

Ideology and Utopia in the Early Van Wyk Louw: A Preliminary Investigation

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Summary

Focussing on N.P. van Wyk Louw's first two collections of critical essays, *Berigte te velde* (1939) and *Lojale verset* (1939), this article considers Louw's recontextualising of the concepts "nation", "nationalism" and "national literature". Louw's distinction between a "national" and "colonial" literature is examined in terms of Paul Ricoeur's oppositional analysis of ideology and utopia in his *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1986). It is argued that these two sets of binary oppositions, supported by subordinate dualisms such as individual/nation and local/universal, formed the intellectual and structural premise of Louw's redefinition of the established Afrikaans critical and creative discourse of the thirties.

Opsomming

Met as middelpunt N.P. van Wyk Louw se eerste twee versamelings kritiese opstelle, *Berigte te velde* (1939) en *Lojale verset* (1939), ondersoek hierdie artikel Louw se herkontekstualisering van die konsepte "volk", "nasionale" en "nasionale letterkunde". Louw se onderskeid tussen 'n "nasionale" en "koloniale" letterkunde word bestudeer met spesifieke verwysing na Paul Ricoeur se opposisionele analise van ideologie en utopie in sy *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1986). Daar word aangevoer dat hierdie twee stelle binêre opposisies, ondersteun deur onderskikkende teenstellings soos individu/volk en lokaal/universeel, die intellektuele en strukturele uitgangspunt van Louw se herdefiniëring van die gevestigde Afrikaanse kritiese en skeppende diskoers van die jare dertig gevorm het.

Perhaps the only story that can be told about a person and a nation is the story of leaving a place which was never home in search of an unseen place which is; and the story of departing and returning home to find everything different and everything the same.

(Noyes 1997: 35)

Noyes links the notions of individuation and nation by means of the dialectic of home (the time and place of origin) and its distance; belonging and longing,

expressed narratively mainly in terms of departure and return. The geopolitical and subjective space Noyes deals with is encompassed in Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach to social and political theory in his *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1986). The tension between individual and nation, home and distance, and belonging and searching can also be regarded as pivotal elements of N.P. van Wyk Louw's first two collections of critical essays, *Berigte te velde* (1939) and *Lojale verset* (1939).

The young Louw's approach to sociopolitics, philosophy and, especially, literature, displayed a confrontational perspective in relation to existing views: it seems that Louw aimed at redefining the boundaries of the Afrikaner's cultural space by reconstructing the established literary and critical discourses. The underlying structural principle of Louw's views in the thirties can be regarded as a recontextualising of the concepts "nation", "nationalism" and "national literature", focussed on ensuring the continued existence and spiritual unity of the Afrikaner at a time of political and economic turmoil.

The divisions within the South African society of the thirties (cf. Moodie 1975; O'Meara 1983) together with Louw's hierarchised sociopolitical and literary views (cf. Olivier 1992) could have given rise to Louw interpreting his historical and present context largely in terms of a system of binary oppositions. Louw not only formulated his views in opposition to prevailing perspectives and their enactment, but also presented his ideas within a binary format. His concepts appear to be systematised in oppositional pairs and defined according to the tension between the components, for example "national"/ "colonial", and "local"/ "universal". The central opposition in Louw's early critical essays – "national" versus "colonial" literature – seems to correspond with the inherent exclusivity of binary oppositions (cf. Harland 1987): Louw claimed that his concept of a "national" literature incorporated the existing local or "colonial" literature, but it appears as if his integration of these two opposites remained incomplete (cf. 2.1 below). The exclusive structure of binary oppositions is also reflected in the hierarchical social dispensation Louw advocated: rulers versus the ruled and elite/masses, for example.

This paper postulates that Louw's distinction between a "national" and a "colonial" literature could be productively analysed in terms of Paul Ricoeur's oppositional analysis of ideology and utopia in his *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1986). It is also argued that these two sets of binary oppositions, supported by subordinate oppositions such as individual/nation, local/universal and belonging/searching, form the intellectual and structural framework of *Berigte te velde* and *Lojale verset*. Within these boundaries –

and with the realisation of inevitable adherence to personal ideological suppositions – the role of Louw in the conceptualisation and introduction of a new grasp on the established Afrikaans critical and creative discourse of the thirties will be investigated.

1 Ricoeur: Motivation and Synopsis

Ricoeur's views on ideology and utopia function as the theoretical base of this study of Van Wyk Louw's early critical prose due to the potentially innovative contribution of Ricoeur's approach to the existing body of research on Louw. The dualism that Louw posits between a "national" and a "colonial" literature yields extensive insight when it is analysed in terms of Ricoeur's polar distinction between ideology (which corresponds with Louw's "colonial" literature) and utopia (which corresponds with the opposing "national" literature) (cf. 2.1).

Ricoeur's conceptualisation of utopia is viewed as applicable to Louw's "national" literature for the following reasons. Louw's notion of a "national" literature is generally regarded as idealistic, but has until now not been analysed as a representation of the philosophical concept "utopia". This paper proposes that Louw's goal of a universal Afrikaans literature could be viewed as a wish-fulfilment dream (Ricoeur's definition of "utopia") which is directly related to the utopia of Afrikaner nation-building in the thirties. According to Louw, a literature that expressed all facets of contemporary existence within the context of a developing nation (a "national" literature) would be incorporated into the corpus of world literature and would simultaneously help to ensure the right to existence of that nation. This idealistic association between art and nation acts as the premise of the binary opposition "national"/ "colonial" literature that formed the focal point of Louw's critical writing in the thirties. The utopian nature of Louw's "national" literature is also related to the Platonic world of ideas that underlies his early literary essays: by means of Beauty, art is namely connected to the unchangeable concepts of Truth, Eternity and the Godly.

Louw's notion of a "colonial" literature and the presuppositions of his essays from the thirties both correspond with Ricoeur's interpretation of ideology. Louw viewed the Afrikaans literature and literary criticism of the early twentieth century as context-bound or "colonial". The rigidity of the repetitive nature of this literature and of the systems of authority governing its production and criticism became clear in the reluctance of these discourses to change in accordance with social and literary developments in the thirties

(both rigidity and inertia regarding change are characteristic of ideology, according to Ricoeur). In addition, Louw appealed to abstract, absolutist ideas – truth, nature, beauty – in order to legitimate his views on nationalism. The ideological foundation of Louw’s literary and cultural criticism is mentioned in discussions of *Berigte te velde* and *Lojale verset*, but is neither incisively analysed nor considered as the opposition/complement of his idealism (Olivier (1992) is a notable exception). Louw’s denial of ideological presuppositions in his early writing and his claim to an “immediate” experience of reality can be convincingly refuted by means of Ricoeur’s arguments against a pre-ideological reality.

An interdependence between ideology and utopia is seldom investigated, due to the divergent literary and semantic expressions of the two concepts. Typically, ideology functions as a polemical term – it is always the stance of the other – within sociology or political science. Utopias (“the glance from nowhere”) are usually advocated by their own authors, within history or literature (Ricoeur 1986: 1-2). The polarity between ideology and utopia was first investigated within one conceptual framework by Karl Mannheim in *Ideology and Utopia* (1936). Mannheim examined both terms as deviations from reality; they diverge within their shared characteristic of non-congruence with actuality. Ricoeur (1986) presents the first definition of the oppositional relationship between ideology and utopia within a common perspective since Mannheim. His juxtaposition of ideology and utopia within the framework of cultural imagination not only leads to a clear demarcation of the terms, but also markedly differentiates them from earlier conceptualisations where ideology was opposed to both reality and science,ⁱ and utopia was generally regarded as mere fantasy (Ricoeur 1986: x).

1.1 Ideology

In correspondence with the views of mainly Marx and Althusser ideology is generally regarded as an illusion, an inverted or distorted image of “reality” (Thompson 1984: 5). Ricoeur’s theory of ideology was largely formulated in reaction to the perspectives of Marx and Althusser. In opposition to Marx,ⁱⁱ Ricoeur refrains from defining ideology in terms of a true/false rendition of social reality: he regards ideology as representation, and, since representation forms an inherent dimension of “praxis” or social reality, ideology and praxis are unified. Marx’s “language of real life” (a pre-ideological reality) becomes Ricoeur’s “discourse of praxis”: “a symbolic structure of action that is absolutely primitive and ineluctable” (Ricoeur 1986:

77). According to Ricoeur (1978: 51) a pre-symbolic, and therefore pre-ideological, praxis is not possible (cf. Eagleton 1991: 3).

The question that Ricoeur refers to as the paradox of Mannheim (cf. 1.2) then arises: what is the epistemological status of a discourse on ideology if all discourse is ideological? Althusserⁱⁱⁱ claims that criticism of ideology is produced from an unmediated (scientific) position, “total reflection” or “absolute knowledge”, as Ricoeur (1978: 57) calls it. Ricoeur holds that ideological criticism cannot be non-ideological (“total”), as all criticism implies in advance a belonging to a society or a cultural tradition. A degree of criticism is made possible, however, by a partial separation or “distanciation” from personal predetermination (Ricoeur 1978: 59). The polarity between distance and participation (belonging) also leads to ideological criticism being necessarily partial and fragmentary (Ricoeur 1981: 245).

Ricoeur identifies three functions of ideology: social integration, legitimation, and distortion. With reference to Geertz (and in opposition to Marx), Ricoeur (1981: 225) maintains that social integration is the primary – and positive – function of ideology: it preserves social identity by creating an image of a social group which makes the representation and realisation of the group possible. The rationalisation of identity turns ideology into an interpretive code, however, which governs access to praxis. In this way authority and domination are introduced into ideology, and its negative functions, legitimation and distortion, are activated (Ricoeur 1978: 47; cf. Thompson 1984: 26).

Ricoeur argues that all forms of authority depend on legitimation. “Ideology must bridge the tension that characterises the legitimation process, a tension between the claim to legitimacy made by the authority and the belief in this legitimacy offered by the citizenry” (1986: 13). The association between legitimation and domination raises the issue of power: Thompson (1984: 130-131) defines domination as relations of power that are systematically a-symmetrical; the hierarchical constitution of social reality in terms of systems of exclusions, mainly founded on the criteria of “high” versus “low”. Thompson identifies a direct link between legitimation and power. He also identifies two additional functions of ideology that are connected to domination: dissimulation (the concealment of relations of domination) and reification (the representation of a transitory, historical situation as permanent, natural or outside of time) (1984: 131).

According to Ricoeur (1981: 229), legitimation serves as the link between the mediating role of ideology and its distorting capacity. Ricoeur maintains that a discourse or mode of thought – ethics and religion, for example – is

distorted when it is diverted from its own role to justify the existing system of authority (1978: 51). Distortion is only possible as a result of the symbolic structure of social reality, Ricoeur argues: the Marxist concept of ideology as an inverted image of praxis therefore refers to a secondary distortion of the ordinary symbolic function.

1.2 Utopia

Ricoeur (1986: 181) bases his conceptualisation of utopia on the conflict and intersection of ideology and utopia. He formulates his theory largely in response to Mannheim's views of ideology and utopia (1936), refuting Mannheim's perspective of non-congruence with reality as a starting-point. Ricoeur argues that deviations from praxis originate in a social and cultural imagination or dream which underpins the historical context. This imagination functions both constructively and destructively, as confirmation as well as contestation of the present order (Ricoeur 1986: 3). Ricoeur holds that the polarity of ideology and utopia functions in direct correlation with the dual structure of the social imagination: ideology represents its preserving capacity and utopia its disruptive side (1986: 265-266). He also describes the disruptive function of utopia as one of "shatter[ing] reality" in its drive towards change (p. 289).

The origin of Ricoeur's use of the term "imagination" can be found in his view of the metaphor as "a logic of discovery": Ricoeur believes that metaphor transgresses or destroys a categorial system, only to invent a new one in the process (1986: xxvii).^{iv} This notion of innovation is central to Ricoeur's concept of utopia: the utopian imagination offers both a vantage point from which to perceive the already constituted social reality and alternatives above and beyond it. Utopia is not merely a wistful dream (the general perception of the concept), however: Ricoeur (1986: 309-310) argues that it contains an inherent element of action that is aimed at changing the present social order and the ideologies which govern it.

Ricoeur (1986: 310) identifies three functions of utopia and defines them in correlation with the positive and negative functions of ideology: the preservation of identity (the positive ideological function) corresponds with the positive notion of utopia as an exploration of the possible; legitimisation relates to the negativity of utopia challenging authority; and distortion corresponds with the equally pathological utopian function of fantasy or escapism.

Utopia explores the possible from its vantage point of "nowhere", the literal meaning of the word (Ricoeur 1986: 15). The consideration of the established

social reality in terms of new possibilities highlights the contingency of the existing order, a characteristic which Ricoeur (p. 300) regards as the main value of utopias. Ricoeur describes utopia's exploration of alternative forms of praxis as "imagination as fiction" or "productive" imagination (p. 266): utopia has the fictional power of "re-describing life" (p. 310). (Ideology, on the other hand, is described as "imagination as picture" or "reproductive" imagination: it repeats what exists, in a sense, by justifying it (pp. 265-266)).

The utopian function of the challenging of authority contains an element of domination which corresponds to the way negativity is introduced into the second function of ideology. According to Ricoeur, all utopias eventually face the problem of authority: they try to indicate alternative forms of government to the state, as every state is the heir of another. Utopia therefore functions to question and unmask the surplus-value that ideology adds to the lack of belief in authority (Ricoeur 1986: 298).

The function of domination again raises the issue of power. Ricoeur regards power as the intersection and most important aspect of the polarity between ideology and utopia: "what is at stake in ideology and in utopia is power" (1986: 298); "ideology is always an attempt to legitimate power, while utopia is always an attempt to replace power by something else" (p. 288). Utopia presents an imaginative variation on power: it aims at ending relations of subordination by de-institutionalising the main human relationships and replacing them with either no rulers (government by co-operation and egalitarian relationships) or with a moral and ethical governing power who would be "the best". Ricoeur regards de-institutionalisation as the core of all utopias (1986: 299).

In its pathological capacity as fantasy or escapism, utopia represents the completely unrealisable, "a refuge against reality" (Ricoeur 1986: 309). The transition from present to future is no longer pertinent; the need to escape dominates the inherent drive to action and utopia is accordingly expressed in literature rather than in a realisation of change. Utopia as fantasy represents a "magic of thought" (p. 296) in the sense that it contains no conflict between goals: all goals are compatible and all obstacles dissolved.

Ricoeur's perspective on utopia provides an additional view to his interpretation of the paradox of Mannheim (cf 1.1). The distance that makes a partial judgment of ideology possible, Ricoeur holds, is provided by the distance from social reality that accompanies utopia: "[W]hat we must assume is that the judgment on ideology is always the judgment from a utopia [T]he only way to get out of the circularity in which ideologies engulf us is to assume a utopia, declare it, and judge an ideology on this basis" (1986: 172). Because the absolute onlooker is impossible, someone within the

process itself then takes the responsibility for judgment. In this way the correlation ideology/utopia is able to replace Althusser's perspective on ideology and science, just as it replaces Marx's unsuccessful contrast of ideology and reality.

2 N.P. van Wyk Louw: "nation", "nationalism", "national literature"

In his preface to *Berigte te velde* Louw writes: "[B]y die herlees van die stukke het dit my voorgekom asof daar een oortuiging aan almal ten grondslag lê, 'n neiging om twee standpunte saam te vat wat anders skerp teenoor mekaar gestel word: 1. 'n geloof aan die primaat van die suiwer estetiese in die kuns, en 2. die oortuiging dat so 'n 'suiwer estetiese' kuns 'n groot, selfs 'n beslissende faktor in die lewe van 'n volk is – en dat dit nie alleen met die kwaliteit van die lewe binne daardie volk te doen het nie, maar nog dieper, met die bestaansreg van die volk self" (1986: 3).^v

The above quotation broaches several issues which played a central role in Louw's recontextualisation of the established interpretation of "nationalism" and "national literature" in the thirties. It also introduces the oppositional structure of the young Louw's critical essays, and indicates Louw's wish to unify those dualisms. The primary importance of beauty in art, and the association between the latter and the existence of a nation, are stated clearly – factors that fulfil an essential function in Louw's utopia of a "national" literature (cf. 1 and 2.1).

The essays in *Berigte te velde* and *Lojale verset* were written between 1936 and 1939, a time of social and political upheaval in South Africa. Events such as urbanisation, the resultant rise of a new class of poor whites, and the shift from a mainly rural economy to industrialisation had given rise to fears among Afrikaner intellectuals about the unity and future of the "volk" (nation). (For a detailed discussion see O'Meara 1983). Van Wyk Louw (1986: 164) believed that cultural activity, or what he called "spiritual life", could unify the divided Afrikaner nation. He also maintained that only the life of the spirit, as expressed in language, and specifically literary texts of an international standard, could ensure the Afrikaner's right to continued existence as a small nation among the great powers of the world (Olivier 1995: 41-42). Louw (1986: 32) held that spiritual life originated in an eternal aesthetic consciousness which was responsible for renewal in both individuals and society.

Degenaar (1976: 59-60) calls Louw's conceptualisation of nationalism in the thirties a cultural or an "aesthetic" nationalism: the individual obtains an identity only by belonging to a nation and the continued existence of the nation is underpinned by a divine "Eternal Right" to that effect. It is the responsibility of the nation to concretise this right by means of its will and deeds, according to Louw (1986: 101), particularly with regard to the creative will expressing itself in the form of spiritual and aesthetic values conveyed in literature (p. 158).

Louw's interpretation of the concept "nation" in the thirties was seemingly formulated in response to the existing parochial "civil religion" (Moodie 1975) (reverence of the typically Afrikaner way of life), as expressed in the literature of the time (labelled "colonial" literature by Louw) (cf Louw 1986: 6-7, 15, 44). It appears that Louw's views were underpinned by the arguments of Fichte and Herder regarding the union of individual and nation, as well as by the related idealistic nationalism of Afrikaner intellectuals such as Muller (1925) and Diederichs (1936). In correlation with these metaphysical theories Louw (1986: 164) defined the Afrikaner as a homogeneous group which formed a unity on the basis of a shared culture, religion, tradition and, especially, language. He emphasised that individual self-determination was only possible by means of identification with national self-determination (1986: 102), "by sinking their own persons in the greater whole of the nation" (Kedourie 1993: 67).

Louw's conceptualisation of a "national literature" (1986: 122) further echoes Kedourie's statement above: "Nasionale kuns is kuns wat geskep word deur 'n persoonlikheid wat geheel binne sy volk staan". [National art is art created by a personality who identifies fully with his/her nation.] The bond between artist and nation (Louw's "national personality ideal" (1986: 23)) also leads to the literary expression of all aspects of human existence, within a national context, redefining and extending the established situation-bound ("colonial") literature or "old nationalism" (Opperman 1953: 202): "Alles, maar ook *alles* wat die moderne mens roer, wat sy vreugde of smart maak, moet ook in ons literatuur sy neerslag kry [D]ie begrip van 'n beperkte volkseienaardigheid [moet] verdwyn voor die begrip van volledige menslikheid binne 'n volksverband" (Louw 1986: 9).^{vi}

2.1 "National" and "colonial" Literature: Ideology and Utopia

The subsequent discussion of the role of ideology and utopia in Van Wyk Louw's early essays focusses on the opposition between "national" and "colonial" literature as the underlying structuring principle of both *Berigte te*

velde and *Lojale verset*. Ricoeur's conceptualisation of ideology/utopia serves as the foundation of this analysis. Louw's aim to integrate the "national" / "colonial" (utopia/ideology) dualism is investigated. The supportive and extending role of subordinate oppositions is dealt with cursorily.

Olivier (1992: 74) remarks that a theoretical idealistic identification of terms possibly opposed in practice will lead to contradictions and a blurring of the individual concepts. This partially describes the conclusion this paper will arrive at regarding Louw's distinction between a "national" and "colonial" literature, when examined within the dual context of ideology and utopia.

In his seminal essay, "Die rigting van die Afrikaanse letterkunde" (1936) (1986: 5-11), Louw introduced a new direction for Afrikaans literature. He conceptualised it as a "national literature" in opposition to the literary canon, which he described as "colonial literature" or "gemoedelike lokale realisme" [genial local realism] (p. 6). Using terms such as "strewe", "verlange", "daad" en "wil" [aspiration, longing, deed and will] Louw maintained that this "national literature" – defined in opposition to "colonial literature" as a spiritual move-ment, "nugter-eerlik" [realistically honest] and universal – could not be perceived as merely imaginary, due to the artistic purification required to realise this discourse, and the artists' subsequent ability to grasp and express "the truth" within the inescapable human boundaries (p. 5). "Colonial literature", on the other hand, idealised the Afrikaner's rural past and accompanying social securities, according to Louw. It reflected the typically local, whereas the "national literature" had as its goal "[d]ie eerlike, strenge *deurdink* van die moderne lewe, soos uit ons nasionale standpunt gesien, met behulp van die groot wysbegeerte van alle tye" (pp. 8-9).^{vii}

The terminology of the above-mentioned essay – which characterises both *Berigte te velde* and *Lojale verset* – indicates several correspondences between Louw's definition of "national" literature and the interpretation of utopia put forward by Ricoeur. With reference to Ricoeur's classification of the functions of utopia (cf.1.2) it appears that Louw's "national" literature functioned, firstly, as an exploration of the possible: it indicated the contingency of the existing literary situation by questioning it and by suggesting alternatives. The second similarity between utopia and the "national" literature is the challenge the latter set the authority of the established literary order by attempting to introduce an adapted power structure. Thirdly, the examples quoted from the above-mentioned essay (Louw 1986: 5-11) may create an impression of "escapism" and, therefore, indicate a parallel with Ricoeur's description of the pathological function of

utopia as “fantasy” (an avoidance of social reality). Louw’s appeal for innovation in Afrikaans literature contained a clear emphasis on instituting change in the literary reality, however: he spoke of a drive or “stootkrag” (1986: 5), emanating from the will and pain of the Afrikaner nation, that would transport the existing “colonial” literary context to a “national” literary future. It appears, therefore, that Louw’s interpretation of “national” literature corresponds with Ricoeur’s definition of utopia in respect of two of the three functions Ricoeur ascribes to utopia.

The utopian nature of Louw’s “national” literature is also demonstrated by his claim that aesthetics (“beauty”) justifies the existence of a nation (1986: 97, 125). Closely related to this idea is his view that art incorporates biological life in an aesthetic form that transforms as well as transcends the biological and instinctive (1986: 157, 164). Beauty therefore justifies and purifies concrete experience (Olivier 1992: 55-56). Louw thus redefined the context-bound “colonial literature” in terms of a Platonic world of ideas, governed by Beauty instead of social reality. He acknowledges this (Louw 1986: 46, 86). The concept of a “national literature” challenged the authority of the existing creative and critical structures, replacing domination by the “typically Afrikaans” with the “best” governing literary power possible, in Louw’s eyes: the representation of all aspects of human existence, within a national context, through Beauty.

Louw’s conceptualisation of a “colonial” literature is dominated by his definitive terminology of “local” (“die eng-plaaslike” (1986: 15)) and “typical”, the literary reproduction of aspects of the environment that are specifically Afrikaans or Afrikaner-related (p. 44). These terms could be denoted as ideological, with reference to Ricoeur’s classification of ideology (cf. 1.1). The traditional or “colonial” literature displayed a component of social integration which corresponds with Ricoeur’s first function of ideology. It namely elevated the distinctive characteristics of the Afrikaner and its environment – it was focussed on creating an image of and identity for a nation traumatised by repeated onslaughts on its freedom.^{viii} This (positive) rationalisation of a sense of belonging turned into (negative) legitimation (Ricoeur’s second ideological function) in respect of the reluctance to change both the reproductive character of the art and the systems of authority governing it, in the face of new social and literary developments (a new class system as a result of urbanisation, and Louw’s innovative literary views, in particular). Louw’s claim that the “colonial” literature is “untrue” (1986: 8) corresponds with Ricoeur’s third function of ideology: it introduced an element of distortion into the concept. Louw’s definition of “colonial”

literature thus demonstrates a similarity with all three categories of Ricoeur's classification of ideology.

Louw denied any predetermination of his conceptualisations. He maintained (1986: 47) that great literature required an "immediate" approach to social reality, a stance of innocence and wonder, "soos die eerste mens teenoor die wêreld" [like the first person viewing the world]. With reference to Ricoeur (cf. 1.1), it can be demonstrated, however, that the structural composition of Louw's essentially utopian "national literature" (cf. above) was not characterised by "total reflection" (cf. 1.1) as he claimed, but included marked ideological elements.

Louw (1986: 119) argued that "national" literature incorporated "colonial" literature. The inherent exclusivity of binary oppositions precludes the unification of two polarised concepts, however, and Louw's posited reconciliation of "colonial" and "national" literature therefore necessarily remained incomplete. In the last essay in *Lojale verset*, for example, "n Lewenshouding vir 'n moderne mens" [An attitude to life for a modern person], which already anticipated the changes in Louw's critical prose in the fifties, Louw still distinguished between transcendent beauty and beauty which satisfies the masses or individuals. It would appear that his attempts at integration – together with the ineluctable predetermination of praxis, according to Ricoeur (cf. 1.1) – led to an overlapping and resultant blurring of both "national" and "colonial" literature (cf. Olivier 1992: 74 above).

Louw's utopian notion of a "national" literature appears to be partly based on ideological suppositions such as universalism, the natural and the eternal: the universal and comprehensive in opposition to the "colonial" "local" and particular; the natural or instinctive (which is linked to will and action) as opposed to the narrower reproductive emphasis on the "typically Afrikaans"; the accentuating of an eternal right to exist, through great literature, in contrast with the historical and contextual rootedness of "colonial literature".

The universal and natural characteristics of "national" literature could be interpreted as legitimation of the concept (compare Ricoeur's second ideological function): they not only rendered these literary products self-evident and inevitable, but also instituted a direct relation between great literature and Beauty (Louw 1986: 46, 157), which served to justify the existence of the Afrikaner nation. It would appear that Louw was constructing a new authoritative system, which would also hold a claim to power. This was further demonstrated by his appeal to a religious basis for the Afrikaner's continued existence, which could be read as distortion (Ricoeur's third function of ideology) with the aim of justifying a personal opinion of truth.

It could be said that the overlapping features of ideology and utopia within the essentially utopian “national literature”^{ix} ultimately demonstrate the process of transition by which utopia becomes ideology (“the shift from fiction to picture” (Ricoeur 1986: 295)). Louw was simultaneously conceptualising and realising a “national” literature: its utopian characteristics, which mainly resided in the aesthetic and spiritual bases of the concept, appear to have turned into rigid ideological suppositions as the theory was applied to praxis. (Ricoeur speaks of “[the] frozen picture of the last stage” (1986: 295).) Louw displayed a realisation of this transitional process: he acknowledged that the complete expression of a world-view, as required by a “national” literature, excluded impartiality (Louw 1986: 52). He also acknowledged that ideals necessarily become impure when realised (p. 170), but added that the purity of ideals could be retained by their (utopian) will to become more than mere ideals.

In correspondence with Ricoeur (1986: 180), it therefore appears that the Louw of *Berigte te velde* and *Lojale verset* could not escape from the circle between ideology and utopia: utopia originates in response to ideology but becomes ideology by the process of realisation. We are always caught in this oscillation between the two concepts, Ricoeur says, but “we must try to cure the illnesses of utopia by what is wholesome in ideology – by its element of identity, which is ... a fundamental function of life – and try to cure the rigidity ... of ideologies by the utopian element” (p. 312). In the words of Van Wyk Louw: “Alles is by ons nog verwagting, alles lê nog voor om te doen of is nog in die heerlike ewewig van die daad” [For us everything is still expectation, everything still awaits doing or is still in the great equilibrium of the deed (my translation)] (1986: 159).

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Notes

- i. With regard to the oppositional relation between ideology and reality, on the one hand, and ideology and science, on the other, Ricoeur (1978, 1981, 1986) extensively discusses Marx and Althusser respectively (cf. 1.1 and Notes 2 and 3 below).
- ii. Ricoeur's perspective on the opposition that Marx identifies between ideology and reality is mainly formulated in response to Marx's *The German Ideology* (1970).
- iii. In his discussion of Althusser's dualism between ideology and science, Ricoeur focuses mainly on *Lenin and Philosophy* (1968).
- iv. Ricoeur's views on metaphor are contained in *The Rule of Metaphor* (1977).
- v. Upon rereading the essays it appeared to me that they were all based on one conviction, a tendency to unite two points of view which are usually sharply opposed: 1. a belief in the primacy of the purely aesthetic in art, and 2. the conviction that such "purely aesthetic" art is a great, even a decisive factor in the life of a nation - and that it does not only have a bearing on the quality of life within that nation, but even deeper, on the right to existence of the nation (my translation).
- vi. Everything, but *everything* that moves the modern being, that constitutes his joy or pain, must also be incorporated in our literature [T]he comprehension of a limited national peculiarity must disappear in favour of the comprehension of complete humanness within a national context (my translation).
- vii. The honest, rigorous and full consideration of modern life, as seen from our national point of view, with the aid of the great philosophy of all times (my translation).
- viii. Moodie (1975) and O'Meara (1983) provide incisive accounts of the events that led to the rise of Afrikaner nationalism.
- ix. Some properties, such as the "Ewige Reg" (eternal right) in respect of the Afrikaner's continued existence, seem to function as both utopian and ideological.