

CHAPTER 5

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AFFECT AND MEANING OF WORDS AND LYRICS IN BOER VOCAL MUSIC

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the analysis of affect and meaning is grounded in an examination of language that is not decontextualised from the sounds of the songs. The lyrics will thus be interpreted in melodic configurations that are equated with the particular moods, emotions and cultural-historical meanings that were highlighted in previous chapters. By linking the lyrics to the sounds of the songs it will be possible to address the aural void that was identified as the lacuna between cultural history and musicology.

Chapter 4 dealt with an illustration of the various musical song genres used by the Boers, while this chapter will deal with the lyrics according to the degree of functional effectiveness in a specific context. Previous chapters highlighted the fact that two of the most important facets of the Boer psyche were their religious fervour and their patriotism. In this chapter, the lyrics of religious vocal music and popular songs they sang during the war will be considered in conjunction with Biblical references to the words of the Psalms, as well as other books of the Bible, to draw attention to these two facets.

5.2 RELIGIOUS VOCAL MUSIC

The Boers interpreted many religious concepts in the light of their everyday experiences during the war. It is from Biblical texts on which religious vocal music is based that the Boers were able to receive solace. Aaron (1985:5) also stresses the affective role of messages from religious music when he speaks about its meaning to the Jews in the Concentration Camps. According to him, “Even when the catastrophe was perceived as being unprecedented, the historical song, with its use of Biblical quotations, its liturgical framework and its theodicy, all served to

console the listener, to mitigate the disaster, to render the actual, time-bound event into something transtemporal” (Aaron 1985:5).

Many examples have been given that verify the fact that the Boers never lost faith and continuously sang religious songs to praise the Lord. Pretorius (1999:138) points out that most Boers went into battle with faith because they believed that their cause was just in God’s eyes and that He would preserve them. In order to gain insights into processes of affect and meaning in Boer religious vocal music, the lyrics of some of the most frequently sung and notated songs will be examined. Reputable commentaries dealing with religious music will be consulted in order to prevent a subjective analysis of affect and meaning by the researcher. The religious music will be highlighted under the following categories:

- ❖ Psalms
- ❖ *Gezangen*
- ❖ Revival songs
- ❖ Songs with religious messages.

5.2.1 Psalms

According to Kidner (1973:7) “critical opinion had seemed likely to remain agreed that the Psalter was a product of Israel’s post-exilic maturity, when the teaching of the prophets and the collapse of the monarchy had combined to give new prominence to individual piety.” The role of the prophet thus disappeared and a new kind of voice was heard, namely, the poets of the Psalter who addressed God rather than man. This has resulted in the book of Psalms becoming a pivotal book for Old Testament study and has a continuing relevance today (Kidner 1973:7).

Translations of the Psalms into metrical verse go back to the 2nd century. In the 16th century a new innovation was added, namely that of public worship. According to Temperley (2001:483), Hus and Luther acknowledged the power of congregational singing that required texts in verse because the people at large could not easily sing prose. The enormous increase in the quantity of metrical Psalms after 1520 was thus a direct outgrowth of the Reformation.

The creation of a metrical Psalter in the vernacular, complete with melodies and attendant polyphonic settings is the chief contribution of Calvinism to the music of Western Europe. The complete Genevan Psalter in Dutch was published in 1566. Petrus Dathenus translated French texts into Dutch and fitted his translations to the Genevan melodies. It remained the official Psalter of the Dutch speaking Calvinist Christians for more than two centuries. Dathenus' texts were replaced in 1773 by order of the Dutch Government, although Genevan melodies were retained (Mundel 2001:491).

All three Dutch Reformed Churches, to which practically every Boer belonged, used the Genevan Psalter. Whenever the use of Psalm singing by the Boers is mentioned it generally refers to the versified Psalm sung to the Genevan Psalm tunes. There are, however, some exceptions and details will be given when referring to these Psalms. Kloppers (2004) points out that a few Psalms were not Genevan melodies. He gives the example of Psalm 130 to a *Voortrekkerwysie* and the very popular Psalm 146 to the German tune of F.G. Bäsler.

The fact that the Psalms are still relevant today partially explains their popularity during the Anglo-Boer War. Amongst other things the Psalms allowed the Boers to:

- ❖ articulate their emotions
- ❖ give voice to their sufferings in a hostile and evil world
- ❖ be reminded of God's goodwill and faithfulness toward his people
- ❖ articulate the great divide between a righteous and what they perceived as wicked nation
- ❖ express the fact that human pride will be humbled and wrongs will be readdressed.

It is, however, easy to fall into the trap of subjectively deciding why certain Psalms were important to the Boers. Ideally the 19th century Dutch Bible read by the Boers should be used as a reference point since translations carry their own hermeneutics and differ widely. The researcher is, however, not a scholar in theology and had to rely on the NIV Study Bible (1995) and reputable 20th century

classification systems that allowed for an objective examination of some of the most popular Psalms notated and sung by the Boers. The 19th century Dutch Genevan Psalter would have been the most reliable source as it carries its own hermeneutics due to cultural conditioning, force of rhyme and verse metre, which would give it a slightly different slant to the Biblical verse. The 20th century sources mentioned, however, proved to be invaluable as they gave insight into the general meaning of the Psalms and were necessary for an understanding of the versified Psalms found in hymnbooks.

For the purpose of this study, the classification system according to type given by H. Gunkel (cited in Seybold 1990:112) will be considered. Gunkel pioneered a new approach to Psalm studies as far back as 1904, “which was to force a reappraisal of the provenance and function of the psalm” (Kidner 1973:7). Gunkel’s classification will thus provide the researcher with a frame of reference under which Boer preference for certain Psalms can be understood. For Gunkel (cited in Seybold 1990:112) there must be three conditions before individual Psalms can be put into a common group or type:

- ❖ there must be a ‘particular *basis in worship*’ in which the texts are all rooted, a uniform setting in cultic life
- ❖ there must be a ‘common treasury of *thought and feeling*’, a uniformity of meaning and mood
- ❖ there must be a ‘shared diction’, a uniformity of style and structure.”

Seybold (1990:112) provides the eight major types recognised by Gunkel, but highlights the fact that no single Psalm represents a type completely. Despite this, he considers Gunkel’s criteria for types as valid to this day.

Major types

- ❖ Hymns
- ❖ Songs of Yahweh’s enthronement
- ❖ Laments of the nation
- ❖ Royal Psalms
- ❖ Laments of the individual

- ❖ Thanksgiving of the individual
- ❖ Prophecy in the Psalms
- ❖ Wisdom in the Psalms

Minor types

- ❖ Blessings and Curses
- ❖ The Song of the Ascents
- ❖ The Song of Victory
- ❖ Thanksgiving of Israel
- ❖ The Legend
- ❖ The Torah

Only types with Psalms that were popular amongst the Boers will be addressed. Favourite psalm verses quoted in the context of song refer rather to the Psalter verses than to the Biblical prose verses.

5.2.1.1 Hymns

According to Seybold (1990:113) this type embraces texts “which combine song, profession of faith, and prayer, and which had their fixed place in the public worship of both the first and the second temple.” Psalms assigned to this type that were popular with the Boers are 100, 105, 146, 148, 149 and 150.

Many diary entries highlighted the fact that the Boers intermixed religion and patriotism. Pretorius (1999:177) corroborates this when he says that many of the Boers on Commando “compared the Afrikaner people to Israel ... [and] saw their dire straits as similar and drew strength from God’s deliverance of Israel.” Psalm 105 would have allowed the Boers the opportunity to articulate this conviction as it is an exhortation to Israel to worship and trust in the Lord “because of all his saving acts in fulfilment of his covenant with Abraham to give his descendants the land of Canaan” (NIV 1995:890).

The last five Psalms, 146-150, were particularly popular and found in many songbooks. All these Psalms begin and end with “Praise the Lord”. Psalm 146 was sung on many occasions and is also an exhortation to trust in the Lord.

The words of verses 1 and 2 read as follows:

“Praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord, O my soul.
I will praise the Lord all my life;
I will sing praise to my God
As long as I live”

(NIV 1995:931 – Psalm 146:1-2).

Verses 7 and 8 allowed the Boers to draw comfort from words that express circumstances which they perceived as similar to theirs. At the same time they were reminded of the goodness of the Lord:

“He upholds the cause of the oppressed
and gives food to the hungry.
The Lord sets prisoners free,
the Lord gives sight to the blind
the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down,
the Lord loves the righteous”

(NIV 1995:931 – Psalm 146:7-8).

5.2.1.2 *Laments of the Community*

According to Seybold (1990:115) these Psalms are prayers of a community in a time of trial and are built on lament and supplication. Through these Psalms the Boers were able to articulate their heartache for their homeland that was involved in a war. According to Seybold (1990:116) a characteristic feature of the *Laments of the Community* “is the argumentative style, recalling promises of the past, pointing out contradictions in the present, suggesting conclusions, offering motives, all in order to win God’s intervention.” The words of Psalm 85

demonstrate many of these features and through them the Boer was able to identify with the hardships of Israel and be comforted by God's intervention.

Psalm 79 also falls under this type. Kidner (1973[b]:286) states that though it is filled with pathos "its prevailing tone is one of indignation, and its appeal is to God's honour." Interestingly enough the words of verses 4 to 8 were often written out in hand-notated scores, suggesting that these verses were more popular than the others. They draw attention to the fact that the Israelites had been banished from God's land and that as exiles they pleaded their special covenant relationship with God. Mention has been made of the fact that the Boers compared their lot to that of Israel and through the words of Psalm 79 verses 4-8 they were able to articulate this and plead their cause with God:

"We are objects of reproach to our neighbours,
Of scorn and derision to those around us.
How long, O Lord? Will you be angry forever?
How long will your jealousy burn like fire?
Pour out your wrath on the nations
that do not acknowledge you,
On the kingdoms that do not call on your name;
for they have devoured Jacob
and destroyed his homeland.
Do not hold against us the sins of the fathers;
may your mercy come quickly to meet us,
for we are in desperate need"

(NIV 1995:863 – Psalm 79:4-8).

Many diary entries refer to Psalm 123, verses 3 and 4, being sung at funerals. This Psalm is a collective lament by people who are suffering. They beseech God to comfort them in their circumstances and, according to Kidner (1973:436), the repetition of "have mercy on us", is used to reinforce the fact that the writer of the Psalm has had enough. Through these words, the Boers could articulate their feeling of desperation and the urgency needed to save them from their situation:

“Have mercy on us, O Lord.
Have mercy on us,
For we have endured much ridicule from the proud,
much contempt from the arrogant”

(NIV 1995:916 – Psalm 123:3-4).

5.2.1.3 *Laments of the Individual*

Needless to say, this type of Psalm was very popular with the Boers because, through the words, they were able to receive solace by identifying with the hardship the Psalter faced and the fact that God was always there to help in difficult circumstances. This is highlighted in Seybold’s explanation (1990:116) of this type of Psalm: “In actual fact, we are dealing with prayers of supplication of a single person in unfortunate circumstances. Among the components of these prayers are the invocations, the representation of self [depiction of misery], requests, combined with expressions of confidence, arguments to motivate God’s intervention, declarations, and vows of thanks and praise.”

Psalm 31 makes the journey twice from anguish to assurance and could come to mind in moments of crisis. The popularity of this Psalm with the Boers suggests that the words gave them courage in their difficult circumstances. “No psalm expresses a more sturdy trust in the Lord when powerful human forces threaten” (NIV 1995:807 – Psalm 31). Verses 9 and 10 clearly express David’s distress, a distress the Boers were able to identify with. The Boer did not necessarily have a physical affliction, but considered the circumstances surrounding his interment as an affliction.

“Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I am in distress;
my eyes grow weak with sorrow,
my soul and my body with grief.
My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning;

My strength fails because of my affliction,
And my bones grow weak”

(NIV 1995:807 – Psalm 31:9-10).

Verses 21-24 also give courage because they remind the reader or singer of the fact that the Lord helped David in difficult times:

“Praise be to the Lord,
for he showed his wonderful love to me
when I was in a besieged city.
In my alarm I said, ‘I am cut off from your sight!’
Yet you hear my cry for mercy
when I called to you for help.
Love the Lord, all his saints!
The Lord preserves the faithful,
but the proud he pays back in full.
Be strong and take heart,
all you who hope in the Lord”

(NIV 1995:808 – Psalm 31:21-24).

Seybold (1990:116) also classifies *Psalms of the Individual* under *Laments of the Individual*. In this group he includes almost a quarter of the Psalms. One of these Psalms, Psalm 25, was very popular with the Boers. Previous chapters highlighted the fact that most Boers put all their trust in the Lord and many of the words of the Psalms that were popular with them articulate this trust. Psalm 25 verses 1-3 not only communicate this trust but, through the words, the Boer is able to ask God to punish the enemy:

“In you, O Lord, I lift up my soul;
in you I trust, O my God.
Do not let me be put to shame,
Nor let my enemies triumph over me”

(NIV 1995:802 – Psalm 25:1-3).

The words of this Psalm allow them the opportunity to beseech God to forgive them their sins:

“Remember not the sins of my youth
And my rebellious ways;
According to your ways remember me
For you are good, O Lord”

(NIV 1995:802 – Psalm 25:7).

5.2.1.4 *Thanksgiving of the individual*

In virtually every Boer songbook we find Psalm 23. This is typical of a Psalm that can be classified under different types. Seybold (1990:116 &118) calls it one of the *Psalms of confidence* and places it under the types, *Laments of the individual* as well as *Thanksgiving of the individual*. According to him, “No single psalm represents the ideal of its ‘type’ completely” (Seybold 1990:112). For the purpose of this thesis it will be classified under *Thanksgiving of the individual*.

The whole Psalm is expressive of personal confidence, joy, and triumph from beginning to end (Spurgeon [s.a] Vol. 1:359). This is understandable as through the words of this Psalm “there is readiness to face deep darkness and imminent attack, and the climax reveals a love which hones towards no material goal but to the Lord Himself” (Kidner 1973:109). The circumstances facing the Boers were indeed threatening and, through this Psalm, they were able to articulate this. At the same time, the Psalm serves as consolation because the lyrics suggest that the reader or singer of the Psalm has a personal relationship with God. The *I* and the *you* suggest this in verse 4:

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and staff, they comfort me”

(NIV 1995:800-801 – Psalm 23:4).

According to Kidner (1973:111), this closeness with God is even more meaningful because the words suggest that God is armed. The rod and staff were the shepherd's weapons. This must have been especially important to the Boers because it highlights God as their protector against the enemy. Verse 6 echoes the consolation theme:

“Surely goodness and love will
follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the House of the Lord
for ever”

(NIV 1995:801 – Psalm 23:6).

Psalm 30 was also very popular with the Boers and is classified under the type, *Thanksgiving of the individual*. It was from Biblical texts like these that the Boers were able to receive solace. Through these texts they could identify with the hardship David faced and the fact that the Lord came to David's rescue made them believe that the Lord would do the same for them. David's thanks to the Lord in verses 1-4 could thus have reminded them of the Lord's closeness in time of need:

“I will exalt you, O Lord,
for you lifted me out of the depths
and did not let my enemies gloat over me.
O Lord my God, I called to you for help
and you healed me.
O Lord, you brought me up from the grave,
you spared me from going down into the pit.
Sing to the Lord, you saints of his;
praise his holy name”

(NIV 1995:806 – Psalm 30:1-4).

According to the NIV, the grave spoken of is figurative of a “brink-of-death” experience (NIV 1995:806 – Psalm 30:1-4). Spurgeon ([s.a.]:44) emphasises the fact that three times over David is quite sure that God has done great things for him. He has healed him, He has brought him up from the grave and He has spared him from going down into the pit. This is a typical Psalm where religious concepts could be interpreted in the light of the Boer’s everyday experiences during the war.

A Psalm which was also popular with the Boers and which had praise and thanksgiving as the topic, was Psalm 66. The focus of the Psalm is “the Lord’s great works, his gracious benefits, his faithful deliverances, and all his dealings with his people, brought to a close by a special kindness received by the prophet-bard himself” (Spurgeon [s.a.] Vol. 2:108). Verses 1-4 call on all nations to praise God by dictating the words of a suitable song:

“Shout with joy to God, all the earth!
Sing the glory of his name;
Make his praise glorious!
Say to God. ‘How awesome are your deeds!
So great is your power
That your enemies cringe before you.
All the earth bows down to you;
They sing praise to you,
They sing praise to your name’ ”

(NIV 1995:844 – Psalm 66:1-4).

Verses 5-7 invite nations to see the works of the Lord. Spurgeon ([s.a.] Vol. 2:108) suggests that the Psalm writer is referring to the Red Sea and the passage through Jordan. The words of these verses also allow the Boers to identify with the hardships faced by the Israelites and the reassurance of help from the Lord in their own circumstances:

“Come and see what God has done,
how awesome his works in man’s behalf!
He turned the sea into dry land
they passed through the waters on foot –
come, let us rejoice in him”

(NIV 1995:844 – Psalm 66:5-6).

Some of the Psalms and other religious songs are very long and often Boer diaries carry references to certain verses sung at different times. The circumstances they were facing could possibly have dictated what their immediate need was and the verses were chosen to fit the occasion. Such examples are found in a letter written by D.W. Steyn (FAD A621 - Articles). He writes about the terrible circumstances on the boat trip to the prisoner of war camp at Ahmednagar in India and how they often sang Psalm 118 verses 6 & 7 for comfort. These verses are a good example of meaning implied in the versified form as the words speak of being encircled and trampled by enemies, yet expressing the fervent confidence in conquering them in God’s name:

“The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid.
What can man do to me?
The Lord is with me; he is my helper.
I will look in triumph on my enemies”

(NIV 1995:905 – Psalm 118:6-7).

Psalm 116 was a very popular Genevan Psalm often sung by the Boers. Verses 1 & 7 were often used to thank the Lord. An example is seen in the diary of H.P. Erasmus after their safe arrival at Ahmednagar (FAD A621). These verses once again emphasise the Boer’s love for the Lord and their belief that He will help them in their dire circumstances:

“I love the Lord, for he heard my voice;
He heard my cry for mercy.”

“Be at rest once more, O my soul.
For the Lord has been good to you
The Lord is my help and power.
I will praise Him as long as I live ”

(NIV 1995:903-904 – Psalm 116:1 & 7).

5.2.1.5 *Wisdom in the Psalms*

It is fitting to close the section on the role of the Psalms by discussing Psalm 91, which is not listed under any of the types given by Seybold. Due to its popularity it was necessary find a place for it and the researcher decided to classify it under *Wisdom Poems* which Seybold (1990:118) describes as an “open-ended group ... being psalms with a fixed formal structure, and also the free didactic poems which have a variety of objectives.”

The popularity of this Psalm could be attributed to the fact that it was a source of great comfort to the Boers as the whole Psalm is a glowing testimony to the security of those who trust in the Lord. It is divided into two halves of eight verses. In the first half those who trust in the Lord will be assured of security from four threats (vs. 5-7):

“You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday.
A thousand may fall at your side,
Ten thousand at your right hand,
But it will not come near you”

(NIV 1995:877 – Psalm 91:5-7).

In the second half, they are assured of triumph over four menacing beasts (vs. 13):

“You will tread upon the lion and the cobra;
You will trample the great lion and the serpent”

(NIV 1995:877 – Psalm 91:13).

The last verses must have been especially meaningful to the Boers in their circumstances (vs. 14-16):

“ ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him;
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.
He will call upon me, and I will answer him;
I will deliver him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honor him
And show him my salvation’ ”

(NIV 1995:877 – Psalm 91:14-16).

Despite the importance of the words of the Psalms, it is important to link them to the sounds. The link between the lyrics and the sounds of religious music is summed up by C.S. Lewis (1958:2-3) when he speaks of the Psalms as “poems intended to be sung: not doctrinal Treatises, nor even sermons ... [T]he Psalms must be read and sung as poems; as lyrics with the emotional rather than logical connections, which are proper to lyric poetry.”

Gunkel’s classification system according to type, gave the researcher a frame of reference that allowed for the objective interpretation of the role some Psalms played in the life of the Boer. In this respect, less attention will be paid to *Gezangen*, Revival songs and Songs with religious messages. This is because there is much overlapping between the meaning of songs within these types, and the meaning found in the Psalms.

5.2.2 *Gezangen*

The *Gezangen* were of Dutch origin and incorporated songs that were for special Church services. Many of these functional *Gezangen* were hand-notated by the Boers in the prisoner of war camps and must have been considered important for special services in the Church calendar. Examples of these *Gezangen* are:

- ❖ For Communion: 96, 100
- ❖ The birth of Jesus: 111 and 113

- ❖ His suffering on the cross: 118, 133 and 134
- ❖ Ascension day: 146
- ❖ Death and eternal life: 181 and 187
- ❖ The New Year: 160.

In Het Boek van Gezangen (1898) the *Gezangen* are classified by subjects. It is impossible to address all ten subjects given. Only a few popular *Gezangen* will be dealt with because the words of these songs played a similar role to the words of the Psalms even though they were based on Biblical texts other than the Psalms. These *Gezangen* will be placed under the subjects given in Het Boek van Gezangen (1898).

5.2.2.1 Geloof en Vertrouwen (*Translation: Christian belief and courage*).

Gezang 75 is classified under this heading and was very popular with the Boers. The words are based on 1 Corinthians 15 verse 58, 16 verse 13 and 2 Peter 1 verses 5 & 6 where courage is the central theme. By singing this *Gezang* the Boers were able to encourage each other to remain courageous despite their circumstances:

“Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you.
Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord,
because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain”

(NIV 1995:1760 – 1 Corinthians 15:58).

“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith;
be men of courage; be strong”

(NIV 1995:1761 – 1 Corinthians 16:13).

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness,
and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control;
and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness”

(NIV 1995:1898 – 2 Peter 1:5-6).

5.2.2.2 Op Bijzondere Tijden en Gelegenheden (*Translation: For special occasions*)

Chapter 3 highlighted the fact that the Boers often attributed the war to their sins such as drunkenness, neglect to educate and raise the blacks in their midst, desecration of the Sabbath and other personal sin. It can thus be understood why so many Boers notated *Gezang* 159, which referred to the conversion of sinners. The words are based on Biblical passages from Hosea 11 and Ezekiel 33. The Boers could have drawn strength from these passages as they remind the singer and reader of God's love despite man's sin:

“When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.
But the more I called Israel, the further they went from me.
They sacrificed to the Baals
and they burned incense to images.
It was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
taking them by the arms;
but they did not realize it was I who healed them.
I led them with cords of human kindness,
with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck
and bent down to feed them”

(NIV 1995:1326 – Hosea 11:1-4).

Other words in this *Gezang* come from Ezekiel 33 vs. 18-19.

“If a righteous man turns from his righteousness
and does evil, he will die for it.
And if a wicked man turns away from his wickedness
and does what is just and right, he will live by doing so”

(NIV 1995:1265 – Ezekiel 33:18-19).

5.2.3 Revival Songs

In Chapter 4 much was said about the revival songs that were popular with so many Boers. The words of most of these songs were attributed to Ira Sankey and the book, *Sankey Sacred Songs and Solos with standard Hymns* [s.a.] supplies an index of forty-seven subjects. Only a few of these subjects will be highlighted in order to show that the Boers chose songs alluding to topics which could have helped them cope with the circumstances that faced them.

5.2.3.1 Affliction and Trial

An important subject in the classic evangelical hymns is a persistent concern for the relief of suffering. This can be observed in the following excerpts from Sankey Songs that were not only hand-notated, but also translated from English to Afrikaans-Nederlands by the Boers.

Sankey song 375 was particularly popular and this could have been due to the fact that the words served as a great comfort to the Boers, because through them they were able to articulate their belief that God would be with them in all circumstances:

“He will hide me! He will hide me!
Where no harm can e'er betide me;
He will hide me! Safely hide me.
In the shadow of His hand.”
“Enemies may strive to injure,
Satan all his arts employ;
God will turn what seems to harm me
Into everlasting joy”

(Sankey 375 vs. 1 & 6).

The words of Sankey 643 and 656 express similar sentiments to those expressed in the song above. A possible explanation for the popularity of the Sankey songs is that the words of the songs are much more emotive than the words of the Psalms and *Gezangen* and possibly addressed the emotional needs of the Boers in the camps. As such they could be considered a coping mechanism to the Boers:

“As pants the hart for cooling streams,
When heated in the chase,
So longs my soul, O God,
for Thee and Thy refreshing grace.”

“God of my strength, how long shall I
Like one forgotten, mourn? –
Forlorn, forsaken, and exposed
To my oppressors’ scorn?”

(Sankey 643 vs. 1 & 3).

“Dear Refuge of my weary soul,
On Thee, when sorrows rise,
On Thee, when waves of trouble roll,
My fainting hope relies.

To Thee I tell each rising grief,
For Thou alone canst heal;
Thy Word can bring a sweet relief
For every pain I feel”

(Sankey 656 vs. 1 & 2).

5.2.3.2 Faith

Faith and Christian confidence is clearly articulated in Sankey no. 739, which was hand-notated and translated in many songbooks:

“How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say, than to you He hath said
To you, who for refuge to Jesus have fled.”

“Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dismayed!
For I am thy God, I will still give thee aid;
I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand
Upheld by My gracious, omnipotent hand.”

“The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
I will not – I will not desert to his foes;
That soul – though all hell should endeavour to shake,
I’ll never – no never – no never forsake!”

(Sankey 739 vs. 1, 2 & 6).

5.2.3.3 Christian Courage and Endurance

This rousing song could also have served as encouragement to the Boers to endure and persevere in all circumstances:

“Onward, Christian soldiers! Marching as to war,
Looking unto Jesus, who is gone before.
Christ, the Royal Master, leads against the foe;
Forward into battle see His banners go.
Onward, Christian soldiers! Marching as to war,
Looking unto Jesus, who is gone before”

(Sankey 611 vs. 1).

5.2.3.4 *Heaven and Home*

This section is closes with the Sankey hymn, *We're going home*. The Boers often expressed their longing for home through hymns about eternity.

“We're going home, No more to roam, No more sin and sorrow;
No more to wear the brow of care. We're going home tomorrow.
We're going home, we're going home tomorrow;
We're going home, we're going home tomorrow”

(Sankey 113 vs.1).

5.2.4 **Songs with religious messages**

Songs with religious messages are problematic due to the fact that there is no classification system that allows for an objective analysis of the role of these songs. A few will be mentioned, but meaning is grounded in a subjective analysis by the researcher. The lyrics of some of these songs were written in response to circumstances. This is highlighted by three songs by J.H.L.Schumann, *The Boer Prisoner's Prayer* and *By a Grave* and *How long, o Lord?*

Many other songs with religious messages are found in hand-notated songbooks, diaries and holograph songbooks. It is, however, difficult to say which were written in camps and which were sung before the war. [Example 4.1](#) shows the contents page of a choir book belonging to the *Excelsior Krijgsgevangene Zang Vereeniging*, Shahjahanpur. The book contains many songs with religious messages, the words of which would have played similar roles to those of other Psalms, *Gezangen* and Revival songs, e.g. *Troost en Hulp* (Translation: Comfort and Hope), *Lof en Aanbidding* (Translation: Praise and Worship) and *Kerstlied* (Translation: Christmas Song).

Songs that start with *Houd moed* or *Houdt moed* are found in many books and diaries. They all seem to convey the same message, 'be courageous', although they have different wording. In the diary of Elizabeth Grobbelaar she writes about a card that a minister gave her friend in a concentration camp. The card was sent from a prisoner of war camp in India with the words of the song *Houd Moed*.

The translation reads:

Be courageous women
Your worry, sadness and tears in your eyes,
God sees all

Be courageous women
There is an end in sight and we will be victorious
Despite the loss of farms and blood

(FAD A248).

5.2.5 Christian expression through religious vocal music

References to religious vocal music by the Boers highlighted the fact that through this music the Boers were able to express a wide range of Christian praise, worship, testimony and response to God. It was also a coping mechanism because, through the words of the songs, they were able to articulate their needs.

Much has been said about the importance of the Bible to the Boer and the singing of these texts must have been especially meaningful to them. Elizabeth Grobbelaar (FAD A248), highlights the importance of Biblical references to the Boers in a song *Die Afrikaanse Bybel*. The words of the song clearly express her love of the Word of God and the guidance she receives from the Word. She expresses the wish that all Boers will read and trust the Bible that she considers a light in dire circumstances.

In previous chapters two outstanding characteristics of the Boers were recognised, namely religious fervour and patriotism. The war was a conflict between Afrikaner nationalism and British imperialism. It can thus be understood that the Boers were filled with patriotic fervour and a fierce nationalism and their vocal music allowed them to articulate these sentiments. Chapter 3 gave examples of patriotic music being sung on many different occasions throughout the war. Patriotism, expressed through the words of songs will now be addressed in pro-Afrikaner vocal music.

5.3 PRO-AFRIKANER VOCAL MUSIC

With each threat to the Afrikaner identity came a flood of patriotic songs. Swanepoel (1979:iv) is of the opinion that, had there been no wars of independence (1880-1881 and 1899-1902), this pro-Afrikaner patriotic music would not have been composed as there would have been no tragedy to portray in music.

This section will be divided into:

- ❖ Official *Volksliedere* of the *Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek* and the *Oranje-Vrijstaat*
- ❖ Patriotic music
- ❖ Documentary vocal music about the war.

5.3.1 Official *Volksliedere* of the *Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek* and the *Oranje-Vrijstaat*

During the war, the greatest threat to Afrikaner identity was experienced in the OVS and the ZAR. It is thus understandable that the musical resources of the Afrikaner were channelled there. Previous chapters drew attention to the fact that the official *Volksliedere* of these two provinces were sung on many occasions. Swanepoel (1979:iv) explains a *Volkslied* as a national anthem, chosen by a nation as an audible emblem, comparable to a flag and coat-of-arms as visible emblems. The official *Volksliedere*, namely *Ken gij dat volk?* (ZAR) and *Heft Burgers* (OVS) clearly had the power to collectively evoke the sentiment of

patriotism. These anthems were mostly sung in Afrikaans-Nederlands and there were many official printed scores and texts available. Many hand-notated scores of these two *Volksliedere* are, however, found in archival documents from the prisoner of war camps, suggesting that there were no official printed scores and texts available in the camps. A few hand-notated scores of these *Volksliedere*, with English words are found in songbooks from prisoner of war camps. Numerous holograph songbooks provide English examples, suggesting that these were also sung in English.

An English translation of vs. 1 of *Ken gij dat volk?* is given below. It is not a true translation but a free versified option in English. Although it reflects something of the sentiment of the anthem in a more reserved manner, it fails to portray the rousing spirit of the original Dutch (Kloppers 2004):

“Right nobly gave voortrekkers brave
Their blood their lives their all
For freedom right in death despite
They fought at duty’s call
Oh burgers high our banner waveth
The standard of the fire
No foreign yoke our land enslave
There reigneth liberty
T’is heavens command here we shall stand
And oh defend the folk and land”

(ABWMA 3451/1).

Kloppers (2004) suggests the following translation to portray the spirit of the Dutch anthem:

“Do you know a people with heroes’ courage and yet so long enslaved?
They have sacrificed their goods and blood for freedom and justice.
Come, burghers, let the flags stream; our suffering is at an end!

Rejoice in the triumph of our brave:
That we are a free nation! a free nation, a free nation
That we are a free, free nation!”

An English translation of Verses 1 and 8 of *Heft Burgers* clearly reflects the Boer’s patriotism and religious fervour.

“O Burgers of our country rise
And sing of our own enterprise,
From foreign bondage free,
May our Republic, young and pure,
In order, law and right, secure,
Ranked with the nations be.”

“ ‘With God, for Folk and Fatherland’
By this great motto shall we stand
Tho’ hot the strife may be.
For him, who has in war’s alarms
His God impressed upon his arms,
Is surest victory”

(ABWMA 1647/2).

5.3.2 Patriotic and documentary vocal music about the war

Documentary songs are often inspired by patriotism as they proclaim a national devotion to the ideals of freedom and honour. Some also encourage people to fight for their country. In documentary songs, the artistic value of the song is considered less important than the meaning of the song, as the context allows for the documentation of circumstances for posterity. They are day-to-day chronicles of unfolding events, which often attempt to identify or name the facts surrounding the writer. Most of these types of songs are found in holograph songbooks. Occasionally there are references to tunes to which the songs are to be sung.

One such song by an unknown writer was found amongst archival newspaper clippings. It is called *Op, Afrikaners, Op* (Rise, Afrikaners, rise) and has instructions that it should be sung to the tune of *Grandfather's Clock*. The whole song encourages Afrikaners to fight for their homeland and closes with the words that they will triumph because God will give them strength (FAD A296).

Chapter 3 highlighted the fact that General Christiaan de Wet was considered one of the real heroes of the War. Many documentary songs were written about him, praising his strategies and giving details of battles and the enemy he defeated. One such song in Afrikaans-Nederlands is found in a holograph songbook from the library at Diyatalawa, Ceylon. The song, *Generaal Christiaan De Wet*, has instructions to sing it to the tune *Prinsje nog zoo klein*. The Boer who wrote the lyrics clearly fought under de Wet because his words speak about De Wet's strategies that caught the British by surprise. His pen takes the reader to some of the battle terrains and writes how Lord Roberts failed to block the route De Wet and his men had taken across the Vaal River. There is also mention of how Lord Kitchener, with his large army of British soldiers, was unable to hunt down De Wet's small army. The writer has the greatest respect for De Wet, continually praising him (FAD A12).

Diyatalawa Zang, to the tune of the *Transvaal Volkslied* (not *Ken gij dat volk?*), was a very popular song and is found in many books. The words convey the mood of the prisoners of war and speak about the fact that God has not deserted the Boers on the Island of Ceylon. The song articulates the prisoners' pride in their official *Volksliedere* and flags. Not only is this a documentary song because it gives the reader a window into life in the Diyatalawa Camp, but it also emphasises the patriotism and religious conviction of the Boers (ABWMA 5469/1).

It is interesting to compare the emotions expressed by R.D. van Wyk (ABWMA 5469/1) in what he calls *Ons Kamp Leven te Groen Pint* (Translation: Our Camp Life in Green Point). None of the feeling of desolation portrayed in *Diyatalawa Zang* is found. He speaks about many good conditions in the camp, the good food, how well their clothes are washed, tennis, football and cricket. There is no

indication that, when he wrote the song, he had any idea that he would be deported to Diyatalawa. Van Wyk's songs are excellent historical documents because through his lyrics he allows for insight into the emotions of the Boers and their circumstances.

The holograph songbook by J.A. Grimm (ABWMA 3451/1) contains a song called *A Famous Story*. He does not say to what tune it is sung, but writes that it was composed and sung by prisoners of war on St Helena. The song also gives readers some interesting facts about the war. It was clearly written before the end of the war because he speaks about the *Afrikander* who will win the war.

A few supporting excerpts are given:

A FAMOUS STORY

“Lord Roberts in his cables ‘I’ve annexed those states and men
To give those conquered countries [Transvaal¹⁷ and Freestate] as a
present to my queen.’

But it was a lying story. It’s known far and wide.
They brought a quartermillion soldiers a handful boers to fight.
From England and Australia, from India and the Cape
From Canada they came and failed to conquer two small states.

Lord Bobs [Roberts] went home to England and said the war was over
The Transvaal and the Freestate and the boers exist no more
Just fancy his surprise my friend when he stepped on to England there
To hear those boers had just invaded the colonies once more”

¹⁷ The British referred to the *Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek* as the *Transvaal* and the *Oranje Vrijstaat* as the Freestate.

His closing chorus echoes these sentiments:

“Oh it’s a famous story it has been prophesied
And may our children’s children reecho it with pride
How the Afrikaner nation shall England’s downfall be
They will be forced to recognise us Afrikaner folk”

(ABWMA 3451/1).

According to Pretorius (1999:125) there was a great deal of singing by the Boers on Commando, especially around the campfires. Some Commandos even had their own special Commando song. These songs should not be lost to posterity as they are an integral part of a nation and, as such, significant historical documents.

A particularly popular Commando song found in many holograph songbooks is *Traansvaal Oorlogs Lied* (Translation: Transvaal War Song). The words of the song serve as a window to important events during the war and can thus be considered a historical document. Mention is made of the scorched earth policy, Buller’s problems at the Tugela River, Lord Roberts’ loss at Ladysmith, the hands-uppers, Lord Kitchener and the fact that British strategy is not working against the Boers. The words of this song can be found in the holograph songbook of H.P.N. Viljoen (TAD W81/4). Example 5.1 is a patriotic song without a name, found in the diary of Johannes Buijs (ABWMA 6305/1). It is also a historical document with some information about the war. The song clearly portrays Boer patriotic sentiment.

Songs about Boer internment in prisoner of war camps allows for an insight into the emotions of those in captivity. A typical example is the *Bermudas Lied* found in a holograph songbook belonging to W.C. Cilliers, a prisoner of war in Morgan's Island Camp, on the Bermudas. The words portray his feeling of utter desolation while sitting next to the sea. He explains his longing for his loved ones and the heartache that the scorched earth policy has brought to his people (ABWMA 5848/38).

The Dutch Reformed Church Archives (DRC B34) in Pietermaritzburg have many examples of songs and poems written about the death of Philip Cronje, a Boer prisoner of war. He was shot in the Green Point Prisoner of War Camp while holding a religious service. Cronje's death was so distressing that many tributes and songs were written on boats to prisoner of war camps, while others were written in camps overseas.

Most of the tributes are in Afrikaans-Nederlands but there are also some in English. James L. Molloy, a prisoner of war from Boston, USA wrote about Cronje's death while he was on Morgan's Island in the Bermudas. Molloy came to South Africa to fight on the side of the Boers and was sent to a prisoner of war camp in the Bermudas after having spent time in Green Point Camp with Philip Cronje. Cronje's death clearly had a profound effect on him as he paid tribute to him in his holograph songbook, explained the circumstances that led to his death and speaks about it as "a sad and unwarrantable occurrence, which I consider nothing more nor less than wilful murder on the part of the sentry" (DRC B34). His holograph songbook also contains the words of a song by W. Naude about the death of Cronje ([Example 5.2](#)).

Example 5.1 Song: Johannes Buijs

Vers No. 1
England has proclaimed;
"The Transvaal once again
"A part of old South Africa's domain,
"But little did she know—
"In partaking of the foe,
"It would cost her many a hero to maintain,
"She thought her policy clear,
"In sending her troops here,
"And thought we would never
 Stop her—through great fear,
"But haven't heard on cry,
"We stood to vanity defy.
"And simply say old England if you dare,
 Chorus
While the Transvaal has her sons
And Botha all his guns
No Englishman shall ever take the Vaal
We will show the British Queen.

That we died for liberty and mean
To keep our independence in the Transvaal,

Vers. 2

"Here's to victory host,
"If old England wished to boast,
"She must send some better hero's of her brave,
"Since her noble Union Jack,
"Was lost at Laingsnek,
"She can only be the ruler of the waves,
"While the Frustate has her sons,
"De Wet his Mouser guns,
"No Englishman shall ever rule the Vaal,
"We'll show the British star,
"What kind of men we are
"To keep our independence in the -

Transvaal

Chorus

Example 5.2

Song about Philip Cronje by W. Naude: James Molloy

Have you ^{1st} heard of the death of young ^{Cronje}
Who was killed on the Green Point track
He was holding a Bible in his hand
When the bullet entered his back

^{2nd}
They were holding a meeting for prayer
They had stood there night after night
On a spot ~~to~~ close to the fatal wire
They chose to get near to the light.

^{3rd}
The singing was loud & hearty & strong
What thought they of danger so near
When the sentry cried out "Stand off from ^{wire} the?"
They were singing & could not hear.

^{4th}
When suddenly there came a report of a gun
Which scattered the praying band
And he, whom they loved, fell down by their side
His Bible still clasped in his hand.

^{5th}
He died in the night, no mother was near
To kiss him or hold his dear hand,
But he told the doctor he did not hear
The sentinels' rough command.

6th
Blessed boy, your name is written in heaven
You have answered the call there
and a crown of life to thee is given
Who your Master's cross did share
7th
you took up your arms at your country's call
Your heart was loyal and true,
But loyal more to the One you loved,
Who first loved ~~you~~ ^{thee}, and died for you.
8th
No need have you now for music or words
No need to get nearer the light,
You have learned the song, that the ransom ^{is} ~~is~~
In the land that knows no right.
9th
a prisoner here, but a victor there
In Heaven you reign and live,
and the comrades you left behind still pray,
"Our enemies, Father! forgive"
By W. Naudé

(DRC B34)

Another holograph songbook about the war is a compilation of songs by J. Noothout, a prisoner of war in the Deadwood Camp on St Helena. The words of the first song, *De Oorlog*, articulate his longing for his family and the fact that he has been in captivity for two years. He is worried about his wife and child and wonders who is looking after them. The words throughout the song express feelings of desperation and sadness, but verse 20 concludes with the words that despite the hardship he is experiencing he is still prepared to suffer for his country (ABWMA 1475/10).

The words of all of Noothout's songs convey his great love for his country and God. They are not real historical documents, because he speaks about people he encountered but he does not explain in what context. Throughout the songs he speaks about the *Khakis* (English) and how they are going to be driven out of the country. He mentions names like the good General Botha, Buller who could not stand up to the Boers, Lord Roberts who thought he would be President of South Africa and others. He does not, however, give sufficient information in his songs to make them true historical documents. Many of the words of his songs convey the longing he has for his home and as such are valuable documents because they give the reader an insight into the experiential world of the Boer.

The compositions of J.H.L. Schumann, another prisoner of war on St Helena, were discussed in the previous chapter. The words of his songs also portray the emotions of prisoners of war and as such are valuable documents. The titles of some of his songs are self-explanatory. *How Long, o' Lord, By a Grave, They will miss me, Come Back, Love and The Boer Prisoner's Return*. He wrote most of the lyrics for his compositions. However, there are a few with words by other prisoners. One such composition, *The Boer Prisoner's Prayer*, has lyrics by a Lieutenant Kyle. The lyrics of this song were found in many holograph songbooks and are typical of sentiments expressed in many Boer songs, such as longing for farm and freedom.

The first verse is as follows:

“More boundless than our great *Karoo*,
Vast glorious ocean now I view.
Strange wonders now I'm seeing
In Prisonship out on the main.
The sad, sad thoughts course thro' my brain:
When shall I be, shall I be returning?
To my dear old *plaats*,
To my only home,
Where the *Duiker, Springbok*, and *koo-doo* roam

And the fire of freedom is burning;
Say stars above on this lonely night,
Say waves as you dash with majestic might:
When shall I be returning? (x3)”

(NLSA 559/3).

According to Pretorius (1999:126), F.W. Reitz, who became president of the OVS in 1887 and then ZAR Secretary of State in 1899, was also a well-known poet who also wrote lyrics for songs sung to familiar tunes, lauding the heroics of the Boers in battle.

The use of verbal art where, through innuendo and metaphor, people utilise their songs as outlets for emotional release, i.e. catharsis, is a common feature of a great deal of music where oppressive circumstances are faced. In the collection of songs from the library at Diyatalawa (FAD A12) there is a song that has to do with *England's Disgrace*. This song seems to have been sung by H. Hall in the Green Point Prisoner of War Camp and copied for the library collection in Diyatalawa Camp. Throughout the song the writer is able to express his disgust of the British and their strategies. The lyrics of this song also allow for an element of cathartic release, as can be seen from an excerpt from verse six:

“But a day of reckoning is coming these dark deeds of shame can't last
This foul stain which for blots for ever England's name
Yet remember in your anguish when you are thinking of the past
That the best of England's manhood felt the shame”

(FAD A12).

Through the above songs the Boers were able to articulate their patriotism and their sentiments regarding the war. The words of many of the songs are also valuable historical documents because they give information about persons and events concerning the war. By gaining an insight into the experiential world of the Boers in Chapter 3, it became possible to understand the words of the pro-Afrikaner songs. The insight gained was necessary to place the songs in their

proper context. The Boers did not, however, only sing religious and patriotic music as will be highlighted in the following section.

5.4 OTHER WAR VOCAL MUSIC

Most of these songs are found in holograph songbooks. In comparison to religious and patriotic music, very few of these popular songs were notated. This could possibly be because the Boers did not attach as much importance to these songs and did not consider it essential to preserve them. It is difficult to categorise the songs because they deal with so many subjects. Some are songs that would have been sung in most Victorian homes, while others seem to have words written in response to specific situations. These songs will be divided into:

- ❖ Words of songs to American and English tunes
- ❖ Satirical songs
- ❖ Afrikaans-Nederlands folk songs and songs to well-known tunes.

5.4.1 Words of songs to American and English tunes

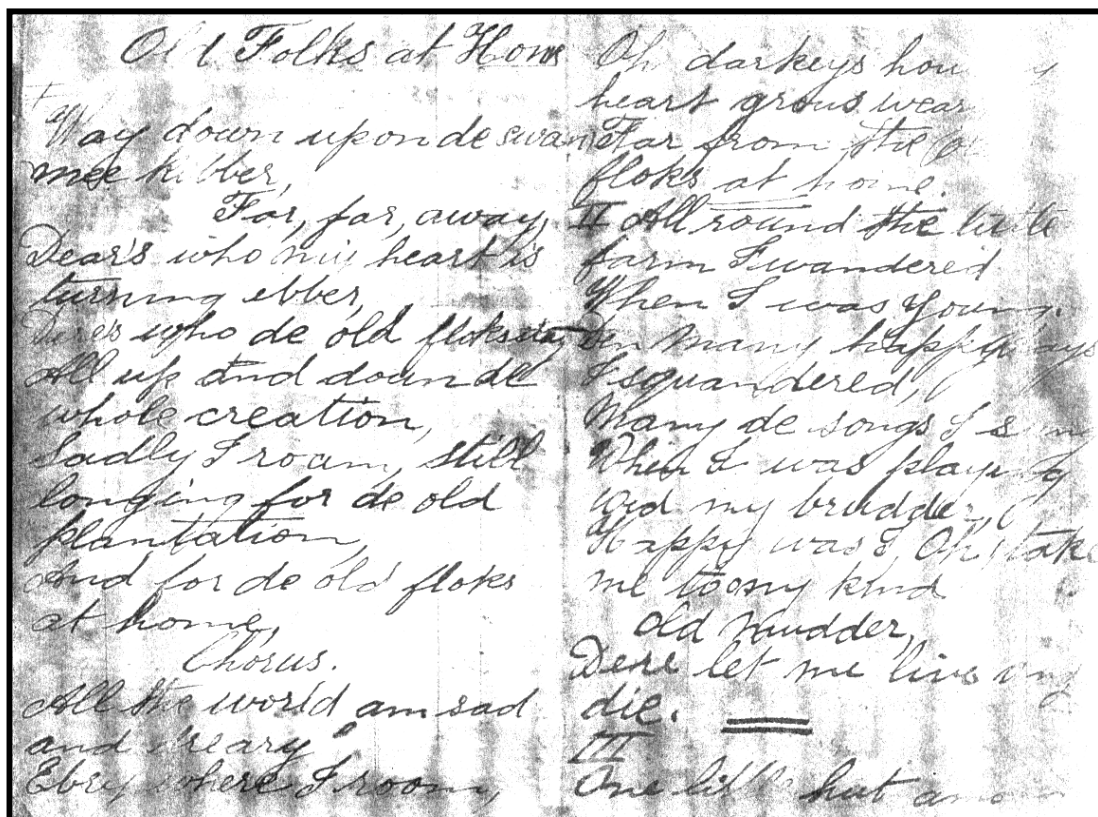
Many songs from the Christy Minstrel Books and the Globe Song Folio appear in holograph songbooks. Songs from these sources were very popular amongst Boer families in the 19th century. This was mainly due to the fact that at the time of the Anglo-Boer War, there were virtually no transcribed Afrikaans folk songs and this necessitated cross-cultural borrowing (Oosthuizen 1975:249; Gray 1996:7). Some of the words of these songs were adapted to portray emotions pertaining to situations the Boers had to face during the war.

The words of *Old Folks at Home* from the Christy Minstrel Book could not only have echoed the emotions felt by Boers who were missing their families, but it could possibly have reminded them of times before the war when family and friends sang together. These songs had become particularly popular with the Boers through regular visits by the Christy Minstrel Group from 1848 onwards and the visits of Orpheus McAdoo and his Jubilee Singers between 1891 and 1898. They performed blackface minstrelsy, which consisted of an exploitation of the

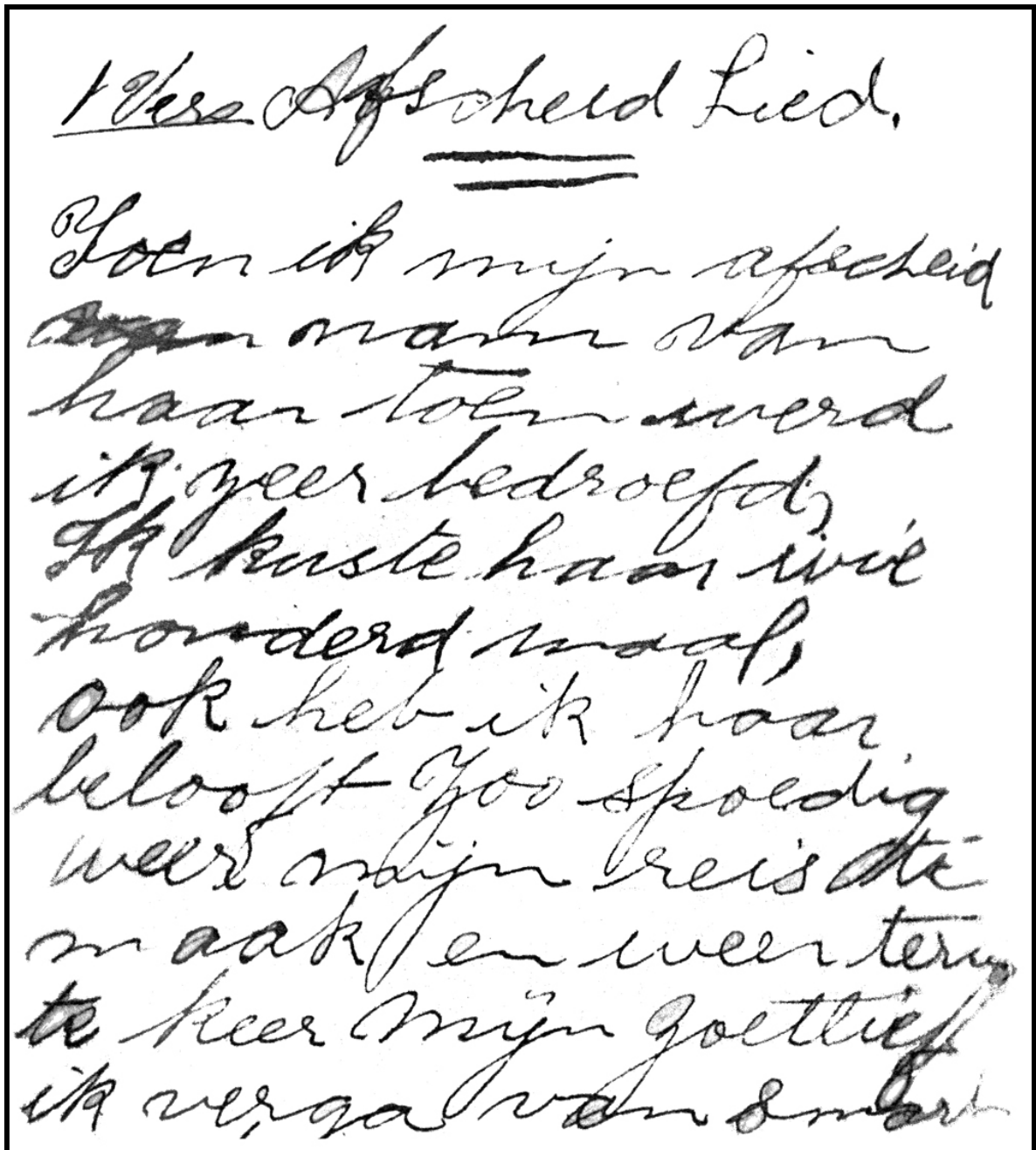
slave's style of dancing and music, by white men who blackened their faces with burnt cork and went on stage to sing 'Negro songs' and to tell jokes based on slave life (Gray 1996:106).

Wouter Kirstein's holograph songbook (TAD A1463/2) is a harsh reminder of the realities of war. The book, which was covered in blood and contains many holograph songs, was found in his pocket after he was killed in March 1901 while on Commando near Lichtenburg. His version of *Old Folks at Home* in [Example 5.3](#), which clearly shows the bloodstains, is interesting because it is written in the English used by the Minstrel singers. He uses words like *ribber* for "river" and *de* for "the". It is also interesting to note that he regularly misspells "folks" as "flocks". Ironically the *Afscheid Lied* (Farewell Song) in [Example 5.4](#), could have indicated that he was mindful of his mortality. This song is found in many other songbooks and was presumably sung to an English or American melody.

[Example 5.3](#) *Old Folks at Home*: Wouter Kirstein



(TAD A1463/2).

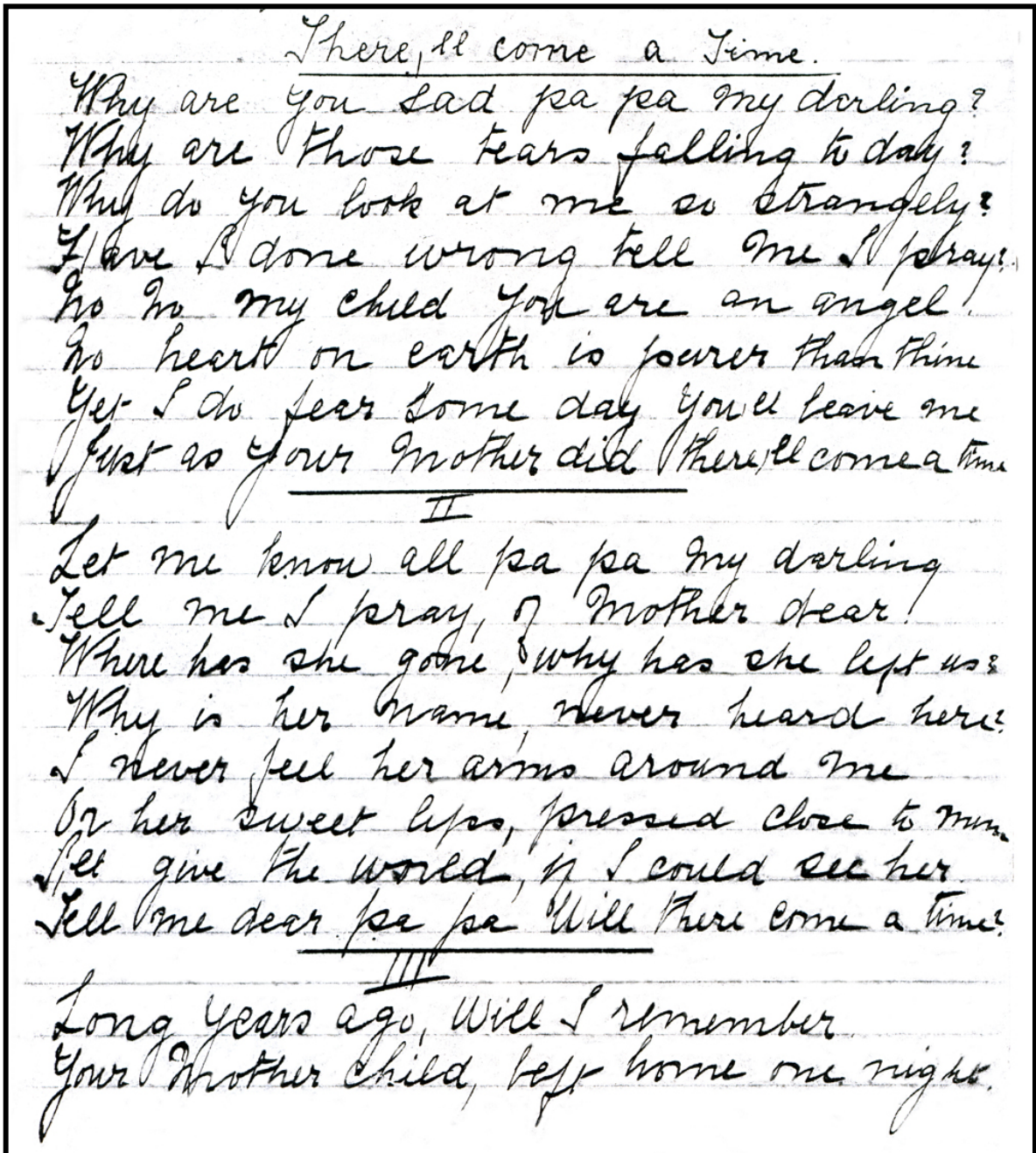


(TAD A1463/2)

It can be assumed that the following songs were meant to be sung to popular American or English tunes because they were found in English holograph songbooks.

Example 5.5

Excerpt from *There'll Come a Time*: J. Bosman



(TAD A 1793/2)

Many of the songs in J.A. Grimm's holograph songbook articulate desolation and longing, emotions that were probably shared by most of his fellow prisoners on St Helena. In the words of the song, *No one cares for me*, the technique of personification is used. Through the words of the song, Grimm is able to express

his feeling of desperation and weariness. Verse 4 is especially poignant. He writes:

“Once I heard it said
In a Sunday school
Jesus takes his children to his breast
Saviour pity me
Let me come to Thee
Where the weary now art at rest”

(ABWMA 3451/1).

Grimm also articulates his longing for home in other songs. Examples are *They will miss me*, *Vacant Chair* and *Flower for mother's grave*. His songs, *The Innocent Babe* and *The Baby's name* seem to suggest that he had children he was missing. Words of another song, *Transvaal Heroes Grave*, clearly pertain to the war as Grimm writes about a Boer who was wounded in a battle and lay dying. The chorus of the song reads:

“Then he whispered good bye
To his comrades so dear
His head upon his knapsack gently laid
If you live to get home,
You may tell them I'm gone,
And laying in a Transvaal Heroes grave”

(ABWMA 3451/1).

Some of these songs appear in other songbooks as well and it is thus not possible to accurately attribute the words of these songs to the writer of the songbook. They could have been well known songs that had been sung before the war. Even if they were songs he was familiar with, they must have aroused meaningful emotions in him, otherwise he would not have written down the words

John O'Reilly's holograph songbook also has many well-known songs. It is difficult to say whether O' Reilly was an Irish South African or whether he was an Irishman

fighting for the Boers when he was caught and sent to Diyatalawa. Many foreigners believed in the Boer cause and came to South Africa to fight for the Boers. Some of the songs found in his songbook were also found in other books. The Boers could have been familiar with them before the war or foreigners like O'Reilly could have taught them these songs in the camps. Many of the songs also reflect emotions of longing and heartache, e.g. *A flower for my Mother's grave*, *My old Kentucky home good-night*, *I'll take you home again Kathleen*, *The Vacant Chair* and *Silver threads amongst the gold*. Most of these songs come out of various Minstrel Songbooks.

A poignant song comes from the pen of Petrus Elardus Erasmus. This song, *Farewell*, found in a letter to Lily Maré, was written from the boat taking prisoners of war to India in 1900. The writer of the letter was a cousin of Petrus Erasmus.

“Oh Fare thee well my own love,
I am going so far from thee;
But do not weep for me dear love
When I am o'er the sea.

(Chorus)

Fear not I ever shall forget thee
Too dear wert thou unto me,
And though-so-ever far from thee dear love
My heart is ever with thee”

(TAD A1580/1).

Sadness pervades most of the words of the above songs. There were, however, times when satirical songs were sung. Well-known Minstrel Songs also presented comic relief to the Boers.

5.4.2 Satirical Songs

In Ludwig Krause's memoirs (Taitz 1996:14) there is a translation of an amusing song. The song, *Vlucht Field-cornet* by a B.H. Dicke, was a parody to the tune of the *Traansvaal Volkslied*. Apparently Field-Cornet Briel often boasted about how well he was going to fight for the Boers. While on Commando, a flock of locusts evidently presented the appearance of a huge streak of dust, which Briel and others saw as the enemy. They evidently made a hasty retreat and when they heard that the "enemy" was locusts, those who had fled returned in shame. It was after this incident that Dicke wrote the song. According to Krause, the Boers often sang "with great gusto for Briel's especial benefit, to the tune of the *Volkslied*" (Taitz 1996:14). The translation reads as follows:

Behold the Field-Cornet who flees,
A bursting bomb gives him D.T.'s
A cloud of locusts fills his heart with fear
He runs for life is very dear.
I've come to show you how to fight, boys,
Come on! Advance! Advance!
Halt! Yonder, I see those frightful locust clouds,
Come back! Retire! Come back!
Saddle up! Come back! Saddle up! Retire!
Oh men! Oh, please! Come back! Retire!

(Taitz 1996:14).

Klem (1976[b]:13) relates an amusing anecdote of how the women in the Bloemfontein Concentration Camp were told to make *vetkoek* for the *khakis*. They were so annoyed that while the *khakis* were eating the *vetkoek*, they tied them to the shaft of a wagon and sang songs lampooning them and their leaders. These nonsense rhymes must also have allowed for an element of catharsis because most of the rhymes were a parody about the British Commander Sir Redvers Buller.

Two examples are:

*“Tiekie-tiekie trippens,
Buller met sy blikpens”*

*“Ou Buller het gevlug
Met ’n ai op syn rug,
Appjubel-Appjubel-Appeljy”*

Klem (1976[b]:13).

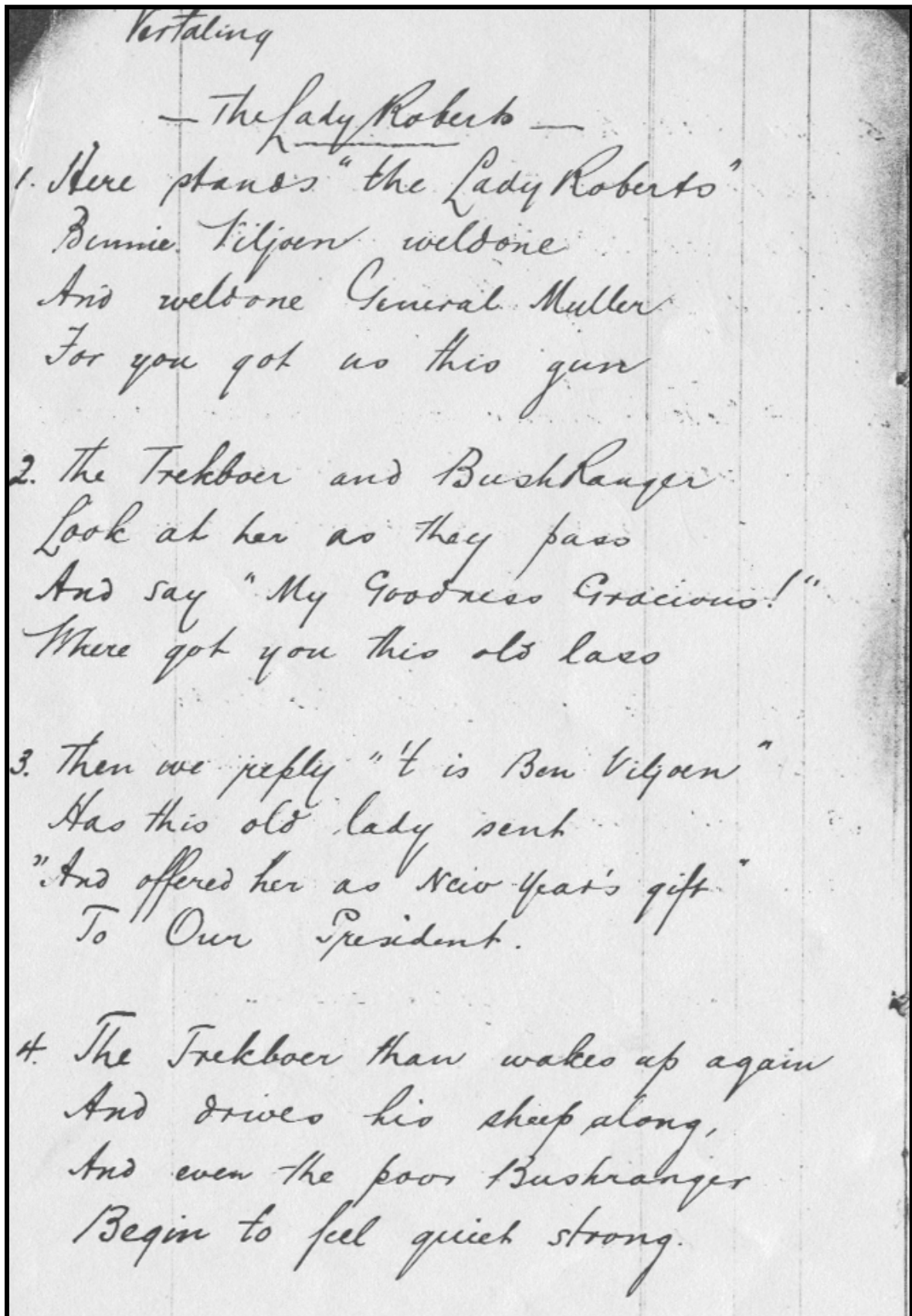
Klem (1976[b]:13) also tells about how the women in the Bloemfontein Camp complained about the bad meat they were given. When nothing was done about it, they marched through the camp singing folk songs after sunset and ignoring the lights out order. When the Camp Constable, Pat, stormed at them, they circled around him singing a nonsense rhyme:

*“Oats and Beans and Barley
Ou Pat se vrou se tjalie.”*

Klem (1976[b]:13).

Example 5.7 gives an example of a satirical song that could have offered an element of cathartic release. *De Lady Roberts* was written about a very big ship’s cannon named Lady Roberts. The British soldiers it this name in honour of their Commander-in-Chief, Lord Roberts. According to Grobbelaar (1999:119), it was one of the most popular songs during the war and was sung to the tune of the American song *Riding Down from Bangor*. The song lampoons the British because the Boers had been able to take the Lady Roberts from them. Grobbelaar (1999:119) notes that the lyrics were written by F.W. Reitz and later translated into English by him in order to allow the enemy to hear how they were joking about their loss of the cannon.

Example 5.7 Translation of De Lady Roberts: F. W. Reitz



5. Lord Roberts, 'e 'as 'ooked it 'ome,
He hav' scooted poor old Chap,
But he left th' Old Lady here with no:
She 's fond of Mielcipap.

6. Lord Roberts burns our houses down,
The women out he drives
He can not overcome the men,
So persecutes their wives.

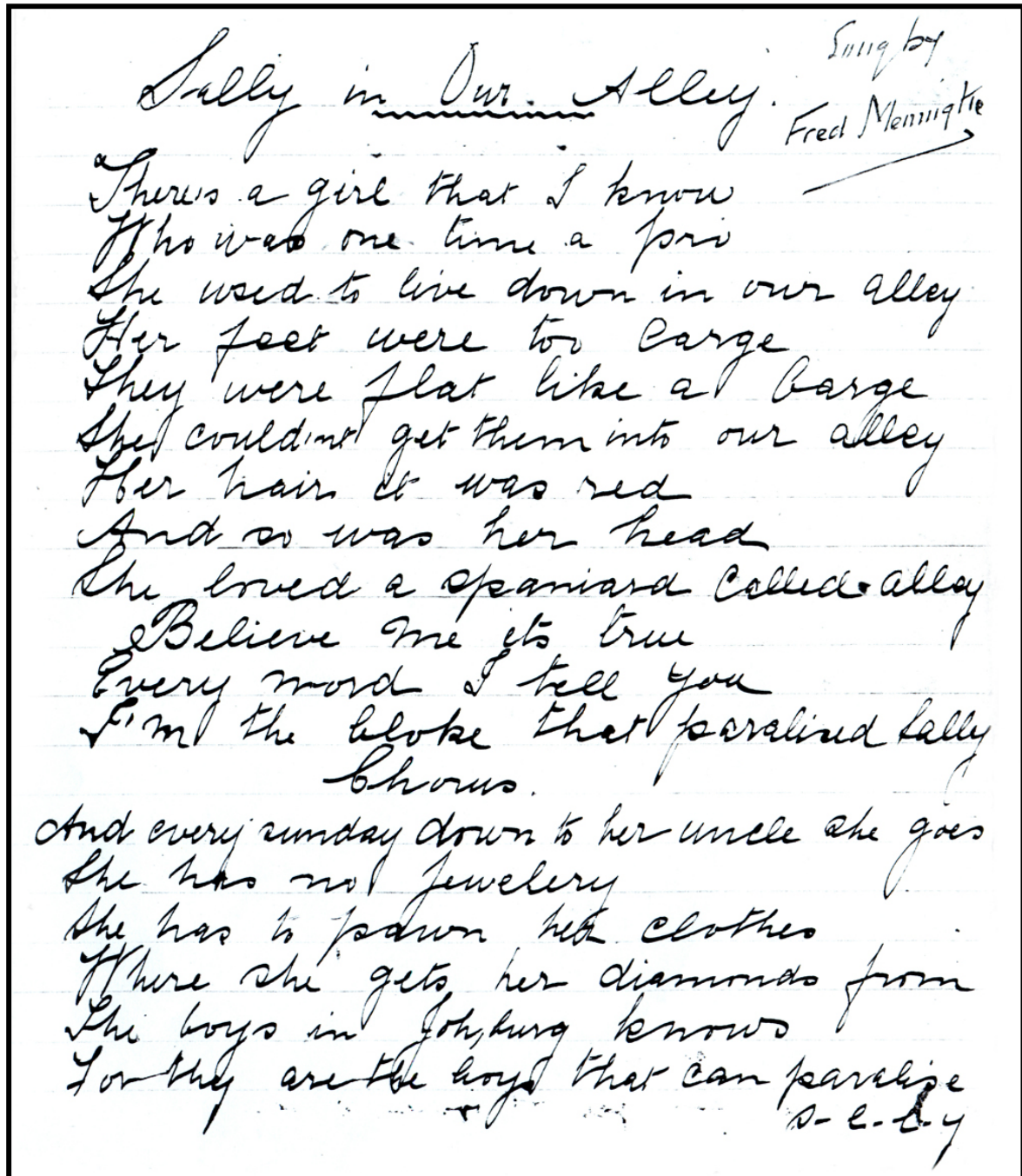
7. But his old Lady Roberts
Who lyddite spits for sport
He puts her at Helvetia
For safety in a fort.

8. He thought there was no danger
For that confounded Boer
With his confounded Mauser
Would trouble her no more.

(TAD W81/3)

Satirical songs did not necessarily all pertain to the war as can be seen in the words of songs from the holograph songbook belonging to John Bosman in St Helena. Example 5.8, is one such song and must have offered comic relief to the singers and listeners.

Example 5.8 Sally in our Alley: J. Bosman St Helena



(TAD A1793/2)

Similarly John O'Reilly's (ABWMA 5709/1) holograph song, *Looking for a Coon like me*, must have brought comic relief to the inmates in the Diyatalawa Camp. O'Reilly's song is a typical Minstrel Song as the following excerpt demonstrates:

“Say boys have you seen a gal
Who's looking for a coon like me,
Oh, if says her name is Sal,
Then she's looking for a coon like me
For when I get upon the job
If I don't [illegible] her she will sob
And her poor heart go wibly, wibly, wob,
Looking for a coon like me”

(ABWMA 5709/1).

5.4.3 Afrikaans-Nederlands folk and other songs to well-known tunes.

So popular were the Minstrel and other American tunes that they were used for Afrikaans-Nederlands songs. Grobbelaar (1999:146) gives the following examples: *Khoekha, Khaki (Daisy)*, *De Lady Roberts* and *ABC van die oorlog (Riding down from Bangor)*, *Ons burgers is getrouw (Marching through Georgia)*, *Blauwe bergen (Clementine)* and *Sarie Marais (Ellie Rhee)*. The popular Christy Minstrel song, *Silver threads among the gold*, was given Afrikaans-Nederlands words and was called *Kaatjie Kekkelbek* (de Coning 1978:12-13).

Sarie Marais is still a popular South African folk song. Many versions of lyrics for this melody are, however, found. Lategan and Potgieter (1988:119) also speak about the unfamiliar lyrics to *Saartjie Maree*, found in the songbook written by S.F. Hugo, a prisoner of war in India. Clearly the lyrics were continually adapted to reflect situations during the war and later.

Grobbelaar, in his book *Kommandeer! Kommandeer* (1999), gives many other interesting Afrikaans-Nederlands songs sung during the war. He calls them South African folk songs, but this is a debatable issue as most of the tunes originated in

other countries. What constitutes a folk song is a source of controversy and heated debate that falls outside the parameters of this thesis. What is, however, of interest is that there is evidence to suggest that the lyrics of these songs were adapted throughout the war to reflect Boer experiences. Grobbelaar's book contains many interesting versions of the songs and cannot be included in this thesis as they need to be linked to the circumstances reflected in the lyrics and this would make the thesis too cumbersome.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter highlighted the fact that the words and lyrics read and sung by the Boers were a instrument of empowerment. They allowed them to express their emotions regarding the war and helped them to cope with the circumstances facing them. Ellison (1989:102) argues that music which empowers, releases human energies as well as inviting investment of affective powers. Pratt (1990:38) supports this by saying that when one is empowered one is "energised rather than depressed; one might sense the possibility of enormous and positive changes, rather than being overwhelmed by the immensity of what apparently cannot be accomplished."

Shepherd & Wicke (1997:3) also emphasise the importance of the lyrics of the songs when they state that music is no different to language with characteristics that link it to a culture and society, which "gives rise to affects and meanings to particular sets of historical contingencies."

Whilst recognising the importance of the lyrics, it is important to link the lyrics to the sounds of the songs in order to understand vocal music as a socially and culturally constituted form of human expression, which gives rise to affect and meaning. The aural void was addressed by linking the lyrics and the sounds of the songs, in order to make it possible to accommodate cultural history with musicology.