextuality is used mostly as a tool to put things into context. The biography makes use of, as Rajan (1991:63) says:

[...] transposition as the intersection of different material as well as textual surfaces [...]

Pachter (1979:11) has this to say about biography intertwining with history:

Ralph Waldo Emerson pronounced of his era: ‘There is properly no history: only biography.’

Cancalon and Spacagna (1994:106) use the example of the film *Bicycle Thieves* as having an intertextual relationship with the novel of the same name it is based on, how someone who has read the novel will view the film, and vice versa. But intertextuality does not only have to have such a direct, one-dimensional relationship to the piece it is speaking to/about. Some intertextual pieces are a written text shadowing another written text, but can also be, for example, song lyrics mentioning the title of a well-known film. (“Breakfast at Tiffany’s” by Deep Blue Something. [1995]) In order to place Kramer in a time and cultural background, the text often used such intertextual references, such as historical events, popular events of the day, songs which were being played on the radio, and so on. An example of an author making references to other art forms or events is Guralnick (1999:84) in his Elvis Presley biography:

Wild in the Country started shooting on location in Napa, California, on November 9. Taken from J. R. Salamanca’s well-regarded first novel, *The Lost Country*, the script had been written by prizewinning playwright Clifford Odets (*Waiting for Lefty, Awake and Sing!*); the director, Philip Dunne, was the author of such notable screenplays as *How Green Was My Valley* and *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*; and the older woman, one of three principal love interests in the story, was to be played by the distinguished French actress Simone Signoret. [Italics author’s]

Here follows an excerpt from *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography* as an example of intertextuality in the biography:

At the time, the Worcester teenagers were playing 7-singles at parties, black vinyl records which were seven inches in diameter. The pop hits for 1969 were:

- Suspicious Minds - Elvis Presley
- Don't forget to Remember - The Bee Gees
- You can Cry if you want to - The Troggs
- My Sentimental Friend - Herman's Hermits
- Crimson and Clover - Tommy James and the Shondells
- Cry to Me – The Staccatos
- Time is Tight - Booker T and The MGs
- Sugar Sugar - The Archies
- Saved by the Bell - Robin Gibb
- Jesamine - The Casuals

A big hit of 1969 was Peter Sarstedt's 'Where Do You Go To My Lovely?', and it was one of the songs you *had* to be able to play if you had a guitar.

'Okay, check you,' the friend said in the typical Worcester colloquialism.
'Check you,' David replied.

Some texts, paintings, films, pieces of music, et cetera, go to the extreme of, if not stealing, then at least borrowing ideas from previous works. Sometimes this is obvious, as in a homage, and more of a compliment than a theft. The Kramer biography does not borrow from other works – it only refers to lyrics, pop charts, and so on, to recreate the period of the time, or to give further insight to the mood of the time. There is a fine line between intertextuality and plagiarism, even in the form of a homage, though. Regarding this, Hutcheon says the following regarding texts “borrowing” from one another (1988:124):

Traditionally, stories were stolen, as Chaucer stole his; or they were felt to be the common property of a culture or community. [...] These notable happenings, imagined or real, lay outside language the way history itself is supposed to, in a condition of pure occurrence.

This leads to the point of referencing: care had to be taken in the thesis to credit references, in order not to inadvertently be guilty of plagiarism by using someone else's thoughts without acknowledgement.

Hutcheon looks at intertextuality from a postmodernist point of view, and points out the intertextual relationship between texts and history (1985:124). She goes on to mention parody, which for her is an element of historiographic metafiction, as an example of intertextuality (1998:127).

Hutcheon writes (1988:126):

The theoretical exploration of the 'vast dialogue' (Calinescu 1980, 169) between and among literatures and histories that is postmodernism has, in part, been made possible by Julia Kristeva's (1969) reworking of the Bakhtinian notions of polyphony, dialogism, and heteroglossia – the multiple voicings of a text. Out of these ideas, she developed a more strictly formalist theory of the irreducible plurality of texts within and behind any given text, thereby deflecting the critical focus away from the notion of the subject (the author) to the idea of textual productivity.

Here the importance of the author is brought into question; when was the author's idea really conceived? Foucault continues the train of thought (1988:127):

The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full-stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network.

Umberto Eco has this to say on writing his novel *The Name of the Rose* (1988:128):

I discovered what writers have always known (and have told us again and again): books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told.

Therefore the way texts are preceded and inspired by others is a rather complex matter, especially if one considers intertextuality where the influence jumps to a totally different format, for example, a well-known political event is later referred to in a song. An example of this crossing over is when the pop group Frankie Goes To Hollywood took their name from a newspaper headline which read: “Frankie goes to Hollywood!”, the Frankie in question being Frank Sinatra.

In the Kramer biography many intertextual references are made. Sometimes song titles are offered, sometimes photographs of Kramer in his hometown. At other times Kramer’s drawings are used in the text, and at another time a reference is made to Enid Blyton’s Adventure series, as well as her Secret Seven and Famous Five books. Each of these intertextual signs has a different value; the songs might place the written passage in a certain time period, whereas the Enid Blyton book titles will give insight to the young David’s mindframe.

5.10 Biography Writing

Nadel (1984:151) asks the pertinent question:

Is there a theory of biography, a systemized set of principles regarding the form and composition of the genre? Given the multiplicity of lives and variety of styles of biographical expression this seems an impossibility. However, a theory of biography based on language, narration and myth provides a possible model. More specifically, I believe that an analysis of the function of tropes, the forms of narrative, and the nature of myth in biography can establish a foundation for a theory that emphasizes its generic properties. Shaping this approach is the principle that the literary form of biography derives not from observing a set of rules, nor from the documentation of a life but from the literary act of composition and the dependence of the biographer on language to express a life-story. What gives biography its impact is not the point of view of the biographer, as Strachey emphasized, nor the ‘inner myth’ of the subject, as Leon Edel stresses, but the linguistic expression, narrative technique and mythical elements employed by the author to tell his story.

Nadel speaks only of a *possible model*, which leaves the exact nature of biography still rather slippery. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as it gives a biographer leeway to create a text which he or she finds meaningful, even if the biography is gossipy in feel.

Holmes (1995:16) points out, text such as Morton’s *Diana: Her True Story* will be

[...] influenced less by John Milton than by Barbara Cartland. But the traditions of gossip, or aristocratic scandal, of piquant anecdote, also runs deep in the form and arguably goes back to John Aubrey’s *Brief Lives*. It is useless to pretend it does not exist.

This means then that the biography would have been different had a different biographer written it. Morton brought his own personality and agenda to the story of Diana, and that, to a large extent, is what makes his biography what it is.

Regarding Nadel's statement that the biographer's view is not important: he makes what at first seems a contradiction when he goes on to describe Edel's notion of an ideal biographer, one who (1984:153)

[...] writes a story of the progress of a life; he must allow himself to feel its failures, its obstacles overcome, its human ambiguities, its fallibilities, and the drama of personality and temperament. If he's a good biographer, he knows how to select and use significant detail. He can't allow himself to be too much the critic, lest his critiques of the work impede the march of the story. A critical biographer is a contradiction in terms [...] The beauty of what a biographer does resides in his insights: we discern the complexities of being, without pretending that life's riddles have been answered.

The difference seems to be that the biography is not a platform for the biographer's *views and opinions*, but that there is place for his *insights*. There is a subtle difference here, but an important one: when the reader has finished reading the biography, he/she should know far less about the writer than about the subject. The author should be invisible, nondescript, using only literary technique in which to illuminate the subject of the biography.

Nadel (1984:29) mentions *narrative technique* such as tropes (metaphor, metonymy, irony, oxymoron, hyperbole, litotes, antithesis, etc) as ways of telling the story. Nadel's statement reminds us that, at the end of the day, one is dealing with a work of literature which is joined to other forms of literature by the techniques it uses to create itself. He adds the following definition (1984:30):

Biography [...] begins to become more than a recital of facts, more than a description of an individual's minute doings, more than a study of achievement, when we allow ourselves to glimpse the myths within and behind the individual, the inner myth we all create in order to live, the myth that tells us we have some being, some selfhood, some goal, something to strive for beyond the fulfilments of food or sex or creature comforts.

It seems as though the reader of biographies wishes to be privy to the inner myth of the person he or she is intrigued by.

As an aside, with regard to the myth Nadel mentions, Pachter (1979:3) adds:

'Is it not curious,' remarked André Maurois in the historic series of lectures on 'Aspects of Biography' [...] how the metaphor of the portrait painter crops up as soon as one begins to talk of the biographer.'

There should be a balance in trying to reveal the *inner myth* and to portray the subject factually. Pachter (1979:5) writes:

If we learn, for example, that George Washington had large feet – and he had, the marvel of his age – we are not edified, but we are warmed to the presence of a living being; we are less worshipful and more intrigued. The idealizing biography, like the standard boardroom portrait and other totems of respectability, begs to be ignored. Unwilling to genuflect before his subject, the biographer pulls him back into his humanity. Boswell, reports the literary historian Richard Altrick, when asked by Dr. Samuel Johnson's friend, Hannah More, to soften his portrayal of the 'asperities [...] (of) our virtuous and most revered departed friend,' replied that 'he would not cut off his claws, nor make a tiger a cat, to please anybody.'

Returning to the matter of how, with which literary tool, the biographer can portray his subject, Pachter quotes Plutarch (1979:12):

Sometimes [...] an expression or a jest informs us better than their characteristics and inclinations, than the most famous sieges [...]

This thesis would concur. Sometimes one can give more insight, more facets to a personality or a situation by presenting the text more obliquely – a direct listing of the situation or person is rather one-dimensional.

5.11 Conclusion

Biography writing, then, whilst being a specific genre, can have many variations. For example, one biographer might add elements of fiction to his or her text (Taraborrelli's *Once Upon A Time – Behind the Fairy Tale of Princess Grace and Prince Rainier* [2003], for example). Yet another might recreate a person's life by mixing interviews with the subject with interviews of friends and acquaintances (Kelly's *Sean Penn – his life and times* [2004], for example). The list of possible differences is endless, yet there is one characteristic all biographies have in common: they have to remain faithful to reality, to the actual events of the subject's life, such as dates of birth, graduation from school, and so on.

This thesis stated that it is not adequate to label a text either *fiction* or *nonfiction*, as some texts lie somewhere between, and should rather be thought of as *creative nonfiction*. This led to this chapter's discussion of the fictional elements in the Kramer biography, and it argued that it is an accepted form of presenting a life, because sometimes there is not enough information available, or simply, it is easier to describe the life by using fiction

than merely making a list of the subject's achievements. This in turn led to the question of ethics: whether a subject might find such a biography offensive. The thesis made no final decision – it was felt that each text should be looked at individually for its merits, or lack thereof.

Other elements of biography writing such as influences on the author were looked at, as well as the author's approach to the subject – was he going to glorify Kramer or make him a villain?

Also considered was the part of the reader, the process of make-believe, accepting the written word as a plausible reality.

This chapter briefly looked at how intertextuality was used to give insight to the times in which Kramer grew up in.

Finally, and most importantly, this thesis investigated biography writing, and agreed with Nadel (1984:151) who claimed that it was impossible to pin biography down with one, easy definition.

6. CONCLUSION

David Kramer – an unauthorised biography proves that a traditionally nonfictive piece such as a biography can at times be written as fiction, yet be accepted by the reader.

There are a few pertinent aspects to making such a biography, the most important being that it was written as a piece of creative nonfiction. Secondly, the text at times used intertextuality.

As far as the creative nonfiction aspect to the biography goes, in *David Kramer – an unauthorised biography* a reader will accept the creative nonfiction passages as being true, as true as a piece of nonfiction. This is because the reader is presented with many true facts, such as the singer's name, amount of records sold, details of his career, and so on. Also, with the tool of intertextuality, "real" things such as photographs, song lyrics, et cetera, are presented to the reader, who might then more readily accept the sum of the biography to be factual. Now, the reader might well feel that the idea of creative nonfiction is less of a contradiction in terms.

Another vital aspect to the biography of this study was the bilingual nature of the text. The first reason for this was that Kramer often wrote Afrikaans lyrics, or at least a mixture of English and Afrikaans. The biography itself is also bilingual to illustrate the divisions in the South Africa at the time of Kramer's career written about, between

English and Afrikaans, black and white, liberal and conservative. This was used to recreate the cultural background Kramer and his audience found themselves in. For example, when Kramer does his compulsory military service, many of the passages are written in Afrikaans, to show that the military was predominantly Afrikaans-speaking. This is to remind the reader that the government of the time were Afrikaans-speaking, and at the time Afrikaans was often seen as the language of the oppressor. There should now be an added dimension when listening to the Afrikaans or English/Afrikaans lyrics of a Kramer song. Kramer did, after all, have a political side to his career.

This biography then, as well as other texts such as newspaper editorials, advertisements, and so on, seems to be able to exist in a world which is both fiction and nonfiction.

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