

CHAPTER 5

C LOUIS LEIPOLDT'S LITERARY SUBSTANCE IN THE VALLEY — AN ALTERNATIVE HISTORIOGRAPHY

Pretoria¹ is in spirit and essence merely a magnified village, intensely sensitive to criticism, with sensitiveness of a patriarch out of touch with youth and innovation.
— C Louis Leipoldt writing in *Bushveld Doctor* in 1937.

Chapter 4 discussed the full set of material Gustav S Preller employed in his work from 1902, such as portraying the Voortrekkers in film, writing up the history of the Voortrekkers, his role in establishing basic literary standards for Afrikaans, his contribution to Afrikaans journalism, theatre, and literature, setting up bodies for the promotion of Afrikaans, founding literary and household magazines, and the work he did for the Voortrekker Monument in 1938 – all making up a fully-fledged public heritage-history. Throughout this period of thirty-six years and more, Preller's aim was to develop a historical consciousness for Afrikaners, to build a national spirit by almost subliminally exhorting a response from the soul of the Afrikaner, in the direction of this national spirit. Preller's contribution to the development of an Afrikaner national consciousness through a *volksgeskiedenis*, was considerable.

In Chapter 5, we read how C Louis Leipoldt processed his own life experiences, through his sense of the value of accumulated, local and deep tradition, to write against Preller's *volksgeskiedenis*-construct. Whilst Preller was building a conservative *Volk* consciousness, Leipoldt's English language fiction as in *Gallows Gecko* romanticized the land as a way of patrician settlement in the newly-fledged nation after the establishment of Union. Yet Preller also extolled the virtues of the land, but did so for its vastness and openness (reasons contrary to Leipoldt) which the Voortrekkers came to inhabit, in their conquest. For Preller, the Afrikaners sought peace and security to establish a new country, by seeking personal freedom, which would gradually, but eventually, lead to national freedom. Leipoldt was writing against the racial prejudice of Preller, who felt the necessity for a *Volkstum*, for the future survival of a small number of Caucasians in the face of a majority of Negroid people at the tip of the African continent. Not only the notion of deep-rooted tradition, but also a cosmopolitan mind-set appealed to Leipoldt, formed from his Germanic background, and also

¹Tshwane.

from the way he had travelled extensively in his peregrinations across the entire globe, visiting the United States, living in the United Kingdom (for fourteen years), visiting Eastern and Western Europe and the Far East. Yet, he was the boy from Clanwilliam, where he lived from 1884 to 1897. This is the place where the three novels making up *The Valley* trilogy are set. In fact, the roots (tradition) from Clanwilliam and surrounds gave rise to the metonymic detail of the three fictional novels which (the metonymic detail) forms the literary substance of Leipoldt's sense of accumulated tradition — the set of *topoi* (traditional material) making up this detail is transferred into a metaphorical tropology, the fiction of his novels making up Leipoldt's idea of South African liberal society. This tropology is in motifs such as in the image of the (fictional) well-tended garden in *Stormwrack* —which has in it practical and aesthetical benefit — and becomes a means of class identification, and a focus and image for a liberally emerging South Africa, in contra-distinction to Preller's exclusive idea of a *Volkstum* and public history. Furthermore, it is argued that a liberal spirit gives Leipoldt the material to contest emergent chauvinist nationalism although this topic would require further study and application.

Some have argued, however, that no study of Leipoldt can be complete without his alternative world-view on sexuality. One way of looking at this would be to link this open stance on this topic to his liberal views on race (and an emergent view in Britain from Havelock Ellis). Furthermore, Leipoldt's connection to a Buddhist world-view in opposition to what he believed was the narrow-mindedness and restrictions of Calvinism seems a valid one to explore and this might be taken up further in terms of psycho-sexual analysis. However, for the purposes of this thesis it is proposed to examine Leipoldt's sexuality in the sense already explained, namely as part of his broad world-view, and as a manifestation of universal, unconditional love (a theme in *The Mask*.)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Whilst the three books (*Gallows Gecko*, *Stormwrack* and *The Mask*) of *The Valley* are 'closely related books', each 'complete in itself' they should nevertheless be read in their full force, as a 'sustained ... project' of the 'historical sweep from the 1830s to the 1920s' and because they conduct 'an intense debate on the meaning of liberalism and national sentiment within Leipoldt's contemporary and highly contentious political milieu in the Union of South

Africa between the two world wars.² In this way the narrative strategy of *The Valley* is to engage with the fundamental historiography of the Great Trek. It takes on Preller's foundational myth propagated in his public history made up of a full set of *topoi*, from his Romantic historical writing, journalism, enactments, monuments and memoirs that justify the Voortrekker movement of the 1830s finally establishing itself in Afrikaner independence in the 1850s. Against Preller's sense of tradition, is the Leipoldt argument that it is better to remain and concentrate on the values and benefits accrued in the effluxion of time, to be found in local, deep-rooted, accumulated tradition which is the sustained metaphor for Western civilization to be found in literature and civil society open to all South Africans.

5.2 – THE EMPLOYMENT OF FICTION IN *THE VALLEY*

The role of fiction in novels such as *The Valley* is there for a very specific reason. This sense of tradition can be traced to the social thought of Olive Schreiner, 'renouncing the imperial romance ... and inaugurating an indigenous tradition of liberal realism'³ and as 'being clearly marked by the affinity between the novel as it developed in nineteenth-century Britain and a liberal outlook, with its emphasis on interiority and choice, grounded in a paradoxical conception of the individual as embedded in socio-historical context yet essentially free of social determinants.'⁴ South African literary historian and poet Stephen Gray explains Leipoldt's choice of fiction over history, because he was an artist, and he wished to place more stress on social documentation rather than on individuated life-stories, more on community values than on private aesthetics.⁵ The following from Gray about *The Valley* project is worth noting:

'This strain (using fiction) was familiar and even popular enough from writers like Anthony Trollope and George Gissing, and in the Edwardian period, of which Leipoldt is very much a product, writers of the materialist school, like H.G. Wells and Arnold Bennett, had developed the novel as a vehicle for conveying broad social scenes acted on by the impact of historical change. Leipoldt could co-opt the form more or less unchanged, knowing that it allowed him the undifferentiated all-inclusiveness to carry the cargo of as wide a local history as possible. The social novel was sufficiently rag-bag a form to contain more or less all the material that came to hand indiscriminately. Leipoldt had experience of history-writing and biography, but for these purposes chose

²Peter Merrington, 'C Louis Leipoldt's 'Valley Trilogy' and Contested South African Nationalisms in the Twentieth Century', *Current Writing*, 15(2), October 2003, p. 34.

³*The Cambridge History of South African Literature*, edited by David Attwell and Derek Artridge, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012, p. 479.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Stephen Gray, 'Leipoldt's Valley Community: The Novelist as Archivist', *Social Dynamics*, 10(1), 1984, p. 47.

fiction above history because, according to the conventions of his times, fiction was felt to be more able to transmit the living testimony and the impetus of history than the more selective, “pure, correct official printed” version.⁶

Gray’s explanation is one among several explanations for Leipoldt’s choice of fiction (these are discussed in the thesis). This ‘undifferentiated all-inclusiveness’, as Gray puts it, writing in favour of a unitary state and true universal suffrage⁷ stands against the narrow, exclusive historiography of the Great Trek that Preller constructed over a period of approximately 33 years (1905 – 1938), covering *circa* hundred years of Afrikaner history. One can argue that Leipoldt’s narrative construction for *The Valley* beginning in 1902 at the time of writing his *Oom Gert Vertel*, up to 1932 when the Valley project was completed, more-or-less covered the same time of physical writing as Preller, and the same period that was being written about: 1830s to 1930s. When one considers this it might be thought of as quite an uncanny thing but upon deeper reflection, it is not actually coincidental.

As *The Valley* has the value and virtue of tradition as one of its main if not central themes, several questions could well be asked such as what importance it holds in this context, why does it recur as a theme, what is its role/status in the text, and what is its political or social constituency? To this end, the *The Invention of Tradition* edited by Eric J Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger is a valuable text that throws light on the movement in historical-cultural-heritage studies of the 1980s. It would be possible to study this text in the light of the questions about tradition, asked above. How for instance did this sense of tradition that Leipoldt speaks of, emerge? A possible suggestion is that it could be found in the explanation of the gentrification of South African society of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as explained earlier in the thesis by historians such as Robert Ross.⁸ Furthermore, as Hugh Trevor-Roper in Hobsbawm and Ranger explained the tradition of Highland Scotland, one could do the same and analyse how the invention of tradition in the Cape, particularly the ‘highland’ Cape of the Cederberg, arose.⁹ Hard as might be to prove, one could nevertheless explain the gentrification of the Cape at that time as evolving out of the

⁶Stephen Gray, ‘Leipoldt’s Valley Community: The Novelist as Archivist’, *Social Dynamics*, 10(1), 1984, p. 47.

⁷In Stephen Gray’s Introduction to C Louis Leipoldt’s *Chameleon on the Gallows*, edited by Stephen Gray, p. 12.

⁸R Ross, *Beyond the Pale, essays on the History of Colonial South Africa*, Witwatersrand University Press, 1993, pp. 48 – 49.

⁹H Trevor-Roper in the essay ‘The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland’, pp. 15 *et seq.* in *The Invention of Tradition* edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983.

time of colonial slavery.¹⁰ In the same way that a gentrification occurred in the Cape, the north experienced its own gentrification process for instance, against African tenancies, in the form of white, capitalist agriculture.¹¹ The counterpoise of Cape *versus* northern gentrification is what this study is about, because the one group derived out of the other (the exiled Voortrekkers moved away from the Cape frontier) and Leipoldt is saying the sectarian *animus* of the north is the death-knell of a Western-based culture in South Africa.

Other important writers dealing with the role of fiction in South African literature and literary history are Stephen Gray, J M Coetzee and André Brink.¹² A work that discusses the problem of fiction writing in South African literary history is Michael Cawood Green in his *Novel Histories*.¹³ Green's approach however takes a postmodernist turn, clear by what he says about fiction: 'Fiction, no less than the writing of history, or, for that matter, the constructing of nations, becomes a historicizing form when it so operates upon its material – no longer bound to a particular temporal location, but open to the past, present, and future.'¹⁴ Yet Green 'works hard at avoiding the rather vague areas of agreement that tend to characterise current theoretical debates concerning the plurality, constructedness, positionality, and contingency of literature and history.'¹⁵

Referring to Michael Cawood Green however should not in any way be seen as propagating a postmodernist turn for a theoretical explanation of *The Valley*; on the contrary, as Peter Merrington says, it (*The Valley*) is 'a significant moment in the revision of South African literary history, reflecting an alternative fictionalisation of social thought' and this 'moment' has its place in time (a temporal location) at the end of the full thrust of the three novels, when the prophetic voice of Leipoldt cautions that the politics of the 1920s and 1930s in South African history would result in divisive trends.

¹⁰R Ross, *Beyond the Pale, essays on the History of Colonial South Africa*, Witwatersrand University Press, 1993, p. 48.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²See also another work that discusses the postmodernist novel, André Brink's *The Novel – Language and Narrative from Cervantes to Calvino*, University of Cape Town Press, Cape Town, 1998.

¹³M Green, *Novel Histories: Past, Present and Future in South African Fiction*, Witwatersrand Press, Johannesburg, 1997.

¹⁴Michael Green, 'Social History, Literary History, and Historical Fiction in South Africa', *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 12:2 (1999), p. 130.

¹⁵http://www.michaelcawoodgreen.com/index_files/Page2314.htm.

A further possible explanation for the choice of fiction as a medium for Leipoldt's ideas lies in the timing of its writing. Leipoldt wrote *The Valley* towards the end of the 1920s which was a very significant year in the development of segregation in South Africa. Hertzog introduced the so-called Hertzog Bills in 1926, to eject Africans from the political system. The Mines and Works Amendments Act (Colour Bar Act) No 25 of 1926 replaced the Mines and Works Act of 1911, enforcing the colour bar in the mining industry, thus restricting the opportunities for blacks, and limiting them to the more menial, physical labour-based categories of work. The Immorality Act No 5 of 1927 forbade extra-marital carnal intercourse between whites and Africans. Leipoldt admitted that miscegenation was a subject to be approached with infinite tact, as it relates to colour prejudice and this is very strong in South Africa; and although interracial marriage between white and non-white (*sic*) is deprecated in South Africa and is a criminal offence, he nevertheless admits it is an inevitable thing.¹⁶ It is possible Leipoldt created the character of the adulterer Elias Vantloo, to enter into extra-marital sexual liaisons with the coloured maid, in *The Mask* so as to parody the actions of anyone thinking they could prevent a person from having such relations when the propinquity of the situation conduces to it.

A further reason for Leipoldt possibly choosing fiction as a medium to portray historical events can be found by investigating his close acquaintance with the Roman Catholic cleric, Frederick Charles Kolbe (1854 – 1936), who converted to Catholicism.¹⁷ Leipoldt was a young reporter working in Cape Town at the time he met Dr Kolbe (in 1898) who was responsible every Wednesday and Friday, for the leader for *The South African News*. As the South African War progressed it was becoming increasingly dangerous for pro-Boers to pen articles about the British, which might have resulted in Kolbe resorted to the use of allusion and analogy and satirical writing to protect the newspaper. On one occasion when writing his article Kolbe used the story of *Alice through the Looking-glass*, who saw everything in

¹⁶C Louis Leipoldt in *Bushveld Doctor*, p. 193.

¹⁷Kolbe must have inspired some of Leipoldt's thoughts as a dissident writer, which is the topic (that of a dissident writer) of parts of Chapter 3 of this thesis. See 'Contribution to a bibliography of Frederick Charles Kolbe (1854-1936)' by Joseph Patrick Nolan, University of Cape Town, School of Librarianship, 1957. See also Frederick Hale, 'A Catholic Voice against British Imperialism: F C Kolbe's Opposition to the Second Anglo-Boer War', http://www.unisa.ac.za/default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=7374&P_ForPrint=1. See also F C Kolbe, *Up the Slopes of Mount Zion, or, A Progress from Puritanism to Catholicism*, Benziger, New York, 1924. See Rev F C Kolbe's pamphlet entitled 'The National Crisis' published in 1915 by Wallach's Ltd, Pretoria, in A787 Preller Collection, Volume 258, 24 *et seq.* See how Hans Freyer expressed his doubts publicly but not explicitly, through the use of allusion and analogy, about how in his view the National Socialists in Germany had overcome the egoism he had attributed to bourgeois society – in Jerry Z Muller, *The Other God that Failed – Hans Freyer and the Deradicalization of German Conservatism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1987, p. 6.

‘Topsy-turvy Land’, when the British Constitution no longer applied in the Cape Colony.¹⁸ Kolbe used the medium of satire to criticize the government for imposing martial law, which restricted freedom.¹⁹ One wonders whether, when writing in *Stormwrack* that martial law is the ‘negation of law’²⁰ and creating the character of the magistrate Storam who refers to martial law as a ‘legal fiction’²¹ Leipoldt did not have something of Kolbe in mind, whose writing he admired²² and to whom he deferred with great respect.

Professor Wium van Zyl has likened Leipoldt to the Dutch dissident writer, Multatuli, because of his role in fighting injustice through the pen.²³ This sense of injustice surfaces in *Songs of the Veld* (published in Britain in 1902 and republished by Cederberg Publishers under the editorship of Marthinus van Bart) which contains poems voicing protest against the South African War.²⁴ One of the poems in this publication entitled ‘The Executions in Cape Colony’ under the pseudonym ‘F.W.B.’ is attributed to C Louis Leipoldt. Furthermore, there is a similarity between the novels of Leipoldt (*The Valley*) and Multatuli (*Max Havelaar — 1862*)²⁵ as both work with the idea put forward by the South American writer Mario Vargas Llosa that novels can be used to disguise history.²⁶

Added to this is the point made earlier that Leipoldt might have written *The Valley* to add to the paucity of available South African literature, and in response to the appeal by Galsworthy, referred to earlier. He might well have been writing his novels as a form of protest against the narrower Afrikaans literature he deemed poor especially in his opinion, coming from the likes of Langenhoven (and one imagines he might also have had Preller in mind). Good examples of literature that he was aware of included works by Galsworthy, Mann and

¹⁸In J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, 'n Lewensverhaal*, p. 138.

¹⁹J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, 'n Lewensverhaal*, pp. 138 – 139.

²⁰C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 375.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, 'n Lewensverhaal*, p. 138.

²³Wium van Zyl, ‘Leipoldt as Rebel.’ A paper presented in April 2011 at the Cederberg Festival in Clanwilliam.

²⁴*Songs of the Veld and Other Poems*, edited by and with the Introduction by Marthinus van Bart, Cederberg Publishers, Cape Town, 2008; the book was first published by New Age Press in 1902.

²⁵Multatuli (alias Eduard Douwes Dekker), *Max Havelaar: Or the Coffee Auctions of the Dutch Trading Company*, published in Holland in 1860. The book explains the efforts of the protagonist Max Havelaar who campaigns against a corrupt government system in Java; in a similar way, Leipoldt opposes the British military system (martial law) in South Africa during the South African War, and the attitude of the British authorities towards the two republics.

²⁶For further reading on this topic see D Vela, ‘Terror Through the Eyes of Latin American Novelists’, *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, 18, pp. 7 – 15.

<http://www.shoreline.edu/seanrody/Terror%20Through%20the%20Eyes%20of%20Latin%20American%20Novelists.pdf>

Coperus; and South Africa required its own canon of good literature. Furthermore, by using fiction, Leipoldt was able to express himself more freely, especially in the face of regressing freedom in South African society as a result of the racial and other restrictive policies of the Nationalists.

5.3 – THE LITERARY SUBSTANCE OF *THE VALLEY*

It has been stated that to understand the full logic of *The Valley* in its full sweep and thrust it must be read in its entirety. Leipoldt's meticulously kept and precise pocket diaries provide important detail about *The Valley* project that he undertook between 1928 and 1932.²⁷ The period from 1927 onwards at his home 'Arbury' in Kenilworth, coincided for Leipoldt with one of the most productive periods of his life as a writer.

This Chapter will examine the specific examples and *topoi* that Leipoldt employed as his literary substance that makes up *The Valley*. All three novels contain characters which are sympathetic to Leipoldt's view of tradition and who openly express themselves on this issue. The root of this view on tradition held by Leipoldt lies in his own world-view, stemming from his incredibly humanist-based upbringing under the tutorship of his father and mother, both highly refined individuals, who loved music, literature and culture. Leipoldt's youth was spent avidly reading classic texts in several languages, to include the predominant Dutch, English and other authors. The input from his father, who trained as a missionary and was educated in several fields, such as philosophy and theology, was incalculable. The opportunities to extend his knowledge through reading books in the house and town's library, prepared Leipoldt for this humanist-based education.

His own life experiences as a young adolescent from the time he was twenty-two years old when he left for London to take up studies in medicine, and the subsequent twelve years studying and working there as well as travelling to different places in Europe and the Far East, further forged this cosmopolitan view. His love for studying broad views on theology to include Buddhist systems, as opposed to the narrow Calvinism which was the predominant theological-ideology prevalent among Afrikaners in South Africa at the time, further expanded his horizons. Leipoldt's incredibly wide range of experiences as a journalist from

²⁷BC94; A4.17 (1928) through to A4.22 (1933) (Jagger).

age eighteen seeing for himself the tensions in the Cape Colony from the rise of Imperialism and its eventual effect on the two white elements in South Africa at the time, also broadened his views and together with the missionary morals acquired from his home— although he was not particularly zealous about them — provided him with a balanced, inclusive stance on nationalisms and race.

The comments in the last paragraph require historicization. Much of Leipoldt's work is seen as part of the Afrikaans literary canon, especially for his poetry on the South African War, written at a time the Afrikaner was without much literary history as the Second Language Movement had not yet taken effect. One of South Africa's leading poets at the time of Leipoldt's death in 1947 N P Van Wyk Louw, wrote of him in *Die Burger* on Monday 14 April of that year:

In the days of our greatest distress Leipoldt was the heart of the Afrikaans nation. That was during the time after 1900 when it seemed that our people were finally humiliated and past redemption, when it seemed as if we would disappear from the league of nations without leaving a word of what we could be. Then Leipoldt spoke, gave words to our grief, and allowed this beloved Afrikaans world of ours to shine with love which had grown over hundreds of years. Each tiny flower, each tiny animal of our veld he named as if it would be for the last time. This is the Leipoldt we know best. After him we as a nation may still perish, but it would not be wordless.

According to cultural journalist Marthinus van Bart, Leipoldt was a meticulous and ethical newspaperman who made the miscarriage and perversion of justice practiced by the British authorities in the form of the rule of law (martial law) in South Africa, known the world over.²⁸ Writing in *De Volkstem*²⁹ of 20 January 1914, the Afrikaans Romantic historian Gustav Preller referred to Leipoldt's poetry as a fine example of (Afrikaner) national literature. But, as already mentioned, Leipoldt himself said of his early war poetry that the only person who understood *Oom Gert Vertel* was the Dutch poet Albert Verwey, who saw his words as nothing other than an interpretation of a young person's deep indignation for unjust action and downright injustice, wherever and by whoever.³⁰

J C Kannemeyr, Leipoldt's biographer, saw his poetry as having a 'wider spiritual horizon'

²⁸*Songs of the Veld and Other Poems*, edited by and with the Introduction by Marthinus van Bart, Cederberg Publishers, Cape Town, 2008; the book was first published by New Age Press in 1902, lxxvii.

²⁹Preller was assistant editor of *De Volksstem*, late *De Volkstem*, and later, *Die Volkstem*, from 1903 – 1924 and editor from 1924 – 5.

³⁰C Louis Leipoldt, *Eerste Skoffies*, 1933.

than his contemporaries'.³¹ Whilst it would be wrong to try to disregard Leipoldt's sentiments expressed in his works at the time, about the Afrikaner and his plight, the reference above from Kannemeyer and especially the one from Verwey, show that Leipoldt's views were universal in their application, when it came to the practice of injustice, as in the case of events in South Africa at the time of the South African War and its aftermath. So, when considering Louis Leipoldt as one of the 'Driemanskap' (with Celliers and Totius, and together with Eugène Marais, writing the first serious Afrikaans literary poetry in the early decades of the Twentieth Century, their clear national(ist) thrust as part of the Tweede Afrikaanse Taalbeweging, celebrating the universal effects of nature but also extolling the virtues of forgiveness after the South African War), Leipoldt should be viewed in the light of the preceding paragraphs, as not partisan to any specific nationalistic cause.

Central to *The Valley* is Leipoldt's view of Afrikaner history with its parochial concept of race and language. Thus it can be said that *The Valley* is written against the views held by some of Leipoldt's colleagues and contemporary poets and writers such as Gustav S Preller and C J Langenhoven. As explained in the previous chapter, Gustav S Preller was responsible for constructing a public history for the newly formed Union of South Africa, through his writings from 1905 to 1938, and he employed the Afrikaans language to do so. Although there are differences between the way Preller and Langenhoven saw the role of language, respectively, language was nevertheless viewed as a powerful tool and means of building a national consciousness, and sometimes it was a test of patriotism, for instance, as explained through the voice of the English rector in *The Mask*.³²

An anti-trek sentiment is felt in the voices of several of the characters in *The Valley* as they lament the departure from the Cape Colony, of their compatriots thus abandoning Western European thought and culture. Chapter 6 in *Gallows Gecko* reflects this in the conversation between Everardus Nolte and Pastor Johann Von Bergmann, the wise cleric, modelled on Leipoldt's grandfather: 'I gravely question the propriety of their going', argued Von Bergmann, followed by his statement that there was no just cause for trekking, even though there might have been cause for 'grievance and complaint'.³³ In this light, according to Von Bergmann, 'it would've been better and more courageous for them (the trekkers) to have

³¹J C Kannemeyer, *A History of Afrikaans Literature*, Elaine Ridge (translation), Shuter and Shooter, Pietmaritzburg, 1993.

³²C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 644.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 44.

remained and fought with us to get salvation. It's easy enough to fly from temptation, but a true man fights against it.'³⁴ He continues by emphasizing there was much to do at home, rather than go trekking, and by staying one could build up one's own independence against the British administration: 'That time is coming. Already we have some say, and if the hotheads will only work and have patience, we'll get along much better than by trekking and complaining.'³⁵

In *Stormwrack*, the second of the trilogy, the conversation is between the English rector and Andrew Quakerley. The rector explains the division that exists between the Transvaal north and the Cape south: 'so long as there remains in the north an administration that is definitely antagonistic to England, there'll always be something of that feeling, rector. I confess that the attitude the Transvaal has lately adopted fills me with misgiving.'³⁶ Then there is the direct reference to those who trekked, 'who were dissatisfied here and who deliberately separated themselves from our traditions and adopted their own, which are in many respects not such that all of us can subscribe to them.'³⁷ Those in the north gave up 'substance for shadows.'³⁸

And in *The Mask*, one can argue much the same, viz., the south anti-trek view *versus* the north pro-trek view. Ironically, the character in the novel, the nationalist-inspired Santa takes the Preller line, when she says: 'With all that history of the Great Trek – all that struggle for existence!' against the view from her Aunt Gertrude, from one of the traditional (fictitious) landed gentry families of the Cederberg, who answers: 'It's facing facts and dealing with them, and making up your mind to do what is right and proper even though it goes against the grain. And they never did that. I always thought less of them than most folk do because they trekked and didn't stay behind and fight out their own salvation as our own people did.'³⁹ Against this is the Preller debate (in Santa's words): 'I honour them for it ... they didn't intend to have their souls stifled, and so they went out into the wilderness and made good there.'⁴⁰

³⁴C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 44.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 280.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 280.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 280.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 646.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 646.

The perspective of being rooted in local, deep tradition is directly related to the anti-trek idea and informs the entire trilogy. Whereas Preller lauds the Voortrekkers for their decision to trek, in order to realize their desire for personal and national independence and thus establish their own traditions such as the north-based view of the use of the Afrikaans language, Leipoldt would argue that in fact there is no real tradition for the nation as a whole from these Afrikaner nationalist moves. If anything, Preller's idea of tradition (for Leipoldt) develops into a one-sided, partisan, exclusive, sectionalist, sectarian nationalism, exactly what needs to be avoided if there is to be progress for all in the Union of South Africa. As opposed to Preller's conservatism is Leipoldt's idea in *Gallows Gecko* that the kind of tradition to be found in family dynasties, exist in various forms, for instance, in the way families marry, the congenial relations between English and Afrikaans-Dutch, progress of blacks and scientific patterns in genetics, to name some.

In fact, literary historian Peter Merrington argues that whilst many of the *topoi* such as chivalry, aristocratic families, classical education, tolerance, latitudinarian attitudes, courtesy, high-bred tradition, and more, point to fantasies that are more in the memory than part of Leipoldt's authorial framework — all 'a nostalgia for a perceived gracious past' — through one of the characters Maria Vantloo, as part of her memory, is a summation of the author's views.⁴¹ There are so many examples to cite illustrating the views on tradition, through certain characters in Leipoldt's novels and these are dealt with *seriatim* in the three texts starting with *Gallows Gecko*.

5.4 - GALLOWS GECKO

Before looking at the concept that Leipoldt employs as a central *topos* for *Gallows Gecko*, it is appropriate to view the book in its historical setting. M P O Burgers conceded that it was the intention of Leipoldt to re-work *Gallows Gecko* (from *Galgsalmander*), so that it could become part of the eventual trilogy, *The Valley*.⁴² In this regard it is appropriate to view Stephen Gray's explanation of the 'the three-phase model of colonial history', the structure in which *The Valley* was set up, of which *Galgsalmander* is the first 'phase':

⁴¹Peter Merrington, "C. Louis Leipoldt's 'Valley trilogy' and Contested South African Nationalisms in the Early Twentieth century", *Current Writing*, 15(2), 2003, pp. 42 – 43.

⁴²M P O Burgers, 'C. L. Leipoldt, 'n Studie in Stof-keuse, -verwerking en -ontwikkeling', p. 146.

Galgsalmander, a bucolic comedy set in the Valley, serialized in *Die Huisgenoot* from 30 August, 1929 to 3 January 1930. This was reworked into a more serious and far-reaching novel (*Gallows Gecko*). Settlement by Boer and British, agricultural development up to representative government (1835 – 1845).⁴³

According to Gray, Leipoldt used the material he gathered for his Afrikaans novel, through oral history, for ‘the construction and composition of a sequence of four historical novels dealing with analogous material in English’.⁴⁴ Gray has compiled an important paper about the value of ‘the related aspects of interpreting historical fiction as historical source material.’⁴⁵ Leipoldt uses the fiction from ‘living oral history ... converted ... into written Afrikaans documentation.’⁴⁶ *The Valley* is a good example of this as the fiction in it is limited to a very specific and demarcated area reflecting ‘one coherent South African community’; and because many of its actual historical records were destroyed by accident.⁴⁷ Researching from these fictional sources, the researcher working in such an area will have to note that she/he will be working with sources which are not ‘of the more routine scientific nature.’⁴⁸

In *Gallows Gecko* Leipoldt reported on the state of South Africa’s cultural and constitutional development at the time and the transition to a period of liberalism with the establishment of the Cape Parliament in 1853, a start in the process towards ‘a common ideal of self-independence’ as we gather from the following excerpt:

The book describes conditions in the Cape Colony at the beginning of the reign of Queen Victoria. It deals more especially with the Dutch speaking element in the population, but gives a glimpse of the relations, amicable and neighbourly, that existed between them and their English speaking fellow settlers. It shows the Valley at peace, developing in a way that promises to lead, ultimately, to national unity and the realization of a common ideal of self-independence.⁴⁹

The way in which Leipoldt constructed his historical fictional narrative in *Galgsalmander*, traces the gradual cultural and political ‘growth’ of a resident of the Valley whose arrival

⁴³Stephen Gray, ‘Leipoldt’s Valley Community: The Novelist as Archivist’, *Social Dynamics*, 10(1), 1984, p. 50.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁷Stephen Gray, ‘Leipoldt’s Valley Community: The Novelist as Archivist’, *Social Dynamics*, 10(1), 1984, p. 46. The fire that destroyed the official documents in Clanwilliam, razed government offices housing important documentation about Clanwilliam (1901).

⁴⁸Stephen Gray, ‘Leipoldt’s Valley Community: The Novelist as Archivist’, *Social Dynamics*, 10(1), 1984, p. 46.

⁴⁹BC94 A7.5 (Jagger).

there around 1840, after slavery had been abolished, is rendered as mysterious. He is Amadeus Tereg, a civil servant working in the Cape Colony in the early nineteenth century, and on a single occasion he acted as an executioner to earn extra money. Ashamed of his past, he decides to go somewhere with his family where he could be *incognito* and eventually changes his name to Everardus Nolte. He carefully selects a place on the other side of the mountain ranges, close to the Village, which is the place recognizable as Clanwilliam, the town along the Olifants River where Leipoldt himself grew up.

Thus, when writing *Galgsalmander*, Leipoldt could base the types on, and draw the characters in his novel from, his recollections of the past and characters of the past he either knew or knew of. In this respect it is true when M P O Burgers said that the community featured in *Galgsalmander* was sketched more or less from the memories from Leipoldt's childhood as 'aspects of interpreting historical fiction as historical source material', and the process of shifting from 'orality to literacy'.⁵⁰ Leipoldt is thus a classic example of the scribe of oral tales; as a recorder of near-forgotten stories and a cultural archivist.⁵¹ The following meticulous English translation by Stephen Gray explains this further (a rather lengthy passage is necessary):

As a child, Clanwilliam's child, I heard at third-hand how Clanwilliam came into being. Above the floodgate, there were a few Coloured families, among whom still survived a few old ones, either descendants of slaves or who had been slaves themselves. One I can remember now perfectly well; she had a gaunt, thin, impressive build and always called to my mind the Witch of Doré's drawing. She had been a slave, together with old Karools, whom I believe still lives in Saron, and for hours on end she could tell us what happened in the old days. Half blind in the one eye, she could still see reasonably well with the other; but even more, and for a child much more important, she could squint with her good eye in a way that her face took on an expression of aloof mysteriousness. And what didn't we just hear from her. All the stories of how Clanwilliam came into being, the history of Coenrad Fiet, which I briefly told in "Dinsdagaand", the adventures of the first inhabitants of Roodezand and Patrysberg; the legends about One-eye and Foot-eye and the diamond-crowned serpent that lived in the hippo pools at the bottom of the gardens.

Oral transmission, as Dieulafoy said, is the best material for making history. The best we possess is founded in tradition. And so tradition — the tradition which is now half forgotten and threadbare — is more reliable and better than the recorded history of Clanwilliam. We don't know too much of that pure, correct official printed history, either. Many items have become lost; many others were burnt when the public offices burnt down in 1902. In my years as a child the old people still knew the tradition.

⁵⁰Stephen Gray, 'Leipoldt's Valley Community: The Novelist as Archivist', *Social Dynamics*, 10(1), 1984, p. 46.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 47.

They used to tell us how Fiet murdered the cattle-dealers, right where the Augsburg orphanage stands today; how old ‘miesies’ — in those days we never talked of ‘madam’, it was always ‘miesies’ — how ‘miesies’ so and so thrust her slaves into the baking oven ...⁵²

Yet *Gallows Gecko* does not just rely on orality but has with it some of Leipoldt’s own research, for instance, his interest in the Swanepoel murder case.⁵³ Thus, it is possible that Leipoldt draws his character Amadeus Tereg from a real person, who on a single occasion acted as a hangman. Leipoldt’s jottings give some indication of a family tree for the writing of *Gallows Gecko*, but the extent to which this is based on historical data is difficult to say.⁵⁴ From what can be established in these jottings, however, is that a certain Amadeus Tereg was born in 1808, and Magriet de Lerch in 1808, which might be a link to real people, on which these two characters in *Gallow Gecko* are based (and Magriet is the name of Amadeus’s spouse, in the fiction). According to Leipoldt’s genealogical table the couple married in 1829. Stephen Gray therefore gives the time frame of *Gallows Gecko* from 1835 – 1845. Given that Tereg’s wife inherited a fortune from one of her relatives, and that Tereg tried to evade the ignominy he has been caused from acting as a hangman, it is possible that he and his family would have ventured to the Valley around about this time (1835), and therefore the fiction seems to be synchronic with the facts.

Tereg (who changes his name to Everardus Nolte) is well-received by the local community and acquires a humanist-based education in etiquette, outlook and human rights from the more well-established members of the Valley, such as Martin Rekker and Uncle Dorie, as well as the wise cleric, Pastor Johann von Bergmann. He ends up serving the Valley community by becoming the District’s first representative in the newly established Cape Parliament in 1853 shaking off his ignominious past in the process. The story of *Galgsalmander* ends when the eccentric schoolmaster Pierre Mabuis (nicknamed Tins) reforms and marries a widow with a dowry, and goes on honeymoon to a place that is recognizable as Cape Town. Interestingly enough however, as Stephen Gray shows, Leipoldt

⁵²C Louis Leipoldt, ‘Clanwilliam: herinneringe aan ’n Ou Dorpie’, *Die Huisgenoot*, 5 November 1926. I am indebted to Stephen Gray for the translation which is from page 47 in his article, ‘Leipoldt’s Valley Community: The Novelist as Archivist’, *Social Dynamics*, 10(1), 1984. The fire was 1901 not 1902.

⁵³M P O Burgers, *C. L. Leipoldt, ’n Studie in Stof-keuse, -verwerking en -ontwikkeling*, p. 146. There is extensive reference in Burgers, to Swanepoel.

⁵⁴BC 94 A5.8 (Jagger).

felt he could have done more with the story of Everardus Nolte in the novel at the time.⁵⁵ Leipoldt probably got bored with writing it.

Gallows Gecko includes insightful social and political commentary as well as more autobiographical detail than its Afrikaans version, *Galgsalmander*.⁵⁶ Gray explains that between the time of writing *Galgsalmander* and *Gallows Gecko*, Leipoldt's insights changed because he was researching his article for the *Cambridge History of the British Empire*.⁵⁷ As a result of the research required for such a project, and in the cross-over from writing in English to Afrikaans, Leipoldt developed 'a theory of the social evolution of South Africa' expressed as follows by Gray:

"The Valley trilogy" turns into a virtually step by step illustration of the theory; *Chameleon on the Gallows* is where this process begins in all its sombre, sweeping detail. As Leipoldt crosses from Afrikaans into English his sensibility really profoundly changes.⁵⁸

Furthermore, as 'scribe of its oral tales, as the recorder of its near-forgotten traditional history and, in effect, as its cultural archivist'⁵⁹ and working as an artist, Leipoldt could place 'the stress more on social documentation than on individuated life-stories, more on community values than on private aesthetics'.⁶⁰ Whilst a novel of fiction, *Gallows Gecko* nevertheless has the status of being a combination of things – causerie, a collection of ligatures about issues that affect us to this day in South Africa's complex history, issues such as race, health, class, convention, culture and politics. In this sense, Leipoldt's fiction can become very useful for an understanding of South African history of the time.

⁵⁵Stephen Gray in the 'Introduction' to C Louis Leipoldt's, *Chameleon on the Gallows*, (ed Stephen Gray), Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, Pretoria, Johannesburg, 2000.

⁵⁶M P O Burgers, 'C. L. Leipoldt, 'n Studie in Stof-keuse, -verwerking en -ontwikkeling', p. 149.

⁵⁷*The Cambridge History of the British Empire VIII*, Chapter XXXII, 'Cultural Development' (General Editors A P Newton & E A Benians), (Advisor in South Africa, E A Walker), 'South Africa, Rhodesia and the Protectorates', Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1936, pp. 844 – 873. See the entry by Leipoldt in his diary of 22 November 1929 in BC94 A4.18 – he writes: 'Started my art. for Walker History is a damned nuisance'. (*sic*) The dates in his diary for 1929 reflect the time he started and when he ended with this project: on 16 November 1929 he thought out his scheme; on 22 November he started writing; by 9 December he had completed writing (and said: 'jolly glad for it was boring me stiff'); and on 15 December he had completed the final re-write of what he calls his 'article on Cultural development for Walker history' (the renowned historian E A Walker being the person Leipoldt refers to).

⁵⁸Stephen Gray in his 'Introduction' to C Louis Leipoldt, *Chameleon on the Gallows*, Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, Pretoria, Johannesburg, 2000, pp. 10 – 11.

⁵⁹Stephen Gray, 'Leipoldt's Valley Community: The Novelist as Archivist', *Social Dynamics*, 10(1), 1984, p. 47.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

Chapter 1 of *Gallows Gecko* introduces an idyllic landscape with high-bounding hills ‘rising four thousand feet above the flatlands that stretch to the sea.’ This is a landscape of the mind of Leipoldt, but also physical, geographic places ‘that were landmarks for the old Portuguese navigators’.⁶¹ By writing these lines, Leipoldt traces the history of the place to one of the earliest engagements when Western Europeans ventured into South African waters. In his poem ‘’n Voorspel vir ’n Afrikaanse heldedig’ Leipoldt celebrates Vasco Da Gama and Bortholomeu Dias, as a sea-giant and admiral respectively, for their great and heroic deeds of discovery, as the foster-fathers of the history of South Africa and inaugurator of the way to the East, a place much loved by Leipoldt.⁶²

At the centre of Luis De Camões’s epic poem published in 1572 entitled *The Lusíads*, is Vasco Da Gama’s pioneer voyage to southern Africa in 1497, on his way to India. It is possible that Leipoldt had this poem in mind when compiling his own poem.⁶³ Interesting to note, however, is the dialectic between Leipoldt’s heroes, and Preller’s hero, respectively, the Portuguese navigators of the Renaissance carrying the Astrolabe and Cross to other parts of the world, *versus* Piet Retief, who decided to trek away from the Cape, leaving behind its liberal, Western civilization albeit in limited form, for the wide open spaces of the northern land.

Furthermore, the early pioneers who came to inhabit the hinterland of the Cape such as in the Cederberg are described by Leipoldt in the idyllic setting of flowers, hot springs, and teaming game of the Hantam Karoo. On his way into this beautiful area Nolte ‘passed through the valley and his imagination was captured by its wonderful beauty, its serenity, its boundless possibilities.’⁶⁴ In this setting and with congenial neighbours showing ‘old-world courtesy’, Nolte set forth to acquire a piece of land, as there was ‘much unoccupied, vacant land – government land ... that could be bought for a pittance.’⁶⁵ Here we see Leipoldt’s strong views on the value of diligence and work (*arbeid adel*), hence Nolte’s desire to ‘labour at and improve (the land) with a chance of seeing the result of his labour before he was too old and spent to care much for what life could still give.’ In Chapter 3 of *Gallows Gecko* we read of the praiseworthy way in which Thomas Seldon and Andrew Quakerley were ‘two outstanding

⁶¹C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p.5.

⁶²C Louis Leipoldt, ‘’n Voorspel vir ’n Afrikaanse heldedig’ in *Versamelde Gedigte*, compiled by J C Kannemeyer, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1980, pp. 129 – 140.

⁶³J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, ’n Lewensverhaal*, p. 255.

⁶⁴C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 6.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

examples of newcomers who by grit, patient hard work and adaptation to their new environment had made good.⁶⁶

These descriptions are in contrast to ‘undiscovered territory’, into which ‘those complaining burghers ... had trekked beyond the great river to find in the no-man’s-land beyond a refuge where they could be safe from the exactions of a government they disliked.’⁶⁷ These are the trekkers Leipoldt was criticizing and the same people that Preller celebrated for the courage to trek, unlike the men and women who held it ‘more manly and courageous to remain and fight the evils they complained of than to throw down the reins in despair and seek salvation in flight.’⁶⁸ It was men like Nolte that Leipoldt admired, who ‘in that beautiful valley, on his own land, as his own master – (he) would play his part, win new friends and take his due share in the affairs of a new community.’⁶⁹ It is in this sense that Peter Merrington says of *Gallows Gecko*: ‘These ligatures bind and give purpose to the frame, which is the exemplary tale of Everardus Nolte’s own development as a farmer, citizen, and good neighbour, in a combination of Bildungsroman, romantic story-line, natural observation, and social comedy.’⁷⁰ Coming to the Valley as he did, will expose Nolte to the true values of local, deep tradition, as will be seen from the ensuing paragraph.

It is almost as if Leipoldt applied Buddhist tendencies, enabling the character to redeem his ignominious past through good works. Nolte’s assimilation into the Valley community is gradual, assisted and supported by many friends, such as the already-mentioned ‘Uncle Dorie’ (the utilitarian Doremus Van Aard) and Martin Rekker (the essence of ‘old-world stateliness and dignified courtesy’).⁷¹ Here we see Leipoldt employ one of his *topoi*, namely strong genes/genetics. The Rekkers were the real aristocrats of the Valley, genetically ‘taller, sturdier, better-proportioned ... healthy and fresh ... fair ... their musculature excellently well developed; their carriage and poise admirable.’⁷² But also important in the social relations in the Valley are the missionaries, which historically make up Leipoldt’s own family and forebears, his parents having been missionaries (Leipoldt modelled the character of the

⁶⁶C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 17.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁷⁰Peter Merrington, “C. Louis Leipoldt’s ‘Valley trilogy’ and Contested South African Nationalisms in the Early Twentieth century”, *Current Writing*, 15(2), 2003, p. 38.

⁷¹C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 22.

⁷²*Ibid.*, p. 23.

wise cleric Pastor Von Bergmann on his dearly beloved maternal grandfather, head of the Rhenish Mission Station in Adderley Street, Worcester, Cape Colony).

On an occasion, one of the characters in *The Valley Doremus* (Uncle Dorie) decided it was time to introduce Everardus to the missionaries at Neckerthal (the fictitious name for Wupperthal), where they would stay a few days. They would stay at the home of the Reverend and Mrs Uhlmann, who headed up the Station (Leipoldt's paternal grandparents). Visiting at the Station at the time, was Pastor Von Bergmann. Leipoldt greatly admired his maternal grandfather, drawing the character Brother Von Bergmann from him, describing him thus: 'a broad-shouldered, brown-haired, clean-shaven man with a determined chin, cleft in a dimple, and a finely modelled head, broad in the forehead, high above the ears – a man carpentered by nature on ample lines, forceful, virile, impressive.'⁷³ The conversation between Von Bergmann and Nolte centre on a number of points and issues, from the value of a European-based education, the role of missionaries in society, that hard-work is ennobling, to intellectual and cultural discourse of European developments, and also topics that show a cosmopolitan and broad moral universe. These topics or typical points of discussion (*topoi*) in the fiction are what Leipoldt uses as part of the substance which he elevates into a metaphor for civilized behaviour and etiquette, as the German missionaries subtly and didactically provide Nolte with an education.

Unbeknown to Nolte, Von Bergmann knows about his ignominious past (having on an occasion been a hangman). This angers Nolte, when he realises it, but his fears are allayed after a frank discussion between them. More importantly, however, is the way Von Bergmann enlightens Nolte in racial affairs, and one can only imagine this is Leipoldt's own voice as a political liberal coming through, urging 'a man on to self-sacrifice, to duty ... tradition' but not the tradition of subserviency (such as slavery).⁷⁴ The question of the trekkers comes up in their discussion (Leipoldt's own anti-trek sentiments), whom Nolte does not hold with but does not judge — as opposed to Von Bergmann who confesses he judges them (the trekkers) because they should have stayed as others did and work out their destiny in the Cape.⁷⁵ These and the aforementioned points of discussion between Von Bergmann and Nolte, in the words of Peter Merrington, are:

⁷³C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 28.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 37 – 38.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 38.

‘framed by the idea of a liberal Cape tradition. Tradition is exemplified in terms of family dynasties, in several dimensions: from the topics of genealogy and of progress, the arrival of the settlers in the Valley in the 1830s, the establishment of farmsteads, the co-operation between the English and Dutch, negotiations over marriage, questions of bequests and inheritance, to the speculative issues of social Darwinism and the cultural maturity of blacks, and the equally speculative ‘tradition’ of genetic patterns, genetic legacies, eugenics, and the scientific as well as social implications of consanguinity, inter-racial marriage, and creolisation.’⁷⁶

The qualities of beauty in the human face of Martin Rekker are described: ‘a handsome man, an aristocratic type that in youth must have attracted anyone with a sense of beauty ...’ and ‘from a race finely-framed and belonging to the best Nordic stock.’⁷⁷ The foil to the aesthetical beauty of Rekker is Doremus Van Aard (who accompanied Nolte to Neckerthal), ‘totally different in appearance, a short, comfortably fleshy man whose round, chubby face, almost equally round short-cropped head and podgy hands could not for a moment be compared with those of his friend.’⁷⁸ The fact that Leipoldt makes this comparison strengthens the possibility of an interest in aesthetical appearance in certain males although, it must be conceded, this might not be the only reason he does this.

The image of facial aesthetics is a strong feature of class and society, of the writing of British novelist John Galsworthy in his trilogy, *The Forsyte Saga*, written between 1906 and 1921. Swithin Forsyte was shaven with a square old face; and James Forsyte was tall and lean, his cheeks thinned by two parallel folds and a long, clean-shaven upper lip. At the head of the Forsytes was Jolyon, eighty years of age but with his ‘fine, white hair, his dome-like forehead’, ‘had a partriarchal look’ and ‘gave an impression of superiority to the doubts and dislikes of smaller men.’⁷⁹ This is similar to the way Leipoldt compares Rekker with Van Aard in *Gallows Gecko*.

Stephen Gray refers to Leipoldt’s impeccable style in the school of Anthony Trollope or John Galsworthy.⁸⁰ Allusions to *The Forsyte Saga* can be found in descriptions such as: ‘a certain steadfastness of chin, underlying surface distinctions, marking a racial stamp, too prehistoric to trace, too remote and permanent to discuss — the very hall-mark and guarantee

⁷⁶Peter Merrington, “C. Louis Leipoldt’s ‘Valley trilogy’ and Contested South African Nationalisms in the Early Twentieth century”, *Current Writing*, 15(2), 2003, p. 38.

⁷⁷C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, pp. 11 – 12.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷⁹John Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga*, Heinemann/Octopus, 1976, p. 14.

⁸⁰Stephen Gray in C Louis Leipoldt, *Stormwrack*, Human and Rousseau, Cape Town, Pretoria, Johannesburg, 2000, p. 5.

of the family fortunes.’⁸¹ The descriptions in *Gallows Gecko* of characters Martin Rekker *et al* in the paragraphs immediately above resonate with Galsworthy; furthermore what Gray has to say about Galsworthy and Trollope, that they are ‘typical of English-speaking liberal traditionalists of a certain period ...’ is an interesting link for this chapter.⁸² It is suggested that Galsworthy’s reference to ‘racial stamp’ as in the description above could resonate with the term ‘Nordic stock’ used by Leipoldt in *Gallows Gecko*, and the term ‘White stock’ used by Professor Gilder in his article about Leipoldt, considered necessary by Leipoldt for good breeding, as, ‘after a couple of generations the population would otherwise begin to degenerate.’⁸³

From the above, one can deduce that Leipoldt writes about some of his characters to make them seem genetically strong and sturdy, showing an interest in genetics, and at the same time to accentuate their physiognomic aesthetical appearances, which is in line with other writers of the same era, Galsworthy serving as a good example. The points made in the above paragraphs about the similarities between Galsworthy and Leipoldt’s descriptions by no means lie outside the bounds of possibility, since writing in *De Volkstem* of 20 November 1926, Leipoldt referred to the family saga in Galsworthy’s *The Forsyte Saga*, acknowledging Thomas Mann’s *Buddenbrooks* as its forerunner.⁸⁴ He clearly was aware of these literary works.

The point therefore can be made, in view of Galsworthy’s character sketches, and what Leipoldt writes in *The Valley*, as in the above paragraphs, that he features and characterizes certain men in a certain style, in order to position them in a social standing (and as genetically strong), as successful and confident – in this manner, Leipoldt is showing an attitude towards men in their social standing, in a sophisticated sense, and not in a boorish, bucolic way as those who trekked, lived.

This point is still further borne out by descriptions of the strong physical and genetic features of certain male members of the Valley and also some of their aesthetical qualities as reflected in another passage from *Gallows Gecko*, where we read of the ‘good health’ and ‘physical

⁸¹John Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga*, Heinemann/Octopus, London, 1976, p. 15.

⁸²Stephen Gray in C Louis Leipoldt, *Stormwrack*, Human and Rousseau, Cape Town, Pretoria, Johannesburg, 2000, p. 5.

⁸³S S B Gilder, ‘Leipoldt the Editor’, *South African Medical Journal*, 6 December 1980, p. 928.

⁸⁴This reference is in J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, 'n Lewensverhaal*, p. 480.

perfection of most of its male members.⁸⁵ They seemed ‘taller, sturdier, better-proportioned than the men he had lived with in his old district’, and:

their complexions, though tanned by the sun-glare, were healthy and fresh, in the younger ones fair almost to transparency; their musculature excellently well developed; their carriage and poise admirable.⁸⁶

The value of being rooted in tradition is seen by the way (contrary to the way writers of farm novels would generally show the pathos and grievances of the farming community) Leipoldt placed the emphasis of his fictional novel on ‘questions of progress, construction, and the integrity of this diversely-constituted social fabric.’⁸⁷ This is seen by the way Nolte constructs his farm with support from the likes of Doremus: ‘Uncle Dorie had even hinted that at the next election of office bearers it might be a good thing to propose him for the office of deacon, which in time would lead to the more responsible senior position of elder.’⁸⁸ Even with the ignominy hanging over his head, Nolte was nevertheless accepted into the community as an Afrikaander:

‘Some of them, like Uncle Martin, respected him (Nolte) less for these gifts than for what they found in his nature and his temperament, but they recognised that he was an acquisition to the district and placed him in the same category wherein they had already listed Quakerley and the Seldons, remarking, when they did so that Nephew Everard was at any rate superior to these latter inasmuch as he was indubitably one of their own people, even if they knew not whence he came or who his father and grandfather had been.’⁸⁹

A further topos is the position and attitude held by Leipoldt on the question of the characteristics of race, what differentiates people based on the colour of their skin, and the attitude of white people to blacks, referred to by Merrington as ‘the speculative issues of social Darwinism, and the cultural maturity of blacks.’⁹⁰ Discussions on these topics in the novel take place between Nolte and Von Bergmann, wise to the composition of a person’s soul, spirit, and attitude on race, as well as having his own missionary’s politically liberal idea, and therefore possibly the spokesman for Leipoldt’s views on race: ‘The missionary amazed Everardus by his breadth of outlook ... ’and ‘that if all races had the same chances,

⁸⁵C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 23.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*

⁸⁷Peter Merrington, “C. Louis Leipoldt’s ‘Valley trilogy’ and Contested South African Nationalisms in the Early Twentieth century”, *Current Writing*, 15(2), 2003, p. 38.

⁸⁸C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 50.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁹⁰Peter Merrington, “C. Louis Leipoldt’s ‘Valley trilogy’ and Contested South African Nationalisms in the Early Twentieth century”, *Current Writing*, 15(2), 2003, p. 39.

the same opportunities, there wouldn't be marked differences between them.'⁹¹ It goes without saying that such views are in total opposition to the conservative attitudes that Preller and many Afrikaners held on this topic.

The anti-trek motif is perpetuated in the novel, seen by the residents of the Valley when confronted by some or other 'pestilential fellow' who came to collect money for the exiled trekkers. The chapter discusses the question of national feeling, 'a complex of slow growth, the product of various emotions that react differently on different individuals ... developed by factors and conditions that antagonise as much as they may tend to encourage the cultural progress of a people, and it is directed into channels that may or may not benefit communal solidarity.'⁹²

An interesting counterpoise between Leipoldt and Preller lies in the way festivals and celebrations are portrayed. On the one hand, for instance, as in Chapter 10 of *The Valley* Leipoldt demonstrates the joyous festivities and celebrations around the birthday of Alexandrina Victoria, the figure-head queen to Colonials and Boers alike — until attitudes change as allegiances become split during the South African War. But in the 1880s there is still this bond between Boer and Colonial, and even blacks are included in the celebrations, around their beloved Alexandrina Victoria. The same kind of unity however cannot be said for the celebrations in the northern districts, such as Dingaans Day, which are very specific to the Afrikaners. These divisions in attitudes are perpetuated in Chapter 11 which further discusses the relations between the nationalities in South Africa, confessing that (referring to that time) 'today [they are] not yet what they might or should be', and that it was a matter of 'mutual respect in a community' that holds the community together, also when it comes to respecting newcomers such as 'the Seldons, as fair representatives of the English but — unconsciously or subconsciously — it clung to the idea that they did not represent England and — equally subconsciously — it ranked them very much in the same category in which it had placed the trekkers', until 'the newcomers had shown themselves proven fellow-citizens was it prepared to accept them as co-equals'.⁹³ The same argument applied to the aristocratic Quakerleys.

⁹¹C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 57.

⁹²*Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁹³*Ibid.*, pp. 85 – 86.

Underlying the way the English were ‘accepted’ is Merrington’s point that later, as the drive towards Union took place, it remained an ideal promoted by political lobbies but that ‘once Afrikaner or Dutch national interests had been secured, however, it remained largely a rhetorical sentiment among anglophile, cosmopolitan, empire-loyalist and more-or-less liberal white South Africans’.⁹⁴ History was to show that any chance of ‘nation-building’ received a blow in the 1924 elections when the Afrikaners gained power in the Pact with the Labour Party. This outcome however never detracted from Leipoldt’s hopes for a national South African cultural unity/federation.

A further range of topics is debated in the novel such as religion, the distinction between papism and Calvinism, negotiations over marriage: which ‘in matters of faith, social custom, education and ethics, the church decreed and the valley followed.’⁹⁵ The value of High Dutch as opposed to the use of Afrikaans, was very much a debate in the Cape, as opposed to the northern parts of the country, where Gustav Preller and others promoted the writing and speaking of Afrikaans as a medium — the following paragraph makes the distinction between the two languages, the much broader Dutch being the preferred language of learning for Leipoldt:

In those days this variation of the parent language – now called Afrikaans, which differs from high Dutch in its disregard of inflexions, its peculiar construction of sentences and its predilection for the use of the double negative and of diminutives – had not attained the dignity of official or semi-official recognition. The valley spoke it to its native servants, whose only language it was, to its children who had not yet mastered the grammatical high Dutch, and familiarly when it conversed *inter pares* about commonplace things. It never dreamed of using it when it addressed the Deity, officialdom or superiors, for then high Dutch was imperative; and the valley kept its high Dutch singularly pure and free from alien admixture. Seniors like Uncle Martin and Uncle Dorie spoke it with almost as good an accent, and certainly as grammatically correctly, as did the Reverend Mr de Smee, who had received his education in Holland and could converse in several languages including Arabic. For the Reverend Sybrand had passed his superior examination and had obtained his *Acte Classicale*, which permitted him to write the letters VDM after his name and qualified him for an appointment in the East Indies. To obtain these distinctions, as everyone knew, he had had to prove his knowledge not only of the classics but also of oriental languages, and although he protested that these acquirements rusted very soon through disuse, it was generally understood that when he went to Cape Town he practised his Arabic on a Malay Imam and talked Latin with the learned pastor at the Paarl. In the valley the Reverend Sybrand represented the acme of culture, and it was perhaps well for the

⁹⁴Peter Merrington, “C. Louis Leipoldt’s ‘Valley trilogy’ and Contested South African Nationalisms in the Early Twentieth century”, *Current Writing*, 15(2), 2003, p. 34.

⁹⁵C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 100.

valley that such was the case, for the pastor was a mild-mannered, gentle-souled man whose influence made itself felt far beyond his immediate environment.⁹⁶

Neither did the workers of the salt pans evade Leipoldt's eye as social commentary, perhaps as a counterpoise to the poor white problem that was more a phenomenon of the north. It was Uncle Dorie who when he had gone hunting one day when holidaying at Lamberts Bay, found 'a community of men, women and children who lived a life of their own, apart, in squalid misery – mitigated by their philosophical resignation, their patient acceptance of hardship and poverty, and their sturdy, hard-working independence.'⁹⁷ There are further social issues that appear in *Gallows Gecko*, such as the consanguinity, inter-racial marriage and creolization raised by Merrington.⁹⁸ The inclusion of these topics in *The Valley* are to show the opposite of progress, and a sympathy for these communities. However it might be that Leipoldt was discussing issues such as breeding and genetics, topical at the time. For instance, we read that these were 'silent, almost morose folk ... but hardy and sun-tanned ... their skins showed milk white against the brown of the water' with 'their proportions, for a vigorous open-air life had moulded their limbs far better than any course of exercises designed for that purpose could have done. The men were strapping, upstanding fellows, bearded six-footers with long, sinewy, hairy arms.'⁹⁹

In contradistinction were the excellent stock such as the Quakerleys, descendants from England, who believed that race and descent – however intangible they might be – were nevertheless things that counted and that carried with them obligations as well as privileges in addition to which someone such as Old Andrew was incredibly well-read in the Classics. Leipoldt uses Quakerley to illustrate the difference in language, culture and outlook, between English and Dutch-Afrikaans, and that 'compared to you English (we are) so badly off that we must constantly fight not to be overwhelmed by you, with your immense resources, your language, your culture.'¹⁰⁰

As the book draws to an end it becomes clear that Nolte's secret is exposed but that the Valley community accepts it and in fact is pleased with his nomination in 1854 as

⁹⁶C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 101.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁹⁸Peter Merrington, "C. Louis Leipoldt's 'Valley trilogy' and Contested South African Nationalisms in the Early Twentieth century", *Current Writing*, 15(2), 2003, p. 38.

⁹⁹C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 118.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, p. 149.

representative of the valley district in the newly formed liberal Cape Parliament. The above paragraphs illustrate some of the *topoi* associated with the value and virtue of being rooted, in local, deep tradition, a mind-set and world-view that developed as a result of a number of factors in, and influences on his life, such as education, race, genetics, cultural advancement, to name some. The central topic (being rooted in deep, local tradition) informs the entire logic of *The Valley* as an oppositional text to the fully-fledged, national *volksgeskiedenis* propagated by Gustav S Preller.

5.5 – *STORMWRACK*

The second novel *Stormwrack* was written between 12 July 1930 and 31 January 1932. The book is described in the following synoptic form by Stephen Gray as a:

chronicle realist novel, cottage industry and specialized agriculture (1895 – 1902). Analysis of a community which follows an alternative to the Trekker myth, on which the Second Anglo-Boer War recoils as an invasion back into Cape territory.¹⁰¹

There are different versions of the manuscripts for *Stormwrack* housed in the Manuscripts and Archives of the University of Cape Town Libraries. In addition there is the 500 foolscap-page typescript with the missing title page in the Africana Collection of the Cape Town Branch of the National Library of South Africa. Stephen Gray's edited version of *Stormwrack*, as is fully explained in his 'Introduction', is housed with the Manuscripts and Archives at the University of Cape Town Libraries.¹⁰² One reason there are several manuscripts of the same text is because Leipoldt successively worked at tidying them up – his own methods were slapdash and he was not nearly methodical enough for them to appear ready for publishing. The current edition of *The Valley* used the TSS of 'Leipoldt's own last edition of each of the novels.'¹⁰³

As a sequel to *Gallows Gecko*, *Stormwrack* shows the descendants of certain of the characters 'under totally altered conditions that existed at the end of Queen Victoria's reign.'¹⁰⁴ The following summing-up is what Leipoldt said about it. The hero, Andrew Quakerley, the son of an English aristocrat, is well-respected among both the English and

¹⁰¹Stephen Gray, 'Leipoldt's Valley Community: The Novelist as Archivist', *Social Dynamics*, 10(1), 1984, p. 50.

¹⁰²BC94 A7.13.2 (Jagger).

¹⁰³C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, 2001, p. vii; BC94 A7.13 (Jagger).

¹⁰⁴BC94 A7.6 (Jagger).

Dutch inhabitants of the Valley and his pride and joy is his garden. When the South African War breaks out he tries his best to keep the district quiet but the allegiances of the Cape Afrikaner and English-speaking South Africans have changed because they have relatives on both sides fighting in the war. Leipoldt explains that at this time ‘there was practically civil war in the Cape Colony’.¹⁰⁵ The war affects Andrew Quakerley himself — his ‘ingrained English ideal’ changes and he ‘finds himself more and more in sympathy with his neighbours.’¹⁰⁶ In this way, Leipoldt is expanding on the point of contested nationalisms as he shows how Andrew gradually turns away from his own nationalism (just as Preller had his own idea of nationalism) and begins to accept a more true South African nationalism.

Stormwrack, which was written after the other two books in the trilogy had already been completed, was re-worked by Leipoldt from novellas, *De Rebel* (1900) and *The Rebel* (1904) and the monologue *Oom Gert Vertel* (1911). The inspiration for these works were born out of Leipoldt’s experiences from witnessing the war as a reporter, and a war journalist and correspondent writing for overseas newspapers such as *Het Nieuws van den Dag*.¹⁰⁷ The situation he found himself in when interviewing a Boer rebel-prisoner in the Dordrecht prison, with the legal counsel present, according to Leipoldt, led to the subject matter for his poem ‘Oom Gert Vertel’.¹⁰⁸ There are similarities between *Oom Gert Vertel* and *Stormwrack*, for instance, the character of Oom Gert in *Oom Gert Vertel* and Martin Rekker are similar. The dastard actions of the British military, and the folly of the Boer Commando invasions into the Cape Colony are examples of other, similar themes.

South African journalist Leopoldt Scholtz explains the importance of Leipoldt’s journalism for an understanding of the thoughts (intellectual history) of society at a certain time.¹⁰⁹ Between the time Leipoldt wrote his earlier war writings (1902 – 1904) and the time he wrote *Stormwrack*, a period of approximately 26 years, his indignation for what was happening

¹⁰⁵BC94 A7.6 (Jagger).

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷C Louis Leipoldt, *Hierdie Land van Leuens*, ‘Brievens uit de Kaap Kolonie’, edited and translated by Wium van Zyl, Africana Uitgewers, Cape Town, 2002, pp. 9 – 10.

¹⁰⁸C Louis Leipoldt, ‘Eerste Skoffies’ in J M H Viljoen, *’n Joernalis Vertel*, Nasionale Boekhandel, Beperk, Cape Town, Bloemfontein, Johannesburg, 1953, p. 189.

¹⁰⁹C Louis Leipoldt, *Hierdie land van leuens*, ‘Brievens uit de Kaap Kolonie’, edited and translated by Wium van Zyl, Africana Uitgewers, Cape Town, 2002, p. 1.

(martial law, the war, the destruction in relations it brought) never left him. The ‘delicately balanced Cape belief in the value of tradition and the value of mutual understanding between Dutch and English’¹¹⁰ changed when fighting erupted in the Valley, from the war. Cape Colonials who were at the same time Her Majesty’s subjects, had to make the difficult choices either of upholding their allegiances to the Queen or lending moral support to their relatives in the adjoining Republics.¹¹¹ This dilemma became especially prominent when a Republican proclamation of 1899 declared certain areas in the south-eastern part of the Cape Colony part of the Republics, which effectively made rebels of the the Colonials, even if they did not respond to the Republican proclamation. Leipoldt explains this in *Bushveld Doctor*:

During the Boer War the republican commandos invaded the Cape Colony and proclaimed parts of it republican territory. The Dutch-speaking farmers in those ‘annexed’ divisions were told that they were now republican burghers and had to fight in the commandoes. When the districts were re-occupied, these men, who were British subjects and technically rebels, were arraigned before a special court of three judges and were tried on charges of treason, murder and various offences. It was a circuit court, travelling from district to district, and it tried many rebels, with the majority of whom one could not help sympathizing, since they had gone into rebellion, not always because they rebelled against the Government under which they lived, nor because they so whole-heartedly sympathized with the cause of the republics, but because they had been induced to believe that they were by annexation republican subjects and as such

¹¹⁰Peter Merrington, “C. Louis Leipoldt’s ‘Valley trilogy’ and Contested South African Nationalisms in the Early Twentieth century”, *Current Writing*, 15(2), 2003, p. 39.

¹¹¹The following story by Leipoldt serves to illustrate that the attitude of the Cape Afrikaners towards the Queen in some cases was so strong and therefore cannot be underestimated in the way Cape Colonials viewed Her Majesty as their Queen. ‘I was at the time a correspondent attached to the court, and heard many tales about the intimidation that had forced some of those rebels into rebellion. One evening the solicitor who acted for the defence came and asked me to accompany the lawyer who had been briefed in the case of one of the foremost farmers in the district, and to act as interpreter for his client. We found the accused in the town jail, in a small bare cell, into which he had been brought that afternoon. It was night time when he came, and the jailer lighted us in with a guttering candle that he placed on the form, dropping a few goutts of grease to make it stable on the wood. Huddled in the corner sat the prisoner, an old man with a fine grey beard, a well-to-do, much respected farmer who had been field cornet, elder of the church, and justice of the peace. [Is this not reminiscent of the fictitious character Martin Rekker in *Stormwreck?* – PLM] He was crying when we came in, in the pitiful, restrained way that old men cry when they are affected by their feelings beyond the bounds of control, and when he saw us he started up and spoke agitatedly.

‘I have indeed been made to drink the dregs of misery,’ he said, wiping his tears away and emphasizing his points with a lean forefinger, ‘I am on my farm, Mr. B—, peaceable and quiet, and the brothers from across the river come. They take away all my sheep, and they nail a paper to the door of my wagonhouse, and they come and tell me that I am now a subject of the Republic, and that I must go with them. They put me on a horse, and make me go with them [this is what the Boers who invaded the District did to Martin Rekker’s son, also called Martin] Mr. B—, to show them the way, and they keep me with them until the English come, and then they leave me behind and the English soldiers catch hold of me and are very rough with me, Mr B—. They bring me to this prison ... and our family, Mr. B— have never had a jailbird among them, and I feel the shame of it, Mr B—. I feel it. And to crown all, I am like Job in his trouble of whom the good Book tells, for when my cup is already full there is this more to make it overflow, since nephew E— here’ — and he pointed to the jailer — ‘has just told me that our dearly beloved Alexandrina Victoria is dead...’ [the extract is from: C Louis Leipoldt, *Bushveld Doctor*, pp. 82 – 83.] It can be of interest to note that Mr B is probably the legal counsel Mr Henry Burton; Burton’s mother was Emily Fryer, and she was the daughter of Charles Fryer of Clanwilliam on whom Leipoldt partially modeled his character Andrew Quakerley.

bound to fight in the commandoes. The republican leaders who cajoled them into this belief knew perfectly well that every man they recruited in the Cape Colony ran the risk of being summarily shot as a rebel when captured; they themselves, being republican burghers, could claim the privileges of prisoners of war, but their dupes could not reckon on such immunity.¹¹²

With the signing of the Peace at Vereeniging at the end of the South African War in 1902, Deneys Reitz refused to take up the oath of loyalty towards Britain.¹¹³ Instead, he went into exile in Madagascar where he wrote his memoirs of his three years' experience of the war, the 1903 text in Dutch, which forms the basis of the 1929 text, *Commando*. It is suggested Reitz removed the stinging comments he made about the actions of the British soldiers, from the 1903 manuscript because of the fact he was deeply influenced by Generals Smuts and Botha and their reconciliation policies. Furthermore, according to Trevor Emslie, publisher of the Reitz trilogy, 'Michael Reitz says that his father says that Deneys complained about the Faber people tinkering with his work, but he was a first-time author and couldn't do much about it.'¹¹⁴ Reitz's stinging comments appear in various parts of the 1903 text, for instance:

From there we reached the little village of Hartebeesfontein, which we found entirely deserted and devastated. The prayer books and baptismal registers lay around fluttering in the streets and the church was sorely damaged. The floor and pews had been broken up for firewood and the windows all smashed to pieces, as well as the communion vessels being stolen — all the work of the civilized Brit.¹¹⁵

A further example of Reitz's stinging comments is reminiscent of the comments by Leipoldt about the destruction during the South African War, concerning the library in Clanwilliam in 1901, in the following extract:

In the house of the parson, Dominee Winter, it looked, if possible, even more sickening and miserable. His fine library was all in the road, for the most part in the water channel, and all the furniture and household goods were smashed to bits ... There was not a single house in the whole village but that it had been vandalized, and the entire place appeared as if a hoard of Atilla's Huns has passed through rather than that a civilized British military force had marched past.¹¹⁶

Reitz describes the destruction of a farmhouse that he himself witnessed burning down, as follows. Passing through the area of destruction, Reitz enquired from an elderly man

¹¹²C Louis Leipoldt, *Bushveld Doctor*, pp. 81 – 82.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, p. 493.

¹¹⁴Confirmed in a telephone conversation between me and Michael Reitz (grandson of Deneys Reitz) on 25 June 2009.

¹¹⁵Deneys Reitz, 'Herinnerengen', p. 575. This is from the unpublished 1903 manuscript. (Permission was obtained from Diana Madden of The Brenthurst Library, to reproduce this information and the further references). The translations are from the Dutch, by Michael Reitz.

¹¹⁶Deneys Reitz, 'Herinnerengen', pp. 576 – 577.

sitting near to the scene: ‘Oomie, whose farm is this?’ He replied laconically, ‘It’s my farm, my boy’, and he stared phlegmatically at the cloud of smoke rising upwards.¹¹⁷ Reitz describes the ‘rich’ Visser’s farm in the neighbourhood of Jagersfontein village; everything according to Reitz lay in ruins: ‘The handsome furniture lay outside in the farmyard, battered to pieces or burnt’.¹¹⁸ Reitz expresses his sadness at the destruction, as he and his war companions alone on the farm felt ‘upset and uneasy’.¹¹⁹ He recalls how, before, he had been on the same farm in the ‘happy old days, when we used to trek from Bloemfontein by ox wagon in order to catch the train at Colesburg [sic] for our annual excursion to the Cape’.¹²⁰

At the same time Leipoldt criticizes the actions of the ‘civilized’ British, through the voices of certain of his characters. Chapter 32 of *Stormwrack* contains scenes in which the voices of these characters also lash out at the wanton destruction committed by the marauding Boer forces in certain areas where they entered the Cape Colony. These actions enhanced ‘the high-pitched’ emotional excitement (concerning martial law) that prevailed everywhere’.¹²¹ The Boer forces here are the republicans who came through the Cape in the third front against the British, known as the guerrilla phase of the war, under Boer leaders such as Smuts and Hertzog. In this sense, *Stormwrack* takes an anti-northern view when it criticizes the irresponsible behaviour of the republicans. The following extract from *Stormwrack* supports Leipoldt’s belief that the republican ideal for South Africa was not a true republican, democratic ideal but rather an ‘ideal of government by a clique, by a bigoted, intolerant group, just as is actually the case in the Transvaal today’ and that the Transvaal government (then) was ‘retrogressive, corrupt and illiberal.’¹²²

Not only is it argued that the anti-republican stance Leipoldt writes into *The Valley* is informed by the fact that the north-south-South African split emanates from those early actions of the Voortrekkers moving out of the civilized, Western cultural society at the time, but with the move north, there grew a strong Calvinist community entrenched in narrow-mindedness. There is a scene in *Stormwrack* that supports this view. The character of Pastor

¹¹⁷Deneys Reitz, ‘Herinnerengen’, p. 580.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 673.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 674.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*

¹²¹*Ibid.*, p. 432.

¹²²C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 297.

Uhlmann in *Stormwrack* modelled on Leipoldt's liberally-minded father was silenced by the elders of the (dour)¹²³ Calvinistic Dutch-Reformed Church for playing his violin, an instrument he was proficient in. The following excerpt is included unabridged as it is a poignant piece and describes this lack of tolerance from the elders.

That one exception [where there was intolerance] had saddened him [Pastor Uhlmann], even though he had subscribed to it. From his earliest youth he had been passionately fond of music and he had received a good musical training. In his Utrecht days he had devoted himself enthusiastically to the violin, and had pleaded with his father to be allowed to become a professional violinist. That could not be permitted in a missionary's son whose career had been mapped out from the day of his birth and whose life had been consecrated to mission service. But while he had given up the idea of earning a living with his fiddle, that instrument had been a solace and comfort to him for many years. He played it in Sumatra, and his playing had won him a mild reputation which he had brought with him to the Colony. After his induction as parson at the village he had played it often, in the quiet afternoons and the quieter evenings – Bach and Beethoven and Mozart, Hungarian, Russian, Polish and Italian compositions, improvisations of his own. The village had listened and admired, and the location – that appreciated anything that could be fiddled with any semblance of tune – had been in ecstasies. But the church council had called on him as a deputation and asked him, for the sake of his cloth and the edification of the congregation, to refrain from playing “fiddle music”. No former parson had fiddled, and it was beneath the dignity of their parson to descend to such vulgarity. A less self-disciplined man would have laughed at them and argued with them; one with more knowledge of men would have played to them and mastered their prejudice by the wizardry of his art. Mr Uhlmann did none of these things. He gave them coffee and cake, and locked up his violin in his study cupboard which he never opened; although he had listened in silence and had given them no promise. But he never played the violin after the deputation had left. No one but he knew what the sacrifice had meant to him. There remained the piano in the drawing room and the small organ in the church, and these he could play without wounding the prejudiced susceptibilities of his church council. He acted as he thought it was his duty to act; “be ye conformed” was an injunction that had scriptural warrant.¹²⁴

Certainly one of the *topoi* in *Stormwrack* that is supported by the virtue of tradition is this open-mindedness and sense of tolerance of others' cultural practices and views. Leipoldt's odium for forced religion especially Calvinism is seen from an earlier quotation, whereby he showed disdain for the 'relegie' (religion) when he refers to it as 'die prulvlag van Kalvinistiese verdoemnisloer.'¹²⁵ As a young boy growing up in a missionary home he was taught organized religion from a young age and found this to be abnormal, anti-social and a

¹²³C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 345.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 337 – 338.

¹²⁵In a letter to Dr J du P Erlank (a.k.a. Eitemal) dated 18 January 1935, BC94 B14.174.1 (Jagger). (Translation: 'it's shoddy flag of Calvinist damnation lore.')

form of paganism.¹²⁶ He thus viewed religion as narrow-minded and recognized it (narrow-mindedness) existed in the clique of a bigoted, intolerant group of certain Transvalers (the north).¹²⁷ Furthermore, according to one of the characters in *The Mask* sympathetic to Leipoldt (Mabuis III) ‘...Dutch Reformed Calvinism ...is inimical to culture.’¹²⁸ From the above one can deduce Leipoldt did not admire the position of Calvinism in South Africa.¹²⁹ In fact on 29 May in a letter to his friend Dr F V Engelenburg, Leipoldt wrote to say he was writing a novel of the period around 1850 for the *Huisgenoot*, but that one had to proceed cautiously, since one of the characters is a dominee (minister of religion) who would be seen by the current Ministers (of the Dutch reformed Church) as a heretic because he chooses to dance, dabble with cards and does not find it sinful to look at a naked body.¹³⁰

This leads to another *topos* in the Leipoldt repertoire, namely that of aesthetics. This can be seen in *Stormwrack* in the way Andrew Quakerley had a disciplined appreciation of form and colour.¹³¹ This is taken further to include the way he beheld the physical beauty of his grandson visiting from Australia. He sees Charlie as ‘a slender, supple boy whose open shirt revealed the smooth white of a skin not yet bronzed by the semi-tropical sun, and the marked contrast between bone and flesh that is the hallmark of a lad just emerging from childhood.’¹³² Looking at his grandson’s artful body (‘a beauty of contour, the round sweep of limb and cheek, the straight line of shoulder ...’), leaves Quakerley with a sense of guilt because he had for a moment abandoned his loyalty to his garden, ‘a suspicion of an alien pride which the plants he had carefully tended and loved so dearly might justifiably resent.’¹³³ The trade-off between the beauty in the garden and the beauty of the boy strengthens the point made that the viewing of the boy is not an act of physical sexuality as much as it is an attitude towards (exotic) beauty:

As he drank his tea and listened, abstractedly, to the talk around him at the tea table, his eyes followed the boy playing with the terrier on the lawn. They made a pretty picture,

¹²⁶C Louis Leipoldt writing to the Afrikaans poet ‘Erlank’, W J du P Erlank, in a letter dated 18 January 1935.

¹²⁷C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 297. (This view is expressed through one of the characters sympathetic to Leipoldt).

¹²⁸C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 553.

¹²⁹See Robert Ross, Chapter Nine entitled ‘The Rise of Afrikaner Calvinism’, pp. 183 *et seq.*, in *Beyond the Pale: Essays on the History of Colonial South Africa*, Witwatersrand University press, Johannesburg, 1993.

¹³⁰C Louis Leipoldt, in a letter to Dr F V Engelenburg, dated 29 May, 1928. BC94 B10.14 (Jagger).

¹³¹*Ibid.*, p. 223.

¹³²C Louis Leipoldt, Chapter 15 in *Gallows Gecko, The Valley*, pp. 248-249.

¹³³*Ibid.*, p. 249.

these two, and his aesthetic sense responded to the appeal of their lithe, clean beauty. Looking at them, he felt the satisfaction he had frequently experienced when admiring some lovely flower.¹³⁴

A further *topos* that surfaces in *Stormwrack* and in fact is central to the novel is that of botany. The origin of this interest can be traced to Leipoldt's earliest years, under the influence of his maternal grandfather who according to the school of Herbart taught his grandchildren how to grow plants, in a way that it was interesting for them.¹³⁵ The school of Herbart requires explanation, for a fuller understanding of the context of Leipoldt's youth experiences processed in *The Valley*. The following excerpt explains Herbart's pedagogy and when reading it, one might bear in mind Leipoldt's grandfather applying theory to praxis, for the benefit of his own grandson's education:

Herbart saw the teacher's essential task as identifying the existing interests of the student and relating them to the great store of human experience and culture in order to help the student become part of civilized life. He also held that the ultimate goal of education was the building of ethical character rather than the acquisition of knowledge.¹³⁶

A specific aspect of Herbart's theory was the notion of 'apperceptive masses',¹³⁷ whereby new ideas enter the mind, through assimilation, or association with similar, present ideas. When grouped they become what Herbart termed 'apperceptive masses',¹³⁸ which end up as the human experience. Thus, when Esselen was demonstrating to his grandchildren how plants grow from seeds, it was 'proving' 'apperceptive masses' for/on their minds. Leipoldt recalled the amazement and delightful satisfaction with his first experiment when he was about three years old which was conducted with rye seeds by his grandfather.¹³⁹ After a few days of the seeds having been 'sown' between cotton wool and a polished marble slab, to his

¹³⁴C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, pp. 250 – 251.

¹³⁵C Louis Leipoldt, 'Jeugherinneringe', p. 2. This article appeared in *Die Huisgenoot* of 9 May 1947. BC94 A7.21 (Jagger).

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

¹³⁶<http://faculty.mdc.edu/jmcnair/Joe29pages/herbart.htm>.

¹³⁷There is an excellent definition of this term in <http://www.csudh.edu/dearhabermas/womdiff01.htm>.

¹³⁸<http://faculty.mdc.edu/jmcnair/Joe29pages/herbart.htm>.

¹³⁹C Louis Leipoldt, 'Jeugherinneringe', p. 2. This article appeared in *Die Huisgenoot*, 9 May 1947. BC94 A7.21 (Jagger).

amazement and delight, Leipoldt witnessed the way the tiny leaves had appeared and the fact he could see the little roots under a magnifying glass clinging to the little stones, all demonstrated by his ‘Oupa’.¹⁴⁰

The way apperceptive masses are proved on the mind of a young person through experiment, is present in the *Stormwrack* text, and explains how the natural surroundings create an avid desire in the central character Andrew Quakerley to have his own garden. In a way this notion informs the novel and is a method in contradistinction to the narrow Calvinist method of single-mindedness in culture and education. For Andrew: ‘the avatar of his youthful yearning to plant a garden, engrossed him almost to the exclusion of other interests.’¹⁴¹ From an early age already, Andrew ‘had made, in the rain-sodden soil of his father’s farmyard, little gardens of delight, pansied with sorrel petals and the ultramarine blossoms of wild tulips.’¹⁴² In Leipoldt’s own life, at the age that ‘apperceptive masses’ were strong enough to influence him, Leipoldt met important botanists, namely Professor MacOwan, Rudolph Schlechter and Dr Bolus.¹⁴³

We read in the text of how Leipoldt himself, through the character Quakerley, is reminiscing about his own youth and interest in botany when he met prominent botanists such as Professor McOwan, and the young German botanist Rudolph Schlechter, with whom he journeyed on a hundred mile¹⁴⁴ trek into the outskirts of Namaqualand. Plant pathology as a science in South Africa began formally in 1887 with the appointment of Peter MacOwan as the consultant in economic botany to the Cape Government. It was to Professor MacOwan that Leipoldt sent plant specimen, for his South African Botanical Exchange Society, which sent specimen abroad. Harry Bolus (1834 – 1911) was a botanist who greatly advanced botany in South Africa by establishing bursaries, founding the Bolus Herbarium and bequeathing his library and a large part of his fortune to the South African College (now the University of Cape Town). He was active in scientific circles and received several awards for his work in science and philanthropy. He was instrumental in founding the Botanical Society in 1913, which is part of the Cape liberal Union-Loyalist-based paradigm referred to

¹⁴⁰C Louis Leipoldt, ‘Jeugherinneringe’, p. 2. This article appeared in *Die Huisgenoot*, 9 May 1947. BC94 A7.21 (Jagger).

¹⁴¹C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 241.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 222.

¹⁴³C Louis Leipoldt, *Bushveld Doctor*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1937, p. 23.

¹⁴⁴160 km.

earlier, which Leipoldt represents in his novels, and it was this very person who acted as a mentor for Leipoldt.

Later, when at boarding school in Cape Town, the natural phenomena on the slopes of Devil's Peak prove apperceptive masses for the mind of Andrew Quakerley. The desire for a garden intensifies when his teacher exposes him to plants and shows him the natural beauty, as we read from the following extract from *Stormwrack*:

The headmaster's experiment proved an undoubted success. There was no attempt to teach formal botany, but the natural treasures of the mountain and Common proved apperceptive masses upon which the mind of the country lad seized with avidity.¹⁴⁵

When Andrew finally has his garden it is so majestic that 'it gave to the Village its distinction' and the Village becomes well-known 'for the garden Andrew Quakerley had created'.¹⁴⁶ Later, himself a grandfather, Andrew finds himself trying to 'teach' his grandson Charlie Crest formal botany, not by making him learn the names of plants, but by taking him out into the veld — excursions such as these 'yielded a host of apperceptive masses'¹⁴⁷ much like it was for Leipoldt when his grandfather gave him his first lessons in growing seeds.

Leipoldt had spent the first four years of his life under the careful guidance and influence of his grandfather at the Rhenish mission house in Worcester, Cape Colony.¹⁴⁸ In 1884 the Leipoldts as a family moved from Worcester to Clanwilliam where Leipoldt's father C F Leipoldt took up a position as a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church. This move was made because there was no full-time post for him at the mission station in Worcester and consequently he was forced to leave the Rhenish Missionary Society (the Lutheran faith) to take up a post as minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in Clanwilliam (Calvinist). From there it was to be a new experience for his children, including his third surviving child, Louis (then known as Christie) who would enjoy the immense exposure to the natural floral beauty of Clanwilliam and the Cederberg, much like his character the young Andrew Quakerley in the novel, is exposed to the floral kingdom on the slopes of Devil's Peak as a boy.

¹⁴⁵C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 225.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 243.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 275.

¹⁴⁸Today this region is known as the Western Cape.

Leipoldt describes Andrew's garden much along the lines of Herbartian ethics, viz. that the building of it was an ennobling experience, coupled with the fact it should hold practical value and a desire to work:

He threw himself with avidity into the work of planning, perfecting and ennobling the magnificent creation which he had in mind. Long ago he had laid, in imagination, the foundations of it, sketched in outline the salient features, filled in the details and studied the combinations upon which he had decided. The comparatively small space in which he had to work prevented the conception of anything on a grandiose scale, but that did not disturb him for he did not wish to emulate, in quantity or extent, the horticultural achievements of Buitenzorg or the Company's garden at Cape Town. He wanted quality, a choice, delightfully patterned series of plots in which practical utility should neighbour aesthetically satisfying arrangement, a collector's garden more than a nurseryman's, a dilettante's more than a professional's.¹⁴⁹

For the construction of the garden motif in *Stormwrack*, Leipoldt must have had in mind the garden in Clanwilliam at the time, of Mr Charles Montague Fryer.¹⁵⁰ He described Fryer's garden as something along the lines of a botanical garden as far as variety, species and thorough cultivation, was concerned.¹⁵¹ A full description of Quakerley's garden with botanical terms is the topic of Chapter 3 of *Stormwrack*.¹⁵² Before publishing *The Valley*, Trevor Emslie the co-editor, contacted Barbara Knox-Short, a *cognoscente* on botany and botanical terms to proof-read the TS to verify the correctness of botanical terms in Leipoldt's book. I recalled this and so wrote to Professor Emslie to verify this point and his reply to me is that this is correct, saying that: 'the botanical names change from time to time, so Leipoldt's notations were just out of date, not wrong.'¹⁵³

A further point about the garden motif although it can only be speculation at this stage relates to the visit by Leipoldt to Bogor (then Buitenzorg), 60km south of Djakarta, in 1912.¹⁵⁴ Here

¹⁴⁹C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 241.

¹⁵⁰The body of Charles Montague Fryer is buried in the cemetery of the Parish of St John's Anglican Church in Clanwilliam. According to the 'Scheme' in his jottings, Leipoldt drew his character Andrew Quakerley from Mr Charles Montague-Fryer, a leading resident of Clanwilliam; as well as from 'type Knobel's father', who was a German nobleman, and one of Leipoldt's forebears on his mother's side. BC94 A5.6 (Jagger). When I researched the genealogical table of Montague Fryer on http://ancestry24.com/search-item/?id=2149453053&item_id=2, I found that he was married to Alice, which is the name Leipoldt gave to Andrew's wife in the novel; I also found that the name of Van Tongerloo's wife, a resident of Clanwilliam in the late nineteenth century (Vantloo?), was Maria, the name Leipoldt gave the wife of Elias Vantloo in *The Mask*. From this we can see that Leipoldt probably had real persons in mind when constructing his fiction.

¹⁵¹C Louis Leipoldt, 'Clanwilliam: Herinneringe aan 'n Ou Dorpie', *Die Huisegenoot*, 5 November 1926, BC94 A8.12 (Jagger).

¹⁵²C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, pp. 238 – 243.

¹⁵³An e-mail from Trevor Emslie to Paul Murray, dated Monday 2011/09/12 11:34 a.m.

¹⁵⁴The unpublished manuscript by C Louis Leipoldt, entitled "Visit to the East Indies", BC94 A7.16 (Jagger), is probably based on his jottings from his notebook which is BC94 A5.9 (Jagger); these jottings include very

he learnt of a skirmish between the English under Thomas Raffles and the Dutch army under J W Janssens and one can only wonder if the descriptions in *Stormwrack* of the skirmish between the Boers and the British in Andrew Quakerley's garden could not possibly have any bearing on his recollections of his visit to the East. According to literary historian Peter Merrington, the garden's eventual destruction, which is *Stormwrack*'s conclusion, is 'an allegory for the destruction of a long-held delicately balanced Cape belief in the value of tradition and the value of mutual understanding between English and Dutch.'¹⁵⁵ Merrington sees *The Valley* as having 'an inherent nostalgia for a perceived gracious past, which is in sharp contrast with the emerging destructive sectarian tendencies in Leipoldt's own society.'¹⁵⁶ Andrew Quakerley is shattered to see his work of beauty destroyed overnight, as we read in the following extract from *Stormwrack*:

Now there was fighting going on in his garden ... men were dragging the gun carriages across the paths; the wheels would make deep ruts in the gravel, but that was nothing – that could be repaired. But the guns would do much more damage, and so would the horses ... what a mess ... what a mess!¹⁵⁷

It can be argued that Leipoldt constructed the garden motif/metaphor in *Stormwrack* from his youth experiences. Surrounded by the floral kingdom of Clanwilliam and the Cederberg was fertile ground for Leipoldt's avid interest in botany. The way his grandfather exposed him to the growing of little seeds and how they came to fruition, proved 'apperceptive masses' on the young mind of Leipoldt, just as they were proved on the mind of the character Andrew Quakerley in *Stormwrack*. The youth experiences of C Louis Leipoldt therefore have been directly processed in his writing of 1929 – 1932, as seen in *The Valley* trilogy.

It has been suggested elsewhere that the garden motif relates to a liberal Cape tradition. For more detail about gardens at the Cape one can go to *The Gardens of Good Hope* by Marion Cran, with illustrations.¹⁵⁸ There are other texts that concentrate on the role of the importance of gardens at the Cape such as *The Pilgrim's Way in South Africa*.¹⁵⁹ In addition

precise details of the gardens of Buitenzorg, such as the names of plant species that grew there; the dimensions of the gardens, and details of the scientist-gardeners who designed them. Chapter 3 in *Stormwrack* refers to the grand scale of the garden at Buitenzorg (*The Valley*, p. 241), of which the dimension is, for practical reasons, just too big for Andrew to emulate.

¹⁵⁵Peter Merrington, 'C Louis Leipoldt's 'Valley Trilogy' and Contested South African Nationalisms in the Early Twentieth Century', *Current Writing*, Text and Reception in Southern Africa', 15(2), October 2003, p. 39.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁵⁷C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 475.

¹⁵⁸M Cran, *The Gardens of Good Hope*, Herbert Jenkins Ltd, London, 1926.

¹⁵⁹Dorothea Fairbridge, *The Pilgrim's Way in South Africa*, Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, London, 1928.

to the Cape's beautiful gardens is its unique Cape-Dutch architecture. For the classic text relating to this topic Dorothea Fairbridge's *Historic Houses of South Africa* is important.¹⁶⁰ In addition are her articles in the loyal-unionist magazine *The State*, on architecture.¹⁶¹ The work done by Fairbridge to promote Cape vernacular architecture sprung from the Oxford-educated members of Sir Alfred Milner's 'kindergarten' espousing a neo-Hegelian idealist and organic view of society 'interpreting South African union as an algorithm for imperial or commonwealth union on a greater scale.'¹⁶² Whilst the idea of Union and reconciliation was a move driven by Generals Botha and Smuts, the loyal unionist vision was more the idea of those feeling the need to forge a strong affiliation with England and take on a British imperial world-view.¹⁶³ For this point see the account of the closer union movement and the publication *The State*, and the endeavours of Curtis and others in unification, but also according to historians Thompson and Hancock, — that unification was achieved because of the way English- and Afrikaans-speaking 'factions saw in unification advantages to their group, whose interests they identified with all South Africans.'¹⁶⁴

The change in government in Britain in 1906, however, meant that a more republican shift could take place in South Africa hence the move in the *Het Volk* Party to be able to manoeuvre away from the jingoistic loyal unionists as in Lord Milner, Lord Selbourne and Lionel Curtis.¹⁶⁵ Yet the initiatives begun around 1905 to propagate a union-loyalist-based culture still continued despite the pursuit of Botha and Smut's policies for a reconciled union of South Africa. These initiatives continued into the 1920 and part of them was the work done by Dorothea Fairbridge and her friends for instance in the South African National Society for the preservation of Items of Historic Interest and National Beauty established in 1905.

The National Society saw the need for a body similar to the Historical Monuments Board in Britain and in 1923 the Natural and Historical Monuments Act was passed which sought to preserve historic buildings, a process overseen by the Historical Monuments Commission

¹⁶⁰Dorothea Fairbridge, *Historic Houses of South Africa*, with a preface by General J C Smuts, Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, London, 1922.

¹⁶¹Dorothea Fairbridge, 'Old South African Homesteads XI – Old Stellenbosch Houses', *The State*, Volume VIII No 5, November 1912, pp. 389 *et seq.*

¹⁶²Peter Merrington, 'Carrying the Torch: Dorothea Fairbridge and the Cape Loyalist Imagination'.

¹⁶³*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴Walter Nimcocks, *Milner's Young Men – The "kindergarten" in Edwardian Imperial Affairs*, by Walter Nimcocks, Hodder & Stoughton, Duke University Press, London, 1968, p. 122.

¹⁶⁵For an account of the closer union movement and the publication *The State*, and the work done by Curtis see Chapter 7 of *Milner's Young Men – The "kindergarten" in Edwardian Imperial Affairs*, by Walter Nimcocks, Hodder & Stoughton, Duke University Press, London, 1968, pp. 108 *et seq.*

which became the National Monuments Council in 1969, subsequently the Heritage Commission. The areas of preservation included land having distinctive or beautiful scenery, beautiful or interesting content of flora or fauna, and objects (whether natural or constructed by human agency) of aesthetic, historical or scientific value, or interest, and also specifically to include waterfalls, caves, Bushmen paintings, avenues of trees, old trees and old buildings.¹⁶⁶

The Valley contains a great deal of what Merrington refers to as the tropology (that is in) the idea of :

husbandry, and in particular of an extensive and well-tended garden, which becomes the leading motif in *Stormwrack*. (The garden, botany, and horticulture, were common motifs among the Cape elite in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, becoming in fact a complex means of regional and class identification, and a focus of what was understood as an emergent liberal idea of South Africa).¹⁶⁷

Leipoldt had a close association with Dr Bolus, his mentor, who in turn was a close friend of Dorothea Fairbridge, and she together with her friends in 1913 began the South African Botanical Society at Kirstenbosch on land which was bequeathed by Cecil John Rhodes for the development of a garden by the South African government on condition that an appropriate organization from civil society was formed to assist with the venture. Some of these aspects of aesthetical society are elevated in *The Valley* by Leipoldt together with topics such as race relations and the language question and so argue for a more inclusive South African identity. As we read in *Stormwrack* its hero reflects an attitude of ‘tolerance and nineteenth-century *laissez-faire* liberalism, focussed in the person of the old gentleman farmer Andrew Quakerley’¹⁶⁸ and this together with references to the *topoi* already mentioned, feature as symbols for a Western tradition, highly valued by writers such as C Louis Leipoldt in *The Valley*.

¹⁶⁶‘Myths Monuments Museums – New Premises?’ A Paper delivered by Andrew Hall & Ashley Lillie of the National Monuments Council, on 6-18 July 1992 at the University of the Witwatersrand, as part of a History Workshop, for a Policy for providing protection for the cultural and environmental heritage.

¹⁶⁷Peter Merrington, ‘C Louis Leipoldt’s ‘Valley Trilogy’ and Contested South African Nationalisms in the Early twentieth Century’, *Current Writing*, 2003, 15(2), p. 47.

¹⁶⁸Peter Merrington, ‘Carrying the Torch: Dorothea Fairbridge and the cape Loyalist Imagination. ’

5.6 – *THE MASK*¹⁶⁹

The third of the novels, *The Mask*, is a re-working of *Afgode*, a play in four acts. *Afgode* first appeared in serialized form in *Die Huisgenoot* from 16 March to 6 April 1928 and thereafter was published in book form in 1931. The story therefore preceded the other novels. Yet, ironically it became the final of the three novels that made up the trilogy. Leipoldt re-worked *Afgode* into *The Mask* from 10 May to 29 May 1930 and it was completed by the beginning of June 1930. *The Mask* follows contemporary South African history of the period (*circa* 1929) and there are characters in it whose ancestors we know from the previous novels. As M P O Burgers states however, Leipoldt has not really succeeded in retaining his proposed theme of describing the ‘omwentelinge’ (coming full circled/rounding off the chronicle) of two specific families.¹⁷⁰ *The Mask* is a sequel to *Stormwrack* in that once the cordial relations of the two elements have been ruptured, the future prospect of a broader South African nationalism, was to become less likely. Therefore the notion of tradition, of being rooted in solid Western cultural philosophy of respect and tolerance begins to fade away, as the new Nationalists come onto the scene, represented in the novel in the character of Santa.

The Mask was never published during Leipoldt’s lifetime, appearing for the first time, as part of the trilogy in 2001, and thereafter separately in a single volume published by Cederberg publishers in 2006. Stephen Gray explains that the book is really about the 1930s and not the preceding century.¹⁷¹ To this, Gray adds: ‘to decode history in fiction with an accuracy, the reader must of necessity read backwards in time, following a model which is not incremental and accumulative, but reductive and anti-developmental.’¹⁷²

Leipoldt gives an outline of his book as follows: the Valley and the Village are shown in their ‘modern guise’¹⁷³ and the chief resident is the prosperous town’s attorney who has allied himself to one of the leading families of the district. He is admired as the epitome of honesty and is the Grand Master of the Good Templars Lodge. But eventually his

¹⁶⁹There are two versions; BC94 A7.14 (Jagger), the earlier version, Chapters I – XXVII, and BC94 A7.15 (Jagger), a later version, Chapters I – XVIII.

¹⁷⁰M P O Burgers, *C. L. Leipoldt, 'n Studie in Stof-keuse, -verwerking en -ontwikkeling*, p. 131.

¹⁷¹Stephen Gray, ‘Leipoldt’s Valley Community: The Novelist as Archivist’, *Social Dynamics*, 10(1), 1984, p. 51.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*

¹⁷³BC94 A7.7 (Jagger).

daughter, the newly qualified medical doctor, Santa, comes to realize her father is a drunkard and that one of her patients is the illegitimate child of the family household nurse, and her father. She is in love with Eric, a partner in her father's law firm and he has known about Elias's shenanigans. They hide the fact from Elias's wife/Santa's mother Maria but she has known all along. Despite this, she stands by her man and shows unconditional love towards him. Santa, anti-English and fanatically Republican in outlook, is challenged by a former citizen now living in Argentina (providing an outsider's view, and possibly the views of the 'objective' Leipoldt) and the two debate topics and issues such as language, nationality and race. Leipoldt ends the Synopsis of his book, with the following words:

The book throws light upon the present political conditions in South Africa, and explains much that is puzzling in the relations between the races, and at the same time it serves as a pendant to its two predecessors, rounding off the chronicle of the Valley by relating the fortunes of the various characters that have played a part in the history and development of the district.¹⁷⁴

The similarities between the *The Mask* and *Afgode* are strong and according to M P O Burgers the events for *The Mask* take place approximately thirty years later (than the events in *Stormwrack*) and mainly correspond or coincide with the events of *Afgode*.¹⁷⁵ One of the central themes in *The Mask* is hypocrisy — the newly qualified female medical doctor Santa exposes her father whom she once idolized, for having done three terrible things: that he fathered an illegitimate coloured child from a liaison with the coloured house nurse; that he surreptitiously consumes alcohol even though he professes good templary; and that he has embezzled the money kept in trust for her — Santa calls for an end to the 'make-believe and hypocrisy in which we have been living all these years.'¹⁷⁶ But the theme of hypocrisy in Leipoldt's eyes extends beyond just this sort of hypocrisy. He feels strongly that people unwisely make political idols out of those they hold up or idolize in society, as well as those who are hypocrites because as 'fence-sitters' they are 'dignified' hypocrites.¹⁷⁷ This odium that Leipoldt had for hypocrites is reflected in his views in *Bushveld Doctor*.¹⁷⁸

It was Leipoldt's intention with *The Mask* to engage in polemical discussions on important topics in South Africa's political, social, economic and cultural history at the time. A foil to

¹⁷⁴BC94 A7.7 (Jagger).

¹⁷⁵M P O Burgers, *C. L. Leipoldt, 'n Studie in Stof-keuse, -verwerking en -ontwikkeling*, p. 138.

¹⁷⁶C Louis Leipoldt, *The Mask*, Cederberg Publishers, Cape Town, 2006, p. 256.

¹⁷⁷For the reference to the hypocrisy of politicians see C Louis Leipoldt, *The Mask*, p. 142.

¹⁷⁸C Louis Leipoldt, *Bushveld Doctor*, p. 80.

the politician-hypocrites is the character Jeremiah Gerster, a member of one of the two original aristocratic Dutch families that inhabited the Valley, who is portrayed as much wiser in the author's eyes but not necessary 'slim' (clever, cunning); his breeding however would never lead to hypocrisy. This reference to 'slim' (clever) could possibly be directed satirically at someone such as General Smuts (his nickname was 'Slim Jannie') whom Leipoldt (until *circa* the 1940s) did not seem to have much time for, and even thought suffered from much the same disease as his own mother, which Leipoldt termed *paranoia diabetica*.¹⁷⁹ Other important themes in *The Mask* are the hotly contested flag and language debates of the era.¹⁸⁰ Then there is the voice of the anti-Trekker Leipoldt through his moderate character, the wise Dr Buren, in a discussion with the fiery young nationalist Santa, who criticizes any section or group for thinking they can have a sort of monopoly over patriotism.¹⁸¹

Another theme in *The Mask* is the degeneration of families and values, and the loss of tradition (tradition and values are necessary to forge a strong nation). But now the respect for tradition gradually becomes lost as the new societies degrade.¹⁸² The following passage indicates how those who trekked north did not understand the tradition that was considered important for society, this tradition having value and virtue and based on respect, tolerance, and appreciation:

'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.'¹⁸³...

A topic employed in the Leipoldt text to sustain the argument of the virtues of being rooted in local tradition is the use of language. In the previous chapters reference was made to the way Gustav Preller employed the argument that Afrikaans was important to construct a national character. *The Mask* debates the topic of language for its political advantage rather than its cultural and aesthetic qualities. Whilst politicians need to adopt language for its political utility, Leipoldt as a cultural pluralist, sees the importance of maintaining high levels of culture such as the continuation of Dutch and a strong literature: 'Formerly we expressed it in

¹⁷⁹BC94 E2.5 (Jagger).

¹⁸⁰C Louis Leipoldt, *The Mask*, pp. 110 – 111.

¹⁸¹*Ibid.*, p. 113.

¹⁸²C Louis Leipoldt, *The Mask*, Cederberg Publishers, pp. 132 & 136.

¹⁸³*Ibid.*, p. 646.

good Dutch and some of the Afrikaans we now use was reckoned fit only for the kitchen.’¹⁸⁴ A discussion between Santa and Mabuis III in *The Mask* centres on the topic of language, a subject covered by Leipoldt in *The Cambridge History*.¹⁸⁵ The point is voiced through one of his characters that language can be inimical to culture — how like Dutch Reformed Calvinism, Serbian Orthodoxy is inimical to culture.¹⁸⁶ It is probably Leipoldt’s privileged voice we hear through his character Mabuis III, saying the following:

“I happen to know a little Serbian,” said Mr Mabuis imperturbably. “I was with the Serbian forces in the second Balkan War, and I have read a good deal of their literature. And I fancy I am well up in Afrikaans, well enough to compare its literary results with those of contemporary writers in other languages.”¹⁸⁷

As the exclusive, social, economic and political policies of the 1920s, of the National Party in the form of ‘civilized’ labour and the introduction of a colour bar in the work place emerged, and sexual segregation as in the Immorality Act of 1927 and political segregation (the Native Representation Act of 1927) began to enter the stratification of South African society, Leipoldt became increasingly alarmed, a condition which is expressed through the voice of the character Mabuis III. The reader reading the ensuing passage can get a feeling of the way Leipoldt might even be directing his voice at someone such as Gustav Preller who is more or less guilty of what Leipoldt is saying about that specific kind of Afrikaans writer:

“Take the native problem, for example. What South African, whether English or Dutch, can take an unprejudiced view of it, unless – like me – he has been expatriated and has learned that colour and race by themselves do not really matter in the long run? Yet you Nationalists take it for granted that every English-speaking South African holds the old Exeter Hall view of the native and every Afrikaans-speaking one the South African view. And this while you know that Natal, which is predominantly English-speaking, is the most anti-negrophilistic province of the Union. That seems scarcely logical to me.”

“And consider,” he went on earnestly, “what you produce by constantly asserting your rights as you call them. You imply that these rights still need defence whereas they are enshrined in your Act of Union, and by propagandising for them you merely create the impression that they are still non-existent or at least in jeopardy. That is the way a child looks at things. He imagines all too lightly that someone is trying to rob him of his rights, and as you know that creates a peculiar attitude towards his environment which psychologists declare is a defensive complex, which gives rise to all sorts of reactions.”

“You would have us tamely submit to see those rights whittled away, then?”

“By no means. I have not made myself clear, I am afraid, if that is your impression. Let us take a concrete case – the language. Its equality with English is admitted by statute, isn’t it? Very well then, why not take that equality for granted and allow

¹⁸⁴C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p.644.

¹⁸⁵*The Cambridge History of the British Empire VIII*, Chapter XXXII, ‘Cultural Development’, pp. 857 – 862.

¹⁸⁶C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 553.

¹⁸⁷*Ibid.*, p. 554.

everyone to make his own choice as to the language he prefers to use? Why propagandise for the one while the other remains content with what it has and by its very inertness, by its abstention from aggressive action, appears – I say appears – to justify its superiority? You started that way, but very soon your politicians saw what could be made of the language as a party-political weapon, with the result that already Afrikaans has reaped some of the discredit which inevitably attaches to a political subject. Instead of writing, as your pioneers did, purely literary books, you are producing propaganda literature and you are using your schools, universities and cultural centres for the dissemination of propaganda, not culture.”

“You say that because you refuse to admit that sentiment plays a large part in creating national feeling. I suppose it is propaganda to refer to the war and the concentration camps.”

“If you do it for the purpose of creating ill-feeling against the English – as some of your writers do – yes, I do call it that. Your Afrikaans works, written when the writers were under the influence of the war, deal with these matters in a passionate but perfectly legitimate manner to which no sensible man can possibly object. But do your moderns do that? Do they cull from their own experience and treat these lamentable subjects as objectively as their predecessors did? You know they don’t. They go largely on hearsay evidence and they do not stress the wrong *qua* wrong but as something peculiarly and especially done by England against South Africa, or rather against Afrikaans-speaking South Africa. Which, as you again know, is not a fact. There were many of us who, much as they disliked the war, disliked the Transvaal Administration still more. But you slur over these facts. You intend the younger generation which knows nothing first-hand about these matters to grow up with the feeling that these wrongs were deliberately, consciously and purposely done by England, and in that way you foster the spirit of ill-feeling and antagonism which was gradually dying down at the time of Union.”¹⁸⁸

M P O Burgers, argues that as far as it is possible, a comprehensive study of any writer can only be effectively undertaken when the whole oeuvre is considered, for understanding his/her life and his/her intellectual development.¹⁸⁹ From this explanation it might be justified to include some discussion on Leipoldt’s sexual orientation which is seen in Leipoldt’s (1) aversion towards women, as a subject of sexual attraction (2) friendships with men (3) an attraction towards boys (4) and the caring for boys he took into his home.¹⁹⁰ A further point made by Burgers is that whilst Leipoldt idealised marriage in his work, where the two partners must show a deep sense of unity for and faithful duty towards each other, Leipoldt could never try to realise this ideal himself.¹⁹¹ In the light of this, Burgers describes elements of a psychical homosexual orientation in Leipoldt.¹⁹² Burgers nevertheless acknowledges that at the time he was writing, the terrain of literary psychology was new in

¹⁸⁸C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, pp.559 – 560.

¹⁸⁹M P O Burgers, ‘Voorwoord’ to ‘C. L. Leipoldt, ’n Studie in Stof-keuse, -verwerking en -ontwikkeling’.

¹⁹⁰M P O Burgers, ‘C. L. Leipoldt, ’n Studie in Stof-keuse, -verwerking en -ontwikkeling’, p. 302.

¹⁹¹*Ibid.*, p. 301.

¹⁹²*Ibid.*, pp. 301 – 302.

Afrikaans and that differences of opinion on it exist.¹⁹³ But Burgers does not shy away from discussing elements of a homosexual orientation in certain of Leipoldt's fictional prose, for instance in the case of the character Jan Slink's behaviour towards his son.¹⁹⁴ Burgers suggests that Leipoldt behaved towards the boys that he took into his home and cared for, in much the same way¹⁹⁵ — sublimating his homosexual orientation. Kannemeyer however cautions that Burgers's extensive psychological-critical (psigologies-kritiese) study is based on too many assumptions, although he strongly acknowledges the newly available, heretofore unknown detail on Leipoldt.¹⁹⁶ Thus, one should proceed with caution with Burgers on this topic, although this does not mean one cannot take note of what he has to say. But to omit reference to Leipoldt's Buddhist sense of unconditional love is to omit an important side to his world-view.

Unconditional forgiveness is a characteristic Leipoldt got from his interest in Buddhism, which the editors in the 'Introduction' to *The Mask*, comment on as follows:

If it can be said, as we suggest it can, that the endurance and triumph of this kind of love is the ultimate theme of *The Mask*, then the deeply personal nature of this novel is clear — in the light of Leipoldt's own beliefs and the way in which, throughout his life, he gave to others expecting nothing in return.¹⁹⁷

It is argued that Leipoldt's affinity with the East may also throw light on his attitude and relationships with women and it may even explain the puzzling role and position of Maria in *The Mask*. That Leipoldt embraced Buddhism, and the role of Maria as the all-forgiving wife in *The Mask*, who stood by her husband no matter what, is corroborated by M P O Burgers through the way Leipoldt believes in unconditional love that expects nothing in return, derived from Eastern influences but also from Christian ethics.¹⁹⁸ Kannemeyer's view is that the unconditional love shown by Maria for her undeserving husband is contextualized in terms of Leipoldt writing under the influence of the Victorian period and era. He explains Leipoldt's Buddhist tendencies to discuss the question of Leipoldt's sentiment about unconditional love; of giving without expecting anything in return. In the sense of demonstrating Buddhist tendencies, Kannemeyer claims Leipoldt

¹⁹³M P O Burgers, 'C. L. Leipoldt, 'n Studie in Stof-keuse, -verwerking en -ontwikkeling', p. 1.

¹⁹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 184.

¹⁹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶J C Kannemeyer. 'Voorwoord', *Leipoldt, 'n Lewensverhaal*, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1999.

¹⁹⁷The editors in the 'Introduction' to C Louis Leipoldt's *The Mask*, Cederberg Publishers, Kenilworth, Cape Town, 2006, p. xx.

¹⁹⁸M P O Burgers, *C. L. Leipoldt, 'n Studie in Stof-keuse, -verwerking en -ontwikkeling*, p. 183.

risers above all sexual instinct, and all urges he might have in this sense are perfectly sublimated in ‘perfect love that lives for evermore’.¹⁹⁹

Burgers links the view he has of Leipoldt’s unconditional love to an Eastern influence, and with the apostle Paul in the first letter to the congregation and community in Corinth.²⁰⁰ The following extract from Professor Louise Viljoen of the University of Stellenbosch, outlining the qualities Leipoldt might have acquired from an Eastern influence, can further explain Leipoldt’s emotions and feelings about great and selfless love:

A similar point might be made about Leipoldt’s enthusiastic depiction of the Orient in terms of qualities like mystery, impenetrability, indefinability, emotion and femininity; even though it is a positive evaluation, it implies that the Orient cannot be seen in terms of qualities highly valued in the West like rationality, lucidity and masculine strength.²⁰¹

The Eastern influence on Leipoldt, as far as marriage is concerned, is expressed by him addressing his adopted son, Jeff, as follows:

Sexual attraction which in adolescence is the mainspring of love, can never itself justify marriage, or that lasting companionship that, even without the formal marriage tie, may satisfy a man and a woman. There must be something more than mere lust, which, after all, anyone with common sense and the precautions that modern conventions demand can occasionally satisfy without binding either party to something that is irrevocably fixed by contractual obligations Between man and woman, the gratification of sexual lust is of course that implied selfishness which is, equally of course, a perfectly natural result of man’s desire to procreate. But obviously the far higher friendship is the companionship that asks no gratification, the Buddhist’s “love without desire” that should be the ideal.²⁰²

In conclusion, the lack of local, deep tradition informs the trilogy in its full thrust and once this great virtuous quality becomes eroded, so the once strong cultural bonds break: (the following is a discussion between husband and wife, Gertrude and Jerry):

‘Now she’s off on her hobby horse,’ murmured Jerry, filling his pipe. ‘It’s not a hobby,’ his wife said sharply. ‘It’s common sense and you know it as well as I do. The pity is that so few nowadays, or formerly for that matter, had any tradition to fall back

¹⁹⁹J C Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt, 'n Lewensverhaal*, p. 617.

²⁰⁰M P O Burgers, *C. L. Leipoldt, 'n Studie in Stof-keuse, -verwerking en -ontwikkeling*, p. 181.

²⁰¹Louise Viljoen, *Leipoldt and the Orient: a Reading of C.L. Leipoldt's Travel Writing in the Context of Orientalist Discourse*, University of Stellenbosch, p. 6.

See also Edward W Said *Representations of the Intellectual – The 1993 Reith Lectures*, Vintage, London, 1994. In this book Said helps people to understand our aspirations as moral agents and not servants of power (Noam Chomsky, of Said’s book).

See also Ryszard Kapuściński, *The Other*, Verso, London & New York, 2008. Kapuściński exhorts humanity to accept and acknowledge ‘otherness’. (*Financial Times*, about Kapuściński’s book).

²⁰²BC94 B4.1 – B4.207 (Jagger).

on. There were some who came from fine stock, but you could count those on your fingers. There were others who had education and culture behind them, and knew what was due to them and theirs. That kept them from making fools of themselves as so many of the others did. But we are wandering away from your question, niece. I suppose what you wish to know is whether Jerry and I would approve of putting the black folk on an equality with us.²⁰³

By writing *The Mask*, Leipoldt emphasized the social changes that followed the South African War. The newly formed National Party in 1914, formed partly in reaction to the union loyalist paradigm, is represented in the novel by Santa and her father. Her father Elias Vantloo who made good out of the war now represents the National Party as a Member of Parliament, whilst Santa herself embraces the nationalistic spirit. Santa represents the new movement of racial purity, a policy of which the initial stages were implemented by law under Hertzog in the native Bills in 1926. The entire set of *topoi* that Leipoldt employed, centering on the virtues of tradition in his fiction, to explain its values, is to counter Preller's *volksgeskiedenis*, and as he advanced in years, the idea of a *Volkstum*, realized under the Nationalists several years after he died (1943) when they came to power in full force in 1948. *The Valley* by C Louis Leipoldt is an oppositional novel to the calamity, but to see this it must be read in its full force to understand the logic by which it is informed.

²⁰³C Louis Leipoldt, *The Valley*, p. 646.