

CHAPTER 4

GUSTAV PRELLER'S CONSTRUCTION OF A PUBLIC HISTORY BETWEEN 1905 AND 1938 — THE SUMMATIVE, CONTRARY EVIDENCE TO THE VALLEY:

4.1 – INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 looked at aspects of the lives of Gustav Preller and C Louis Leipoldt, respectively, and the way certain of their youthful experiences were processed in their writing. It also looked at Preller's role as a writer of history, and Leipoldt's role in fiction. Preller's was a more popularized and romantic-type of history than standard history, whilst Leipoldt constructed his fiction for specific reasons. Preller propagated a public history through cleverly employing a set of media such as film, enactments, acting, the promotion of writing Afrikaans literature, promoting the medium of Afrikaans as a language, and, above all, his flamboyant historical writing. It was against this set that C Louis Leipoldt wrote his fictional novels in *The Valley*, in its full thrust. The fact that Preller's writing eclipsed Leipoldt's desired South African nationalism, his own nationalism being a contestation of it, is heard through the voices of Leipoldt's characters, who lament the loss of lasting values of being rooted, in local, deep tradition.

Chapter 4 examines the actual material in Gustav S Preller's *volksgeskiedenis*, a fully-fledged national, public history. As a means of facilitating an understanding of the dialectic between Preller and Leipoldt, the so-called Van Der Stel controversy is examined as a model to show how a burgher (citizen) public history (that taken up by Tas and Huising) elicited a response from loyal-unionists Leibbrandt and Fairbridge, in the form of their counter or contra-history to the then existing public history.

4.2 – THE VAN DER STEL CONTROVERSY – A LITTLE-KNOWN INSTANCE OF THE WRITING-UP OF A PUBLIC HISTORY AND THE COUNTER TO IT

Possibly one of the less-known events in South African history, illustrating a fully-fledged public history, subsequently challenged by historians in counter-historiography, is the controversy at the time, surrounding Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel, the son of Simon van der Stel. Willem Adriaan first arrived at the Cape on 23 January 1699 to take over the administration from his father. His role at the Cape as Governor in the late

seventeenth and early eighteenth century was a significant one, but did not occur without its controversy. This controversy was initiated when several free burghers at the Cape challenged the governor's monopolistic actions, by writing a letter of protest to the Dutch authorities, explaining what they believed to be irregularities, although it is alleged the original document "The Diary of Adam Tas" has been lost.¹ Adam Tas (1668-1722) was an early Dutch free-burgher who was a prominent farmer from the Stellenbosch district and is best known for the part he played in the free burgher conflicts with Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel, concerning the corruption of Company officials and their misuse of trading monopolies. This diary, the work of an engaging and genial man, describes the comfortable life of the emerging Cape 'gentry' and the drama leading up to the arrest of Tas as the ringleader of the malcontents – although, as diaries go, it is very anecdotal.

An edition of Tas's diary was published by the South African Library in 1914, edited by Leo Fouché. The mark of Fouché's volume is his spirited defence of Tas's complaints against Governor Adriaan Van Der Stel. Fouché's has become an historical document in itself and in its own right, of the public history of the Cape in the early eighteenth century. It was revised by A J Böeseken and published in 1970 as *Dagboek van Adam Tas, 1705 – 1706*.² For the purpose of this chapter, it is worth noting that the Willem Adriaan van der Stel polemic is one about national history, written up by journalists, leading to heatedly contrary historiographies. It gave rise to an extensive albeit short-lived alternative public-historical view on South Africa's past and the nation's then-contemporary public identities. This point will be further explained in the ensuing paragraphs.

Of significance, however, is that the controversy may act as a paradigm for the unfolding of the Preller-Leipoldt polemic in the way that in *The Valley* Leipoldt was using his Western roots as his literary substance, to argue for the value of accumulated local tradition and being rooted, as opposed to the idea propagated by Gustav Preller, that trekking was imbued in the soul ('*trekker siel*') of those Afrikaners out of which the nation was forged.³

¹L Fouche, *Dagboek van Adam Tas, 1705 – 1706*, edited by Leo Fouché, with an English Translation by A C Paterson, Longmans, Green and Co., 1914, xxxi.

²*Dagboek van Adam Tas, 1705 – 1706*, edited by Leo Fouché and revised by A J Böeseken, Cape Town, Van Riebeeck Society, 1970.

³G Preller, *Andries Pretorius*, 1937, pp. 1 – 11.

Leipoldt elevated the topics of tolerance and respect for tradition which form the ethos of *The Valley*, into a sustained metaphorical tropology, using symbols such as husbandry, botany and horticulture, to construct his idea of a South African society.⁴ This metaphorical tropology takes the form of motifs such as the cultivation of a garden (as in Andrew Quakerley's garden in *Stormwrack*), as a form of class identification in the Cape-loyalist, liberal paradigm as well as in clubs, societies and vernacular architecture. They (the topics) reflect Leipoldt's nostalgia for an organic past of forgiving and forgetting the South African War, and embracing a broader South African nationalism. These topics are much more desirable as human values than the world of social modernisation. Therefore he demonstrates how his world-view runs counter to race-based sectionalism which was an ideology that developed in the north of South Africa, fuelled by the likes of Gustav Preller.

As the free burghers wrest their present historical situation from the VOC of which Van der Stel is the representative, so Preller wrests himself from the British influence in South Africa, to construct a narrative which becomes the national public history of the first forty-or-so years of the twentieth century in South Africa. At the same time a public history such as he wrote, sets itself up as one against which oppositional voices are heard.

By 1705, the land at the Cape was owned by twenty Company officials, which established a monopoly in the sale of wine, meat, fish and wheat, causing one Henning Huising a resident at the Cape at the time, to lose his meat contract. Adam Tas, a well-educated Stellenbosch burger drew up a petition on behalf of Huising, which was signed by some 63 burghers of the 550 that were resident at the Cape at the time, half of the signatories being French.⁵ The petition, against the dictatorial actions of Adriaan van der Stel and the corrupt VOC administration at the Cape, held that the VOC's officials were abusing the company's trading monopoly. The fact that 31 French Huguenots signed the petition was "a matter of some concern for the VOC, as Holland was at the time at war with France and they therefore became fearful that French settler dissatisfaction might develop into spying with foreign ships calling at the Cape harbour."⁶ Against this Willem Adriaan van der Stel organised a counter-petition, which included signatories from Asiatics, free blacks, in addition to which some names were added without the knowledge of these persons, and also, the landdrost by a show

⁴P Merrington, 'C Louis Leipoldt's 'Valley Trilogy' and Contested South African Nationalisms in the Early Twentieth Century', *Current Writing*, 'Text and Perception in Southern Africa', 15(2), 2003, p. 32.

⁵Eric A Walker, *A History of South Africa*, Longmans, Green and Co Ltd., 1928, p. 67.

⁶Source: <http://sahistory.org.za/people/adam-tas>.

of arms collected other signatures resulting in a document that in the end bore the names of 240 free men out of the 550.⁷

The situation at the Cape became tense, with Tas and others imprisoned for their actions against the Governor. One of the outcomes was that Dutch officials at the Cape were subsequently forbidden to own property or trade on the Cape market, and insisted that they surrender their land.⁸ Tas was eventually released and Van der Stel recalled to Holland departing from the Cape in April 1708. No doubt the outcome was a resounding victory for the burghers. The far-reaching effects of the Tas controversy are fully described by Eric Walker on p 69 of his *History of South Africa* published in 1928.⁹

Van der Stel was eventually dismissed from the services of the VOC, after a fair trial.¹⁰ However, there are alternative views on the event, especially that the Van der Stels had left an important and rich legacy. Whilst it is mostly agreed that his rule at the Cape was authoritarian and not without irregularities, a counter view of his tenure presents him as one who engaged in important activities for the benefit of the region, such as in agriculture and horticulture. In this aspect, he is presented as a man of great vision and imagination.¹¹ One such view praising Van der Stel for his great achievements is the historian Dorothea Fairbridge who in her book entitled *A History of South Africa*, reports that according to some who knew him, Van der Stel was a kind person of a very gentle nature.¹² In fact on 3 March 1706 Adam Tas withdrew the charges that he had made against Van der Stel.¹³

Whilst the events of early eighteenth century Cape history as entered by Tas in his diary, reflecting the flavour of the day, are 'brief moments' in its history, their effects are far-reaching as much in what happened in history as much as the effects it had on historical writing. One can look to the Cape historian Dorothea Fairbridge, the daughter of the Cape Victorian attorney and Member of Parliament Charles Fairbridge, to see just how significant these events became. A remarkable relationship unfolded between the neighbour of Charles, the Reverend H C V Leibbrandt, who was the first Cape Colonial Archivist and his daughter

⁷L Fouche, *Het Dagboek van Adam Tas 1705-1706*, Longmans, Green and Co., London and New York, p. 215.

⁸<http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/willem-adriaan-van-der-stel>.

⁹Eric A Walker, *A History of South Africa*, Longmans, Green and Co Ltd., 1928, p. 69.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹<http://tia-mysoa.blogspot.com/2011/09/south-african-free-burghers-not-free.html>.

¹²Dorothea Fairbridge, *A History of South Africa*, Oxford University Press, London and New York, 1918, p. 84.

¹³*Ibid.*

Dorothea. In fact, he is considered to be her mentor.¹⁴ Just as Fouché believed W A van der Stel had been justly impeached for his monopolizing actions at the Cape in the early eighteenth century, so did the historian George McCall Theal. However, Leibbrandt took it upon himself to redeem Van der Stel's name and it was exactly this point that Fairbridge took up and from which she constructed her narrative on Cape history and architecture.¹⁵

She in fact presented Van der Stel as a martyr, a nation-builder, comparable to Cecil John Rhodes and Alfred Milner who, like Van der Stel, had for some or other reasons fallen out of public and political favour.¹⁶ And it is exactly this point that is relevant for a study of the Leipoldt-Preller polemic. Fairbridge was acquainted with Rhodes and Milner, the imperial cause, and supported Van der Stel, against the burghers who worked for a South African independence for whom the stance of the eighteenth-century free burghers in contesting Van der Stel's privileges was exemplary of modern political rights.¹⁷ So, when one refers to the Leipoldt-Preller Polemic, it can be consoling to know there is already such a model of a history, in opposition to an existing public history, and that the likes of Leibbrandt, Fairbridge, Leipoldt and others are brave in their initiatives to take it on. A further point can be made namely that the members of the Cape burgher society who took on the officials at the Cape, became increasingly estranged and began moving inland with their cattle, better known as the trekboers of eighteenth century South Africa. Their inland movement gradually consolidated as economic, strategic and other factors created a solidarity by them against the British authority at the Cape, out of which the Voortrekker movement grew, which was exactly the phenomenon much celebrated in Gustav Preller's 'history' against which Leipoldt writes his fiction.

4.3 – THE PRELLER-LEIPOLDT POLEMIC — MATERIAL IN THEIR RELEVANT WORKS, RESPECTIVELY

The Afrikaner Nationalist establishment of which Gustav Preller was an important part drew on a wide range of modes and genres to propagate its own formative national historiography and identity-formation. These media were in the form of the building-up of the Afrikaner language to stand alongside English, as a conduit for propagating important literature, but

¹⁴Mike Leiven, *The Imperial adventure story and critiques of Empire*, p. 8 of 13, in <http://www.unisa.ac.za/Default.asa?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=6722> dated 2 December 2009.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷*Ibid.*

also took many different forms. The Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap was formed in 1905¹⁸, a literary canon amplified by the written works of Gustav Preller notably his classic, *Piet Retief*, Afrikaans hymns such as the publication of *Drie Liedereren* in 1908, the founding of the Afrikaans-Hollands Toneelvereniging in 1907, Hamlet's speeches translated into Afrikaans by Preller, the literary magazine *Die Brandwag (The Watchman)* established in 1910, enactments of the Great Trek both in film and in the open in 1916, and not least, the construction of the Voortrekker Monument of which the foundation stone was laid in 1938. Preller played a direct role in each of these and other activities, and therefore contributed in no small way to national identity-formation, especially from his historical works, which helped construct a *volksgeskiedenis* to arouse the consciousness of the Afrikaner. The principal way he did this was through the memorialisation of Voortrekker heroes, especially Piet Retief and Andries Pretorius.

Leipoldt had the following to say about Preller's works: 'Already in 1907 Gustaf S Preller had published his *Piet Retief*, and the publication of this biography of the murdered Voortrekker may be regarded as one of the landmarks in the history of the language. Preller has since added to his reputation as a literary artist by the publication of several other contributions to the literature.'¹⁹ One notes Leipoldt's description of Preller as a literary artist, and against this, is Leipoldt's own fiction in *Galgsalmander/Chameleon on the Gallows/Gallows Gecko* written 'with loving care' about 'the early Valley days — which were, after all, the days of his childhood stories and of his own experience of the local history of Clanwilliam — he was also writing of a South Africa that could have come into being.'²⁰

A further point made by Gray is crucial for an understanding of writing *The Valley*:

Although in tone it (*Chameleon on the Gallows*) remains buoyantly comic and celebratory of bourgeois rural virtues, it still ends, like *Stormwrack*, on a rather ominous threshold of opening choices — representative and then responsible government loom, as does the Crimean War. The whole community is left poised at a crossroads, invited to choose between unity and incorporation of dissidence into a greater society, or sectionalism and ultimately civil war. In *Stormwrack* we see that it

¹⁸A787 Preller Collection, Volume 107, pp. 2 – 199. Correspondence relating to this topic dates between 1905 – 13, in this Volume.

¹⁹C Louis Leipoldt in Newton, A P & E A Neniens (eds.) & E A Walker (advisor in South Africa.), *The Cambridge History of the British Empire VIII, South Africa, Rhodesia and the Protectorates*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1936, p. 867.

²⁰C Louis Leipoldt, *Chameleon on the Gallows*, edited by Stephen Gray, Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, Pretoria, Johannesburg, 2000, p. 16.

has the latter chosen for it, as the whole nineteenth-century fabric of what Leipoldt thought of as ‘civilisation’ and ‘culture’ is torn apart.²¹

Leipoldt writing in his own publication *Die Groot Trek* (Nasionale Pers, 1938) referring to several books containing the reminiscences of the Voortrekkers, also refers to Preller’s book *Voortrekkermense* and says that Preller does justice to the Voortrekkers.²² At the same time in *Die Groot Trek* Leipoldt writes that the hero Piet Retief deserves a place in our history, as ‘’n Afrikaner waarop ons trots kan wees.’²³ There is an appraisal by C Louis Leipoldt in Chapter XIII entitled ‘Dingaan’s Day’ in his scientific work *Bushveld Doctor* in which he draws on historians such as Sir George Cory in his *Rise of South Africa Volume IV*, to explain the significance of the day that commemorates the Battle of Blood River that took place on Sunday 16 December 1838, and explains that ‘the anniversary of that day is celebrated as a public holiday in accordance with the vow taken by the Boers that if God granted them the victory, that day should in perpetuity be consecrated to the honour of God.’²⁴

But Leipoldt clearly shows an inkling of his dislike for a partisan, sectionalist approach when he describes Dingaan’s Day as ‘a danger that the patriotism for which it pleads, and strives to inculcate, may be of the narrow kind that engenders hatred and animosity towards those whose culture and tradition are not its own’ and continues, by saying that ‘that danger was very apparent when the day was used for political propaganda at a time when party feeling ran high in the Transvaal and the ranks were divided into Botha and anti-Botha folk.’²⁵ This Voortrekker history was the kind that Preller celebrated whom Leipoldt describes as ‘buite die perke wat menigeen sal stel vir die noukeurige geskiedkundige.’ Preller wrote more about ‘die gees van die tydperk’ (the spirit of the age)²⁶ than as a historian. Historian B J Liebenberg’s conclusions about the status of Preller as a historian are damning, showing his ‘histories’ to be inaccurate, exceptionally subjective and filled with fantasy; on the positive side, however, Preller was productive, wrote with a sense of reverence about the Afrikaners’ history, and expanded the knowledge about early Afrikaner history.²⁷ D W Krüger’s older appraisal of Preller the historian (geskiedskrywer) is more flattering than

²¹C Louis Leipoldt, *Chameleon on the Gallows*, edited by Stephen Gray, Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, Pretoria, Johannesburg, 2000, pp. 15 – 16.

²²C Louis Leipoldt, *Die Groot Trek*, Nasionale Pers, Kaapstad, Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth, 1938, p. 111.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 108.

²⁴C Louis Leipoldt, *Bushveld Doctor*, p. 224.

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶P C Schooneess, *Die Prosa van die Tweede Afrikaanse Beweging*, Drukkeij en Uitgeverij J H De Bussy, Pretoria, 1939, p. 519.

²⁷B J Liebenberg, ‘Gustav Preller as historikus’, *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, Pretoria, 1975, p. 250.

Liebenberg's, and this comes across because Preller is seen as a pioneer in the field of scientific history (writing using sources) and because of his early biographies of the Voortrekker leaders.²⁸ From these views one can deduce that the value of Preller's writing appears to be more from his literary artistry than for his historical accuracy.

4.4 – *THE VALLEY* (IN ITS FULL THRUST) AS A FORM OF ALTERNATIVE HISTORICAL WRITING IN THE PRELLER-LEIPOLDT POLEMIC

Two aspects important for an understanding as to why C Louis Leipoldt wrote *The Valley* need to be shown. The first is to identify the metonymic detail of the fiction which evolved from Leipoldt's deep emotional roots in the Clanwilliam district, which is the literary substance of Leipoldt's sense of tradition. The set of *topoi* for this (categories of relationships) are then elevated into a sustained metaphorical tropology for the way Leipoldt envisaged the future for a cultural South Africa. This tropology lies in the idea of husbandry, gardening and botany, which all form a class identification from a Cape-liberal perspective. From the outset, in *Gallows Gecko*, an anti-Trek sentiment prevails through the voices of Leipoldt's characters such as the magistrate who regards it a stupid thing for residents to trek into the interior, away from the Cape — 'to follow those fools who've left the boundaries of the Colony' as opposed to the excellent decision 'to buy land ... to farm', '... and make good at it ...'²⁹ (in the Cape). The character Everardus Nolte instead of trekking inland confronts the problems he faces. The done thing according to the wise cleric Pastor Von Bergmann, a character in *Gallows Gecko*, is to stay and fight for your rights, and not 'throw up the guide rope'³⁰ as doing so would mean losing one's tradition, and this would cause future generations 'to degenerate unless we guard what we have.'³¹

And the children of those folk who trekked 'are even more behind than they are in the valley' and will be led to think that 'just because they're white, they'll be all right in the future.'³² Unfortunately, according to Von Bergmann, the stupid decision made by parents, impact later on their children, and their children, with the result that those who are the stupid ones evade

²⁸D W Krüger, 'G S Preller as Geskiedskrywer', *Koers*, Deel XI, No. 6, Junie 1944, pp. 194 – 198.

²⁹C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 2.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 39.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 39.

³²*Ibid.*, pp. 39 – 40.

the effects, causing the ill to be the lot of the fourth and fifth generation as the bible says.³³ One of the woes that befalls the future generations is the idea that some groups consider themselves to be ‘inherently superior as a race’, which ‘inevitably bring(s) its own punishment in our children’s shame when, in the future, they compare themselves with other white children from the homeland.’³⁴ According to Von Bergmann (implying) those folk who trekked north into an isolated white enclave of existence, ‘think only of their prestige as white men, of their boasted civilisation — and think of blacks as inferior’³⁵ and do not believe as Von Bergmann does that ‘in time (blacks) gain the same prestige and make the same civilisation, or a better one even’ than the civilization of whites.³⁶ Von Bergmann was a proponent of universal brotherhood, very much the belief of the missionaries who never believed that ‘one race is superior to another.’ The missionaries believed only issues of environment, opportunity and economics caused a difference between the two.³⁷ Von Bergmann is clearly saying that if the trekkers had remained behind, that would have been a braver stance than trekking, although trekking also meant being brave. However the former requires more bravery.³⁸

The same anti-Trek sentiment expressed by Von Bergmann in *Gallows Gecko*, can be found in the second of the three novels, *Stormwrack*. This is borne out in an intense discussion between Mr Chisholm the assistant magistrate at the Village (recognisable as Clanwilliam) and Mr Sablonnierre a very eccentric farmer of the district who in conversation with Chisolm, explains the poor decision by the men who ‘left this Colony years ago to found new states beyond the government’s marches’ and who ‘represent the majority in the north’³⁹, referring to the *voortrekkers* who trekked to go north, from the Cape Colony. They left behind local tradition based on respect, to take up a new ‘tradition’ of ‘freedom, licence, grieved resentment, justifiable jibbing against authority’.⁴⁰ This tradition the northerner Afrikaners in the Transvaal took up, is the tradition ‘the majority here (in the Cape) have always resisted.’⁴¹ According to Chisholm, ‘there’s no difference between the English- and the Dutch-speaking colonist here (in the Cape), but there’s a profound difference between the

³³C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 40.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 39 – 40.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 40.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 325.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹*Ibid.*

colonist here and the *voortrekker* (meaning the Afrikaans Transvalers).⁴² To Chisolm, the Afrikaner in the Transvaal is ‘an individualist, an intolerant individualist at that’ although, by admission, in the Cape, we ‘give too little attention to the individual.’⁴³

Against the characteristic of ‘pluck’ demonstrated by the sacrosanct forefather *voortrekkers* who left the Cape and ventured north, which (pluck) according to the assistant magistrate is essentially an animal instinct, Leipoldt positions a characteristic he greatly admires, namely that of tolerance,⁴⁴ so perfectly demonstrated by his father who in the face of criticism and censure from the elders in the church community, nevertheless showed the utmost restraint.⁴⁵ ‘Even if it isn’t, you need not swear at it,’ remarked his wife placidly. ‘But he is right, my dear. I said so when I heard that we had given in all along the line to the north. There they view these things differently. They have no tradition; they have no real sense of obligation, for they have no background ...’ In the third of the novels, *The Mask*, the same argument is perpetuated by Leipoldt, that of the value of local tradition and having a good ‘background’ as opposed to the north who ‘view these things differently’ and ‘have no tradition; they have no real sense of obligation, for they have no background ...’

In Chapter 24 of *The Mask*, in a conversation between Santa the nationalist and her Aunt Gertrude, and with her uncle Jerry present, members of one of the ‘aristocratic’ families of the Valley, she declares the efforts of the trekkers noble challenging her aunt’s assertion that they had no ‘background’ — how could this be when they had all that history of the Great Trek behind them, ‘all that struggle for existence!’ From there the conversation turns to the question of race, announcing that people fear blacks and believe they will crush the whites and this Aunt Gertrude puts down to the fact that this is the ‘northern’ view. A much more open stance on race is to believe that one day ‘sometime, some day, they may become our equals. Why shouldn’t they? After all, they’re human beings just like us and they have just the same rights, and should have the same chances as we have.’⁴⁶

The excerpts just quoted can be seen in the light of Peter Merrington’s view that the three novels constitute ‘a sustained polemic against orthodox Afrikaner nationalist

⁴²C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 325.

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 370.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 647.

views.’⁴⁷ In *Gallows Gecko*, the central idea is the ‘abdication of responsibility’ as ‘an interpretation of the “Great Trek”’, against the character *Gallows Gecko* (Amadeus Tereg who changes his name to Everardus Nolte) who chose against trekking and consolidating his position and future in the Valley where he took to farming — therefore, Nolte did not contribute to ‘a divisive nationalism rooted in grievance rather than in constructive engagement.’⁴⁸ In the same way, the two other novels making up *The Valley* trilogy each contains its own ‘sustained polemic against orthodox Afrikaner nationalist views’ — *Stormwrack* by the way it shows the South African War as a product of the actions of the northerners in their dealings prior to the outbreak of war with the British military authorities, as well as in the way the northern Republicans swept up the rebels to fight.⁴⁹ And in *The Mask*, the ‘sustained polemic against orthodox Afrikaner nationalist views’ manifests itself in ‘the emergence of nationalist policies in the 1920s.’⁵⁰ Thus, in the Leipoldt text, in its full thrust, in all three novels, we see how the great attributes of local tradition and tolerance are held up as values for those who know it, such as the fictional Gersters and Rekkers of the Valley, who (short of making a generalized comment) follow the traditions of the South (the Cape) as opposed to the individualist, sporadic, sentiments expressed by those in the North, perfectly illustrated by Santa, the ‘new’ nationalist.⁵¹ In addition, the exclusive racial policies practised by the Herzogites from the 1920s are part of Leipoldt’s attack against political bigotry. This liberalism is heard through certain of the voices in the three texts, all sympathetic voices, to Leipoldt’s sentiments about race: Pastor Von Bergmann in *Gallows Gecko*, the magistrate Storam in *Stormwrack*, and Aunt Gertrude in *The Mask*.

4.5 – PRELLER, THE CAMPAIGNER FOR THE MEDIUM OF AFRIKAANS

Essential to the construction of an Afrikaner nationalist identity after the South African War, was to build a language, as in the motto ‘ons gaan ’n taal maak.’⁵² Whilst it can be said that the ascendancy to power in Britain of the Liberal Party in 1905 promoted South African liberalism it also had a direct effect on the promotion of Afrikaans, once Alfred Milner had

⁴⁷P Merrington, ‘C Louis Leipoldt’s ‘Valley Trilogy’ and Contested South African Nationalisms in the Early Twentieth Century’, *Current Writing*, ‘Text and Perception in Southern Africa’, 15(2), 2003, p. 37.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p.379.

⁵⁰P Merrington, ‘C Louis Leipoldt’s ‘Valley Trilogy’ and Contested South African Nationalisms in the Early Twentieth Century’, *Current Writing*, ‘Text and Perception in Southern Africa’, 15(2), 2003, p. 37.

⁵¹C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 646.

⁵²[Translation: ‘we will build a language.’]

left South Africa. From this year onwards, Gustav Preller was to play a strong, leading role in the spiritual and cultural mobilization of the *Afrikanervolk*.⁵³ Gradually, in the cities, Afrikaans had the opportunity of rising up as a spoken and written language alongside English.⁵⁴ Preller had come out of the South African War a patriot and one who stood for the self-respect of the Afrikaner, and would become a great campaigner for the Afrikaans language in the ensuing years, for his people.⁵⁵ Preller together with other colleagues who were journalists, from the North, are possibly the subject of the following words critical of Afrikaans as opposed to Dutch from *The Mask*: ‘Nowadays one can only express one’s soul in Afrikaans. Formerly we expressed it in good Dutch and some of the Afrikaans we now use was reckoned fit only for the kitchen. But of course it’s heresy to say so.’⁵⁶

The debate on Dutch versus Afrikaans is extensively covered by Sandra Scott Swart in the chapter entitled ‘An aspect of the roles of Eugène Marais and Gustav Preller in the Second Language Movement, c.1905 – 1927’ in her doctoral thesis on Marais.⁵⁷ Scott explains the attempts by Langenhoven to replace Dutch with Afrikaans, but she goes on to explain Preller together with Eugène Marais making an about turn on the stance they had taken as young men at the start of the Second Language Movement. One recalls how in 1905 they publicly campaigned to entrench Afrikaans, and now in 1927, they were coming to regret that stance.⁵⁸ The learning of Afrikaans and an antipathy towards Dutch brought anglicisms into the language.⁵⁹ The whole question of how Preller and Marais envisaged the roles of Afrikaans and Dutch is a complex one, veering off into the direction of a debate around syntax, but also enmeshed in the debate about the difference between ‘Cape and Transvaal patois.’⁶⁰

⁵³P J Du Plessis, *Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller 1875 – 1943*, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 112. [Translation: Afrikaner nation.]

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁵⁶C Louis Leipoldt, *The Mask*, p. 644.

⁵⁷S S Swart, ‘A “Ware Afrikaner” – an Examination of the Role of Eugène Marais (1871–1936) in the Making of Afrikaner Identity’, University of Oxford, 2001, pp. 80 *et seq.*

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁶⁰S S Swart, ‘A “Ware Afrikaner” – an Examination of the Role of Eugène Marais (1871–1936) in the Making of Afrikaner Identity’, University of Oxford, 2001, pp. 97 *et seq.* This is a complex issue and it is not necessary to get involved in the finer detail. The main part of this argument is the campaign for the use of the imperfect tense. This was deemed necessary in view of writing about the past, which any established language required as part of its syntax.

By the end of the nineteenth century, as far as getting Afrikaners to write Afrikaans, the First Language Movement had lost ground and was kept alive by a few enthusiasts. Educated Afrikaners preferred using English to High Dutch as a written language, and certainly not Afrikaans. But the South African War changed this, especially when Milner and his administration attempted to anglicise Afrikaners.⁶¹ There was not enough cultural capital on the side of the British to establish a policy for this, especially not after the disastrous impact the war had had on Anglo-Afrikaner relations. According to D W Krüger, ‘there was no such policy, and that lack, combined with the memory of the hated internment camps, helped give birth to the Second Language Movement.’⁶² In a letter dated 15 July 1914 by J F du Toit, he wrote that ‘the Second Afrikaans Language Movement differed from the First by being directly involved with politics from its inception.’⁶³ According to Ian Hexham, ‘the Second Language Movement arose out of the defeat of the Boer republics and the attempt by the British authorities to anglicise Afrikaners. It was part of a general defensive reaction aimed at preserving Afrikaner values and traditions from destruction by a conquering power.’⁶⁴ According to T R H Davenport, Milner’s actions of trying to weaken the culture of the Afrikaners, ‘simply created a cultural and political reaction which in time would threaten to destroy everything he had worked for.’⁶⁵ According to provincial reports, parents objected to their children learning Dutch as they needed to be proficient in English when leaving school, to get employment.⁶⁶

It is for this reason that visionaries such as Gustav Preller realized that, according to Hexham, ‘if any trace of their Dutch origins were to be preserved in South Africa it would be through creating a new written language which gave respectability to the everyday speech of the

⁶¹Ian Hexham, *The Irony of Apartheid: The Struggle for National Independence of Afrikaner Calvinism against British Imperialism*, The Edwin Mellen Press, New York & Toronto, 1981, p. 128.

⁶²D W Krüger, *The Making of a Nation*, London, 1969, pp. 20 – 21, in Ian Hexham, *The Irony of Apartheid: The Struggle for National Independence of Afrikaner Calvinism against British Imperialism*, The Edwin Mellen Press, New York & Toronto, 1981, p. 128.

⁶³A letter from J D Du Toit (Totius), dated 15 July 1914, in the J D Du Toit Papers, in Ian Hexham, *The Irony of Apartheid: The Struggle for National Independence of Afrikaner Calvinism against British Imperialism*, The Edwin Mellen Press, New York & Toronto, 1981, p. 128.

⁶⁴Ian Hexham, *The Irony of Apartheid: The Struggle for National Independence of Afrikaner Calvinism against British Imperialism*, The Edwin Mellen Press, New York & Toronto, 1981, p. 128.

⁶⁵T R H Davenport, ‘The Afrikaner Bond’, Oxford, 1966, pp. 252 – 253, in Ian Hexham, *The Irony of Apartheid: The Struggle for National Independence of Afrikaner Calvinism against British Imperialism*, The Edwin Mellen Press, New York & Toronto, 1981, pp. 128 – 129.

⁶⁶(TED) Transvaal Education Department Report, 1909, p. 99; (CED) Cape Education Department Annual Report, 1917, p. 16.

people.⁶⁷ Advocates such as Preller opposed the views of the Taalbond (Language Union), formed in 1890, and revived in 1903 to promote a simplified form of Dutch.⁶⁸ The practice at the time was that English was propagated as the official language, Dutch was the *status quo* written but not spoken language, Afrikaans the spoken language of the Afrikaner, and somewhat looked down upon as a written language. According to reports from the Transvaal and Cape Education Departments, respectively, ‘given a choice between Dutch and English, most Afrikaners, or so the proponents of Afrikaans believed, would choose English.’⁶⁹ They could learn Dutch at home, but should not forfeit the chance of learning English at school.

The Preller story goes even further than the above paragraphs attest to. On 6 March 1905 Jan Hendrik (‘Onze Jan’) Hofmeyr, a leading Taalbond figure and prominent Cape politician, delivered an interesting speech to the Stellenbosch Literary Society entitled ‘Is’t ons ernst?’⁷⁰ The reason for the speech was to warn of the possible dangers of anglicisation and he asked whether the Afrikaner was serious about Dutch being taught in the schools or whether they were content to let language equality be a mere fiction.⁷¹ The speech was published in a pamphlet for Afrikaners to remember their Dutch heritage.⁷² Gustav Preller working at *De Volkstem*, wrote an article in response, entitled ‘Laat’t ons toch ernst wezen. Gedachten over de aanvaarding ener Afrikaanse schrijftaal.’⁷³ This became known as the Second Language Movement’s manifesto.⁷⁴ As Hexham says, ‘Preller replied in a series of editorials which carefully marshalled the arguments in favour of Afrikaans against Dutch.’⁷⁵ Apart from stating that actually Dutch was not the language that existed in the nation’s soul, from a practical view, Preller stated that Afrikaners were writing a mixture of Dutch, Afrikaans and

⁶⁷Ian Hexham, *The Irony of Apartheid: The Struggle for National Independence of Afrikaner Calvinism against British Imperialism*, The Edwin Mellen Press, New York & Toronto, 1981, p. 129.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*

⁶⁹TED report, 1915, p. 39; CED report, 1917, p.16, in Ian Hexham, *The Irony of Apartheid: The Struggle for National Independence of Afrikaner Calvinism against British Imperialism*, The Edwin Mellen Press, New York & Toronto, 1981, p. 129.

⁷⁰Translation: ‘Are we in earnest?’ The Gustav Preller School in Discovery adopted Preller’s strap phrase ‘Dis Ons Ernns’ as its logo/motto – see the ‘Mrs J C Preller Papers’ in the W A Kleynhans Private Papers in the UNISA Arcives, that discusses the establishing of the school bearing the name of Gustav Preller, especially the correspondence from the headmaster Mr Boshoff, dated 18 May 1956.

⁷¹S S Swart, ‘A “Ware Afrikaner” – an Examination of the Role of Eugène Marais (1871–1936) in the Making of Afrikaner Identity’, University of Oxford, 2001, p. 91.

⁷²Ian Hexham, *The Irony of Apartheid: The Struggle for National Independence of Afrikaner Calvinism against British Imperialism*, The Edwin Mellen Press, New York & Toronto, 1981, p. 130.

⁷³Translation: ‘Do let us be in earnest. Thoughts on the acceptance of an Afrikaans written language.’

⁷⁴G Dekker, *Afrikaanse Literatuurgeskiedenis*, Nasionale Pers, Kaapstad, Bloemfontein en Pretoria, 1935, p. 40.

⁷⁵Ian Hexham, *The Irony of Apartheid: The Struggle for National Independence of Afrikaner Calvinism against British Imperialism*, The Edwin Mellen Press, New York & Toronto, 1981, p. 130.

English.⁷⁶ The excuse was that Dutch grammar was difficult, even to the effect that from the pulpit one was not hearing pure Dutch.⁷⁷

The efforts of amongst others Preller led to the formation of the Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap (ATG) on 13 December 1905 (Afrikaans Language Movement) and support for it came even as far as from Holland.⁷⁸ This association was not hostile towards Dutch but rather saw it as Preller suggested, Afrikaans being more than Dutch, as Afrikaans plus Dutch ('Afrikaans is meer as Nederlands, dis Afrikaans plus Nederlands!')⁷⁹ In the final analysis Preller proposed that in order to avoid the supremacy of English, Afrikaans should continue to be spoken, and that it should be written, and that Dutch should be better learnt, and that both Dutch and Afrikaans should be read.⁸⁰ An excellent example of written Afrikaans, according to Preller was Marais's poem 'Winternag'.

Whilst Preller's campaign for Afrikaans was a practical one at the time, he never advocated the replacement of Dutch, but saw that 'n grondige kennis van Nederlands Afrikaans alleen tot voordeel kan wees.'⁸¹ Where Leipoldt however would disagree would be with protagonists of Afrikaans is if they insist upon the slogan that 'the language is wholly the people'.⁸² This for Leipoldt would be tantamount to the politicization of Afrikaans and this is what he would be against. If Afrikaans is to be on an equal with English it would have to rival the latter in its cultural appeal, according to Leipoldt.⁸³ Leipoldt writing in 1936 however warned about Afrikaans that 'at present it stands in a favoured position because it is the visible sign of Afrikaans culture, the expression of the Afrikaans-national ideals of half the white population of the Union.'⁸⁴

Writing in *De Volksstem* of 18 August 1905, against the antagonists of Afrikaans, Preller published a poem in Afrikaans, translated into English as 'Is Afrikaans your Mother tongue?'

⁷⁶G Dekker, *Afrikaanse Literatuurgeskiedenis*, Nasionale Pers, Kaapstad, Bloemfontein en Pretoria, 1935, p. 41.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸For details on the establishment of Afrikaans and the 'Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap' see A787 The Preller Collection, Volume 113, pp. 1 – 149 and pp 830 – 1026.

⁷⁹G Dekker, *Afrikaanse Literatuurgeskiedenis*, Nasionale Pers, Kaapstad, Bloemfontein en Pretoria, 1935, p. 42.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, p. 43. (translation – 'a well-grounded knowledge of Dutch will only be advantageous for Afrikaans.')

⁸²C Louis Leipoldt in Newton, A P & E A Neniens (eds.) & E A Walker (advisor in South Africa.), *The Cambridge History of the British Empire VIII, South Africa, Rhodesia and the Protectorates*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1936, p. 860.

⁸³*Ibid.*

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

in which the sentiment was expressed that Afrikaans would evolve as it became more written, by writing and composing. In the immediately ensuing years, the Afrikaner Literary Movement was established, in 1908, with the publication of important collections of war poetry by Jan F E Celliers, and J D du Toit (Totius). The South African Academy for Language, Literature and Arts⁸⁵ was established in Bloemfontein in 1909 in which Preller had a leading role (as one of the founders) and on 31 May 1910 the magazine *Die Brandwag* appeared for the first time with the editors Gustav Preller and Dr W M R Malherbe. This magazine continued to appear until 1922. Afrikaans was recognized as a language to be used in schools in 1914; in 1916 the Dutch Reformed Church recognized the use of Afrikaans followed one year later by the Reformed Church. The 'Afrikaans Wordlist and Spelling Rules'⁸⁶ was produced in 1918, and in 1925 Afrikaans was declared one of the two official languages of the Union of South Africa, followed in 1933 by the publication of the Bible in Afrikaans.

4.6 – PRELLER'S MATERIAL – HIS PUBLISHED HISTORY *PIET RETIEF*

With the completion of the Voortrekker Monument in 1949 it is to be expected much would be published on the history of the Voortrekkers. Furthermore, the timing of the completion of the monument came at an important time for the Afrikaner with the advent to power of the National Party. One who wrote a great deal about the important documents and writings about the Great Trek, was Professor A N Pelzer. According to Pelzer there are two important works written by Gustav Preller, which cover Great Trek history, *Piet Retief* (1907) and the *Dagboek van Louis Trichardt* (1917).⁸⁷ Pelzer says that the work of Preller on the Great Trek had such an important effect on Great Trek historiography that it is safe to call it the 'period of Preller'.⁸⁸ Between 1905 and 1938 after which Preller concentrated more on the South African War, Preller was responsible for no less than ten important works on the Great Trek.⁸⁹

⁸⁵Die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns.

⁸⁶Afrikaans Woordelys en Spelreëls.

⁸⁷A N Pelzer, 'Die Belangrikste Geskifte oor die Groot Trek', *Jaarboek van die Afrikaanse Skrywerkring*, Nommer XIV, 1949, p. 3.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

Preller's published works on the Great Trek has been mentioned in previous chapters. According to Pelser, it was Preller who was the first to accumulate and preserve important source-documents about the Great Trek, and have them archived.⁹⁰ For Pelser, the *Dagboek van Louis Trigardt* (1917) contains not only valuable documents *per se*, but the introduction by Preller and the accompanying footnotes, make it doubly important.⁹¹ However, Pelser continues, Preller is sometimes guilty of a lack of thorough research, inaccuracies (criticisms echoed by Liebenberg) and in his last biography, viz. that on *Andries Pretorius*, lacks inspiration.⁹² This is not the case with Preller's first work, *Piet Retief*, according to Pelser.⁹³

These shortcomings, however, when reading what Pelser has to say about writers of the biography of the Voortrekker leaders, do not lie only with Preller as there are others that suffer from the same shortcomings.⁹⁴ Added to this is the view from T H le Roux that *Piet Retief* is usually considered Preller's best work, as a work of historical value, but the same cannot be said of it in terms of its use of language.⁹⁵ This point might be explained because Afrikaans at that stage was in its infant stage, and antiquated Dutch as well as foreign words dominated it. Referring to Preller, Le Roux comments — 'but in spite of this he rendered lasting services as a writer of Afrikaans.'⁹⁶

Preller was not only pre-occupied with raising the status of Afrikaans as a language, but also with raising the status of Afrikaner history, as he believed he did by writing up the histories of the Voortrekkers. Pride of place for him in this field was the history of the Voortrekker leader, Piet Retief, particularly the dramatic turn of events that led to his death in 1838. But more than any other motivation for Preller at this stage was the negative image of the Afrikaner in the eyes of British-South African historiography, especially as from this view South Africa was seen as an unimportant appendage and furthermore, as he wrote on page 106 of his work *Piet Retief*, the history of the Great Trek was dragged through the mud to make room for the lessons that an English history could provide, especially from the example

⁹⁰A N Pelser, 'Die Belangrikste Geskrifte oor die Groot Trek', *Jaarboek van die Afrikaanse Skrywerkring*, Nommer XIV, 1949, p. 5.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁹²*Ibid.*

⁹³*Ibid.*

⁹⁴*Ibid.*

⁹⁵T H Le Roux, 'Die Afrikaans van Gustav Preller', *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, (6) (1), Maart, 1966, p. 232.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*

of Cecil John Rhodes. Against the English histories of South Africa, Preller felt he was at a disadvantage, also writing in the medium of Afrikaans.⁹⁷

According to Du Plessis the choice by Preller of *Piet Retief* fits in with his temperament. He wanted the character of Piet Retief to act as an ideal for the Afrikaner and to invoke knowledge of his (the Afrikaner's) history and wanted to inculcate a historical conscience.⁹⁸ The writing up of such a history, and the use of Afrikaans are therefore two aspects in symbiosis, and would create a national culture.⁹⁹ Above all, according to Du Plessis, it is Preller's vision and idealism that put him above any in the sense of creating this national spirit.¹⁰⁰

J J Oberholster saw the two areas of material that Preller worked with, viz. the Great Trek and the South African War, as two moments in the history of the Afrikaner which represented a quest for freedom without confine.¹⁰¹ According to Preller, the object of the Great Trek was to achieve freedom from the oppressor, and no-where were human sacrifice and perseverance, suffering and heroism better displayed than by the Voortrekkers in their bid to achieve their goal.¹⁰² Oberholster argues that Preller is totally absorbed by this quest for freedom and takes refuge in it, almost losing himself in it.¹⁰³ F A van Jaarsveld argues that projecting his shortcomings and the problems of his own time onto the Great Trek and especially onto Piet Retief, makes his biography *Piet Retief* a publication that is actually more about Preller's own time than about the past.¹⁰⁴ Preller confessed that politics constituted his life as a journalist, but that historical writing was his life.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁷P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 133.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹J J Oberholster, 'Die neerslag van die Romantiek op ons geskiedskrywing – Gustav S Preller', Inaugural address at the University of the Orange Free State, 6 May, 1965, p. 15.

¹⁰²G S Preller, *Piet Retief*, p. 148.

¹⁰³J J Oberholster, 'Die neerslag van die Romantiek op ons geskiedskrywing – Gustav S Preller', Inaugural address at the University of the Orange Free State, 6 May, 1965, p. 15.

¹⁰⁴F J Van Jaarsveld, *Lewende Verlede*, Pretoria, 1961, p. 87.

¹⁰⁵J S Du Plessis, Dr Gustav Preller as Historikus van Die Groot Trek, Unpublished treatise, Potchefstroom University, 1945, p. 32.

Oberholtser explains that the emotional aspect found in Romantic historians is also evident in Preller.¹⁰⁶ According to Oberholster, just as the Western European Romantic historians reverted to the Middle Ages as the period of independent nationalism, so Preller reverted to the high-romantic periods in the Afrikaner's history, namely the Great Trek and the South African War.¹⁰⁷ About the Great Trek Preller writes as follows:

Daar is heldemoed verrig, van onsterflike roem; alleenstaande dae van moed, so mooi as die geskiedenis van enige ander nasie oplewer, ten uitvoer gelê in die opwelling van die nobelste gevoelens waarmee ooit 'n mens besiel word ...¹⁰⁸

Dr P C Schoonees claims we are to be indebted to Preller for the way he has been responsible for curating many texts on Voortrekker history, which had it not been for him, would have been lost.¹⁰⁹ Schoonees explains that Afrikaner cultural history would be the poorer without the colourful sketches of the traditions and behaviour, and without these spellbinding accounts from witnesses who saw how the Voortrekker descendants struggled against Nature and the 'wilde Kafferstamme' (unbridled black tribes), all action-packed with exciting episodes in history.¹¹⁰

Furthermore, according to Schoonees, the way Preller represents the historical accounts of the Voortrekkers is fertile ground for future South African writers of Romantic history.¹¹¹ Lastly, Schoonees explains that Preller's example put others to work, with the result that a great deal of historical detail has been written and captured, whipping up great interest in the Afrikaner nation's past.¹¹² For Oberholster, Preller's emotional side initiated in his historical writing was achieved through a vivid reconstruction of the past, by paying special attention to the picturesque detail and the historical colour.¹¹³ He captivates the reader through his

¹⁰⁶J J Oberholster, 'Die neerslag van die Romantiek op ons geskiedskrywing – Gustav S Preller', Inaugural address at the University of the Orange Free State, 6 May, 1965, p. 15.

¹⁰⁷J J Oberholster, 'Die neerslag van die Romantiek op ons geskiedskrywing – Gustav S Preller', Inaugural address at the University of the Orange Free State, 6 May, 1965, p. 15.

¹⁰⁸G S Preller, *Piet Retief*, p. 270. [Translation: 'Great deeds were carried out; deeds of incalculable glory, deeds by some, with inconceivable courage. On a level with the attractive history of any other nation, these deeds are carried out with an expression of loyalty that will appeal to anyone.].

¹⁰⁹P C Schoonees, *Die Prosa van die Tweede Afrikaanse Beweging*, HAUM, Cape Town, 1939, p. 518. See for instance *Vootrekkermense I, II, III and IV* (1918 – 1925); and *Vootrekkermense V and VI* (1938) which contain important source documents and personal recollections by Voortrekkers and their descendants, which Preller amongst others was responsible for collecting and having archived. The second of these volumes contains invaluable material on the recollections of Karl Trichardt, the memoir of Anna Steenkamp-Retief (Piet Retief's niece) and the diary of the clergyman accompanying the Voortrek, Erasmus Smit.

¹¹⁰P C Schoonees, *Die Prosa van die Tweede Afrikaanse Beweging*, HAUM, Cape Town, 1939, p. 518.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*

¹¹²*Ibid.*

¹¹³J J Oberholster, 'Die neerslag van die Romantiek op ons geskiedskrywing – Gustav S Preller', Inaugural address at the University of the Orange Free State, 6 May, 1965, p. 16.

glowing accounts and lyrical lamentations, as in the way he describes the tragic death of the hero Retief, when he reveals how thousands of pairs of feet beat in tune with the wild war cry, approaching, getting wilder as Dingaan's improvisation spurs them on. Soon the awakened earth droned beneath the feet of the crouching Boers.¹¹⁴

So when Preller writes about the moment when the Voortrekkers arrived on the apex of the Drakensberg range in Natal, he uses the opportunity to describe the expansive landscape that lay at their feet.¹¹⁵ P J du Plessis explains that the Romantic (historian) needs to reconstruct the events so that they become alive on the page,¹¹⁶ and Preller's description of the dance-scene of the Zulus, at the time they were receiving their Afrikaner (Boer) guests, serves as a suitable example of this.¹¹⁷ The image Preller creates of Retief is that of a majestic, powerful leader,¹¹⁸ against the thuggish Dingaan, pictured as a barbarian.¹¹⁹ According to Oberholster, the hero acts as an agent for the masses and he acts on behalf of the will of the people.¹²⁰

Preller sees Retief as the martyr who dies in this light at the hands of the Zulus bearing their weapons.¹²¹ According to Du Plessis, Preller's biography of Piet Retief follows a representativeness in his writing, rather than abstraction, in order to build the history around the person or hero of flesh and blood as is the case with Motley's history of the Dutch Republic and the way William of Orange is represented.¹²² Preller's descriptions of the attack by the Zulu on the Retief party do not withhold the bloody details which the scene reflects both in its location but also in the way the landscape is shown to be bloody, and the Zulus are shown to be barbaric.¹²³ Du Plessis describes how Preller's *Piet Retief* acts as a rainbow after a long drought, and how for the first time a meaningful image of the Great Trek appears, as seen through the eyes of the Afrikaner. Whereas the South African War had brought discontinuity in the Afrikaners' history, *Piet Retief* restores the continuity in their

¹¹⁴G S Preller, *Piet Retief*, p. 273.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹¹⁶P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 139.

¹¹⁷G S Preller, *Piet Retief*, pp. 98 – 99.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹²⁰J J Oberholster, 'Die neerslag van die Romantiek op ons geskiedskrywing – Gustav Preller', Inaugural address at the University of the Orange Free State, 6 May, 1965, p. 16.

¹²¹G S Preller, *Piet Retief*, p. 102.

¹²²P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 143.

¹²³G S Preller, *Piet Retief*, pp. 57 and 105 – 106.

history and future as a nation, within the Empire.¹²⁴ Du Plessis describes the way Preller created a feeling for the past rather than just an objective view of it, and he does this because he feels personally involved and cannot help but idealize Retief.¹²⁵

Considered in Hayden White's terminology, Preller was indeed a romantic historian, using metaphor as his trope of preference, portraying the victory of good over evil, in line with his ideological project: to change the position of the Afrikaner in the imperial hegemony of his day.¹²⁶

The following observations are incredibly important to understand how Preller raised the level of the Afrikaner awareness of their past. Several reviews acknowledged that Preller's *Piet Retief* revealed information not known before¹²⁷ — here Du Plessis's words are important: 'Van besondere betekenis egter is die invloed van die werke op die vorming van die nasionale bewussyn by die Afrikanervolk.' (Of considerable importance however is the influence of the works on the formation of the national consciousness of the Afrikaner nation).¹²⁸ The Great Trek comes alive in a *post-bellum* spirit by the way Preller goes a step further than the pure chronicle of the at-the-time histories of the event, although there are criticisms of Preller's work.¹²⁹ Few however deny the value of Preller's *Piet Retief* for the way it contributed to the development of a national spirit.

4.7 – OTHER PRELLER MATERIAL USED TO PROMOTE AN AFRIKANER HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Preller's contribution in historical writing to the building of an Afrikaner national consciousness is not the only medium that he worked in, although he did do so in this medium on a large scale. He also, however, put himself forward as a critic and his work in this field further built his construction of a national consciousness. The year 1906 was to be an important one for the newspaper where Preller worked, *De Volkstem*, as politically,

¹²⁴P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 143 – 144.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*

¹²⁶K Jenkins, *On What is History? From Carr and Elton to Rorty and White*, Routledge, London, 1995, pp. 150 – 162.

¹²⁷A787 Preller, Volume 113; undated cuttings, *Hogeveld Herald*, *De Nieuwe Tijd*, *Ons Land* inter alia. The debate over Afrikaans and its standing alongside Dutch and English is also contained in this Volume.

¹²⁸P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 144.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 144 – 145.

matters between Boer and Brit in the Transvaal were becoming more tense as voting constituencies for parliamentary membership were being contested.¹³⁰ Preller was to use the newspaper to propagate his own ideas around a white person's South Africa, for example in an article dated 17 February 1906. A way in which he worked was to promote the Afrikaans language as a literary language in a serious light with a specific direction in mind, viz. not according to the whims of individuals but against the background of the established norms of the old world of literature and art, and as an intellectual mark or gauge according to the norms and requirements of the nation.¹³¹ Furthermore, the correct use of language, Preller felt, was essential as was choosing the appropriate words for their intonations.¹³² But whilst it can be said that Preller might not have possessed what literary critics such as N P Van Wyk Louw would later set as the standard for the elevated writing of Afrikaans, he nevertheless made a concerted effort to introduce some ideas about the standardization of Afrikaans literature, although there might not have been sufficient literary precedent at the time when he was writing in *De Volkstem* of 1906.

In the same year, 1906, the Cape Afrikaners established the Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuur Vereeniging (ATKV) (Afrikaans language and cultural society) with the Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap already in the Transvaal (today, Gauteng) since 1905, which further stimulated growth and debates around the status of Afrikaans as a language in South Africa. As South African politics entered the arena with the establishment of self-government for the Transvaal in 1906, Preller as the sub-editor of *De Volkstem* came to the realization that Afrikaners would have to take up their place in the Empire but without in any way being swamped by it and that culturally Afrikaans-speakers would have to come to recognize that their competition lay with English speakers.¹³³

In 1907 Louis Botha and his *Het Volk* emerged victorious in the Transvaal. Although Preller was loyal to Botha's party and accepted its policy of reconciliation, he never lost sight of the Afrikaner's own path which he felt would need to take a strong cultural direction, especially to forge its own culture. As urbanization increased he feared more and more people would take pleasure in attending variety shows, the bioscope and sports matches, which were a

¹³⁰P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 145.

¹³¹G S Preller, *Eerstelinge*, p. 16.

¹³²*Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹³³P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 158.

strong feature of the schools.¹³⁴ Afrikaans therefore required its own culture to include theatre and music, and he embarked on a campaign to advance these media. One way of promoting the aspect of Afrikaans culture was through reviews of programmes.¹³⁵

But more than anything he saw the necessity to elevate Afrikaans music to a height equal to that of other nations, by reflecting the own qualities of it as a nation.¹³⁶ He expressed his thoughts for the performing arts, of which there was a dearth in Afrikaans, in *De Volkstem* of September 1908. He wanted these to reflect South Africa's own, unique position. To this end he was responsible for founding the Afrikaans-Hollandse Toneelvereniging (1907), which was to establish and strengthen a national Afrikaans-Dutch theatre with the purpose of promoting the Afrikaans language and the education of a nation.¹³⁷ The Afrikaans production of *Ou' Daniel*, written by Harm Oost, was produced by Preller himself portraying the Voortrekker (Daniel) in a naturalistic setting of the 'poor white' emerging after the South African War, but nevertheless depicting him as a human being, instead of just as a patriot.¹³⁸

Preller felt strongly about the way the performing arts would stir Afrikaners' emotions, arranging for productions to be staged also in the towns, and making still further efforts such as with the production of Euripides's *Medea*, in which he took the part of Kreon the king.¹³⁹ The *Rand Daily Mail* of 15 August 1907 lauded Preller's translation into South African Dutch, of Hamlet's soliloquy. Therefore, from Preller's efforts a great deal to elevate Afrikaans as a language, also in the performing arts, was achieved. However, he would have to wage a difficult war with the conservative Afrikaner religious organizations, for instance the Gereformeerde congregation of Pretoria, over the status of the performing arts.

¹³⁴A787 G S Preller Collection, Band 259, *Drama and Moraal*, pp. 45 – 47.

¹³⁵A787 Preller, Volume 258, contains programmes and articles reflecting music concerts as well as commentary on the role of national music, for instance on pp.99 et seq. ., as well as music programme dated 4 August 1906 p. 174) Included is Preller's 'Ou Daniel' a play he wrote – the programme is on p. 178. On p. 192 is the programme for *Medea* translated by Preller who also took the role of King Kreon.

¹³⁶A787 Preller, Volume 258, Konsep van "Gedagtes oor 'n Nasionale Toonkuns", pp. 81 et seq.

¹³⁷A787 Preller, Volume 259, Circular letter of the AHTV dated 23 October 1907.

¹³⁸Johan Van Wyk, 'Nationalist Ideology and Social Concerns', a paper delivered between 6 – 10 February 1990, at a History Workshop at the University of the Witwatersrand, entitled 'Structure and Experience in the making of Apartheid'.

¹³⁹A787 G S Preller Collection, Band 258, Programme dated 30 September 1907.

4.8 –THE YEARS 1908 TO 1915; IMPORTANT YEARS FOR THE AFRIKANER¹⁴⁰

The year 1908 saw the appearance of Preller's third (amplified) edition of *Piet Retief*. It was to be a year for further opportunities to build an Afrikaner national consciousness. Preller promoted fine arts in addition to having had a strong influence in the performing arts and music. But there were pressing matters and issues that had to be dealt with in journalism. And it is at this time that Preller felt the backwardness of the Afrikaner compared to the English speaker in South Africa. This point is especially important as South Africa approached unification — what would the future status of Afrikaners be; how would they come out of this? Preller wrote to General Botha about the prospective status of the Afrikaner¹⁴¹ and these views were also expressed in the Loyalist publication *The State*, in which he set out the advantages for the Afrikaner to be derived from unification.¹⁴² In fact, with the establishment of the the Zuid-Afrikaanse Akademie voor Taal, Letteren en Kunst on 1 and 2 July 1909, Preller emphasized that such an organization would not limit itself to the question of just language and literature but that it should include art in its broadest sense (the Calvinist view of performing arts would never be freed from the question of art). His position at the Academy as one of the thirty members elected to the body was a testimony to his great efforts for the promotion of the Afrikaans language.

Preller was instrumental in inaugurating the launch in 1909 of the Afrikaner's first home magazine, *Die Brandwag*, along the lines of the popular American kind, to exhort Afrikaners to read their language.¹⁴³ The one that Preller had in mind would have to serve the Afrikaner nation in matters historical, literary, educational and scientific.¹⁴⁴ As already mentioned, Preller shared the editorship with Dr W M R Malherbe. The inaugural copy appeared on the day South Africa became a Union, 31 May 1910. The front page bore a typical Preller motif namely a Boer sentinel observing the interior. Several leading writes such as Jan F E Celliers and Joubert Reitz contributed articles, as did Preller – on Leo Tolstoy (1 December 1910).

¹⁴⁰For a very thorough account/appraisal of Preller's work as a journalist see W Van Heerden, 'Preller die Joernalis', in *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, Pretoria, 1975, pp. 265 – 278.

¹⁴¹A787 Preller, Volume 202, p. 50, Preller to Botha, 18 November 1908.

¹⁴²A787 Preller, Volume 196, p. 216, letter from Kerr to Preller, 23 February 1909, p.216.

¹⁴³P J Du Plessis, *Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller 1875 – 1943*, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 183.

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 184.

4.8.1 — THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRIKANER POLITICS – 1910 - 1914

Hertzog's 'De Wildt' speech delivered on 7 December 1912 is an important milestone in South African history, as Hertzog identified the widening gap in Afrikanerdom — South Africans and not Imperialists should be in the government.¹⁴⁵ The context of this is that anyone not 'truly South African' could not be part of the South African government, alluding to someone such as Sir Thomas Smartt, leader of the Unionist Party, who in the first instance had declared himself to be an Imperialist, and then, a South African.¹⁴⁶ Any association with the idea of Imperialism, for Herzog, would only be acceptable if it was in the interest of and secondary to South Africa.¹⁴⁷

The year 1912 was a crisis year for Louis Botha and a time when he required an ally in the press, and who better than Gustav Preller. According to Du Plessis he took Preller into his confidence.¹⁴⁸ Such was the standing at that time already, of Gustav Preller. On 7 June 1912 Botha addressed a letter to Preller, discussing the Hull-Sauer incident, whereby Botha took in Sauer as a cabinet minister after the resignation of Hull.¹⁴⁹ Preller wrote back showing Botha loyalty, which he did all along and which he retained to the end of Botha's life, and even beyond that.¹⁵⁰ Gradually a close relationship unfolded between Botha and Preller and Botha relied on Preller for support in *De Volkstem*, especially when it came to possible dissidence among those who believed Botha might have had too close a leaning towards the Imperialists. It can be said that Preller was a true lieutenant of Botha.

On the other hand there was the anti-imperialist Hertzog who saw things differently to Botha. The pressure this placed on Botha and Hertzog's relationship eventually became too great with the result that Botha dissolved the cabinet on 12 December 1912. These events were to be significant for Afrikanerdom. Preller writing in *De Volkstem* of 20 December 1912 commented on the work Hertzog had done towards creating an Afrikaner national spirit and although he stayed loyal to Botha, there must have been stirrings in his own mind about his future allegiances, as is discussed elsewhere in this thesis.

¹⁴⁵Report on J B M Hertzog's speech at De Wilt in *The Star*, 7 December, 1912.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 201.

¹⁴⁹A787 Preller, Volume 202, p. 79, Botha to Preller, 7 June 1912.

¹⁵⁰A787 Preller, Volume 202, pp. 82 – 85, Preller to Botha, 13 June 1912.

In the meantime, however, he felt it was his task to promote the idea that the Afrikaner was politically more resistant than his English counterpart and that his/her (the Afrikaner's) cultural growth had to be ensured.¹⁵¹ This point is further supported by the fact that Preller shared his views with Botha on the question of the national interests of South Africa above that of the Empire.¹⁵² Examples of the poor image that Afrikaners have been given are evident in Preller's writing in *De Zuid-Afrikaan* — he criticised the deprecating way English writers portrayed Dutch South Africa, for instance, John Barrow and David Livingstone¹⁵³ and protested against Rider Haggard's English heroes and the fact that the vagabonds were Afrikaners, and Boer and brutes were synonyms.¹⁵⁴

The effect/impact of national symbols such as the significance of the historic 16th December (Dingaan's Day) of 1913, for reminding Afrikaners of their destiny¹⁵⁵ remained important for Preller as can be seen from his writings on the following day (17 December 1913), appealing to Afrikaners to display a sense of South African patriotism.¹⁵⁶ The ensuing year, 1914, saw the stirring up of a nationalist fervour when Jopie Fourie died by firing squad. Writing in *De Volkstem* of 22 January 1915, Preller made the comparison of the imprisonment of the rebels and said it was unfair when one considers the length they had to serve by comparison to Jameson and his men, almost twenty years before, after the infamous anti-Republican Jameson Raid.¹⁵⁷ The anti-German propaganda in the English press distressed Preller calling up images of the way the British behaved in South Africa in the period 1899 to 1902.¹⁵⁸ Preller's pro-German views expressed in *De Volkstem* were responsible for a protest march

¹⁵¹P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 213.

¹⁵²A787 G S Prellerversameling, Band 89, Preller to Botha, circa November 1912 – March 1913.

¹⁵³G S Preller writing in *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 10 July, 1913.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵A787 Preller Volume 147 contains correspondence and cuttings from pamphlets and newspapers featuring notes and programmes about the festival. Of special interest for this thesis is the letter written by Preller whilst editor of *Die Vaderland*, published in *Die Burger* of 18 December 1925 (this is after his dismissal from *De Volkstem*) in which he attacked General Smuts for not retaining the decorum around Dingaan's Day (special celebrations were destined for every five years), the day that commemorates the Voortrekker's pact with God, established at the Battle of Blood River on 16 December 1838. Reference is made to the Unionists whom Smuts had a pact with, as opposition, having lost the 1924 election to the national Party and Labour – it was at this point that Preller abandoned his strong ties with the South African Party, where he had shown strong loyalty to Botha who he referred to as 'Oubaas'.

¹⁵⁶A787 Preller in Volume 147 pp. 383 *et seq* contains thoughts by Preller around the meaning of Dingaansdag, as part of the tradition of the Afrikaner, grounded in the history of the Voortrekkers and their pledge of 16 December 1838.

¹⁵⁷G S Preller writing in *De Volkstem* of 22 January 1915.

¹⁵⁸P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 249.

on the offices of *De Volkstem*, but with minimal damage to the building.¹⁵⁹ The end of the Rebellion on 10 December 1914, however, was not to bring an end to the division that was emerging in South African Afrikaner society. And the impending South West African Campaign would further widen such divisions.

However, although Preller might not have altogether agreed with Botha and Smuts's handling of affairs as far as the Rebellion and the war in South West Africa were concerned, he nevertheless remained loyal to them and to the South African Party of which *De Volkstem* continued to reflect the policies. Writing to his father, Preller wrestled with the idea of possibly resigning his post as deputy editor of *De Volkstem*.¹⁶⁰ As an anti-extremist, his great passion for calm and a middle course, however, was to remain his guiding principle for some time to come, in the interests of cultural unity for the sake of the Afrikaner. As he had expressed himself earlier, a calm see provided the best atmosphere in which endeavour for the promotion of culture, could occur.¹⁶¹ The nucleus of cultural development was through the correct use of language and the production of literature to which the political side was secondary, as the way forward for the formation of nationalism.¹⁶² But this view was not to withstand developments in South African political history when the National Party was formed in 1914.

4.8.2 — A POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS SUPPORTED BY CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS — 1917 – 1924.

No better example of inculcating the *fons et origo* of a national spirit could be found than the first and subsequent nine editions of *Piet Retief*. A short monogram by T H le Roux covers the development of all the editions, the first 'edition' having appeared in serialised form in *De Volkstem* in 1906.¹⁶³ The ninth edition appeared in 1917 and this was important as a text with correct spelling according to the new spelling rules as laid down by the SA Akademie as approved in the Spelreëls of 1915.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 249.

¹⁶⁰A787 Preller Volume 237, Preller writing to his father on 28 August 1915.

¹⁶¹G S Preller in *De Volkstem*, 24 January, 1913.

¹⁶²P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 262.

¹⁶³T H Le Roux, 'Die Afrikaans van Gustav Preller', *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, (6) (1), Maart, 1966, p. 235.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*

Overall, however, through the gradual publication of so many texts with the same title, amplified and added to over a period of approximately fifteen years, Preller helped to mould the Afrikaans language in no small way.¹⁶⁵ But all the same, caution needs to be exercised when speaking of Preller's *Piet Retief* — there are so many editions, that they differ one from another as far as the use of language is concerned. Afrikaners, however, found the publication, *Piet Retief*, a valuable monument for the period of the coming of age of their nation and not only this but it has taken up a valuable place in Afrikaner literature.¹⁶⁶ Preller writing in the ninth edition of *Piet Retief*, said that although Retief's trek was short-lived he and he alone planted the idea in the children of South Africa of an independent Afrikaner nation.¹⁶⁷

What Preller writes further is of immense importance when he says, whilst most others considered the land and themselves as a large and passive appendage of one or other European empire (Dutch and English?), Retief was the first to bring to light the nascent Afrikaner's nationality, when he dared to consider South Africa as his fatherland.¹⁶⁸ In ensuing paragraphs on pp. 279 and 280, Preller speculates what might have happened if Retief decided not to trek. The trekking for Retief is synonymous with the forging of an Afrikaner nation. The ninth edition of *Piet Retief* published in 1917 is clear on this. Retief's vision, the open spaces that lay ahead, the grievances against the British at the Cape are instances clearly written about by Preller.

Further books written by Preller are important in the building of an Afrikaner national consciousness for the period 1915 – 1925, the year in which Preller eventually decided to leave *De Volkstem*, which has already been explained. *Kaptein Hindon* (1916) is based on the war memoirs of John Oliver Hindon, known as Captain Jack Hindon of the Hindon Scouts, or Dynamite Jack, for his attacks during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) against British supply and troop trains.¹⁶⁹ Hindon was a friend of Preller's, but after the war suffered from a severe neurological disorder. Hindon had aided the Boers in the Jameson Raid of 1895, and in the South African War, serving with distinction in the Middelburg Commando.

¹⁶⁵T H Le Roux, 'Die Afrikaans van Gustav Preller', *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, (6) (1), Maart, 1966, p. 232.

¹⁶⁶P C Schoonees, *Die Prosa van die Tweede Afrikaanse Beweging*, HAUM, Cape Town, 1939, p. 521.

¹⁶⁷G S Preller, *Piet Retief*, 9th edition, p. 279.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹<http://jackhindonscouts.blogspot.com/2008/12/kaptein-hindon.html>.

Preller's fictionalized biography was 'sold to raise funds for his friend and comrade in arms during the Anglo-Boer War.'¹⁷⁰ But it is thought that Preller changed a great deal from the original manuscript and even possibly destroyed the original (in English) 'that covered his experiences in the South African War, impressions on early Afrikaner nationalism and perceptions of the time he was living in'¹⁷¹ and gave a plausible reason for not publishing it, as the First World War had changed the face of the world and the South African War had been re-written as a footnote in history, and so what Hindon had to say no longer mattered.¹⁷² Preller's account aggrandizes the actions of Hindon as a fighter for the Boers, an account which can be followed in an article by Dudley Aitken, the curator at the South African National Museum of Military History.¹⁷³ Once again we see Preller interested in the stories of heroes, so as to inculcate their actions for Afrikanerdom in their minds, as he did with the image of Piet Retief.

Preller published a brochure containing a reprint of several articles that appeared in *Die Brandwag*. This is known as *Baanbrekers* (1915) reprinted as *Oorlogsmag* (1923). One of the accounts which further fuelled a national Afrikaner spirit is the murder in September 1854 of Hermanus Potgieter, the younger brother of the Voortrekker leader Andries Hendrik Potgieter, and his entire entourage consisting of fourteen men, women and children at 'Moordkoppie'. Much conjecture exists as to the reason for the murder, but, it resulted in reprisals which have become known in euro-centric terms as the siege at Makapaansgat, resulting in a great many members of the Kekana dying in the cave of hunger and thirst and the death by suicide of the leader Mokopane. The initial idea was to use dynamite to blow open the cave after which it was blocked. The son of Hendrik Potgieter, Piet Potgieter, part of the reprisal operations, was fatally wounded whilst engaged in reconnoitring operations. Paul Kruger, later to become President of the South African Republic, retrieved the dead corpse of Potgieter from the entrance to the cave in life-threatening conditions, and this event is commemorated in bronze relief on the Kruger memorial in Church Square in Pretoria. Also involved in the reprisal was the grandfather of Gustav Preller, Stephanus Schoeman, who took as his third wife the widow of Piet Potgieter, who died in the reprisal vindicating the death of his uncle. Although there is some controversy over the way Preller represented

¹⁷⁰<http://jackhindonscouts.blogspot.com/2008/12/kaptein-hindon.html>.

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*

¹⁷²*Ibid.*

¹⁷³D W Aitken, 'Guerrilla Warfare, October 1900 - May 1902: Boer attacks on the Pretoria-Delagoa Bay Railway Line', *Military History Journal*, Vol 11 No 6 - December 2000.

the account (because of links with the descendants), Preller nevertheless used the history to aggrandize the heroic event of some of the early Voortrekker leaders for his readers.¹⁷⁴

Gustav Preller and C J Langenhoven jointly published *Twee Geskiedkundige Opstelle* (1919), of which Preller's contribution re-appeared as *Historiese Opstelle* (1925). The topics in the latter contain some gems such as the account of Eugène Marais, a very close friend of Preller's, whose work he used to uplift the Afrikaner's idea of national identity. Marais would easily rank as one of Afrikaans's more complex literary figures, and in the essay Preller shares rare insights into the person of Marais¹⁷⁵ whose poem 'Winternag' he says shows that Afrikaans ranks as a language that can express feelings as well as any other language can.¹⁷⁶ Preller was responsible in 1925 for publishing Marais's first edition of poetry.¹⁷⁷ Whilst some of the essays such as *Frederik die Grote*, are from a historical perspective, others relate to personal reminiscences or source material such as *Ons Militêre Tradisie* which provides a historical account of the rise of the artillery corps of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal.¹⁷⁸ Nienaber attributes to Preller the status of being the father of Afrikaans's first romantic prose.¹⁷⁹ In these essays as elsewhere in Preller's writing, the writer is cleverly inculcating a consciousness of a national awareness in the mind of the reader. Similarly with the publication of *Oorlogsmag en ander Sketse en Verhale* (1923), he evokes the pain and suffering from the time of the South African War,¹⁸⁰ in which Preller also plays on the emotions of the reader to create an awareness of the rich Afrikaner past.

4.9 – 1925 to 1929

Preller worked at *Land en Volk* for a year or so (1902) after which he moved across to *De Volkstem* where he stayed until 1925. His departure from the editorial of *De Volkstem* to *Die Vaderland* in 1925 was politically motivated and warrants some explanation. On 17 August 1925 at the home of Smuts, Preller's fate at *De Volkstem* was sealed due to misgivings about Preller's ideological stance, which over the years changed from his being a

¹⁷⁴An account by Richard Searle, Nellmapiusrylaan 42, Irene, 0062, Tel (012) 667-6360, 9 August, 2004.

¹⁷⁵P C Schoonees, *Die Prosa van die Tweede Afrikaanse Beweging*, HAUM, Cape Town, 1939, p. 524.

¹⁷⁶P J Nienaber, in *Perspektief en Profiel: 'n geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Letterkunde*, Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel, Johannesburg, 1951, p. 42.

¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸P C Schoonees, *Die Prosa van die Tweede Afrikaanse Beweging*, HAUM, Cape Town, 1939, p. 524.

¹⁷⁹P J Nienaber, in *Perspektief en Profiel: 'n geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Letterkunde*, Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel, Johannesburg, 1951, p. 42.

¹⁸⁰P C Schoonees, *Die Prosa van die Tweede Afrikaanse Beweging*, HAUM, Cape Town, 1939, p. 524.

Botha-man to his being a Hertzog-man. Looking back, in an article he wrote in *De Volkstem* of 28 August 1928, Preller set out his views along the lines that one had first to choose one's allegiance to one's country, then the party. Heretofore Preller had remained loyal to the party of Botha and Smuts, the South African Party, and was disdainful of Afrikaners splitting the ranks such as Hertzog had done (as this jeopardized the need for Afrikaner solidarity against English politics in South Africa). The 1924 election changed that for Preller. In the article entitled 'Eers die Vaderland, dan die Party' (Fatherland first, then Party), he explained that he had worked his life long as a journalist, and he expressed his view that he thought *De Volkstem* was the mouthpiece through which he could promote the national ideal.¹⁸¹ But this seemed no longer to be so and consequently should he continue in his position at *De Volkstem* he would be unfaithful to himself and his past.¹⁸² One of his main gripes was that in his view the Unionist Party was dominating the South African Party.¹⁸³ For Preller the South African Party he once knew had changed and it seemed that the current government (now the National party) in his opinion was operating in an empathetic way, for the benefit of the country and people.¹⁸⁴

In the same article he now turned to Hertzog and lauded him for his foresight when he indicated that imperialism would come to destroy a true South African patriotism, not that he in any way wanted to see the close co-operation between English and Afrikaans speakers disappear — it was essential for the future existence of white South Africa.¹⁸⁵ Being offered the post of editor of *Ons Vaderland*, the mouthpiece of the National Party¹⁸⁶ he found it hard to decline it. Preller had two ideas, firstly that Hertzog was the possible unifier of the Afrikaners; and secondly, that the two elements (English and Afrikaans) could be equal and united under a common South African nationalism, and that the republican ideal should not be allowed to become the bone of contention at this stage.¹⁸⁷ This was the way Preller saw it.

One of his immediate tasks was to convert *Ons Vaderland* to a daily which he managed to do when it appeared on 16 February 1929, as such. He also managed to attempt to defend his

¹⁸¹A787 Preller, Volume 196, p. 72, see Preller's own description of this, in his hand.

¹⁸²G S Preller writing in *De Volkstem*, 28 August, 1925.

¹⁸³*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶A787 Preller, Volume 242, p. 221, Dan P van der Merwe writing to Preller, on 5 December 1925.

¹⁸⁷P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 355.

position for the retaining of the teaching of Dutch in the schools, which led to a fiery debate between him and C J Langenhoven, the campaigner for Afrikaans. Some might see Preller's campaign to retain the teaching of Dutch in the schools as a contradiction of his stance taken in 1905 to promote Afrikaans, but to take such a position is to argue out of context. What Preller was doing in 1905 was to raise the level of spoken and written Afrikaans and also to ensure an easier application rather than the rather Dutch.¹⁸⁸ He was adamant to establish basic rules for the writing of Afrikaans, and used his position in *Ons Vaderland* to promote it alongside his own representations for it. However, for the year 1929, there were impending issues that required his undivided attention, in the interests of promoting nationalism, especially at a time when grave issues such as the position of the 'poor whites' were a reality, in the face of a much stronger English-speaking South African community. These were some of the issues that the National Party could concentrate on, for its campaign ahead of the 1929 general election.

4.10 – PRELLER'S IDEOLOGY – 1929 ONWARDS

There can be little doubt judging by what has been written on Preller's cultural contributions, for instance his romantic renditions of the history of the Voortrekkers, that a great contribution was made by him in the 1920s and before, towards forming a national identity among Afrikaners. If one accepts that racial purity, Calvinism and language are three important areas for the Afrikaner's existence and survival as a Caucasian people on a continent inhabited mostly by a Negroid people, then the work of Preller as a contribution for the establishment of an Afrikaner national consciousness, must be seen as important.

In the process of achieving his ideal Preller worked in the paradigm called a *Volkstum*.¹⁸⁹ Writing in *Ons Vaderland* on 28 October 1927, he was questioning why eugenics was not a means to ensure the future survival of the Afrikaner. He even went so far as to advocate moral, mental and physical qualifications for marriage so as to prevent the white race from degenerating.¹⁹⁰ On 4 July 1929 writing in *Die Vaderland* he reminded his readers how the

¹⁸⁸G S Preller writing in *Ons Vaderland* of 5 July, 1927.

¹⁸⁹P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 394.

¹⁹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 395-396.

forefathers of the Afrikaners had warned against racial mixing. One can even venture to say that there were very many Afrikaners who thought that way.¹⁹¹

On 3 December 1930 Professor Dr R W Wilcocks in a laudation honoured Gustav Schoeman Preller on behalf of Stellenbosch University for the work he did for Afrikaner nationalism, recognizing the beginning of his life on 4 October 1875 with Voortrekker blood in his veins.¹⁹² His youth was spent closely observing and associating with the events of the South African Republic of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, said Wilcocks.¹⁹³ His work as a journalist began in 1902 when he joined the editorial of *Land en Volk*, followed in 1903 by the position as sub-editor of *De Volkstem*, a post he occupied until 1924 when he was appointed editor of the same journal.¹⁹⁴ Wilcocks lauded Preller for the central position he played in the cultural development of the Afrikaans nation being an outstanding figure in the Second Language Movement as well as for the fact he was a leading light in the Afrikaans Language Movement of the north, as illustrated by the robust debates he engaged in, campaigning for Afrikaans in the press.¹⁹⁵ He was lauded for broadening the use of Afrikaans as in the establishment of the Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap in Pretoria in 1905 as well as for his role in starting the magazine *Die Brandwag* in 1910, responsible for educating the Afrikaner in the home.¹⁹⁶

Whilst the latter are the efforts of the language propagandist, he worked as a critic and was also responsible for the production of literature in Afrikaans and was an inaugural member of the South African Academy.¹⁹⁷ The entire scope and ambit of his written oeuvre was then mentioned by Wilcocks and singled out were his definitive works accompanied by commentaries, such as his *magnum opus*, *Piet Retief*.¹⁹⁸ Wilcocks ended the laudation by recognizing Preller as a leading historian of the period known as the Great Trek, the period of history that one might call the Heroic Age in the history of the Afrikaner.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹¹P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 402.

¹⁹²A787 Preller Collection, Volume 238, p. 59.

¹⁹³*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹*Ibid.*

In the ensuing years, Preller campaigned to have the State Archives augment its collection of sources on South Africa's early history, not least for it to take over his great collection of letters, documents and books, laboriously collected since 1902.²⁰⁰ Preller continued to campaign for national unity among Afrikaners, for instance by referring to the way the church in Scotland enabled the Scottish national character to survive.²⁰¹ One of Preller's great passions remained writing up the history of the Afrikaner. And one of his great contributions in *Die Vaderland* was a series of articles discussing the 'poor white problem.'²⁰² The potential problem of the poor white question was that it could cause the degeneration of the Afrikaner if not dealt with. He pleaded for the Church to refrain from its theological dogma and to assist the poor whites; and with the government to re-establish the urbanized poor, in the country-side.²⁰³ Furthermore, national socialism by the way it could serve the needs of the Afrikaner people, appealed to Preller, especially after the appearance of the work of Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*.²⁰⁴

After retiring from *Die Vaderland* at the age of sixty in 1935, Preller devoted his time to writing. The following works appeared from the time Preller retired in 1935 till the time of his death in 1943; *Ons Goud Roman: die Marais-dagboek (1849-1865)*, Pretoria, 1935; *Daglemier in Suid-Afrika; Oorsig van die Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika van die Vroegste tye tot 1881*, Pretoria, Wallachs' Beperk, 1937; *Andries Pretorius - Lewensbeskrywing van die Voortrekker Kommandant-Generaal*, Die Afrikaanse Pers Beperk, Johannesburg, 1938; *Scheepers se dagboek en die Stryd in Kaapland, 1 Oktober 1901 - 18 Januarie 1902*, Kaapstad, 1938; *Ons Parool: Dae uit die Dagboek van 'n Krygsgevangene*, Kaapstad, 1938; *Ou-Pretoria: Sakelike Verhaal van die Stad se Voortrekkerperiode*, Pretoria, 1938; *Geskiedenis van die Krugerstandbeeld*, Pretoria, 1939; *Voortrekkers van Suid-Wes*, Kaapstad, 1941; *Talana: die Drie Generaalsslag by Dundee, met Lewensskets van Genl. Daniel Erasmus*, Kaapstad, 1942; *Lobengula: the Tragedy of a Matabele king*, Johannesburg, 1963 (posthumously).

Furthermore, in 1938 Preller was directly involved with the planning of the aesthetical construction of the Voortrekker Monument and the reliefs that would be exhibited.

²⁰⁰A787 G S Preller Collection, Bands 1- 282.

²⁰¹A787 G S Preller Collection, Band 245, 'Die viand in ons poorte', 1932, pp. 142 – 143.

²⁰²A787 G S Preller Collection, Band 245, typed concepts of the series of articles, 1932, pp. 99 *et seq.*

²⁰³P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 421.

²⁰⁴P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 421.

Remarkable was the way Preller encouraged younger Afrikaners, such as Peter Kirchhoff, Laurika Postma, Fanie Kruger and Hennie Potgieter, to be involved in the building and construction of the monument.²⁰⁵ Preller, as part of the Historical Committee, gave advice on the dress of the Voortrekkers²⁰⁶, the appearance of the Zulus and topography, amongst other matters.²⁰⁷

Preller's undying endeavour to resurrect pride in Afrikanerdom through his writings and other media, contributed to realizing the Afrikaner ideal — it is directly through his groundwork that it came to fruition.

A number of typed-up pages in one of the volumes of the Preller Collection in the National Archives in Pretoria reflect some interesting detail about Preller's changing political persuasion. In this volume are some of his thoughts (ten typed-up pages) about the state of the world and democracy and the imperialist-democratic government system as he called it (implying the South African government's propinquity to the British Commonwealth?)²⁰⁸ There is reference to the 'Nuwe Orde'²⁰⁹ (the New Order) and one imagines this to be a reference to national-socialism or a form of social democracy. He looked back over the previous 35 years and declared that not much has happened. His tirade was against the electioneering with all the promises in the world, while the poor white problem continued to exist.²¹⁰ He referred to the Orange Free State government system of national-socialism and then criticized the fact that the British system of government had been allowed to prevail.²¹¹ And then he explained why, according to him, it had been necessary in spirit to divide white from black for the future existence of South Africa, referring to what he termed our first and free constitution of 1837; followed by the 33 Articles at Potchefstroom in 1844, proclaiming no bastards may dwell in any Afrikaner councils and serve on committees; and then further in 1858 when the constitution of the Transvaal had proclaimed no black to be equal in the nation, in Church and State.²¹² He then culped the Jewish-English democracy in practice

²⁰⁵O J O Ferreira, *Die Geskiedenis van die Sentrale Volksmonument Komitee*, p. 141.

²⁰⁶A787 Preller, Volume 210 pp. 108 *et seq* are notes describing the mode of dress of some of the Voortrekkers particularly their dress between the years 1835 – 1840. Included are the patterns for the kappie (the hat worn by the ladies, as protection from the sun.

²⁰⁷PV94 E G Jansen Collection, file 1/57/1/2: SVK Minutes, 1936 – 1948, Meeting of 4 September, 1937.

²⁰⁸A 787, Preller, Volume 130, p. 181.

²⁰⁹*Ibid.*

²¹⁰*Ibid.*

²¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 184.

²¹²A 787, Preller, Volume 130, p. 184.

since 1902 as well as English missionaries, who had implemented their policies, against which Afrikaners had been too weak to stand up.²¹³

Then followed an attack on the existence of black living areas surrounding white residential areas, and a suggestion that the Voortrekkers' system could be called national-socialist.²¹⁴ Then followed a sharp attack on the Jewish-British mining conspirators and the importation of black mine-workers, and he sketched the poor white situation.²¹⁵ A system of socialism existed, according to him, yet as a conundrum policy-makers did not refer to this term.²¹⁶ Neither did the Cape Afrikaners evade his caustic tongue as they were possibly seen as too liberal in terms of racial policy, in the quest to keep black and white separate and preserve (the Afrikaner's) Aryan blood.²¹⁷ A register of titles of Preller's books donated to the University of Potchefstroom by his widow, which occupied thirteen folios of titles, included a selection of books on race and the black question. These topics certainly occupied Preller's mind and defined the road he walked in his career and until the end of his days. These radical-conservative views were in sharp contrast to those of the political-liberal C Louis Leipoldt, hence the existence of what was referred to as the Leipoldt-Preller polemic/dialectic.

4.11 – THE FINAL STAGE IN CONSTRUCTING A VOLKSGESKIEDENIS: ANDRIES PRETORIUS AND THE FESTIVAL OF THE GREAT TREK OF 1938.

Preller's writing career did not end when he retired from full-time journalism in 1935, at the age of sixty. Two years later in 1937 he published *Andries Pretorius* (what Huizinga refers to as 'perfumed' history – Liebenberg)²¹⁸ written on his farm al Pelindaba.²¹⁹ From when he wrote his first 'edition' of *Piet Retief*, in 1906, until 1937, a period of 31 years, much had happened in Afrikaner history, as well as in his own mind. Eric Walker's single-volume history of the Great Trek had become available in 1934.²²⁰ *Andries Pretorius* was a *magnum opus* consisting of five hundred pages covering the period 1838 to 1853, from Pretorius's

²¹³A 787, Preller, Volume 130, p. 184.

²¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 185.

²¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 185 – 6.

²¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 185.

²¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 187.

²¹⁸B J Liebenberg 'Gustav Preller as historikus', in *Tydskrif vir Wetenskap en Kuns*, Pretoria, 1975, p. 249.

²¹⁹Prof H B Thom thinks this is Preller's best work but then Thom's view is from an Afrikaner-nationalist perspective – see H B Thom, 'Dr Gustav Preller: 1875 – 1943' in *Tydskrif vir Wetenskap en Kuns*, 5 (2), 1945, p. 94. Thom praises Preller for emphasizing the future of South Africa as a white person's country, an ideology extrapolated from *Andries Pretorius*, according to Thom.

²²⁰E A Walker, *The Great Trek*, A & C Black Ltd, London, 1934.

arrival in Natal until his death. Whilst from some quarters the work was favourably received, others, such as Liebenberg, criticized it for its failure as a biography.²²¹ The work accentuated the Germanic quest for freedom and other Germanic characteristics.²²² In the work Preller has propagated his own racial views, seen through Pretorius — Preller does this in his writings, projecting his views on the historical persona, or *vice versa*²²³. Added to this is the way Preller views history, as a theory that history is Tolstoyan, which means that the unconscious will of the masses prevails over the actions of leaders.²²⁴

He coupled his thoughts on this point with his argument that the Voortrekkers had an urge to move, as nomads through the countryside until they came to their place of rest, peace, and where they could live on the land in freedom.²²⁵ Furthermore, as a group, argued Preller, the will to trek lay in the Afrikaner's Germanic blood, which, in Preller's estimation was almost hundred per cent of which sixty per cent was German.²²⁶ He furthermore explained the will to trek in terms of the historical urge to move, linking the Voortrekker movements up with the oldest treks, such as during Nordic times, even describing the wagon laagers in terms of the Goths in their great round encampment of wagons, which he took from T Hodgkin's *Italy and its Invaders*.²²⁷ He even described the trekkers and their similarities in religious practices, with ancient biblical times.²²⁸ A year after the appearance of *Andries Pretorius*,²²⁹ Preller was hard at work as Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the Voortrekker Monument. He and his wife Hannie were personally involved as Hannie's grandmother, the daughter of Piet Retief, lived on the same farm they now owned.²³⁰ Hannie was one of the persons chosen to lay the foundation stone of the Monument. One of the pieces written for enactment was by Preller, who re-constructed the moment Andries Pretorius left behind his dying wife, to trek.²³¹ The highlight of the Voortrekker Festival of 16 December 1938 was when the trekking parties from the different parts of the country assembled, symbolizing the

²²¹P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 451.

²²²G S Preller, in 'Agtergrond van die Voortrek' in *Andries Pretorius*, pp. 1 – 11.

²²³P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, pp. 448 *et seq.*

²²⁴G S Preller, in 'Agtergrond van die Voortrek' in *Andries Pretorius*, p. 1.

²²⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 1 – 11.

²²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 4. See J A Heese, *Die herkoms van die Afrikaner, 1657 – 1867*, Kaapstad, A A Balkema, 1971 for detail of the composition of the Afrikaner.

²²⁷G S Preller, in 'Agtergrond van die Voortrek' in *Andries Pretorius*, p. 9.

²²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 11.

²²⁹See a review of his book by Gurney Lawrence, in A787 Preller, Volume 272, p. 97.

²³⁰P J Du Plessis, 'Die Lewe en Werk van Gustav Preller – 1875 – 1943', D Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, October 1988, p. 462.

²³¹'Haar Afskeid' by G S Preller.

great efforts of so many who played significant roles in the building of an Afrikaner nation, which from 1938 onwards became even more momentous as the milestone year, 1948, for Afrikaner nationalism approached.²³² Preller's role as the Romantic historian, propagandist and much more, was not insignificant in the achievement of Afrikaner domination.

4.12 — PRELLER IN VOORTREKKER HISTORIOGRAPHY; ISABEL HOFMEYR ET AL.

In an article Isabel Hofmeyr discusses several of the points that have been raised, about the historian Gustav Preller, specifically the way he used a combination of personal experience and popular memory. The above paragraphs making up Chapter 4 of this thesis showed this in many different ways. Hofmeyr's field is constructed nationalisms, and the way Preller constructed his nationalism is certainly fertile ground for such a study. Hofmeyr sees Preller as a popular historian, who was responsible 'for shaping many of the key myths of Afrikaner nationalism.'²³³ The best example to illustrate the point made by Hofmeyr is the story of the Great Trek, and Preller's interpretation of it. Hofmeyr then states (referring to the Great Trek) that: 'It is Preller's written visual version of this social movement that has been the dominant one for the last seven decades.'²³⁴ As was shown in the previous paragraphs in this chapter, the media that Preller used ranged from books, newspapers, magazines, films, drama and enactments.²³⁵ An example of his involvement in enactments was his leading role in the 1916 film *De Voortrekkers*, the script of which Preller wrote and the trekker costumes of which he designed.²³⁶ Again, with the re-enactments of the Voortrekker movements on the occasion of the Voortrekker Festival of 1938, Preller's role was pivotal in the planning of the festivities. Hofmeyr in her article explores the way Preller popularized his work.

²³²The National Party came into power in that year.

²³³Isabel Hofmeyr, 'Popularizing History: The Case of Gustav Preller' in *Journal of African History*, 29, 1988, p. 535.

²³⁴*Ibid.*

²³⁵A 787 Preller Volume 259 pp. 52 *et seq* contains Preller's outlines for 'Drama en Moraal' (Drama and Ethics) in which he outlines the importance of the role of drama/acting to inspire nationalism. Chapter II discusses the morals of acting from the perspective of the Gereformeerde Kerk (the Reformed Church). See also the article written by Preller in *Die Volkstem*, dated 20 June 1934 (on p. 143) dealing with the question of art and Calvinism.

²³⁶A787 Preller Volume 270 especially pp. 45 *et seq*. See also A787 Preller, Volumes 266 and 270 for substantial documentation on the Voortrekker film in which Genl Botha, who Preller had a close association with, showed interest in. The term of endearment Preller has for Botha was 'Oubaas'. This information has been taken from Isabel Hofmeyr, 'Popularizing History: The Case of Gustav Preller', *Journal of African History*, 29, 1988 p. 521.

For Hofmeyr, the way Preller went to work on this topic was how people recalled the past and more importantly ‘how one could get them to ‘enact’ this memory in their own lives.’²³⁷ Much like Leipoldt did according to Stephen Gray, Preller, according to Hofmeyr, ‘relied heavily on oral history’ and then furthermore, ‘he familiarized himself with popular forms of both oral and written storytelling which in turn inform his work.’²³⁸ For Preller the enactments such as filming the history, and performing it on stage, were important for creating national history. Furthermore, according to Hofmeyr, a tactic Preller followed was to explore and ‘colonize’ ‘the institutions of popular leisure which he then remoulded in his nationalist enterprises.’²³⁹ The preceding pages in Chapter 4 showed the ways Preller employed his writing to romanticize the position of the Voortrekkers, who went out in search of personal freedom to achieve national freedom. Hofmeyr shows Preller more as one who popularized this history, to become the dominant Afrikaner history of that period.

The potential work on Preller is enormous, as Hofmeyr says, especially ‘for those interested in the cultural fabrication of nationalisms.’²⁴⁰ Whereas Leipoldt’s literary substance in *The Valley* lies in the *topoi* that surround the virtue of being deeply rooted in local tradition, which is elevated into a tropology (fictional text from orality), Preller constructs his romantic ‘history’ around historical characters, elevated into a national *volksgeskiedenis*, based on stories and myths of the past. One wonders just how far Preller’s romantic histories lie from Leipoldt’s fictional accounts, of an overlapping period in South African history (1830s – 1930s). Leipoldt lived for 67 years; Preller for 68. The dates of Leipoldt’s texts that eventually ended in *The Valley* text range from 1902 – 1932, a period of thirty years; Preller’s accounts that make up the *volksgeskiedenis* range from *circa* 1905 – 1938, a period of 33 years. Yet the two were diametrically apart as far as cultural and ideological views were concerned.

4.13 — CONCLUSION

This chapter examined the material in Gustav S Preller’s *volksgeskiedenis*, a fully-fledged national, public history which almost single-handedly was constructed by him, made up of

²³⁷Isabel Hofmeyr, ‘Popularizing History: The Case of Gustav Preller’ in *Journal of African History*, 29, 1988, p. 535.

²³⁸*Ibid.*

²³⁹*Ibid.*

²⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 522.

his special form of popularized, highly-romanticized, historical writing as well as other media such as film, pictures and enactments, to propogate such a history. Preller's material was what Leipoldt countered in the form of his oppositional, fictional account in *The Valley*, drawing his *topoi* from a culturally-rich Western tradition. As a means of facilitating an understanding of the opposition/polemic dialectic between Preller and Leipoldt, the so-called Van der Stel controversy was examined as a model to show how a burgher (citizen) public history albeit short-lived (that of Tas and Huising) brought about a response from writers in opposition to it, such as the counter-history constructed in the loyalist-unionist paradigm embraced by Leibbrandt and Fairbridge.