

CHAPTER 3

***THE GUSTAVS PRELLER-C LOUIS LEIPOLDT POLEMIC – THE HEDGEHOG AND THE FOX*¹**

Chapter 2 analysed a selection of theoretical works by pioneering thinkers, leading scholars and other authors, against which *The Valley* as a work of narrative fiction could be read. A selection of writers of theory from ‘standard’ works was made. Newer trends in the theory of history were discussed. And voices of criticism against the deconstructivist paradigm were heard. Against these works, it was seen if historical fiction is fully-enough equipped to provide an alternative (reading of the) past. Put another way, the question is asked whether the profession of history can benefit from the inspiration offered by the work of writers of fiction, such as C Louis Leipoldt’s *The Valley* trilogy.

Chapter 3 examines C Louis Leipoldt’s *The Valley* trilogy as a set of fictional novels, in their full thrust, as contestation against Preller’s romanticised, idealized and popularized *volksgeskiedenis* made up of a set of wide-ranging history-as-heritage media, to include enactments, film, the theatre, literature and history, although his predominant medium was his carefully researched historical accounts of the Voortrekkers. This *volksgeskiedenis* was the prevailing public narrative dominating South African history for the first forty years or so of the twentieth century. This public history-construct, covering a period of *circa* 100 years — the time of the start of the Great Trek in 1838 till the commemoration of it a century later culminating in the *Voortrekkereufoes*² of 1938 — was the tireless efforts of Gustav S Preller. Not only was he responsible for writing histories of the Afrikaners’ heroic age as in the Great Trek, but also some on the South African War, gradually building a national consciousness of the Afrikaner from it.

Against this is Leipoldt’s cosmopolitan world-view in *The Valley* trilogy, covering virtually the same period as Preller (from after the Second British Occupation at the Cape around 1820, until the time of the Hertzog administration of the 1930s) drawing from a specific loyal-unionist paradigm, voiced through some of his characters in his novels. Whilst Preller

¹Terms assigned as a result of the story by Aesop in which the fox outwits the hedgehog.

²The *Voortrekkereufoes* (Voortrekker Festival) celebrated the one hundredth year of events that resulted in the so-called ‘Great Trek’. According to the historian P H Kapp this festival had a considerable effect on the life of the Afrikaner because it gave an affective side to the Afrikaner, for the idea of commemorating a festival – P H Kapp, *Die Afrikaner en sy Kultuur*, Deel III ‘Ons Volkfeeste’, beskryf deur P H Kapp, Tafelberg-Uitgewers, Kaapstad, 1975, p. 91.

lauded the exiled Voortrekkers as they ventured into the interior of South Africa and conquered new lands, Leipoldt single-handedly took him on arguing the values of local tradition but was unable to sustain it (the argument) when it was eclipsed by this nationalist historiography. In this way it is possible to refer to a Preller-Leipoldt polemic/dialectic.

3.1 — BACKGROUND TO THE GREAT TREK

When the first Dutch colonists came to South Africa in 1652, followed by French and German immigrants in the seventeenth century, it was to affect South African history in a significant way. Later, in the first half of the nineteenth century, a movement known as the Great Trek emerged, whereby colonists moved out of the British sphere in the Cape, inland, to a lifestyle established by these frontier farmers.³ Several years of struggle against challenging obstacles finally resulted in the founding of the South African Republic in 1852 whereby Afrikaners had reached their goal of personal freedom, from which they would create a state of national freedom.

C Louis Leipoldt felt that the Voortrekkers ‘chose to abandon (the) wider moral and intellectual horizons of the Western European nineteenth century.’⁴ Instead of remaining behind and facing the challenges that society-at-the-time posed, Afrikaner residents in the eastern and north-eastern areas of the Colony left its borders in the form of self-imposed exile, between the years 1834 to 1838.⁵ These Afrikaanders⁶ were unable to reconcile themselves with the British de-nationalization and Anglicization policies at the Cape at the time of this administration.⁷ Before the advent of the British to the Cape, the Afrikaanders had their own civil and political structures based on Calvinist-religious views.

³F A Van Jaarsveld & G D Scholtz, editors, *Die Republiek Van Suid-Afrika*, Vootrekkerpers, Johannesburg, 1966, p. 35.

⁴P Merrington, ‘C Louis Leipoldt’s “Valley Trilogy” and Contested South African Nationalisms in the Early Twentieth Century’, *Current Writing*, 15(2), 2003, p. 36.

⁵F A Van Jaarsveld & G D Scholtz, editors, *Die Republiek Van Suid-Afrika*, Vootrekkerpers, Johannesburg, 1966, p. 37.

⁶This term is how the Dutch-Afrikaners referred to themselves at that stage in their history. For this, see F A Van Jaarsveld & G D Scholtz, editors, *Die Republiek Van Suid-Afrika*, Vootrekkerpers, Johannesburg, 1966, p. 35.

⁷*Ibid.*

These structures were established along with their individualism as well as a sense of equality among each other and a desire for independence and a democratic proclivity.⁸ In addition, military and civil structures were well-established for their security especially as the pastoral lifestyle required farmers to be far away from the towns. The commando system (*kommandostelsel*) served a civil as well as a military purpose, while the system of magistracies (*landdrosts*) and country courts (*heemrade*) served a legal purpose, and in the political field a council (*Politieke Raad*) was in place.⁹ Gradually, however, as the British administration encroached on their freedom, these structures changed. For instance, the *landdrost* and *heemrade* were abolished in 1828, followed by the abolition of the commando system in 1833.¹⁰ To add insult to injury, English replaced Dutch as the official language in the period between 1822 and 1827.¹¹ Leipoldt writing in *The Valley* refers to the ‘complaining burghers who had trekked beyond the great river to find in the no-man’s-land beyond a refuge where they could be safe from the exactions of a government they disliked.’¹²

The Afrikaanders’ new lives on the frontier brought with it a change in language, character and outlook on life¹³ and they became more cohesive and developed a common identity around the idea of a common *volk* (a people).¹⁴ And so gradually a homogeneous group of people developed, whose symbols lay in the Bible, horse and ox wagon, residing in a landscape known as the *veld* and acquiring the name ‘boer’ (farmer) and as a whole, ‘Boerevolk.’ It is around this event, the Great Trek, amongst others, but predominantly so, that the Afrikaans historian Gustav Preller creates his public history. Against the Preller narrative, Leipoldt laments the fact that former residents of the Cape, abandoned local tradition and Western ideas, only for it to be replaced by a bucolic, heavily religious, racist, Calvinist-Afrikaner society in the north. It is this event known as the Great Trek that was at

⁸F A Van Jaarsveld & G D Scholtz, editors, *Die Republiek Van Suid-Afrika*, Vootrekkerpers, Johannesburg, 1966, p. 35.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹²C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 8.

¹³F A Van Jaarsveld & G D Scholtz, editors, *Die Republiek Van Suid-Afrika*, Vootrekkerpers, Johannesburg, 1966, p. 35.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

the centre of South African historiography for a considerable period of time,¹⁵ propagated by Gustav Preller, which informs the entire logic of Leipoldt's *The Valley*.

3.2 — GUSTAV SCHOEMAN PRELLER (1875 – 1943)¹⁶

J G Calitz in his biography of Deneys Reitz made the statement that the personality of the individual and the problems/issues of his/her time make a good biography.¹⁷ This point can be equally important when examining the development of the historical consciousness of Gustav Preller to see how it in turn, translated into the development of an Afrikaner-nationalist identity. Preller's father Robert Clunie Logie Preller had established himself in the district of Pretoria in 1861 on the farm Klipdrift near Hammanskraal. He married Stephina, the daughter of the prominent Voortrekker leader Commandant Stephanus Schoeman, who resided on the corner of Mark and Boom Streets in Pretoria, on his estate called 'Klein Schoemansdal' and it was here that the young Gustav was born on 4 October 1875.¹⁸ Gustav was thus descended directly from one of the Voortrekker families which might well have played a significant role in the intense interest he showed in Voortrekker history, reflected in his historical writings, which contributed in no small way to the building of an Afrikaner national consciousness.

According to the *Natal Mercury* of 3 May 1860, Gustav's father Robert had not been satisfied with the British management in Natal where he was living at the time, and this precipitated him to move to the Transvaal in 1861.¹⁹ Three years later, when Gustav was three, his father decided to sell his farm in the district of Pretoria and purchased a farm approximately 38 km south of Standerton.²⁰ After a short period living here, the family moved again, to the farm Rietspruit north of Standerton, this time close enough to the town so that the Preller children

¹⁵A N Pelzer emphasizes the point made earlier, that the Great Trek as an event is important to both Boers and the British and at the time sets out the period in which historical writing about the event appeared. See A N Pelzer, 'Die Belangrikste Geskifte Oor Die Groot Trek', in *Jaarboek van die Afrikaanse Skrywerskring*, XIV, 1949, p. 3.

¹⁶For a full biography refer to the *Suid-Afrikaanse Biografiese Woordeboek*, Deel I, Hoofredakteur W J de Kock, Nasionale Boekhandel Bpk., Kaapstad, 1968. The biographical notes are by J S Du Plessis and run from pp.673 – 677. Preller died on his farm Pelindaba on 6 October 1943.

¹⁷G J Calitz, 'Deneys Reitz (1882 – 1944): Krygsman, Avonturier en Politikus', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, 2008, p. 3.

¹⁸P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 3.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 14.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 20.

could be within easy travelling distance of school.²¹ Historian P J du Plessis describes Gustav as a gifted child, whose colourful school career unfortunately came to an end when he was fifteen years old, because the school closed in October 1890, which meant Gustav had to go out to look for work.²² His father was not in favour of Gustav going to university in Stellenbosch, as judging by an article in one of the conservative journals of the time, the spirit that reigned there was against Afrikanerdom.²³ It was to Afrikanerdom that Gustav would devote his life, as will be shown in the ensuing paragraphs of this chapter and the next.

Hardly a month out of school, on 3 November 1890, Preller found work at a general dealer's store, Paddon and Block, in the Standerton area, and compensated this boring work with a great deal of reading English classics.²⁴ It is possible that such a great amount of reading instilled in him an interest in the heroic deeds of the novels' protagonists, and, one wonders if this did not inspire him, later, to write his Afrikaans classics such as his *Piet Retief*.²⁵ It was Gustav Preller who immortalized the Voortrekker hero and leader, Piet Retief, more than any other. This is by far Preller's most important work and more will be said about *Piet Retief* by Gustav Preller elsewhere in this and the ensuing chapter.

The importance of Preller as a writer of Voortrekker history is reflected in a letter dated 14 October 1940 from the Afrikaans poet D J Opperman, to Preller inquiring about the sources that Preller had consulted. The answer that Preller gave led Opperman to believe Preller was the inaugural Afrikaner historian as well as a prominent Afrikaner literary critic.²⁶ As early as 1893 Preller was already reading Dutch literature, including Van Deyszel²⁷ and it is probably reading such as this that enabled Preller to engage thus. An example is when Preller exhorted Afrikaans historian J H H de Waal instead of using jaded, scaled-back words that cannot proceed any further, rather to use more gifted, rounded and whole words as in the style of the Dutch writer Van Deyszel — words neatly lined-up like a team of broad-

²¹P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, pp. 20 – 21.

²²*Ibid.*, pp. 21 *et seq.*

²³*Ibid.*, p. 25.

²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 25 – 26.

²⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 27. Gustav S Preller, *Piet Retief, Lewensgeskiedenis van die Grote Voortrekker*, J L Van Schaik, Pretoria, 1917 (this is the 9th edition, the first being in serialized form in *De Volkstem*, 1907).

²⁶D J Opperman, 'Preller en sy Studiebronne', *Standpunte*, 7(2), 1952, p. 117.

²⁷Lodewijk van Deyszel was the pseudonym of Karel Joan Lodewijk Alberdingk Thijm (1864 - 1952), a Dutch novelist, prose-poet and literary critic and a leading member of the 'Tachtigers.'

shouldered, patriotic oxen, together heaving, to 'trek' his thoughts and convey them.²⁸ From the above example of the way Preller employed the Afrikaans language, and from such an early stage, it can be seen how he used images to propagate his ideas of trekking. It might even be said that he used the language to promote a sense of northern-ward movement, away from the Cape, to conquer new lands, as the trekkers did.

In Chapter I entitled 'Agtergrond Van Die Voortrek'²⁹ written in Dutch in his biography of *Andries Pretorius*³⁰ Preller explains Chief Justice John G Kotze's view that the trekkers are the true fore-runners and founders of South Africa's civilization and advancement.³¹ This view is in opposition to the unthinkable, opposing view held by Judge Watermeyer that the migratory spirit was the curse of South Africa.³² But for Dr D F Malan, had there been no Great Trek, no Afrikaner nation would have emerged.³³ In Malan's view, 'men zoekt persoonlike vryheid, de grondslag van nationale vryheid.'³⁴ Whilst the pro-trekker Preller agrees that there are numerous, obvious reasons given for the Great Trek, he believes that the unconscious will to trek, ranks first in the line-up of factors.³⁵ Peaceful existence (*rus*) is what the Voortrekkers desired. Neither did the reason for trekking, according to Preller, lie in the individual will, but rather, as in the Tolstoyan view that it is the intuition of a nation, the will of the masses, which provides the direction for the great events that follow out of this.³⁶

The move by the Preller family in 1891 from Standerton to Pretoria provided the curious young Gustav with the opportunity of living in a modern and aesthetic city, which in no small way impressed him.³⁷ Here there were so many outlets for the curiosity of a young person thirsty for knowledge. For instance, having the library at his doorstep meant he now had access to important classics such as Tolstoy and was able to visit important exhibitions that the city offered, such as on geology. He paid regular visits to the museum's exhibit of the Retief-Dingaan Treaty, and saw first-hand the diary of Louis Trichardt, on which the brown, bespattered blood stains from the bludgeoning of Retief acted as a source of stimulus which

²⁸D J Opperman, 'Preller en sy Studiebronne', *Standpunte*, 7(2), 1952, p. 118.

²⁹[Translation: 'background to the Great Trek'].

³⁰Gustav Preller, *Andries Pretorius*, (no details of publisher), 1937, pp. 1 – 11.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 1.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 1.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 1.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 1. [Translation: 'men seek personal freedom as the foundation for national freedom.']

³⁵Gustav Preller, *Andries Pretorius*, (no details of publisher), 1937, p. 2.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 1937, p. 2.

³⁷P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, pp. 28 *et seq.*

further developed his historical and political consciousness.³⁸ These sources of stimuli were to give him the inspiration to pursue studies on Voortrekker history, and to become an undisputed expert in the field. Successful examinations as a translator in Dutch and English afforded an infinite number of opportunities for extensive reading and study.

Learning German gave him access to Nietzsche, which helped form his religious outlook (or lack thereof) — D J Opperman explains Preller's early meeting with Nietzsche, in fact, before 1900.³⁹ The city's library, on his doorstep, was an extensive one, possessing a wide range of interesting reading material.⁴⁰ It was in Pretoria at the time he met the Afrikaans writer and poet Jan F Celliers and also the eccentric F V Engelenburg who in his official capacity as one of the library's directors had been responsible for importing thousands of volumes of English works from abroad, for the library. Of importance for Preller was the way the Dutch 'Tagtigers' made Dutch accessible through a rejuvenating cure.⁴¹ This obviously influenced Preller by the way he would embrace the use of Afrikaans as a language of a nation, making it accessible to a broad range of speakers and readers, as opposed to the stiff Dutch of the church and classroom. It was through the medium of Afrikaans that Preller promoted Afrikaans nationalism.

With rapid strides Preller devoured books on many subjects, became interested in acting, took up writing articles for submission to the newspapers, and writing in general — Preller blossomed in humanist-based activities, at the same time writing up mining reports for the local newspapers.⁴² After entering the law firm of James Berrangé as a clerk it soon became evident he was not cut out for this work, possibly also to do with the difficulties surrounding the entrance qualifications, and subsequently took up a position as a clerk in the Department of Mines. Preller's upward mobility in the Department was assured as it was evident this person was diligent and proficient in his work.

³⁸Sir George Cory, G S Preller, W Blommaert, 'Die Retief-Dingaan-Ooreenkoms' (Annale van die Universiteit van Stellenbosch, B(1), May 1924, p. 52. The authenticity of the signatures of the treaty is a topic of a debate between Cory and Preller. Preller's theory is that the original was removed from the Republican archives by the British during the war (the South African War). For this point, see p. 54 of 'Die Retief-Dingaan-Ooreenkoms'.

³⁹D J Opperman, 'Preller en sy Studiebronne', *Standpunte*, 7(2), 1952, p. 118.

⁴⁰P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller — 1875 — 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 33.

⁴¹D J Opperman, 'Preller en sy Studiebronne', *Standpunte*, 7(2), 1952, p. 118.

⁴²P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller — 1875 — 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, pp. 33 *et seq.*

Once he felt he was sufficiently established, he was ready to settle down and on 13 April 1898 he married (Hannie) Johanna Pretorius.⁴³ The fact that he had chosen this person as his partner in marriage is important for the Preller story. Gustav was a regular visitor at the home of the Pretorius family where the son Lood was a close friend. Lood's sister Johanna appealed to him and it was she whom he married. The father of siblings Lood and Johanna, Henning, was the commandant in the state artillery, and the eldest son of M W (MW) Pretorius (1822 – 1864), not to be confused with the president of the Transvaal with the same name.

MW's wife, Debora was the daughter of Piet Retief,⁴⁴ the assassinated Voortrekker hero, whom Preller was to immortalize in Afrikaner history. Furthermore, Johanna's great-great-grand uncle was Andries Pretorius (one of the initial Voortrekkers who left the precincts of the Colony in 1838), apparently the Boers' choice to replace the slain Retief and the one who mustered together a party to avenge Retief's death.⁴⁵ Preller's history of the Voortrekkers beginning with the publication of his work *Piet Retief* (1906) and ending in 1838 in the year of the Afrikaner folk celebrations to commemorate the Great Trek, with the publication of *Andries Pretorius* (1938) brings full circle his life's work, although he continued after this date to campaign for the cause he set his mind on. Is it not ironic that albeit indirectly, through marriage, Preller had some connection with both Retief and Pretorius, and that his own progeny, would one day be carriers of their blood?

But more importantly however, is the way political circumstances towards the end of the nineteenth century, would contribute further to the development of Preller's historical and political consciousness. Out of this came a canon of Afrikaans historical literature reflecting the deeds of the Voortrekkers and their leaders as they engaged in the struggle against British imperialism and as a nation in exile. Preller immortalized them as the ones who against adversity and holding onto their ideology would one day see their actions lead to the creation of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.

⁴³P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 40.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁴⁵The University of South Africa holds the W A Kleynhans Papers in which are contained the speeches on the Voortrekkers, made by Mrs Preller, during her life, as well as important correspondence about Voortrekker history.

Whilst one can safely assume that the aforementioned detail in some way or other would have an impact on the development of Preller's political consciousness, for instance, his contact with members of the family of Piet Retief, and his own descent from a Voortrekker family, to name some of the factors, one imagines that there would have to be much more direct and powerful reasons impacting on his mind for him to have produced a canon of Afrikaner historiography that became a national, fully-fledged, public history.

3.3 — GUSTAV PRELLER THE HISTORIAN

J R Malan presents an interesting view of Preller as the writer of historical works. Preller never called himself a historian but one who loved history.⁴⁶ His interest in history grew from the period he lived in.⁴⁷ He saw it his mission to salvage any historical source or relic for the Afrikaner's posterity, and in the foreword to his seventh edition of his work *Piet Retief*, admonished those who failed to do the same.⁴⁸ Malan sketches a very specific kind of approach to history, held by Preller. To Preller 'die geskiedenis van ons volk is nie 'n reeks kafferonluste of 'n opeenvolging van belangrike insidente nie.'⁴⁹ Rather, Preller sees history as an unending number of expressions of the will.⁵⁰ For him the intuition of the whole nation (of Afrikaners?) determines the direction in which great events of the world follow on from each other.⁵¹ This gives historical writing a kind of sanctity (*heilige erfenis*) which is expressed as if it were the voice of a king or God's voice.⁵² With this view of the task destined before him, Preller held onto the firm belief in the future of his people, a form of manifest destiny.⁵³ Much of Preller's views as expressed in the above lines are to be found in his writings, for instance *Historiese Opstelle* and his historical works are re-worked from diaries, whilst his two biographies, *Piet Retief* (1906) and *Andries Pretorius* (1937), according to Malan, remain his *magna opera*.⁵⁴ Malan describes the way Preller heralds these two Voortrekkers, in his highly romanticised biographies, respectively, into the heroic

⁴⁶J R Malan, 'Preller as Kunstenaar met verwysing na sy Mensbeelding, Verhaalkuns, Taal en Styl', MA Dissretation, 1924, p. 1.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 1. [Translation: 'the history of our nation is not a series of kaffir unrests or a range of important incidents.']

⁵⁰J R Malan, 'Preller as Kunstenaar met verwysing na sy Mensbeelding, Verhaalkuns, Taal en Styl', MA Dissretation, 1924, p. 1.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 2.

age of Afrikanerdom. It is as Malan implies, writing of Preller, that he works as an artist in the way he sketches the lives of Retief and Pretorius, two Voortrekker leaders greatly admired by Preller for their venturesome spirit, and by the way they dealt with the dangers they faced.

One who writes authoritatively about Preller's role in the historical writing of the Great Trek is J S Du Plessis, in his MA Thesis entitled 'Dr Gustav Preller as Historikus van die Groot Trek.'⁵⁵ An important chapter is the discussion of the *ante*-Preller historiography of the Great Trek.⁵⁶ The point made by Du Plessis is that prior to Preller, the historiography was un-national (*onnasionaal*), and so it is largely due to Preller that it (the historiography) took on a nationalistic proportion. Du Plessis historicizes the way Preller saw his work as one destined to uplift the Afrikaner people after the ill-fate that had befallen them, from the South African War – a *volksbeweging* (national movement) reflecting the will of the masses, duly organized by the talented leaders, not necessarily initiated by them.⁵⁷ The remainder of the thesis deals with important topics such as Preller's monograph of works on the Great Trek (Chapter IV); how Preller saw his role as a writer of history and how one can learn from history, much here taken from *Historiese Opstelle* (Ch V), Preller's role as a writer (Ch VI) and finally some concluding remarks. One such remark is that one should see Preller's part in Afrikaner historical writing at the stage that Afrikaner historiography was in its infant stages. Ironically, whilst he views his role as guardian of the sources, Preller seldom visited the archives. Furthermore, he gave a side to the Great Trek history no-one else had done till then, namely that the Voortrekkers faced great strife from the 'barbarians.'⁵⁸

Whilst Preller's predominant medium to promote Afrikaner nationalism, as an accomplished journalist, was undoubtedly the written word, and more specifically, history and historical writing, he promoted Afrikaans culture and language to do so. Much of what Preller proceeded to write, was born out of his great love of writing up the history of the Voortrekkers. *De Volkstem* of 13 December 1905 reported how Preller began his historical writing by manifesting a number of original documents and sources in his newspaper columns, out of which grew his first history, viz., that of *Piet Retief* (1906).

⁵⁵J S Du Plessis, 'Dr Gustav Preller as Historikus Van die Groot Trek' University of South Africa, 1949.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 1 – 15.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 129.

For Preller, great interest lay in the accumulation of primary documents. For instance, he was most upset when a diary from the period 1839 – 1842, as a result of a family dispute, resulted in lost opportunities of securing it for the archives.⁵⁹ He lamented that letters (allegedly) in Retief's hand were stolen from the Pretoria archives, and that the biographical details about Retief's early life are scarce.⁶⁰ According to P J du Plessis, all four provinces' archives were not well positioned to supply archival sources on the Great Trek.⁶¹ Not only did Preller attempt as far as possible to do primary research, he also had the benefit of existing historiography by writers and historians such as H J Hofstede, S J du Toit, C N J du Plessis, J A Roorda-Smit, F Lion-Cachet, J H Huttingh and J A Wormse⁶² even though these works are by no means complete and have their own discrepancies as far as histories of the Great Trek are concerned.

When at the beginning of the Second Language Movement in 1905 Preller set out to write his history of Piet Retief, he had no training as a historian. He had however prepared himself, through reading up on the subject of the philosophy of history, such as works by Leopold Von Ranke, Aristotle, Marcus Aurelius, Francis Bacon, Auguste Comte, Thomas Huxley, John Locke, J S Mill, Montaigne and C Kegan's *The Thoughts of Blaise Pascal* (London, 1895).⁶³ Du Plessis emphasizes the role of the Romantics that exercised an influence on Preller, and cites a range of writers accessible at the time to him, such as Leckey, Motley, Gibbon, Walter Scott and the Dutch writer Lennep.⁶⁴ Reading these works led to a feeling and appreciation for these writers and according to Du Plessis led to similarities in approach between these the Romantics and Preller's *Piet Retief*. Above all, however, the role that the Romantics play in the writing up of history would lie, according to Du Plessis (referring to David Levin's *History as Romantic Art*, Stanford, California, 1959, p. 7), in an interesting story, with a grand theme, such as the rise of a nation, the thirst for freedom and the taming of a new land.⁶⁵ These characteristics Preller saw in the history of the Voortrekker and put his own knowledge and imagination to good use, to construct his own histories of them.

⁵⁹Gustav S Preller, *Piet Retief*, (9th edition), J L Van Schaik, Pretoria, 1917, p. vii – xii.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943, D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 134.

⁶²*Ibid.*, pp. 132 – 133.

⁶³*Ibid.*, pp. 135 – 136.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 137 – 138.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 138.

It is even suggested that the model held up for Preller's hero Piet Retief in his quest to establish a nation in the face of British imperialism and dominance was John Lothrop Motley's William the Silent in his *opus magnum*, the *History of the United Netherlands* – the hero 'William the Silent' acts in full force against the might of the Spanish.⁶⁶ One could make a comparison here with the way Leipoldt appreciated Multatuli's activist writing against the treatment of the local inhabitants of Java by the Dutch. The common theme is the use of historical writing and prose to protest against opposing forces such as British imperialism, in the case of Preller, and Dutch hegemony in the case of Multatuli and Leipoldt respectively. As the historical Afrikaner-hero protests against British domination over his people, echoing John Lothrop Motley's Prince William's stance against the Spanish in the Netherlands, Preller projects from the present into the glorious past of the Afrikaner.⁶⁷ Thus, Retief leads his party into freedom, far from the British border, to found a new Fatherland, reminiscent of an age even further back, one immortalized in Latin hexameter by the Latin poet Virgil in his *Aeneid* when amid great strife the hero-prince Aeneas founds the city of Rome and its people: *tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem*.⁶⁸ Such are the exigencies of Preller's lofty historical prose.

Afrikaans literary critic Rob Antonissen refers to Preller's work of elegant prose coming from the Second Language Movement (1905 – 1925) and says of it that it is the first in a series of respectable/venerable historiographic publications with which he would establish his authority as a *cognoscente* of the Great Trek period and the Second War of Independence (the South African War).⁶⁹ Antonissen describes the way Preller's visionary and psychological historical writing evokes the inner lives of the past, allowing these lives to be captured in the present, and reconstructs closely investigated historical realities so as to give form to the Afrikaner's destiny.⁷⁰ Antonissen refers specifically to the careful spirit with which Preller conducts his research, to his profound knowledge and imagination, his sharp eye capturing the essence of human life and events through the assemblage of facts, and building up a fixed synthesis, as in his definitive *Piet Retief* (1905) text, and his great biography of *Andries*

⁶⁶P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943, D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 138.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁶⁸So much strife it was to establish the Roman 'volk'.

⁶⁹R Antonissen, 'Die Afrikaanse letterkunde van 1906 tot 1966', in *Perspektief en Profiel – 'n Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Letterkunde*, edited by P J Nienaber, Perskor, Johannesburg, 1982, p. 41.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

Pretorius (1938).⁷¹ His style, except when it is the fluent journalist writing, tends towards a natural-dramatic quality, and has a feel for the art of the expressive, plastic, impressionistic, delicate/sensitive even though this might at times lead to some ornamental and ostentatious writing.⁷² On the other hand when the need arises he is able to chronicle the detail as in his war diary, *Ons parool* (1938).⁷³ But there are other views on Preller's ability as a historian, which will be discussed elsewhere in this thesis.

In a way, Preller's position as a historian has something in common with the following point from philosopher of history Isaiah Berlin when he says: 'Capacity for understanding people's characters, knowledge of ways in which they are likely to react to one another, ability to 'enter into' their motives, their principles, the movement of their thoughts and feelings – these are the talents that are indispensable to historians ...'⁷⁴ Preller certainly seemed to display an element of this understanding as he constructed his narratives of the past, celebrating the lives of his Voortrekker antecedents. But albeit in fiction, it can be argued that C Louis Leipoldt in *The Valley* showed similar trends in the way he constructed his characters, in each of the three novels making up the trilogy, he himself showing his characters to understand the history they were engaging with. It is these characters that Peter Merrington suggests are 'running directly counter to Preller' as:

Leipoldt's sympathetic characters in his trilogy (that) argue that the Transvalers, the burgers of the erstwhile Transvaal Republic in the north (and equally the burgers of the Orange Free State Republic), are a negative force behind the divisive and racist nationalism of the 1930s precisely because they elected to leave the British-ruled Cape Colony a century before, and in doing so chose (according to Leipoldt's argument) to abandon wider moral and intellectual horizons of the Western European nineteenth century.⁷⁵

By contrast, in Preller's historiography those who elected to leave are the heroes, and he immortalizes them in his historical writing through a very concentrated, purposeful, inscription of them into the past, and into the Afrikaner's political consciousness, in a 'volksgeskiedenis' that dominated South African history until at least the Great Trek celebrations of 1938. According to Afrikaans literary historian Dr P C Schoonees one would

⁷¹R Antonissen, 'Die Afrikaanse letterkunde van 1906 tot 1966', in *Perspektief en Profiel – 'n Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Letterkunde*, edited by P J Nienaber, Perskor, Johannesburg, 1982, p. 41

⁷²*Ibid.*

⁷³*Ibid.*

⁷⁴Isaiah Berlin, *Concepts and Categories – Philosophical Essays*, Pimlico, London, 1999.

⁷⁵P Merrington, 'C Louis Leipoldt's "Valley Trilogy" and Contested South African Nationalisms in the Early Twentieth Century', *Current Writing*, 15(2), 2003, p. 36.

have to look hard to find the equal of Preller as far as being the *cognoscente* of the *Voortrek* (the movement of the Voortrekkers) and its people.⁷⁶ It therefore comes as no surprise when for the erection of the Voortrekker Monument inaugurated in the ceremony on 16 December 1949 (which for Preller was posthumous), Gustav Preller was a member of the original 1938 committee of experts ‘to ensure that the frieze should give a complete and faithful picture of the important events connected with the Great Trek.’⁷⁷ His efforts were clearly towards ‘the gradual development towards national independence spread over a period of more than a century.’⁷⁸ The reasons for Preller doing this, is explored elsewhere in this chapter.

The following are a number of works that come from Preller’s historical pen, showing just how extensive his oeuvre is.⁷⁹ Amongst the publications that appear under his name, are *Laat’t ons toch Ernst Wezen* (1905); *Piet Retief* (1906) (it sold 14,000 copies in ten years); *Baanbrekers* (1915) published later as *Oorlogsoormag*; *Kaptein Hindon* (1916); *Dagboek van Louis Trigardt* (1917); *Vootrekkermense I – IV* (1918 – 1925) and *V – VI* (1938); *Generaal Botha* (1920), later published as *Historiese Opstelle*; *Oorlogsoormag en ander sketse en verhale* (1923); *Vootrekker-wetgewing*, which were the notes from the Natal Parliament of 1839 – 1845 (1924); *Historiese Opstelle* (1925); *Sketse en Opstelle* (1928); *Die Grobler-Moord* (1930); *Ons Goud-Roman* (1935); *Daglemier in Suid-Afrika* (1937); *Andries Pretorius* (1938); *Scheepers se Dagboek* (1938); *Ons Parool* (1938); not mentioning the works he co-wrote with Dr Engelenburg, C J Langenhoven and his translated works; and not forgetting he was from 1902 – 1903 the editor of *Land en Volk*⁸⁰; writing for *The Moon*, *De Pers*, and eventually editor of *De Volkstem*, and editor of *Ons Vaderland* which became known as *Die Vaderland*, a full-time career in journalism spanning almost forty years.⁸¹

⁷⁶P C Schoonees, *Die Prosa van die Tweede Afrikaanse Beweging*, Drukkerij en Uitgeverij J H De Bussy, Pretoria, 1939, p. 518.

⁷⁷The Official Guide to ‘The Voortrekker Monument’, compiled and published by the Board of Control; of the Voortrekker Monument, P O Box 1595, Pretoria (undated).

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁷⁹A full biography is by W M Toerien ‘Gustav Schoeman Preller (1875 – 1943): ’n Bibliografie’ *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, Pretoria, 1975, p. 279.

⁸⁰A787 Preller Volume 74, pp. 191 *et seq.* contains the personal correspondence Preller received whilst working as editor on Eugène Marais’s newspaper *Land en Volk* – he was editor between 1902 – 03. These documents are of high archival value as they contain important information about the South African War but mostly from the perspective of soldiers ‘on the ground’ although there are some letters from persons in high command for instance the correspondence from Maj-Genl Smith-Dorian for whom it was ‘especially painful to have to burn farms and destroy property ...’ (letter dated 7 November 1900). Whilst in the position of editor of *Land en Volk*, Preller called for readers to write in about the war and the intention from him was probably to end up publishing an account of the war, which he never managed to achieve on the scale he did for the history of the Voortrekkers.

⁸¹B J Liebenberg in ‘Gustav Preller as historikus’, *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, Pretoria, 1975, pp. 243 – 244, catalogues Preller into works on the Great Trek, the South African War, and then a general category.

3.4 — CONCLUSION

Gustav Preller is a significant figure in Afrikaner history-writing which forms an important and fundamental part of the Great Trek historiography, particularly in his biographies of the leading lights in Voortrekker history but also the important archival sources of this period of history. But his writings also include important studies on the South African War, such as Preller's unpublished war diary currently held in the Preller Collection in the State Archives in Pretoria.⁸² This diary illustrates the importance of the war, for Preller the individual. The sum total of the Preller historiography however, is the historical-social national foundational myth that he constructs from a wide set of symbols and writing which he developed into a full-fledged folk narrative, folk history. It is this set that informs the entire logic, rationale and narrative strategy of C Louis Leipoldt's *The Valley* whose full force is to argue the value of being rooted, of local deep tradition, over and against the idea of leaving the old Colony and abandoning roots, values and tradition. It was this narrative of Preller that was the leading narrative for an entire nation, starting just after the South African War and culminating in the Voortrekker Festival in 1938 which Preller was directly involved in, as the Chairman of the Organizing Committee for the re-enactment of the trekkings.⁸³ By this time Preller's writings on the Great Trek were well-known among his compatriots and throughout Afrikanerdom, and the schools were using his works as texts.⁸⁴ In this regard, the following words from P J du Plessis are significant:

As kenner en historikus van die Groot Trek hou die jaar 1938 vir Preller besondere betekenis in. In hierdie jaar vind die eeufees van die Groot Trek plaas. Oor die jare heen het Preller se geskiedeniswerke en bronnepublikasies onder sy landgenote bekend geraak. Op skool het baie kinders daarmee kennis gemaak en 'n jonger geslag word groot in 'n aura van Romantiese en Afrikanersentriese interpretasie van die land se geskiedenis. Preller se naam en die geskiedenis van die Groot Trek word willekeurig met mekaar verbind.⁸⁵

⁸²A787 Preller Volume 61.

⁸³P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 462.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p. 459. [Translation: As *cognoscente* and historian of the Great Trek the year 1938 was a very meaningful one for Preller. This is the year the commemoration of the Great Trek took place. Over the years, Preller's historical writing and publications of the sources (of the Great Trek) inspired his compatriots. Many students at school became acquainted with his works and a younger generation was raised in an aura of Romantic and Afrikaner-centric interpretations of the country's history. Preller's name and the history of the Great Trek become inextricably intertwined.]

Included in the 1938 festival programme was a play especially written by Preller for the occasion, entitled ‘Haar Afskeid’ (Her Farewell), based on the poignant moment in the life of one of the Voortrekker leaders, Andries Pretorius, as destiny called for him to trek northwards to lend support to the other trekkers, in the face of his dying wife.⁸⁶ This event had moved Preller so much that he wrote the piece. Finally, it can be said that the effect of the Voortrekker commemoration, the proceedings in which Preller played a significant and in fact leading role, cannot be underestimated as regards the way it gave impetus to the ensuing ten years in the Afrikaners’ history, leading to their victory in the 1948 elections.⁸⁷ His contribution to Afrikaner cultural history was so profound that one of Afrikaans’s greatest poets, N P Van Wyk Louw, assigns to Preller the position of initiator of the theory of a national aesthetics, for Afrikaans literature.⁸⁸ It is this public history of the time that Leipoldt sometimes as an insider, but mostly as an eccentric (ex-centre) takes on with his own argument, and his own alternative, in *The Valley*.

An important point to consider, in closing this section, is that Preller remained interested in history till the end of his life. He received the appointment of State Historian in 1936, a post he filled until his death in 1943, and during that time, as in the period of his working life prior to that, he worked tirelessly to obtain important documents in the Afrikaner’s history, of which the Preller Collection contains the correspondence between him and donors of these documents – the nature of these documents relate mostly to the history of the Voortrekkers as well as the South African War.⁸⁹ Correspondence between Preller and the State Archivist J H Breytenbach attests to the enthusiasm with which Preller worked to add items to the Archive at the Union Building, as seen in letters between the two.⁹⁰ The post as National Historical Researcher/State Historian is acknowledged in a letter from the

⁸⁶In the festival programme entitled “Voortrekkereufees: Broederstroom, Pelindaba en omgewing vir 12 Desember 1938”, pp. 2 – 4.

⁸⁷Dr H F Verwoerd, at the ATKV Congress, quoted in *Die Taalgenoot*, September 1963 by A P J van Rensburg, ‘Monumentaal die Bouwerke’, p. 115, in P J du Plessis, ‘Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943’, D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 464.

⁸⁸P J Du Plessis, ‘Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943’, D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 469.

⁸⁹A787 Preller, Volume 130; pp 31 – 4; 35; 36 – 7; a letter dated 24 July 1853 allegedly describes the last days of M W Pretorius, pp 45 – 7; p. 48, *et seq*. See also Volume 193 for substantial detail on correspondence that relates to the history of the Voortrekkers, for instance, an original letter dated 1866 in the hand of Charl (Carl) Cilliers.

⁹⁰A787 Preller, Volume 130, p 85, a letter from J H Breytenbach dated 22 March 1941, to Preller, relates to the history of General Erasmus.

Secretary of the Interior J H de Wet, dated 25 October 1941, who requested further details about Preller's position, for the purposes of submitting budgets for the State Finances.⁹¹

In a letter from his farm where he lived in retirement he wrote to J H de Wet on 29 October 1941 stating he was busy compiling a register of historical papers for the Archives, to be placed with material already sent by him.⁹² Further correspondence between Preller and the State Archives in Pretoria followed, in which the donations of rare material on the South African War, was acknowledged.⁹³ Neither were his services limited to the furtherance of the construction of archives, an activity he campaigned for and tirelessly worked for, but he remained in demand for his historical sketches and writings, to the end, as can be seen from correspondence held in the Preller collection, for instance, a letter to him from *Die Vaderland* dated 9 October 1942, requesting a short history of the discovery of gold.⁹⁴ On 17 October 1942, Preller received a request from the South African Broadcasting Corporation to conduct a series of conversations on the customs of the past, specifically about Boer cultural practices, on which he was an undoubted expert.⁹⁵ Such was his standing in Afrikaner history.

3.5 – C LOUIS LEIPOLDT

The following extract about the influence of environment on a writer is important in this context and for this chapter, especially for the possible connection between the years of Leipoldt's youth and his writings of 1929 – 1932:

Environment in relation to its influence on the mind is not only interesting from a purely psychological point of view: it is equally instructive to the literary student who wishes to know the forces which moulded the thought, the impressions which stamped themselves indelibly on the memory of the master, and the associations which modified or broadened his views or cramped and stultified his methods of expression.⁹⁶

⁹¹A787 Preller, Volume 130, p 92, a letter from the Secretary of the Interior to Preller.

⁹²A787 Preller, Volume 130, p 93, a letter from Preller to J H De Wet.

⁹³A787 Preller, Volume 130, p 108, in a letter dated 4 May 1942 from Preller to the Archives, and a letter in acknowledgement from the Archivist to Preller, dated 26 May 1942.

⁹⁴A787 Preller, Volume 130, p 119, a letter dated 9 October 1942 from W van Heerden of *Die Vaderland*.

⁹⁵A787 Preller, Volume 130, p 120, a letter dated 17 October 1942, to Dr Preller.

⁹⁶“John Keats, medical student”, *Westminster Review*, April 1907, quoted in J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt 'n Lewensverhaal*, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1999, on the unnumbered page preceding the table of contents.

For a work on literary biography see A C Pelsers's 'Die Literêre Biografie, 'n Terreinverkenning' in <http://upetd.up.ac.za/thesis/available/etd-08272002-142815/unrestricted/dissertation.pdf>.

Christian Frederik⁹⁷ Louis Leipoldt was the fourth and third surviving child of Christian Friedrich Leipoldt (born in Wupperthal on 4 October 1844) and Anna Meta Christina (née Esselen), born in Worcester on 29 March 1848. He was born in Worcester on 29 December 1880 at the house of the Reverend Louis François (Franz) Esselen, his maternal grandfather. Louisa Frances Carolina (Issa), born on 20 September 1875 five years older than Leipoldt, and two sons Johann Gottlieb (Johnny) born on 2 August 1877, older by three years, and Charles William, who died a few days old, on 15 May 1879, were born in Sumatra where Leipoldt's mother and father were missionaries at the time. Leipoldt was born Christian Frederik Louis (his second name is spelt differently to his father's second name) and after him the fourth surviving child, Catharina Wilhelmina (Katie) was born on 14 March 1888 in Clanwilliam. Leipoldt's earliest youth experiences were the first four years of his life he spent under the careful guidance and influence of his grandfather at the Rhenish mission house in Worcester, Cape Colony.⁹⁸ Leipoldt remarks that his grandfather, Oupa Esselen, 'was 'n groot pedagoog, gekonfyt in die skool van Herbart⁹⁹, en het deur aanhaling en voorbeeld in alles vir ons iets gelewer wat ons belangstelling boeiend gemaak en gehou het.'¹⁰⁰ The processing of Leipoldt's youth experiences cannot omit the profound effect Esselen had on Leipoldt's earliest years, which Leipoldt himself confesses was even greater than that of his parents.¹⁰¹ This he attributes to his grandfather's remarkable personality.¹⁰² From an early age, his grandfather taught the grandchildren experiments such as placing seeds in cotton wool, and then showing them the roots as they grew, under a magnifying

⁹⁷Leipoldt's second name is the same as his father's but spelt slightly differently; his father was baptized Christian Friedrich Leipoldt, and his son, Christian Frederik Louis Leipoldt. The reference for this is J C Kannemeyer, pp. 731 – 732.

⁹⁸Today this region is known as the Western Cape.

⁹⁹Herbart saw the teacher's essential task as identifying the existing interests of the student and relating them to the great store of human experience and culture in order to help the student become part of civilized life. He also held that the ultimate goal of education was the building of ethical character rather than the acquisition of knowledge. From: <http://faculty.mdc.edu/jmcnair/Joe29pages/herbart.htm>.

¹⁰⁰C Louis Leipoldt, 'Jeugherinneringe', p. 2. This article appeared in *Die Huisgenoot* of 9 May 1947. BC94 A7.21 (Jagger).

[Translation: '... a great pedagogue, well-versed in the school of Herbart, (who) retained our interest by providing us with practical examples of everything we did.'] The reference is to Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776 – 1841) who was a German philosopher and psychologist and the founder of pedagogy as an academic discipline. Further information on Herbart and Herbartism can be found at <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/history/herbart.html>. In *The Valley* Leipoldt writes the name of Pastor Johann von Bergmann with two 'n's in both his name and surname, possibly following the trend from Mann's *Buddenbrooks*. It is however not outside of the bounds of possibility to consider that it might be because of the way Leipoldt associates Von Bergmann with his grandfather, and with Johann Friedrich Herbart. Incidentally, Herbart studied directly under Fichte, to whom Leipoldt makes reference in *The Valley* (p. 38).

¹⁰¹C Louis Leipoldt, 'Jeugherinneringe', p. 1. This article appeared in *Die Huisgenoot* of 9 May 1947. BC94 A7.21 (Jagger).

¹⁰²*Ibid.*

glass. These early experiences appealed to the curious mind of Leipoldt, and influenced his great love for botany that subsequently developed.

The Leipoldts moved to Clanwilliam in 1884 where his father took up the post of minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. As a loner, Leipoldt's avid interest in botany grew now that he found himself surrounded by the natural surroundings and floral kingdom of the Cederberg. He clearly recalls playing in the bushveld to the right of the house where the Leipoldts lived in Clanwilliam. This bushveld he termed a wonderful paradise in which he was able to travel, as he says, 'myle ver in die veld gestap, byna elke dag, om plante te versamel, wat soms, veral in die somer as dit bra warm was, vir my goed moeg gemaak het.'¹⁰³ The experience of travelling across the Olifantsrivierkloof to Cape Town with his family in 1886 remains strong in Leipoldt's memory, as he explains 'hoe ons by die eerste uitspanning groot ruikers geurige wit jasmyn gepluk het' and that 'ek glo dat daardie reis my die eerste aangeprikkel het tot n [sic] belangstelling in die botaniek wat later my geliefkoosde stokpertjie [sic] sou word.'¹⁰⁴ The great love Leipoldt had for botany stems from his early years in the Cederberg, and from meeting important botanists such as Rudolph Schlechter and later, Charles MacOwan.

Having completed his civil service examinations in 1897, it was time for Leipoldt to leave his home town of Clanwilliam and look for work in Cape Town. He did not have much trouble finding employment although his first appointment, as a correspondent for *De Kolonist*, lasted only a short while. He was dismissed from the staff in September 1899 as a result of a fiery article he had written.¹⁰⁵ Soon after, with the help of friends and associates, he was appointed as a junior reporter to the pro-Boer newspaper *The South African News* (1899). It was whilst in the employ of this newspaper that he experienced the South African War first-hand, which he refers to as a conflagration.¹⁰⁶ Until then, the closest he had come to experiencing anything resembling a (political) conflagration, was as a boy living in his parents' home in Clanwilliam. The role of botany is important for the middle of the trilogy,

¹⁰³C Louis Leipoldt, 'Jeugherinneringe', p. 11. [Translation: '(I) walked miles and miles in the veld, pactly every day, to collect plants, which sometimes, especially in the summer when extremely hot, caused me to become very weary.'] BC94 A7.21 (Jagger).

¹⁰⁴C Louis Leipoldt, 'Jeugherinneringe', p. 9. [Translation: '...how at the first stop we picked large bunches of scented white jasmine' and that 'I believe it was that excursion that provided me with an interest in botany which was later to become my most cherished hobby.'] BC94 A7.21 (Jagger).

¹⁰⁵J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, 'n Lewensverhaal*, p. 111.

¹⁰⁶C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 267.

Stormwrack, where the character Andrew Quakerley tends to his well-defined garden. This image represents a delicately balanced belief in order and beauty. Once the garden is destroyed, so is the mutual understanding between the elements that make up the Valley community.

The second of the youth experiences impacting on Leipoldt's writing of 1929 – 1932, is from the influence that Leipoldt's father C F (Christian) Leipoldt, had on his son and the great admiration Leipoldt had for his father is autobiographically portrayed in *The Valley*, in the person of Pastor Uhlmann, 'an exponent and not an apostle of the dogma that he preached.'¹⁰⁷ Pastor Uhlmann's cosmopolitan spirit is compared to the less open-minded views of his counterpart Andrew Quakerley entrenched in his English ideals:

Both tradition and training, added to his natural disposition that made him averse from obtruding himself and inclined to the peaceful calm of a student's life, had made him far more cosmopolitan than he realized himself to be, and had dulled in him even that dim spark of nationalism that still flickered in Andrew Quakerley's soul.¹⁰⁸

Leipoldt's affinity for Eastern philosophy and religion influenced his liberal outlook which played a role in his political liberalism. In a letter to Leipoldt's friend Dr W J du P Erlank *alias* Eitemal, the Afrikaans poet, playwright and writer of prose, Leipoldt confesses: 'My belangstelling in Oosterse sake – filosofie, godsdiens ens – dagteken glo van my geboorte, want ofskoon ek hierso gebore is, is ek in Sumatra, op Prou-Sorat gemaak.'¹⁰⁹ M M Walters, a former professor in Afrikaans-Nederlands at the University of Cape Town, wrote of Leipoldt: 'Aan die een kant het jy die seun uit 'n familie met 'n sendeling-tradisie wat geslagte oud is, die pastorie-seun uit 'n konserwatiewe Afrikaanse platteland; aan die ander kant het jy die Boedhis wat die Christelike leerstellinge verwerp en saans plegtig "punjaar

¹⁰⁷C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 337.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, p. 337.

¹⁰⁹C Louis Leipoldt, in a letter to Dr Erlank, dated 18 January 1935, BC94 B14.174.1 (Jagger). It is technically speaking not possible for Leipoldt to have been 'made' in Sumatra, unless of course he means spiritually. This is so because the Leipoldts arrived in South Africa from the East on 10 November 1879 and Leipoldt was born on 28 December 1880 which exceeds the nine month gestation period for humans. Leipoldt might have been talking spiritually or imaginatively and thinking his soul was formed there, a possible manifestation that relates to his Buddhist tendencies. His parents returned to South Africa for reasons pertaining to Christina's health. Their third child Charles William born on Sumatra died there after a few days, on 5 May 1879. This latter tragedy was instrumental in the decision to return to South Africa so Christina could be with her parents. [Translation: 'My interest in Eastern matters – philosophy, religion etc. – dates, seemingly, from my birth, since whilst I was born here, I was made [conceived?] in Prou-Sorat, Sumatra.']

maak” voor etc.¹¹⁰ As already mentioned in Chapter 1, Leipoldt had a strong leaning towards Eastern religions and may on occasion have indicated his religion as Buddhism’.¹¹¹

Reading Junghuhn’s travel descriptions of Java and Sumatra¹¹² and the descriptions of the Islam and Buddhist systems (‘uitwydings oor die Islam en Bhoeddistiese stelsels’)¹¹³ expanded the young Leipoldt’s horizons in this field.¹¹⁴ These Eastern systems provided fertile ground for comparisons to Christendom, and according to Leipoldt, his father had no reservation to discuss these with him.¹¹⁵ A project that will certainly be of value for gaining some understanding of Leipoldt’s deeper insights into the East will be the editing of his unpublished manuscript entitled “Visit to the East Indies” (1912).¹¹⁶

Leipoldt’s mother, a highly cultured person, for her own moral reasons, thought it unfit for her children to attend the local school and thus forbade them to do so.¹¹⁷ The result was that

¹¹⁰M M Walters, ‘C Louis Leipoldt 1880 – 1947’, ‘Foundation for Research and Development: Man and Environment, Die invloed van die Omgewing op die Kunstenaar’, p. 15. [Translation: ‘On the one hand you have the boy from a family steeped in an age-old missionary tradition, the boy from the rectory coming from a conservative Afrikaans countryside; on the other hand you have the Buddhist who eschews the Christian dogma and in the evenings religiously brews punjaar before dinner.’]

¹¹¹E M Sandler, ‘C.Louis Leipoldt — Medical Student Extraordinary’, the address at A J Orenstein Memorial Lecture, The Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of the Witwatersrand, October 8, 1980 (abridged) p. 14. This reference was made earlier and is repeated here.

¹¹²Friedrich Junghuhn & C G Nees von Esenbeck, *Topographische und naturwissenschaftliche Reise durch Java*, Emil Baensch, Magdenburg; A. Baedeker, Rotterdam & J. Müller, Amsterdam, 1845. In Leipoldt’s jottings in BC94 A5.9 (Jagger) there are quotes from Junghuhn, and notes on him, in Leipoldt’s own hand.

See also Jan Sihar Aritionang, ‘The Encounter of the Batak People with Rheinische Missions-Gesellschaft in the Field of Education (1861 – 1940), a Historical-Theological Enquiry’, dissertation for the degree of Doctor, University of Utrecht, 15 June 2000, for information on mission life in Java. Leipoldt’s mother and father worked among the Bata(k) people and were fluent in their language.

¹¹³C Louis Leipoldt, in a letter to Dr Erlank, dated 18 January 1935. BC94 B14.174.1 (Jagger).

[Translation: ‘expositions on Islam and Buddhist systems.’] See Ch X entitled ‘Mirakelland van Oerwoud en Vulkaan’ in J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, ’n Lewensverhaal*, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1999. This chapter deals with Leipoldt’s perceptions on places he visited on his 1912 visit to the Dutch East Indies.

¹¹⁴C Louis Leipoldt, in a letter to Dr Erlank, dated 18 January 1935. BC94 B14.174.1 (Jagger).

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹¹⁶BC94 A7.16 (Jagger). The manuscript (with the first page missing) is entitled ‘Visit to the East Indies’ with some chapter headings supplied by Dr M P O Burgers. Leipoldt reworked the English manuscript into Afrikaans as *Uit my Oosterse Dagboek* (Nasionale Pers, Cape Town, 1932). There is a great deal that is of importance in this manuscript for a better understanding of the differences of the way the Dutch systems worked in the East Indies, versus South Africa; for instance the topic of race relations; the way the local inhabitants of East India had no say in the affairs of their country much like the National Party conducted its political policies at the exclusion of the majority of the local inhabitants of South Africa; a comparison between the Javanese and the Malays; the role of women in society and the garden at Buitenzorg. Leipoldt’s jottings in BC94 A5.9 (Jagger) describe details of the garden at Buitenzorg, which he must have had in mind as background information for his manuscript, ‘Visit to the East Indies’.

¹¹⁷Leipoldt did not like his mother, yet she was responsible for a great deal of missionary work in her district. See the poignant letter her husband C F Leipoldt sent to his congregation at the occasion of her death on 2 December 1903, outlining the projects in philanthropy she conducted during her lifetime. This is in the Slotow Collection in the Archives of the University of South Africa.

the library in the ‘pastorie’¹¹⁸ in Clanwilliam, which possessed an eclectic range of books ranging from theology to literature, became a kind of classroom for the young Leipoldt. There he learnt about the rudiments of botany and zoology by ‘devouring’ these books. It is safe to suggest however that his fascination with the subject of botany grew even more as he learnt to classify flowers and plants.¹¹⁹ At age eight Leipoldt was permitted to visit the town’s library with its vast collection of: ‘pragtig ingebinde stelle Engelse klassieke, die werke van Scott, George Eliot, Jane Austen, Maria Edgeworth... feitlik die hele lange ry van Engelse skrywers...’¹²⁰ By his admission, the dialogue in Scott’s *Heart of Midlothian* left a lasting impression on Leipoldt.¹²¹ It can be argued that Scott’s lengthy and descriptive sentences might well have been an influence on Leipoldt’s own style of writing, in *The Valley*. There are overlapping themes in *The Valley* of Leipoldt with Scott’s work, for instance, an interest shown in what Leipoldt terms ‘average inhabitants.’¹²²

Leipoldt the writer cannot be seen outside of this fascination with reading from an early age.¹²³ The young Leipoldt was a gifted child writing a play at age eight and winning a writing competition run by *Boys Own Paper* at age eleven. At fourteen, pieces of his writing on a range of topics were appearing in the *Cape Times*. Leipoldt somehow liked to think of himself as the ‘Louis’ in Robert Louis Stevenson although his middle name derives from his maternal grandfather. Leipoldt and Stevenson nevertheless have a great amount in common, not least their ability to construct historical fiction, for instance, Stevenson’s *Kidnapped* published in 1886, and before that, *Treasure Island* in 1881 – 1882 in *Boy’s Own Paper*.¹²⁴ The Leipoldt household received subscribed copies of *Boys’ Own Paper*¹²⁵ so it is possible the young Louis, or Christie as he was known, came across Stevenson’s work at an early age. A further point worthy of noting is Walter Scott’s great influence as a writer on Robert Louis

¹¹⁸Equivalent to the rectory, the place where the minister of religion and his family lived, whilst attached to the congregation he served.

¹¹⁹C Louis Leipoldt, ‘Jeugherinneringe’, pp. 5 & 11. BC94 A7.21 (Jagger).

¹²⁰C Louis Leipoldt, ‘Jeugherinneringe’, p. 12. BC94 A7.21 (Jagger). [Translation: ‘beautifully bound sets of English classics, the works of Scott, George Eliot, Jane Austen, Maria Edgeworth ... practically the whole long row of English writers.’]

¹²¹C Louis Leipoldt, ‘Jeugherinneringe’, p. 12. BC94 A7.21 (Jagger).

¹²²Leipoldt specifically uses the term ‘average inhabitants’ in his jottings. BC 94 A5.6 (Jagger). A further similarity between Scott and Leipoldt is in Scott’s *Waverley* where the aristocratic protagonist Edward Waverley, (Andrew Quakerley in *The Valley*?) finds himself in the middle of a civil war in a country that he is unfamiliar with. Other themes in common surfacing in both *The Valley* and *Waverley* are the role of tolerance in society, and the traditions of the past.

¹²³Very much the same is said of the great Italian Romantic poet and philologist Giacomo Leopardi (1798 – 1837) whose family library was extensive, to cover a wide range of subjects.

¹²⁴<http://books.google.co.za/books?id=IKw8yzQLTVEC&pg=PA22&lpg=PA22&dq=The+boys'+own+paper>.

¹²⁵J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, 'n Lewensverhaal*, p. 73.

Stevenson. As previously mentioned, Leipoldt greatly admired Scott's *Heart of Midlothian*. Leipoldt explains his attraction to Scott from a young age, and liked the uncomplicated dialogue and the imaginary in Scott, especially by the way the novels affected his feelings.¹²⁶

The fact Leipoldt loved the English, Dutch and German classics, is clear from a letter dated 18 January 1935, to Erlank.¹²⁷ In the letter he names the authors he has read and they span different languages to include Latin, Italian, Dutch, English, German and French. It is doubtful, however, whether Leipoldt actually had much proficiency in languages such as French and Italian although according to E M Sandler he read works in these languages.¹²⁸ Professor S S B Gilder of the University of Cape Town Medical School, whilst acknowledging Leipoldt as an accomplished linguist, thought him to be 'not really perfect in any one language', with his Afrikaans and English coming under fire from time to time.¹²⁹ This comment should, however, be seen more in terms of the way Leipoldt might have translated technical work. It is nevertheless unlikely he had a good command of written Italian and French although he was taught Latin by his father, and liked to quote from this language. Being incredibly proficient as he was in two languages is already probably enough.

In 1936 Leipoldt placed a letter written in Latin in the editorial of the *South African Medical Journal*¹³⁰ and saw no reason why it should be translated; such was his arrogance, according to S S B Gilder.¹³¹ He liked quoting Latin, Italian and French in his texts as in *The Valley* as well as (especially French) in his correspondence with his colleague F V Engelenburg. I asked a mother tongue Dutch speaker Mr Piet Westra, the former Director of the South African Library, the publisher of the 'Brievens' edited by Wium van Zyl, about the standard of Leipoldt's Dutch and the response was that it is certainly adequate. The English writers that Leipoldt loved reading included Browning, Keats and Milton; and the Dutch writers Vondel, de Genestet and Perk. Leipoldt was a strong opponent of the Afrikaans poet C J Langenhoven, who fought for Afrikaans as a national language, against Dutch; Leipoldt's

¹²⁶C Louis Leipoldt, *Jeugherinneringe*, p. 12. BC 94 A7.21 (Jagger).

¹²⁷BC94 B14.174.1 (Jagger). Chapter 7 of *The Mask* emphasizes the importance, through the voice of his character Mabuis III, the importance of this international literature.

¹²⁸E M Sandler, from his Address at A J Orenstein Memorial Lecture, 8 October 1980, entitled 'C Louis Leipoldt – Medical Student Extraordinary.'

¹²⁹S S B Gilder, 'Leipoldt the Editor', *South African Medical Journal*, 6 December 1980, pp. 927 – 928.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*

¹³¹*Ibid.*, p. 928.

great love for Dutch literature is evidenced by the fact he greatly lamented the change to Afrikaans from Dutch, as one of South Africa's two official languages, which took place on 8 May 1925.¹³² The voice of Leipoldt is most probably reflected through the character Mabuis III who announces the importance of Dutch and Dutch literature, in Chapter 7 of *The Mask*.

It was once said, since the Esselens are restless people (this is Leipoldt's mother's side of the family), and therefore to settle their souls, they needed to have two different jobs.¹³³ Whilst one might see this as said in jest, it seems that Leipoldt considered this statement in the most serious light, seen by the way he actually ended up pursuing two careers, the one as a journalist and the other, as a medical doctor. Journalism however remained his first love, and Leipoldt's great contribution in this field spans most of his working life; from the time he joined *De Kolonist* as a junior reporter in 1898 at the age of eighteen and soon thereafter, joining the staff of *The South African News*. He continued writing for periodicals, magazines and newspapers, including *Die Huisgenoot* for his entire adult life, and was the inaugural editor of the *South African Medical Journal* (1926 – 1944).

In addition to his post on the staff of *The South African News* at this time, Leipoldt was appointed as the war correspondent to foreign journals including the *Manchester Guardian* and *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, a pro-Boer Dutch newspaper. One of his briefs was to report on the trials of rebels in the special circuit courts at Dordrecht, Barkly East, Cradock, Middelburg, Burgersdorp and Somerset East. Leipoldt's biographer, J C Kannemeyer, comments as follows:

Met sy werk as snelskrywer en verslaggewer het Leipoldt nou die geleentheid gehad om eerstehandse kennis van die oorlog in die republieke en die uitwerking van krygswet in die Kolonie in te win en om streke te besoek waar hy nooit tevore was nie.¹³⁴

¹³²The event is explained in the following site: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/afrikaans-becomes-official-language-union-south-africa>; 'On 8 May 1925, the Official Languages of the Union Act No 8 of 1925 was passed at a joint sitting of the House of Assembly and the Senate. By this Act, Dutch was replaced by Afrikaans. Both Afrikaans and English enjoyed equal status and rights. For further detail of the position of C Louis Leipoldt versus C J Langenhoven, see Riaan Oppelt's MA entitled 'The valley trilogy: a reading of C. Louis Leipoldt's English-language fiction circa 1925-1935' submitted to the University of the Western Cape in 2007.

¹³³J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, 'n Lewensverhaal*, p. 458.

¹³⁴J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, 'n Lewensverhaal*, p. 118. [Translation: 'Working as a stenographer and reporter Leipoldt now had the opportunity to acquire first-hand knowledge of the war in the republic and to ascertain the effect of martial law in the Colony and to visit regions where he had never been before.']

Whilst reporting from areas such as Dordrecht and Barkly East, he witnessed first-hand the detrimental effect of the proclamation of martial law in 1899 on the local backveld farmers which he describes as (a period in South African history) with ‘the difficulties of the position at a time when there was practically civil war in the Cape Colony.’¹³⁵ He explains that a possible reason for them turning to rebellion was to protect their possessions.¹³⁶ It was these experiences and views that led him to pen his poem *Oom Gert Vertel* in 1902 (published in 1911), important as a war text as well as for gaining some insights to Leipoldt’s sentiments about the war at the time. Leipoldt once explained that out of all his critics, the Dutch poet Albert Verwey was the only person to recognise his poem as not only an *ad hoc* plea, but the voice of a young man’s deep indignation at unjust treatment and downright injustice, wherever and by whomever.¹³⁷ It is this sense of fairness and openness that played a role in shaping Leipoldt’s political-liberal world-view. The early teaching from his grandfather and the instruction he received and the influence from the father, had a direct effect on this liberalism in Leipoldt’s soul.

3.6 — C LOUIS LEIPOLDT’S *THE VALLEY*, HISTORY IN FICTION?

Jeanne Reames, Martin Professor of History at University of Nebraska, Omaha, specializing in the history of Ancient Greece and Macedonia, Alexander the Great and the history of the Early Church describes two types of historical fiction (not separate genre categories), which she explains as between *fiction* and *allegory*.¹³⁸ For Reames, historical fiction is never really about who any given historical figure was, but rather the quality of the research as well as how effectively the author draws the reader into the world of the story.¹³⁹ Historical *allegory*, however, succeeds or fails by the strength of the symbolic hermeneutic between the past and the present.¹⁴⁰ For Reames one of the best examples of historical allegory is Indo-Irishman Aubrey Menen’s wickedly funny *A Conspiracy of Women* — ‘whilst the book is about the final years of Alexander’s reign, his time in India, and the mass weddings that followed ... it

¹³⁵ BC94 A7.6 (Jagger).

¹³⁶For an excellent account of British policy in South Africa at the time see G H le May’s *British Supremacy in South Africa, 1899 – 1907*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1965. In many instances farmers in the north eastern districts of the Cape Colony such as Aliwal North and Dordrecht were led to believe they were subjects of the Republic (Free State).

¹³⁷In J M H Viljoen, *’n Joernalis Vertel*, Nasionale Boekhandel Beperk, Kaapstad, Bloemfontein, Johannesburg, 1953, p. 189.

¹³⁸http://myweb.unomaha.edu/~mreames/Beyond_Renault/writing_historical_fiction.html.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*

is really about the *British* in India and the clash of an imperialistic nation with a traditional one. It holds up a mirror so we can see ourselves more clearly.’¹⁴¹

It can be argued that both these two types of historical fiction are present in *The Valley*. For instance, the first of the trilogy, *Gallows Gecko*, draws on the historical, and draws the reader into the world of the story; whereas, *Stormwrack*, whilst it does this, is allegorical for the destruction of the once cordial relations between the Afrikaners and English-speaking residents of the Valley. The destruction of Andrew Quakerley’s garden serves as a suitable example of how Leipoldt uses allegory. *The Mask* does the same, by showing the gradual decline in relations between the two elements/sections, as growing sectarian interests gain ascendancy, and suggesting what lies in store for the future of South Africa.

Whereas the previous section on Preller examined him from a perspective of historical writing, this section looks at Leipoldt’s historical fiction as in *The Valley*. *The Valley* trilogy covers a historical sweep of approximately 100 years, covering the exact same period that Preller’s Afrikaner historiography covers, viz., from about the 1830s to the 1930s. Yet Leipoldt also lies somewhere within the Afrikaans canon of literature, mainly as an Afrikaans poet, for his first anthology appearing in the *post bellum* period in Afrikaans as *Oom Gert Vertel en Ander Gedigte* (1911), which gave him the status as a volksdigter¹⁴² in the ‘Driemanskap’ with Jan F Celliers and S D du Toit (Totius).¹⁴³ *Oom Gert Vertel* has been extensively analysed not least by literary critics Hein Viljoen¹⁴⁴ and Wium Van Zyl.¹⁴⁵ The poem shares the important theme of changing emotions, feelings, sympathies and allegiances held by Afrikaans Cape Colonials at the difficult time of the South African War, with Leipoldt’s novel, *Stormwrack*. From his writing of *The Valley*, Leipoldt is viewed differently to the way Afrikaners would have seen him – then they saw him as this great *volksdigter*, but now that he had written his ‘English’ novels, he comes across as a liberal. Because of these two views of Leipoldt, one should therefore not lose sight of what Peter Merrington says: ‘Leipoldt is a complex figure who fits partially into both these camps.’¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹http://myweb.unomaha.edu/~mreames/Beyond_Renault/writing_historical_fiction.html.

¹⁴²The poet reflecting the sentiments of the people.

¹⁴³*Nom de guerre* of S J du Toit.

¹⁴⁴H Viljoen, ‘What Oom Gert does not tell: Silences and Resonances of C Louis Leipoldt’s “Oom Gert vertel”’, *Literator*, 20(3), 1999; Viljoen, H, ‘Op soek na Leipoldt se oom Gert — ’n studie in historiese resonansies’, *LitNet Akademies*, 7(3), 2010.

¹⁴⁵W van Zyl, ‘“Oom Gert Vertel” en Multatuli’, *Tydskrif vir Nederlands en Afrikaans*, 6(1), 1999.

¹⁴⁶P Merrington, ‘C Louis Leipoldt’s “Valley Trilogy” and Contested South African Nationalisms in the Early Twentieth Century’, *Current Writing*, 15(2), 2003, p. 32.

Not surprisingly, when Leipoldt tried his hand at producing, like Preller, histories in Afrikaans (among them *Jan Van Riebeeck (1936)*,¹⁴⁷ *Die Groot Trek*¹⁴⁸ and *Die Hugenote*¹⁴⁹) not one of them received a flattering review. *Die Groot Trek* was reviewed by South African historian P H S van Zyl who criticizes the history for its brevity, lack of imagination, and inaccuracies.¹⁵⁰ Leipoldt's poetry anthology *Dingaansdag* (1920) according to Dr G Dekker Emeritus Professor of Afrikaans literature at Potchefstroom University writing in 1958 was a disappointment for the reasons he gives. But what is important to note for this thesis, is that Leipoldt meant this anthology to take the form of an epic, related to the Great Trek, but failed to perpetuate his original idea with the result that it is neither an epic nor does it deal with that period.¹⁵¹ Rob Antonissen agrees that Leipoldt's original intention with *Dingaansdag* was the epic-lyric work of the Great Trek, but Leipoldt was unable to sustain his verse in this mould due to his liberalism.¹⁵² This point might be used to show that Leipoldt's world-view was too broad and universal to limit his writing to the kind that Preller was inclined, reflecting parochialism.

When Leipoldt the contrarian and maverick then takes on the *volksgeskiedenis* of Preller, he chooses fiction as his medium. The role of fiction here is not a random but a very specific decision and this requires some explanation. One of the proponents of this mode of writing was Dorothea Fairbridge, another, Gertrude Millin. The National Society for the Preservation of Objects of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty is the first in a series of cultural bodies 'to preserve and protect relics of South Africa's past', founded on 18 February 1905, even before the establishment of Union.¹⁵³ The members consisted of 'a number of persons imbued with a real interest in the preservation of places and objects of historical interest and natural beauty' including 'the old houses, trees and avenues, and wild flowers, all

¹⁴⁷This book was reviewed by historian D W Krüger in *Ons Eie Boeke*, July-September, 1938.

¹⁴⁸C Louis Leipoldt, *Die Groot Trek*, Nasionale Pers Bpk., Kaapstad, Bloemfontein en Port Elizabeth, 1938.

¹⁴⁹C Louis Leipoldt, *Die Hugenote*, Nasionale Pers Bpk., Kaapstad, Bloemfontein en Port Elizabeth, 1939.

¹⁴⁹P H S van Zyl's review appeared in *Brandwag* on 29 December 1938 and appeared in *C Louis Leipoldt, Eensame Veelsydige*, edited by P J Nienaber, Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel, Johannesburg, 1948.

¹⁵⁰P H S van Zyl's review appeared in *Die Vaderland*, on 3 September, 1938 and appeared in *C Louis Leipoldt, Eensame Veelsydige*, edited by P J Nienaber, Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel, Johannesburg, 1948.

¹⁵¹G Dekker, *Afrikaanse Literatuurgeskiedenis*, 10th edition, Nasou Beperk, Kaapstad, Bloemfontein, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, Pietmaritzburg, 1958.

¹⁵²Rob Antonissen, 'Die Afrikaanse Letterkunde van 1906 tot 1966', in *Perspektief en Profiel* edited by P J Nienaber, Perskor, 1982.

¹⁵³http://www.artefacts.co.za/main/Buildings/style_det.php?styleid=386.

of which were then fast being destroyed'¹⁵⁴ as were works of art being destroyed. Among the members of this society was Dorothea Fairbridge, the daughter of a Cape Town attorney, Charles Fairbridge, and also close associates of Leipoldt, namely his benefactor the botanist Dr Harry Bolus and a close associate, Monsignor Kolbe.¹⁵⁵

The idea was to provide 'the people of South Africa with a sense of nationhood through the preservation and enjoyment of their national heritage as a prelude to a vision of Union which consequently followed in 1910.'¹⁵⁶ One of the media used by Fairbridge in her work was fiction, alongside history, aesthetics and Africana.¹⁵⁷ The fiction of the day according to Merrington refracted 'the preoccupation in the early twentieth century with the passing of an old order, the effects of burgeoning modernisation in England and in the colonies or dominions.'¹⁵⁸ This heritage discourse, discussed in an extended study by Merrington, applies to what Fairbridge and her associates were doing, to construct a 'sense of public heritage for the new nation and state of the union of South Africa'.¹⁵⁹

In the same way that Fairbridge attempts to construct her liberal heritage discourse (using history, fiction, aesthetics and Africana) in *post-bellum* South Africa, from a Cape and South African 'loyalist' point of view¹⁶⁰ albeit from an opposite ideology, so does Preller, using the same period, the *post-bellum* situation, to create a conservative Afrikaner consciousness in the mind of the Afrikaners. He uses the romanticised past incorporating the lives and stories of Voortrekker leaders such as Piet Retief and Andries Pretorius, but also film enactments, plays, poetry, and the construction of heritage buildings such as the Voortrekker Monument.

And Leipoldt in *The Valley* is using similar *topoi* to Fairbridge, in the Unionist-Loyalist liberal Cape-based paradigm, to write against Preller's conservatism. Leipoldt's *The Valley* in its full thrust takes on the Preller narrative but does not succeed in the end. Lamentably, Leipoldt is not able to sustain his project as *The Mask* (the third in the trilogy) shows, because the Preller story eclipses the liberalist lobby when the Hertzog's National Party ascends to political power.

¹⁵⁴http://www.artefacts.co.za/main/Buildings/style_det.php?styleid=386.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷Peter Merrington, 'Carrying the Torch: Dorothea Fairbridge and the Cape Loyalist Imagination', Paper presented at the University of Pretoria, 2002.

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*

3.7 — CONCLUSION

It is clear when reading the above that one sees Leipoldt's own youth and other experiences emerge in his writings. He is a complex figure and therefore it is not easy to place him in a pigeon hole. But what seems clear from a study of his life and writings is that he is not a typical Afrikaner although his earliest writings are Afrikaans poetry. The reason for this is that the devastating effect of the South African War left an impression on him and a move rather towards the spirit of restoration than restitution. The influence from his missionary background accounts for this, as does the strong influence of the Quakers in England, on him. Some of the factors discussed in this chapter thus far account for Leipoldt's world-view which is counter and oppositional to the parochial, Afrikaner stance, so strongly manifested in his counterpart Gustav S Preller, whom Leipoldt saw as a 'Jaap', his very own pejorative way of denouncing anyone antagonistic to cultural pluralism.

3.8 — THE PRELLER-LEIPOLDT 'FEUD'

It is appropriate at this stage to say something about Preller and Leipoldt's relationship. Leipoldt became acquainted with Preller, his senior by five years, and like himself an autodidact, in Pretoria whilst Preller was assistant editor of *De Volkstem*.¹⁶¹ On an occasion when Leipoldt was a guest to dinner at the Prellers' home in Pretoria, in the presence of another invited guest, the Afrikaans poet Jan F Celliers, Mrs Preller placed finger bowls on the table which Leipoldt proceeded to stack and remove from the table and announced that it was not the done thing to use them.¹⁶² It would be conjecture to say this incident sparked off what was to become a future, strained relationship between Leipoldt and Preller, since the future break in relations was ideologically-based. However, the tension began with a situation whereby Leipoldt was appointed to the staff of the pro-South African Party newspaper, *De Volkstem*, at the insistence of General Smuts, as an appeasement towards Leipoldt (who had opposed the appointment of J H Hofmeyr as Administrator of the Transvaal, a post Leipoldt thought should have gone to him).

¹⁶¹A journal sympathetic towards the South African Party.

¹⁶²In an interview between Mrs Johanna Preller and Monica Breed, on 19 October 1963, Sentrale Klankargief, SABC, Johannesburg, cited in J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, 'n Lewensverhaal*, footnote 16, p. 708.

In addition, Smuts thought that Leipoldt would be good in that position as a counterpoise to Langenhoven at *Die Burger*, the National Party mouthpiece of the Cape. Leipoldt was appointed at the maximum salary of 1,400 Pounds. But Preller had been employed at *De Volkstem* since 1903, and now suddenly Leipoldt comes in at a higher salary. Furthermore, such an act could even place Preller's upward mobility in the organization in jeopardy and he must have seen Leipoldt as a threat. Furthermore, Preller was to learn in June 1924 that he was the only one on the staff whose salary had not been increased.¹⁶³ It is not hard to believe that from these incidents, a strained relationship between Preller and Leipoldt could arise hence the letter of mild protest from Preller to Engelenburg, that Leipoldt was appointed at a salary higher than Preller.¹⁶⁴

Matters came to a head when *De Volkstem*, with Preller succeeding as editor after F V Engelenburg had resigned for health reasons in September 1924, published an article which attacked H S Scott, a member of staff at the Transvaal Department of Education. Leipoldt had worked under Scott when he was Medical Inspector of Schools and had formed a sound opinion of him and was therefore disturbed to read the article.¹⁶⁵ He found Preller unsympathetic towards the Scott situation and this aggravated existing, strained relations between Preller and Leipoldt, which he described in his diary in which he referred to the unsavoury handling of the Scott situation.¹⁶⁶

J C Kannemeyer suggests that over and above possible personal clashes between Leipoldt and Preller, Preller might have been guarding his own position with the newspaper.¹⁶⁷ According to Kannemeyer, Preller informed Leipoldt on 10 February 1925 that his services were no longer required at the newspaper¹⁶⁸ whilst P S du Plessis indicates that it was Leipoldt who thought it best to leave the services of *De Volkstem*.¹⁶⁹ The former is the correct version and proof of this lies in the Minutes of the 67th Meeting of the Direction of *De Volkstem*, held on Tuesday 12 May 1925 at 4.30 pm in Pretoria where reference is made

¹⁶³J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, 'n Lewensverhaal*, footnote 16, p. 485.

¹⁶⁴A787 Preller, Volume 207, pp. 159 – 160, a letter from Preller to Engelenburg.

¹⁶⁵Leipoldt wrote in an article in the newspaper on 12 November 1924 that there was 'No worse example of racialism' – 51/16/1 Preller Collection, University of Stellenbosch Archives.

¹⁶⁶BC 94 A4.14 (Jagger).

¹⁶⁷J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, 'n Lewensverhaal*, footnote 16, p. 486.

¹⁶⁸J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, 'n Lewensverhaal*, footnote 16, p. 486.

¹⁶⁹This is referred to in the WAK: Louis Esselen (SA Biografiese woordeboek, II, pp. 225 – 227); also in the University of Stellenbosch G S Preller Collection, Band 51/7/1: Notule van die 67ste direksievergadering dd. 12.5.1925, cited in P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 350.

to the dismissal ('ontslag') — the way it was handled was questioned by one of the newly appointed Directors to *De Volkstem*, Mr Louis Esselen, chief secretary of the South African Party, and a *confidante* of Smuts, who happened to be one of Leipoldt's close relatives from his mother's side.¹⁷⁰ Esselen was placed in that position specifically to check for any possible ideological shift from Preller that might affect the newspaper's sales.¹⁷¹ There had already been signs that Preller was sympathetic towards the nationalists, and his preference for segregation.¹⁷² The fear that the board of *De Volkstem* had is corroborated by the fact Preller was hoping for a post with the Nationalists in Cape Town.¹⁷³ The implication of the questioning by Esselen, points to possible heavy-handedness by Preller, in the way he handled the Leipoldt dismissal, and one can assume as a close relative of Leipoldt, Esselen was unhappy with the situation.

Preller wrote in *De Volkstem* of 28 August 1925 that he felt it his duty to support his nation above all else, and for him, Hertzog was the one ensuring the future of the nation, because he was steering it away from British imperialism.¹⁷⁴ Three years before, in 1921, he was contemplating going over to the Nationalist journal, *Ons Vaderland*. Preller once explained his decision not to stand as Member of Parliament for the South African Party in the constituency of Standerton.¹⁷⁵ There might have been misgivings already then, surfacing about his true allegiance although he conveniently said he did not want to compromise his position as a journalist.¹⁷⁶ Further proof of Preller's misgivings is reflected in his view that if the English and Afrikaans speaking elements could not work together, to Preller it meant an end to white civilization in South Africa.¹⁷⁷

Preller had all along remained loyal to Botha but after Botha's death, although he remained a member of the South African Party (SAP), he started developing leanings towards the

¹⁷⁰51/7/1 in The Preller Collection, University of Stellenbosch Archives — 'Die Heer Esselen vraagt of de Korrespondentie inzake 't ontslag van de Heer Dr. C. L. Leipoldt, door de Sekretaris is gevoerd, in welk geval hy inzage daarvan verzoekt. — Mededeling wordt gedaan dat deze saak door de Editeur is behandeld.' [Translation: Mr Esselen asked whether the correspondence regarding the dismissal of Dr C L Leipoldt was conducted through the Secretary in which case he requested to see it — word has it however that this case was handled by the Editor.]

¹⁷¹P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 350.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*

¹⁷³*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 352.

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 254 – 255.

¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷*De Volkstem*, 28 August 1925.

National Party. The outcome of the 1924 election was for him the last straw when the South African Party and the Loyal-Unionists got together, and this he could not tolerate as they appeared to be the enemy of Afrikaans.¹⁷⁸ And on top of it all there was the incident whereby C Louis Leipoldt was appointed to the editorial of *De Volkstem* at a salary considerably higher than Preller's. In addition there had been a series of meetings by the Directorate of *De Volkstem*, about Preller's allegiances towards the newspaper.¹⁷⁹

In 1925 as a result of serious misgivings about the policy of the South African Party, Preller left the services of *De Volkstem* to take up the position of editor of *Die Vaderland*, a newspaper sympathetic to the National Party.¹⁸⁰ Leipoldt jotted down in his diary how his relations with Preller were strained and how profoundly anti-English he was, and that he was 'Jaap-ish', a term Leipoldt used to designate ultra-conservative Afrikaners.¹⁸¹ It appears Preller and Leipoldt never had contact again, although Preller approached Leipoldt in 1928 for three articles, but Leipoldt declined for political reasons.¹⁸² On 17 April 1925 Leipoldt left to take up residence in Cape Town.

It should be mentioned that the Esselens were staunch missionaries, and grew up in a liberal home and that the character of Pastor Von Bergmann in the first of the novels, *Gallows Gecko* in *The Valley* trilogy, is based on Louis Esselen's father, Leipoldt's maternal grandfather, The Reverend Francois Esselen. It is Pastor Von Bergmann who is one of Leipoldt's spokespersons on universal brotherhood. As early as 1914 it was already picked up that Preller was out of place in the South African Party, from circumstances around the First World War between Britain and Germany. Cape liberal and Cabinet Minister of Native Affairs Henry Burton, a close friend of Leipoldt, protested over Article 137 of the South Africa Act of 1909 in which it said Dutch was one of the official languages, and not Afrikaans as Preller was obviously promoting.¹⁸³ Burton's protests did not end with the language issue, but proceeded to include a criticism of Preller's racial views.¹⁸⁴ C Louis Leipoldt and Advocate Henry Burton were close friends having met at Dordrecht in the

¹⁷⁸P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 347.

¹⁷⁹51/3/2 in The Preller Collection, University of Stellenbosch Archives, 11 May to 13 May 1925.

¹⁸⁰J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, 'n Lewensverhaal*, pp. 487.

¹⁸¹BC 94 A4.15 (Jagger).

¹⁸²BC 94 A4.17 (Jagger).

¹⁸³P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 271.

¹⁸⁴*Ibid.*, p. 273.

prison during the South African War when Burton was acting for the Cape rebels and Leipoldt a court reporter.

In a letter from Sara Gertrude Millin she writes to *inter alia* Dr Gustav Preller on 16 March 1927, naming him as a potential member of the PEN Club at whose insistence for its establishment was none other than John Galsworthy the author of the much admired work by Leipoldt *The Forsyte Saga*.¹⁸⁵ Leipoldt must have shirked at the name of Preller put forward, as Galsworthy's intention was for South African writers between North and South to co-operate and not to be left wanting in terms of the country's position in the world as to the importance for South African literature.¹⁸⁶ It is possible that the visit from Galsworthy inspired Leipoldt to write *The Valley*, and write against Preller.

3.9 – LEIPOLDT AND ENGELENBURG

When Leipoldt was requested to write a eulogy on Preller at the time of his death in 1943, Leipoldt agreed to this, albeit hesitantly at first. Leipoldt as a true professional paid tribute in a way that gave Preller credit, as one of the first interpreters of Afrikaans cultural life, in addition to which in Leipoldt's opinion, Preller would take up a lasting place as a writer of prose. Leipoldt referred to Preller's strong belief in the future of his people and language and also to his bold eagerness ('voortvarendheid'), which took him beyond the bounds that many would set for the meticulous historian ('wat hom gelei het buite die perke wat menigeeen sal stel vir die noukeurige geskiedkundige.')¹⁸⁷ In this rather euphemistic way, Leipoldt is referring to the romantic way of Preller, well-known for his hyperbole when representing the past. Leipoldt went further to say that Preller was a 'getroue vertolker van sy stamgenote' (faithful interpreter of his clansmen), a 'kranige voorvegter vir die belange van sy taal' (bold campaigner for the interests of his language), and Leipoldt regarded himself as a colleague journalist and appreciated the work Preller did for Afrikaans culture.¹⁸⁸

It is uncanny that both Preller and Leipoldt greatly admired the driving force behind *De Volkstem*. Leipoldt's close relationship with Engelenburg goes back to 1914 when they

¹⁸⁵A787 (The Preller Collection), Volume 243, p 2 - 4; the letter is photocopied, from Millin to Preller, dated 16 March 1927.

¹⁸⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷C Louis Leipoldt' eulogy at the time of Gustav Schoeman Preller's death on 6 October 1943, for Piet Meyer's programme on Cape Town radio, in J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, 'n Lewensverhaal*, pp. 487.

¹⁸⁸*Ibid.*

first met. *De Volkstem* was a newspaper sympathetic to the South African Party of Jan Smuts, the same party which Preller belonged to. The intellectual attraction was instantaneous between Leipoldt and Engelenburg, according to Burgers.¹⁸⁹ One of the areas where their many interests overlapped was in the field of literature; and both possessed a satirical sense of humour.¹⁹⁰ In 1923 the opportunity arose for Dr Engelenburg to appoint Leipoldt as assistant editor of *De Volkstem*. As already mentioned, J C Smuts, at the time Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, requested Engelenburg to make the offer to Leipoldt.¹⁹¹ Riaan Oppelt explains this: ‘In the early 1920s, in response to the National Party-affiliated CJ Langenhoven being granted a column (‘Stille Waters’) in the Cape daily ‘Die Burger’, ‘Die Volkstem’ gave Leipoldt his own column, called ‘Diwagasies van Oom Gert’ ... but ‘while promoting the SAP Leipoldt’s articles and pieces reflected his broader interests rather than merely being party-oriented propaganda (arguably, Langenhoven’s column could be exonerated in similar terms).¹⁹²

Leipoldt and Engelenburg worked closely together until in 1924 when the editorship changed, with Gustav Preller taking over the reins. As the previous paragraphs show, Preller and Leipoldt did not see eye to eye and Leipoldt was consequently dismissed. An important archive for the purposes of this chapter is J H M van Aardt’s discovery in the Archives in Pretoria of a bank of spontaneously written letters from Leipoldt to Engelenburg.¹⁹³ The contents of the letters point to some of the important topics and interests embraced by Leipoldt, one of which was the current status of South African literature, a topic dear to Leipoldt’s heart. In a letter of 2 April 1928, Leipoldt told Engelenburg how much he enjoyed his biography of Botha.¹⁹⁴ He praised him again in a letter of 10 May 1928 adding that no existing Afrikaans literature comes close to Engelenburg’s book.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁹M P O Burgers, ‘Ou Briewe van Leipoldt Ontdek’, *Die Huisgenoot*, 5 December 1955, p. 37.

¹⁹⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁹¹J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, ’n Lewensverhaal*, p. 464.

¹⁹²Riaan Oppelt, ‘The valley trilogy: a reading of C. Loius Leipoldt’s English-language fiction circa 1925-1935’, MA submitted to the University of the Western Cape in 2007. Oppelt acknowledges J C Kannemeyer for certain of the information, in J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, ’n Lewensverhaal*, p. 465.

¹⁹³Volumes 7 & 14 of the Engelenburg Collection; A140, Transvaal Archives Depot, Pretoria (TAD). Copies of the correspondence from Leipoldt to Dr Engelenburg were made by J M H van Aardt for M P O Burgers from the originals in the Engelenburg Papers in the State Archives in Pretoria. BC94 B10.14 (Jagger).

¹⁹⁴The reference is to F V Engelenburg, *Genl Louis Botha*, J L Van Schaik, Pretoria, 1928. BC94 B10.14 (Jagger).

¹⁹⁵BC94 B10.14 (Jagger).

A topic Leipoldt shared with Engelenburg was the debates surrounding the status of Dutch, a language greatly loved by Leipoldt. In a letter dated 29 May 1928, Leipoldt reacted to the sheer chauvinism he noted coming from some quarters. Leipoldt, in his own opinion, does not suffer from the despicable arrogance-inferiority complex which is nothing other than fully and perfectly seen in the Afrikaner and in him alone.¹⁹⁶ In the same letter Leipoldt follows with a tirade against C J Langenhoven (the protagonist of the move to replace Dutch with Afrikaans) and against his poor attempt to translate Gray's 'Elegy' into Afrikaans. Such an attempt, in Leipoldt's opinion, is an example of how poorly Langenhoven understands English, not to mention the poorly written dedication in Latin which is so poor that it would cause a church father's hair to stand on end, higher than our karoo outcrops (karoheuweltjie). And to top it all Langenhoven has the audacity to publish it all as if it is something for him and us to be proud of.¹⁹⁷

M P O Burgers describes how comments such as these from Leipoldt tend to leave some people with the impression that Leipoldt implied that because Afrikaans was weak the country's literature was wanting and poor.¹⁹⁸ But Burgers corrects this by saying that Leipoldt's criticism was just as much applicable to both groups, English and Afrikaans.¹⁹⁹ Whilst sometimes he seemed to gun for the Afrikaners, Leipoldt was nevertheless concerned about South Africa's progress, hence a remark to Engelenburg about whether South Africa would be the appropriate place for his adopted son's future studies, or whether it would be better for him to go overseas.²⁰⁰

In a letter dated 2 September 1929 to Engelenburg, Leipoldt said he felt what needed to be said in Afrikaans could no longer be written in Afrikaans, and therefore from the following year he would be writing in English.²⁰¹ And writing to Engelenburg on 10 September 1929, he says how he wants to start writing for money and that he now has an added responsibility, a child, and the English publishers pay a lot, lot ('baie, baie') better.²⁰² Thus we see Leipoldt

¹⁹⁶BC94 B10.14 (Jagger).

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸M P O Burgers, 'Ou Briewe van Leipoldt Ontdek', *Die Huisgenoot*, 5 December 1955, p. 39.

¹⁹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰⁰BC94 10.14 (Jagger).

²⁰¹*Ibid.*

²⁰²BC94 10.14 (Jagger) J C Kannemeyer, in *Leipoldt, 'n Lewensverhaal*, pp. 592 *et seq.*, describes the situation about Leipoldt's 'adopted' children, and those that lived in as boarders in his house in Kenilworth, purchased in 1927. Initially, he took in three lodgers one of whom Reggie Waugh, had come with him from Pretoria. Two others joined the Leipoldt household, Peter Schrooder and Ken Goldswain. Gradually, more boys were added.

at the time finding it restrictive to write in Afrikaans about some of the topics he wanted to cover; and secondly, he needed to earn money to supplement his income. He had been used to a sizable income from his previous very handsomely rewarded position on the staff of *De Volkstem*, added to which he now had a full-time household to maintain and a child to raise.

This is different from the Leipoldt who once wrote ‘Ek sing van die wind’ in which he ends by saying that whilst he sings about aspects of Nature, he never sings about money.²⁰³ His income for 1930 shows he was now earning less than when writing for *De Volkstem* (£1,400 p.a.), in 1923 – 1925. His diary of 1930²⁰⁴ shows expenses of £514 on an income of £1,540 of which £500 came from writing. The balance of income was from his medical practice and his income from teaching at the Cape Town University Medical School. He might also have had in mind the fact that Reitz’s *Commando* was selling well; a book as he had in mind (*The Valley*), might be a suitable, and much-needed supplement to his income.

Leipoldt lamented that in South Africa, certain of the classics were virtually nonexistent²⁰⁵ and as he was German-speaking he could read German fluently. He recognized the excellent value of Thomas Mann’s *Buddenbrooks* (1903) with its sweeping story of the history of a family that suffered from the process of society’s degeneration. *Buddenbrooks* is a forerunner to John Galsworthy’s trilogy, *The Forsyte Saga*.²⁰⁶ One can see from Leipoldt’s jottings how he attempted to lay out his genealogical table for *The Valley*, as one imagines Mann might have done for *Buddenbrooks* and Galsworthy for *The Forsyte Saga*. Leipoldt in fact wrote to Engelenburg to say he had begun a novel à la

In 1928, Leipoldt travelled on a student tour to Britain, and it was his intention whilst there to try to adopt a child, which he did, and who came back with him to be his legally adopted son, Jeffrey Barnett Leipoldt. Jeff as he was known (his nickname was Guggug) was born on 28 June 1921 in Reading. He was seven at the time of the adoption. Another boy was taken in by Leipoldt (not adopted), namely Peter Shields, who went on to qualify as a medical doctor and for many years practiced in Plumstead, Cape Town. Peter came to the Leipoldt household at age fourteen in 1932. At all times, there were a number of lodgers in Arbury, which had five bedrooms on the first floor. Needless to say, the costs of running the establishment were not small, hence the fact Leipoldt needed to write to supplement his income.

²⁰³For a transcript of the poem in Afrikaans, the following site can be consulted: <http://www.ee.sun.ac.za/~lochner/blerkas/woorde/057.txt>

²⁰⁴BC94 A4.19 (Jagger).

²⁰⁵In J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, 'n Lewensverhaal*, p. 480.

²⁰⁶In J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, 'n Lewensverhaal*, p. 480. Galsworthy’s trilogy is made up of *The Man of Property* (1906); *In Chancery* (1920); *To Let* (1921).

Mann's *Buddenbrooks* about the chronicle of two Cape families.²⁰⁷ Thus, Leipoldt had before him an example of a generation novel as in Mann and a trilogy as in Galsworthy, with the theme of a dying society (morally) and degeneration, from *Buddenbrooks*. The social and political situation evident to him in South African history at the time probably provided him with some sort of idea for foraging in Mann and Galsworthy territory.

The works of Galsworthy and Leipoldt respectively, engage in causerie; the following excerpt from the 'Introduction' to Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga*, can almost be applicable to *The Valley* (especially when we are looking at the common spaces of history and fiction): 'the artist's *son et lumiere* (sun and light), the tragedy, comedy and irony of life observed and transmuted into the highlights and shadows of fiction.'²⁰⁸ The following excerpt from the 'Introduction' is equally as apt for *The Valley* as it is for Galsworthy:

His own books are as firmly part of the society and ways of his own country as the carved mahogany furniture, the dark- green velvet upholstery, and the saddle of mutton traditionally set on Forsyte dinner tables, his view of the dying society which he describes is as affectionate and sensible of its charm as it is ironic.²⁰⁹

Antagonists of the double standard of justice, Galsworthy and Leipoldt, dramatists at heart, chart the courses of successive generations and the rise of a new social structure 'that became so inevitably and visibly irreparable fissures.'²¹⁰ There are also similarities between *The Valley* and Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, both transition novels,²¹¹ for instance, suggesting how families degenerate because of poor decisions taken by members of the family, in marriage. *The Mask* shows this point when the wily town's attorney, Elias Vantloo, enriches himself through transport-riding for the British – he is clearly not of the right stock for marrying into the aristocratic Rekker family, of whom his wife Maria Vantloo, was a member. Both novels, Leipoldt's and Mann's, chart decline, economic, physical and spiritual, as true happiness comes under threat, and as time-honoured qualities such as tolerance, respect and tradition, are fast disappearing, because of the inter-marriages by members of lower class-structures, into the upper middle-class echelons of society.²¹²

²⁰⁷BC94 10.14 (Jagger).

²⁰⁸In the Introduction to John Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga*, Heinemann/Octopus, London, 1967.

²⁰⁹*Ibid.*

²¹⁰*Ibid.*, 1967.

²¹¹Passing from one era to another.

²¹²Leipoldt discusses degeneration on p. 861 of *The Cambridge History of the British Empire VIII*, Chapter XXXII, 'Cultural Development'.

Some of the letters from Leipoldt to Engelenburg exchange very clear set ideas about literature or mention important literary texts, such as Louis Coperus's *Iksander*²¹³, Ibsen and Baudelaire. In these letters Leipoldt gives the impression that for South Africa's cultural development, there is room for a strong and vibrant literature. The endearing friendship between Engelenburg and Leipoldt must therefore be seen in context of this, and contributing to Leipoldt's writing of *The Valley*. Engelenburg with a profound knowledge of literature, served as a source of inspiration for Leipoldt, considerably younger than him, and one who could keep things in perspective for Leipoldt. It is quite amazing when you come to think of it, how Leipoldt confesses to Engelenburg that he wants to write a novel *a la* Mann. *The Valley* is born out of the circumstances outlined above together with the other factors already explained. From this we are then fortunate to have *The Valley*, as an alternative form of South African history; covering a period in South Africa's history that might well have been lost had it not been for the imaginative historical narrative from one of South Africa's leading writers at the time, and the inspiration from a senior member of the South African literary scene, Dr F V Engelenburg.

3.10 — CONCLUSION

It can be argued that the lives of Gustav Preller and C Louis Leipoldt were very different. P J du Plessis has even gone so far as to compare the two in the hedgehog-fox scenario, the former the hedgehog. Preller's life's experiences led him into the direction of writing his histories of the Voortrekker, a great passion and his life's work, seen in published works such as *Piet Retief* and *Andries Pretorius*, respectively. Through Preller's work he was able to construct a *volksgeskiedenis* that became the dominant narrative of the first forty years of the twentieth century. Its contents are conservative, reflective of the Afrikaner nationalist ideas he had. C Louis Leipoldt's cosmopolitan world-view, on the other hand, opened up to a much broader representation, to include a South African national identity. Ironically, both enjoyed a close friendship with F V Engelenburg, as well as personal contact through him with important South African dignitaries at the time, notably Louis Botha and J C Smuts, respectively. However, as matters degressed politically it became more apparent to Leipoldt that it would be difficult to perpetuate close relations albeit working or of a personal nature with G S Preller. The two moved apart in 1925 after working for a short while for

²¹³A novel of fiction based on the story of Alexander the Great.

De Volkstem. One can go so far as calling this the Preller-Leipoldt feud, which was precipitated by the Leipoldt-Preller dialectic/debate/polemic. Once Preller moved across to *Die Vaderland* many supporters wished him well, the correspondence of which is available in the Preller Collection of the University of Stellenbosch.²¹⁴ It was then that Leipoldt returned to Cape Town, where he settled down and wrote prolifically amongst which was *The Valley*, a set of novels oppositional to ‘Jaaps’.

²¹⁴See a letter of congratulations from none other than Jacobus Hendrik Pierneef from Holland, the well-known South African colourist artist, dated 28 October 1925 (51/6/58).