

BETWEEN THE LINES : *THE STAR AND SOWETAN* AND THE
CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE NEW SOUTH
AFRICA

Richard Laurence Epstein

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Abstract

This thesis examines, through an interpretative framework of *specificity* and *difference*, how the 'New South Africa' is being constructed by *The Star* and *Sowetan* newspapers. Using semiotics as the method of analysis, it gives detailed deconstructive readings of *The Star* and *Sowetan's* coverage of the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as South Africa's first post-apartheid head of state. In the process it reveals how signs are mobilised to give a particular meaning to the New South Africa. The findings of this study show that there is no single construction of the New South Africa. Instead, there are *different*, although *not necessarily intentional*, constructions which are *specific* and relative in nature. They privilege specific forms of identity which are not applicable to everyone who claims to be South African. This leads to the conclusion that we cannot view nationalisms and national identities as being coherent and unified. Rather, it concludes that we should see them as being constituted by specificity and difference.

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.



Richard Laurence Epstein

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Introduction

This thesis is concerned with examining the processes involved in the formation of social identity. It looks at the formation of collective identity within a specific context and through the use of a particular case study. More specifically, it focuses on the role of the media in the construction of national identity. In particular, it investigates the ways in which *The Star* and *Sowetan* newspapers, as examples of print media, define and construct a New South African identity. Furthermore, this study explores, by way of a *semiotic analysis* of their coverage of the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa, how these newspapers differ in their relative constructions of the nation. And, in turn, it assesses the implications of this for our understanding of nationalism.

This thesis takes as its point of departure the assumption that the New South Africa, or at least the idea of the New South Africa, like all nations, is socially constructed. That is, it is essentially about meaning and representation and, as a result, it relies on the system of signs and symbols for both its creation and reproduction. Yet, within this assumption I will argue that the way in which the nation is constructed is neither straight-forward nor uniform. Rather, it is constructed at different levels and in different forms. On one level, for example, the construction might be intentional, but on another level it might be quite unintentional. On the latter, the point is that the nation can be constructed independently of both

motive and intention. That is, in the absence of agency. Yet, this does not make such constructions any less significant. Furthermore, this thesis argues that there is not one construction of the New South Africa. There is no one New South Africa. Rather, there are potentially many different constructions which encourage us to think about the New South Africa in different ways¹.

The significance of this study is fourfold. Firstly, it is distinguished by its methodology. It provides a semiotic analysis of nationalism and, as such, it differs from the methods traditionally used to analyse this phenomenon (oral histories, interviews, documentary research, institutional analyses, etc.). While this may appear a trivial point it is not. The significance of using semiotics to study nationalism is not simply limited to the fact that it is a relatively novel and under-utilised method, it also has practical implications:

The ability to deconstruct material gives us at least some knowledge of what is going on, of what possible meanings there are, which we are taking in, one way or another. This knowledge gives power, the power to make choices about what may be meant, the power to accept or reject what we are told from a position of some strength and not from a position of weak ignorance. The knowledge is not so much based on facts as on skills - the skills of analysis and

¹ This study does not explore other forms of construction of the New South Africa (such as those that occur in state and government discourse, as well as those that are present in history books).

interpretation. The power lies in understanding communication properly, in gaining some measure of control over the messages we receive, in balancing the power that producers have to construct attractive and influential communication with a power of the audience to accept or reject that communication. (Burton, 1990: p141)

And, when applied to the study of nationalism, this is particularly relevant. Nationalism is as much about exclusion as it is about inclusion (Schlesinger, 1987). It is capable of systematically excluding various categories of people and thus it is a potentially dangerous tool. Thus, if through a semiotic approach we can become aware of how the nation is constructed in various contexts, if we can read between the lines and see who is excluded or marginalised, we can subsequently resist such manoeuvres².

Secondly, and related to the first point³, this project addresses itself to the explanatory imbalance which has tended to characterise the work on nationalism. Rather than problematising the nation and nationalism as

² This, to borrow from Van Dijk (1991: p6), rests on an assumption that national consciousness and identities are "predominantly acquired and confirmed through various types of discourse or communication, such as socializing talk in the family, everyday conversations, laws, textbooks, government publications, scholarly discourse, advertising, movies and news reports".

³ Indeed, the particular aspect of nationalism which one chooses to investigate will influence which method of research is adopted. The fact that I have chosen to focus on *how* the nation is constructed, rather than *why*, immediately narrows the choice of methodologies. The distinction between the first point and the second point is therefore an analytical one.

macro-phenomena, this study problematises them as micro-phenomena⁴. That is, it looks at the nation as a *discursive product* (Foucault, 1972). This is in contradistinction to much of the work on nationalism which has tended to limit its attention to macro-level explanations, neglecting the internal processes of nation-formation. As such, it also asks a different set of questions. Instead of asking *why* nations come about it asks *how* they come about (Foucault, 1982).

Thirdly, this study looks at the construction of the nation through a framework of *specificity* and *difference*. The aim is to demonstrate that there are different constructions of the nation and, furthermore, that these constructions are specific and relative in nature. That is, they are not definitive constructions. Rather, they represent specific forms of the nation; forms specific to certain people at certain times.

⁴ Similarly, this research also addresses itself to the imbalances characteristic of the sociology of the media. Much of the sociological work on the media and mass communication has concentrated on macro-phenomena such as institutions, audiences, large-scale effects, and the overall functions of the media in society. Consequently, it has neglected the micro-phenomena, including the actual texts which would have such influence:

"comparatively little attention has been paid to the systematic analysis of what mass communication seems to be primarily about, viz. texts (messages, discourse, etc.). Indeed, most work deals with various sociological or socio-psychological theories of mass-media institutions, of audiences or effects, or the relations between media on the one hand and society and culture on the other hand. The study of the mass mediated messages themselves is usually relegated to a predominantly methodological approach, viz. that of so-called 'content analysis'." (Van Dijk, 1985a: p1)

Fourthly, the study is also significant in terms of the attention it gives to the *media* in the construction of the nation. It recognises that the media is the bearer of much of the information which we obtain about the world and that it is therefore ideally placed to play a significant role in this process. It acknowledges that the media mediates in our interpretation and construction of the social world and that, therefore, it is a potential source of mass-produced (national) consciousness. And, in an era increasingly dominated by the mass media (Thompson, 1992: p223) this inquiry is given greater significance. As Gerbner (1985: p13) points out:

Informed policy-making and the valid interpretation of social concept formation and response require the development of some indicators of the prevailing winds of the common symbolic environment in which and to which most people respond. ... the rise of the industrialised and centrally managed discharge of massive symbol-systems into the mainstream of common consciousness has given the inquiry a new urgency and social policy significance.

Barthes (1973: p112f) makes a similar point, in the process reminding us of the importance of semiotics as a method of analysis (see above):

The development of publicity, of a national press, of radio, of illustrated news, not to speak of the survival of a myriad rites of communication which rule social appearances makes the development of a semiological science more urgent than ever.

It is for these reasons that this study is important.

I now conclude this introduction with a brief overview of this thesis' chapters.

Chapter one attempts to come to grips with the issue of nationalism and national identity. It sketches a broad overview of the existing literature, indicating where this particular study is situated in relation to it. From there it goes on to outline the theoretical assumptions on which the thesis is based.

The second chapter highlights the methodology involved in this study. It gives an overview of semiotics and suggests how it can be applied to the analysis of newspaper texts. Rationale is then provided for the case study. It justifies why *The Star* and *Sowetan* were chosen as the objects of study and then motivates the decision to focus specifically on the Mandela Inauguration.

Chapters three and four are the analysis chapters. They give detailed deconstructive readings of the *Sowetan* and *The Star's* coverage of the Inauguration, showing the ways in which certain signs are mobilised by these two newspapers to give particular meanings to the New South Africa.

The thesis then concludes with an assessment of the implications of the findings of chapters three and four for our understanding of nationalism and national identity.

Chapter One

Explaining Nationalism

INTRODUCTION

Much of the work on nationalism has inclined itself to focus on the general, macro-level, political and/or societal dimensions of nationalism. While this is necessary for an adequate understanding of this complex phenomenon, it certainly is not sufficient. It neglects the various micro-levels of the actual expressions, manifestations and mechanisms of the creation and reproduction of nationalism which includes its discursive aspects (Van Dijk, 1991; p5). It is with this in mind that this research intervenes in the literature on nationalism, choosing as its focus the construction and representation of the nation within news media discourse.

THEORIES OF NATIONALISM - A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Broadly speaking, theories of nationalism and national identity have tended to fall into one of two categories: primordialist or modernist. The primordialist or 'perennialist' view (Shils, 1957; Simmel, 1964) argues that nations, and therefore nationalisms, are natural units of history and

therefore integral elements of human experience and societies. Consequently, nations are regarded by the primordialists as both perennial and natural (Smith, 1986: p12). This view suggests that national identity is a given form of social existence, that, independent of time, forms the core of our experience, being and social existence.

Smith identifies two variants of the primordialist view of nations, namely socio-biological and sociological. The former "asserts that ethnicity is an extension of kinship, and that kinship is the normal vehicle for the pursuit of collective goals in the struggle for survival. (p12)" The latter, on the other hand, sees

language, religion, race, ethnicity and territory as the basic organizing principles and bonds of human association throughout history.... (thus) they both precede more complex political formations and provide the bases upon which the latter can be built (Smith, 1986: p12).

Modernists (see, for example : Hobsbawm, 1983; Gellner, 1983) reject this formulation of national identity, suggesting that it only appears to be the case that nations are perennial and natural. And, because of this appearance, the primordialist conception of the nation appeals to common-sense. As such, it is a popular explanation. However, common-sense and popularity are neither sufficient nor necessary indicators of

validity. Simply because we tend to think of national identities as essential parts of who we are, does not mean that this is actually the case:

The idea of a man without a nation seems to impose a strain on the modern imagination. A man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears. All this seems obvious, though, alas, it is not true. But that it should have come to seem so very obviously true is indeed an aspect, perhaps the very core, of the problem of nationalism. Having a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity, but it has now come to appear as such. (Gellner, 1983: p6)

In contrast to the primordialist views outlined above, the modernist or 'situational' perspectives claim that nations and nationalisms are in fact purely modern phenomena (see, for example, Anderson, 1983; Bhabha, 1990; Gellner, 1983; Kedourie, 1960; Nairn, 1977; Rotenstreich, 1984), that are contingent on specific historical processes and conditions of modernity, such as capitalism, industrialisation and bureaucracy (Smith, 1986: pp8-9). Nations and nationalism are thus expressions of 'modern developmental history' (Nairn, 1977: p359).

This suggests that national identities and cultures are not fixed. Rather, they are shaped and developed by various processes and, therefore, are constantly open to change, redefinition and reconstruction. As a result, the space is subsequently opened to explore those processes which are

responsible for the creation and recreation of national culture, identity and consciousness.

Situated within the situational perspective on nationalism are the Marxist approaches. For traditional Marxists nationalism has always represented a grave theoretical problem. They have not been able to explain adequately why people in modern societies have organised themselves more in terms of national identity rather than class identity. They have tended to explain nationalism in terms of an epiphenomenon, in terms of a false consciousness, seeing it as an ideological disguise for capitalist exploitation (Nimni, 1991: p4). In other words, traditional Marxists suggest that national consciousness is manipulated by the ruling class in order to prevent the formation of class consciousness. Although this explanation may appear valid, it is however problematic. It suggests that people are merely passive imbibers of nationalist ideologies, that they are essentially duped by those whose interests nationalism promotes. Consequently, as Nairn (1977: p329) has pointed out, "The theory of nationalism represents Marxism's greatest failure."

It was Nairn's recognition of this failure that led him to try and offer an alternative Marxist explanation of nationalism. Instead of the false consciousness thesis proposed by traditional Marxists, Nairn argued that nationalism could better be explained in a Marxist framework if it was located within the context of global capitalism.

Nationalism then was seen as "determined by certain aspects of the world political economy" (Nairn, 1977: p332), particularly those of the uneven development of capitalism which led to imperialist relations of domination. The globalisation of capitalism had contradictory effects. On the one hand, it raised the expectations of the periphery by promising material progress. But, on the other hand, the periphery experienced that promise as domination and oppression. The gap between expectation and reality created by the uneven development of capitalism was so great that the periphery was effectively forced to try and narrow the gap by themselves. This they attempted through the mobilisation of national consciousness and identity, for nationalism represented the resistance to what was seen as alien oppression.

The strength of Nairn's argument is that he demonstrates that nationalism plays a much more central role in society than the traditional Marxists suggest. Nationalism, he suggests, was successful because it provided people with something relevant and meaningful. It performed a function in society - that is, resistance to imperialist domination - and, therefore, even though it may have been mobilised from above, it cannot be merely reduced to a state of false consciousness.⁵

⁵ This aspect of nationalism has been built on by a number of other theorists. For example, Smith (1986) and Anderson (1983) have argued that nationalisms enjoy great support because they help to alleviate people's fear of fatality. They therefore "come to serve vital psychological as well as economic needs" (Smith, 1986: p10). Consequently, nationalism provides meaning which political ideologies such as Marxism and liberalism fail to emulate.

While Nairn's thesis is an improvement on the traditional Marxist perspectives, going some way towards addressing the question of meaning in nationalism, it is nevertheless still lacking. The weakness of Nairn's argument lies in the suggestion that nationalism was used to mobilise the masses against imperialist domination simply 'because it was there'. Consequently, he tends to retreat into an explanation that is ultimately instrumental⁶. And here he shares a similar shortcoming to the traditional Marxist perspective outlined above, not just because his argument is essentially instrumentalist, but also because it does not explain how nationalism 'came to be there'.

Even if we assume that Nairn and the traditional Marxists are correct, that national identity is manipulated and/or mobilised by various ruling elites in order to serve political and/or economic interests, they still do not explain how the national identities come to be constituted in the first place. They do not actually explain how they become available for subsequent manipulation and/or mobilisation. After all, false or not, nationalism is still a form of consciousness and, most importantly, of identity.

⁶ I would argue that Nairn also retreats into an explanation that is tinged with shades of primordialism. If nationalism is a by-product of the global political economy as he suggests, then how can it simply 'be there'? Where does it come from? 'Because it was there' implies primordialism and if this is so then it would surely have pre-dated capitalism, thus giving lie to his central contention that it is certain aspects of capitalism which give rise to nations and nationalism.

Consequently, although these theories explain the social functions of nationalism fairly well, they say remarkably little about its nature. They do not take account of the internal dynamics of nationalism and, therefore, while they may be able to explain why nationalisms develop, they cannot adequately explain how they develop. In short, they neglect *the processes* of identity-formation⁷. To this end, the work of Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), and Anderson (1983) is particularly informative.

TOWARDS A MICRO-LEVEL APPROACH TO NATIONALISM

Invented traditions

The work of Hobsbawm and Ranger and their co-contributors on 'invented traditions' is important because it gives us an insight into the processes through which nationalisms are constructed, and continuously defined and redefined. They suggest that nationalisms reconstruct, and even invent, the past in order to meet the needs of the present. Thus, as the needs of

⁷ Except perhaps for the work of Hofmeyr (1987) : "Building a nation from words : Afrikaans language, literature and ethnic identity, 1902-1924", most of the literature on nationalism in South Africa has tended to neglect the internal processes of national identity construction, focusing instead on the history of these specific social movements, their ideologies and social functions. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the contributions made by the literature on nationalism in South Africa to our overall understanding of what is, given the history of South Africa, an extremely complex and sensitive issue. See, for example, Marks (1989); O'Meara (1983); Beinart (1987); Marks and Trapido (1987); Moodie (1975); Adam and Gillomee (1979).

the present change, so do national identities and cultures. They are redefined in line with the imperatives of the present.

This redefinition of national identity is achieved through invented traditions which are

a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. (Hobsbawm, 1983: p1)

The symbolic nature of invented traditions is important for the creation of national identity and consciousness as

most of the occasions when people become conscious of citizenship as such remain associated with symbols and semi-ritual practices (for instance elections), most of which are historically novel and largely invented: flags, images, ceremonies and music. (Hobsbawm, 1983: p12)

Consequently, while giving the appearance of being natural and perennial, nationalisms are actually socially engineered *through suitably tailored discourses*:

the history which became part of the fund of knowledge or ideology of the nation-state or movement is not what has actually been preserved in popular memory, but what has been selected, written, pictured, popularized and institutionalized by those whose function it is to do so. (Hobsbawm, 1983: p13)

This points to the significance of symbols and myths in the construction of nationalism⁸. Yet, what is particularly important to note about the work of Hobsbawm and Ranger, especially for our purposes, is that they show that symbols and myths do not just exist as natural and timeless indicators of the nation; they show how they come to exist (and therefore subsequently stir national sentiment). Thus, rather than the nation giving rise to national symbols and myths, it is the symbols and myths which give rise to the nation⁹. The nation can therefore be defined and redefined through the invention of new and the reconstruction of old symbols and myths as political and ideological realities/needs change. This points to the potentially fluid nature of nationalism.

Imagined communities

Hobsbawm and Ranger's work is, I believe, complemented by the work of Benedict Anderson (1983) on 'Imagined communities' which gives an account of the historical antecedents which have made the invention of

⁸ See also Smith, 1986.

⁹ See also James Donald : 'How English Is It ? Popular Literature and National Culture', *New Formations*, no. 6, who suggests that the nation "does not express itself through its culture : It is cultural apparatuses that produce 'the nation' " (p32).

tradition, and therefore nationalism, possible. It too is concerned with process, with the how of nationalism.

For Anderson, nationalism is nothing more than an imagined community. That is, it is a way of thinking about or imagining a particular group identity. However, this kind of imagined community has only been possible with the advent of capitalism, for it has given rise to modes of communication which have transformed the way in which communities throughout the world think about themselves and their relations with others. In particular, Anderson gives attention to the role played by the mass media in the creation of national identity and consciousness. Indeed, it is his central contention that "Print language is what invents nationalism" (1983: p122). And, as Anderson (1992: pp7-8) reveals in a more recent paper, "print capitalism brought into being mass publics who began to imagine, through the media, a new type of community: the nation." Gerbner (1985: p15), in line with Anderson's argument, elaborates on the nature of this process:

Publication is thus the instrument of community consciousness and of governance among large groups of people too numerous or too dispersed to interact face to face or in any other personally mediated fashion. The truly revolutionary significance of modern mass communication is its broad 'public making' ability. That is the ability to form historically new bases for collective thought and action

quickly, continuously, and pervasively across previous boundaries of time, space, and culture.

Thus, as this theory suggests, nationalism can be defined and redefined depending on how the media allows the national community to be imagined. The discourses articulated by the media about the nation therefore become of prime importance in determining how national identity and consciousness is shaped.

At this point it would perhaps be useful to outline some of the theoretical assumptions which inform my research.

CONSTRUCTING THE NATION

It is my central contention that nations are socially constructed. That is, although they may exist as 'objective' political, juridical and geographic entities, nations are, I argue, essentially about meaning and representation. And, nations only become meaningful in relation to how they are represented:

a nation is not only a political entity but something which produces meanings - a system of cultural representation. People are not only legal citizens of a nation; they participate in the idea of the nation as represented in its national culture. A nation is a symbolic community

and it is this which accounts for its power to generate a sense of identity and allegiance. (Hall, 1992: p292)

Following from this, I would like to suggest that the nation is produced/constructed discursively. This has important implications for the media as it is a primary source of mass representation.

As Hobsbawm (1983: p14) suggests (and as mentioned above), nationalisms are socially engineered through suitably tailored discourses¹⁰. And, although he was specifically referring to the role of historians in this process¹¹, I would like to suggest that the media is also an important provider of 'suitably tailored discourses' about the nation. Although the media may not actually institutionalise history, it nevertheless does select, write, picture and popularise 'the story of the nation'¹². The media is thus also an important source of 'the national story':

the narrative of the nation, as it is told and retold in national histories, literatures, the media and popular culture.... provide a set of stories,

¹⁰ Here I use Hall's definition of discourse: "a way of constructing meanings which influences and organizes both our actions and our conceptions of ourselves" (1992: pp292-293 - my emphasis). The value of this definition is that it explicitly links discourse to the formation of identity.

¹¹ "the history which became part of the fund of knowledge or the ideology of the nation-state or movement is not what has actually been preserved in popular memory, but what has been selected, written, pictured, popularized and institutionalized by those whose function it is to do so." (Hobsbawm, 1983: p13)

¹² See, for example, the second part of Curran et al (1987) 'Media and Social Control' as well as Bhabha (1990) who discusses the nation as narrative.

images, landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols and rituals which stand for, or represent, the shared experiences, sorrows, and triumphs and disasters which give meaning to the nation. (Hall, 1992: p293)

And, since the media is arguably a more accessible, immediate and pervasive source of national representation its influence in constructing the nation should not be underestimated. Thus I take my cue from Anderson who privileges the role of the media in the construction of the nation (see above).

For Anderson, what is important in understanding the nation is not so much the fact that it is constructed but rather *the way in which it is constructed*: "Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity or genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (Anderson, 1983: p15). What he suggests therefore is that "the difference between nations lie in the different ways in which they are imagined" (Hall, 1992: p293). However, what this view neglects is the possibility that there might be numerous ways of imagining the same nation. That is, while he is sensitive to difference between nations he tends to ignore difference within a nation¹³. It is here that my work breaks with his thesis.

¹³ This implies that the media all represent/construct a given nation in a similar way, allowing people to imagine that nation in the same way. This has, as I see it, one of two implications for media theory. Either it suggests a conspiracy model; that the media all reproduce dominant definitions of the nation. Or, it suggests a mirror model of the media; that the media simply reflect social reality (rather than construct it or mediate in it).

CONTESTED IMAGININGS: SPECIFICITY AND DIFFERENCE

While I accept Anderson's general proposition that the media constructs the nation by allowing people to imagine it in a distinct way (that is, distinct from other nations), I prefer to look at his thesis through a framework which highlights the *specificity* and *difference* of this process, demonstrating that the nation is not necessarily coherent, but potentially effused with contradiction and inconsistency. Put another way, there is no single construction of the nation. Rather, there are many different and specific, often contradictory, constructions and representations of it. The idea of the nation, what it means and who is part of it, is therefore contested (Esonwanne, 1993). By looking at the nation through the framework of *specificity* and *difference* (Deleuze, 1994; Derrida, 1978; Gates, 1986) I hope to highlight these contradictions.

The construction of the nation is an essentially contradictory process: it negates and affirms difference at the same time, it excludes and includes simultaneously. On one level the nation denies difference by unifying it under the banner of a broader group identity (see Hall, 1992: p296), defined by 'suitably tailored discourses', but on another level it asserts difference through exclusion. At some point it excludes difference by defining the boundaries between one national identity and another. How

those boundaries are defined and at what point that occurs is different in different contexts and in different discourses. Thus, there is a double contradiction: within a particular construction of the nation and *between different constructions* of the same nation. It is however the latter contradiction with which I am essentially concerned, as I am interested in exploring how different representations of the nation in the media allow us to imagine the nation in specific ways.

A NOTE ON NEWS AS IDEOLOGY

I also engage in this research with the assumption that news is not value-free (see also Van Dijk, 1991; Fowler, 1991; Simpson, 1993), even though it presents itself as such¹⁴. Rather it is implicated in ideological production (and reproduction). News is a text, a form of communication, and, as a result, meaning is embedded within it:

¹⁴ As Burton (1990: p109) points out: "Most people trust the news machine and what it tells us. Often it is endowed with qualities of neutrality and authority which in fact it has not got, and could not reasonably be expected to have. "Indeed, the very format of newspapers creates this impression :

"Each day newspapers print one or two separate articles, distinct from the news reporting, features and other daily items, claiming to speak their own point of view. These sections are variously headed or indexed as 'leading article', 'editorial', 'opinion', 'comment', ... and so on. They have an important symbolic function, seeming to partition off the 'opinion' component of the paper, implicitly supporting the claim that other sections, by contract, are pure 'fact' or 'report.'" (Fowler, 1991 : p208).

Representation, in the Press as in all other kinds of media and discourse, is a constructive practice. Events and Ideas are not communicated neutrally, in their natural structure, as it were. They could not be, because they have to be transmitted through some medium with its own structural features, and these structural features are already impregnated with social values which make up a potential perspective on events. (Fowler, 1991: p25)

messages... are not simply reflections of the world as it is. By being given to us, they actually help make up our view of that world. This is not to say the messages are totally untrue. Nor is it to jump into judgements about whether the situation as described to us is a good or a bad thing. But it is to say that the very act of communicating is one in which a message and its treatment is selected, and therefore cannot by definition be neutral. (Burton, 1990: p134)

Put another way, there is no ideologically neutral way of communicating.

News production, like most forms of communication, involves a series of choices: what stories to include; what should go on the front page; what the headline should say (and how it should say it); what pictures to use, etcetera. Each of the choices means something. For example, newspaper A and newspaper B might both have the same lead story, yet they might choose to highlight different aspects of that story in their respective

headlines, thereby giving different meanings to the same event (see Van Dijk, 1991: ff50).

UNINTENDED CONSTRUCTIONS

However, having said this, I would also like to point out that the meanings constructed within newspapers are *not necessarily* the result of intentionality. The editorial process demands that choices are made. Production schedules (deadlines) have to be met, placing constraints on both space and time. Not every possible news story and not every available picture can be included in the newspaper. Yet, those items that are chosen nevertheless mean something, regardless of the motive behind the choice¹⁵.

As Fowler (1991: p41) suggests in the following extract, choices are not necessarily ideological in intent, they are often made in relation to other 'non-ideological' considerations, yet this does not preclude them from conveying an ideology:

¹⁵ It is my assumption that all signs mean something. And, since news texts are made up of signs they all mean something, regardless of motive. Meaning exists outside of the intentionality of the subjects who write the news.

representation is by no means a deliberate process, entirely under the control of the newspaper. The newspaper does not select events to be reported and then consciously wrap them in value-laden language... ideology and all... the practice of news selection and presentation are habitual and conventional as much as they are deliberate and controlled. And, as for value-laden language, the crucial point is that the values are in the language already.

The point to be made is that the rationale for choosing one item over another might give rise to an unintended value-message. To illustrate, consider the following. During a discussion with *The Star's* chief photographer I commented that it appeared to me that *The Star* was going out of its way to publish photographs showing the New South African flag. I then asked whether this was perhaps a strategy designed to contribute to the building of the New South Africa. Expecting a positive response, I was surprised to hear her reply that this was not the case. She told me that one of the major criteria used to decide which photographs should be published was *brightness*, as it made people want to see the photographs and therefore it enticed them to buy the paper. And, she explained, since the New South African flag was brightly coloured this would explain its high rate of prevalence in *The Star*.

Thus we can see how an essentially economically inspired decision gave rise to an unintended, although not necessarily undesired, meaning. The repeated representation of the New South African flag signifies an

affirmation of the New South Africa. Yet, as I found to my error, this does not necessarily mean that *The Star* intends such a signification. In other words, you cannot simply read an intention off from a given meaning. A sign signifies, regardless of motive or intention. And, simply because a meaning is unintended it does not make it any less significant.

This in turn has interesting implications for how we theorise the nation. If we accept that the nation is produced discursively (see above) and that meaning within discourse occurs independently of intention or motive, then we can argue that the construction of the nation can also occur in the absence of intentionality and motive (Foucault, 1973). This then provides a challenge to those theorists who insist on the role of intentional agency in the construction of national identity¹⁶. It therefore challenges the view held by many theorists (most notably Marxist theoreticians of nationalism) that national identity is simply manipulated by various ruling elites in order to serve their interests.

Having outlined the theoretical assumptions which underpin this thesis as well as the theoretical framework which guides it, it is now necessary for me to discuss how this study was conducted - that is, what methodology was employed.

¹⁶ I am indebted to my supervisor, Windsor Leroke, for making this point.

Chapter Two

Methodology

INTRODUCTION

The object of this research is to examine how the New South Africa is being constructed by *The Star* and *Sowetan* in their relative coverages of the 1994 Presidential Inauguration. It is therefore, as suggested in the previous chapter, essentially concerned with the question of meaning and representation. More specifically, the focus is on the question of how we access such meaning from given texts. Consequently, it requires a research method that is: a) applicable to texts, and; b) qualitative in nature. It is with these imperatives in mind that I have chosen semiotics as the principle method of research. After all, semiotics "is equivalent to the detailed, participant-observation study in that it offers a way of analysing, in depth, the meanings that lie within a particular text" (Barrat, 1986: p108).

So, what is semiotics?

SEMIOTICS - A BRIEF OUTLINE

Semiotics, according to its founder, Ferdinand de Saussure, is 'the science of signs in society' (Saussure, 1974). Its basic unit of analysis is therefore, not surprisingly, the sign. For semioticians, signs consist of two parts, namely the signifier and the signified (Barthes, 1973; Saussure, 1974). The former is "the physical object that we perceive through our senses", and the latter is "the thing that the object represents to us, its meaning" (Barrat, 1986: p112)¹⁷. This is one level of meaning; a first-order signification. However, there are also other levels of meaning. A sign (signifier + signified) can, in turn, itself become a signifier. And, therefore, when combined with another signified it becomes another sign, with a potentially very different meaning. This is a second-order signification (Chandler, 1995; Barthes, 1973: p114). It has important implications for textual analysis. Indeed, it should guide the way in which we approach a text:

¹⁷ It should be pointed out that the connection between a signified and its signifier is neither natural nor necessary. It is arbitrary. For example, there is nothing about an actual table which lends itself to being called 'table'. However, it should also be noted that some signs are less arbitrary than others. Not all signs are linguistic, some are visual, and therefore have a more direct relationship to that which they represent. These signs are referred to as iconic. Yet, as Barrat (1986: p113) points out:

"The distinction between arbitrary and iconic signs is not... a hard and fast one... All signs have an arbitrary element. We have to learn certain conventions even to decode a photograph, however iconic it may appear. It is, after all, unlikely to be life-size in scale, it is often just black and white, and it is always two- rather than three-dimensional."

As a working principle in discourse analysis or critical linguistics, we assume that the ostensible subject of representation in discourse is not what it is 'really about': in semiotic terms, the signified is in turn the signifier of another, implicit but culturally recognizable meaning. (Fowler, 1991: p170)

A second-order signification is usually referred to by semioticians as connotation. This is in contrast to first-order significations which they generally term denotation (Hall, 1980; Chandler, 1985)¹⁸. Denotation is "what a sign stands for" (Chandler, 1995); its 'literal' meaning (Hall, 1980: p132). Connotation, on the other hand, is a sign's associative meaning¹⁹, and usually "involves emotional overtones, subjective interpretation, socio-cultural values and ideological assumptions" (Chandler, 1995).

Semiotics takes as its point of departure the assumption that we do not experience reality directly, but rather through a socially produced system of signs called codes which "endow the world with meaning or significance by organizing it into categories and relationships which are not there 'naturally'" (Fowler, 1991: p3).

¹⁸ This second-order signification is what Barthes (1973) refers to as myth: "myth is a peculiar system, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a second-order semiological system" (p114)

¹⁹ According to Hall (1980: pp132-133), such a sharp distinction between denotation and connotation is only analytical as, in the real world; "There will be very few instances in which signs organized in a discourse signify only their 'literal' (that is, nearly-universally consensualized) meaning. In actual discourse most signs will combine both the denotative and the connotative aspects..."

For semioticians the most important code is language and, indeed, they even use language as a model for other codes. Semioticians argue that codes are language-like in character. That is, they consist of a 'vocabulary' (signs) and a 'grammar' (conventions). Signs are the basic units of codes, while conventions are the sets of rules which determine how signs should be put together (Barrat, 1986: pp108-109).

However, what is significant about these codes is that they tend to be taken for granted and thus they appear to be natural and obvious. They are learnt. But, with constant use, they become 'second nature'. Consequently, they make excellent hiding places for ideology (Barrat, 1986: p109). It is therefore considered the job of semiotics to make such ideology apparent:

Semiotics can help to make us aware of what we take for granted in representing the world, reminding us that we are always dealing with signs, not with an unmediated objective reality, and that sign systems are involved in the construction of meaning. (Chandler, 1995)

This is all very well, but how is it achieved? How do we deconstruct meaning from a text? The answer lies in being cognisant of the choices involved in these codes (Barrat, 1986: p111). And, since codes are made up of both signs and conventions we need to be aware of the choices

made in relation to both of these. To this end, the semiotic concepts of paradigm and syntagm (Barrat, 1986: pp110-111; Chandler, 1995) are useful.

Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Analysis

Paradigm refers to a range of associated signs from which possible choices are made. Syntagm, on the other hand, refers to the way in which these signs are put together according to a framework of rules and conventions. Thus, as Chandler (1995) points out: "The plane of the paradigm is that of selection whilst the plane of the syntagm is that of combination." Both, however, involve choices: a) about which signs to select, and; b) about how to put them together (within an acceptable framework). To illustrate, consider the following example:

Clothing is another code. The way we dress involves a series of choices. Like language these choices can be analysed into two types: firstly, choices about what to wear, in that we select individual items from shops in the long term and from our wardrobe in the short term - our 'vocabulary' of clothes - and secondly, choices about how to combine these items together to produce our overall appearance on any day. (Barrat, 1986: p110)

And, the choices which are made create meaning:

In the 1960s there was a fashion among young people for wearing items of second-hand military clothing (camouflage jackets, dress uniforms, etc.), but when combined with long hair and old gym shoes they produced a non- or anti-military style that was intentionally²⁰ shocking. (Barrat, 1986: p110)

Consequently, although signs do signify by themselves they should be 'read' in relation to other signs in the system: "Individual signs may signal strongly to us. But in the end it is always the collection of signs which add up to the complete meaning in a message" (Burton, 1990: p27). Indeed, given that connotation is a sign's associative meaning, and therefore subject to ideological assumptions and subjective interpretation (see above), it is imperative that we consider other signs within the text merely in order to anchor, or fix, the meaning of that text (Barrat, 1986: pp114-116). Taken together, paradigmatic and syntagmatic analysis can be a powerful tool of textual analysis.

²⁰ It should be pointed out however that not all meaning is constructed intentionally. As Barrat (1986: p111) goes on: "We are probably *not always conscious* that in putting on clothes we are constructing a coded communication. Many people (particularly men) will protest that they just wear the first thing that comes to hand" (my emphasis). And indeed, we should consider that free choice is not always possible. Often people's choices are constrained by structural factors. To carry the clothing analogy further, poor people might not be able to afford many clothes and consequently they are likely to be constrained in what they are able to say by way of this particular form of coded communication. Nevertheless, despite this, what they wear still says something, even if it is not what they necessarily want to say. A poor person's tattered clothing says 'I am poor, I am not a full member of society' even if what that person would like to say is 'I may be poor but that should not exclude or marginalise me from society'. Therefore, to reiterate a point made in the previous chapter, meaning can occur in the absence of intention.

APPLYING PARADIGMATIC AND SYNTAGMATIC ANALYSIS TO NEWSPAPER TEXTS

It should be pointed out that newspaper texts consist of numerous codes, many of which overlap. These include, amongst others; a format code, a language code, and a photographic (or visual) code. But, while they may differ in terms of their associative signs (topics, words and images respectively) and the conventions which organise how these signs are put together, they nevertheless all share the same basic structure: sign and convention. They are therefore also all analysable in the same way: through a combination of paradigmatic and syntagmatic analysis.

Apart from minor differences, newspapers all share a similar format code, characterised by certain, usually unspoken, conventions which structure meaning within the text. For example, the headline, which is signified by a larger and bolder typographical style (first-order signification), signifies the most important aspect of a particular story (second-order signification). And, while this may appear to be natural it is not. Such conventions are learnt and subsequently taken for granted. Thus, the sign (in this case a particular aspect of the story) which is chosen to fill the headline is signified as the most important (and usually goes unquestioned). It consequently affects the meaning of the particular story.

There are many possible aspects, or what Van Dijk (1991: p71) calls topics, of a news story to choose from when reporting (paradigm). Yet, presumably, not all will be chosen. Those that are chosen will mean something individually. And, depending on how they are put together (syntagm) within the topical structure (convention) (Van Dijk, 1991; p73), the meaning of the story will be modified²¹ If a particular topic is headlined then we can usually decode this as the newspaper's 'angle' on the story:

headlines are not arbitrary parts or labels of news reports. On the contrary, they formulate the most crucial words of such reports. Their position, semantic role, and cognitive consequences are such that they literally cannot be overlooked. They express the major topic of the report, as the newspaper sees it, and thereby at the same time summarize and evaluate a news event. In other words, they essentially define the situation. (Van Dijk, 1991: p69)

As a result, headlines are important sites of latent meaning²². And, it is for this reason that I have particularly chosen to focus on headlines in my analysis.

²¹ For an excellent account (and example) of how the organisation of topics within a news story affects meaning, see Van Dijk (1991: pp71-117)

²² Van Dijk (1991: pp50-51) also points out that headlines have an important cognitive function:

"they are usually read first and the information expressed in the headline is strategically used by the reader during the process of understanding in order to construct the overall meaning... of the rest of the text before the text itself is even read... Headline information is used by the reader as an overall organizing principle for the representation of the news event in memory, namely as a so-called 'model of the situation'."

Headlines are made up of words and therefore they contain a language code. And, it is this language code which encodes meaning within the headline. Thus, in order to access the headline's meaning we need to decode its language. We therefore examine both the headline's lexical style and its syntactic style. The former refers to the choice of words in the headline (paradigm) and the latter refers to the sentence patterns which organize these words (syntagm). Both determine the meaning of the headline.

Words are signs and therefore they express meaning both denotatively and connotatively. The choice of one word rather than another to denote the same referent, or express more or less the same message, will however connote a different meaning (Van Dijk, 1991: p53)²³. For example, it is possible that 'thug' and 'youth' could both be signifiers of the same signified (a particular person). They therefore denote the same referent. However, what they connote is very different. That is, they have different associative meanings (second-order signification) - thug

This cognitive function derives from the headline's position in the newspaper's layout code which signals it as the most important part of the story and which we take for granted.

²³ Here it is often useful to look at the absences, i.e. what is not chosen, as these are often more revealing than what is chosen. As Fiske (1982: p62) argues, "the meaning of what was chosen is determined by the meaning of what was not." And, therefore, according to Williams (1992: p138), "one of the simple yet revealing techniques of discourse analysis is to ask: what would the opposite be? See also Burton (1990: p88).

connoting brutality, youth connoting vitality. Consider the following statements:

1. Man hits thug.
2. Man hits youth.

The meaning of these statements is similar but what they connote is very different. Our understanding of the event is subsequently affected, even though there is only a difference of one word. Because of what 'thug' connotes we are likely to react positively to statement one. And, because of what 'youth' represents we are likely to react negatively to the second statement, even though the same event is being described.

While words play a crucial role in constructing meaning within a text, they are not the only source of meaning. A language code is not just the sum of its parts: "Its meaning does not come only from the individual words but from the way they are combined together" (Barrat, 1986: p115). We therefore need to take account of syntactic style. As Fowler (1991: p77) points out, "syntax provides for alternative phrasings, and... whenever in language alternative variants are permitted... different values come to be associated with the different variants." The choices made with regard to syntactic style therefore have consequences for meaning. Consider, for example, the following syntactic transformations of the clause:

1. The police killed a man.
2. A man was killed by the police.
3. A man was killed.

Although all of these examples are consistent with one another and describe the same event, they nevertheless encode subtly different meanings of it. The first sentence is a grammatically active one. The subject has been placed first and is therefore foregrounded. This stresses the police's involvement and responsibility. In the second (grammatically passive) sentence such responsibility has been de-emphasised by the foregrounding of the object and the backgrounding of the subject. The third sentence has gone a step further and removed the subject altogether. Responsibility for the action is therefore hidden (Simpson, 1993: pp87-88).

Thus we can see how even when the lexical style remains the same the meaning can still differ if the syntactic style differs. We therefore have to be aware of the choices involved on both the paradigmatic and syntagmatic planes if we are to deconstruct a headline (or any written text for that matter) effectively. However, such an approach does not only apply to language codes. It is suitable for visual codes too. Therefore it is also applicable to photographic texts, although obviously the basic unit of analysis will no longer be a word and the conventions which determine how the signs should be combined will also be different. Nevertheless, the same basic principles of paradigmatic and syntagmatic analysis still apply.

As in written texts, photographs also consist of numerous signs. And, as in written texts, the way in which these signs are combined also encodes

meaning in the photograph. We therefore need to follow a similar procedure to that used above: interpret the individual elements of the text separately and then together in order to work out what the whole image means.

The analysis does not stop once we have interpreted/decoded the meanings of these individual texts (that is, the headline/written text and photograph). Once the meanings of these texts have been decoded they become second-order signs in themselves; part of another paradigmatic plane within a larger text. Consequently, they too have to be seen in relation to each other (the syntagmatic plane) in order to access the overall meaning of the larger text.

Semiotic analysis of newspaper texts can therefore be seen to address itself to two main questions, both of which have guided me in my analysis of *The Star* and *Sowetan*: What are the signs of the text? And, how are these signs put together to produce meaning? I have however asked a further set of related questions: How do these meanings relate to the New South Africa? What do they say about the New South Africa? How do they allow us to think/imagine the New South Africa?

WHY THE STAR AND SOWETAN ?

The Star and *Sowetan* were chosen as the objects of this study for two reasons. Firstly, they were chosen because of what they have in common: they are the two largest selling English-speaking dailies in the most populous province in South Africa (Gauteng). Secondly, and more significantly, they were chosen because of their differences: they essentially have different identities and markets which are separated along racial lines. The *Sowetan* is a 'black newspaper'; editorial control is vested with blacks and its readership is black. *The Star*, on the other hand, has a 'white' middle class identity; it has a predominantly white readership and this is combined with white editorial control.

It is these differences which might have implications for how the New South Africa is constructed, for the construction of a New South African nationalism.

WHY THE INAUGURATION ?

Once it was decided that this study would focus on *The Star* and *Sowetan* a decision had to be made with regard to sampling. The purpose of the research is to investigate how these newspapers construct the New South Africa. I therefore initially intended to analyse those articles that

dealt with issues related to the New South Africa (from a purposive sample of copies of these papers printed in 1994). However, it soon became apparent that such an approach was far too broad. Messages relating to the nation could be implied in an almost limitless number of articles, varying from politics to crime to sport. To adopt such an approach would thus have proved too unwieldy. Consequently, it was decided to narrow the focus of the research, concentrating instead on *The Star* and *Sowetan's* coverage of one particular event²⁴, namely the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa. It was chosen because of its symbolic location in the genesis of the New South Africa.

On the 10th of May 1994 at the Union Buildings in Pretoria, in front of thousands of local and international dignitaries, 150 000 members of the public, as well as a live television audience of millions, Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as South Africa's first (fully) democratically elected president. In the process he also became South Africa's first black president. It was an event that marked the climax of an incredible fortnight

²⁴ It was also considered appropriate to focus on an event because news is essentially about events. Like many other industries the news media also have to comply with certain production schedules (deadlines) if they are to remain 'competitive' in the market. This has important implications for the way in which news is constructed. Time constraints mean that news tends to revolve around events rather than processes:

"Certain kinds of reality are singled out from the continually on-going process of social experience, highlighted and made more important than the mundane social processes within which they repose. The event is then re-presented and sold as news to a consumer public. News in this way becomes a commodity" (Tomaselli, 1987: p24).

Consequently, "a single event is more likely to be reported than a long process." (Fowler, 1991: p14). See also Hall et al (1978) and Van Dijk (1991) who focus on events in their approaches to studying how ideology is constructed in the media.

in South African history, a fortnight that saw the delivery of democracy to all of South Africa's people.

Two weeks earlier (on 26, 27 and 28 April) South Africa's first all-race elections were held. Black South Africans voted for the first time and, in so doing, they exercised their rights as full South African citizens. They became political equals. This said however, democracy still had not been delivered. The 'will of the people' still had not been met. The elected leader still had to be installed in office²⁵. The inauguration of Nelson Mandela thus represented the completion and culmination of the democratic process. It marked the official transfer of power from white minority rule to majority rule. As such, it also confirmed the delivery of the New South Africa.

The term 'the New South Africa' had been bandied about in South Africa since early 1990. It was used to describe the move towards full democratisation and the recognition of blacks as full citizens with equal political and economic rights. In short, it was used to describe the move towards a post-apartheid society. However, until the events of April and May 1994, 'the New South Africa' was used to denote the promise of a fully democratic post-apartheid society, as this had not actually been

²⁵ Compare this, for example, to the recent case in Nigeria where Moshood Ablola, the winner of the 1993 election, was not allowed to take up the post to which he had been elected by the Nigerian people. Instead, the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida illegally declared the election null and void. Although elections took place, democracy was not delivered. The will of the people was not met.

realised. Political power had not yet been transferred. It was therefore only with the Inauguration that the New South Africa was realised.

The Inauguration was therefore chosen because of its national and symbolic significance. It is a widely held symbol of the change to the New South Africa. And, as a result, it was felt that *The Star* and *Sowetan's* coverage of this event would be a much more appropriate source of meaning²⁶. It therefore seemed particularly pertinent to this study.

So, how did *The Star* and *Sowetan* cover the Inauguration? And, what are the implications of their coverage for how the New South Africa is constructed? The following two chapters answer these questions.

²⁶ This raises the question of *Intertextuality*, a post-modern concept that refers to the interdependency of texts. *The Star* and *Sowetan's* coverage of the Inauguration is intertextual. The Inauguration was a communicative event, full of signs and symbols. It is therefore a text in its own right. And, therefore, when *The Star* and *Sowetan* report on the Inauguration (and incorporate aspects of it into their own texts) they are automatically implicated in intertextuality.

Chapter Three

'Building the nation'²⁷:

The Sowetan and the Inauguration

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is devoted to the *Sowetan's* construction of the New South Africa via its coverage of the Inauguration of President Mandela, which took place on 10 May 1994. It discusses how the *Sowetan's* construction of New South Africa is one that encourages the reader to identify with the New South Africa. It will also show how, rather than being definitive, the *Sowetan's* construction of the New South Africa is in fact specific. That is, it represents a *local* form of what it means to be a New South African; a form that is specific to certain people, not to everyone who claims to be South African, a form which is significant in the context of the *Sowetan's* identity and indeed in terms of its readership.

²⁷ 'Building the nation' is the *Sowetan's* subtitle. This phrase appears in the paper's masthead and reflects the *Sowetan's* editorial policy, which was developed in 1988 in an attempt to encourage its readers to rebuild the structures that had collapsed in black communities as a result of Apartheid.

10 MAY 1994

'Honour thy father'

On the day of President Mandela's inauguration (10 May 1994), the *Sowetan* led with a story headlined *The world at Mandela's feet* (see Appendix A). It is a significant headline in that it places Mandela in a position of great importance and privilege. The implication is that the world looks up to Mandela and therefore that it respects him. The headline expresses a spatial code²⁸ which, in turn, connotes a particular relationship of power between Mandela and the world.

In particular, the headline expresses a spatial code which, for our purposes, I will call a *verticalic code*. By verticalic code, and borrowing from Kress & Hodge (1983: p52), I refer to the set of meanings carried by relationships between elements of a text on a vertical axis (or plane). In particular, verticalic codes signify relations of power and degrees of importance (rather like a hierarchy). Mandela clearly occupies the higher plane of the verticalic code suggested by the headline and thus enjoys greater power.

²⁸ A spatial code refers to the set of meanings carried by the ordering of bodies in space. Although spatial codes are usually used for analysis of visual texts, they are also apparent in written texts:

"there are many forms of speech which express social meanings in spatial terms: 'keeping one's distance', being stand-offish, 'high status', 'grovelling', 'knowing your place', 'upper management', and so on. These turns of speech are sometimes called metaphors, but what they express is a basic equation between the ordering of bodies in physical space and the relationships between persons in social space." (Hodge and Kress, 1998; p52)

However, 'difference in power' is not *in itself* a closed text, it is an open one (Barrat, 1986: pp114-115). That is, there is more than one way of interpreting what 'difference in power' means. For example, although Mandela is positioned higher than the world in the above headline there are two possible 'attitudes' which we can derive from this. Either that Mandela 'looks down on' the world, or that the world 'looks up at' Mandela. The first derivation suggests a negative relationship while the second suggests a positive one. By itself, therefore, 'difference in power' is open to either interpretation. However, in the context of the headline, I would argue that the meaning of this particular 'difference in power' is disambiguated. The world, and not Mandela, is foregrounded and constructed as the agent in the headline (see below), and thus we are encouraged to see the relationship from its perspective; 'looking up' at Mandela.

Note also that the noun-phrase 'the world' occupies the syntactic subject (left-hand) position in the headline, a position "which is usually associated with an agent" (Fowler, 1991: p77). The noun-phrase 'Mandela's feet', on the other hand, occupies the syntactic object (right-hand) position. Consequently, 'the world' is constructed as *the agent, or doer*, and Mandela as the *patient*. And, from a normal syntactic analysis we could thus conclude that the world is the active subject and Mandela is the passive object. Thus, it could be suggested that the world is coming to pay

its respects (active action) to Mandela while he simply receives them (passive action), rather like a king receives his subjects.

However, having said this, we should also note that the predicate, 'at' (shorthand for 'is at'), implies a *state*²⁹ as opposed to an action or process (Fowler, 1991: p73) and therefore it modifies this meaning slightly. The fact that the predicate does not imply an action³⁰ suggests that the world, rather than being an active agent is actually a passive agent. Thus, rather than the world coming to Mandela (active action) there is an implication that the world submits to him (passive action). And, the fact that the world is nevertheless still the agent of this submission suggests that it is voluntary, thereby reinforcing the general idea that the world has tremendous respect for Mandela³¹.

From this we can conclude that the *Sowetan* constructs Mandela as a great leader, respected and honoured throughout the world³². And, since he is *our* leader, we (as South Africans) become honoured and respected by association.

²⁹ A state implies that there is a sense of inevitability and certainty expressed in the proposition; that 'this is the way things are'.

³⁰ Here I refer to action in the sense of *active*, as, technically speaking, inaction can also be defined as an action.

³¹ This suggestion of voluntarism reinforces the positive interpretation of the power relationship between Mandela and the world.

³² This is not to say that Mandela is not in reality respected and honoured throughout the world, but rather that the *Sowetan* contributes to this.

Mandela represents South Africa, he stands for us as a nation and he does this on two levels. Firstly, he is *President Mandela*; South Africa's president; its elected leader. He is its chosen representative; its *first citizen*. However, he does not only represent South Africa in the constitutional and legal sense. He also (secondly), and perhaps more significantly, represents South Africa in the *symbolic* and *semiotic* sense. And here I refer specifically to the New South Africa, as Mandela is generally associated with dedicating his life towards achieving the values supposedly embodied in the New South Africa; democracy, equality, human rights, reconciliation; fortitude, etcetera. He is, in a sense, the mythical founding father of the New South Africa, the personification of 'the national character', of all that is good about South Africa. He therefore also *signifies* the New South Africa. Thus, when Mandela is honoured South Africa is honoured. When the world is at Mandela's feet it is simultaneously at our feet. Mandela becomes a metonym for the New South Africa.

By constructing Mandela as respected and honoured throughout the world, as a great leader, the *Sowetan* is therefore simultaneously able to construct the New South Africa as a nation respected and honoured throughout the world. To put it into marketing discourse³³, the *Sowetan* offers the reader a positive 'value message' (respect and honour) and

³³ See Williams (1992: pp128-131) for further elaboration on the uses of marketing discourse.

identifies it with 'the product' (the New South Africa), such that the reader is encouraged to 'buy' the product (Burton, 1990: p121). And, by 'buying into' the New South Africa, or rather the idea of the New South Africa as constructed here by the *Sowetan*, the reader is therefore simultaneously offered the subject position of someone who is respected and held in high esteem throughout the world (see also Williams, 1992: pp7-8). Put another way, the *Sowetan* is appealing to our need for self esteem by offering us the psychological rewards (pride, approval, recognition) packaged in this construction of Mandela and the New South Africa (Burton, 1990: pp121-122). The reader is therefore encouraged to identify with the New South Africa via feelings of pride and respect. The readers are encouraged to admire and respect Mandela. And, in identifying with him, they are persuaded to 'possess the product' with which he is associated (Burton, 1990: pp121-122) - the New South Africa.

11 MAY 1994

'There ain't no white in the New South African flag'³⁴

The day following the inauguration (11 May 1994), the *Sowetan's* front page headline, situated about half way down the page, read *Madiba Relgns*. Above it lay a striking montage³⁵ in the form of the New South

³⁴ This is an adaptation of the title of Paul Gilroy's book (1987): *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*.

³⁵ Here I refer to montage to mean the composite picture made from various elements.

African flag, incorporating three photographs of scenes related to the previous day's Inauguration (see Appendix B). The photographs which make up the montage fill the three main panels of the flag (namely the side black triangular panel, the top red panel and the bottom blue panel) and are each framed by the relative colours of the panels they occupy. The remaining colours of the flag (green, gold and white) further distinguish between the photographs.

Starting from the top, the first photograph (occupying the red panel) is a shot of Mandela, his right hand raised, solemnly taking the oath of office. Then, moving anti-clockwise, the second photograph (filling the black panel) shows a black family from Soweto, together with their friends, excitedly watching the events of the day on television. Many of them have raised their arms in a gesture of joy and triumph. Some of them are holding beer cans, one is waving a small ANC (African National Congress) flag. And, lastly, the third photograph (occupying the blue panel) depicts a crowd of black soccer fans at a match staged to celebrate the inauguration. Some of them are shown, their arms raised, holding ANC flags and banners depicting Nelson Mandela.

The size of the montage (it occupies approximately a third of the front page) together with the fact that it is positioned above the headline signals its importance³⁶. The message which the montage conveys is therefore prioritised.

³⁶ The format code of newspapers usually dictates that front page headlines should be the most prominent as they convey what the newspaper deems to be the most important

The montage in the form of the New South African flag is a very interesting way of portraying the Inauguration and it conveys a number of possible meanings. Firstly, the production of a composite whole from separate photographs connotes the idea of unification. And, the fact that the photographs are united within the confines of the New South African flag suggests a strong link between the notion of unity and the New South Africa. It thus implies that the New South Africa is a united country.

It could be argued that the montage, through its creation of a composite whole from separate parts, invokes the theme of *unity in diversity* so central to the mythology of the New South Africa, a mythology that is also captured in the title of the Inauguration concert, *Many Cultures - One Nation*, as well as in the narrative of *the rainbow nation* (see below my analysis of the rainbow nation as an anti-narrative of apartheid in my discussion of *The Star's* front-page headline (May 11, 1994) entitled *The rainbow covenant*). Such a reading is unlikely however, given that the diversity suggested by *unity in diversity*, *the rainbow nation* and *Many Cultures - One Nation* is not really present in the montage. It only really portrays one part of the diversity, one part of the rainbow, one part of the multiculturalism. That is, the 'black part', as only blacks are represented in the photographs (see below). Consequently, it is just *black unity* that is connoted, not *unity in diversity*.

nows and therefore they are generally placed at the top of the page, under the masthead. (see the methodology chapter).

Secondly, the juxtaposition of photographs creates a sense of simultaneity which is important for the imagining of the national community (Anderson: 1983). The raised arms of the participants in the second and third photographs appear to mirror the raised hand of Mandela in the first photograph. This therefore suggests that the raised arms of the people are a response to Mandela taking his oath - a joyous and simultaneous acknowledgement of this symbolic moment.

Although in reality the people may have raised their arms in response to something else (some other aspect of the inauguration), we are nevertheless led to believe that this is not the case, that they are in fact responding to Mandela's action in the first photograph. Indeed, the third photograph was most certainly not a direct response to the first picture as it was taken at a football match held to celebrate the inauguration a few hours later. Nevertheless, the illusion is created that they are responding to Mandela in the first photograph.

The photograph of Mandela occupies the top panel of the montage and, in line with the vertical code, this suggests that it is the most important. This is reinforced by the fact that it is lighter and less crowded than the other two photographs, thus making it stand out. And, because it is constructed as the most important photograph, it becomes the reference point for the other two photographs. The simultaneity suggested by the montage thus revolves around the Mandela photograph. As a result, it is

Implied that the idea of celebration and joy invoked by the second and third photographs is a response to the first photograph. The way in which the second photograph is cut and pasted also adds to the illusion.

Although the caption tells us that the subjects of the photograph are sharing in the excitement of the inauguration via a television, the photograph is cut in such a way that the television is not visible. Furthermore, the photograph is pasted in such a way that its subjects, while actually looking at the television, appear to be looking at Mandela. Consequently, their actions appear not to be a response to what is showing on the TV but rather what is happening in the first photograph. When taken as a whole therefore, the montage signifies the simultaneous celebration of and participation in the national ritual that is the inauguration. And, since the inauguration connotes the official birth of the New South Africa it also signifies the simultaneous celebration of the new nation.

Perhaps it should be pointed out that even though we might know that these photographs were not taken at precisely the same moment such knowledge does not undermine or negate this sense of simultaneity. What is important is that we know that they are responding to the same event or set of related events within the same *generalised* time. The illusion of precise, immediate time suggested by the montage simply serves to intensify the sense of simultaneity, it does not create it. Even if the illusion of precise simultaneity was absent, our knowledge that the subjects are

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responding to related events within a generalised timeframe would still be sufficient to create a sense of simultaneity. The value of this illusion of precise simultaneity is that it intensifies the imagined community. That is, it narrows the imaginary distance between its imagined members, such that, to borrow from Anderson (1983: p16), "a deep, horizontal comradeship" is conceived of.

The impression is created that although the various participants of these photographs occupy different spatial dimensions, they nevertheless occupy the same emotional³⁷ and temporal dimensions. Put another way, they are joined by simultaneous activity, by their synchronous, albeit perhaps vicarious, participation in the inauguration. The reader is therefore able to imagine them all as members of the same community. And, since this suggestion of simultaneous activity occurs within the confines of the New South African flag, the reader is further encouraged to imagine this community as being bounded. (Anderson, 1983: p16) The community that is imagined is therefore not a global or even a regional community: it is a national community. And, it is not just any *national community*, it is a specific one; a New South African one.

Having said this however it should be pointed out that there is a suggestion of a *double specificity* in the imagined community evoked by the montage. That is, while it is imagined as a specifically New South

³⁷ The simultaneous occupation of the same emotional dimension, in this case collective joy and celebration, further encourages the reader to imagine the nation "as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson, 1983: p16).

African community, the nature and identity of the community tends to be defined in a specific way. Indeed, it would appear as if the *Sowetan* is constructing the New South African community as essentially *black*²⁸.

This is evidenced by the fact that all the participants in the photographs are black. Perhaps what is most interesting about this is not only that blacks are represented but that no whites or 'non-blacks' (including Indians and coloureds), are represented. As Williams (1992: p138) points out, "absences often tell us as much about the discourses as the presences". He goes on to argue that "one of the simple yet revealing techniques of discourse analysis is to ask: what would the opposite be?" And, in this context, the answer to such a question would be: a montage of photographs representing both black and white participants. After all, to borrow from Williams again, since the actual photographs used in the montage relate to the same event it must have been possible for the *Sowetan* to use any number of other photographs, at least some of which must have depicted whites celebrating the inauguration. And, since the inauguration was an event of exceptional newsworthiness²⁹, it is difficult to imagine that the *Sowetan* would not have a higher than usual number of photographs to choose from. Indeed, the *Sowetan* could even have

²⁸ In order to avoid confusion, I would like to point out that when I say black I specifically refer to Africans. This is in contrast to the more general categorisation which includes other 'non-whites', such as Indians and Coloureds. I therefore use the terms *black* and *African* interchangeably.

²⁹ See Galtung & Ruge (1973), Fowler (1991) and Hall (1988) for an explanation of what makes an event newsworthy.

instructed their photographers to get a particular kind of photograph or, alternatively, they could even have bought such photographs from other news agencies covering the event (Williams, 1992: pp137-138).

This presentation of only blacks within the montage, which is in the form of the New South African flag, is an interesting reversal, although an unintentional one, of the idea contained in the title of Paul Gilroy's book (1987) : *There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack*. 'There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack' is a rallying cry of British racist movements. It captures very succinctly the chauvinist notion that Britain is for whites only. That is, that only whites can be British. By allying an exclusionary expression ('There ain't no black') with perhaps the most obvious symbol of the nation; the flag ⁴⁰ ('the Union Jack') this idea is conveyed very forcefully. And, although the *Sowetan's* montage does not as such exclude whites (or non-blacks), at least not as explicitly as the above saying, it nevertheless does not include them. The exclusion is therefore far more subtle. Consequently and at the risk of being flippant, the montage could 'read' : 'There ain't no white in the New South African flag' or, alternatively; 'There's only black in the New South African flag'.

This is not to say however that the *Sowetan* necessarily intended to construct such a notion of the New South Africa. Although, the

⁴⁰ *"The National Flag, the National Anthem and the National Emblem are the three symbols through which an independent country proclaims its identity and sovereignty, and as such they command instantaneous respect and loyalty. In themselves they reflect the entire background, thought and culture of a nation."* (my italics) (quoted in Hobsbawn, 1983: p11)

photographs that were chosen for the montage were probably chosen intentionally (as opposed to randomly), we cannot assume that they were chosen with this specific purpose in mind. They may have been chosen for any number of other reasons. Thus the particular 'meaning of the nation' constructed by them might merely have been an unintended consequence. We cannot assume motive, we can only assume that regardless of motive there was an effect. Put another way, this particular 'meaning of the nation' is produced by the system of signs, which exists outside of the intentions of its author or authors (in this case the photographers and picture editor).

Consequently, the suggestion is not only that blacks are part of the new nation, but that whites are not⁴¹. As a result, it is *only blacks* who are represented as occupying the same emotional and temporal dimensions. It is *only blacks* who are joined by their simultaneous activity. And therefore it is *only blacks* who are imagined as part of the New South Africa⁴².

⁴¹ It should also be pointed out that the *Sowetan's* construction of the nation is covered with another layer of specificity. Not only is the New South Africa represented here as specifically black but it also has an urban bias. That is, those who are represented in the montage occupy urban space (Soweto and Ellis Park), rather than a rural one. Thus, it is suggested that only blacks are part of the New South Africa.

⁴² For further illustration of how what is not said/represented (as well as what is said/represented) helps to define the nation see Van Dijk (1991), Fowler (1991), Anderson (1993) and Williams (1992).

The specificity of this construction of the nation is augmented by the suggestion that the New South Africa represents the triumph of African nationalism (in a similar way to which apartheid represented the triumph of Afrikaner nationalism). The presence of ANC (African National Congress) flags held by the participants in the second and third photographs alludes us to this signification. Although the participants are simultaneously celebrating the New South Africa they are nevertheless doing so by holding up symbols of African nationalism.

The African National Congress is a nationalist movement. And, despite its name, it should be pointed out that its nationalism is not limited to African identity alone. Indeed, it represents a broader South African nationalism which is inclusive of all races⁴³. Yet, in the context of the montage and the accompanying headline (see below), the *Sowetan* gives a more specific interpretation of the ANC's nationalism, an interpretation which privileges African or black identity. Put another way, the *Sowetan* appropriates African nationalism to mean just that - *African nationalism*.

This said however it should also be noted that the *Sowetan* is not simply guilty of 'mis-representing' the ANC's version of nationalism as, semiotically speaking, the ANC represents a specifically *African* nationalism. Although in reality the nationalism envisaged by the ANC is a broader South African one (a 'rainbow nationalism'), the ANC is still seen

⁴³ This is evidenced in *The Freedom Charter* which states that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white".

as 'a black organisation'. That is, it is seen as primarily representing the interests of blacks, as fighting for black liberation⁴⁴. To quote from *Strategy and Tactics*, a document adopted by the ANC at its first National Consultative Conference (Tanzania, 1969):

The main content of the present stage of South Africa's revolution is the national liberation of the largest and most oppressed group: the *African* people. This strategic aim must govern every aspect of the conduct of our struggle, whether it should be the formulation of policy or the creation of the structures itself. Amongst other things it demands, in the first place, a *maximal mobilization of the African people as a dispossessed and racially oppressed nation*. This is the mainstream and it must not be diluted. It involves a stimulation and a deepening of national confidence, national pride and national assertiveness. (cited in Meli, 1988: p71) (my emphases)

Thus, although the ANC's vision of South Africa includes 'non-Africans', the fact that it is, or was, a liberatory nationalism suggests that it is primarily concerned with black interests and black identity. After all, whites were the oppressors.

⁴⁴ The nationalism espoused by the ANC is a liberatory nationalism. That is, it was mobilised in response to oppression. This is in contrast to Afrikaner nationalism which (since 1948) can be seen as an example of an oppressive nationalism. In this sense the nationalism of the ANC is akin to the kind of nationalism described by Nairn (1977) (see Chapter One : *Explaining Nationalism*, above).

Underlining the montage is the *Sowetan's* front page headline which reads *Madiba reigns*. 'Madiba' is a reference to Mandela. More specifically, it is a reference to his clan name. As such it signifies his African identity. 'Reigns', on the other hand, suggests the holding of royal office, the ascension to authority⁴⁵. Together, they imply a dynasty, but not just any dynasty; an African dynasty, as signalled by Mandela's clan name. It also implies that Mandela was born, rather than chosen, to be leader. Thus, it further connotes the idea of destiny. Yet, it is a *fulfilled* destiny - *Madiba reigns* - he is reigning *now*. And, the fact that the headline does not contain a syntactic object suggests a permanence and pervasiveness about Mandela's reign. The verb (reigns) is not qualified (other than by 'Madiba' who is the subject). And, as a result there is nothing that limits, constrains or negates it.

Consequently, the headline suggests that Mandela was destined to be leader and that his reign is permanent, pervasive and unchallenged, and therefore widely accepted. However, there is another meaning underlying this one. The use of 'Madiba', as opposed to Mandela, signals that it is not simply Mandela that reigns but also his African identity. The headline is

⁴⁵It is perhaps interesting to note the box, entitled *Ascension Day*, at the top left-hand corner of the front page. Although it refers to the upcoming religious holiday of that name, given the context in which it occurs it takes on a slightly different meaning. At a glance (that is, only taking in the boxes' title), the reader might be forgiven for thinking that it is related to the rest of the front page's coverage of the inauguration. After all, *Ascension Day* would in its own right be an apt description of the previous day's event - Mandela *ascending* to the presidency. However, ascension rather conjures up images of taking *royal office*, as in 'ascending the throne'. Consequently, it adds to the meaning suggested by *Madiba reigns*.

therefore a simultaneous affirmation of both Mandela and African culture and identity. By allying Mandela with an obviously African identity, the *Sowetan* constructs the inauguration, and therefore the New South Africa, as a triumph of 'Africaness' and, by implication African nationalism. It thereby adds to the suggestion already created (above) that the New South Africa is specifically and essentially a black/African nation. This privileging of African nationalism is further reinforced in the opening paragraph of the lead article (p1):

Mr Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, *leader of the African National Congress*, was sworn in at the Union Buildings in Pretoria yesterday as the first black President of South Africa. (my emphasis)

What is interesting about this extract is that Mandela's title as leader of the African National Congress is explicitly mentioned. A similar strategy is employed later on in the *Sowetan* where in introducing a reproduction of the full text of Mandela's inauguration speech, it (11 May, 1994: p8) says:

Statement of the president of the African National Congress, Mr Nelson Mandela, at his inauguration as President of the democratic Republic of South Africa, Union Buildings, Pretoria May 10 1994 (my emphasis)

In both of these examples, such information is essentially irrelevant. We do not really need to know that Mandela is leader of the African National

Congress, it does not affect the fact that he was sworn in as President of South Africa the previous day. However, as I have suggested elsewhere in this project, although something may be irrelevant from a 'pure news' point of view, it is certainly not irrelevant from a semiotic point of view. That is, while it does not change 'the facts' it affects our understanding of them. It alerts us to how meaning is constructed within news.

Indeed, the fact that Mandela is mentioned as leader of the African National Congress, in addition to his title as President of South Africa, reinforces the link between African nationalism and the New South Africa. If Mandela was only mentioned in relation to his title as President of South Africa it would imply that his attainment of such an honour is a personal triumph. However, the fact that he is also mentioned in relation to his position as leader of the African National Congress, implies that it is not only a personal triumph but also a triumph for African nationalism (and, in particular, a triumph for the more specific *Sowetan* construction of African nationalism). Mandela is not just President of South Africa, he is also leader of the African National Congress. There is therefore an equation of New South Africanism with African nationalism⁴⁶.

Furthermore, as suggested above, this African nationalism is constructed by the *Sowetan* in a way which privileges black identity. Consider, for

⁴⁶ However, Mandela's title as leader of the African National Congress is not just mentioned *in addition to* his title as President, it is positioned ahead of it. It is foregrounded, suggesting that it is Mandela's primary identity and therefore that the New South Africa is merely an expression of African nationalism.

example, the following extracts from a background article (entitled *A sure sign of reconciliation*) describing 'the mood' in Pretoria immediately before the inauguration (*Sowetan*, 11 May, 1994: p9):

Large crowds of mainly black people invaded this one-time bastion of Afrikaner arrogance, proud and showing it....

On the way I met friends I knew from the days of hard struggle, we shook hands, a strong shake that said: "This is it, Comrade".

We hugged, a strong hug, and saluted each other with raised fists....

There was this vibrant feel about the city; a spirit that seemed to say, we have come to take over for good now.

And the arrogant Afrikaners, of whom editor Aggrey Klaaste once said they walked with a proud bearing in the city to show they owned it, were yesterday nowhere to be seen.

Blacks were everywhere. And their President was in town to rule.

These extracts suggest that the New South Africa, rather than being inclusive of all South Africans, is in fact a specifically black nation. The presence of blacks in *the national space*, as connoted by Pretoria and the Union Buildings (the seat of government and therefore the political centre of the nation, as well as the symbolic birthplace of the New South Africa), is pervasive: "Large crowds of *mainly black people*"; "Blacks were *everywhere*".

Furthermore, despite the title of the article (*A sure sign of reconciliation*), there is a suggestion that in fact there is not much reconciliation. Blacks are described as triumphantly entering the national space at the expense of Afrikaners who, it is suggested, have been displaced from or are absent from the national space: "this *one-time* bastion of Afrikaner arrogance"; "the arrogant Afrikaners... were yesterday *nowhere to be seen*." And, in addition, blacks have "invaded" and "come to take over for good" the national space. This marginalisation of Afrikaners is given further impetus by the fact that they are described as arrogant. It is suggested that when they occupied the national space, they did so with arrogance. On the other hand, blacks now occupy the national space with *pride* ("proud and showing it"), an altogether more positive description.

At the same time, this exclusionary nationalism is allied to the African nationalism of the ANC, such that the ANC's broader nationalism is appropriated by the *Sowetan* in much more specific exclusionary terms. This is suggested by the last two lines of the article: "Blacks were everywhere. And *their* president was in town to rule." The president referred to here is obviously Mandela. Yet, rather than him being every South African's president, he is constructed as being the president of blacks only. That is, as president he belongs to blacks (denoted by *their*). Mandela is being inaugurated in Pretoria as president of (the new) South Africa. And, if he is president of blacks only, then it is implied that the New South Africa is for blacks only.

Even if we give a more generous interpretation of this, assuming that the use of president in this extract refers specifically to his position as president of the ANC, rather than president of South Africa, the same meaning is still evident. If as president of the ANC he is only the blacks' president then it is implied that the ANC is essentially a black organisation (thereby reinforcing the *Sowetan's* specific construction of African nationalism). Therefore, if the inauguration, and the New South Africa, is seen as the triumph of the ANC and its version of nationalism, then it is still implied, although more subtly, that the New South Africa is for blacks only. The African Nationalism of the ANC is therefore constructed by the *Sowetan* in a way which privileges black identity. This adds to the *Sowetan's* construction of the New South Africa as essentially black.

CONCLUSION

From the *Sowetan's* coverage of the presidential inauguration two issues related to the New South Africa emerge as significant. Firstly, the New South Africa is represented as a nation that is respected and honoured throughout the world. The reader is therefore encouraged to see the New South Africa in a positive light and subsequently associate themselves with it. Furthermore, by appealing to the notion of international respect and admiration the *Sowetan* gives the New South Africa wider legitimacy.

Secondly, the New South Africa is constructed in a way which privileges black/African identity (sometimes to the exclusion of non-blacks). This is significant when we consider the *Sowetan's* readership and identity⁴⁷.

The *Sowetan's* market is essentially black and so this emphasis on black/African identity is probably more effective in getting them to identify with the idea of the New South Africa. Such a construction is therefore likely to make its readers feel that they are definitely part of the New South Africa. It also corresponds with the *Sowetan's* 'position'. That is, the *Sowetan's* particular construction of the New South Africa, as outlined above, corresponds to its editorial policy of nation-building, which incorporates elements of black consciousness (see Bell, 1994; pp13-14).

The *Sowetan's* nation-building initiative was developed in an attempt to rebuild the structures that had collapsed in black communities as a result of apartheid⁴⁸. Implicated in this is the black consciousness idea of rebuilding the mental 'structures of self-respect and confidence'. Indeed, the *Sowetan's* editorial policy of nation-building can be seen as an attempt to 'change the story' about black South Africans. It seeks to explode the myth that blacks are "helpless victims of oppression" (Jansen, 1992: p50).

⁴⁷ The *Sowetan's* roots lie in two previous newspapers aimed at urban blacks in the Johannesburg area, namely *Post* and *World*. See Tomaselli et al (1987: pp46-57) for a concise history of the black press in South Africa.

⁴⁸ As the opening paragraph of the *Sowetan's* Nation Building Manifesto reads: "Nation building means picking up the pieces and rebuilding all the structures that have collapsed in our communities."

It seeks to change black people's perceptions about themselves, instilling in them a sense of pride about who they are, such that they are empowered to liberate themselves from the mental oppression which many of them had experienced under apartheid⁴⁹.

Consequently, the privileging of black/African identity in the *Sowetan's* construction of the New South Africa can be seen as a reflection of its nation-building policy, as part of a strategy⁵⁰ aimed at rebuilding the mental structures of self-respect and confidence which had collapsed in the minds of many blacks as a consequence of apartheid.

⁴⁹ Indeed, it is a central tenet of black consciousness that apartheid was not simply about political oppression, it was also about mental oppression. Thus, it argues, while political emancipation is necessary, it is not sufficient. True liberation requires mental liberation too.

⁵⁰ When I use the term strategy I do not wish to suggest that the privileging of black identity in the *Sowetan's* construction of the New South Africa is necessarily the result of a deliberate attempt to build the nation. Rather, I would like to suggest that, regardless of motive or intent, such a message was created; a reflection of the ideological nature of language. That is, due to the nature of language, 'a particular point of view' is inevitably encoded within it.

Chapter Four

'Telling it like it is'⁵¹:

***The Star* and the Inauguration**

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I analyse *The Star's* construction of the New South Africa. Once again, I use the same event (the inauguration), or at least *The Star's* coverage of it, as the basis for the analysis. As with the *Sowetan*, I discuss how *The Star* 'sells' the New South Africa to its readers. I also reveal the specific nature of its construction, demonstrating how although it proclaims a broad national identity on one level, on another level it constructs the New South Africa in a way which privileges a specific identity. And, as in the previous chapter, I also speculatively relate this construction to its context. That is, to the 'position' of *The Star*, as well as to its readership.

⁵¹ "Telling it like it is" is *The Star's* 'payline' or motto. It occurs in *The Star's* mission statement which reads: "To produce newspapers which 'tell it like it is', without fear or favour, and to protect their independence by ensuring continuing and improving viability."

9 MAY 1994

'Honour thy father' too

The Star's coverage of the Presidential Inauguration began the previous day (9 May 1994). The most extensive aspect of this coverage was in a feature article headed: *The world at his feet* (*The Star*, 9/5/94: p11) (see Appendix C). It is a title almost identical to the *Sowetan's* front page headline of 10 May 1994; *The world at Mandela's feet* (see above). In fact the only difference lies in the *Sowetan's* use of 'Mandela's', as opposed to *The Star's* use of 'his'. And, since 'his' in *The Star's* article stands for 'Mandela's', the two headlines therefore essentially say the same thing. That is, the world has tremendous respect for Mandela.

As I mentioned in the methodology section of this project, the difference of only one word can have important implications for meaning. And, indeed, there are subtle differences in meaning between *his* and *Mandela's*⁵².

His connotes dissociation while simultaneously negating personal identity - it is not clear who the person is. *Mandela's*, on the other hand, makes it clear who is being referred to in the headline. It therefore allows us to access the meanings associated with Mandela. *His*⁵³ does not connote

⁵² For further elaboration on how naming strategies in written texts encode meaning, see Simpson (1993 : pp140 - 147) & Fowler (1991 : pp97 - 101).

⁵³ *His* also suggests that there might be a gendered dimension to this national identity. That is a national identity which privileges male identity.

the New South Africa, it does not represent the New South Africa semiotically, whereas *Mandela's* does (see above).

However, while this particular analysis would hold if we looked at these headlines in isolation, it does not when we consider their relative contexts. That is, when we consider how the respective headlines relate to other elements of the text (syntagmatic analysis). Whereas the *Sowetan's* headline occurs on its own, *The Star's* version is accompanied by a sub-headline (above the headline) which reads: "Never before in South Africa, and seldom in the world, has there been such a glittering array of kings and presidents gathered to honour one man. Norman Chandler gives the full picture of the *Mandela* inauguration" (my emphasis). This makes it evident that *his* actually denotes Mandela. The meaning of the headline is subsequently modified. The presence of *Mandela* in the sub-headline activates the second-order significations associated with Mandela. Consequently, as discussed in the previous chapter, the link between Mandela and the New South Africa is still prevalent, despite the difference in wording between the two headlines.

The sub-headline not only makes it clear that the world is at Mandela's feet, it also reinforces the general theme of the headline. That is, that the world has tremendous respect for Mandela. Here, however, the theme is intensified. "A glittering array of kings and presidents gathered to honour one man" indicates that it is not just 'the world' that has come to honour Mandela, it is also kings and presidents, people who themselves are

honoured and respected. This has the effect of elevating Mandela's standing even more. After all, it is one thing for ordinary people to honour you, quite another for eminent people to do so. And, coupled with the rarity of such an event - "Never before in South Africa, and seldom in the world" - the importance of Mandela and the respect which he commands is amplified. If respect and honour on such a scale is rare, then, it is implied, Mandela must really deserve it. Furthermore, such honours cannot be mere platitudes, they must be genuine.

Although such information (that such occasions are rare) is essentially superfluous, and therefore irrelevant as far as the facts of the event are concerned - it does not impact on the fact that presidents and kings have come to honour Mandela - it is extremely relevant to our analysis, as it helps to construct meaning around the facts. In other words, although it is irrelevant from a 'pure news' point of view it is relevant from an ideology/discourse point of view - it allows us to access the meanings which underlie the news.

From this we can gather that *The Star*, like the *Sowetan*, constructs the New South Africa as a nation respected and honoured by the world⁵⁴. Therefore, *The Star* also constructs Mandela and the New South Africa in

⁵⁴ At the same time that *The Star* constructs the New South Africa as *approved by the international community*, it also constructs the international community as *the norm*; as the benchmark against which South Africa should measure its worth as a nation; a norm which South Africa did not previously meet, and therefore its ostracisation. And, as I will show later, the international community subsequently becomes an important symbol in *The Star's* mythology of the New South Africa.

such a way that it too offers the reader a positive 'value message'. It too encourages the reader to 'buy into' the New South Africa and adopt the subject position of someone who is respected and held in high esteem. Furthermore, the fact that such approval is implicitly contrasted with the old South Africa ("never before in SA") suggests that not only should we identify with the New South Africa but also that we should identify with it in preference to the old South Africa.

At the foot of the page, there is a collection of passport-style photographs of sixteen (two rows of eight) of the leaders due to attend the inauguration. The tableau is captioned: "Arafat, Bhutto, Huddleston.... They're all flying to Pretoria" and: "Just some of the leaders who will gather at the Union Buildings tomorrow". It then goes on to identify the photographs in order: "The PLO's Arafat, Pakistan's Bhutto, Huddleston, US's Gore, Australia's Fraser, Zr. Jabwe's Mugabe, Namibia's Nujoma, republic of China's Lee... US's Hilary Clinton, Ireland's Robinson, Botswana's Masire, Tanzania's Nyerere, Portugal's Soares, Israel's Welzman, Ghana's Rawlings, Australia's Hawke". Although, this may appear to be neutral, it serves a number of functions.

Firstly, the collection of photographs (grouped close together) of leaders from very different parts of the world prefigures the gathering of leaders at the actual event the following day. This allows the reader to begin to imagine the event, initiating a narrative which suggests that the New South Africa, through Mandela, inspires international harmony. It also

reinforces the theme of international respect for Mandela and South Africa (as discussed earlier). After all, it is suggested that the whole world, no matter what their backgrounds and beliefs (as represented by the photos of leaders as diverse as Arafat and Weizman, Nujoma and Gore, Bhutto and Lee), approves of the New South Africa. Consequently, Mandela and the New South Africa, are constructed as universal symbols of hope and reconciliation.

Secondly, the fact that the leaders are represented as being possessed by their relative countries, as signified by the constant use of the possessive; *apostrophe-s* (for example: Pakistan's Bhutto, US's Gore, Australia's Fraser, etc.), encourages us to see Mandela in that light too - that is, South Africa's Mandela. Their countries are foregrounded. Thus, rather than representing themselves, the leaders *represent* their countries⁵⁵. And, insofar as we are encouraged to see Mandela in a similar light, the connection between Mandela and the New South Africa is reinforced.

Underneath the tableau the names of many of the foreign dignitaries who were to attend the inauguration are listed. Although few of the readers are likely to read through the list name by name, probably choosing to skim

⁵⁵ It is also interesting to note that the passport-style photographs of these leaders reinforces the suggested link between them and their countries. The fact that the images of these leaders is closely linked to the idea of passports further encourages us to see them as nationals. Passports, apart from signifying international travel, also signify national identity. And, therefore, when associated with passports, it is suggested that these leaders stand for, or signify, their countries of origin.

over them instead, it nevertheless suggests quite strongly the importance of the occasion and the high esteem in which Mandela (and therefore, by implication, the New South Africa) is held by the international community; an international community, which until recently, condemned South Africa, thereby throwing the significance of the transition, in general, and the inauguration, in particular, into sharp relief.

'Follow *The Star*' - the narrative of the miracle birth.

Within this feature article a narrative of pilgrimage is strongly evoked - that is, leaders of the international community travelling from afar to honour 'the great leader'. This theme is captured in the headline: *The world at his feet*, and is supplemented by various references to travel in the feature. This is especially evident in the tableau (see above) where the use of passport-style photographs (signifying passports and therefore travel), together with the caption "they're all flying to Pretoria" help to convey this meaning. In addition, immediately below the tableau, the article states: "The world's leaders - representing 145 countries - *are beating a path* to the Union Buildings for tomorrow's inauguration of President Nelson Mandela" (my italics).

A pilgrimage connotes a journey to a sacred place and, therefore, since the inauguration is their destination it is implied that it is a source of spirituality. Furthermore, since the inauguration signifies the birth of the New South Africa then the New South Africa becomes endowed with

sacredness. It is therefore implied that the New South Africa is a sacred place, a nation characterised by the presence of God.

This suggestion of a pilgrimage feeds into a more specific, but related narrative - that of the birth of Christ. There are a number of aspects to this. Firstly, as already mentioned, the inauguration signifies the birth of the New South Africa. However, it is not just any birth, it is a miracle birth, and therefore it corresponds to the birth of Christ. After all, the New South Africa has supposedly come into being against all odds. It has supposedly been born of a miracle transformation that has seen it overcome the deep division, mistrust and conflict of the past to create a united and reconciled society. At least this is the way in which *The Star* tends to construct the New South Africa:

It (the inauguration) is the climax of an *incredible* fortnight which has seen South Africa *transformed* from a *violence-ridden* nation in *turmoil* - and an international pariah - to what the world perceives as a beacon of race *reconciliation* (*The Star*, 10/5/1994: p1) (my italics)

Indeed, even the very use of the word 'transformed', as opposed to 'changed', conveys a sense of miraculousness as it implies a complete overhaul. The use of 'incredible', which means unbelievable or inconceivable, also helps to convey this meaning⁵⁶.

⁵⁶ See also the sub-headline of *The Star's* lead story of 27 April 1995: "The rainbow nation *miracle* lives on" (p1 - my italics) as well as *The Star's* editorial of 9 May 1994: *Rocks in the road* (p10), where the Government of National Unity is described as being born of "unlikely parentage". And, although this specifically refers to the unexpected

Secondly, the narrative of pilgrimage discussed above - dignitaries travelling from afar to pay their respects to 'the great leader' and witness the birth of the New South Africa - is suggestive of another aspect of the story of the birth of Christ - that is, the journey of the Magi ('the three wise men') to pay homage to the birth of 'the king of men'. And, like the three wise men, some of the international dignitaries also come 'bearing gifts'. Consider, for example, the following sub-headline: "US commerce secretary *arrives bearing gifts*" (*The Star*, 9/5/94: p3) (my italics). And, although *The Star* is referring here to investment and aid, rather than gold, frankincense and myrrh, the idea is the same.

And, thirdly, like Christ, the New South Africa is constructed as a shining example, offering hope to the world. This is suggested by the following: "SA becomes a *beacon of hope* as President Mandela takes oath of office" (*The Star*, 10/5/1994: p1) (my emphasis). Also: "... South Africa's democratically engineered transformation as a *role model for world race relations*" (*The Star*, 10/5/95: p1) (my emphasis).

The significance of this narrative is considerable. The New South Africa is constructed in such a way that it is equated with Christ. And, therefore, since Christ is (according to Christian mythology) the physical manifestation of God so too, it is implied, is the New South Africa.

'marriage' of the National Party and African National Congress which the transition represented, it is also an image which is reminiscent of the unusual parentage of Christ.

Consequently, rather than there just being a strong relationship between the New South Africa and God, as suggested by the narrative of pilgrimage alone, the narrative of the birth of Christ implies a much more intimate relationship. Indeed, the New South Africa is constructed as God in another form.

Detailed Imaginings

Another important aspect of the article is the issue of detail⁵⁷. Although the feature article is not particularly long it nevertheless goes into a surprising amount of detail. As already mentioned, it gives a list of the names of the foreign dignitaries attending. Yet, the detail does not stop there. Consider the following extract:

An inauguration luncheon for 1200 invited guests takes place at the Presidency after the inauguration.

On the menu is trout, a vegetable soup, roast rack of veal and vegetables, followed by a white chocolate mousse with fresh strawberries. Wines to be served include a 1992 Nederburg Chardonnay, a 1982 Nederburg Cabernet, and a 1992 Bellingham Noble Late Harvest.

String quartets from schools in Pretoria and Verwoerdburg areas will be playing during the luncheon.

⁵⁷ See Naomi Schor (1987): *Reading in detail*, for further insight into how detail in texts produces meaning.

The 5000 guests attending a second luncheon, on the lawns to the west of the Union Buildings, will be served traditional South African fare.

This includes springbok pate, smoked crocodile, smoked ostrich, biltong, dried sausage, tuna, lamb, bobotie, umngusho (a Xhosa speciality), as well as a selection of venison, Indian chicken salads, and beef.

Also on the menu are delicacies such as melktert and koeksisters. While they are lunching, a spectacular Many Cultures - One Nation concert takes place on the lawns.

It is to feature some of South Africa's greatest artists, including Miriam Makeba, Sibongile Khumalo, Abdullah Ibrahim, Johnny Clegg, Mango Groove, Jonas Gwangwa, and Ladysmith Black Mambazo.

Consider also the following time schedule, boxed off and reproduced together with a graphic of the Inauguration at the top of the page:

9am	Musical programme in the amphitheatre.
9.30-10.52	Arrival of VIPs.
10.54	Arrival of executive deputy presidents.
10.58	Arrival of President Nelson Mandela.
11.	Inauguration.
11.45	President addresses the nation from podium on Union Buildings lawn.

- 12.15pm** President and deputies meet with heads of state at Presidency.
- 1.30** State luncheon.
- 2.30** Many Cultures - One Nation concert on the lawns.
- 4.10** President addresses foreign guests on Smuts Lawn (west of buildings).
- 4.35** President and deputies fly by helicopter to Ellis Park stadium for soccer international.

So what is the significance of this detail for our analysis? What purpose does such detail serve? After all, it is not totally necessary to include such detail. The first extract, for example, could quite easily have read something like the following: An inauguration luncheon for 1200 invited guests takes place at the Presidency after the inauguration. A second luncheon for 5000 guests, on the lawns to the west of the Union Buildings, will also be held. While they are lunching, a spectacular concert, featuring some of South Africa's greatest artists, takes place on the lawns.

Similarly, it is ultimately not necessary for us to know the specific detail of the times of the inauguration. Do we really need to know that the VIPs will arrive between 9.30 and 10.52 (and why 10.52 precisely? why not round it off to 10.50 or 10.55)? And, do we really need to know that the state luncheon will begin at precisely 1.30 (particularly as we are not likely to be attending)? And, is it important that we know that the president will address foreign guests on Smuts Lawn at 4.10? The gist of such

information could have been maintained without such detail. For example: The day's proceedings will begin with a musical programme in the amphitheatre at 9am. VIP guests will then begin to arrive. President Mandela and his executive deputy presidents are expected shortly before the inauguration which is scheduled to start at 11am. Following the ceremony the president will address the nation from a podium on the Union Buildings lawn. He and his deputies will then meet with heads of state at the Presidency before the state luncheon... (and so on).

So, to return to my original questions, what is the significance of this detail for our analysis? What purpose does such detail serve? And, more specifically, how does it relate to the construction of the nation?

In answer to these questions I have identified two ways in which such detail potentially constructs the nation. Firstly, on a general level, detail connotes the importance and significance of the inauguration and therefore of the New South Africa. Although, as I have already suggested, much of the above detail may appear superfluous and therefore essentially irrelevant, *it is however extremely relevant*. It might not add much to our knowledge of the event, yet curiously enough it adds a lot to our understanding of it. That is, it creates meaning around the event. Thus, although detail appears to be neutral it is not; it says something about the New South Africa. It signals its importance. After all, if something is described in detail it must be considered worthy of such attention. Also, attention to detail implies concern. The presence of detail

in the description of the day's events therefore serves an ideological function. It contains a value message about how we should view the inauguration and the birth of the New South Africa. That is, as important and worthy of our concern.

Secondly, and specifically with regard to the two examples I highlighted above, the presence of detail allows us to think about the inauguration more precisely. It therefore encourages us to imagine being there and participating and sharing in the event. And, once we share in this national ceremony (with all its attendant symbolism), no matter that it is only in our imaginations, we begin to imagine ourselves as part of the national community that is the New South Africa⁵⁸.

This imagining is supplemented by the presence of a graphic at the top of the page entitled *The inauguration*. It presents four different views of the inauguration from four different perspectives. As you look at the graphic, moving from left to right, the views of the inauguration go from the general to specific. The first, situated in the top left-hand corner of the graphic, shows the largest area in the smallest space. Headed "Cordoned-off area" it is an overhead, map-like representation of the suburbs and streets surrounding the Union Buildings. The second, just under the first, shows a more detailed, aerial view of the "Union grounds" with the Union buildings

⁵⁸ The detail of the 'schedule of times' example also helps to convey a sense of ritual which, according to Hobsbawm (1983), is an important element in the 'invention of tradition'. It encourages us to imagine ourselves as members of a national community: "most of the occasions when people become conscious of citizenship as such remains associated with symbols and *semi-ritual practices*" (Hobsbawm, 1983: p12).

and surrounding lawns (which are labelled) clearly visible. Areas reserved for the public are labelled, as are the concert stage and large TV screen. Although the inauguration podium is not visible it is nevertheless positioned by a labelled arrow. The third graphic, to the right of the second, labelled "the amphitheatre", narrows in on the Union Buildings themselves. From a slightly elevated angle, it shows the amphitheatre of the Union Buildings where the podium (the focal point of the Inauguration) is now very clearly visible. The areas reserved for guests and the media as well as the choir are also labelled. The final graphic (furthest right): "On the podium", focuses on the Inauguration ceremony itself. It portrays the three inaugurees, Executive Deputy Presidents Thabo Mbeki and FW de Klerk, and President Nelson Mandela, presumably taking their oaths of office from the inaugurator, Chief Justice Corbett. They are all standing in front of a table, on which stands the State Bible which signifies the sacredness of the occasion.

This gradual shift from the general to the specific in the graphic has the effect of creating a sense of movement. As the graphic zooms in we feel that we move with it. We are almost carried into the event, invited to be there. It allows us to imagine the spatial dimension of the ritual which, when combined with the temporal dimension (the schedule of times), allows us to situate ourselves, in an imaginary way, within it. Consequently, it is much easier for us to imagine participating and

sharing in the occasion. And, once we feel that we share in this national event we begin to imagine ourselves as part of a national community⁵⁹.

Are we really civilised ?

The detailed description of the menu, allows the reader to imagine the sumptuousness of the occasion. And, if it is sumptuous, then this also implies that it is important. *Trout, roast rack of vegetables, white chocolate mousse and strawberries, as well as a selection of fine wines, coupled with the image of string quartets*, connotes elegance, sophistication and civility. Consequently, the message is created that South Africa, as host of this grand occasion, is a sophisticated and civilised country which can hold its head high in the company of other civilised and sophisticated countries. Furthermore, the fact that the wines are South African (not imported) and that the string quartets come from schools in Pretoria and Verwoerdburg suggests that South Africa has sophistication and civility within; 'running through its veins'. In other words, they are not just the trappings of civility, imported for the occasion.

However, having said this, it should be pointed out that 'good food and wine' and 'string quartets' connote Western culture⁶⁰. And, therefore, despite the fact that the New South Africa is presented as sophisticated

⁵⁹ The focusing effect of the graphic also suggests the import of the occasion by reinforcing the fact that the event is the focus of not only South Africa's but the world's attention.

⁶⁰ This is not to say that non-Westerners do not enjoy or appreciate them, it is merely to say that they are Western cultural forms.

Author Epstein R L

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