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'VICTIMS OF FOOLISH PLEASURE': FILM, ETHNOGRAPHY, AND COLOURED WOMEN MAKING MUSIC IN THE GREAT KAROO

LIZA JANE KEY

submitted in fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

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SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR CHRISTINE LUCIA

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DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dedicated to my mother, Marion who will be delighted that the production of this thesis has finally come to and end, to my friend Janice Honeyman who has put up with me for four years while I have tried to untangle the mysteries of academia, to Lara Allen for believing in me and to Christine Lucia, my brilliant supervisor, whose encouragement and support went way beyond the call of duty.

For the musicians of the Northern Cape who still play *die ou liedjies*.

In memory of:

Helena Nuwegeld
Siena Mouers
Jan Mouers
Magdalena Mouers
Koos Lof
Jan Willems
Dawid van Rooi

And a very special thanks to David and Renaye Kramer who introduced me to the world of Northern Cape music. And to John Kramer for the use of his photographs.

ABSTRACT

In 2003 I made a documentary film called *Karoo Kitaar Blues* with South African songwriter and guitarist, David Kramer, on the rare musicians, music, and instruments of scattered coloured communities in the Northern Cape. When I set out, seven years ago, to make the film I had no intention of making an ethnographic film or producing a visual ethnography in the anthropological sense (I am a documentary filmmaker), but two academic reviews, critical of its lack of 'ethnographic context' caught my intention. This dissertation attempts to respond to their critique. I explore the territory of visual anthropology and ethnographic methodology in order to understand why my film, with hindsight, is and is not 'ethnographic', and to establish how ethnographic practice could enhance my work as a filmmaker. I use *Karoo Kitaar Blues* as my visual monograph and examine the differences between ethnographic film and documentary (in the observational mode) with reference to ethnographic methodologies and theory in ethnomusicology, and consider how film can be used 'as' ethnography or 'in' ethnography. I conclude that *Karoo Kitaar Blues* film lies somewhere between ethnographic and observational filmmaking.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.



Liza Jane Key

(Name of Candidate)

2nd day of June 2011

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CHAPTER 1: FILM AND (MUSIC) ETHNOGRAPHY

> All over the world, on every continent and island...precious, totally irreplaceable, and forever irreproducible behaviours are disappearing, while departments of anthropology continue to send fieldworkers out with no equipment beyond a pencil and a notebook (Mead 1975: 4).
>
> Ethnographic film has been too long dominated by technical specialists and cinematic artists whose knowledge of the topic of their films is often limited to a few months of reading and scattered days of consulting with subject matter specialists. To borrow a military cliché, ethnographic film is too serious a thing to be left to filmmakers (Ruby 2000: 39).

Questions of aim, motivation, method

Assuming that the object of ethnography is to reveal as much as possible of the 'lived experiences' of ethnographic subjects, (Titon 1997: 87, Henley 2004: 114) and writing as someone principally interested in the medium of film, in this thesis I explore the contested area of visual anthropology (see for example El Guindi 2004, Loizos 2003, Mead 1975, Ruby 2000, Pink 2007) using my documentary film, *Karoo Kitaar Blues* as my 'visual monograph'.

By 'visual monograph' here I mean visual interpretation on film, and broadly speaking that interpretation works on two levels. One is the micro level of the lived experience of two ethnographic subjects who dominate the film, Helena Nuwegeld and Siena Mouers - and their families, communities, sufferings, and music making. The second is the macro level of 'film in ethnography', more specifically here, music ethnography. As will become clear during the course of the thesis, my position as a documentary filmmaker is not that of the anthropologist implied in the quotation from Margaret Mead (above), who uses film in the same way pencil and notebook were once used, as a tool for recording 'disappearing behaviours'. Nor is it that of the 'cinematic artist' whom Jay Ruby scorns for only superficially grasping subject matter which is manipulated to make a 'good film'. Nor, on the other hand, is my position that of the ethnographer for whom film is a non-interventionist medium allowing subjects to express themselves freely without mediation, as it is in some visual anthropology. My method in documentary filmmaking is to let the

film speak as text without undue interference, to use editing to create dialogue and allow resonances to emerge without forcing them.

What I do thus lies somewhere between documentary filmmaking and visual ethnography, and in Chapter 1 I begin to investigate the difference between the two (I continue this debate in chapter 5). I ask whether film can be used *as* ethnography (El Guindi 2004) or (only) *in* ethnography, and in the latter case, as a research tool for data collection and analysis (Hastrup: 2003) or as Peter Loizos puts it in relation to mainstream anthropology as a text 'gaining depth from [its] connectedness to other texts' (2003: 64).

In chapter 2 I describe my journey (seven years ago) through Namaqualand with songwriter, David Kramer[1] and slide guitarist Hannes Coetzee who were searching for a *blikviool* (tin can violin) player to perform in a concert. I explain how I initially used a non-interventionist, hands-off mode of filmmaking, in 'road movie' style, on this journey and why I changed to a more participatory documentary style, more in keeping with the reflexive dialogic practices of contemporary ethnography when I filmed two women musicians, Helena Nuwegeld and Siena Mouers, in Victoria West. In chapter 3 I construct fragmented 'life stories' of Nuwegeld and Mouers using excerpts from my diary and interviews I conducted with them. It is a retrospective account written in a mixture of the past tense and the ethnographic present. In chapter 4 I investigate expressions of rural coloured identity and gender in the dance and music of Helena Nuwegeld and Siena Mouers using James C Scott's notion of the hidden transcript. I examine three tropes that dominate the discourse of their hidden transcripts - race, class, and gender - and have selected two songs and a dance that feature regularly in their music making in which these tropes are embedded. Finally, in chapter 5 I attempt to assess the 'ethnographicness' of my film in the light of two academic reviews of *Karoo Kitaar Blues* (mentioned in chapter 2) and in what this dissertation has revealed. By producing a reflexive account of the filming process which together with the documentary itself and additional video clips (not included in the documentary) I show how film can be used 'in'ethnography as opposed to 'as' ethnography.

[1] David Kramer is one of South Africa's most well-known songwriters and performers. He is also a playwright and director of internationally reknowned musicals.

When I set out, on 10 March 2003, to make a film about musicians in the Northern Cape of South Africa called *Karoo Kitaar Blues*,[2] I had no intention of making an ethnographic film or producing a visual ethnography in the anthropological sense, even though the subject matter is germane to cultural anthropology and particularly ethnomusicology: music, musicians, and instruments. I am a documentary filmmaker, and in 2003, unfamiliar with the academic discipline of visual anthropology, I was following South African songwriter, guitarist and 'song collector' David Kramer on his travels across the Northern Cape to source new musicians for his next concert of Karoo *Kitaar Blues* at the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town.

Kramer had undertaken his original journey in 2000 'in the mould of the Lomax family',[3] as he put it (Kramer 2003b),[4] to record and document *die ou liedjies* (the old music/songs) played by elderly musicians in the area. For thousands of years, before white settlers arrived and appropriated their land, this semi-desert region was home to indigenous pastoralists and hunter-gatherers, the Khoi and the San, and it is their descendents who play the *ou liedjies*. I joined Kramer on a trip to Namaqualand when he was looking for a violinist to replace the recently deceased *blikviool* (tin can violin) player Japie Jaers. He agreed to let me film the journey.

My relationship with David Kramer is a complex one in terms of ethnographic research. I first met Kramer when I was invited by a friend to the premiere of his concert, *Karoo Kitaar Blues* on 10 April 2002.[5] Not a great fan of the guitar, or of Afrikaans folk music, I went along reluctantly. But from the moment Kramer walked onto the stage - the iconic landmark of a Karoo windmill back-projected onto a screen, a row of guitars gleaming on their pedestals - I was entranced, transported into a world and its people that I had not known existed.

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[2] The Northern Cape is the largest province in South Africa and the most sparsely populated.
[3] Alan Lomax was an American folklorist who collected thousands of songs in America and Europe using a coding system called cantometrics.
[4] These and similar quotations are from an interview I conducted with David Kramer on 8 October 2003. The interview is included as an extra on the DVD of *Karoo Kitaar Blues* (2003).
[5] *Karoo Kitaar Blues* (the concert) was performed at the Baxter Theatre from 12 to 23 March 2002 and then toured to the KKNK Festival in Oudtshoorn (2 to 5 April), the Port Elizabeth Opera House (2 to 4 May), then moved to the Nelson Mandela Theatre, Civic Theatre, Johannesburg from 28 May to 1 June 2002. The show had its premier in 2001. The CD, *Karoo Kitaar Blues* that was recorded live at the Baxter Theatre on the 3 November 2001, was launched on 12 March 2002 at the Baxter Theatre.

At the time I was considering a career-change, something more lucrative and less emotionally challenging than social documentary filmmaking. I was in the process of making a documentary on apartheid's chemical and biological warfare chief, Wouter Basson.[6] I had been sitting in Pretoria's Supreme Court for over a year attending Basson's trial. He was in the dock accused of 67 counts of murder, conspiracy to murder, embezzlement, drug trafficking, fraud and corruption. As the various charges arose I had been taking myself off with a cameraman and sound recordist to find victims and witnesses who would corroborate the allegations. We had tramped through mosquito-infested swamps outside Beira, in Mozambique, looking for the family of one of Basson's victims. We were later to discover that their reed and mud home had been washed away in devastating floods the year before and that their whereabouts were unknown. We flew up the Skeleton Coast of Namibia where Basson had been accused of ordering the disposal of 200 SWAPO (South West African Peoples Organization) prisoners of war by throwing their bodies from an aeroplane into the sea.[7] He had injected them with a lethal cocktail of powerful drugs before doing this. With the aid of a map drawn on the back of a Peter Stuyvesant cigarette carton by one of Basson's former operatives, Jacques Oosthuizen, we had found the foundations of a secret military base called Fort Rev near Oshakati where Basson was alleged to have tortured his victims. In an emotional interview with one of the few survivors of Fort Rev, a former SWAPO prisoner of war described the atrocities that had taken place there.[8] At the time of the concert I was not to know that twelve days later, on 22 April 2002, Basson would be acquitted on all charges and that he would never give me the interview he had promised me when the trial began.

Prior to my attempt to expose the illusive 'Dr Death', as he was known in the media, I had made a documentary that was emotionally demanding in another way, *A Question of Madness*.[9] It was about Dimitri Tsafendas, the parliamentary messenger who stabbed Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd to death in the House of Assembly in Cape Town in 1966. For his crime he spent the next twenty-eight years of his life in solitary confinement in Pretoria Central Prison. Not as challenging as the Basson documentary it was as time consuming: I had spent two years in Sterkfontein Psychiatric Hospital negotiating my way

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[6] *The Man Who Knows Too Much.* (2002) Liza Key, dir.; Key Films.
[7] SWAPO (South West African Peoples Organization) was a liberation movement formed in Namibia in 1960 to fight for Namibia's independence from the South African government.
[8] This former SWAPO freedom fighter prefers to remain anonymous.
[9] *A Question of Madness.* (1998) Liza Key, dir; Key Films.

through the erratic and damaged mind of Tsafendas, who was in the early stages of dementia.

But sitting in the Baxter Theatre that night listening to one extraordinary Northern Cape musician after another singing ballads about their lives and playing the piano accordion, *mondfluitjie* (mouth organ), guitars, and home made instruments, I knew that a documentary about these artists would be my next project; and that my career as a filmmaker was not over. In fact I became so agitated during the performance of *Karoo Kitaar Blues* that some other filmmaker in the audience might have the same idea, that I rushed back-stage after the show to speak to Kramer about making a documentary on the musicians and their music.[10] *Karoo Kitaar Blues* would thus be a serious departure from my interest - at the time - in making films about notorious South African political figures, and the first in a genre currently establishing itself, to which I think my documentary contributes, of telling South African stories of the past through music.[11]

It was also a departure from my normal style of filmmaking, where I use interviews and archive footage to tell the story. I had never before thrown myself headlong into the non-interventionist observational documentary mode where I hoped that by standing back, some details of the lives and music of Northern Cape musicians - whom I had never met - would be revealed. It seemed at the time, however, the perfect mode for following Kramer on his quest for musicians: I was, after all, not dealing with the ethnographic subjects directly but through Kramer. It was as much, initially, a film about Kramer as a film about them. Hence my initial 'hands-off' stance.

But when he started to get more involved with particular individuals and their music I became frustrated by the methodological restrictions of the non-interventionist observational mode and 'broke the rules', as I discuss in detail in chapter 2. It was no longer a 'road movie' filming Kramer's quest for a new musician, but was becoming a film about two women making music in an extremely marginal social environment. The film not only involved complexities in the making and deviations from what I regarded as the norm, but even after it was made it continued to be seen by different people in

[10] I spoke to Kramer rather than the Karoo performers, as he was the director and one of the producers of the show, acting as their agent or representative.
[11] Films I made after *Karoo Kitaar Blues* that use music as a vehicle to tell the story are *A Sentimental Journey* (2004) and *Rewind: A Cantata for Voice, Tape and Testimony* (2008).

different ways - including myself. It became a text subject to the kind of interrogation it is now receiving in this thesis. In a sense, it became, despite what I originally envisaged (a film about music and musicians), a film that is in many ways almost as political as those I had just made. The politics is far more embedded here, however, and is more than anything else the politics of survival in the extremely harsh, bleak world of the Northern Cape. What I discovered about that world was largely through the two women, Siena Mouers and Helena Nuwegeld, and what they expressed in song and through interviews about their lives became the focus of the thesis. The film's political levels also include David Kramer, his relationship with the musicians and especially the two women, and his relationship with me. My ambivalence towards him has grown as I have written this thesis: he remains a friend without whom neither the film nor the thesis would have been possible. He created the space in which several extraordinary musicians living in isolation, on the edge of poverty and despair, were suddenly able to express in public what they had all their lives expressed only in private. Yet Kramer's intervention is also inevitably the articulation of a relationship of power in which he was, and remains, the more powerful. My ambivalence towards Kramer, whose work I deeply admire, comes from this sense of his power, of his being both facilitator and exploiter, and evidence of it recurs in various ways throughout the thesis, especially over his (co-) authorship of the women's songs.

To return to the concert: using the device in staged entertainment of compère or master of ceremonies, Kramer introduced each musician by giving a short background to their lives and music practice. The musicians did not address the audience or speak. I only heard their voices when Helena Nuwegeld or Hannes Coetzee sang. Although clearly relaxed and comfortable with Kramer, judging from the smiles and nods and occasional joke that occurred between them, I wanted to know more about their lives, their life histories and their music. I wanted to hear them speak.

After the show, Kramer introduced me to his wife Renaye, co-producer of *Karoo Kitaar Blues*, and I spoke to her about making a documentary. Some months later I received a call from Kramer who told me that tin-can violinist, Japie Jaers, had died of a heart attack while riding his bicycle through the Kamiesberge to see his girlfriend near Nourivier.[12]

[12] Nourivier is a small Nama-Khoi settlement in the Kamiesberg-Leliefontien area of Namaqualand, and in

Kramer was planning another show and needed to find a replacement. He suggested that if I was still interested in making a documentary I should accompany him on his journey to Namaqualand in the Northern Cape to find a new violinist. He would also be spending some time in Victoria West with the Mouers family - Helena Nuwegeld, her sister, Siena Mouers, brother-in-law, Jan Mouers and brother, Koos Lof - whom he hoped to work with on new songs for the forthcoming concert.

I jumped at the opportunity, immediately went to work raising money for the documentary, and began researching Northern Cape music. The main funds were found surprisingly easily: from the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC 2) and the National Film and Video Foundation.[13] Moonlighting Filmmakers and Kramer's company Blik Music also made contributions. However, finding information on the musicians and their music was more difficult.

Researching Northern Cape music for the documentary

My first job - as a documentary filmmaker - was to find out if anyone else had made a film about the musicians. Director, Jan Horn had made a six-part television series, *Langpad*, on South African guitarists for *Kyknet* (M-Net) in 2000, which included the music of the Northern Cape and Karoo. The series was presented by Kramer and became the inspiration for his *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concert. In fact, *Langpad* should probably be credited as the first visual media work to draw attention to the existence of this music to people outside the communities who practice it. I only glanced through the series at the time as I had made a decision *not* to view it prior to shooting *Karoo Kitaar Blues*. I was concerned that I might be influenced by Horn's representation of the musicians: an aspect of my wanting to let my film speak as a visual monograph without the evidence of too many preconceived ideas. (Bear in mind that at this stage - 2002 - I was doing research for a documentary, not for this thesis.) Since the completion of *Karoo Kitaar Blues* in 2003, several other films have been made about Northern Cape music. They include two documentaries on Nama-Khoi singer, Grietjie Adams: *Grietjie van Garies* directed by

chapter 2 I expand on the socio-economic deprivation of this area. The tragic irony of the bicycle is, as I learnt from Kramer, that Jaers had bought it with some of the proceeds of the *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concerts.

[13] SABC 2 contributed R300 000 and the National Film and Video Foundation R100 000.

Odette Geldenhuys (2004) and '*GODESSA meet Tant Grietjie*' directed by Miki Redelinghuys for Plexus Films in Cape Town (2007). Johnny Clegg interviews musicians and *riel* dancers from Kimberley and Upington in Episode 3 of the Curious Pictures series, *A County Imagined* (2010).

In 2002 I found very little literature on contemporary coloured music of the Northern Cape. Various newspaper reviews and one magazine article with Kramer on the *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concerts included potted histories of the musicians and their music (see for example Behr 2002: 48-49).[14] The only other references I could find on the contemporary musical culture of this region were in writer Elias P. Nel's descriptions of the *riel* dance in his book of short stories, *Iets Goeds Uit Verneukpan?* (1998: 63).[15]

> *Die riel het, so vertel die oumense, in die meeste gevalle te doen met 'n liefdespel tussen 'n jong man en meisie. Op die dansbaan (nie vloer nie, want die riel word meesal op die oop veld gedans) word hierdie hofmakery uitgebeeld deur diere en insekte na te maak. Die oumense het altyd na 'n dans as 'n 'speel' verwys, miskien omdat die hofmakery van diere speel-speel nageboots word. Daar is verskillende variasies van die riel waarin diere en insekte nageboots word.*
> [The reel, so say the old people, in most instances is a love game between a young boy and girl. On the dance space (not a floor as the reel is mostly danced in the open veld), the courting is performed by emulating animals and insects. The old people always referred to a dance as a 'game' perhaps because they always playfully mimicked the courting of animals. There are different variations of the reel in which animals and insects appear (transl. Liza Key).][16]

Only later, in 2009, did I learn that a *rieldans* competition has been held annually since 2006, at the Taal Monument in Paarl (see atkvprojekte.co.za/*riel*dans/index.php, accessed 10 December 2010).

I speak more about the *riel* and its importance as a marker of identity, in chapter 4. By 2002 all I had learnt was that components of this *riel* dance could be traced back to the

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[14] Behr, Mike. 'Karoo Blues' in *Songlines*, Issue #13, July/August 2002, pages 48-49. Further examples include: 'Its the Hottest Ticket in Town', Christina Kennedy, *The Citizen*, 30 May 2002, 'Desert Blooms with Music: Touring musicians play rare songs from South Africa', Dina Kraft, *Los Angeles Times*, 26 July 2002, 'Theatre Pick of the Week', Guy Willoughby, *Mail and Guardian* May 31 to June 6 2002, 'Review: Karoo Kitaar Blues', Peter Feldman, *Artslink*, 29 May 2002 (http://www.artlink.co.za/news_article.htm?contentID=17248, accessed 12 February 2011), 'Kitaar Blues' laat vel kriewel', Pieter van Zyl, *Die Burger*, 22 April 2002 (http://152.111.1.87/argief/berigte/dieburger/2002/04/22/12/14.html, accessed 12/February 2011).

[15] Whenever Afrikaans is used in references or interviews it is given in italics followed by a translation in English.

[16] All translations from interviews and literature have been done by Liza Key unless otherwise indicated.

18th and 19th centuries in traveller accounts and other colonial literature. Looking through my mother's library I found - between her editions of Hedley Chilvers' romantic history of the Witwatersrand, *Out of The Crucible* (1929) and homages to Cecil John Rhodes and Jan Smuts - a more recent reference to early San dance practice, in travel writer Lawrence Green's *On Wings of Fire*: 'The women clapping and singing formed the orchestra at a dance. They [the male dancers] danced happily under the new moon for they welcomed the light after darkness. They mimicked the whole animal world, from the lion to the gemsbok, grimacing like baboons, squatting like frogs, or becoming a realistic swarm of bees' (Green 1967: 166).

Most exciting for me at the time was finding a similar description of this dance in mygrandfather's edition of late 19th-century geologist, historian, artist and ethnographer George Stow's *The Native Races of South Africa*:

> In others they were so dressed as to represent a particular animal, when the dance was called by its name; such was the *t'Gorlo'ka,* the *Man-nia,* or Baboon dance, in which the performers imitated all the actions and droll grimaces of rival baboons, springing, gambolling and running upon all fours, chattering and grimacing like a troop of excited *simiadae*. Another, and one which also appeared a favourite amongst them, was the *'Kloo-rou-o,* or *Frog-dance,* in which they squatted and leaped, and rolled about like a lot of inebriated batrachians' (Stow 1964: 117).

Although Stow's patronising (if not racist) description of the dance of the Bushmen at the end of the 19th century bore very little similarity to the music making I had seen in *Karoo Kitaar Blues*, the emulation of animal behaviour and the handclapping in Nel's contemporary representation of the *riel,* were clearly fragments of a past tradition. Reading Carolyn Hamilton seven years later she confirms that these are 'fragments of Nama memory [that] inhabit the marginal spaces of everyday social practices and places' (Hamilton 2002, 223). I hoped that we would be lucky enough to see a performance of the *rieldans* during the film shoot.

On the other hand, I found that Percival Kirby's photographs of Bushmen violins (1968 plate 71) and *ramkies* (1968 plate 72) in his book, *The Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South Africa* (1968) looked remarkably like the instruments I had seen on the stage: the *blikviool* played by Japie Jaers and the *ramkie* by Tokas Lodewyk. The earliest written description of a bushman *ramkie* is quoted in Kirby (1968: 249) from the diary of

O.F. Mentzel, who was in the Cape between 1733 and 1741. According to Mentzel it is a 'Hottentot' instrument:

> It consists of a body formed from the lower half of a calabash or wild pumpkin. A stave two fingers broad and an ell long, with a pointed and tapering end, is thrust through the middle of the half calabash and secured to it. A little piece of sheepskin, from which the wool has been entirely removed, is, after having been softened in water, stretched over the half calabash and made fast to it, so that when dry it is tightly strained and serves as a resonator. To the thin end of the stave which passes through the calabash and projects from its other side, three strings of gut of different thicknesses [*stärke*] are bound, which, as on a violin, are drawn over a little bridge, and fastened to and strained by three small screw-pegs [*wirbel*] set into three holes which have been bored through the broad end. [T]he Hottentots [can] produce nothing but the three sounds of these gut strings, ... striking them three times in succession. One might describe this as 3/4, 4/4 and 5/4 time (Kirby 1968: 249-250).

In 1804, again according to Kirby, a certain Captain Percival describes a young 'Cape Hottentot woman' accompanying a group of male dancers on her '*gabowie*':

> I was highly entertained by seeing a number of Hottentots dance to an instrument played by a young woman. It was a piece of deal board, three feet long and one broad; four or five strings of brass wire were stretched along it, and supported by bridges or bits of upright wood, like those of our fiddles. In this rude sort of guitar which they called a *gabowie,* was inserted a piece of looking-glass, of which they are immoderately fond ... She kept touching the strings with a quill, whilst a dozen of the men formed a ring around her, dancing and violently beating the ground with feet and sticks, they continued also incessantly to place themselves in the most grotesque attitudes, yet with still some reference to the player (in Kirby 1968: 251).

Reflecting now on what I found out in my research then, in 2002, I see how easy it is to regard these accounts as 'historical' forgetting that they are dismissive narrative traces written by travellers, administrators, and other colonial agents. As Nigel Penn says, 'recorded history is usually what dominant cultures leave behind them as they relegate the dominated to the shadowy status of people without history' (Penn 2005: 2). Two hundred years after Captain Percival's account, Khoisan revivalist movements are calling for 'the restoration of Khoisan identity and dignity as people' (Ibid: 123). The nuances of coloured identity politics raised by this issue I only gradually became aware of, and are refered to several times in this thesis. This awareness however does little more than graze the surface of a highly contentious, highly complex and explosive topic. One point, for example, which I return to later, is that some of my informants did not regard themselves as coloured.

These early descriptions of musical practices, flawed as they are, were nevertheless valuable resources for me at the time, for from these accounts I could sense how to find evidence of past traditional musical practice in contemporary performance, especially in dance, and in Thurnberg's description of instruments. The *rabékin* in 1795 appears to have similar characteristics to a Korana *ramkie* on display in the Kirby collection at the University of Cape Town (plate 72): 'The *rabékin* is a kind of guitar', Kirby says, 'made from a calabash and a straight plank, and furnished with three or four strings which are tightened by means of screws. The Hottentots play upon this instrument with their fingers' (Kirby Ibid).

Kramer was particularly interested in a plucked lute chordophone from the early 1870s collected by Bleek and Lloyd in the Kirby collection (UCT KC KK8), as Deirdre Hansen has put it, 'made from cardboard and wood by "/abo" [perhaps //Kabbo?]' (Hansen 1996: 298). This instrument is remarkably similar in structure to the homemade *blikviool* played by Japie Jaers 130 years later in the first season of *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concerts (see Figure 1). 'Note the similarity of the carved necks and heads. Japie's is a 3-string. //Khabbo's a 4-string. As you can see not much has changed apart from the use of an oil can resonator' (Kramer 2002).[17]

A representation in San rock art of a musician playing a multi-stringed hunting bow with an unattached gourd acting as a resonator (Skotnes 1996: 313, Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1999: inside front and back cover; see Figure 2), could be an early version of a *ramkie.*

Kramer questioned Kirby's opinion (a view he shared with early travellers) that the provenance of the *blikviool* is not Africa, but Europe: that it is a rough replica of the four-stringed western violin brought to the Cape by Europeans 'at a very early date' (Kirby 1968: 246). See for example the very detailed description by W.J. Burchell in 1822 (Ibid: 247). Likewise, Kramer doubted that the *ramkie* was a version of the three-stringed lute with calabash resonator brought to the colony by the Malabar slaves in the 17th or early 18th century (Kirby 1968: 249, quoting O.F. Mentzel). Kirby suggests its origins were Portuguese because 'the Malabar coast had long been under Portuguese influence' (Ibid:

[17] These and similar quotations are from an interview I conducted with David Kramer in July 2002 for the film proposal of *Karoo Kitaar Blues.*

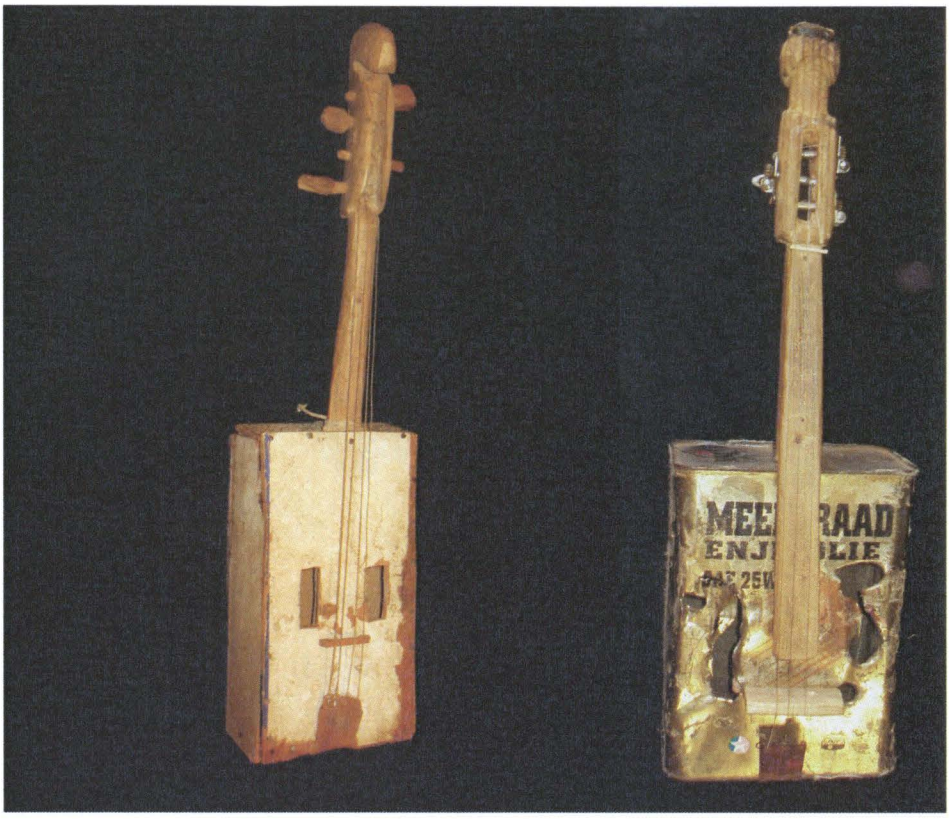


Figure 1: Photograph of Bowed Lute made by //Kabbo c1870-75 (Hansen 1996: 298; left) and *blikviool* made by Japie Jaers in 2001 (right)
(photographs courtesy David Kramer and Kirby Collection, UCT)

250). Hansen, on the other hand, has described the *ramkie* as an 'early form of a long-necked plucked lute with three, and later four strings, and tuning pegs' which early travellers most often associated with the Khoikhoi (Hansen 1996: 302). But as she points out, an early *ramkie* in the Kirby collection (K 189 A) and a description by the Rev. Mr Thompson of a 'Bushwoman playing the *raamakie* in 1823 at a place called 'Bloem Fonteyn' in the Roggeveld' provides evidence that the San also played the instrument (Ibid). Moreover, Hansen suggests that it was 'not originally a copy of the guitar, although later in its development it acquired certain guitar features, notably a *capo tasto*' (Ibid).

In Kramer's view: 'Bowed and plucked musical instruments have been around in West and East Africa for centuries. Why does everything always have to come from the outside? There is evidence that the Khoisan were playing a three-stringed instrument called the *gabowie* which was typically African in the seventeen hundreds' (Kramer 2002). In *Africa and the Blues* ethnomusicologist Gerhard Kubik confirms the view that

there are African origins to certain instruments, when he proposes that the American banjo and fiddle, which are Western in structure, are conceptually an extension of the



Figure 2: Section of a tracing of a southern Drakensberg rock painting showing a man playing a musical bow
(Lewis Williams 1996: 313; copy by T.A Dowson)

bowed and plucked lutes found in West Sudan, Cameroon, Northern Nigeria and Senegambia, and the one-stringed fiddle or *goje* played by Hausa minstrels (Kubik 1999: 8-11).

Kramer was however not only interested in the instruments, but in the musicians and their background. In the next *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concert (May, 2003), for example Kramer was to introduce the Mouers family as 'coming all the way from Victoria West' (in the Karoo) and *ramkie* player Tokas Lodewyk from (nearby) Richmond. Where they come from historically is a more complex matter than what they play. Stow has described, the Korana Khoi under the leadership of their great chief, Eikomo, migrating north as the colonists encroached on their territory:

> From that place he went still further north, until he arrived amongst a numerous tribe of Bushmen who were wandering on the banks of the 'Gariep. Here he entered into a treaty with these people, and settled in the country ... It was from this point that the Korana clans began to separate and spread themselves, some continuing along the river-valley, others migrating into the Middle Veld, near the present Richmond and Victoria West, where they remained until they appear to have lost all tradition about the Great river (1968: 269).

Was it possible, I asked myself in 2002, that that these *Karoo Blues* musicians could be descendents of the San and Korana Khoi migrants who lived in the area for over two hundred years?

When I finally set out to shoot the documentary - contracts signed and sealed - I was extremely curious about and interested in the music and musicians, but I had yet to meet them. I had a smattering of knowledge of contemporary Northern Cape music drawn from the sources mentioned above, fragments from Kramer on the life stories of the six musicians I was going to meet in Victoria West, and accounts of the *riel* dance by Nel. From the historic record I had found anecdotal descriptions of early instruments and dance from 18th century traveller journals, depictions of plucked instruments in San rock art and evidence of Khoisan presence in the Victoria West area where the Lof and Mouers families lived, and in Richmond where Lodewyk still lives today.

It was only later, in 2003, when I had already completed shooting the documentary (*Karoo Kitaar Blu*es) and was editing it, that I came across a journal article on the Karretjie People (donkey cart people) of the Northern Cape written by Michael de Jongh (2002). I was struggling to understand recurring themes in the lyrics of Helena Nuwegeld's songs, and in chapter 4 I expand on that understanding with hindsight. For now, I simply flag that although de Jongh's study is not directly referenced in my documentary, it gave me the necessary background to confidently highlight, in the film, the lyrics of songs as representations of the historical and social history of Nuwegeld's family and community. In his study of these modern nomads he describes the itinerant sheep-shearing *karretjie mense* as:

> People of the arid Great Karoo of South Africa [who] are of the poorest of the poor and represent a rural underclass ... Although they have for generations rendered an important service to the agricultural economy of the sheep-farming Karoo, they have at best, largely remained socio-economically 'invisible' to the local population, or at worst, strangers in their own land (de Jongh 2002: 2).

The following song I found particularly significant. It is in Afrikaans, the home language of the Mouers family and 68 % of the population of the Northern Cape (http://www.encounter.co.za/article/230.html, accessed 10 January, 2011). Later, I discuss the tension between the different versions of songs we encountered and Kramer's need to

establish a particular version as a 'composition' for the concert. I analyse this and other songs in Chapter 4.

Ons is vermaak se maksels	We come from foolish pleasure
Ons is trek eiland se boesmans	We are the wandering bushmen of the island
Dit is baie swaar	It is really tough going
As jy kannie ma se,	If you can't say mama,
Jou kannie pa se	You can't say papa.
Toe ons op die eiland loop staan	We went to stand on the island
Toe staan ons bloot alleen	We stood there all alone
Nou ons is niemand se vriend nie	Now we are nobody's friend
Trane is vir my	Tears are for me
Hartseer is vir jou	Heartache is for you
Ons is vermaak se maksels	We are objects of ridicule
Verwyd se honne gaan ons bly	The dogs of rejection we will stay
My trane rol	My tears roll
Groot riviere vol.	The big rivers fill

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Vermakse Maksels,* transl. David Kramer 2003 © Blik Music)[18]

Fieldwork as road trip

In Chapter 2, I describe our journeys to Namaqualand and the Great Karoo regions of the Northern Cape and discuss the different methodologies and documentary styles I used to make *Karoo Kitaar Blues* the documentary. For the purposes of this dissertation, I consider the whole shoot - mainly on the road - as my main 'field' trip, for nothing else that could be called fieldwork in the ethnographic sense preceded the shooting of *Karoo Kitaar Blues.*

I must stress that this is not normal practice in documentary filmmaking. The research phase - the discovery of cultural knowledge and analysis of data - usually plays a vital role in determining the process of structuring the proposal and treatment of a film. For various reasons I did not do a 'recce' before shooting *Karoo Kitaar Blues.* In filmmaking going on a recce (shortened form of 'reconnaissance') is the research period prior to shooting a film and can include anything from location and accommodation hunting and checking out light and sound conditions to meeting and getting to know interviewees. With Kramer's microbus at the centre of the action we had no way of knowing exactly where were going or who we would find, and therefore the road trip was the 'recce'. For

[18] Unless otherwise stated song translations are by David Kramer.

ethnographers, I discovered later, the 'recce' is vital, encompassing the function of preliminary, preparatory work on the literature and the beginning of actual fieldwork itself.

On our trip to Namaqualand (from 10 to 16 March 2003), I was working in what I call the 'road documentary' genre or what is more commonly known as a 'road movie'. This becomes, in this thesis, the material for a deeper reflection on what I was doing as an 'ethnographer' and constitutes what in ethnographic terms is my main field data. I drew on features common to most road movies, whether documentary or fiction, such as *Don't Look Back (1967)*,[19] *Paris Texas* (1984), and *Almost Famous* (2000).[20] An (un-credited) article on the website *Film Reference* describes the elements of a road movie that give it its specific style, thus:

> The iconography of interstate highways and border crossings [and] related visual motifs …(of) vast, open landscapes and expansive, seductive horizon lines. Highway signs, motels, diners, and gas stations also recur for various plot twists… the moving camera helps represent plot-driven motion and also affords the viewer a kinetic sense of being on the road. Another of the genre's signature means of enhancing the cinematic sensation of driving is an exuberant music track - usually rock and roll, with its back-beat propelling the journey (http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Independent-Film-Road-Movies, accessed 6th January, 2011).

In *Karoo Kitaar Blues*, the 'exuberant music track' I use, which enhances 'the cinematic sensation of driving', is Kramer's song, *Die Kruispad*. It is used extra-diegetically, in the sense Bruce Kawin means when he says 'that which comes from the outside world of the story and is not accessible to the characters but is still part of the discourse, for example '[a] voice-over narration or a "commentative" music track' (Kawin 1992: 545). In my film *Karoo Kitaar Blues* this song is sung over visuals of the 'Volksie Bus' travelling through the Karoo at sunset.

Dit is pikswart daarbo	Its pitch black up there
Dis 'n donker Karoo	Its dark in the Karoo
Ek het baie om te se	I have a lot to say
Maar niemand wil my glo	But no-one will believe me
Niemand will my glo nie	No-one believes me

[19] *Don't look Now* (1967) is a documentary by D.A Pennebaker that follows Bob Dylan's 1965 tour of England.

[20] *Paris Texas* (1984) directed by Wim Wenders is about man who loses his memory and wanders off into the desert. Starring Harry Dean Stanton. *Almost Famous* (2000) directed by Cameron Crowe tells the story of a high school boy journalist following a rock group on tour.

Di hemel hettie vloer nie	There is no floor in heaven
God sittie op 'n troon nie	No throne for god to sit on
Die hemel issie so nie	Heaven's not like that
Maar dit mag ekkie sê nie	But I'm not allowed to say that
Niemand wil dit hê nie	No-one wants to hear it
Die plekke waar ek slaap	The places that I sleep
Wil niemand anders lê nie	No-one dares go near
Hulle sê ek ken die duiwel	They say I know the devil
En die die duiwel ken my naam	And the devil knows my name
Hy't gemaak met my net wat hy wil	That I fell under his influence
Toe ek onner innie kruispad staan.	When I went down to the crossroads.

(David Kramer, *Kruispad* © Blik Music)

In Victoria West (from 25 to 30 March 2003) I continued, for a while, to use what I have referred to earlier as the non-interventionist observational documentary mode, where I maintained an unobtrusive position behind the camera. (In visual anthropology this would be regarded as 'film as ethnography'. Kramer acted as my mediator and the person who made access to the informants possible.

I had not met the Mouers/Lof families prior to filming as Kramer had known and worked with them for two years and therefore had no reason to visit Victoria West before the shoot. They had given their permission for the documentary to be made on condition that Kramer was present. However, during the shoot in Victoria West I broke with my non-interventionist strategy and took on a more participatory approach. I discuss this approach in chapter 5, for it relates strongly to what I later discovered to be the self-reflexive turn ethnography took in the wake of James Clifford and others' intervention around reflexive writing strategies (see Clifford 1988). (I explain below why I focus in my thesis on my interviews with Nuwegeld and Mouers, out of the people I interviewed on film.) My work 'behind camera' on the shoot allowed me the position of non-participant observer as in 'old style' anthropology where a distinction is made between the researcher and the researched; but the interventive turn (introducing interviews), while more participatory, still did not amount to 'participation' in the ethnographic sense of learning the songs, playing the instruments of my research subjects, and living with them over an extended period of time. Learning the instruments was still a role reserved for Kramer, who has also 'lived with' his informants in the sense that he has known them and shared their problems for several years although he has not 'lived with' them literally.



Figure 3: David Kramer and myself outside the town hall,
Victoria West, 2003 (photograph courtesy John Kramer)

This description of events that happened in 2003, seven years before the writing of this thesis, in many respects constitutes my fieldwork and my data, as I mentioned above, and when I describe it now, I am describing process and product. A question I return to later in the thesis is, can this be regarded as fieldwork in the ethnographic sense, even with hindsight? At the time, it was the shooting period of making a documentary. When I sat down seven years later to write these descriptions of filming *Karoo Kitaar Blues*, my memories of the production process were vague. But as one does when making a film, you keep everything.

Stored away on the top shelf of a cupboard in my study were two cardboard boxes filled with materials from the shoot: my journal in which I noted down dates and places and impressions of the landscape, the people, and my personal observations. There were two thick files containing transcribed and translated transcripts of conversations between Kramer and the musicians[21] and my interviews with the Victoria West musicians and Hannes and Sheila Coetzee in Herbertsdale. Two logbooks describing - in detail with time code - forty hours of filmed footage and an envelope of photographs taken by John Kramer, David's brother. There were six mini-disc recordings of music from the shoot and the concert and newspaper cuttings of concert reviews. But most important were my rushes (or raw filmed footage) that have enabled me to relive the experience of seven

[21] Kramer made relevant transcriptions of songs, diagrams of notations and descriptions of different tunings available to me from his notebook.

years ago and describe in detail the extraordinary journey that we undertook to make the film, *Karoo Kitaar Blues*.

The aftermath of *Karoo Kitaar Blues*

After the 2003 concerts at the Baxter Theatre that played to sold-out houses, Kramer and his wife Renaye produced one more season of *Karoo Kitaar Blues* at Spier Amphitheatre in 2006.[22] I completed *Karoo Kitaar Blues* the documentary and it screened at the Sithengi Film Festival in Cape Town in November 2003 as its closing night film. At the Sithengi premier all the participant musicians attended and were given a copy of the film on VHS. Unfortunately it was one of those dreadful occasions that started late and dragged on for hours with tributes to dead filmmakers, government ministers imprinting their hands in clay to ensure their immortality, and sponsors waxing lyrical about their own generosity and contribution to the future of the film industry. By the time the film started at 11pm the musicians were snoring quietly in their seats and for a large number of the audience bed called and they started slipping out of the side doors of the theatre.

With very little sleep the musicians graciously set off early the next morning on their journey back home - an eleven-hour drive through the Karoo and Namaqualand, to a world where fancy events and self-important bureaucrats have no value. A month later - a finalist for the Joris Ivens Award - *Karoo Kitaar Blues* had its European premier at the International Film Festival of Amsterdam. At the screenings there was not a government spokesperson in sight. Just filmmakers and audiences filled the theatres and gave the film and its subjects their due. If only the musicians had been there: this could have been an eleven-hour journey not wasted.

Karoo Kitaar Blues went on to other international film festivals including the Margaret Mead Film Festival in New York (2004) and the Tiburon Film Festival in San Francisco where it won 'Best Music Documentary' (March 2006). It was broadcast on

[22] *Karoo Kitaar Blues* season at the Spier Amphitheatre: 3, 4, 9, 10, 11 March 2006.

Scandinavian, US, UK, South African, and Canadian television and was - and still is - distributed commercially on DVD.[23]

And that would have been the end of it, had I not read two academic reviews of my documentary, which had been sent to me by my distributor in New York. The first was by historian Christopher J. Lee, the second by archivist John Bewley:

> This documentary about a folk music indigenous to the Karoo region of South Africa raises as many questions in my mind as it answers. Of course, this can be seen as a positive or negative attribute depending on your point of view. In a positive light, the film successfully piqued my interest in an area and its people. Those seeking a complete educational package about the Karoo region, the Karretjie people, and the musical issues presented during the course of the film will be frustrated by the lack of thorough background information. But, this may not be a fair criticism of a documentary film intended to stand alone on its own merits (Lee 2005; 155 my emphasis).

> As perhaps expected, the exact origins of this music and the individual histories of the players are somewhat elusive. Interviews reveal that most are self-taught, having learned their craft by watching and imitating older relatives and friends. Though many of the musicians would be considered 'coloured' (mixed race), *the social history and the impact of twentieth-century politics on these scattered rural communities did not come through.* Entertainment value for the most part supplants the concerns of academic enquiry (Bewley 2006, my emphasis).[24]

Their critiques about the 'lack of background' on the 'social history' and 'impact of politics' on 'scattered rural communities' made me realise that there clearly was an expectation of documentary films in academic circles that *Karoo Kitaar Blues* did not live up to. There was a suggestion in these reviews that documentary film need not necessarily show or imply all this 'background', but that by not doing so, by not engaging with the social and political issues, the film only had 'entertainment value'. I wondered whether these were fair criticisms – as Lee himself wonders - and if so, whether I could learn from methods relevant to anthropology. I was so intrigued by these criticisms that I decided to register at Wits University for a Masters degree. I was admitted, with the proviso that I register for a semester course in Ethnomusicology with Wits lecturer Brett Piper in 2006. Following this, my Masters proposal was accepted in August 2007 and I began a Masters degree by thesis.

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[23] Two versions, a 54-minute cut for television broadcast and a 90-minute director's cut, of *Karoo Kitaar Blues* are available commercially. The package includes additional interviews, as extras, with David Kramer and musicians who did not appear in the film (see www.davidkramer.co.za).

[24] http://libweb.lib.buffalo.edu/emro/search.html, accessed 20th January, 2006.

I had not been to university for 30 years, and to find myself sitting in a small class with students less than half my age, articulating theory in an academic discourse that was alien to me, was daunting. My last experience of anthropology was the structuralist school of Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown back in the dark ages of the 1970s, when the 'critical turn' was still a few years away. Week after week I ploughed through music ethnographies by *inter alia* John Blacking (1973), Paul Berliner (1978), John Miller Chernoff (1979), Steven Feld (1990), Christopher Waterman (1990), David Coplan (1994), Veit Erlmann (1996), and Louise Meintjies (2003). I began to look at the role of film in visual anthropology, and tried (a number of times) to show *Karoo Kitaar Blues* to my classmates, but there was little interest. I had read El Guindi (2004) and Anna Grimshaw (2001) on the history of visual anthropology, and it seemed as though a century-long dispute over the pros and cons of using visual material in anthropology still haunted the discipline. This now became my focus of interest. When our class was asked to present papers at the 19th [South African] Symposium on Ethnomusicology, at UCT, I took the gap. In a paper called *Using Film as an Ethnographic Tool* I laid the groundwork for myself to begin investigating the use of film 'in' or 'as' ethnography.[25] That paper became the basis for this thesis.

After my presentation at UCT, I was asked by a Cape Town academic who had previously seen my documentary, why I had depicted coloured people as drunks in the film. I was thrown by this question, partly because I had been careful to draw attention away from the abuse of alcohol by three of the musicians in the film and comment, rather, on the relation between alcohol abuse and poverty and unemployment in Victoria West, and partly because I was not 'depicting' as in 'representing' coloured people. This was my first exposure to a critique of representation, one that my film like so many documentaries and ethnographies brings up, and which is a key issue in the debate about 'ethnographic authority' raised by James Clifford (1988). On one level, my entire film, indeed the entire project of David Kramer, everything written, performed, or filmed as a result of the exchange we had with the musicians, is, despite my (naïve) intention to be 'hands-off', a representation. What Clifford calls 'the making of ethnographic texts' (Clifford 1986: 2) was prescisely what Kramer and I were doing. On another level, Kramer's intervention

[25] I selected excerpts from *Karoo Kitaar Blues* to illustrate my argument but unfortunately, as seems to happen whenever visual technology is required on such occasions the projector did not work. I had to rely on verbal descriptions, which defeated the object of the exercise.

was more extensive than mine: I was 'recording', he was 'interfacing'. Yet as filmmaker it was I, not he, who was creating the partial truths that constitute what Clifford calls 'fictions in the sense of something "made or fashioned"' (Ibid: 6). In this sense my inclusion of scenes where alcohol was used - or even my exclusion of them - is a representation: both of my 'subjects' and of myself as 'authority'.

Aside from my own continuing history of engagement with *Karoo Kitaar Blues* there have been two academic studies on rural coloured music since the completion of the film that investigate the social processes and cultural histories that have influenced the acculturation of coloured music in the Karoo and Eastern Cape. I briefly survey these here and some of the literature relevant to my study, returning later to some of the issues they raise (see chapter 4). Marie Jorritsma's *Sonic Spaces: Inscribing Coloured Voices in the Karoo* (2006) and an article for SAMUS (2008) by Jorritsma, investigate coloured identity and social history in the Graaff-Reinet area, through the sounds and spaces of religious performance culture. Jorritsma did her fieldwork in the coloured township of Kroonvale outside Graaff-Reinet, interviewing members of a church choir and singers from a local women's society. She recorded their hymns and songs and drew on secondary sources from local and regional archives. Although my study focuses on secular folk music of an area of the Karoo much further north with clear roots in early San musical practice and Jorritsma's research 'suggests stronger connections with Xhosa music and the hymnody of missionary Christianity' than mine (2006: 10), their social histories share a lot in common.

Boudina Coetzer's article 'Langarm in and around Grahamstown: The dance, the social history and the music' reports on how the dance form *langarm* is practised by the coloured community in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape (2005: 70-83). Like Jorritsma, her work is situated in a community in a small town rather than a totally rural setting, and is even further south than Graaff-Reinet, hence much further south than my areas of study. But it is nevertheless a study of a secular music practice, like mine.

Otherwise, the literature on South African coloured music and identity that I have grown aware of in the past few years is focused on urban coloured experience that does not resonate with the scattered, tiny communities I worked with hundreds of kilometres further north. Sylvia Bruinders' recent work on Christmas Bands (2006: 119 and 2007:

109-126), the marching band tradition that has annual street parades and competitions (as in the 'Coon Carnival'), shows that the history of this practice is deeply embedded in the history of slavery and militarism at the Cape, meaning Cape Town. The bands, the communities they come from, and the social and political issues they represent, are all integral, Bruinders shows, to the formation and contestation of 'Coloured' identity; but it is an urban identity, intimately bound up with the history of and struggle for political and social recognition in the greater Cape Town area.

Denis-Constant Martin's study of the carnival tradition similarly, looks at how that tradition was 'shaped by the experience of slavery and the development of a cosmopolitan creole culture that came not only from people living at the Cape but from various outsiders' (1999: 50). In the 2nd edition of *In Township Tonight*, David Coplan refers to the influence of Cape coloured music on *marabi*, a black working class musical and dance tradition that evolved on the Rand in the late 19th century (2009: 114-119). In passing, he mentions slave culture in Cape Town and the introduction of the *ramkie* that he believes was brought to South Africa by Malabar slaves (Ibid: 15). (As we have seen, David Kramer disputes this).

Having set the scene for the making of *Karoo Kitaar Blues* and its aftermath, I now turn to a description of my 'fieldwork': the road trip to Namaqualand and Victoria West in the Great Karoo. Some of the issues it raised in relation to my two main ethnographic subjects, Helena Nuwegeld and Siena Mours are further developed in chapters 3 and 4, which in many ways constitute the 'background' deemed lacking in the documentary. I focus here (in this thesis) on these two women musicians rather than on other musicians in the documentary, for a number of reasons: (1) according to Kramer the existence of women guitarists in the Northern Cape is atypical. It is a role usually reserved for men, (2) Nuwegeld and Mouers composed their own songs – unlike the musicians who we had met on our journey who played *die ou liedjies* (3) I was able to spend more time with them than any of the other musicians on the film shoot and (4) I had seen them perform in two *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concerts and was familiar with their music. The only other women musician in the film was Sheila Coetzee who accompanied her husband, Hannes Coetzee on the guitar but did not compose her own music. And unlike Mouers she was not a particularly accomplished musician.

In the final chapter, chapter 5, I return to the way methodologies diverge (or not) in the making of documentary and ethnographic film.

CHAPTER 2: MAKING A 'ROAD DOCUMENTARY'

> The filmic project, in [Frederick] Wiseman's words becomes a '"natural history" of American life all the more valuable because it' refuses to take sides, cast blame or offer solutions. The finished works can then be understood as 'unanalyzed data,' the accretions of a 'statistical survey' with filmmakers cast in the role of field workers 'with a camera instead of a notebook' (cited in Arthur 1993: 120).

.In this chapter I do not narrate the story of the entire film shoot. It would be too lengthy. I have rather selected highlights from the three journeys that most aptly illustrate the filmmaking mode and the methodologies I used, and give a sense of the place, the space, the music and the people of the Northern Cape: (1) we travelled to Namaqualand with Kramer on his quest to find a *blikviool* player; (2) in Victoria West we observed Kramer working with the Mouers family on new songs for the *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concert; and (3) in Cape Town we followed the musicians experiencing the city, recording a CD,[26] and having publicity photographs taken for the *Karoo Kitaar Blues* which would be happening at the Baxter Theatre on 10th May, 2003.

Observational documentary: The camera as notebook

At 15h15 on the 10 March 2003, eight of us set off for Namaqualand in the Northern Cape: four in Kramer's signature 'Volksie Bus',[27] with Japie Jaers' *blikviool* packed away in the back and four in a hired microbus with a trailer attached for the film equipment. Kramer was accompanied by Hannes Coetzee, who had featured in all *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concerts, astonishing audiences with his unique method of playing slide guitar using a teaspoon clenched between his gums.[28] He would assist Kramer in his search for a *blikviool* player.

> I took Hannes along because he acted as a bridge. The people we met could see in Hannes somebody who had worked with me and who could vouch for the experience he had had with me. He also excited people with his playing

[26] The CD of the music recorded at Glen Beach Studios on 3 April 2003 is not yet published.
[27] Kramer was the (advertising) face of the Volkswagen microbus for many years. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_RAXodCwT0&NR=1, accessed 10 January 2010.
[28] Coetzee comes from Herbertsdale, a small village near Mossel Bay in the southern Cape. His playing can be seen on http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PECpA9a_2zQ, accessed 5 February 2011.

> technique. Hannes performed more than one function. He created an access to people that he was much more familiar with than I was. On a previous trip I had seen how Hannes approached them and talked to them: the family connections, where they came from. Also, I was putting the show together and needed his opinion on the people we met as he was going to be playing with them (Kramer 2010).

Kramer's brother John Kramer, an artist and stills photographer, came along for the ride. I had hired two cameramen, Brand Jordaan and Paul Morkel, and a sound recordist, Tony Bensusan. The equipment included two cameras - a Sony Digital Betacam and Sony PD150 DVCam - a digital audio track recorder and mini-disc recorder. A travel kit of tungsten lights, a portable dolly and tracks,[29] mini-DV and Digibeta tape stock, reflector boards, a monitor for direction and viewing rushes and batteries, cables, and other essentials that completed our equipment requirements.

Martin Macavoy, a taxi driver from Athlone,[30] was our chaperone and driver. He had worked with Kramer on the Cape Town *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concerts and knew all the musicians in the show. He doubled up as both company manager and driver and would be looking after the performers when we got to Cape Town. Ksheka Singh was the production assistant. She drew up the daily shooting schedules, organised accommodation, bought refreshments for the crew and the musicians and generally made herself useful.

[29] A dolly is a camera mount fixed onto rails to create smooth tracking shots.

[30] Athlone is on the Cape Flats, historically a dumping ground of the Apartheid government for thousands of people who were forcibly removed out of the city of Cape Town under the notorious Group Areas Act of 1950. See http://www.athlone.co.za/heritage/history/2212200501_history.php, accessed 10 January 2011.



Figure 4: David Kramer and Hannes Coetzee posing for a photograph in *Kamieskroon*, Namaqualand, 2003
(photograph courtesy John Kramer)

Namaqualand 10 to 16 March 2003: In search of a violinist

The first trip took us from the Koue Bokkeveld in the Western Cape to Steinkopf in the north of Namaqualand, a tiny village 156 kilometres south the Namibian border where traditional *matjieshuise*[31] still pepper the landscape. Figure 5 gives an idea of a vastness of the area and the scope of our journey.

We asked people on the side of the road and in the villages and towns if they knew of any musicians who played what they and Kramer called *die ou liedjies* on violins or guitars.[32] On many occasions they did, but often we were sent on a wild goose chase, as Kramer amusingly describes in the introduction to his song *Johnny Raakvat* (transl. in square brackets by Kramer):

[31] *Matjieshuise* are traditional dome-shaped reed huts made by the Nama people (http://www.namaqualandflowers.co.za/steinkopf.html, 10 December 2010).
[32] The term 'old (Afrikaans) songs' seems to cover a wide variety of repertoire but in this context it refers to 19th or early 20th century songs, including Boer War songs, that have left traces all over the northern Cape.

Dan gaan jy daar. As jy daar kom dan vra jy die mense, ek is opsoek na Johnny Raakvat, ek hoor hy is n bo-baas kitaar speller?
[So you go there. And when you get there you ask: 'I'm looking for Johnny Raakvat. I hear he's an excellent guitar player'.]
Ja nee, meneer ou Johnny ja, hy kan kitaar speel meneer, hy's nou nie so goed soos hulle se nie... het... maar as meneer wil nou ou Johnny hy's maar eintlik 'n skaap skeerder en hy was nou hierso omtrent so drie weke terug... maar ou Johnny skeer nou skape daar bo by die van der Merwe se plaas. Nou hoe kom ek nou daar uit?
[Well yes Johnny can play. He's not as good as they say. I also play a little if you're interested. But Johnny's actually a sheep shearer. He was here about three weeks ago, but now he's gone to shear up there at Van der Merwe's farm. [DK:] So how would I get there?]
Nee meneer, as ek nou daar by die van der Merwe wil gaan dan sien meneer die pad, dan gaan jy deur daai hek en dan verby daai windpomp en nog n windpomp... en dan nog n windpomp, en dan draai meneer daar af... Is dit nou links of regs?
[Well Mister, if you want to go to van der Merwe's ... Do you see this road? You go through that gate. Past that windmill and another windmill. Another windmill and then you turn down ... [DK:] Is that left or right?]
...meneer moet daar af draai.... en dan moet meneer verby daai dammetjie ry en kry meneer daar so n huisie en dan moet meneer daar op draai... ja op... en dan kry U n huis en nog n hek... en dan kom jy daar uit by van der Merwe se plaas.
[Mister must just turn down there. And then you drive past the dam and then you get to an old ruin and then there's a little house and Mister must turn up. Yes all right. Up. Then you get a house, another gate and then you'll be at the van der Merwe farm.]
Nee maar baie dankie, and then you jump into your vehicle and you're just about to set off and...- maar meneer, meneer as ek nou daar by van der Merwe wil uit kom, sal ek nou nie hier begin nie!
[Thank you very much. But Mister! Mister! If I wanted to get to Van der Merwe's farm then I wouldn't start here.]

And the song itself - written in Afrikaans - goes like this:

Almal praat van Johnny Raakvat	People talk of Johnny Raakvat
Die man wat so lekker kan kitaar slat	The man who plays guitar so well
Eendag is hy hier	One day he's here
Eendag is hy daar	One day he's there
Op soek na Johnny Raakvat	Looking for Johnny Raakvat
Op soek na Johnny Raakvat	We're looking for Johnny Raakvat
Soek na Johnny Raakvat	We're looking for Johnny Raakvat
En sy blik kitaar.	And his tin can guitar.

(David Kramer, *Johnny Raakvat* © Blik Music)

We found musicians in small villages and towns along and beyond the N7:[33] in Op Die Berg, Prince Albert Hamlet, Vanrhynsdorp, Kamieskroon, Kharkhams, Springbok, Concordia, and Steinkopf. With the permission of the musicians we recorded all their performances on film. In most instances Hannes Coetzee would accompany the musicians while Kramer recorded their individual tuning styles and idiosyncratic methods of playing their instruments in his hard-covered notebook. (See Fig 9, later in this chapter.) He used an electronic tuner to detect the pitch of the notes and chord grids and letter notation to transcribe chords and chord sequences. It was not long before his notebook was filled with the transcriptions and notations of a wide *range* of individual tuning styles that he had come across, not only in the different towns we visited but also within families themselves.

Speaking to camera he would describe the tunings used by a guitarist or violinist:

> Tape 7, 07:20:06[34]
> The *Kavalier* uses a semi-open tuning and then he picks out the melodic line on the top three strings. It is a right hand finger picking style that's called *optel en knyp* - which means pick up and pinch
>
> (*Karoo Kitaar Blues* rushes, 13 March 2003)

We filmed all Kramer's encounters with musicians. Brand would shoot wide shots, usually on a tripod, capturing the *mise-en-scène*,[35] while Paul using his camera handheld would focus on details in close up: the instruments, a violin bow, fingers picking strings or sliding up the neck of a guitar, a foot tapping, expressions on faces. Unrestricted by a tripod he was able to move easily between the performers and the audience, capturing their responses. Tony recorded the sound onto tape as well as on mini-discs: a safety-measure in case the source tapes were lost or damaged. I made myself as unobtrusive as possible standing behind the camera and giving Brand or Paul direction while Kramer and Coetzee engaged with the musicians. The presence of film equipment and the crew did

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[33] The N7 highway stretches directly north for 671 kilometers from Cape Town in the south to Vioolsdrift on the Namibian border.

[34] The time codings (12:21, 13:14, etc) refer to the clock track digitally embedded in the recording used to identify position in the film. The time code is used to synchronise different sound and visual elements to one another.

[35] *Mise-en-scène* refers to almost everything that goes into the composition of the shot, including the composition itself: framing, movement of the camera and characters, lighting, set design and general visual environment, even sound (http://userpages.umbc.edu/~landon/Local_Information_Files/Mise-en-Scene.htm, accessed 10th January, 2011).

not seem to worry the musicians we met. In most cases they seemed delighted to perform for the cameras. Sometimes it was the people gathered around to watch, rather than the musicians, who would shyly hide their heads under their arms or turn away from the camera.

By the end of our trip to Namaqualand, instead of finding one violinist to replace Japie Jaers, Kramer and Coetzee had discovered three talented musicians to added to the *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concert cast: violinist Dawid van Rooi, mouth organ player Johannes Coetzee, and *blikviool* player Jan Willems. This is how we met them, and between descriptions of the people details of the road trip continue.

Dawid van Rooi: 11 March 2003

Travelling through the Koue Bokkeveld, on the second day of our journey we stopped off in the small village of Op Die Berg. We met a local resident called Willem Klaaste who told us that a retired apple picker called Dawid van Rooi was known in the area for his *riel* dancing and violin playing. We found van Rooi on a farm called *Wadrift* hidden from view behind the heavily laden branches of an apple tree. Standing in a furrow the film crew directed their cameras and boom towards the foliage while Klaaste coaxed him into the open. Van Rooi emerged remonstrating with Kramer who was standing at the foot of an apple tree:

> Tape 2, 02:30:29
> **Van Rooi**: *Hy kry nie vir my, hy kry nie vir my. Ek werk nou. Nou werk ek. Ek werk nou.* [He isn't looking for me. He isn't looking for me. I am working now.]
> **Kramer**: *Aangename kennis.* [Nice to meet you.]
> **VR**: *Lekker! Lekker! Lekker! Lekker!* [Nice! Nice! Nice!] *En wat wil jy nou nog van my hê?* [And what more do you want from me?]
> **Willem Klaaste:** *Hy soek die manne, die ou manne wat viool speel.* [He's looking for the men, the old men who play the violin.]
> **VR**: *Ek sien! Ek sien!* [I see! I see!]
> **DK**: *Gaan ons nou 'n geleentheid kry om jou te hoor?* [Now are we going to get an opportunity to hear you?]
>
> (*Karoo Kitaar Blues* rushes, 11 March 2003).

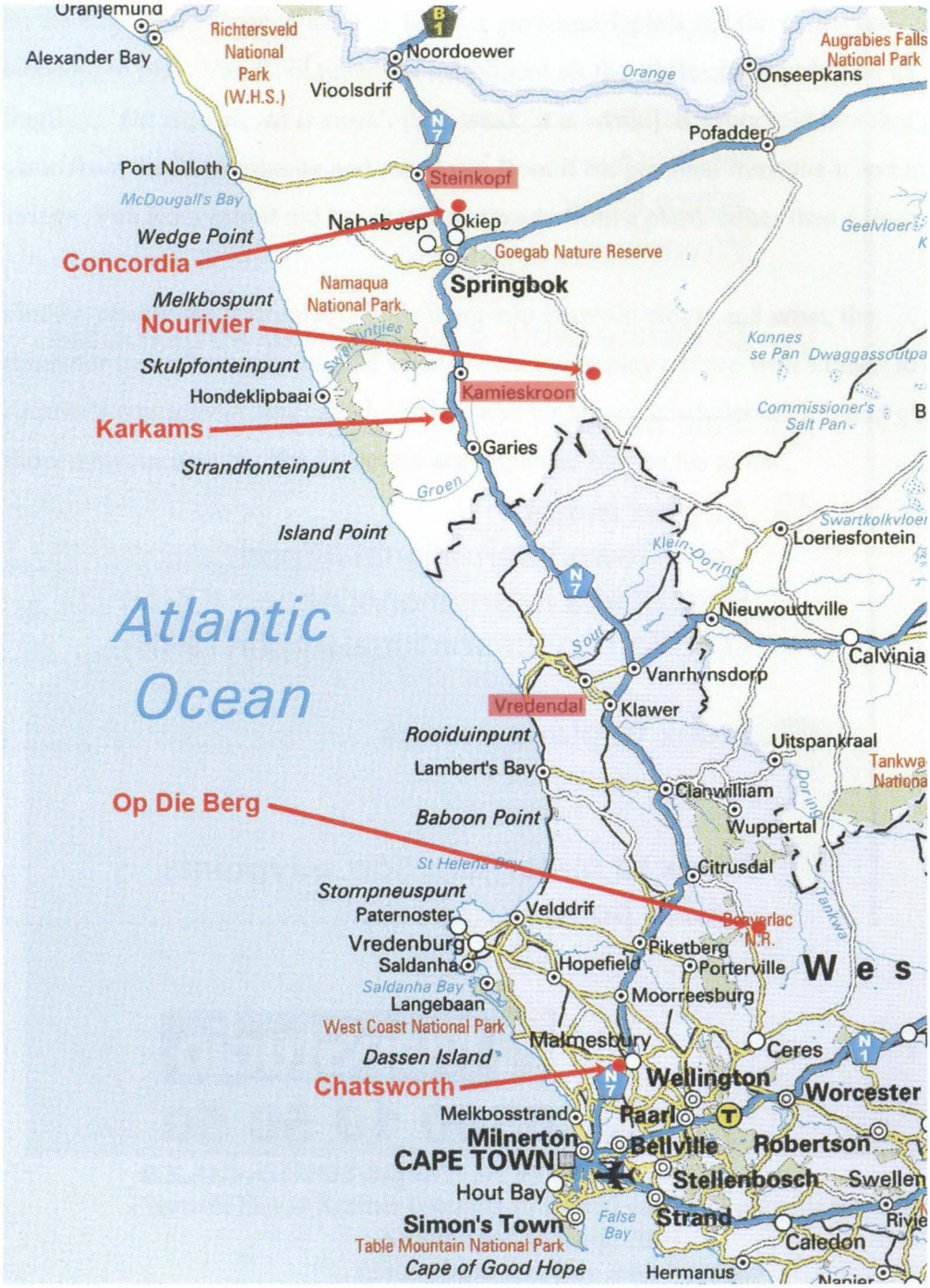


Figure 5: Area map of Namaqualand highlighting the small towns and villages that we visited on our journey. The highlights and arrows are mine (courtesy The Map Studio)

Van Rooi finally agreed to play for Kramer on condition that our production assistant Ksheka came along: '*As jy vir my die meisiemens saam bring dan speel ek baie beter*'. [If you bring the young girl with you I will play much better.] He sat down on

on the edge of the floor of the van. Kramer gave him Japie's old three-stringed *blikviool* to play. Van Rooi tuned the instrument all the while commenting on its fragility: '*Dit is swak, dit is swak*'. [It is weak, it is weak.] Kramer told him that it came from the Kamiesberge and asked van Rooi if his personal instrument had three strings. Van Rooi said it did but that it was made from a plank rather than a tin can.

Finally, resting the instrument on his inner arm between elbow and wrist, the resonator tucked snuggly into his waist, he started to play a piece which much to Kramer's amusement was called, '*Bokkie wys vir my jou* emskelems'. [Young girl show me your naughty bits.] Coetzee accompanied him on his guitar.



Figure 6: David Kramer listening to Dawid van Rooi play his three-stringed violin, Op Die Berg, 2003
(photograph courtesy John Kramer)

Kramer, sitting next to van Rooi, his signature pork pie hat worn low on his forehead, listened to Oom Dawid, as the local community called him. It soon became clear, judging by the excitement on Kramer's face, that van Rooi would definitely be part of the show. I was momentarily concerned that our journey might have ended before it had even begun, but Kramer, thrilled by his discovery, was inspired to move on and find more musicians of the same calibre. Van Rooi ended his performance with a

piece called *Karieberg* and then unaccompanied, he danced the *riel* for Kramer and Coetzee. Knock-kneed, on tiptoes in his old canvas shoes, he hit the ground in 4/4 time much to the delight of the apple-pickers who had gathered around to watch him dance.

We kept the cameras rolling as we followed the 70-year-old van Rooi home to a white-washed worker's cottage on the farm. A sleepy, golden-haired dog lay in its kennel tied by a chain to a post. It wagged its tail as van Rooi walked past. We entered the cottage through a narrow back door and into the kitchen. The smell of freshly baked bread made our stomachs rumble. We had last eaten at six o'clock that morning at the Herberg Bed and Breakfast in Ceres.

Van Rooi had baked the bread himself before leaving for work that morning. The gleaming, crusty bread was made from a recipe left to him by his wife, who had died eight months before, and would remain untouched until after we had left. Completely at ease with the cameras, van Rooi pointed to a photograph of his parents hanging on the wall:

> Tape 10, 10:29:59
> **Dawid van Rooi**: *Daar staan my ma en my pa. Hulle darem fluit gespeel daardie mense, hulle kan darem fluit speel.* [There, that's my mother and father. They really knew how to play the mouth organ.]
> **David Kramer**: *Dit is lekker musiek daardie.* [That's nice music.]
> **VR**: *Dit is lekker musiek, dis lekker musiek, dis lekker musiek. Daar twee ouers van my dis by hulle wat ek so geleer het. Dis hulle wat my so geleer het. Dan't hulle die fluite en dan't ek die kitaar agterna, en dan speel ek agter hulle aan.* [It's nice music, it's nice music! But I tell you sir, those people, those parents of mine, they taught me how to play, I learnt from them. They played mouth organ and I played guitar along with them.]
> **DK**: *Het jy jy eier viool gemaak?* [Did you make your own violin?]
> **VR**: *Ja ek het eers my eier viool gemaak.* [Yes, I started by making my own violin.]
> **DK**: *Het jy hom nog?* [Do you still have it?]
> **VR**: *Nee ek het hom nog nie meer nie.* [No, I don't have that one any more.]
>
> (*Karoo Kitaar Blues* rushes, 15 March 2003)

While Brand filmed Kramer's conversation with van Rooi, Paul captured details of the house: a doily on a table, a photograph of his parents on the wall, the gleaming loaves of bread. Kramer took down van Rooi's contact details and promised to get in touch.

Not far from *Wadrift* we met old man, Jan van Neel who lived on the farm *Tweefontein.* He produced his homemade violin and using a B-E-A-D tuning played ragtime, a *trekliedjie* and a *rieldans.* We left the van Neel's small cottage with the tunes of '*Daar Kom die Van*' (*There Comes the Van),* '*Secateurs*' and '*Steek Weg My Wynbottels*' (*Put Away My Wine Bottles*) still going round in our heads, and drove over the Uitkyk Pass - a terrifying 46 kilometre journey on a windy gravel road through the Cedarberg mountains to Citrusdal. Half way across the pass we pulled up on a steep incline to meet a car rental agent who had brought us a new microbus. (We had noticed that morning that the brake lights on the hired vehicle were faulty and the air-conditioner had stopped working.) We travelled on through Vanrhynsdorp— towards Kamieskroon, 350 kilometers further north. Temperatures reached a sweltering 38 degrees centigrade. The air conditioners in the vans struggled to cope as we drove through the vast grassy, dwarf shrubland of Namaqualand.

Namaqualand is the part of the Northern Cape and is home to most of the musicians we met on our first trip. It is a huge province taking up almost a third of the country's land but has a tiny population of only about 1-million people. (http://www.southafrica.info/about/geography/northern-cape.htm, accessed 13th January 2011). The pre-colonial archaeology of the region dates back one to two million years to the Stone Age. San rock art sites can be found throught the region providing evidence that the northern Cape was originally home to the indigenous people of South Africa - the Khoi and the San - who until the first European settlers arrived had coexisted fairly peacefully in the area, grazing their herds or living a hunter-gatherer existence (see Penn 2005, Mountain 2003, Skotnes 1996). The descendents of these indigenous ancestors, the Nama-Khoi, still inhabit the area and play *die ou liedjies.*

Once a year, after the spring rains, the indigenous flora and fauna that have laid dormant through the summer and winter months suddenly burst into bloom, bringing tourists from all over the world to admire a dazzling display of colour. As we travelled further north along the N7 in this semi-desert area, the landscape grew drier, trees gave way to scrub, people and animals became sparser and one telephone pole after another marked our way north:

> When you travel like this for such long distances, I can't help but notice the telephone poles. They come by the window, one after the other, one after the other.

> And I think, who planted them? Who dug the holes, you never ever see anybody putting up these telephone lines. It made me think of the musicians. These invisible people who play this music that's almost been forgotten. But you don't know who they are or where they are. So you have to keep looking, and asking, driving
>
> (Kramer' voice over commentary recorded 13 October 2003).

Brand and Paul filmed travelling shots through the windows of the microbus and along the way we met more musicians. We filmed conversations and music making between Kramer/Coetzee and the performers, but no in-depth interviews were conducted. None of the musicians we met on this trip were forewarned of our arrival. We were just making a 'road movie', travelling north with no idea of where the journey was leading us and whom we were going to find. As we travelled from town to town, Kramer and Coetzee would quietly jam together inside the van. And often when we stopped for petrol or food Kramer would take out his guitar and play for people who had recognised the legendary star (in his pork pie hat) pulling into town. We filmed Kramer's 'Volksie Bus' travelling through the landscape at sunrise, at sunset, and in the heat of the day: drive-by's, the vehicle disappearing into the distance, driving towards camera, shots in the side mirrors. Every now and again we would catch a glimpse of Coetzee, on film, in his old felt hat staring straight ahead with Kramer behind him playing their guitars as they swept through this ancient landscape.

In addition to the film itself, as a record of the 'field trip', I kept a diary capturing my personal journey through this unknown territory:

> 11 March, Kamieskroon Hotel, Namaqualand
> Can't sleep for the heat. Maria [my housekeeper back home] calls at 3am to say that two men have broken into the house. Janice calls at 3.30 am to tell me about the burglary.
>
> 12 March, Kamieskroon Hotel
> Eggs and bacon again for breakfast. Watch rushes. Too stylised. Talk to David about [them]. He agrees. Need a more *cinema verité* style. Arrive at Nourivier ... Extraordinary landscape - bare, rocky outcrops and dust. The old lady lies in bed - blind, her husband deaf. A one-eyed sister cries for her dead brother. Mangy dogs.

We stopped off at Nourivier so that Kramer could pay his respects to the Jaers's family and express his condolences. 24 kms away is Vaalputs, Koeberg Nuclear Power Station's

low-level waste and intermediate-level waste disposal dump. Apartheid-era consultants specifically chose the site as for its low rainfall and geological stability, but also because it fell outside the boundaries of the white-run municipalities (Fig 2005: 61).[36]

After spending time with Jaers' old mother, Kramer gave the family a copy of the *Karoo Kitaar Blues* CD featuring Jaers on his *blikviool.* We listened to it on the CD player in the bus and the family gathered around. As the strains of Japies' violin carried across the rocky outcrops in the foothills of the Kamiesberge I felt sad for this desperately poor family who had lost a loved one. Some of the family cried while others tapped their feet in time to the music. Children looked on curiously.

Kramer's response to the sound of the *blikviool* was, however, different to mine:

> So for me the *blikviool* is not nostalgic, but a discovery and confirmation of my premise about the roots of this music. It is a raw, exciting sound with the unique voice of the Kamiesberge or the Koue Bokkeveld. It is real and exists and it is played and enjoyed and danced to. It is connected to a painful history, and when you hear it, it sings of the past and the present and it is as jagged and as fucked as the musician playing it. And when you hear it, *dan is jou bloed soos 'n snaar* [then your blood is like a (violin) string] and you know in your being because you were born here and because you are human that this is not someone else's shoes, this is not hillbilly waltzes or bluegrass. *Dit was my ervaring* [It was my experience], this is what I learned on my journey (http://www.oulitnet.co.za/mond/kramer.asp, accessed 2008).

We pushed onto Kharkhams where the legendary *blikviool* player Jan Willems lived. A local guitarist called Willem Links offered to take us to his home. The journey across the village was one of great hilarity as Links tuned Coetzee's guitar, tightening the strings to almost breaking point. He called this tuning *noord* (north). When we got to the Willems' small, whitewashed cottage the violinist was nowhere to be found. His wife had no idea of his whereabouts but took the opportunity to waltz with Links in the street accompanied by a relieved Coetzee who had his guitar firmly back in his possession.

We drove on to Springbok having made an arrangement to meet Jan Willems at the post office the following morning, a Saturday. When we woke up:

[36] There was no public consultation, and local inhabitants faced a fait accompli. A pre-operational survey was started in 1979 and the first consignment of LLW (low level waster) and ILW (intermediate level waste) waste arrived from Koeberg in 1986 (Fig 2005: 63).

13 March, Springbok Hotel
A general power failure at 06h15. The whole of Springbok is out. Breakfast by candlelight

Johannes Coetzee: 13 March 2003, Concordia

We arrived in a tiny village called Concordia in the former copper mining belt of Namaqualand which had originally been established as a Rhenish mission station in 1852. We were directed by a man on a bicycle to the home of guitarist and mouth organ player, Johannes Coetzee - not to be confused with Hannes Coetzee, Kramer's 'bridge' man. Tall and scrawny, a blue workers' overall hanging off his skinny frame, Johannes Coetzee invited us into his home. He rummaged in cupboards and boxes until he triumphantly pulled out his mouth organ from under a pile of washing. Paul squeezed himself into a corner of the tiny sitting room, his camera on his shoulder while Brand set up his camera outside, framing the musicians in the doorway. Hannes Coetzee took his guitar off his back and sat down on a red sofa and Kramer balanced on his haunches in front of an apple-green dresser. While Johannes Coetzee tapped his instrument hard on his knee to clean it, Kramer asked him about the music in the region:

Tape 6, 10:17:21
David Kramer: *Is daar liedjies van van hierdie omgewing van Namaqualand wat jy ken?* [Do you know any songs from this part of Namaqualand?]
Johannes Coetzee: *Ja, maar hier is van hierdie gramma en teipe en goed, nou's die goed mos uit gesterf.* [Yes, but now there are gramophones and tapes and things like that, so those songs have mostly died out now.]
DK: *Dit is die probleem.* [That is the problem.]
JC: *Maar ek will een try.* [But I will try one.]
DK: *Watter een is dit nou?* [Which one is that?]
JC: *Wag, laat ek net kyk of ek hom kan tol.* [Wait, let me see if I can play it.]
DK: *Ok Ok tol hom.* [Ok, ok play it.] (Johannes Coetzee plays a platriel.)
JC: *Dis nou een van die ou liedjies.* [That is one of the old songs.]
DK: *Dit kan ek hoor.* [I caFn hear that.]
JC: *Dis nou wat hulle noem die platriel.* [This is what they call the platriel.]
DK: [Platriel. Hoekom? [Platriel. Why**?**]
JC: *Kyk daai tyd het die goed mos nie name gehad nie. Ons het net gespeel.* [You see, in those days these tunes didn't have names. We just played.]

(*Karoo Kitaar Blues* rushes, 13 March 2003)

Finally Johannes Coezee stopped playing, apologised and hurried us out of the house. He had taken time off work as a pipe-layer for the Namakwa Water Board and was anxious to get back before his absence was noticed: being a casual worker in a region with a 40% unemployment rate, he would be easily replaced.[37] Kramer promised to get in touch with Coetzee once he had decided whom to include in the concert.

We reached Steinkopf in the late afternoon and after listening to the left-handed guitarist *die Kavalier* (the Cavalier) play his guitar upside down, and violinist Jan Cloete play the v*astrap* on his western violin, Kramer decided it was time to head back home to Cape town. If Jan Willems did not come up to scratch the next day, he had found a superb violinist in Dawid van Rooi - with the unexpected bonus of a mouth organ player. We spent a second night at the Springbok Hotel.

Jan Willems: 14 March 2003, Kharkhams

After breakfast we headed back to Kharkhams, a 67-kilometer drive south of Springbok. Macavoy had called ahead to confirm Kramer's meeting with Willems at the local post office later that morning.

> 14 March, Kharkhams
> Hot, dry and dusty. The post office an unremarkable whitewashed building. Surprisingly healthy-looking dogs wander around looking for scraps. A young boy called Gershwin is sitting on the post office steps playing his guitar. He stares into Paul's lens. Nama women in *voortrekker* bonnets chat animatedly to each other. A normal Saturday morning in Kharkhams?

We hung around waiting for Jan Willems to arrive. After an hour or so a battered-looking blue Toyota pulled up. Paul rushed across the gravel just in time to film a rear window being wound down. Sitting in the back was Jan Willems, his face creased in a broad, toothless grin. He climbed out of the car and enthusiastically greeted Kramer. Brand, his

[37] Statistics SA (2001) state that 'as a consequence of the decline of the formal economy in the region, the official unemployment rate in Namaqualand has increased from 25% in 1996 to over 30% in 2001. Unemployment rates in the communal areas are significantly higher. These high levels of unemployment are reflected in income levels generally - in 2001, of the working age population, 40% of individuals reported no income at all and a further 32% a monthly income of less than R800 per month' (Lebert 2004: 52).

camera locked off on a tripod, filmed the meeting in wide shot. After pleasantries had been exchanged, with a lot of back-slapping and laughter, Kramer told Willems that he was looking for a violinist who played *die ou liedjies* to take part in a *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concert in Cape Town. He explained that Willems' reputation had brought us to Kharkhams and that he was here specially to meet this *blikviool* star.

Jan Willems broke a matchstick and slipped it under the strings of Japie's violin to make a fret. Later Hannes Coetzee explained how fascinated he was by this technique:

> *Die mense se altyd daar, haai kyk daar hoe slim is hy. Dis nou die eerste tyd wanneer ek sien laat mens n stokkie onder 'n kitaar se snaar sit. En wat maak die stokkie wil almal nou weet, wat maak die stokkie? Nou sê jy, man nee, die stokkie draai ek nou hier in, want ek wil nou nie hê die snaar le te plat en nou slat die snaar was, en nou as ek 'n stokkie onder het kan hy dit nie doen nie. Wat daar op daai viool gedoen is, dis eintlik 'n ding daai wat van die kitaar eerste gekom het. As jou snaar vas slaan dan die stokkie onder, dan skyf jy hom onder die kitaar, dan skyf jy hom onder die kitaar*
> [The people always say, look at that, look how clever he is. That's the first time I've seen someone put a little stick under a guitar string. And then everyone wants to know what's that little stick for? Then you tell them, I fit the stick underneath here because I don't want the string to lie too flat because then it catches, but if I push the stick underneath then it can't do that. What he's doing with that violin, that's actually something that first came from the guitar. If your string catches then you put a stick under it, then you move it around underneath.]
>
> (Hannes Coetzee 16 March 2003).

Willems and Coetzee began to play a waltz. People gathered around. A woman in a white bonnet glided across the gravel. She shouted to her friends to join her and not to worry about the filmmakers. Soon the women were dancing with each other, their faces shaded from the sun under the large brim of their *kappies* (bonnets).[38] With their petticoats peeping out from under their skirts, they lifted their arms to twirl their partners around. This could have been a Saturday two hundred years ago except then the dancers would

[38] These *kappies* (bonnets) worn by the women in Kharkhams are very similar in design to the Voortrekker bonnet. The Voortrekkers were Dutch-speaking settlers who - in the 19th century - trekked north from the Cape Colony to escape British rule. The women 'took with them material to make women's dresses: chintz and prints for everyday wear, and silks for special occasions. The kappie was in the style of the poke-bonnet ... Kappies were made of linen in three thicknesses or layers and then beautifully quilted. They were practical and could be frequently washed, starched and ironed' (http://myfundi.co.za/e/SA_historical_%2817th_19th_centuries%29_Costume, accessed 14 December 2010).

have been the wives of *trekboers* and the musician a coloured servant. Jan Willems grinned at Kramer, the homemade bow rasping across the strings in 3/4 time. Kramer had found his violinist (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7f7ueeCY-x8).

On the way back to Cape Town on 16 March 2003 we dropped Coetzee at home in Herbertsdale. We would next see him again in May for the Cape Town concert.

Cape Town: 17 to 24 March 2003

I dropped the Beta and mini DV tapes off at VNG, a postproduction house in Dorman Street. I wanted them transferred onto VHS with burnt in time code (BITC) for logging. Then I bought myself three moleskin notebooks and a couple of black felt-tipped pens before meeting with Brand, Tony, and my brother Philip, who was one of the producers of the documentary. Tension had been building up between my director of photography and soundman on the Namaqualand trip. They both felt that I was not experienced enough to tell them what to do, and Brand that I was compromising his reputation. We all aired our views and my long-suffering brother - as always the master of diplomacy - managed to get us to all shake hands on it and look forward to the next journey. I spent the rest of the week on my bed, remote control in my hand logging the rushes off a television monitor and into my moleskins. On the left-hand page I recorded all footage shot on Paul's PD150 according to the BITC. And on the right-hand page logged Brand's correlating footage. I logged every sequence shot on both cameras with a brief description of the size and content of the shot.

I also hired Lika van den Bergh, a drama student from the University of Cape Town, to transcribe and translate all the Afrikaans dialogue on the VHS tapes: as I finished with the tapes I passed them onto her. By the end of the week I had logged the entire Namaqualand trip: 18 hours of footage from the mini-dv's and digibeta tapes. It looked great, I thought. Paul's footage of the musicians moved rhythmically and lyrically across the frame and Brand's carefully composed shots lent themselves to the grandeur of the landscape. They complemented each other perfectly: except they had mistakenly been shot on different formats. Brand had used the 16:9 cinema format and Paul the 4:3 academy or television framing. This would become a problem later on, in the online process, when the PD150

footage would lose quality in the process of stretching the images to match the Digibeta footage.

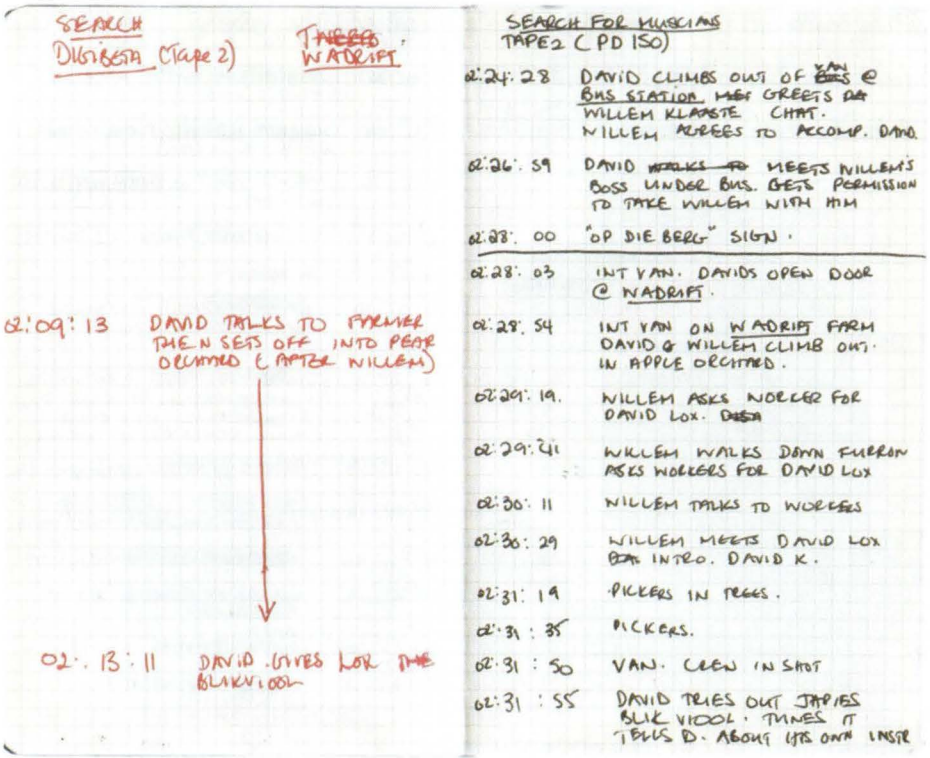


Figure 7: Sample from my logbook, 26 March 2003, *Wadrift* Farm

Victoria West: 26 to 30 March 2003 - making music with the Lof and Mouers family

After a ten-day break in Cape Town we left for Victoria West, stopping off along the way to pick up Koos Lof from Chatsworth, and then drove on to Beaufort West to pick up his sister Helena Nuwegeld. 'The area is arid, with an annual rainfall of less than 350mm and the vegetation cover typically comprises tufts of grasses and Karoo shrubs on the slopes and upland areas with thick Acacia Karoo thorn trees along the drainage lines' (www.savannahsa.com/.../Karoo%20Renewable%20-%20Appendix%20H%20-%20Geology%20and%20erosion%20potential_.pdf, accessed 16 December 2010). We arrived in Victoria West after dark, and dropped Lof and Nuwegeld off at the home of their sister and brother-in-law, Siena Mouers and her husband, Jan. Siena and Jan lived in the old Bokomo Bakery on the edge of town. Kramer had informed the family that he would be arriving in Victoria West with a film crew who were interested in making a

documentary on their music. As I mentioned in chapter 1 they had given their consent on condition that Kramer be present. My friend and theatre director Janice Honeyman joined us for this period to translate from the Afrikaans spoken by the musicians into English. She had recently adapted H.M Scholtz's novel *Vatmaar* for the stage and was familiar with the Afrikaans dialect spoken in the Northern Cape. I could understand the language reasonably well but was not proficient enough to speak it or understand the nuances and colloquialisms.

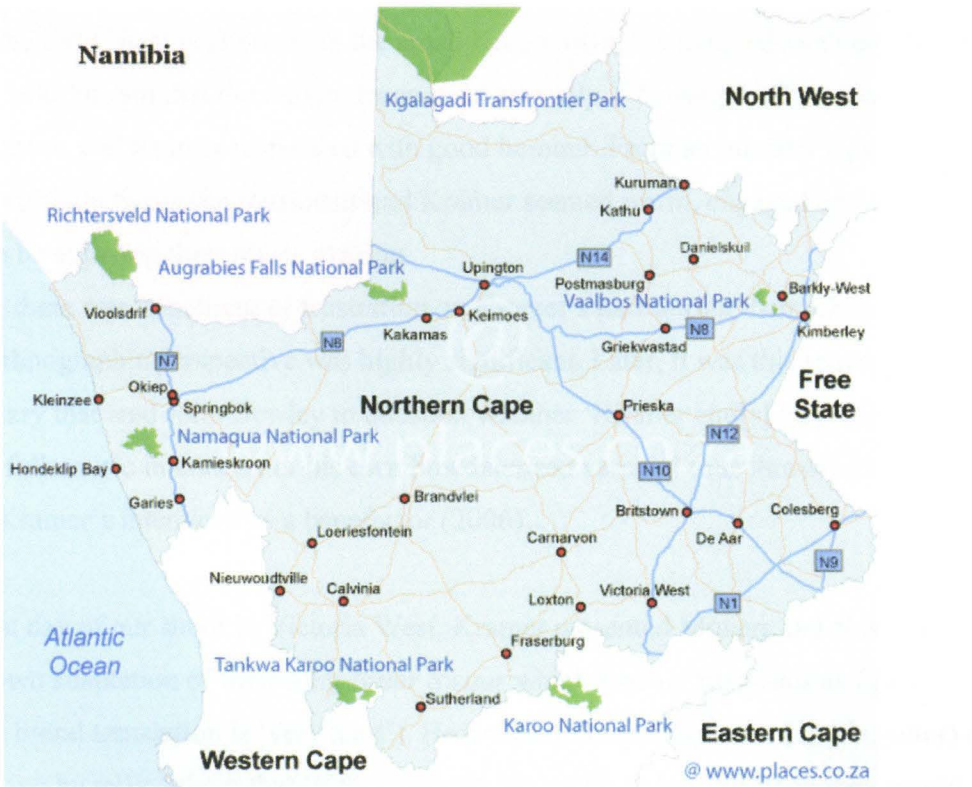


Figure 8: Area map of the Great Karoo, Northern Cape which shows Victoria West and the towns where Koos Lof worked as a fence-maker (courtesy www.places.co.za)

Kramer worked with the family in the local town hall, which gave Brand ample space to set up the dolly and tracks and move smoothly and slowly around the musicians with his camera. He tracked across their faces in close up and then in mid-shot while Paul captured details of fingers plucking strings, hands moving up the neck of the guitar, making chords and fingers on the keyboard of the accordion. Kramer, balanced on his haunches, listened and transcribed the words of Nuwegeld's songs into his notebook. Siena and Jan Mouers'

chord sequences and tunings were notated. Kramer was particularly impressed with one of Jan Mouers' tunings (see Fig 9). He explained it like this:

> Jan plays the guitar with a capo over there on the 5th fret. He has a very interesting open tune, with an interesting inversion on the major chords and he calls this tuning *die swart hel* [the black hell]. Siena has changed things around a little bit. She's put string number 2 and 3 through this single groove in the top nut there, so that she can play string number 2 and 3 together as one and then she harmonizes that with the top string and the base strings are tuned to open notes (Kramer 2003a).

Outside, the 28° C heat beat down on the small Karoo town, the parched earth crying out for the 155mm of rain that the region depends on annually.[39] Nuwegeld flirtatiously teased Kramer, and Kramer responded with good humour. From an outsider's perspective the relationship between the musicians and Kramer seemed warm, engaged and they all seemed to be enjoying their music making.

However, there was a moment of frustration on Kramer's part during their rehearsals that from an ethnographic perspective was highly significant. Later, it was this sequence in the documentary that lead John Bewley to question whether 'Kramer end[s] up presenting authentic folk music in concert or his own bowdelerised version' thus throwing into question Kramer's intentions as a benefactor (2006).

On the last day of our shoot in Victoria West, Kramer presented Mouers and Nuwegeld with his own adaptation of their song *Bitter Swaar* which Kramer translates as *Life is Hard* (the literal translation is 'very hard'). He prefaced his performance (on his guitar) of the new song by telling them that 'if they wanted their song to be a hit' then they would have to expand it from a three-line song with repetition, as they sang it, to a song with a number of verses and a chorus. Here is their version:

Bitter swaar, bitter swaar	Life is hard, life is hard
Bitter swaar, bitter Swaar	Life is hard, life is hard
Bitter swaar om 'n weeskind te wees.	Very hard to be an orphan child.

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Bitter Swaar* © Blik Music)

[39] Average midday temperatures range from 15°C in June to 30°C in January. The region is the coldest during July when the mercury drops to 0.5°C on average during the night (http://www.saexplorer.co.za/south-africa/climate/victoria-west_climate.asp, accessed 13 January 2011).

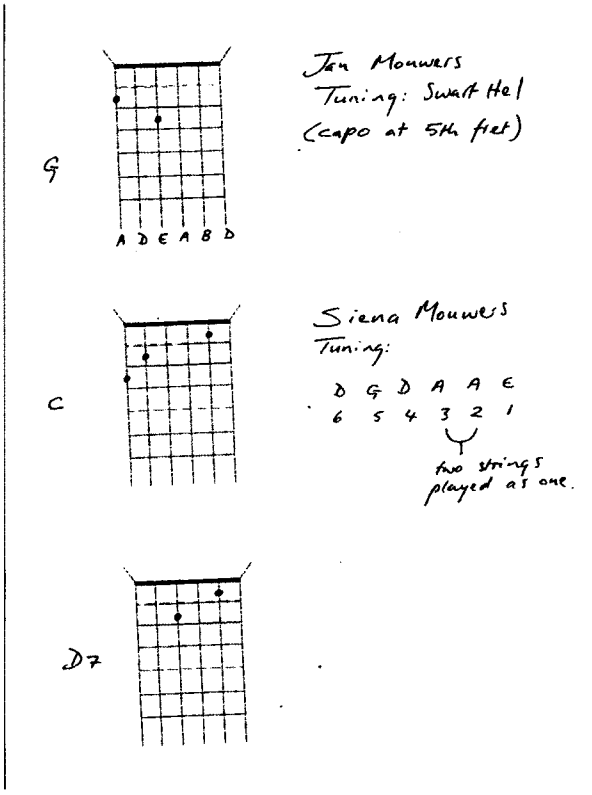


Figure 9: Illustration of Kramer's chord notations for
Siena Mouers and Jan Mouers' tunings.
Kramer's diagram shows (at the top) how Jan retunes his six strings to E-A-B-E-F#-A. (Conventional tuning is E-A-D-G-B-E.) By putting a capo on the 5th fret he then pushes this tuning up five semitones to A-D-E-A-B-D. Siena (in the middle) retunes the six strings differently, to A-D-A-E-E(same pitch)-B, which, when a capo is added on the 5th string rise to D-G-D-A-A-E, as shown.

Neither of them commented. At this point, Kramer asked the film crew to leave the hall as he felt that our presence might have something to do with Nuwegeld and Mouers' reticence to enthuse about his new song. He let Paul remain, on condition that he used a handheld camera, no lights, and kept in the background.

Kramer's expanded version of *Bitter Swaar* which he would perform in the next *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concert is as follows:

Lorries oppie teerpad	Lorries on the tar road
Ek het net my rooi kitaar	I've nothing but my red guitar
Ekkit ie ma nie	I don't have a mother
Ek kannie by jou bly nie	I can't stay with you
Treine oppie spoor	Trains on the tracks
Die res het ek verloor	The rest I lost somewhere
Ekkit ie pa nie	I don't have a father
So moenie vir my vra nie	So don't even ask me

Dit is swaar dit is swaar	It is hard, very hard
Baie swaar bitterswaar	Heavy and hard
Swaar om 'n weeskind te wees	To be an orphan in this world
Alles wat ek het	Everything I own
Is in 'n streepsak vasgebind	Is tied up in a sack
'n boksie metjies en 'n sigaret	A box of matches and a cigarette
Ek is hoepelbeen se kind	I'm hopalong's child
Ek kannie woorde lees ie	I can't read a word
Die name moet ek hoor	The names I have to hear
Ek wietie waar ek issie	No idea where I am
My pad het ek verloor	I have lost my way
Dit is swaar dit is swaar	It is hard, very hard
Baie swaar bitterswaar	Heavy and hard
Swaar om 'n weeskind te wees	To be an orphan in this world
Ek staan hie oppie stasie	I'm standing on the station
Ek tokkel my kitaar	I'm playing my guitar
Hulle gooi my 'n paar sente	They throw me a few cents
Ek maakit alles bymekaar	I put them all together
Ek het net my drie chords	All I have is three chords
Ek het net my krag	And the strength in my two arms
Worry nie van more nie	I don't worry about tomorrow
More is 'n anner dag	Tomorrow is another day
Dit is swaar dit is swaar	It is hard, very hard
Baie swaar bitterswaar	Heavy and hard
Swaar om 'n weeskind te wees.	To be an orphan in this world.

(David Kramer, *Bitter Swaar* © Blik Music)

My journal entry for that day reads:

> 26 March 2003, Victoria West.
> Book stadsaal. Tony sulks badly over acoustics. David works with the musicians on a new song. Use the dolly and tracks for the first time. Doesn't look good because of [bad] light.

For now, it is important to remember that at this point I was simply filming David Kramer's interaction with musicians with whom he is trying to collaborate in order to find songs for his new show. Clearly it is a difficult 'collaboration' in this instance, and ultimately Kramer takes the original song by Nuwegeld as an 'idea' for a new song by himself. The sister's three-line song effectively becomes the refrain or chorus to which he adds three verses. I analyse this song in detail in chapter 4.

In the afternoon when the sessions in the town hall with Kramer were over, the family gave us permission to film them going about their domestic chores, cooking, shopping

and walking through he streets of Victoria West, and at a party on the last night of our stay, permission to capture their music making and dancing on tape. It seemed at this point, that the musicians had become uninhibited by the presence of camera and crew and were comfortable having us film the party. However, when Nuwegeld tripped and fell while dancing, her first response to Kramer who helped her up was to ask us not to film her on the ground.

Interviews: Breaking with the documentary genre

I had hoped to adhere to the non-interventionist tradition of true observational documentary style throughout the film, but realised as our time in Victoria West drew to a close that that details of the musician's life stories were not emerging in their interactions with Kramer, except in a conversation with Jan Mouers where he discusses his former job (see rushes tape 18, 26 March 2003) and Nuwegeld describes how her father made them instruments when they were young (discussed further in chapter 3). Kramer's interest was primarily in transcribing Nuwegeld's songs, notating chord sequences and tunings, and developing songs. His questions in most cases related to the music itself. My emerging agenda, I realised, was to understand as much as I possibly could of the 'lived experiences' of the subjects of my film and how their music revealed the social conditions of their lives.

I had got to know the family a little and sensed that the presence of a film crew was no longer as intrusive as it had been initially. I therefore broke with the experiential documentary mode I had been using until then, in favour of a more participatory mode that would give me greater clarity about these lived experiences. More in line with the observational cinema of Colin Young 'where the involvement of the filmmaker in the lives of the subjects is integral' (Henley 2004)[40] or David and Judith MacDougall's *To Live With Herds*, a remarkable example 'for their affecting intimacy with their subjects'

[40] Colin Young established the Ethnographic Film Training Programme at UCLA when Dean of Theatre Arts in 1966. He is responsible for defining the principles of observational cinema along ethnographic lines. It (observational cinema) 'must be based on and intimate, sympathetic relationship between the filmmaker and the subject – not the eye of the aloof, detached observer but of someone watching as musch as possible from the inside' (Henley 2004; 113).

(8).[41] Helena Nuwegeld, Siena Mouers, Jan Mouers and Koos Lof gave their consent to be interviewed, and we agreed that the interviews would only interrogate their personal histories in relation to their music practice. I was not sure at that point how I would make them fit structurally in the edit, but I knew I needed to include them.

I went about setting the interviews up in between their sessions with Kramer in the Victoria West Town Hall. I did not ask Kramer to conduct the interviews, as it would remove him from the insider position he held in the family. I asked Siena and Jan whether I could interview them together in the kitchen of their home. I wanted a place where they would feel relaxed and a space that reflected their domestic world. I placed the couple on two chairs next to each other with a kitchen shelf behind them - covered in aluminium foil - on which Mouers had arranged a collection of old cake tins. Nuwegeld chose to be interviewed in the same space, but sitting at the kitchen table. I decided to interview Lof next to a fence in the Karoo landscape. He had been a fence-maker all his working life, erecting fences between Victoria West, Loxton and Prieska. I hoped that by placing him in this familiar landscape he would feel comfortable and at home. Lof enthusiastically agreed and selected a piece of fence that he had erected along a farm road outside Beaufort West.

All the interviews were shot on two cameras. Brand on the Digibeta - locked off on the tripod - shot the interviews in wide two-shot to capture the *mise-en-scène* while Paul, also on a tripod, filmed their faces, hands, and feet in close up. Tony recorded synchronised sound by plugging his sound recorder into the Digibeta. He used lapel/radio microphones attached to the collars of the interviewees. There was a tense moment when Tony interrupted my interview with the Mouers because the sound of a passing truck was drowning out the sound of their voices. I was astounded at his intervention. Tony was unrepentant. His reputation was at stake: he needed to produce a perfect sound recording. This is an example of the difference between writing and filming culture, where field notes can be rewritten, but if you lose the moment in film it is gone forever. On this subject, visual anthropologist Karl Heider has described how film goes against the ethnographic process: 'Cinematography makes irreversible choices at the very beginning, [that] the

[41] The documentary, *To Live with Herds* (1972) is part of a trilogy which investigates life in a Jie homestead in the Karamoja district of Uganda.

finished film can contain only those images that were shot at the beginning' (2006: 8). Fortunately both Brand and Paul carried on filming and Mouers carried on talking, seemingly undisturbed by the interruption.

After the interviews Paul captured details of the immediate environment in close up: a cup on a dresser, a cat chewing a chicken bone next to Mouers' chair, two women washing dishes at the sink, a piece of barbed wire from Lof's fence, his fingers on the keys of his accordion. I had decided to use the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews, (Beaudry 1997: 63) which would give me the opportunity to ask the loosely constructed questions which I had written down in my notebook, while at the same time give the musicians the space to elaborate.

The musicians all reacted differently to the interviews. Siena Mouers and Lof seemed uninhibited and comfortable in front of the camera whereas Jan Mouers had to be encouraged and prompted by his wife to speak. Nuwegeld was reluctant to do the interview and was blatantly resistant. Filmmaker and film theorist, Trinh T-Minh-ha sums up the discomfit and self-consciousness that prevails in an interview situation and particularly - in my case - when one does not know the interviewees very well:

> Questions and answers can sometimes force both interviewer and the interviewee into awkward positions because we often feel compelled to bear the burden of representation. We know that we are not simply speaking to each other or for ourselves; we are addressing a certain audience, a certain readership. I would say that interview is, at its best, a device that interrupts the power of speaking, that creates gaps and detours, and that invites one to move in more than one direction at a time (Minh-ha 1999: 4).

I asked the questions in English and Honeyman translated them into Afrikaans. At the end of each answer, Honeyman would give a summary of what had been said. Although my Afrikaans was not good enough to ask the questions I knew enough to understand most of the replies. What I hoped to find out were details about the social circumstances of their lives. All musicians spoke animatedly about making instruments and how their father made them for them and taught them to play. Interestingly, none of them had any knowledge of music practice in their family that went further back than one generation. In chapter 3 I draw from these interviews and other sources to piece together the life histories of this extraordinary family.

Cape Town: 31 March to 3 April 2003

The final part of the film shoot followed directly on from the Victoria West visit. The night after the party the Mouers family and guitarist, Tokas Lodewyk (who had been picked up in Richmond by Martin the day before), left for Cape Town. We filmed them putting their suitcases into the back of the minibus, waving goodbye and setting off for the city. The Mouers family, Nuwegeld, Lof and Lodewyk had all been to Cape Town before for the previous *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concerts as had Coetzee. Martin had organised a car to pick him up from his home in Herbertsdale and drop him off at the bed and breakfast in Athlone where all the musicians would be staying and where he had stayed before.



Figure 10: The Mouers and Lof family outside the Old Bokomo Bakery, Victoria West, 2003
From left to right: Helena Nuwegeld, Magdalena Mouers, Jan Mouers, Koos Lof, Siena Mouers
(photograph courtesy John Kramer)

Of the three new additions to the concert cast, David van Rooi had visited Cape Town before, but for Jan Willems and Johannes Coetzee it would be their first trip. Martin

collected van Rooi from Op Die Berg the following day and Willems and Johannes Coetzee caught a bus from Springbok arriving at Cape Town station late that evening. It had been an eight-hour journey down the N7. Paul was at the station to film them climbing off the bus while Brand remained at the Bed and Breakfast in Athlone to film Nuwegeld, Lodewyk, and Lof who were involved in a rowdy game of back gammon in a back room.

The next two days were a flurry of activity: a photographic studio for publicity photographs, recordings for a CD at the Steve Louw Sound Studio on Glen Beach, Nuwegeld and Mouers shopping for concert clothes at The Exclusive Ladies Factory Shop in Salt River, a trip to the aquarium and visits to the optician and dentist for Hannes Coetzee.

The *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concert: 10 May 2003

We filmed the opening night of the concert on 10 May 2003 using four PD150 cameras synchronised to each other by time code lock and married to a 22-track recording, which was stored on a hard disc. I positioned two cameramen in the auditorium on either side of the stage, one at the back of the theatre and Paul shooting handheld on the stage itself. A feed from the 22-track recording was sent to the master camera positioned at the back of the theatre and locked off in wide shot. This would serve as a master guide track recording. Microphones were positioned on the musical instruments or in front of their amplifiers and each artist was individually connected by radio microphones, which gave them freedom of movement on the stage. A number of other microphones were positioned for ambience and audience reaction.

The reason I have gone into such detail about the sound set-up at the concert is because the multi-track recording that should have been taken to a sound studio to be mixed into a stereo master for the film was stolen or lost, the whereabouts of the hard drive still a

mystery. We had to use the mixed master guide-track recording in the documentary and cancel the production of a concert DVD.[42]

There wasn't a seat to be had in the Main Theatre at the Baxter.[43] Backstage the performers imbibed a mixture of brandy and beer - with the exception of Coetzee and Siena Mouers, who were teetotallers.[44] Jan Mouers smoked a joint. The performance went pretty much according to plan with a few unexpected hitches. Van Rooi, for example, was not able to dance the *riel*, a highlight of the show. Earlier in the day, he had complained of leg pains. Much to van Rooi's chagrin Johannes Coetzee made up for it by dancing in front of the veteran violinist as he belted out a version of *My Naam is Pepsi Cola* on his violin. Siena Mouers, perhaps annoyed at the introduction of these two new musicians into the concert family chose the same moment to cross the stage with her handbag, ostensibly looking for the bathroom.

[42] *Karoo Kitaar Blues*, the concert was released in December 2010 using the master guide-track recording. Sophisticated methods were used by Eastern Acoustics, a Cape Town sound studio to boost the sound.
[43] As I was present, I can testify that it was a predominantly white, Afrikaans-speaking audience.
[44] Again, this was my personal observation, and is in no way intended to be read as associated with what Mohamed Adhikari has called 'one of the most common aspects of the racial stereotyping of Coloured people' (Adhikari 2005: 197).

CHAPTER 3: 'VICTIMS OF FOOLISH PLEASURE': LIFE STORIES OF HELENA NUWEGELD AND SIENA MOUERS

> Night, Victoria West 25 March 2003
> We picked up piano accordionist Koos Lof in Chatsworth - a settlement near Malmesbury - early this morning and travel to Beaufort West where we collect his sister Helena Nuwegeld. It is dark when we finally pull up outside the Mouers' house in Victoria West. The temperature has dropped. It is cold. The Mouers family live in the old Bokomo bakery on the edge of town. Their home is in darkness. David knocks on the door. A dim light goes on, a rattling of keys and eventually the iron security gate opens. Siena Mouers has a red nylon jacket flung over her shoulders, underneath it a bulky Fair Isle jersey. On her feet are red and white shoes and white ankle socks. Siena's husband, Jan Mouers, emerges from the shadows behind her followed by their daughter Magdalena. She carries a toddler in her arms. The child is on the verge of tears, bewildered by this rude awakening. The siblings embrace. Siena hugs David. We keep the camera rolling from outside the house so as not to intrude. We capture hugging shadows, silhouettes of hats and exclamations of joy. We make out the vague shapes of Siena and Jan's guitars propped up against the wall.

After six days of extraordinary and often brilliant performances from musicians across Namaqualand, it was in Victoria West that I experienced my first real glimpse of a tragic colonial history, reflected in Mouers's repetitive and eccentric chord sequences and Nuwegeld's lyrics which spoke of dispossession, loss, and marginalisation - *Bitter swaar, bitter swaar, Bitter swaar om 'n weeskind te wees.* [Life is hard, Life is hard, It is hard to be an orphan in this world.] Nuwegeld sang and created the lyrics of their songs and Mouers accompanied her on slide guitar. On the rare occasions that they spent time with their brother, Koos Lof,[45] he would play along on his accordion with Siena's husband, Jan Mouers on the rhythm guitar.

> Town Hall, Victoria West, 27 March 2003
> Siena, skinny and well into her sixties, plays her guitar like a demon. She uses a paper clip as a plectrum. David describes how she puts two strings through a single groove in the top nut of her guitar. She belts out a tune as an accompaniment to her sister's mournful lyrics. Helena, stockier than her sister, her gravely voice hinting at a lifetime of cigarettes, sways as she sings, tears flowing down her ravaged face.

[45] David Kramer was responsible for bringing the siblings together in the first *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concert. The sisters had not seen Lof for twelve years.

Life stories and the ethnographic present

As mentioned in chapter 2, I revisited my box of field records: audio recordings, video footage with a detailed log, transcriptions of interviews and songs, my documentary *Karoo Kitaar Blues*, and the journal in which I kept a daily record of our journey across Namaqualand and the Karoo. It is from these texts that I have constructed here - or more appropriately, stitched together - a fragmented biographical text. In it I try to situate Helena Nuwegeld and Siena Mouers in the social, historical, and cultural context of the coloured working class of the Great Karoo, giving a partial answer to the critiques of my documentary by Lee and Bewley.

It is a fragmented biography, pieced together from the scant published information in one magazine article on David Kramer's *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concert, five newspaper reviews, information on the dust cover of the CD, *Karoo Kitaar Blues*, the interviews Kramer conducted, plus my own interviews with Nuwegeld, the Mouers, and Lof, the section from my journal that took us to Victoria West for five days from 25 to 30 March 2003, and a later interview I conducted with Nuwegeld at ther home in Beaufort West on 14 December 2007. In revisiting this data I realize that neither Nuwegeld nor Mouers revealed much about themselves in the short time I spent with them, either in formal interviews (I was however restricted by my agreement with them, in this regard), or in informal exchanges. Nuwegeld seemed particularly reluctant to talk about her past, and although Mouers was more forthcoming, she was vague about her ancestry. She told me that she had no idea where her grandparents came from or even what their names were (Mouers 2003).[46]

Since I do not have enough information to write a full, continuous narrative, I have constructed what Jeff Todd Titon calls 'life stories' in a fairly fractured narrative, taking note of what anthropologist Kate Shulman says about the 'similarities between crafting a biography, an autobiography and a novel [since] in all these forms of writing characters must [to some extent] be imagined, significance imposed, events interpreted' (Bowers 2000: 143 and 151).

[46] A name and date in brackets refers to an interview I conducted with Siena Mouers on 27 March 2003.

This retrospective account of Helena Nuwegeld and Siena Mouers' life stories is written in a mixture of the past tense because it records a history of people and their families and ancestors, and the ethnographic present. This latter is used where there is a direct transcription from my journal, which was written in the (then) present, and partly because, with both these women now dead, I sometimes do not want to talk about them in the past, but through their voices and my own make them live. By choosing to use the ethnographic present I hope to retain the immediacy of my experiences seven years ago; but I am also aware of the dangers. Anthony Seeger, for example, has cautioned about the possibility of 'distortion and misunderstanding' (Seeger 2004: xvi) when using the present tense, as it can be read as presenting the society under study as static and unchanging, and their social behavior - in the moment - as normative or even idealised.

It is, therefore, important to bear in mind when reading my journal and interviews and watching or listening to the video and audio recordings from 2003 and 2007 that are referred to here, that these are my observations, descriptions, interpretations and recordings of particular people in a particular place at a particular time. To underscore the point, that one cannot 'exclude the essential dynamism and contingency of culture from its ethnographic tense' (Coplan 1994: xvii), I include different versions of songs that Nuwegeld and Mouers sang. I treat them not as potential or actual compositions, as Kramer does, but as texts that are expressions of a lived experience that varies from day to day. Every time the sisters play a particular song it is slightly different, but each time there is clearly something in it that speaks poignantly to their condition and their feelings.

To the data already mentioned I add 'contextual' information that is situational, geographic, and physical in detail. My own insights and explanations, and other information, provide an interpretation woven into the data, the result helping to create an account that is 'thick description – both descriptive and interpretive and multi-layered.[47] I also refer to film clips, from the documentary, on DVD that demonstrate the power of film in ethnography: the way it can enhance the depth and complexity of ethnographic interpretation. I have generally attempted to make my description 'luminous' in Jack

[47] Cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz uses the term 'thick description' to describe his form of ethnography which is both descriptive and interpretive: 'What the ethnographer is faced with...is in fact a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render' (Geertz, 1973: 10).

Katz' terms, extrapolating the 'why' (theory) from the 'how' (descriptive methodology) wherever I can (Katz 2002: 64).

Victims of foolish pleasure



Figure 11: *Elandsrus* Country Lodge on *Elandsfontein* Farm where Siena Mouers was born
(photograph courtesy Patrys van der Merwe)

Helena Nuwegeld was born near Richmond on the farm *Ooikraal* in 1924, and Siena Mouers in 1936, on *Elandsfontein* farm, between the Karoo towns of Beaufort West and Richmond (see Fig 11). *Elandsfontein* farmhouse still stands and is now a country lodge called *Elandsrus*, an overnight stop for people travelling between Cape Town and Johannesburg.[48] When I look at the photograph of the typical old Karoo farmhouse, I can imagine a young Nuwegeld fashioning a *stokpop* (stick doll) out of sticks and old pieces of fabric (see Steyn 2009: 140) while their mother weeded the garden or worked in the kitchen of the old farmhouse with baby Siena tied to her back. The fact that Nuwegeld and Mouers were born on different farms and that their father was a seasonal sheep shearer, suggests that they were often on the move. From descriptions of their childhood in interviews, it would seem that the family were almost certainly Karretjie People as

[48] On my behalf the present owner of the farm, Patrys van der Merwe, recently spoke to sixty-two year old Jan Jooste, a former shepherd who still works on the farm. He has no recollection of a Lof family having lived there. Both Nuwegeld and Mouers would have been about 25 and 13 years older than him so were long gone before he arrived.

mentioned in chapter 1.[49]

During her adult life Nuwegeld lived a more sedentary existence, in full-time employment as a domestic worker and Mouers married a man who was permanently employed on the railways. Their brothers, Freek and Koos Lof were less settled. Freek Lof travelled extensively across the Karoo in his donkey cart erecting farm fences as did Koos Lof on his bicycle:

> *As ek vir môre moet sê, ek het die wereld omtrent deur getrek, oor Prieska, Britstown, Strydenburg, daai grond het ek plat gewerk, tot onder Aberdeen het ek die plek deur gegaan, maar daai tyd toe travel ek met my fiets, toe's ek weg van die huis af, toe's ek nou op my eie, en so het ek aan gegaan met die werk, en so aangegaan met die werk.* [If I speak about tomorrow [the future] I travelled all over the place, over to Prieska, Britstown, Strydenburg, I worked all over that land, down to Aberdeen. I worked right through that place. But at that time I travelled on my bicycle so I was away from the house, so I was on my own (Lof 2003).]

Whether as children the Lof siblings led a peripatetic lifestyle or 'had graduated to a life of permanency on a farm' (de Jongh 2002: 17) is not clear. Nuwegeld does mention in an interview that her father – apart from sheep shearing - also erected fences. This suggests that he might have remained on farms for a longer period after the shearing season was over: *Ja, my pa was 'n ambagsman van draad werk, en sy skeer werk. Dis sy werk gewees in sy lewenstyd.* [Yes, my father was a craftsman when it came to fence making… and his shearing. That was his work in his lifetime (Nuwegeld, 2003).]

According to de Jongh: 'a significant number of Karretjie People sooner or later reach a stage when they contemplate an alternative lifestyle…They all have a history of at least temporary sedentarism as labourers living on farms. The durations of their stay on a single farm varies from a brief sojourn [to] 18 years' (2002: 16).

There were six siblings in the Lof family - three boys and three girls. Their mother worked part-time in the gardens or as a domestic worker on white-owned farms. In 1996

[49] The Karretjie People – descendents of the Khoi and the San – are itinerant, seasonal shearers that travel across the Karoo in their donkey carts, setting up temporary shelters with their families on verges of roads bordering the farms where they work. According to Michael de Jongh, in the mid-nineties there were over 5000 [and growing] Karretjie People in the Great Karoo working on farms in the vicinity of towns that include Victoria West, Colesberg, Beaufort West, Loxton, Middleburg, Steynsburg and Strydenburg (de Jongh 2003: 2).

the average family income was R281.00 per month', a shearer's family after deductions for shears and food and other purchases, often walk[ing] away with a net payment of on R40.00 to R80.00 [per week]' (de Jongh 2002: 12). In the 1920s and '30s it was obviously far lower. To supplement his meager income their father put his children to work at a young age:

> *Ons het vir hom gehelp draad werk, ons het vir hom gehelp in die tuin werk, ons het vir hom gehelp skaapskeer, pense uithaal, als het hy vir ons geleer, so het ons groot geword.* [We helped him with the fences, we helped in the garden, we helped him shear sheep, take out the intestines, he taught us all of this and that is how we grew up (Nuwegeld 2003).][50]

Young children working on the farms with their parents to supplement the family's income is typical practice among the Karretjie People. According to Steyn:

> When farmers approve of the whole family residing on their property for the duration of a shearing task, some of the older children are often incorporated into labour activities. Although this practice is constitutionally illegal for children under the age of sixteen, it is regarded as beneficial by both adults and children because of the financial contribution, though minimal, to individual units (Steyn 2009: 133).

Although they seemed to be more settled than their fellow itinerant sheep-shearers who lived in temporary shelters, their lives were still economically and culturally vulnerable. Dependent on seasonal wages, with little or no access to health services and education, having no access to land and therefore no 'fixed abode', they are part of what Michael de Jongh calls the rural underclass, the poorest of the poor (de Jongh 2003: 2).[51]

So how did these descendents of the Khoi and the San, the oldest indigenous inhabitants of South Africa, who still move about in small extended family groups but no longer with any access to land, undergo the transformation from independent hunter-gatherers to a peripatetic community,[52] dependent on seasonal sheep-shearing for their livelihood?

The destruction of Khoisan society through colonialism, land dispossession, enslavement, genocide has been extensively covered in the literature (see Penn 2005, Mountain 2003,

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[50] A name and date in brackets refers to an interview I conducted with Helena Nuwegeld on 27 March 2003.
[51] A report in 1996 from the Ministry in the Office of the President identified rural people and particularly women, 'as bearing the largest burden of poverty in South Africa' (Mxotwa 2010: 3).
[52] Peripatetic here means 'primarily non-food producing, preferentially endogamous, itinerant communities subsisting mainly on the sale of specialised services to sedentary customers' (Rao cited in Steyn 2009: 33).

Skotnes 1996 et al.,) and de Jongh and Steyn have focused specifically on the social and economic histories of their descendents in the areas of Victoria West and Colesberg in the Great Karoo (2002 and 2009). Kirby (1936a) and C.M Doke (1936) wrote remarkable accounts of the musical practices and 'games, plays and dances' they encountered settled at Bain's camp 'near the junction of the Aoub and Nossop Rivers in the Kalahari desert' (Kirby 1936a: 373) Kirby refers in this account to earlier writers who not only described but transcribed 'in European [music] notation, Bushman music: Burchell (1811), Weisebecker (1879), Stow (1880), and Bleek (1925). (He also wrote another substantial account (1936b) of Bushman music). More recently Hansen has looked at the acculturation of the music making and dance of the Khoi and the San (1996). Rather than covering the same ground here, I look at the representation of this history and the concomitant social and economic conditions that have affected this community through the music, songs and life histories of Nuwegeld and Mouers.

Evening, 27 March 2003

Helena and Siena are sitting on stools at the side of the road outside Victoria West. A vast scrubland stretches out behind them and as the sun sets the mountains cast shadows across the land. Siena tunes her guitar; Helena pulls her cardigan tight across her breasts. Brand turns on his camera and Tony swings his boom towards the two musicians. Helena coughs, clears her throat, bends forward and begins to sing:

Ons is vermaak se maksels	We come for foolish pleasure
Ons is trek eiland se boesmans	We are the wandering bushmen of the island
Dit is baie swaar	It is really tough going
As jy kannie ma sê,	If you can't say mama,
Jou kannie pa sê	You can't say papa.
Toe ons op die eiland gaan staan	We went to stand on the island
Toe staan ons bloot alleen	We stood there all alone
Nou ons is niemand se vriend nie	Now we are nobody's friend
Trane is vir my	Tears are for me
Hartseer is vir jou	Heartache is for you
Ons is vermaak se maksels	We are objects of ridicule
Verwyd se honne gaan ons bly	The dogs of rejection we will stay
My trane rol groot riviere vol	My tears roll, the big rivers fill

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Vermakse Maksels* © Blik Music)

The lines of descent of present-day Karretjie People has recently been determined through 'the techniques of (maternal) mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) and (paternal) Y-chromosome analysis. Research conducted by the Human Genomic Diversity and Disease Research Unit at the Medical Research Council (MRC) headed by H. Soodyall in

collaboration with M. de Jongh (who is affiliated with the University of South Africa), provides evidence that the DNA of the Karretjie People can be traced directly to the KhoeKhoen and San (De Jongh & Soodyall, forthcoming, cited in Steyn, 2009: 2). Evidence that siblings Nuwegeld, Mouers and Lof are descendents, aside from their birth and circumstances, can also be seen in their slanted eyes and high cheek bones. It is of course dangerous to make statements that can be seen as racial stereotyping; but Nuwegeld, withstanding its contestation as an appellation (see Jolly 1996: 197), categorically called herself a *boesman* (bushman) – in her song and in an interview when I visited her in 2007. She simply said: '*Ek is 'n boesman'* [I am a bushman].

But did Nuwegeld's claim to what Peter Jolly calls 'bushmanness' (1996: 197) come from a place of pride, irony, or shame? The introduction of the Population Registration Act of 1950 damned all South Africans to a racist classificatory system based on skin colour, and to a powerlessness reinforced, as coloured identity theorist Mohamed Adhikari has pointed out, 'with the removal of Coloured people from the common voters' role in 1956' (Adhikari 2005: 18). People like the Khoisan, neither black nor white (in the eyes of the State), were mostly classified 'Coloured' and this is the identity to which the descendents of the indigenous people of South Africa were condemned, a condemnation they internalised; '*Ons is vermak se maksels, Ons is trek eiland se boesmans* [We are the victims of foolish pleasure, We are the wandering bushmen of this land'.]

In dealing with the isolating and disempowering effects of the 1956 legislation Adhikari has shown how coloured people themselves used the 'colloquial expression "We are the jam" which likens coloured people to the thin layer of jam squeezed between two slices of bread' (Ibid: 19), a metaphor for entrapment between racial groups - African and White - from both of which coloureds were excluded. Further, the intermediary status of being 'not' white, 'not' black but the 'jam in the middle' came with associations of weakness, inferiority and a Khoisan past which was linked in the popular mind to 'images of inveterate laziness, irresponsibility, dirtiness, and a penchant for thievery' (Ibid: 28). As a result the terms *hotnot* (Khoi) and *boesman* (San) are generally regarded as derogatory and insulting.

Musical apprenticeship

Nuwegeld, Mouers, Lof and Coetzee acquired their musical expertise in what Barbara Rogoff calls an 'apprenticeship model' within a community of practice:

> Through children's everyday involvement in social life, 'lessons' regarding skilled and valued ... cultural activities are available to them ... It is part of the nature of children to seek the meaning - the purpose and connotation - of what goes on around them, and to involve themselves in ongoing activity (Rogoff 1990: 18).

In the interview with Kramer that appears as an extra on the *Karoo Kitaar Blues* documentary DVD, he describes a typical scenario of the informal acquisition of musical skills among the coloured working class of the Northern Cape.

> It appears to me that lot of the guitar players were shepherds and the violinists as well and that the nature of their work - sitting out watching the sheep - allows them the opportunity to sit with an instrument and to play it and develop that instrument. The stories that I heard was that little boys start looking after sheep. They wouldn't go to school or they didn't go to school in those years so they would fashion themselves an instrument out of an old oil can and a piece of wood and two or three strings and then they would watch somebody in their homes or in their community and then try and learn to play. They were never taught. They weren't taught by music teachers and again from what you hear is that the older generation did not seem to have much time to teach children or indulge children so if a kid had a musical sense he would make his own instrument and sit out in the veld and watching the goats or the sheep and learning to pay this instrument (Kramer 2003b).

Coetzee provides an illustration of what Kramer describes and Rogoff alludes to. As a young boy in Herbertsdale, Coetzee worked as a shepherd, never going to school or learning to read or write. He spent his days looking after sheep and practicing his ***blik*** guitar. When I asked him in an interview how he felt about not going to school, he told me that he was very grateful because if he had gone he would never have been the great guitarist that he is today (Coetzee 2003). He delightfully describes how he learnt to play:

> *As my pa hulle speel dan moet julle ookie 'n mistake maak om* (indistinct) *..teenwoordigheid ma jy's nog 'n kind. Nou gooi* (indistinct)*...regkry om te sien hoe hulle dan druk nie dan klim ek onder die tafel en nou sit ek lekker – pens en pooitjie daar –want hulle weet mos nie van jou nie.*
> [When my father and his friends played music you didn't dare make the mistake of trying to join the party because you were still a child. If I couldn't manage to see the

chords - how they were being played - then I hid under the table - boots and all - and watched them in secret (Coetzee 2003).][53]

Nuwegeld and Mouers were more fortunate than their female counterparts who had to work in the kitchens and gardens of the farms. They had access to the 'male realm' where music played an important role. Hanging out with the men on the land they learnt to play the *blikviool.* Old man Lof made them each a guitar from an oil can and a piece of wood. He taught them chords and each one had to create a song and practice until they got it right. However, there was never any formal process around learning music in the sense of a structured timetabled, an institutionalized space, or a conventional student/teacher relationship.

> *Ons het met blikviole leer speel. Al maak my pa vir ons blik viole, ramkiekie. Dan sê die ou hoe ons moet druk en wat moet ons maak, en ons moet n liedjie maak on te sing, wat ons gespeel het, ons kan hoor of ons reg kom, nou toe maak ons die liedjie so en dis wat ons nou het. Ja dat ons dit nou het, elkeen n liedjie, laat jy druk op die kitaar, jy weet net jy stem hom eerste.*
> [We learnt how to play on tin can violins. My father used to make us all those tin-violins, *ramkiekie*. Then he told us how to press [the chords], OK? And [told us] what we should do. And we had to make a song to sing which we [then] played [until] we could hear that it sounded correct to us. And that's how we sing it and that's how the song is now. That is how it happens that we all now have a song. You play the guitar like this. But first you have to tune it. (Nuwegeld 2003).]

Their brother Koos Lof explains that when he began to play the *ramkie* in 1963 on Larry Synman's farm in Besjiespoort, he did not know how to tune:

> *Hoe en hoe, en op daai manier, toe kom ek, toe 't ek n stel gestel, maar ek weet ok nie watse stel is dit nie, maar toe ek druk, toe druk hy reg, so het ek hom geaanvaar. Nou toe het ek van die blik ramkiekie af oorgeslaan na die kitaar toe, en so 't ek met die kitaar gespeel.*
> [And that's how I found a tuning, but I did not know which tuning it was, but when I play, it sounds right, so that is how I kept it. Now I have changed from the tin *ramkiekie* to the guitar, and that is how I [learnt to] play the guitar (Lof 2003).]

Lof then learnt to play the accordion, by 'playing and playing and playing' (*toe 't ek die ding geleer en geleer en geleer*), using an instrument belonging to a man he grew up with in Victoria West:

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[53] Interview with Hannes Coetzee in Herbertsdale on 30 March 2003. English translation taken from sub-titles of *Karoo Kitaar Blues* documentary. Original Afrikaans indistinct under music.

Toe trek hy spoorweg toe. Nou toe koop hy vir hom die musiek, nou hier oor die naweek kom hy mos uit na my toe, nou kuier, en ek het die musiek, dan speel ek dan speel ek, dan vind ek weer uit. Dan vind ek weer uit die musiek maak my moeg. Toe vra ek hom, maar jong verkoop die ou musiek aan my? Jy bly dan mos nou daar, dan kan jy mos weer n ander een koop vir jou. Jy werk mos nou vir baie geld op spoorweg. Toe sê hy vir my, maar hy sal eers dink oor die saak. En toe hy weer die naweek daar kom, toe sê hy nee, ek die musiek by hom oorkoop. Toe koop ek die musiek by hom oor toe sê hy vir my alright ek kan hom R250 gee. Toe vat ek die musiek by hom. En daarvan af het ek hom nou so geleer en geleer en geleer, tot ek nog gespeel het soos ek nou hier speel. So't ek gebegind.
[Then he moved to the railways. He bought himself a 'music' [an accordion] and over the weekend he came out to visit me and I played the accordion. I played and played it, and then I found again and again that playing the music [accordion] made me tired. Then I ask him, 'Hey kid, why not sell the accordion to me? Now that you live over there, you can buy yourself another one. You earn a lot of money on the railways'. So he said he would first think about the matter. And when he came again at the weekend he said yes, I could buy the accordion from him. So I bought the accordion from him and he said all right I can give him R250. So I took the accordion from him and from then on I practiced and practiced and practiced, till I could play like I play now. That's how I started (Lof 2003).]

Gendered selves, impoverished communities

Gender appears to have been a highly influential factor in Nuwegeld and Mouers social and cultural lives. For example forms of disguise had to be assumed to enter into the world of men. From an early age they grew up in a man's world and this is where they learnt to play the guitar - in the fields during their lunch breaks or after work. Or possibly in the outspans if they were not resident on a farm.[54] Kramer describes the restricted opportunities for working class women who wished to learn to play an instrument on Karoo farms. He explains how Nuwegeld and Mouers' experiences were were exceptions to the norm:

> Now the young girls of the family wouldn't have that opportunity. That wouldn't be a role that they would have. They would have to - I suppose - work in the kitchen of the farm. If you work in the kitchen of the farm then you are under the eye of your white master and mistress. And so you wouldn't be able to rush off and play your instrument. Now in the case of Siena its different because her father dressed her up as a boy. And Helena as well. And so they were passed off as young men when they were teenagers and they worked on the farms as young men... They suddenly found

[54] Outspans are: 'A vacant, 'neutral' piece of land belonging to a local or provincial authority which may be legally occupied for no more than 48 hours at a time (Steyn 2009: viii)

themselves in the male realm, which seems to have made it easier for them to become guitarists (Kramer 2003b).

Nuwegeld confirms Kramer's story and goes further by describing with pride the skills acquired from her father, the craftsman, that gave her and Mouers equal status with male labourers and with whites:

> *Ons het groot geword in mannetjies klere, ons het nie groot geword soos vroue mense nie. Ons het ons man se klere als gedra, en ons werk saam onse pa. Dit is soos dit is. Ons kan vandag enige wit mens, ons kan gaan, dan kan ons dit [doen?], dans ons vrou mense, ons doen dit, maak ons die draad, ons strek ons eie pale en ons maak hom reg. Ons het so groot geword. Dit is die talent wat die Here vir hom gegee om vir ons te gee.*
> [We grew up in boy's clothes, we didn't grow up as women. We wore men's clothes and worked alongside our father. That is how it is. Today we can do it as well as any white person. Us women we do it, make the fences, straighten our own poles and make them right. That is how we grew up. That is the talent that God gave him to give to us (Nuwegeld 2003).]

Mouers claimed her space as an independent woman in a male-dominated world by protecting her right to play the guitar, a role normally reserved for men. In her interview she told me how central the guitar was in her life and how to protect her freedom to play her instrument influenced her decision to marry Jan Mouers:

> *Ek willie 'n man he wat nie kan kitaar speel nie, want ek speel kitaar. Nou gaan ek en my man, nou speel ek met daai man kitaar, as ons by die huis kom dan slat my man my. Toe se ek, ek gat n man soek wat kan kitaar speel saam met my, en toe kry ek hom- en toe't ons twee mekaar geneem, en so't ons maar so saam gespeel, saam gespeel en ons kom reg.*
> [I did not want a man who could not play the guitar because I play the guitar. Now if I played the guitar with another man, when I came home my man would beat me up. So I said to myself I must find a man who can play the guitar with me. And I found him and we got married and came right (Mouers 2003).]

Mouers 'came right' in her thirties with her second husband, Jan Mouers - a railway worker from Besjiespoort, a small town and railway siding between Victoria West and Three Sisters. His wife had died and he had been left with three small children to look after. So although Mouers' freedom to play the guitar was assured, in the other half of the contract ironically situated her firmly in the role of mother and carer of three children (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyl2aO1cXB0).

> *Hy's 'n spoorweg man. Hy's 'n man wat van sewe uur die oggend tot vyf uur die aand gewerk het. Hy't besluit dat ons moet trou sodat ek die kinners kan oppas.*

[He's a railway's man. He's a man who worked from seven in the morning until five in the evening so he decided that we should get married so that I could look after the children (Mouers 2003).]

Afternoon, 28 March 2008
Jan Mouers, tall and rigid in his chair. One eye protrudes in a baleful stare - glazed from a recent hit of marijuana. In a monotone he describes his work to me:

Die werk wat ek gedoen het, madam, was met yster en klip. En daai werk het ek elke dag gedoen. Tot in die middernag, donker nag, moet ek met daai yster en klip werk. Niks ander sort werk het ek gedoen nie, net yster en klip. Die werk wat ek gedoen is daai sleepers onder die spoor. Dan lig hulle die spoor op en dan kom die spoor soveel op, die sleeper. Dan moet ons daai klippe onder daai sleepers inslaan... slaan, slaan, slaan tot op die end... net yster en klip... Yster en klip, yster en klip madam, net yster en klip.
[The work I did madam was with iron and stone. And that work I did everyday. Until midnight, in the dark of the night, I had to work with iron and stone. I didn't do any other work except iron and stone. The work that I did was with those sleepers under the railway line. They lift the railway lines and then the tracks are lowered onto the sleepers. Then we had to hammer those stones under the sleepers ... slam, slam, slam until the end ... just iron and stone. Iron and stone, iron and stone madam, just iron and stone (Jan Mouers 2003.]

The monotony of the work is echoed in the 6/8 meter delivery of his words, *yster en klip, yster en klip* taking on the rhythm of the clacking of the train's wheels on the rails. *Yster en klip, yster en klip*, clackety-clack, clackety-clack.

In 1981 Jan Mouers was retrenched: a victim of privatisation when South African Railways and Harbours (S.A.R. & H.) became South African Transport Services (SATS) (http://mysite.mweb.co.za/residents/grela/transnet.html). His sister-in-law Helena Nuwegeld wrote this song for him:

Op 'n Maandag more	On a Monday
Ou Jannie Mouers op die staalpad	Old Jannie Mouers steps onto the railway track
Hy knoop sy baadjie toe	He buttons up his jacket
En toe hy op die stasie kom	But when he comes to the station
Trek die trein net weg	The train has gone
To staan hy met 'n hand vol trane	He stands there with a handful of tears
En hy maak twaalf kinders groot	He's made twelve children big
Met ses duntjies brood.	On six slices of bread.

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Jannie Mouers,* 2003 © Blik Music)

I asked Nuwegeld: *'n Hand vol trane? Nou wat is dit*?' [A handful of tears? Now what does that mean?] She replied:

Dit bedoel nou die trein het hom uit gery en hy moet daar wees waar die trein na toe gaan. Toe moet sy hart nou seer word bedoel dit nou. Want hy kannie by die werk wees nie.
[It means that the train left without him and actually he had to be there where the train was going. Therefore his heart was sore because he can no longer go to work (Mouers 2003).]

I write in my journal: 'The setting sun casts long shadows across the landscape. Jannie Mouers with his guitar on his back walks slowly down the railway line away from the camera. His figure gets smaller and smaller until he is just a dot in a landscape that no longer feeds him'.

Victoria West, 27 March 2003
We have breakfast and then drive through town to look for a venue where David can work with the Mouers family on their songs. We drive past the Victoria West Hotel. The owner, a portly, white man called Mr Hickson, is standing in front of the hotel off-licence drinking a cup of coffee. Behind him on the wall is written: 'Pick a Bottle Bottle Store'. A number of unemployed coloured people, in various stages of inebriation, mill about in front of the sign. A woman looks into the camera and says: *Jy kan my video as jy wil. Sê nou vir die mense ek lyk so van die honger. Ek kry swaar.*['Yes, you can film me if you want and tell the people that I drink because I am poor'.] Mr Hickson is oblivious to this desperation as he directs the offloading of hundreds of *'papsakke'* from the back of a trailer that has pulled up in front of the hotel. He owns all the bottle stores in Victoria West. David tells me that sixty-five % of the people in the town are alcoholics.

Mouers reveals more about this in her interview:

Ek ken die tyd ek nog jonk gewees het. Jy kry brandewyn, jy kry wyn, vae wyn - enige ding. Maar nou is daar mos nie meer sulke goeters. Daar's papsaakke. Papsakke is gevaarlik - hy's gevaarlik. Dit is die ding wat die dokters so die mense stop - die papsakke. Daai dokter het gese daai papsak wyn gee jou hare in jou maag. Dan groei daai hare, groei in jou maag, en hy groei so dat hy naderhand steek in jou derme. Dis daai tyd wat jy so bloei uit jou mond en uit jou neus. Na daai bloei dans jy ook verby.
[I remember when I was still young, you could get brandy, you could get wine, vats of wine - anything. But these days, you don't get those things anymore. There are only *papsakke*[55] and *papsakke* are dangerous - they are dangerous. That's the thing that the doctors tried to stop the people [from drinking] - those *papsakke*. A doctor that we went to said that *papsakke* gives you hair in your stomach. Then those hairs will grow, grow in your stomach until eventually the hair will grow amongst your intestines and it's then that you will start bleeding from your mouth and your nose. After that bleeding, you are also finished. (Siena Mouers 2003).]

[55] *Papsakke* are 5-litre bags of (low quality) sweet white wine sold very cheaply. It comes in a silver cooler bag with a plastic tap attached. Literally means 'soft bag'.

We collected Nuwegeld, Lof and Siena, Magdalena and Jan Mouers from home. Siena was ill. Her throat hurt and the phlegm in her chest is made it difficult for her to breathe. Kramer had taken her to the doctor earlier that morning and she had been given antibiotics with strict instructions to go to bed. She had refused, settled down on her chair in the town hall, picked up her guitar and began to tune it. She was accompanied by polyphony of coughing from Nuwegeld, Jan Mouers and Lof.

> Stadsaal 26 March 2003
> What is wrong with them all? Is it tuberculosis, chest infection or is it the homemade cigarettes they all roll from newspaper and cheap tobacco? Lof has nodded off, his piano accordion sighing mournfully on his lap.

Brand, the director of photography was muttering in a corner. He had complained that the light in the room was bad. Siena took the paper clip from under the brim of her hat and started to pick out a melody on her guitar. Jan started to accompany her. Lof woke up and fumbled his way across the keyboard of his accordion and suddenly Nuwegeld's voice filled the space:

Ai nee, ai nee my bruin broer	Oh no, Oh no my brown brother
Hoekom doen jy dit aan my	Why do you do this to me?
Jy't net drie sisters	You only have three sisters
En jy't ons verlaat	And you deserted us
Nou kom jy deur die leegdes	Now you come through the emptiness
Om ons harte to kom troos.	To mend our broken hearts.

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Oom Vredendal,* 2003 © Blik Music)

I was profoundly moved. Even though I did not understand all the words of the song yet, the tears and anguish that marked the performance were clearly expressions of a deeper underlying meaning. Brand and his camera were sliding up and down the dolly and tracks, moving across the faces of the musicians. We were trying to capture the essence of the music embodied in their faces and the movement of their bodies. They seemed oblivious to the camera and the crew's presence. They sang again:

Ai nee Oom Vredendal	Oh no uncle Vredendal
Hoekom doen jy dit nou?	Why do you do this?
Ai nee Oom Vredendal	Oh no Uncle Vredendal
Hoekom doen jy dit nou	Why do you do this?
Jy't gekom om ons harte te breek	You came and broke our hearts
En jy sal weer kom	And you'll return
Om ons harte te troos	To mend them again.
Nou kom jy deur die leegdes	Now you come across the emptiness

Die leegdes	The emptiness,
Om ons harte te kom troos	To mend our broken hearts
Ai nee, ai nee, ai nee	Oh no, oh no, oh no
My bruin broer	My brown brother
Jy moet nou huistoe kom	You must come home now

(Helena Mouers, *Oom Vredendal*, 2003 © Blik Music)



Figure 12: Film crew getting ready to film Helena Nuwegeld and Siena Mouers in the Karoo landscape outside Victoria West, 28 March 2003
(photograph courtesy John Kramer)

Afternoon. The Old Bokomo Bakery, Victoria West, 28 March 2003.
I interview Helena in the kitchen of Siena and Jan's house. They live in the old Bokomo Bakery. I am hoping that she will expand on the subject of *weeskinders* (orphans) referred to in her lyrics and talk to me about her music and her life. Cake tins and cheap clocks have pride of place on well-worn green shelves. A large ghetto blaster sitting on top of an unplugged fridge and a shiny new bicycle against the wall are the only signs of improved circumstances brought about from the proceeds of their last *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concert. A skinny kitten plays with a chicken bone on the concrete floor and behind a curtain, strung across the room to hide a bed, lies their son Pieter, brain-damaged from a fight in a shebeen some months back. Two women lay the table for a supper of chicken feet and white bread. Hanging from their mouths are cigarettes made from cheap tobacco rolled up in newspaper.

Nuwegeld was not keen to be interviewed. She had a cold and a hangover from the family reunion the night before. She folded her arms and stared out of the window. Nuwegeld

and I had known each other for less than 24 hours and I was about to ask her intimate details of her life in front of a camera and crew. Our entry into the Mouer's world had been through David Kramer and it was quite clear that Nuwegeld was tolerating us for his sake. She looked bored and irritated. I had planned a semi-structured interview hoping that Nuwegeld would loosen up as we went along and regale us with stories of her life and making music. It didn't look at all promising. I began by asking her general questions about where she came from. She tersely gave me one-word answers. I wanted to stop but pressed on. I had employed a film crew who were costing me thousands a day and we only had five days in Victoria West. I asked her about her reference to orphans in the song *Vermaak se Maksels* and whether she considered coloured people as 'orphans' in the world:

> *Ja, man, as mens nie ma het nie, dans weeskinders. As die ouers dood is, as ma dood is en pa dood is, da'ns hy mos wees. Hy't mos niks, hy't niemand nie, hy's niemand se vriend nie, as jy nie ouers het nie, is jy niemand se vriend nie, jy staan alleen...en dit is hoe dit is*?
> [Yes man, if a person does not have a mother then they are orphans. If the parents are dead, if the mother is dead and the father is dead, then he is orphaned. He has nothing, he has nobody, he is nobody's friend. If you do not have parents then you are nobody's friend. You stand alone. And that is how it is (Nuwegeld 2003).]

Nuwegeld folded her arms and stared out of the window. Was she being deliberately obtuse or was I? Should I have asked her about her use of metaphor in a different way? The words of her songs - for me - clearly spoke of marginalization and rejection, an issue central to coloured identity. I ask her again, this time about *weeskinders*. She looked at me in exasperation and as if speaking to a child spelt it out (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpKq4Dv9S7I):

> *Dis mos ons. Ons het nie ma nie en ons het nie pa nie. Nie ouma nie, ons het ook nie oompie nie, ons het ook nie antie nie. Dan moet ons vir ons 'n liedjie maak. Ons is wees. Ons is wees, ons het mos nou niemand.*
> [Its just us. We do not have a mother, we do not have a father. No grandmother, no uncle. We have no auntie. Then we have to make a song for ourselves. We are orphaned, we are orphaned, we have no-one (Ibid).]

I asked Siena the same question:'Do you think that coloured people in this country are 'orphans'?

> *Hier is baie wat weeskinders is en dan's daar baie wat nie wees is. Maar ja, maar nou, die lied het ek nou maar gedag - dit sal 'n lied vir ons wees die dag wat ons nie meer ouers het nie. Dan mag ons daai lied gebruik. En toe het ons dit so gedoen.*

> [There are many people who are orphans and then there are many who are not orphans. But yes, but now, the song that I made up - it will be a song for us the day we do not have parents. Then we will use that song. And so we did it like that (Mouers 2003).]

Perhaps engaging with the deeper meaning of the lyrics was not available in the hastily arranged, uncomfortable and unfamiliar interview situation, which acutely exposed what Paul Berliner has called 'the nature of knowledge as privileged information' (Berliner 1978: 7). As informants, Nuwegeld and Mouers were giving me 'only the amount of information they believe to be appropriate to the situation and to the persons involved' (Ibid). Unlike Berliner, however, who in the situation he described in Bandimbira's village in Zimbabwe had more time, patience, and experience than I, the information I sought remained hidden. David Coplan compares the awkwardness that can occur in interviews by means of a parallel with classical music, where there is an 'antagonism [and] mutual dependency (such as this one) inherent in the relationship of artist and critic.

> The ethnographer seeks to categorize and comprehend; the performer to evade categorization and comprehension. As consultant, designated purveyor of local knowledge, the performer's discourse reveals, conceals and manipulates cultural principles of aesthetic production. As creator of representations on some level distinctly his own, he is at once trickster, wizard, and hero - adding his personality to his collectivity, extending their vision uniquely (Coplan 1994: xv).

A tragic event in Nuwegeld and Mouers' lives was the death of their brother Frikkie (Oom Vredendal), a sheep-shearer in the farming area of Vredendal in the Karoo. He seems to have been a favourite with his siblings and a talented musician. It is not clear how he died but according to Siena his wife had poisoned him:

> *Die vrou wat hy gehet het, het vir hom vuilgoed ingegee, wat sy by 'n Bantu man gekry het. En daai vuilgoed het hom ge-eet tot onder die grond. Hy was maar mevrou, ek het net hierdie bene gesien, sulke dun beentjies, voor hy dood is. Wie is die man wat my kan wys wat my broer maker, en wie het dit vir hom so gedoen. Toe sê die oom vir my - sy't vir hom daai goed in gegee, die kaffirbier.*
> [That woman that he had, gave him rubbish [to drink], that she got from a Bantu man. It was that rubbish that ate at him until he was under the soil. He was thin Missus, I just saw these- such skinny thin legs - before he died. Who is the man that can show me where my brother is, and who can show me who did this to him? A man told me it was her - that she gave that stuff to him, the *kaffirbeer* (Siena Mouers, Ibid).]

This extract once again highlights the sisters' obsession with being left alone (orphaned) but Siena's use of 'Bantu' - an apartheid-era word used to classify 'black' people- could

in addition reveal another way in which Siena identified herself: as 'not Black'. As Adhikari has noted, 'that the most insistent element in the expression of Coloured identity was an association with whiteness and a concomitant distancing from Africanness ... could give rise to a sense of shame with regard to any personal associations with blackness or an aggressive bigotry toward Africans' (Adhikari 2005: 11). It was the black man's poison (*vuilgoed*) that killed Oom Vredendal. The loss of their favorite brother left a huge hole in their lives. As their song puts it: '*Ai nee Oom Vredendal, Hoekom doen jy dit nou? Nou kom jy deur die leegdes. Om ons harte to kom troos.* [Oh no Uncle Vredendal, Why did you do this? Now you come through the emptiness, To mend our broken hearts.]

> *Dis min. Di 'n armmoedige plek. Hier kry die mense swaar. Die man drink net soos die vrou en die vrou soos die man Daars nie een wat die ander een keer nie, preek nie. Hulle drink op soos wat hulle kan. En die drank is duur hier in Victoria Wes. Maar hulle gee nie darvoor om nie. Die geld gaan heen daarmee.*
> [People get paid little. This is a very poor place. Here people have it hard. The wives of the men who work, get the money. But the man drinks just as much as his wife and the wife just like the husband. There's not one who stops the other one, who gives a sermon. They drink up what they can. The alcohol here in Victoria West is expensive. But they don't care about that. The money goes to nothing (Siena Mouers 2003).]

And then, according to Mouers, the next day they send their children around the community to ask for mielie meal, sugar or coffee (Siena Mouers 2003). The money to feed the family for the week is gone and Mr Hickson - his stock of *papsakke* depleted - has lined his pockets with the meagre wages of the sheep shearers and *draadtrekkers* and the pensions of the elderly. I asked Nuwegeld whether she had an opinion on why so many people drank alcohol :

> *Dis 'n mens eie keuse. Dit wat jy doen, jy doen aan jouself. Ek kan nie se nie hoekom hy dit doen* y. *Waar of daar pyn is en of hy dit aspris doen. Dis 'n mens eie keuse wat jy doen aan jouself. Dit is hoe dit is.*
> [It is a person's own choice. What you do, you do to yourself. I can't say why they do it. Where there is pain or do you cause the pain yourself? It is a person's own choice what you do to yourself. That is how it is. (Helena 2003).]

Siena Mouers and Jan Mouers did not drink, but for a number of the extended Mouers family and friends, alcohol and music were their opiates. On a Friday night one might have come across Nuwegeld standing unsteadily on her feet and clapping in time to Jan

and Siena Mouers' guitars. As the night's reveling would draw to a close, empty *papsakke* litter the ground, they would fall into an inebriated sleep where possibly despair is put on hold for a few hours.

In the next chapter I explore the abuse of alcohol further, along with other tropes arising from the extreme deprivation of the society in which Nuwegeld and Mouers live. One of these, the *rieldans,* is noted in my journal as follows:

> Old Bokomo Bakery, 30 March 2003
> The Mouers throw a party. We are all leaving f or Cape Town the next day. They provide the venue and we provide the food and drink. The Mouers' extended family and friends sit on chairs against the wall. Siena is playing her guitar and Helena is singing. Toddlers in party frocks crawl about in the dirt. They have lit a fire that throws extraordinary shadows against the wall behind their heads. We add four Coleman lamps to give Brand and Paul the light they need to get an image on their lenses. A women in a bright yellow polka dotted skirt and a slim older man with the distinctive cheekbones of the San start dancing the *hotnot's riel.* The woman stamps her feet, the man contorts his body into an animal shape and against the wall a happier Helena claps. Standing in the shadows at this Friday night get together, I feel extraordinarily privileged to witness what I had hoped to see before we set out on our journey - the *riel,* with its traces and fragments of the Khoekhoe trance dance that go back hundreds of years.[56]

Beaufort West, 2007

After listening to the two sisters, I had made up my mind to return to the Karoo and find our more from Nuwegeld about their music and their lives. It was only in December 2007 that I managed to do so. Both Siena Mouers and her daughter Magdalena had died earlier that year, Mouers from congestion of the lungs and Magdalena from tuberculosis.[57] I interviewed Nuwegeld in her tiny RDP house in Beaufort West,[58] where she was sharing a single bed with her granddaughter and great-grandchild. I found her not only mourning her sister and niece but also her brother, Koos, who had also died from lung congestion.

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[56] Hansen says that, 'the trance dance remains the most important social and ritual event in Bushmen communities. It involves gender-based musical roles, women singing and clapping, while the men dance and wear strung rattles. The music is vocal and polyphonic, being accompanied by polyrhythmic handclapping' (Hansen 1996: 304).

[57] In 2002, 59,951 people died from tuberculosis in South Africa (South African Statistics 2004/5).

[58] The R[econstruction] and D[evelopment] P[rogramme] was a 'policy framework' devised by the first ANC Government in 1994, aimed at redressing poverty and social inequality (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconstruction_and_Development_Programme), accessed 21.1.11). Houses built via this programme were called 'RDP houses'.

(Seven months after my visit, her brother-in-law Jan Mouers had a stroke and died.) Nuwegeld had visibly deteriorated since I had last seen her in 2006 at the Spier *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concert.

> 14th December, 2007, Helena's home, Beaufort West
> Her eyes are opaque from cataracts, stained yellow with nicotine. Her old red jersey falls off her once voluptuous shoulders. I find her sitting outside her tiny home on a melamine kitchen chair, a beer in her hand. Shading her eyes from the sun she fills me in on some of some of the gaps in her life story but mostly, in rhythmical monotone, she sways in her chair and repeats almost verbatim what she had told me three years before: *Dit is swear, dit is swaar, Baie swaar, bitter swear, Swaar om 'n weeskind te wees* ... Helena has no more to say to me.

Helena Nuwegeld was was murdered on Saturday 5th December 2009. I quote the report on her murder in The Cape Times in full below, because it is the description of a tragedy that goes beyond her own brutal death to symbolise the hopelessness of her community, because it finds words that I cannot, to represent her death, and because the report speaks to the uncomfortable, complex but necessary role played by David Kramer, even here. For had Helena Nuwegeld not been one of the stars of *Karoo Kitaar Blues*, it is certain that her death would have gone unnoticed by anyone but her family. But it did not. This the report.

> **Karoo Blues star shot dead December 7, 2009 By Caryn Dolley**
> 'Part of South Africa's music heritage' has been lost with the murder of a Karoo farm worker whose singing ability was so extraordinary, songwriter and guitarist David Kramer had enlisted her in one of his productions. Kramer says 85-year-old Helena Nuwegeld's killing has also spelt the death of the memory of traditional Karoo music. Nuwegeld, who had starred in Kramer's production Karoo Kitaar Blues eight years ago, was killed at Nooitgedacht farm near Beaufort West on Saturday, along with farm workers 64-year-old Hendrik September and 38-year-old Mannetjie John. A 37-year-old man, the farm's caretaker, is expected to appear in the Beaufort West Magistrate's Court today on suspicion of shooting the three with a hunting rifle after an argument with them. Kramer said he had heard early yesterday about the killings, which 'came as a terrible shock. (Nuwegeld) had a very vibrant personality and was an incredibly strong old lady. She contributed many wonderful songs. She was part of South Africa's music heritage and kept the tradition of Karoo music alive. With her goes the memory of all those songs. It's a sad thing. I'm glad to have known her,' he said. Kramer had last heard from Nuwegeld when she had called three days before her murder. His family had sent Nuwegeld some money and, as far as he was aware, she had gone to buy food with it. Nuwegeld had not mentioned any problems.
>
> Kramer met her in the Karoo nearly a decade ago while making a documentary on the musical culture there and had decided to give her and other local artists a

platform to showcase their talents, which resulted in Karoo Kitaar Blues. He had kept in contact with her since. Kramer said that, through the show, he had helped Nuwegeld and her sister, Siena Mouers, who 'played the guitar in a unique way', reunite with their musician brother, Koos Lof, who played the accordion back to front. 'They hadn't spoken for about 12 years and hadn't made music together for about 30 years,' he said.

The trio had travelled with the show, making music together again, to places including Bloemfontein and Johannesburg. Kramer said Nuwegeld had been the surviving member of her musical family. His official website said Nuwegeld's performance in Karoo Kitaar Blues 'stole the show'.'Slumped back in her chair, her doek tied low above her eyebrows it was Helena's voice that stole the show.' Sitting before a microphone for the first time in her life she appeared unfazed by the limelight, instead descending deeper and deep into her hypnotic, head-nodding incantations in a voice dipped in brandy and tobacco toasted to a glorious huskiness,' it said. The website said Nuwegeld had lived in a 'shoe-box size' home and had been the singer of her family. Yesterday, Nuwegeld's niece, Anna, who lived in Delft, broke down when she heard her aunt had died. Relatives of September and John could not be reached yesterday. Vuyisa Jantjies, a Beaufort West resident and co-ordinator of Rural Network, a national NGO, said farm workers and residents in the area were in shock. 'An 85-year-old cannot be a threat to a young man. The big question is, what happened to cause all this?' He said funeral arrangements were yet to be made for the three. Police spokeswoman Bernadine Steyn said the killings on the farm about 25km outside Beaufort West apparently followed an argument between the three farm workers and the caretaker in the workers' home. Steyn said after the argument the caretaker allegedly shot the workers with a hunting rifle. Nuwegeld and September were both shot in the head inside their home. John was shot in the head, chest and leg outside the house. All three died at the scene. Steyn said police were called and when they arrived they arrested the caretaker who was still at the house. The Cape Times could not get hold of anyone from the farm yesterday (http://www.iol.co.za/tonight?fArticleId=5276655, accessed 21 January 2011).

CHAPTER 4: *BITTER SWAAR*: HIDDEN TROPES OF RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

In this chapter I investigate expressions of rural coloured identity and gender in the dance and music of Helena Nuwegeld and Siena Mouers. The fact that that their identity is rural is important, as there are marked differences in the expressions of identity between rural working class coloured people and those living in the cities, as I have already suggested in chapter 1. The fact that that their identity is female is also important because playing the guitar and singing are usually roles reserved for men in this community.

I use James C. Scott's notion of the 'hidden transcript' (1990) to argue that relations of power between the powerful (the apartheid state and its emissaries) and the powerless (the rural coloured working class of Victoria West and its surrounds) is a relationship of deception, where 'the powerless feign deference and the powerful subtly assert their mastery' (1990: back cover). But behind the scenes there is a hidden transcript that takes place in private sites:

> in which the unspoken riposte, stifled anger, and bitten tongues created by relations of domination find a vehement, full-throated expression. It follows that the hidden transcript will be least inhibited when two conditions are fulfilled: first when it is voiced in a sequestered social site where the control, surveillance, and repression of the dominant are least able to reach, and second, when this sequestered social milieu is composed entirely of close confidants who share similar experiences of domination (Scott 1990: 120).

The private worlds of the itinerant or semi-sedentary rural underclass of the Karoo exist in outspans on the verges of farm roads, or in temporary accommodation on white-owned farms that stretch across the scrubland of the Great Karoo. It is in these sequestered sites where families and close friends 'socio-economically "invisible" to the local population' (de Jongh 2002: 2), feel unthreatened by their bosses and the conditioned mindset of the white world - locally and regionally - which 'maintain[s] the status quo of inequity and flies in the face of recent statutory and constitutional changes' (Ibid: 2).

Apart from the *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concerts in Oudtshoorn, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Stellenbosch, music making in the Mouers and Nuwegeld families is highly local and non-public. It is an activity that takes place in the private site of their own homes, away from the prying eyes and ears of bosses - chiefly white farmers - and

other powerful elements (white proprietors, public servants, the police). Their music has been shaped and formed by their own and their particular community's search for identity. They sing and dance in this private site, as Henry Trotter has put it, 'construct[ing] and circulate[ing] oral transcripts that reject the degrading terms of their subjugation and attempt to salvage a sense of pride, dignity and self-worth despite their condition' (Trotter 2006: 53).

In order to bring out - and make more 'public' not in the way the songs were made public through stage performance but in the way interpretation exposes something to a more public gaze - three tropes that dominate the discourse of their hidden transcripts, race, class, and gender, I have selected two songs and a dance that feature regularly in their music making: *Victims of Foolish Pleasure*, *Moenie Lu-jet Drinkie* and the *Hotnot's riel*. I use *tropes* in the sense that Henry Trotter does, as 'figures of speech carrying symbolic significance far beyond their literal meanings' (Ibid: 69).

> People look to their own histories and localities to provide material for symbolic meaning. Certain mores, socio-economic conditions, vocational trends, landscape features, spatial configurations and historical events cue the recall, representation, rehearsal and development of tropes for a community. Linkages between landscape and memory are common in the making of tropes (Trotter 2006: 69).

In these two songs and a dance, the tropes of race, class, and gender are embedded, but this is not to say that each song revolves *only* around one trope, because, as Scott suggests (and as the texts show), the 'unspoken thoughts' that these songs represent, as hidden transcripts, are expressed in a very rich, layered, metaphorical, 'vehement, full-throated' way. In the songs the figures of speech – such as 'orphans' help to embed their meanings, keep them 'hidden' as transcripts to voice them as transcripts of resistance.

Victims of Foolish Pleasure, for example expresses the effects of colonialism and apartheid on the coloured working class of the Great Karoo with its themes of loss, itinerancy, marginalization and racism. Traditional customs and values, fragments of memory, gender identity and pleasure are reflected in the *riel* dance, while *Moenie Lu-jet Drinkie* explicitly expresses the concerns of the working class coloured community around issues of poverty, violence and alcoholism, not only in Victoria West but across the sheep farming region of the Karoo.

As mentioned in chapter 3, Nuwegeld and Mouers were unable to read or write, therefore their expressions of the tropes of racial identity, gender and class are 'non-textual in the literary sense of the 'text' and are all the more significant. Catherine Cole has pointed out:

> Very little attention is given to non-textual expressions in so-called indigenous languages of the formerly colonized world. In the light of the low literacy rates in many post-colonial nations, one must question whether works of literature are generally representative of the cultures out of which they arise .... Non-written media such as theatre, dance, music, street gossip, and radio would assume an importance they have never received in postcolonial theory (Cole 2001: 7)

The written literary record on rural coloured identity (as mentioned in chapter 1), and even less, on rural coloured music, is scant. It is an area that is largely under-researched, and only Marie Jorritsma's work on coloured women's identity in the Karoo being shaped through a religious music practice (especially a hymn repertoire) largely dominated by men, really speaks to mine. Although the private site for Jorritsma's Graaff- Reinet women is situated within the confines of the church and the private site for the Victoria West women is scattered across the farms of the Karoo, they both use these spaces to 'provide opportunities - through song and dance - for the recontextualising and reinterpretation of expected gender roles within th[eir] communit[ies]' (2008:76). Jorritsma also investigates the use of non-textual and non-verbal 'poetic license' in Kroonvale women's performances as evidence of a 'subtle defiance' of patriarchy endemic in many South African communities. Nuwegeld and Mouers assert their independence as women in their private site by playing the guitar and singing (a role usually reserved for men), although in their immediate environment – as far as I could tell – their 'subtle defiance' was not aimed at the men in their immediate family.

By unpicking these very different tropes - racial identity, class, gender - in a dance, a song, and a poisonous drink, I hope to reveal how Nuwegeld and Mouers' music making activities function as hidden transcripts of resistance to their designated social status. The physical environment provides the conditions of privacy Scott identifies for them to be voiced in the 'least inhibited' way. Behind the scenes in their home in the Old Bokomo Bakery, away from the kitchens of the white madams and the fields of the white bosses, Nuwegeld and Mouers can see themselves as members of a particular community and as individuals who have a degree of personal autonomy. Within that, the tropes of dance,

song, and liquor offer a further kind of opportunity for the loosening of inhibition. Not so much the literal loss of inhibition that comes from drinking, but the one that comes from expressing oneself in music and dance.

Each trope addresses different aspects of Mouers' and Nuwegeld's musical practice and shows that the two women musicians not only have a voice, but that the content of their lyrics and musical style as well as fragments from their life stories offer a rich repository for understanding gender and coloured identity.

'*Victims of Foolish Pleasure*' and the complexities of coloured identity

We recorded at least four versions of '*Victims of Foolish Pleasure*' - in the town hall in Victoria West, in the Karoo landscape, at the party and in the recording studio in Cape Town. There are probably several more but it is no longer possible to record them. Like Nuwegeld's other songs, *Vermaak se Maksels* is performative, not a literary text and was varied each time it was presented, as shown below.

Vermaak se Maksels **(version 1)**

Ons is vermaak se maksels	We come from foolish pleasure
Ons is eiland trek se boesmans	We are the wandering bushmen of the island
Dit is baie swaar	It is really tough going
As jy kannie ma se,	If you can't say mama,
Jou kannie pa se	You can't say papa.
Ons het op die eiland gaan staan	We went to stand on the island
Toe staan ons bloot alleen	We stood there all alone
Nou ons is niemand se vriend nie	Now we are nobody's friend
Trane is vir my	Tears are for me
Hartseer is vir jou	Heartache is for you
Ons is vermaak se maksels	We are objects of ridicule
Verwyd se honne gaan ons bly	The dogs of rejection we will stay
My trane rol	My tears roll
Groot riviere vol	The big rivers fill

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Vermaak se Maksels,* 2003 © Blik Music)

Vermaak se Maksels **(version 2)**

Ons is vermaak se maksels	We are victims of foolish pleasure
Ons is eiland trek se boesmans	We are the wandering bushmen of the island
Dit is baie swaar	It is really tough going
As jy kannie ma se nie	If you can't say mama
As jy kannie pa se nie	If you can't say papa
Ons bly verstoot se kinners	We remain cast off children

Ons kry dan hier 'n stoot	We get pushed
Ons kry dan daar 'n stamp	We get shoved
Ons sit daar bo op die bont eiland	We sit alone on a patchy island
Ons is niemand se vriend nie	We are no-one's friend
Ons is vermaak se maksels	We are objects of ridicule
Verwyd se honne gaan ons bly	The dogs of rejection we will stay

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Vermaak se Maksels,* 2003 © Blik Music)

Vermaak se Maksels **(version 3)**

Waarom verwyd julle my?	Why do you reject me?
Ek is 'n weeskind	I am an orphan
Ek kannie ma sê nie	I can't say mother
Ek kannie pa sê nie	I can't say father
Ons bly verstoot se kinners	We remain cast off children
Ons kry dan hier 'n stoot	We get pushed
Ons kry dan daar 'n stamp	We get shoved
Ons sit daar bo op die bont eiland alleen	We sit alone on the gaudy island
Ons is niemand se vriend nie	We are no-one's friend
Ons is vermaak se maksels	We are objects of ridicule
Verwyd se honne gaan ons bly	The dogs of rejection we will stay
Wie sal vir jou lap en stop	Who will patch your clothes
As jy my elke dag klap en skop	If you keep hitting and kicking me?
Want ek hettie ma nie	'cause I have no mother
Ek hettie pa nie	I have no father
Bly maar vermaak se maksels	Remain an object of ridicule
Groot rivier is vol	The big river is full
En my trane rol	My tears keep rolling
Ek het my ma kasty	I castigated my mother
Nou moet ek die swaarheid kry	So now I suffer this burden
Hartseer is vir jou	Heartache for you
Die trane is vir my	Tears for me

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Vermaak se Maksels,* 2003 © Blik Music)

Vermaak se Maksels **(version 4)**

Ons is vermaak se maksels	We come from foolish pleasure
Ons is eiland trek se boesmans	We are the wandering bushmen of the island
Ons het op die eiland gaan staan	We went and stood on the island
Ons is eiland trek se boesmans	We are the bushmen of the island trek
Ai oorleë Oom Freek se boesmans	Oh, the bushmen of the late Uncle Freek
Dit is baie swaar	It is really tough going
As jy kannie ma se,	If you can't say mama,
jou kannie pa se	You can't say papa.
Ons het op die eiland gaan staan	We went to stand on the island
Toe staan ons bloot alleen	We stood there all alone
Nou ons is niemand se vriend nie	Now we are nobody's friend
Trane is vir my	Tears are for me
Hartseer is vir jou	Heartache is for you
Ons is vermaak se maksels	We are objects of ridicule
Verwyd se honne gaan ons bly	The dogs of rejection we will stay
My trane rol	My tears roll
Groot riviere vol	The rivers full

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Vermaak se Maksels,* 2003 © Blik Music)

A similar case is *Oom Vredendal*. On Kramer's first day in the Victoria West town hall, Nuwegeld started off the morning session with *Oom Vredendal.* While she sang, Kramer transcribed as much as he could of the song, and when the chords on Siena's guitar finally died away, Nuwegeld slapped him on the back and said: Do you know that one? Yes of course, says Kramer. 'No you don't' said Nuwegeld cuffing him across the head. Kramer agreed that he didn't know that particular version and asked Nuwegeld to sing it again so that he could transcribe the missing bits. Mouers struck the strings of her guitar and Nuwegeld sang the song again. It was yet another version, and different from the previous one. Kramer explained that he had to have the same version otherwise he couldn't get it all down. Again Nuwegeld agreed and sang yet a third version. Kramer gave up and went through the words with her - unsung – line-by-line. Another version (see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5q6ca64G-8w).

These are not 'songs' in the usual 'ritual' sense, like the hymn repertoire of Marie Jorritsma's research subjects or indeed any other standard repertoire sung by a community that relies on oral communication. To quote Ngugi wa Thiongo, 'each performance [is] a new imaginative creation' (1998: 110). They are very personal self-expressions. The constant changing of lyrics and music gently subverts Kramer's dominant role as mediator and song collector. In their hidden transcript Nuwegeld and Mouers here resist his obvious desire - which he never hides, and indeed it was the purposes of his visit - to catch songs, refine them - and even in one case 'recompose' them - getting them ready for *Karoo Kitaar Blues*.

I selected the version of *Victims of Foolish Pleasure* quoted above, as I was interested in Kramer's translation of the word *maksels* for 'victims' and *vermaak* for 'foolish pleasure'. My immediate response to this translation when I first read it was to assume that it meant that Nuwegeld saw herself and her people as products of miscegenation - 'foolish pleasure'. Initially it made sense in terms of the preoccupation with hybridity among the urban coloured population (see Adhikari 2005, 2009; Erasmus 2001). But taking a closer look at the expressions of *rural* identity, I came to understand the words to mean something different, more like 'objects of ridicule' (Kramer transl.,).

Complications arising from the use of the word 'coloured' occur throughout the chapter, indeed thesis, for the complexity of the concept is at the base of the complexity of Nuwegeld and Mouers' identity. As already mentioned, all South Africans who were not classified white or black under the Population Registration Act of 1950 were classified coloured. Whether such people were originally Khoisan, Malay, Javanese, Mozambican, Madagascan, Indian or from West Africa, if they appeared of 'mixed race' they were 'coloured' or in Afrikaans '*kleurling* (see Adikhari 2006, 2009, Skotnes 1996 et al.,).[59] De Jongh says that although the Karretjie People who come from the areas of Colesberg and Victoria West can trace Khoisan descent, they were 'arbitrarily categorised 'coloured' within the apartheid system' (1). [60] The Namaqualand musicians would probably have been originally classified Native and after 1961 Bantu as they were considered to be 'persons who in fact are, or who are generally accepted as members of any aboriginal race or tribe of Africa' (cited in Beaten 2009: 138).

In 1949 the Nationalist party government had already introduced the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act followed by the Immorality Amendment Act of 1950 making it officially illegal for people of different races to marry or have sex across the color line. This included people of 'mixed' race - coloured people:

> Subsections (1) and (2) of the Immorality Act 1950:
>
> In the present Act the prohibition covers not only the sexual act but all or almost all behavior of a sexual nature between white and coloured persons (as defined in the Act), from the point where either party solicits the other to intimacy, to the stage where intercourse takes place. The policy underlying these prohibitions is common knowledge, namely, to punish all overt tendency towards sexual intimacy between white and coloured, because it is calculated to frustrate the State policy of maintaining the two races distinct' - per Marais J. in *R. v. H & another*, 1959 (1) S.A. 803 (T) at 805 (Hardier and Hartford 1960, 46).

Adikhari argues that 'the construction of coloured identity remained essentialist during the apartheid years as: this was due to the desire to assimilate into the dominant society ... to be accepted as equals or partners by whites' (Adikhari 2005: 8). This was despite

[59] A test of true whiteness was whether a pencil, when placed in a person's hair, would stay put or drop on the floor (Young 2002: 141).

[60] Most Khoe-San descendents were officially classified as coloured and Native during the 19th and 20th centuries. As long as the coloured category subsumed the Native category,'...Bushmen and Hottentots could unproblematically be designated both coloured and Native' (Besten 2009: 136).

United Democratic Front (UDF) and black consciousness resistance to the racist legislation in the 1980's. But in Victoria West and the Great Karoo, among the Karretjie People resistance politics passed them by. They were too poor and disempowered, perhaps, to get involved. So while Cape Town-based Black Consciousness poet James Matthews raged against his people's desire for whiteness:

> Coloured folks garish in coon garb
> Sing and dance in the hot son
> Their faces smeared a fool's mask
> Happy New Year, my baas, a drunken shout
> To whites who applaud and approve
> Their annual act of debasement
>
> (Matthews cited in Adhikhari 2006: 142),

in Victoria West Nuwegeld and Mouers sang songs about themselves as 'bushmen' - 'objects of ridicule', and 'victims of foolish pleasure' (other people's jokes).

For the Karretjie People, I suggest, the above-mentioned apartheid legislations would not have affected their lives in any major way. The damage had already been done. As described by de Jongh in chapter 3 the Karretjie People are 'strangers in their own land', 'invisible people'. The brutal and total destruction of Khoisan society has left those who remain of their descendents landless, homeless - 'the poorest of the poor', banished to a place outside of society.

I do not have the statistics substantiate this but for these 'invisible outsiders' who cross the Karoo in their donkey carts, but I should imagine that infringements of the Immorality or Mixed Marriages Acts, were an unlikely occurrence in the public transcript. As to being classified coloured, the concerns of urban coloureds around hybridity and 'living an identity that is clouded in sexualized shame' (Erasmus 2001: 14) were not, I think, necessarily part of rural Khoisan experience. Whether a direct descendent of the San or not, Nuwegeld called herself a *boesman* and identified with 'the wandering bushmen of the land' with all its associations of marginalization and living on the edge, that this implies.

But who are the 'bushmen' in contemporary South Africa? According to Edwin Wilmsen:

> The term 'Bushman' ... lump[s] together more than a dozen living southern African peoples - plus several others that have disappeared under colonial pressures and

> introduced disease - who have distinct languages and traditions and whose economies cover the entire spectrum of indigenous forms from extensive foraging to intensive agropastoralism. [It is an] imposed category term that mark[s] persons as belonging to social entities that nowhere exist. Thus the term, and category, 'Bushman' ...[is] a colonial construct created to control subjugated peoples in manageable, depoliticized, arbitrarily bounded enclaves of homogeneity in a previously flourishing landscape of political-social diversity' (1996: 188).

In post-apartheid South Africa people have been free to choose their own identities unencumbered by the racist classificatory system of the past, but the Khoisan descendents of the Northern Cape still continue to live in an anachronistic world reminiscent of not only the apartheid past but the earlier colonial past, a world where racism and degradation from those pasts still permeate their lives. Even the Khoisan revivalist movements that have arisen since the mid 1990s, described by Adhikari as, 'in essence, both exclusionist and Coloured rejectionist' (2005: 186), have excluded the rural working class from their 'variety of agendas' (Ibid). The current state of 'fragmentation, uncertainty and confusion' about coloured identity, driven as Adhikari sees it by 'small groups of intellectuals and community activists with limited influence' (Ibid) has not helped remote communities far from the metropole.

Nuwegeld and Mouers have created their own tropes of identity as 'strangers in their own land' (de Jongh). In the public transcript they 'accept the symbolic gestures of domination that serve[s] to manifest and reinforce the hierarchical order' (Scott 1990: 45). But in their private site of music making they become the voices of their community. The community speaks through them, expressing the realities of their Khoisan identity. *Vermaak se Maksels* is a narrative of marginalization, loneliness and rejection in which Nuwegeld presents herself, her people and the broader Khoisan community of the Great Karoo as forgotten people:

Ons bly verstoot se kinners	We remain cast off children
Ons kry dan hier 'n stoot	We get pushed
Ons kry dan daar 'n stamp	We get shoved
Ons sit daar bo op die bont eiland	We sit alone on a patchy island
Ons is niemand se vriend nie	We are no-one's friend
Ons is vermaak se maksels	We are objects of ridicule
Verwyd se honne gaan ons bly	The dogs of rejection we will stay

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Vermaak se Maksels*, 2003 © Blik Music)

This identity is more social than racial or political: 'the product of its bearers [which] can no more be imposed upon people by the state or ruling groups than it can spring automatically from miscegenation or their racial constitution. Social identity is cultural in nature in that it is part of learned behaviour and is molded by social experience and social interaction' (Adhikari 2005: 36). It is in this context that I see the expression of identity in *Vermaak se Maksels* not as a product of miscegenation but as what Zimitri Erasmus calls a 'creolized formatio[n] shaped by South Africa's history of colonialism, slavery, segregation and apartheid' (Erasmus 2001: 14). Creolization here, as Erasmus explains, is not a racial formation but a cultural formation, a *process*, 'born of appropriation, dispossession and translation in the colonial encounter', and I use the word in the same sense she does, as one indebted to Carribean studies and used to 'refer to cultural creativity under conditions of marginality' (Ibid).

Nuwegeld describes herself and her people as *boesmanne* and *weggooi mense* (throwaway people). (Nuwegeld 2007) and in her song expresses this feeling of rejection: *Ons kry dan hier 'n stoot, Ons kry dan daar 'n stamp* [We get pushed, We get shoved]. This sense of being forsaken has reverberations in Mathias Guenther's essay *From 'Lords of the Desert' to 'Rubbish People'* in which he mentions the contemporary self-designation for Ghanzi bushman as *kam ka kwe* which means 'mouthless people ... weak and ineffectual, useless and dispensable people ... rubbish people' (1994: 236). As - defiantly? resignedly? - Nuwegeld ends the song: '*Verwyd se honne gaan ons bly* [The dogs of rejection we will stay.]

On first hearing *Vermaak se Maksels* I immediately assumed that Nuwegeld and Mouers were singing about coloured identity as a condition of homelessness, miscegenation and racism: 'wandering bushmen', 'victims of foolish pleasure', 'objects of ridicule', 'dogs of rejection' all fit in perfectly with an essentialist reading of identity. However, in Chapter 2, I quote from individual interviews with both Nuwegeld and Mouers in which I ask them about this. Nuwegeld adamantly claims that she is not singing about the larger Khoisan community but rather about losing her parents and siblings and being left alone in the world: *as jy nie ouers het nie, is jy niemand se vriend nie, jy staan aleen* [if you do not have parents then you are nobody's friend, you stand alone.]

Mouers verifies that they are singing about family circumstances and nothing else. That they are *vermaak se maksels* (objects of ridicule) because they have no family. Both their parents have died. This does not mean they see their isolation only in familial terms. As Kramer says, 'They are definitely singing about the loss of their loved ones but could be unwittingly talking about their broader community'.

The family is very important in Karretjie People society and close family ties jealously guarded, even though - because of the itinerant lifestyle - siblings and their parents are often separated for long periods of time. And their younger brother Freek Lof - their *droepram borer* (the last born who had to make do with their mother's dried-up breast milk) was hardly ever at home. He travelled the Karoo - in his donkey cart - as a seasonal sheep-shearer and fence maker, his work finally taking him as far as Vredendal - 350 kilometers from Victoria West. *Oom Vredendal* uses the same metaphors of loneliness that runs through all their songs:

Jy't net drie sisters	You only have three sisters
En jy't ons overleapt	And you deserted us
Nou kom jy deur die leegdes	Now you come through the emptiness
Om ons harte to kom troos.	To mend our broken hearts.

His death reminds them that they are orphaned again:

Ai nee Moeder ai nee Ma	Oh no Mother, oh no mama
Kom huistoe Ma	Come home mother
Die huis is leeg sonder jou.	The house is empty without you

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Oom Vredendal,* 2003 © Blik Music)

This loss of a sibling entrenches their feeling of 'sitting alone on a patchy island'. There is no one to speak for them. They had effectively lost the 'head of the family' when Frikkie died, and were out of touch with Koos Lof, the only 'parent' of their generation.

The use of the word '*eiland*' (island) as a metaphor for being cut off from the world, alone, often appears in Nuwegeld's songs. In the semi-arid landscape of the Great Karoo – incidentally, once an inland sea - the use of this word is redolent with irony. But the metaphor of the sea and the island is not about the Karoo:

> *Meroe, kyk nou, soos die liedjie nou gaan van weeskind. As jy nou alleen is dan het jy maar min familie. Nou dit bedoel as jy bo-op daai eiland staan, dan kyk niemand jou nie, jy's in moet verwaarlose vlaktes.*

> [Misses, look here, the orphan-song actually goes like this: when you are alone, then you have but almost no family. That means you are standing on that island. And when you are on that island, nobody looks at you. You are lost on the plains of neglect (Mouers 2003).]

In *Vermaak se Maksels* (a version sung in the Glen Beach recording studio), Nuwegeld uses the word 'berth' that also carries associations of the sea: 'We have to take the long road / But we have no berth'. 'Berth' here could mean home or it could mean land. They have been dispossessed of their land and have no alternative but to carry on travelling the long roads of the Karoo, which end in the Old Bokomo Bakery, or an RDP house.

The *hotnot's riel*: The gendered (colonial) body

> Whilst a dozen of the men formed a ring around her [the musician], dancing and violently beating the ground with feet and sticks, they continued also incessantly to place themselves in the most grotesque attitudes, yet with still some reference to the player (Percival (1804) in Kirby 1968: 25).

> *The Baboon Dance:*
> This dance is carried out in the usual circular style, the dancers following one another around forming a [sic] ellipse rather than a circle in the sand. One of the number bends down and the others leap-frog over his back in imitation of the baboon. As the dance warms up one of the women [will] from time to time leave the group of clappers, cross the ring and approach the principal baboon dancer with obvious sexual movements, to which the man [responds] with contortions in imitation of the baboon (Doke 1936: 469).

> The women clapping and singing formed the orchestra at the dance. They [the male dancers] danced happily under the new moon for they welcomed the light after darkness. They mimicked the whole animal world, from the lion to the gemsbok, grimacing like baboons, squatting like frogs, or becoming a realistic swarm of bees' (Green 1967: 166).

In chapter 1, I refer to a dance described by colonial travellers in the 17th and 18th centuries. This was originally a 'bushmen' dance which has been performed by the San for hundreds of years (see Skotnes 1996, Guenther 1996, Hansen 1996, Stow 1964, Kirby 1968). A distinctive quality of the dance was the mimicking of animals, which is still practiced today in what is commonly, known as the *riel* dance. I had hoped to witness this dance on my journey and the opportunity to do so presented itself on our last night in Victoria West - on 30 March 2003. The Mouers had thrown a party at their home and Kramer asked Nuwegeld if she would play a *riel*:

28 March 2003
A women in a bright yellow polka dotted skirt and a slim older man with the distinctive cheekbones of the San start dancing the *riel*. The woman stamps her feet, the man contorts his body into the shape of a butterfly and against the wall a happier Helena claps.

Seemingly oblivious to the outside world, the couple danced. Siena thumped out a *vastrap* in a cyclical three-chord pattern (C-F-G) on her guitar,[61] and Nuwegeld stamped her feet and clapped in rhythm.[62] Crouching, the male dancer shuffled his feet and started flapping his arms and knees like a butterfly. His head to the side he repeated these movements while the woman in the polka-dot skirt stamped her feet and in tiny steps danced around him. Writer, Elias P Nel, describes a contemporary *skoenlapper* [butterfly] dance:

> *Die 'Skoenlapper' is 'n uitnodiging om saam te dans wat 'n man aan 'n vrou rig. 'n Kenmerk van die dans is die hewige gefladder van knieë wat die skoenlapper se vlerke voorstel en 'n ligvoetse rondspringery.*
> [The butterfly is an invitation to dance together that a man offers a woman. A characteristic of the dance is in the flutter of the knees that portrays the wings of the butterfly and a light-footed jumping around (www.litnet.co.za/. Accessed 2009 (exact date unknown).

The small man in the blue shirt continued to flutter his knees and the woman danced. Standing under a tree behind the old house - a privileged outsider - it was not difficult to imagine another evening around a fire, two hundred years ago. There was no doubt in my mind that the couple dancing and the others making music that Friday night were descendents of the Khoisan who have mimicked the animal world for hundreds of years.

The Mouers' back yard on that last evening was an example of a contained private site 'where the control, surveillance, and repression of the dominant are least able to reach', and where the 'social milieu is composed entirely of close confidants who share similar experiences of domination' (Scott 1990: 12). Yet there were white observers present, expectant - 'they want us to play the *hotnot's riel*'.

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[61] In the Volksie bus, travelling to Cape Town, the day after the party, Kramer described the'*vastrap* as 'an up-tempo dance rhythm [that] comes out of the more coloured side of this roots music. You don't find waltzes and mazurkas in the old *liedjies* but the rhythms that one finds in the *ou liedjies* is usually this *vastrap* rhythmn' (Kramer 2003a).

[62] The same *vastrap* rhythmn,a ccording to Kramer, occurs in music used for *riel* dancing. He was interested in what influenced the *riel*, to him 'a dance that is done around the fire [with] strange little hand movements',which 'look like bushmen dances' and small, frenetically shuffling foot movements (Kramer 2003a).

The family sat on chairs against the back wall of the house. Siena and Jan Mouers played their guitars and Koos Lof, his hat perched on the back of his head played, his accordion. Brand had positioned paraffin lamps around them to light their face. A big fire burnt under the tree casting shadows against the wall. Nuwegeld started singing *Oom Vredendal.* Lodewyk rolled himself a joint. Magdalena Mouers danced, swaying slowly across the space. Children wandered around. Magdalena's toddler, Ronelle, in a pale green party dress watched her grandparents play their guitars. Her small boy-cousin sat next her. Food lay unopened in Spar packets lying on a kitchen table brought outside for the occasion. Wine, beer and brandy flowed freely (we had provided the food and drink and the Mouers the venue). Nuwegeld's coarse chuckle carried across the air. Koos grinned. Everyone was in the mood for a party.

They sang and danced in the private site of their home and family, 'construct[ing] and circulate[ing] oral transcripts that reject the degrading terms of their subjugation' (Trotter 2006: 53), and expressing their Khoisan identity. At the same time they mocked the public transcript of domination where derogative appellations like *hotnot* are used to diminish them. Nuwegeld calls the dance a *hotnot's riel* using the racist term for coloured people in this area. Is this an ironic appropriation? Kramer believes it is:

> They mock the status quo. They mock the farmers. They mock the masters in these songs. And it is done in a subtle way because a lot of the time the musicians on the farms would have to entertain the farmer and his guests ... You can imagine that the joke amongst the musicians themselves would be to make snide remarks, perhaps about what was going on the farm ...The one that describes it best and has become very much part of Afrikaans culture - white and brown - is a song called *Bobbejaan klim die berg.*

Bobbejaan klim die berg,	Baboon climbs the mountain
So hastig en so lastig	So fast and swift
Bobbejaan klim die berg	Baboon climbs the mountain
So hastig en so lasting	So fast and swift
Bobbejaan klim die berg	Baboon climbs the mountain
Om die boere te vererg	To annoy the farmers
Hoera vir die jollie bobbejaan	Hooray for the jolly baboon

(Anon., transl. David Kramer)

> If seen from the perspective of the farm worker who feels exploited by the farmer, when the baboon comes down the mountain and steals the farmer's fruit, then the baboon becomes the hero in the farm labourer's eyes. Not in the farmer's eyes. So this is definitely not a white farmer's song. This is a coloured labourers' song (Kramer 2003).

In the hidden transcript of their bounded cultural expression Nuwegeld and Mouers are not victims. They use pejorative words to build social lives 'within those boundaries, creating positive associations through narrative sharing' (Trotter 2006: 73). 'In oppressive situations, humour [and irony] can be used to show the absurdity of the oppression and thereby transcend national explanation, since humor builds on ambivalence, contradictions and incongruity' (Sorenson 2006: 1). The *riel* is the same dance witnessed by Colonel Percival 200 years ago and Lawrence Green 50 years ago, and now annually re-enacted at the Paarl Monument as *Die Skoenlapper* dance. As Coplan puts it: 'Performance, after all, is not the product of a tradition but a social process through which traditions are elaborated and made perceptible. Their historicity allows evanescent (fleeting) performances to leave their imprint on successive (re) enactments and discourses about them' (Coplan 1994: 30).

In the public transcript we cannot observe past (or present) performances and have to rely on historical texts, that is the accounts of missionaries, explorers and soldiers to find out more about the musical practices of the Khoisan hundreds of years ago. However, 'provided we have studied the mediator as well as the product of his mediation and understood the ideological transaction as well as the practical strategies involved in its production, we need not throw out the baby of primary evidence with the bath water of colonialism's willful or unwitting misconstruals' (Ibid 31).

Imagine Captain Percival of the 18th or Royal Regiment of Foot newly arrived in South Africa, strutting about in his standard issue close-fitting red coat and white breeches, his black buckled shoes gathering dust while he observes the singing and dancing of people that do not look like him and utter - in his opinion - the strangest of sounds. Captain Percival comes from a place where the English language is an indicator of the civilised world. As early as the 16th century poet Samuel Daniel wrote of linguistic colonization:

> And who in time knows whither we may vent
> The treasure of our tongue, to what strange shores
> This gaine of our best glories shal be sent,
> T'inrich unknowing Nations with our stores?
> What worlds in th'yet unformed Occident
> May come refin'd with the accents that are ours?
> (Greenblatt 2007: 22).

Much later that night Captain Percival sits down at his officer's chest and over a brandy dips his quill into a bottle of ink and begins to describe what he had seen earlier that evening: 'Whilst a dozen of the men formed a ring around her ... dancing and violently hitting the ground with sticks ... they continued also incessantly to place themselves in the most grotesque attitudes'. It is highly unlikely that the musicians and dancers observed by Percival in 1804 would have described their practice as 'grotesque', and what non-participatory observer could ever know that 'they danced happily under the new moon' as Lawrence Green romantically described an evening of 'musicking' in the Northern Cape 40 years ago. But these descriptions do confirm that this dance existed, that the mimicry of animals was central to its practice and that the dance was gender specific: women played the instruments and the men danced. However, it was also these kinds of descriptions that confirmed and promoted the negative and racist view of the *hotnot's riel* in the public transcript of the Khoisan. Elias P Nel describes how the word *hottentot* came about:

> *Die Khoekhoes het 'n lied gesing waarin die klanke 'ho, to, to' voorgekom het. Die koloniste, wat nie moeite gedoen het om die volk se naam uit te vind nie, het hulle as gevolg van die lied 'Hottentotte' genoem. Dis 'n naam wat vandag nog steeds bly vasklou en vernederend vir die afstammeling van die Khoesaàn is.*
> [The Khoikhoi sang a song in which the sounds: *ho, to, to* were present. The colonizers who didn't take the trouble to find out the name of these people called them *Hottentots*. It is a name that still sticks today and is insulting to the descendents of the Khoisan.][63]

The problem with historical, racially dominant accounts is that they leave so much out. We will never know how the woman on the *gabowie* learnt to play her instrument or why she became a musician. For postcolonial theorist Robert Young, the problem is that 'No records of the subject-consciousness of [these] women exist ... she is assigned no position of enunciation and therefore everyone speaks for her, so that she is written continuously as the object of patriarchy or of imperialism' (1990: 164).

So although Ellen Koskoff says that 'women, men, gender, identity, music, culture, and so on are not, and never have been, fixed categories [and that] each must be placed within its own unique and changeable context' (2000: xi), Mouers' and Nuwegeld's roles in

[63] 'Dans Uit Vervangese Dae' (http://www.Afrikaans.com, accessed 2009; exact date unknown).

music making appear to be as gender-based as they were hundreds of years ago. However, although Mouers might play the guitar as the captain observed the woman playing the *'gabowie'* over 200 years ago, and Nuwegeld may clap and sing as described in the quotation by Lawrence Green, their reasons for doing so can be clearly 'placed within a unique and changeable context' (Ibid), that of the contemporary South African northern Cape. On the night of the party Nuwegeld and Mouers are clearly in full control of the hidden transcript.

Moenie Lu-jet Drinkie

Helena Nuwegeld sang two versions of this song:

Moenie Lu-jet Drinkie (Version 1)

Moenie Lu-jet drinkie	Don't drink Lujet
Moenie Lu-jet drinkie	Don't drink Lujet
Lu-jet is vererig	Lujet makes you worse [is poisonous]
Maak liewer die 5 liter vol	Rather fill a 5 liter [papsak]
Want onthou	Because remember
Lu-jet is vererig.	Lujet makes you worse.

Moenie Lu-jet Drinkie (version 2)

Mo*enie Lujet drinkie*	Don't drink Lujet
Moenie Lujet drinkie	Don't drink Lujet
Want Lujet us vererig	Because Lujet is dangerous
Mete met 'n tien liter	Measure ten litres (Lujet)
10 liter is vererig[64]	10 litres is poisonous
Daar kom Boetie Blom	There comes Boetie Blom
Boetie Blom is vererig	Boetie Blom is dangerous
Toe ry ek met die drie nil drie	I ride in the three-nil-three (a lorry)[65]
Toe gaan ek Carnarvon toe	To Carnarvon
To koop ek die sjokolaat	To buy a chocolate

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Moenie Lu-jet Drinkie,* 2003 © Blik Music)

The 'poorest of the poor', the unemployed, hung about on the pavement outside the Pick-A-Bottle bottle store hoping for a handout or a stray *papsak* fallen off the back of the wagon. Seasonal sheep shearers waited for the objects of their income to grow woolly and fat before they could eat again. A woman - probably in her forties - sits down in front of the bottle store. Addressing the camera she says *'Jy kan my video as jy wil. Sê nou vir die*

[64] 'There is no such word as "vererig" - but she seems to have created this word from "vererger" = to make worse' (Kramer 2009).
[65] Nuwegeld's translation of 'drie-nil-drie' is 'a lorry'.

mense ek lyk so van die honger. Ek kry swaar. [You can film me if you want. Tell the people that I look hungry because I am suffering.] A donkey cart rattles by, a family of sheep shearers in the back. A tractor pulls up in front the bottle store. Mr Hickson oversees the offloading of a big consignment of *papsakke* from the trailer at the back.[66] Piles of five-litre foil containers glint in the sun: the weekend's path to oblivion.

Mouers describes Victoria West as a 'very poor', indigent (*armoedige*) place where people are driven to drink from despair:

> *Hier cry die mense swear. Maar nou weet ek nie hoekom kan hulle nie maar dink terwyl hulle sien hulle kry swaar nie. Los die wyn, sit hom terug. Maar niks. Ons loop nie rond in hierdie dorp nie, ons loop nie rond nie ek en my man.*
> [Here, the people suffer. But I also don't understand why they can't think whilst they're suffering. Leave the wine, put it back. But no. We do not walk around in this town. My husband and I don't walk around (Mouers 2003.]

Mouers is vocal on the effects of alcohol abuse in Victoria West:

> *Daars baie mense wat siek word dan gaan hulle dokter toe. Dan sê die dokter jy moet die drank los. Jy werk met jou eie lewe- dan sê hulle net daar vir die dokter ja. Maar as hulle uit is dan drink hulle die drank. Hier's baie mense wat gesterwe is op dit. Want soos nou se drank is nie gesonde drank. Maar nou is daar mos nie meer sulke goeters. Daars papsakke. Papsakke is gevaarlik - hy's gevaarlik.*
> [A lot of people get sick and then they go to the doctor. The doctor then tells them to leave the drink. You are in charge of your own life. So you tell the doctor, right there, yes [I will]. But when they leave there, they drink alcohol again. A lot of people here, have died because of that. These days it's only those things. They are *papsakke*. *Papsakke* are dangerous - they are dangerous (Mouers 2003).]

And for those with no money in their pockets but desperate for a way out of their dire circumstances there was always Lujet. The trope that has come up in relation to alcoholism so far in this thesis is that of forgetfulness: drowning your sorrows. That was my initial understanding of *Moenie Lu-jet Drinkie*. The song warns people to drink cheap white wine (*die 5-liter*) rather than Lujet. My interviews with Nuwegeld and Mouers, however, hint at something worse than temporary oblivion.

> *Hier's nou soveel mense dood wat iets gedoen het. Dan gaan hy tronk toe, dan sit die magistraat die saak terug tot so en so n tyd. Nou draai hy, daai ene, om en hy drink dat hy dood is voor die saak weer op is. Of hy't miskien gesteel, 'n skaap*

[66] A *papsak* is usually a 5-litre pack of sweet white wine which is sold very cheaply. It comes in a silver cooler bag with a plastic tap attached. The word iterally means 'soft bag' in Afrikaans.

geslag en hy weet watter straf gaan hy kry- dan draai hy om en hy drink hierdie een, dood. Die tyd wat hy moet voorkom is hy dood. Daar is nie te praat nie. Nou dit is waarom ek daai liedjie uitgemaak het. Lujet is vererig, jy moenie Lujet drink nie. Want die mense het vir my gewys hulle drink dit en al wat dit gedrink het is dood. Maar die skaap gaan nie dood nie, hy maak net daai goeters dood wat die skaap so eet. Want die skaap kry hom mos nie in. Nou die mense drink hom. Lujet is so blink ding, soos olie, maar as jy hom in die water gooi dans die water wit. Jy kan net so klein bietjie ingooi dan drink hom. Dis net so twee minute. Hy's vererig, dit bedoel ek.
[So many people who have done something [wrong] have died here. Then he goes to prison and the magistrate postpones the case until such and such a date. Then some evidence comes to light and he kills himself by drinking the poison before his case comes up again. Maybe he stole. Or maybe be slaughtered a sheep and he knows the sentence that he will get. So he drinks it. So by the time that he has to appear in court he is dead. There is not much talking then. That's why I composed that song. Lujet is for real. You must not drink Lujet. Because the people who showed me that one can drink Lujet, are the people who are dead. But sheep don't die - it only kills those things [lice] eating the sheep. The sheep don't drink it. It's the people who drink it. Lujet is a shiny thing - almost like oil. But if you mix it with water, it becomes white. You only need a little bit and then drink it. It only takes two minutes. It's for real. I really mean it (Mouers 2003)]

Lujet is something you drink when you are absolutely desperate; when 'he knows the sentence he will get'. The only option is to commit suicide, by sheep dip poisoning. Lujet was the brand name for an extremely toxic fenthion-based organophosphate used by farmers in the Karoo as a sheep dip. The International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS) describes the 'principal toxicologic effect of fenthion and other organophosphate insecticides' as 'cholinesterase inhibition. The following health effects can result:

> **Common early signs or mild symptoms** of acute cholinergic poisoning include miosis (pinpoint pupils), headache, nausea/vomiting, dizziness, muscle weakness, drowsiness, lethargy, agitation, and anxiety.
>
> **Moderate or severe poisoning** can result in chest tightness, difficulty breathing, bradycardia, tachycardia, hypertension, pallor, abdominal pain, incontinence, diarrhea, anorexia, tremor/ ataxia, fasciculation, lacrimation, heavy salivation, profuse sweating, blurred vision, poor concentration, confusion, and memory loss.
>
> **Life-threatening or very severe signs and symptoms**, such as coma, seizures, respiratory arrest, pulmonary edema, loss of reflexes, and flaccid paralysis, can occur at high doses, such as in attempted suicide.
> (http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/consultations/west_nile_virus/naled.htm, accessed 10 January 2010.

Toxic to the environment and to humans, Lujet is now supposedly withdrawn from use. On 4 April 2006 journalist, Edwin Tschivhidzo reported (South Africa.info.com) that

South Africa and the World Bank had just signed an R11-million grant agreement on the disposal of poisonous obsolete pesticides in the country:

> The agreement, signed in Pretoria on Tuesday, will see the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism spearheading the cleaning and disposal of obsolete pesticides that pose serious health risks in the country. Spokesperson Molefe Molamu said the department would appoint a team of experts 'as soon as possible' to begin the process. The programme is in line with World Bank's multi-partner African Stockpiles Programme to dispose of vast stockpiles of poisonous, obsolete chemical pesticides in seven African countries. The programme plans to get rid of an estimated 50 000 tons of toxic pesticides and associated waste, as well as tens of thousands of tons of contaminated soil. The project follows on previous successful initiatives carried out in other countries on the continent that resulted in over 1 000 tonnes of obsolete pesticides being destroyed. The pesticides are believed to contribute to land and water degradation and to pose a serious threat to people and livestock (Tschivhidzo 2006).

In early 2003 however, in the Great Karoo, Lujet was obviously still in use by farmers and thus available to farm workers. Alcoholism in itself is not what *Moenie Lujet Drinkie* warns about, but something that is far '*vererig*' (worse): a terrible death. Alcohol is choice, as Nuwegeld and Mouers both point out in interviews: 'leave the wine, put it back'; 'you are in charge of your own life'. Nuwegeld chose to drink, Mouers did not.

Alcohol abuse among farm labourers and their families on rural farms is a legacy of the Dop system – a form of payment or part-payment in alcohol introduced in the 17th century on settler farms in the Western Cape. This system of paying farm workers in alcohol became embedded in farm labour practices over the next three centuries. Although 'it is no longer legal in South Africa, alcohol abuse remains one of the major challenges facing health services', says Lesley London from the Department of Health at the University of Cape Town:

> Even in the absence of a DOP system, alcohol dependence among farm workers continues to play a major role in enmeshing farm workers in a cycle of poverty and dependence from which escape is extremely difficult. The adverse health and development impacts of the DOP system and alcohol abuse are substantial among rural farming communities, where alcohol-related trauma, exceptionally high rates of TB, child and adult malnutrition, and foetal alcohol syndrome are common in the Cape. In addition, social problems associated with alcohol such as child abuse, violence against women and family disruption are major obstacles to access to health and social services for farm residents (http://www.sahealthinfo.org/admodule/dopsystem.htm, accessed 10 January 2010).

Nevertheless, as Scott points out, it can encourage an 'atmosphere of freedom', becoming a 'privileged site for the transmission of popular culture - embodied in games, songs, gambling, blasphemy, and disorder - that was usually at odds with official culture (Scott 1990: 121). Alcohol even slightly 'loosen[s] the normal inhibitions against aggressive talk, thereby allowing a portion of the hidden transcript to find its way on stage' (Ibid: 41). *'Jy kan my video as jy wil'*, said the lady in front of the bottle store: *'Sê nou vir die mense ek ly van die honger. Ek kry swaar* [Tell the people I look hungry because I am suffering.]

The tropes of these three cultural expressions – two songs and a dance - are far more complex than they appear on the surface, and far richer in meaning than I can explore here. Yet by progressing towards them, from the history of *Karoo Kitaar Blues* told in chapter 1, through the field work 'road trip' the 'interventive' interviews in chapter 2, and the fragmented life stories of Helena Nuwegeld and Siena Mouers in chapter 3, they reveal more in detailed close-up than anything I was able to show in the documentary, the background story that *Karoo Kitaar Blues* was unable – for many reasons, mainly length – to show. In the following, final chapter, I return to the problem of what can and cannot be 'shown' in documentary film, and ethnographic film.

CHAPTER 5: ETHNOGRAPHY AND (DOCUMENTARY) FILM

In this final chapter I try to reposition myself in relation to the field of ethnomusicology and visual ethnography with my documentary film *Karoo Kitaar Blues*, responding more directly to the reviews by Bewley and Lee but aware that chapters 1-4 have to some extent also been a response. To sum up their critiques: Christopher Lee was 'frustrated by the lack of thorough background information' on the Karoo musicians and their music (2005: 48) and John Bewley felt that 'the social history and the impact of twentieth-century politics on these scattered communities did not come through' (2006: 156). By focusing on the difference between ethnographic film (visual ethnography) and documentary in the observational mode I attempt here in this final chapter to assess the 'ethnographicness' of my film in the light not only of these critiques but also in what this dissertation has shown. It would seem, to me, that what I do lies somewhere *between* ethnographic and observational documentary filmmaking.

My position as director of the film: Process and product

As I mentioned in chapter 1, I had no intention of making an ethnographic film or producing a visual ethnography in the anthropological sense when I set off to make *Karoo Kitaar Blues*. I was a making a documentary, for that is my metier. What Lee and Bewley demanded of the film was a consequence of what I had deliberately left out. I had made a decision prior to filming to avoid - as much as possible - intruding on the lives of the musicians (including their past lives), either in interviews or any other form of direct intervention. I wanted to situate them, rather, in a dialogic relationship to Kramer as their fellow-musician, friend, famous figure, and song collector. I was using the genre of observational documentary, arguably in its extreme form, 'with its emphasis on objectivity, neutrality and transparency' (Crawford 1992: 73), but with the added advantage and complication of having Kramer, a knowledgeable musician, as, what I have called, a 'first level' informant. I intended to be as unobtrusive as possible and observe the musicians' interactions with each other and with Kramer from a distance, from behind camera, as 'speech overheard rather than heard since the social actors engage with one another rather than speak to the camera' (Nichols 1991: 39).

This approach worked well for most of our journey to Namaqualand (chapter 2) where the search for a violinist did not require any active participation from myself in the lives of the musicians. We were on a quest; passing through towns, *dorps*, people's lives. In ethnographic discourse, I, the observational filmmaker was involved in an etic (outsider) relationship to the informants, observing a participant observer (Kramer) engaged in a semi-emic (partial insider) relationship to the informants (musicians), who are true insiders (emic)'. 'Etic' and 'emic' are contested terms in ethnomusicology, as Timothy Rice and others have shown. Rice for example argues that no ethnographer/ethnomusicologist, unless s/he is a member of the culture being studied can achieve full 'emic' status; furthermore, that however well they can play or understand that particular music tradition they will 'always fall into the gap between outsider and insider, into a theoretical "no-place"'(Rice 1997: 109-110). However, I find the distinction helpful here in viewing my role, Kramer's, and the Karoo musicians'.

But distancing myself from the action and taking a non-interventionist (decidedly etic) approach did not work in Victoria West. Being hidden from view, not engaged in any way with the informants was preventing me from gaining access to the musicians and their life stories: an approach in observational documentary filmmaking that echoes the scientific objectivity of the non-participant observer in 'old style' anthropology. The term 'observational cinema' is problematic, having been applied, as Paul Henley points out, 'to a range of different documentary film-making practices ... At one extreme it has been used to denote film-making in which there is no engagement with the subjects. [A]t another extreme, it can be used of television documentaries' (Henley 2004: 109). So I decided to take a more participatory approach and move along the continuum from minimal engagement towards a mode of observational cinema more in line with the reflexive dialogic practices of contemporary ethnography. I positioned myself in front of the camera and introduced four unscheduled interviews into the film with Helena Nuwegeld, Siena and Jan Mouers and Koos Lof. By engaging directly with the musicians I hoped to capture details of the social conditions of Nuwegeld and Mouers' lives as coloured women in the Great Karoo – including facts from their personal histories (as shown in chapter 3) that were implied in the lyrics of their songs (as shown in chapter 4), their individual tunings, their instruments (in Siena's case) and their conversations with

Kramer (bear in mind that I was not actually doing any filming, which was done by my cameraman.)

This intervention did not amount to 'participation' in the ethnographic sense of learning to play the instruments or learning the songs - Kramer was fulfilling this role – but it did position me closer to the musicians, who thus moved from being second level to 'first level' informants while I myself became something of a 'partial insider'.

On the surface, the two processes - producing an ethnography and directing a documentary film - are similar. There are parallels between the methodologies used in the visual (filmic) and written ethnographic modes. They both occur 'in the field' and involve the collection of data often as a participant observer, including interviews and dialogic interaction. This is followed in ethnography by an analysis of findings, in film by studying and editing the rushes, and finally a written (or filmed) interpretation emerges. For visual anthropologist Peter Crawford 'the two discursive forms of representation are two different *products* of the same (anthropological process), the *producers* of which are engaged in and governed by the communicative conditions of human intersubjectivity' (1992: 68; his emphasis). My final product - the documentary *Karoo Kitaar Blues* - was a distillation, like all written ethnographies are, of a huge amount of data. In my case there is not only all the raw data mentioned in chapter 1, 'dusted' off for the purposes of this dissertation, but there is another film, the Director's Cut, which is 90 minutes as opposed to 54 minutes.

My field - as a site for filming and learning about the music culture of the Northern Cape in the ethnographic sense - stretched north along the N7 highway from the Koue Bokkeveld to Steinkopf in Namaqualand. It included Kramer's 'Volksie Bus' where he and Hannes Coetzee (his 'bridge' to the new musicians) interacted and made music throughout our journey. And the small Karoo town of Victoria West where the two women musicians, Helena Nuwegeld and Siena Mouers lived was the most intense period of 'field' research on the trip. The field could be expanded to include the musicians' time in Cape Town, and the Baxter Theatre stage where the musicians performed in the *Karoo Kitaar Blues* concert.

In ethnographic research, the field is also a very flexible notion and can incorporate similarly different sites of action and focus. One thinks of the field of Steven Feld in Papua New Guinea as in some sense 'classic', in that it is rural and remote (Feld 1982). The field for ethnomusicologist Veit Erlmann in his work on *isicathamiya* on the other hand is equally classic, but metropolitan – in migrant workers' hostels (Erlmann 1996). Louise Meintjes' field was largely a recording studio in downtown Johannesburg (Meintjes 2003). The nature of my field feels far more mobile than theirs - a moving field - and my focus on the two women now, in retrospect, was far too short. But like many other discoveries ethnographers have made 'in the field' it turned out to be the most valuable, irreproducible part of the fieldwork.

My fieldwork was preceded, as ethnographic research is, by some background research, but on a far smaller scale that that engaged in by, for example, ethnomusicologists. For me there was no year or two of coursework including copious required reading; indeed, as I show in chapter 1, although I did read, I found very little that was directly related to contemporary musicians in the Great Karoo. I did not, as a documentary filmmaker, do a recce, and no return to the field followed, except the visit to Nuwegeld in her RDP house in Beaufort West in 2007. This 'follow up' process is equally applicable to ethnography and documentary filmmaking but is not statutory: some filmmakers or ethnographers do it, some do not.

The period I spent in the field from 10 March to 3 April 2003 (with a 9 day break in the middle) was the scheduled shooting period of the documentary and for a documentary not unusual. For ethnographic research on the other hand it would be considered a very short period of time. Paul Berliner spent four years in Zimbabwe studying the *mbira* played by the Shona people (1981), John Miller Chernoff studied drumming in Ghana for two years (1979) and Steven Feld has spent over thirty years studying the Bosavi people of Papua New Guinea's understanding of sound and music (1990). Kramer produced 29 concerts in 2001 and 2002 with the Victoria West musicians, but we only spent seventeen days in the field shooting the film. In hindsight, then, how could this be regarded as 'field research' at all? Part of the answer I have already given, and it lies in both the intention behind my work and in the carrying out of the work, and also in its later interpretation. The other part is related to the role of Kramer as informant, and finally, there is the question of my self-reflexivity both within and after 'the field'.

David Kramer

When I first saw David Kramer in *Karoo Kitaar Blues* in 2002 I felt frustrated that only *he* spoke on stage and that none of the musicians uttered a word apart from singing the lyrics of their songs. This was, in fact, one of the main reasons that made me want to make a film about them. I wanted to hear them speak. But during the course of making the documentary it soon became apparent that the relationship that Kramer had with the *Karoo Kitaar Blues* musicians was far more complex than it seemed on the stage. When I set off with Kramer on our journey to Namaqualand it was instantly clear that Hannes Coetzee and Kramer had a great musical rapport. They played together in the kombi from the moment we picked Coetzee up in Herbertsdale until we dropped him off back home a week later. And all along the way they entertained people: on the side of the road, at petrol stations, for the staff in the small hotels where we stayed. Kramer never turned down a hug from a fan or a request for a song. He was – and still is - a legend in Namaqualand. The guitarists and violin players seemed delighted to play for him, and with him.

He methodically wrote down the lyrics of songs next to the names and addresses of the musicians we met and meticulously notated the different tunings. In Victoria West, Kramer's relationship with Nuwegeld and her siblings was, in ethnographic terms, participatory and dialogic. They played music together, laughed at each other's jokes; they had already toured two seasons of *Karoo Kitaar Blues* together. Mouers spoke warmly about Kramer in her interview with me and mentioned one occasion when he had helped them by paying for a lawyer when the police arrested her grandson. (He had been jailed for breaking into a shop.) They were bemused by his interest in their music, enjoyed making music with him, and took on the *Karoo Blues* concerts with energy and enthusiasm. For Lof, Kramer enriched his life by including him in the concerts. Nuwegeld did not verbally articulate her relationship with Kramer but in the visual imagery of the film you can clearly see the embodiment of her fondness for him – her gestures, her laughter, the expressions on her face.

Bewley, however questions Kramer's integrity as a song collector in his review. Firstly he says that 'there is yet another layer of acculturation that occurs during the film as Kramer shapes the original folk materials into something he feels will work better in concert'. He asks whether 'Kramer end[s] up presenting authentic folk music in concert or his own bowdlerized version' (Bewley 2006). Secondly, he wants to know whether in collecting his songs 'Kramer has done anything to preserve his documentation of these details. This would also help' Bewley adds, 'in weighing the nature of Kramer's enterprise as either exploiter or benefactor' (Ibid., 2006).

In the first instance, Bewley is referring to a sequence in the film (referred to in chapter 2) where Kramer asks Nuwegeld and Mouers' permission to develop their song *Bitter Swaar* into a much longer version with verses and chorus – a version that has become his song. The question around the three-line song that for Nuwegeld was a complete expression of what she wanted to say, but for Kramer was in need of development or the kernel of an idea for a song of his own, remains a contested one. Nuwegeld and Mouers gave Kramer permission to use the title and words of *Bitter Swaar* in his version and he has acknowledged his source in all his concerts and recordings. As to what Kramer's business arrangement was with Mouers and Nuwegeld I do not feel, ethically and ethnographically, that I am in a position to ask Kramer for this information as he was my main informant in the making of the documentary and in writing this thesis. So in the case of *Bitter Swaar* the relationship between Kramer and the musicians should probably be regarded as collaboration rather than exploitation but with the understanding that the socio-cultural conditions under which this song was conceived by Nuwegeld and Mouers has been been ripped it from its private context (the hidden transcript) and thrust it into the public space of a concert platform.

The answer to the second question is yes, Kramer has carefully and methodically documented and preserved all the songs that he has collected from musicians across the Northern Cape by keeping a notebook filled with the names and addresses of the musicians, transcriptions of the lyrics of their songs, chord notations of the different guitar tunings and individual music making practices, locations and dates. He has produced a CD *(Karoo Kitaar Blues)* of some of the songs[67] and recorded more in 2003

[67] *Karoo Kitaar Blues* (2002). Various artists. Blik Music SYS-BLIK07.

at the Glen Beach Studios. The second question is not one that is possible for me to answer, here, except indirectly, that is to give both Kramer and the Karoo musicians their due, and to link Kramer's role as song collector with mine as filmmaker.

Parallels have sometimes been drawn between *Karoo Kitaar Blues* and *Buena Vista Social Club*, and indeed Kramer's journey is in many ways like Ry Cooder's 'efforts to recover a lost musical traditions of revolutionary Cuba' as Lee points out (2005: 155).. Lee feels, however that 'such transparent similarity should not dissuade viewers. Kramer and Key's version is equally rich' (Ibid., 155). Although structurally the films might be similar the outcome for the musicians in the two films is very different. Whereas the Cubans went onto to tour the world and re-ignite their musical careers, the Karoo musicians' fame was short-lived. After a couple of years on the stage they returned to their lives of poverty.

During the entire period I was with Kramer, he acted as my mediator, engaging with the musicians with partial insider status. He had known the musicians for two years, he could speak Afrikaans in the dialect of the Northern Cape, he had learnt to tune his guitar in the style of *die ou liedjies* and could play the music and the instruments. He was fully engaged with the musicians as a participant observer. I was recording his interaction with the musicians on film (as opposed to writing down field notes). My etic position behind camera did not affect the process of data collection at this stage. Kramer was doing my job for me. When I later introduced interviews into the schedule I became a partial participant observer engaged in conversation with Jan and Siena Mouers, Nuwegeld and Lof, collecting data on my own behalf. As is practice in ethnographic field research, I kept a personal journal.

Although for the two critics (and perhaps other people) I had clearly not gone far enough in ethnographic terms, as a filmmaker, I *had* employed an ethno-methodological approach, I suggest. This approach, according to Bill Nichols:

> affords the viewer an opportunity to look in on and overhear something of the lived experience of others, to gain some sense of the distinct rhythms of everyday life, to see the colours shapes and spatial relationships among people and their possessions, to hear the intonation, inflection, and accents that have given spoken language its 'grain' and that distinguish one native speaker from another (1991: 43).

Visual anthropologist Jay Ruby goes so far as to dismiss ethnographic film altogether as a genre 'equally marginal to documentary film and cultural anthropology'. He calls for the death of the term 'ethnographic film' and its replacement with what he calls 'anthropologically intended films' (2000: 29). In such films, the maker (filmmaker/ anthropologist) should have had 'formal training in ethnography' and should have intended to produce an ethnography [and] employed ethnographic field practices' (Ibid).

In this view, *intention* (to be ethnographic) is key, as is training, and if one agrees with it then *Karoo Kitaar Blues* is clearly not an ethnographic film. I am not a visual anthropologist by training, was not working within the framework of ethnographic methodology and was not a true participant observer involved in a reflexive, dialogic relationship with my informants. By the same token neither was Kramer. He was a song collector who had his own agenda, which was to find musicians and songs and to rehearse them for a concert.

The issue is less clear-cut when I look at it from another perspective, inspired by the work of Clifford and Marcus (1986), and especially by James Clifford's notion of 'ethnographic authority' (1997). What he argues for is a closer relationship between research and researched, and a greater degree of self-reflexivity on the part of the ethnographer. Particularly, what he is concerned with is not so much what happens in the field but what happens *afterwards*: the writing process, and the way researcher and researched are represented in the writing. Similarly, in my case, what was of concern in taking time out to study ethnomusicology and write this dissertation was not 'how will I do this (field) work' but 'how has this work by Kramer and the musicians of the Great Karoo been represented in my film'?

Looking at my film as a form of writing, how in fact does it compare with conventional writing? Karl Heider describes ethnography and film as 'profoundly' different enterprises, as obviously different as 'word-on-paper' versus 'photo-on-celluloid' or 'image-on-video tape' (2006: 8). He also makes a very important point about the processing of data. Unlike ethnography, he says, in which field notes can be 're-written, re-organised, analyzed and re-analyzed:

> Cinematography makes irreversible choices at the very beginning. *[T]he finished film can contain only those images that were shot at the beginning.* Especially in ethnographic filmmaking, where the shooting is done in the field and is completed before the editing begins, the editing stage is one of manipulating a finite amount of set material (Ibid; my emphasis).

As well as claiming these limitations for film's 'set material' he further argues that 'ethnographic understanding emerges from the analysis' (2006: 9), and that processes of analysis in the editing of a film, as opposed to the re-analyse and re-writing involved in the production of an ethnography, are compromised by the 'finite amount of set material [shot] in the field and completed before the editing begins' (2006: 8).

Film 'as' and 'in' ethnography

For two decades, film theorist and filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha has criticised what she calls the 'sanctified terrain of anthropology for reducing filmmaking to a question of methodology (193: 102). The issues I have been speaking about do however seem to boil down to questions of methodology - not only in the collecting but more especially in the presentation of data. I began with the premise that one of the aims of ethnography is to reveal as much as possible of the 'lived experience' of ethnographic subjects, which I believe to be through reflexive dialogic engagement. Film 'as' ethnography makes very little allowance, it seems to me, for such engagement. I was disconcerted to note in visual anthropologist Fadwa el Guindi's visual ethnography, *El Sebou: Egyptian Birth Ritual* (1986), for example, that her informants never spoke, except on the odd occasion, for example, when a women in her film thanked a shopkeeper for her purchase. Instead Guindi uses back-to-back voice over (her own voice) describing, analysing, interpreting the birth ritual and the actions of the people involved in it.

This slavish adherence to a body of anthropological conventions laid down for the production of a hands-off visual ethnography is using film 'as' ethnography. To me, it grossly under-uses the potential of film to create layers of meaning in the manner of Geertz's thick description. Not only is film as ethnography clearly not what *Karoo Kitaar Blues* is about, but I would not want to make either a documentary film or an ethnographic film in this way. To me, the use of film 'as' ethnography is purely illustrative, and would be better used 'in' ethnography.

Voices and practices from within anthropology have made reflexivity central to ethnographic filmmaking (MacDougall 1998, Grimshaw 2001:121-148, Pink 2007: 4). In my journey through the repositioning of my documentary film I have come to realise how I moved from an initial hands-off position while filming to a more reflexive place. The reflexivity in the film allows for a variety of discourses. As visual anthropologist Peter Loizos says, 'films as texts gai[n] depth from their connectedness to other texts ... in film we have words plus intonations, plus pauses, plus facial expressions and even a suggestion of the elusive quality of the relationship between anthropologist and informants, matters which an anthropologist alone might have difficulty writing about' (1992: 6). Film captures the embodiment of performance – the negotiations, the music making, the situatedness, the listeners, the facial and bodily gestures - and thus becomes a perfect vehicle for, and in, ethnography.

So although the social history and 'impact of 20th century politics' on this Karoo community might not be verbally articulated in the documentary as criticised by Lee (2005: 155), it is nevertheless apparent *in* the visual imagery (and soundscape) of the documentary. Above all, it is apparent in the texts and music of Nuwegeld's songs, which speak volumes about marginalisation, loss and fractured identity. In the visual imagery poverty is imprinted on the condition and quality of the musicians' clothes, the contents of their homes and the food they eat. Desperation brought about by unemployment is evident in unemployed workers hanging about outside the Pick-A-Bottle Bottle Store in various states of inebriation while the owner, fat and opulent, directs the offloading of *papsakke*.

As Hastrup says, 'the visual gives a record of the form of behaviour but cannot give us an account of its meaning (1992: 11). By the same token, no film an hour long, even 12 hours long, can say everything. Heider describes ethnographic film as a collaboration that 'unite[s] the art and skills of the filmmaker with the trained intellect and the insights of the ethnographer' but the 'privileging of material in the partnership must be its intrinsic ethnographic worth' (2006: ix). And I think that this is right.

Conclusion

I could re-edit it *Karoo Kitaar Blues* using longer takes and incorporating the rushes not used in the original version. I could add explanatory inter-titles and voice over defining the historical, cultural and social contexts surrounding the production of Northern Cape music. I could include an analytical voice examining the meaning of Nuwegeld's lyrics. But in the end, the film - whether going as ethnographic film or as visual ethnography - would still suffer from the same methodological problems as the original version. I have made a film, *Karoo Kitaar Blues*. It is complete. It has been screened, sold and broadcast. It has also been used in teaching, where it seems to have been effective for at least one social anthropologist, David Coplan, who wrote to me after I expressed my qualms about its 'ethnographic' status:

> I've been proudly calling it [ethnographic] from my first viewing. It doesn't require all that social history/ politics/educational condescension – such people want you to have made a different film. Instead we have a document that is as fresh and immediate, up-close and personal, as one could have hoped. Even the kombi breakdowns are part of the encounter, the immediacy. It's about these people and their soundscape of the land. I have shown it to students both here and abroad. Then, because I do know some background, I explain it, but mostly in musical terms (David Coplan pers. comm. 25 January 2011).

Furthermore, from a purely practical point of view, I cannot revisit it. I cannot go back into the field and reshoot it. All my informants are dead. It is what it is: a 54- or 90-minute documentary that touches on the music and lives of a group of musicians. It does not rigidly obey any one set of rules, least of all ethnographic, although its subject matter is germane to ethnomusicology. Making it, and receiving critiques of it has enriched my understanding beyond measure, and I hope that through this thesis I have produced a reflexive account of the filming process that together with the documentary itself and other clips (not included in the film) show how film can be used in (the service of) ethnography. Most importantly, the academic process has given me the option of a framework to work with that I did not know existed before, and a way of paying tribute to the people to whose memory this thesis is dedicated.

APPENDIX: SONGS

I have only included songs that appear in this thesis. As mentioned in chapter 4, Nuwegeld's songs are not static, literary texts but rather performative, personal self-expressions that vary each time they are presented in performance. It is therefore important that they are contextualized temporally and spatially. I have indicated in brackets where and when they were performed.

Oom Vredendal **(version 1):**

Ai nee, ai nee my bruin broer	Oh no, Oh no my brown brother
Hoekom doen jy dit aan my	Why do you do this to me?
Jy't net drie sisters	You only have three sisters
En jy't ons verlaat	And you deserted us
Nou kom jy deur die leegdes	Now you come through the emptiness
Om ons harte to kom troos	To mend our broken hearts

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Oom Vredendal*, town hall, 27 March 2003 © Blik Music)

Oom Vredendal **(version 2):**

Ai nee Oom Vredendal	Oh no uncle Vredendal
Hoekom doen jy dit nou?	Why do you do this?
Ai nee Oom Vredendal	Oh no Uncle Vredendal
Hoekom doen jy dit nou	Why do you do this?
Jy't gekom om ons harte te breek	You came and broke our hearts
En jy sal weer kom	And you'll return
Om ons harte te troos	To mend them again.
Nou kom jy deur die leegdes	Now you come across the emptiness
Die leegdes	The emptiness,
Om ons harte te kom troos	To mend our broken hearts
Ai nee, ai nee, ai nee	Oh no, oh no, oh no
My bruin broer	My brown brother
Jy moet nou huistoe kom	You must come home now

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Oom Vredendal,* town hall, 27 March 2003 © Blik Music)

Oom Vredendal **(version 3):**

Nou kom jy deur die leegdes	Now you come across the emptiness
Die leegdes	The emptiness,
Om ons harte to kom troos	Come back to mend our broken hearts
Ai nee, ai nee, ai nee	Oh no, oh no, oh no
My bruin broer	My brown brother
Jy moet nou huistoe kom	You must come home now
Ai nee, ai nee my bruin broer	Oh no, Oh no my brown brother
Hoekom doen jy dit aan my	Why do you do this to me?
Jy't net drie sisters	You only have three sisters
En jy't ons verlaat	And you deserted us

Nou kom jy deur die leegdes	Now you come through the emptiness
Om ons harte to kom troos	To mend our broken hearts
Ai nee Moeder ai nee Ma	Oh no Mother, oh no mama
Kom huistoe Ma	Come home mother
Die huis is leeg sonder jou.	The house is empty without you

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Oom Vredendal,* town hall, 27 March 2003 © Blik Music)

Bitter Swaar **(version 1)**

Bitter swaar, bitter swaar	Life is hard, life is hard
Bitter swaar, bitter Swaar	Life is hard, life is hard
Bitter swaar om 'n weeskind te wees	Very hard to be an orphan child

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Bitter Swaar*, party, 30 March 2003 © Blik Music)

Bitter Swaar **(version 2)**

Bitter swaar, bitter swaar	It is hard, it is hard
Bitter swaar, bitter swaar	It is hard, it is hard
Dit is swaar	It is hard
On 'n weeskind te wees	To be an orphan child
En ek loop daai pad	And I walk that road
Met die trane in my oe	With tears in my eyes
Bitter swaar	It is hard
Om 'n weeskind te wees	To be an orphan child

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Bitter Swaar*, town hall, 27 March 2003 © Blik Music)

Bitter Swaar **(David Kramer's version)**

Lorries oppie teerpad	Lorries on the tar road
Treine oppie spoor	Trains on the track
Ek het net my rooi kitaar	I've nothing but my red guitar
Die res het ek verloor	The rest I lost somewhere
Ekkit ie ma nie	I don't have a mother
Ekkit ie pa nie	I don't have a father
Ek kannie by jou bly nie	I can't stay with you
So moenie vir my vra nie	So don't even ask me
Dit is swaar dit is swaar	It is hard, very hard
Baie swaar bitterswaar	Heavy and hard
Swaar om 'n weeskind te wees	To be an orphan in this world
Alles wat ek het	Everything I own
Is in 'n streepsak vasgebind	Is tied up in a sack
'n boksie metjies en 'n sigaret	A box of matches and a cigarette
Ek is hoepelbeen se kind	I'm hopalong's child
Ek kannie woorde lees ie	I can't read a word
Die name moet ek hoor	The names I have to hear
Ek wietie waar ek issie	No idea where I am
My pad het ek verloor	I have lost my way
Dit is swaar dit is swaar	It is hard, very hard
Baie swaar bitterswaar	Heavy and hard
Swaar om 'n weeskind te wees	To be an orphan in this world
Ek staan hie oppie stasie	I'm standing on the station

Ek tokkel my kitaar	I'm playing my guitar
Hulle gooi my 'n paar sente	They throw me a few cents
Ek maakit alles bymekaar	I put them altogether
Ek het net my drie chords	All I have is three chords
Ek het net my krag	And the strength in my two arms
Worry nie van more nie	I don't worry about tomorrow
More is 'n anner dag	Tomorrow is another day
Dit is swaar dit is swaar	It is hard, very hard
Baie swaar bitterswaar	Heavy and hard
Swaar om 'n weeskind te wees	To be an orphan in this world

(David Kramer, Bitter Swaar 2003 © Blik Music)

Vermaak se maksels **(version 1)**

Ons is vermaak se maksels	We come from foolish pleasure
Ons is eiland trek se boesmans	We are the wandering bushmen of the island
Dit is baie swaar	It is really tough going
As jy kannie ma se,	If you can't say mama,
Jou kannie pa se	You can't say papa.
Ons het op die eiland gaan staan	We went to stand on the island
Toe staan ons bloot alleen	We stood there all alone
Nou ons is niemand se vriend nie	Now we are nobody's friend
Trane is vir my	Tears are for me
Hartseer is vir jou	Heartache is for you
Ons is vermaak se maksels	We are objects of ridicule
Verwyd se honne gaan ons bly	The dogs of rejection we will stay
My trane rol	My tears roll
Groot riviere vol	The big rivers fill

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Vermaak se Maksels*, town hall, 27 March 2003 © Blik Music)

Vermaak se maksels **(version 2)**

Ons is vermaak se maksels	We are victims of foolish pleasure
Ons is eiland trek se boesmans	We are the wandering bushmen of the island
Dit is baie swaar	It is really tough going
As jy kannie ma se nie	If you can't say mama
As jy kannie pa se nie	If you can't say papa
Ons bly verstoot se kinners	We remain cast off children
Ons kry dan hier 'n stoot	We get pushed
Ons kry dan daar 'n stamp	We get shoved
Ons sit daar bo op die bont eiland	We sit alone on a patchy island
Ons is niemand se vriend nie	We are no-one's friend
Ons is vermaak se maksels	We are objects of ridicule
Verwyd se honne gaan ons bly	The dogs of rejection we will stay

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Vermaak se Maksels*, party, 30 March 2003 © Blik Music)

Vermaak se Maksels **(version 3)**

Waarom verwyd julle my?	Why do you reject me?
Ek is 'n weeskind	I am an orphan
Ek kannie ma sê nie	I can't say mother
Ek kannie pa sê nie	I can't say father
Ons bly verstoot se kinners	We remain cast off children

Ons kry dan hier 'n stoot	We get pushed
Ons kry dan daar 'n stamp	We get shoved
Ons sit daar bo op die bont eiland alleen	We sit alone on the gaudy island
Ons is niemand se vriend nie	We are no-one's friend
Ons is vermaak se maksels	We are objects of ridicule
Verwyd se honne gaan ons bly	The dogs of rejection we will stay
Wie sal vir jou lap en stop	Who will patch your clothes
As jy my elke dag klap en skop	If you keep hitting and kicking me?
Want ek hettie ma nie	'cause I have no mother
Ek hettie pa nie	I have no father
Bly maar vermaak se maksels	Remain an object of ridicule
Groot rivier is vol	The big river is full
En my trane rol	My tears keep rolling
Ek het my ma kasty	I castigated my mother
Nou moet ek die swaarheid kry	So now I suffer this burden
Hartseer is vir jou	Heartache for you
Die trane is vir my	Tears for me

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Vermaak se Maksels,* town hall, 27 March 2003 © Blik Music)

Vermaak se Maksels **(version 4)**

Ons is vermaak se maksels	We come from foolish pleasure
Ons is eiland trek se boesmans	We are the wandering bushmen of the island
Ons het op die eiland gaan staan	We went and stood on the island
Ons is eiland trek se boesmans	We are the bushmen of the island trek
Ai oorleë Oom Freek se boesmans	Oh, the bushmen of the late Uncle Freek
Dit is baie swaar	It is really tough going
As jy kannie ma se,	If you can't say mama,
jou kannie pa se	You can't say papa.
Ons het op die eiland gaan staan	We went to stand on the island
Toe staan ons bloot alleen	We stood there all alone
Nou ons is niemand se vriend nie	Now we are nobody's friend
Trane is vir my	Tears are for me
Hartseer is vir jou	Heartache is for you
Ons is vermaak se maksels	We are objects of ridicule
Verwyd se honne gaan ons bly	The dogs of rejection we will stay
My trane rol	My tears roll
Groot riviere vol	The rivers full

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Vermaak se Maksels,* Karoo Landscape, 28 March 2003 © Blik Music)

Vermaak se Maksels **(version 5)**

Ons is vermaak se maksels	We are victims of foolish pleasure
Ons is eiland trek se boesmans	We are the wandering bushmen of the island
Dit is baie swaar	It is really tough going
As jy kannie ma se nie	If you can't say mama
As jy kannie pa se nie	If you can't say papa
Ons bly verstoot se kinners	We remain cast off children
Ons kry dan hier 'n stoot	We get pushed
Ons kry dan daar 'n stamp	We get shoved
Ons moet die langpad vat	We have to take the long road
Maar ons het geen laaiplek nie	But we have no berth
Ons is vermaak se maksels	We are objects of ridicule
Verwyd se honne gaan ons bly	The dogs of rejection we will stay

Die Staalpad **(version 1)**

Ai ai Oom Jannie Mouers	Oh no Jannie Mouers
Oom Jannie Mouers	Uncle Jannie Mouers
Hy loop op die staalpad af	He walks down the steel track
Daarop die Maandag more	On that Monday morning
Toe knoop hy sy baadjie toe	He buttoned his jacket
Toe gaan hy stasie toe	He went to the station
Toe trek die trein mos net weg	But the train was already leaving
Toe trekkie trein ma net weg	The train was already leaving
Toe staan hy met die hand vol trane	He stood there with a handful of tears
Ai nee Oom Jannie Mouers	Oh Jannie Mouers
Toe staan hy met 'n hand vol trane	He stood there with a handful of tears
Toe hy op die eiland kom staan	Then when he stood on the island
Toe hy oppie eiland kom staan	Then when he stood on the island
Toe staan hy bloot alleen	He stood all alone
Toe staan hy bloot allen	He stood all alone
Hy kannie mama se nie	He can't say mother
Hy kannie papa se nie	He can't say father
Hy's niemand se vriend	He's nobody's friend
Oom Jannie Mouers	Uncle Jannie Mouers
Hy maak sy kinnertjies groot	He's raised his children
Met net ses snytjies brood	With just six slices of bread
Ai nee Oom Jannie Mouers	Oh no Jannie Mouers
Hy loop op die staalpad af	He walks down the steel track

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Staalpad, Karoo Kitaar Blues* concert, 10 May 2003 © Blik Music)

Staalpad **(Version 2)**

Op 'n Maandag more	On a Monday morning
Ou Jannie ouers op die staalpad	Old Jannie Mouers steps onto the railway track
Hy knoop sy baadjie toe	He buttons up his jacket
En toe hy op die stasie kom	But when he comes to the station
Trek die trein net weg	The train has gone
To staan hy met 'n hand vol trane	He stands there with a handful of tears
En hy maak twaalf kinders groot	He's made twelve children big
Met ses duntjies brood.	On six slices of bread

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Staalpad,* Town Hall, 27 March 2003 © Blik Music)

Moenie Lujet Drinkie **(Version 1)**

Moenie Lu-jet drinkie x 2	Don't drink Lujet x 2
Lu-jet is vererig	Lujet makes you worse [is poisonous]
Maak liewer die 5 liter vol	Rather fill a 5 liter [papsak]
Want onthou	Because remember
Lu-jet is vererig	Lujet makes you worse [is poisonous]

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Moenie Lu-jet Drinkie,* town hall 27 March 2003 © Blik Music)

Moenie Lu-jet Drinkie **(version 2)**

Moenie *Lujet drinkie*	Don't drink Lujet
Moenie Lujet drinkie	Don't drink Lujet
Want Lujet us vererig	Because Lujet is dangerous
Mete met 'n tien liter	Measure ten litres (Lujet)
10 liter is vererig	10 litres is poisonous

Daar kom Boetie Blom	There comes Boetie Blom
Boetie Blom is vererig	Boetie Blom is dangerous
Toe ry ek met die drie nil drie	I ride in the three-nil-three (a lorry)
Toe gaan ek Carnarvon toe	To Carnarvon
To koop ek die sjokolaat	To buy a chocolate

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Moenie Lu-jet Drinkie*, town Hall 27 March 2003 © Blik Music)

Antie Mina Jon

Antie Mina Jon, jou skraal genade
Petrus Duikers tel op jou baster
Oom Kosie Lof el op jou quinta
Wat meen die grone gordyne?
Dis my hart se pyne
Die Hofmann's druppels
Is my baby se middels

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Antie Mina Jon*, town hall, 27 March 2003 © Blik Music

Mama sal nie weer trou nie

Mama sal nie weer trou nie x 2	Mama will not marry again x 2
Want sy eerste trou	Because her first marriage
Was 'n bittere berou	Was bitterly regretful
O my mama sal nie weer trou nie	Oh my mama will not marry again

(Helena Nuwegeld, *Mama sal nie weer trou nie*, town hall 27 March 2003 © Blik Music)

O Alle Wêreld

O alla Wêreld pikkewyn my ding	Oh penguin my thing
Laaste Saterdag toe was ek	Last Saturday I was
Weer in jou rib	Again in your spot
Toe tjielie ekkie kat	Now I tickle the cat
En toe tielie ek vir jou	And now I tickle you
Dat jy lekker kry	So you feel good
Toe tik ek die boom	And now I tickle the tree
Toe val daar 'n peer	Now a pear falls down
En toe tik ek vir jou	And now I tickle you
'n lekker koppie koffie	A nice cup of coffee
Met 'n koekie daarby	With a cookie next to it
Toe vry ek vir jou	Now I kiss you
Dat jy lekker kry	So you feel nice
Van die berge gaan	Behind the mountain
Daar waar die liefde lê	There where love lies
Daar by die rooi lippe ding	There with the red-lipped thing
Die rooi lippe ding gaan ek	To the red-lipped thing I go

(Helena Nuwegeld, *O Alle wereld*, town hall 27 March 2003 © Blik Music)

Kruispad

Dit is pikswart daarbo	It's pitch black up there
Dis 'n donker Karoo	Its dark in the Karoo
Ek het baie om te se	I have a lot to say

Maar niemand wil my glo	But no-one will believe me
Niemand will my glo nie	No-one believes me
Di hemel hettie vloer nie	There is no floor in heaven
God sittie op 'n troon nie	No throne for god to sit on
Die hemel issie so nie	Heaven's not like that
Maar dit mag ekkie sê nie	But I'm not allowed to say that
Niemand wil dit hê nie	No-one wants to hear it
Die plekke waar ek slaap	The places that I sleep
Wil niemand anders lê nie	No-one dares go near
Hulle sê ek ken die duiwel	They say I know the devil
En die die duiwel ken my naam	And the devil knows my name
Hy't gemaak met my net wat hy wil	That I fell under his influence
Toe ek onner innie kruispad staan	When I went down to the crossroads

(David Kramer, *Kruispad* © Blik Music)

Johnny Raakvat

Almal praat van Johnny Raakvat	People talk of Johnny Raakvat
Die man wat so lekker kan kitaar slat	The man who plays guitar so well
Eendag is hy hier	One day he's here
Eendag is hy daar	One day he's there
Op soek na Johnny Raakvat	Looking for Johnny Raakvat
Op soek na Johnny Raakvat	We're looking for Johnny Raakvat
Op *soek na Johnny Raakvat*	We're looking for Johnny Raakvat
En sy blik kitaar	And his tin can guitar

(David Kramer, *Johnny Raakvat* © Blik Music)

Bobbejaan Klim die Berg

Bobbejaan klim die berg,	Baboon climbs the mountain
So hastig en so lastig	So fast and swift
Bobbejaan klim die berg	Baboon climbs the mountain
So hastig en so lasting	So fast and swift
Bobbejaan klim die berg	Baboon climbs the mountain
Om die boere te vererg	To annoy the farmer
Hoera vir die jollie bobbejaan	Hooray for the jolly baboon

(Anon., transl. David Kramer 2003)

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