Talking about the Real Thing: Authenticity and the Politics of Authentication at Freedom Park, Pretoria

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I am driving around Pretoria looking for Freedom Park. Coming in from the outskirts of the city, I am having trouble coordinating myself using a crude map printed from the internet. Along the way, I pull over at a Shell Service Station to ask for directions. I hail the petrol attendant and show him my map. He indicates that I am in Brooklyn, a leafy suburb saturated with consulates and embassies, roughly 10 minutes drive from the city centre. He confesses that he has never heard of Freedom Park but is familiar with the Voortrekker Monument and Salvokop, the suburb where the monument is located. Consequently, he raises his head from the map, rolls his eyes and scans the landscape as if channelling some internal GPS and then gives me a list of directions. The route takes me past the monstrous University of South Africa and the Telkom Tower which is still adorned with a gigantic soccer ball recalling the recent staging of the World Cup. Further along, I round Fountains Circle, which has been redecorated with a grand, shiny new monument celebrating the hosting of the World Cup, and enter the city.

After a number of wrong turns, I pull off in the city centre at Pretorius Square, opposite the National Museum of Natural History hoping to get a better set of directions from officials there. Crossing Pretorious Square, I am struck by how complex and symbolically charged this public space is. In descending order, three statues line the path from the entrance of the City Hall down to the Museum of Natural History. At the top of the walkway, is a tall statue of Chief Tshwane, a former ruler of the Tshwane Royal House, who held sway over the land during the 17th century. Sculpted by Angus Taylor, the statue was unveiled in July of 2006 and was meant to serve as a symbolic counter-point to the two apartheid era statues erected further down the walk-way. A week after having been unveiled the statue was vandalised: assailants had sprayed a apartheid era *vier kleur*

flag on the chief's abdomen and the distinctive ammoniac smell of urine was detected at the base of the plinth (SAPA, 14 July, 2006). Further along the path, is the equally monumental statue of Andries Pretorius, an Afrikaner hero. He is portrayed as the pioneering frontiersman: erect, mounted, rifle at the ready, but still elegant, complete with riding jacket and top hat as if to suggest he remained fashionable even in the most testing of encounters in the African wilderness. At the end of the pathway, his son, Marthinus Pretorius, is enshrined on what used to be Pretorius Street. Alternately, he is modelled adopting a meditative pose, with his head turned looking over his shoulder as if to draw on the socio-political genius of his father.

"Follow Visagie Street then take a left into Schubart Street, which becomes Potgieter Street. Keep going until you see the sign showing you the way to Freedom Park ... it's not far," the clerk at reception desk instructs me. Following this new set of directions, I manage to find the sign directing me to the Park. Turning left into Skietpoort Road what immediately strikes me is the run-down, squalled condition of the area. The majority of the homes are solid, well-built brick and mortar houses, yet many are dirty and dilapidated with makeshift garages and car wrecks scattered in between. I find it intriguing that the homes that line the road leading up to Freedom Park provide no camouflage from the poverty in the form of arts and crafts stalls, curio-shops and food and beverage outlets that heritage ventures like this often attract. Villikazi Street in Soweto, Johannesburg stands out as an example of how a large tract of township space has been transformed by official heritage development that has taken place around Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu's homes. An array of organic commercial enterprise has sprung up around the sites—from watering holes and curio stores, to car wash services provided by eager youngsters—as locals have sought to cash in on the buzz of tourists drawn there.

Historically, during the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (Z.A.R.) era Salvokop Hill was used as a signal point for the postal service. The name of Salvokop officially derives from the period of British occupation of Pretoria during the Anglo-Boer War whence it was used as a station for "25-pounder guns [that] fired salutes to visiting or departing

dignitaries or on special occasions" (Andrews and Ploeger, 1989: 58). The contemporary picture of Salvokop however is in large part related to the area's relationship with the rail industry. The houses residents occupy today were initially reserved for railway workers who serviced the bustling railways operating around Pretoria Station. Designed by Sir Herbert Baker and unveiled in 1908, the station remains the focal point of the city's public transportation hub. With the softening of political will accompanied by the withdrawal of the generous benefits afforded to white rail workers, the area was opened up to occupation by black residents from the late 1980's. Salvokop was attractive not only because of its proximity to the city centre or because of its access to public transport but also because the low rent occupants had to pay (interview Salvokop resident Joyce Mabena, 27 September 2010). The size of the homes and properties also afforded primary tenants with an opportunity to generate extra income by renting out portions of their homes or backyard spaces, which also contributed towards overcrowding. The deteriorating social conditions plaguing Salvokop has become a subject of concern for the Department of Public Works which has embarked on a plan to relocate the population and redevelop the area. They have however faced fierce opposition from the local community. This latest effort to relocate Salvokop residents and clean up the area marked one of "numerous unsuccessful attempts to regenerate and integrate the suburb" since the 1970's (Van den Heever, 2006: 32).

Not only did Salvokop provide shelter for the work force servicing the rail industry it also housed the administrative headquarters from where the rail traffic flowing around Pretoria was managed. The original administration block is located on 3rd avenue and remains in pristine condition. At present it accommodates the Freedom Park administrative staff. The rail industry continues to influence the contemporary profile of Salvokop. The Gautrain, a multi-billion rand high-speed rail project aimed at connecting the cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria, passes around the outer contour of the hill. The completion of the line was meant to have coincided with the start of the 2010 World Cup, with initial plans indicating that the line would tunnel through Salvokop to access Pretoria Station. This would suit Freedom Park since it would mean that the planned final station would make the Park more enticing for tourists planning to visit. Unfortunately,

the Park was unable to generate the funds required for the development to take place which led to the rerouting of the line around Salvokop Hill (interview Freedom Park curator Sipho Mbanda, 21 October 2010).

Driving along, I reach the peak of Koch street where the entrance to the Park is situated. A number of construction vehicles rumble about in the vicinity indicating that heavy construction is still taking place at the Park. I stop the car in the middle of the intersection to quickly take a picture of the orange declarative Freedom Park sign. The uniformed security guard manning the boom gate is clearly intrigued. In a second I pull up to the gate and am politely asked to sign in by filling in all my personal details and indicate the reason for my visit.

After signing the register the security official instructs me to drive to the Welcome Centre where I will receive further instructions. I proceed, taking the steep right hand corner slowly, and, having rounded it see another female security official wearing the same navy blue uniform. She waves me down with one arm while holding a walkie-talkie to her face with the other. I stop and the security official comes up to the window and instructs me to switch off the engine and proceed on foot to the entrance of the Welcome Centre where I can buy a ticket for a tour. She does so with a curt, sharp gesture of her arm as if to allay any ideas I may have to wander.

The Welcome Centre is dark and there are two cashiers behind a cash desk and another gentleman sitting at a table to the left. The room is quiet and colourless, virtually baron of the plethora of introductory material commonly displayed at these points. There are also no other patrons. I pay the R20 entrance fee and am handed a glossy pink ticket. The cashier instructs me to drive further up the hill to the pick-up point where I will be met by a tour guide. As instructed, I get back in my car and carry on, passing another security official, who, with an equally officious arm gesture, directs me to continue straight ahead up the hill. Halfway through the ascent, my passage is blocked by a fourth security official who directs me to turn right and park my vehicle in a designated parking area. "Wait here, a tour guide will come to meet you shortly" he says.

Introduction

Located atop Salvokop Hill, a stone's throw away from Pretoria Central Prison, Freedom Park is the post-apartheid state's most ambitious and costly heritage venture. It is intended to catalogue all of South Africa's history dating back 3.6 billion years and represent the cultural history, heritage and diversity of the nation in its entirety. Its work is informed by the desire to commemorate all those who died in South Africa's struggles for freedom and humanity and to facilitate reconciliation and nation-building. The Department of Arts and Culture (presently known as the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology) formally announced the Freedom Park venture as part of its Legacy Projects initiative in June 1998. The "new and diverse monuments, museums, memorials and commemorations" the Department sought to establish through the Legacy Projects initiative were conceived with the intention of acknowledging "the previously neglected, marginalised and distorted" aspects of South African history and cultural heritage (Mtshali, 1998). The announcement of the Legacy Project initiative was significant as it came at a time when South Africa was in the process of coming to terms with the pain of the apartheid past that emerged from testimony delivered during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings. For the state, the mobilization of a new set of cultural heritage resources therefore represented a means of coming to terms with the legacy of the apartheid past in the realm of the "new" South African present. Legislatively, the Freedom Park venture flowed in part out of the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995, but also represented the state's initial attempt to assert its influence over the heritage sector, which culminated in the National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999.

Freedom Park has been constructed in phases over a period of almost 10 years. The Intermediary Phase of the project consisted of the primary memorial element, *Isivivane*, and takes the form of a ceremonial burial site. This element was unveiled on the 27th of April, 2004 and was meant to coincide with South Africa's celebration of ten years of democracy. Phase 1 was officially unveiled on the 16th of December 2006, the Day of Reconciliation. The completion of this phase marked the unveiling of three more elements, *S'khumbuto*, "a memorial that commemorates the major conflicts that shaped

South Africa", a Wall of Names documenting the names of those who fell in the struggles for freedom and humanity, and *Moshate*, "a high level hospitality suite, which will be used for presidential and diplomatic functions".[1] Phase 2A, will include the //hapo, "an interactive exhibition space, which would convey a rich history of 3.6 billion years to visitors",[2] and *Vhuwaelo*, "a peaceful garden for meditation, self discovery, healing and spiritual connection", is still under construction.[3] Phases 2B and 2C are planned for completion from 2011 onwards. These will mark the completion of two more elements, the Pan African Archives and *Tiva* "a large body of water that will be clearly visible on the slope of the hill, symbolising peace, tranquillity and serenity".[4]

Freedom Park claims to display the authorized image of South Africa's heritage and function as the legitimate narrator of the nation's history. Here authenticity refers to the narrative of the nation posited by the state and the success of Freedom Park's representation of it. A fundamental part of the process of fashioning the authoritative heritage narrative has involved having to deny that the Park was a fabrication. The narrative of the nation advanced by Freedom Park has therefore been fashioned under circumstances of close public scrutiny. This has resulted in a number of criticisms being lodged against the project which in one or other way have sought to question the authenticity of the venture. In this paper, I will therefore look at 3 criticisms that have been lodged against the Freedom Park project, and drawing on the work of Edward Bruner and the notion of the politics of authentication, I will try and elaborate the competing concepts of authenticity that these criticisms appear to evoke. Firstly, I will look at criticisms about the Freedom Park as an ideological instrument of power on the

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[1] http://www.freedompark.co.za/cms/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=26. Accessed 1 May, 2011.

[2] http://www.freedompark.co.za/cms/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=29&Itemid=35. Accessed 1 May, 2011.

[3] http://www.freedompark.co.za/cms/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=81&Itemid=130. Accessed 1 May, 2011.

[4] http://www.freedompark.co.za/cms/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=31&Itemid=37 Accessed 1 May, 2011.

part of the state, and how it has been implicated in the distortion of historical facts which fostered social division rather than unity. Secondly, I will look at the criticism that the subject of historical essence and the notion of heritage as sacred space. Finally, I will look at claims regarding Freedom Park's visual aesthetics and the competing notion of symbolic verisimilitude. In order to proceed, however, some context regarding the notion of authenticity is in order.

Authenticity

Charles Lindholm argues that there are "two overlapping modes for characterizing any entity as authentic: genealogical or historical (*origin*) and identity or correspondence (*content*)" so that that which is considered to be authentic displays the character of similitude between essence and appearance: "their essence and appearance are one" (2008: 2 original emphasis). Building on the work of Lionel Trilling (1993), Lindholm argues, furthermore that the contemporary preoccupation with the notion of authenticity emerges historically from a shift from a focus on sincerity, a shift which takes place as part of the gradual unfolding of Western modernity. As Lindholm explains, with the "breakup of the feudal system" and the relocation of peasants from the countryside in the into mixed urban environments, a populous who would normally have relied on the stability afforded by their locative communal relations were forced into a situation where "they were no longer quite sure where they belonged". This marked their "irreversible plunge into modernity", which he describes as the "condition of living among strangers". Without the natural and cosmic frames of reference, this new urban environment created new possibilities for social mobility. It also fostered a social atmosphere of "alienation and meaninglessness" which lent room for a "greater potential for guile and deceit". In this chaotic, 'ambiguous urban milieu', 'sincerity as in the notion of doing what one says one will do, therefore became a desired trait' (3). The other leading features of modernity—from the pre-eminence of the Protestant work ethic, Cartesian scientific reasoning, and contact with the Other in the colonies—further accelerated this shift. With the democratization of European political systems and the emergence of the notion of fundamental human equality, the evolution of sincerity into authenticity is concluded. As Lindholm explains, the notion of democracy "not only supports the political right of each

person to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, it also can motivate a search for a transcendental spiritual essence that is assumed to lie beneath the surface of roles and convention. When individuals try to commune with and express this hypothetical inner source, sincerity has evolved into authenticity" (2008: 6).

Politics of Authentication

How does this notion of authenticity relate to a heritage institution like Freedom Park? One of the assumptions underwriting heritage ventures is that they are naturally imbued with an aura of authenticity. This derives in part from the notion that heritage is a cultural form central to the operation of disciplinary power on the part of the state. Historically, this idea is related to the notion that heritage is intimately bound to the emergence of nationalisms and the practise of civic education (see Bennett, 2009; 2004). As Stuart Hall (2005) explains, heritage may be viewed as the "material embodiment of the spirit of the nation, a collective representation of the ... *tradition*, a concept pivotal to the lexicon of [national] virtues" (2005: 24 original emphasis). If heritage is believed to entail the preservation and conservation of the legacy of the nation, Hall argues that heritage expertise is steeped in "the symbolic power to order knowledge, to rank, classify and arrange, and thus to give meaning to objects and things through the imposition of interpretive schemas, scholarship and the authority of connoisseurship" (2005: 24). The practical implication of this power/knowledge relationship, is that "collections of cultural artefacts and works of art have also been closely associated with informal public education" (2005: 24) since the state seeks to educate the public about the history and heritage of the nation.

But this aura of authenticity in which heritage institutions are cloaked conceals dynamic socio-cultural interactions that go into the production, contestation and interpretation of this seemingly authoritative image. Edward Bruner (1994) aptly demonstrates the kind of politics of authentication that go into shaping an aura of legitimacy around heritage institutions. Bruner uses the case study of Abraham Lincoln's New Salem, an outdoor museum styled as a replica of the 1830's town in Illinois, USA, where Lincoln once lived. As an "authentic reproduction" New Salem offers a striking view into the

management and staging of authenticity since, in this context, "museum professionals struggle with these issues daily" (1994: 398). Focussing on how these heritage practitioners exercise their knowledge pragmatically, maintaining and reinforcing the seemingly oxymoronic juxtaposition of the terms authentic and reproduction, Bruner sets out to "develop a view of historical reproduction based on a constructivist position that sees all culture as continually invented and reinvented; and to argue for transcending such dichotomies as original/copy and authentic/inauthentic" (1994: 397).

Authorities at New Salem are serious about authenticity. While they acknowledge that the park is a reproduction, a replica of the 19th century town where Abraham Lincoln once roamed, they are at pains to create an accurate, realistic re-creation for visitors. The concept of authenticity adopted by employees was however, not uniform or consistent. At times, for employees, authenticity meant "historical verisimilitude": as in a replica that is "credible and convincing to the public and true to history" (399). At other times, authenticity related to the idea of genuineness, or the idea that New Salem would be believable to the original occupants, that it was "true in substance, or real" (399). A third conception of authenticity referred to the notion of the original: unique cultural and historical and material value that is irrefutable, and which, by definition, eliminates any resonances of authenticity generated by copies/productions, since the historical factuality of original material survivals can never be reproduced (400). Finally, authenticity referred to the idea of that which is "duly authorised, certified or legally valid" in terms of official fiat.

Underlying this concern with authenticity is a preoccupation about public image. While employees harboured some perception about what visitors wanted, and how they viewed New Salem, Bruner reveals that these perceptions were at times incongruent with visitors ideas about authenticity. He discovered that visitors' interest in the historical accuracy of the park went "well beyond a search for authenticity", and revolved more around how the park evoked "a sense of identity, meaning, and attachment" (1994: 398). For tourists, New Salem's authentic look and feel was significant as far as it helped them "learn about their past", but also "play with time frames and enjoy the encounter" as the aesthetics

allowed one to go back in time, but at the same time recognise ones location in the present, which was a form of entertainment. Ultimately, through these interactions visitors 'celebrated America', through paying homage to Lincoln's role in the nation's sacred narrative and "the values and virtues" of its "small-town origins" (1994: 398).

Bruner's work demonstrates that, while historically illuminating, Lindholm's (2008) theory of authenticity as correspondence fails to address the complex political processes of contestation and negotiation through which material cultural heritage is accorded with a sense of privileged meaning. This constructivist view of authenticity has been taken up by a number of authors who have elaborated upon the complex, nuanced relationship between authenticity, fakes and forgery (see Chidester, 2005; Shiner, 1994; Kingston, 1999; Dutton, 1985). From this perspective, cultural heritage could be viewed as a phenomenon that is "a construction subject to dynamic processes of (re)invention within particular social formations", and which remains appealing precisely because of its "denial of being a fabrication" (Heritage Dynamics Project Proposal, 2008: 3). To engage with this aspect of cultural heritage, in this text I will take the constructivist theoretical stance which posits that "authenticity is not an essence to be discovered, but a quality produced in cultural forms" (Heritage Dynamics Project Proposal, 2008: 2). In an effort to better understand this facet of cultural heritage, therefore, I will use Birgit Meyer's concept of the politics of authentication as a tool for analysing the way in which cultural heritage narratives have been designed and portrayed as authentic, and to assess the stakes invested in the production, dissemination and consumption of such authenticating narratives.

Freedom Park and Politics of Authentication

Some of the leading questions about the authenticity of Freedom Park have revolved around the subject of how history is portrayed and framed, the choice of site and spatial location of the monument and the authenticity of the visual aesthetics in which the Park was framed. In turn, I will deal with each of these questions, looking at the notion of authenticity they evoke, and then look at the contrasting notion of authenticity which Park officials and visitors to the Park elicit in their understanding of the Park.

- *Authenticity as Historical Accuracy vs Authenticity as Redress*

Writing in the Pretoria News on 5 January 2007, only a few weeks after the official unveiling of the *S'Khumbuto* element, Rodney Warwick argued that the Freedom Park's official "rationale is a confusing bundle of historical illogicalities, inconsistencies, myth and blatant bias". In order to substantiate his claim Warwick embarked on a comparison between the Freedom Park and other major memorials dotted across the South African landscape starting with the Voortrekker Monument. In this first piece of comparative analysis Warwick outlined that the Voortrekker Monument made the clear and simple claim of being "a triumphalist commemoration of Afrikaner nationalism over pre-industrial black African use of land, which later became part of the Afrikaner republics … [and further represented] an Afrikaner nationalist statement against British imperialism". Despite the fact that the Voortrekker Monument's narrative statement "was steeped in bias and historical myth", Warwick conceded, it was laudable because it "never purported to be a symbol of reconciliation" as was the case at the Freedom Park. The point the author therefore tried to assert was that at least the Voortrekker Monument was "ideologically consistent" (Pretoria News, 5 January, 2007: 10).

This was not the last time that the question of ideological bias and its relation to the Park's foundational value of reconciliation and nation building was raised. In his discussion of Freedom Park "as a symbol of a new identity and freedom", Pieter Labuschagne (2010) explicitly foregrounds this subject as a leading problematic facing the Park and state driven post-apartheid commemorative practise in general. He frames the question as such: "will this postcolonial reconstruction … reflect an object perspective of history which will enhance reconciliation and nation building in South Africa, or will the process be subservient to a hidden political agenda?" (112). For Labuschagne, the "political agenda" refers to the "re-creation of history as part of … (re)construction and memorialisation of the past" in a way that serves present day political interests on the part of the state, rather than pay homage to the facts of history, or serve the interests of nation building. As he puts it, state driven heritage interventions embarked upon "unilaterally with little historical backing and coordinated planning, which ultimately has done little for reconciliation and nation building" (113). Crudely

put, the basic problem Warwick and Labuschagne could be said to be grappling with was the authority over who controlled representations of the past. At the same time, we have to ask questions about the relationship between history and heritage practice, especially in light of Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's observation that "Heritage is a new mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past" (1998: 148).

Nevertheless, conceptually, Freedom Park seems to demonstrate this apparent contradiction between ideologically loaded historical interpretation and its foundational value of reconciliation and nation building. Originally, when former president Thabo Mbeki pioneered the venture he argued that "In the narrow sense of the word Freedom Park would refer only to political freedom and therefore be a symbol of acknowledgement of the heroes and heroines of our struggle for freedom" (Mbeki 16 June, 2000). On the other hand, "In the broad sense of the word, we are dealing with freedom from the adverse impact of the forces of nature, freedom that comes with technological revolutions, freedom occasioned by socio-economic advancement and of course freedom from political oppression" (Mbeki 16 June, 2000). In this way, the Freedom Park's commemorative scope was intended to go beyond a narrow focus on the trials and tribulations of South Africa's complex history and explore the deepest meaning of the notion freedom possible. Yet the problems related to who was free and who would remain oppressed and marginalized, a connotation that the word freedom readily elicits, were anticipated by South African stakeholders canvassed prior to the venture's material realisation. The Executive Summary of the Public Consultation on Freedom Park explains that "both the concept and the name "Freedom Park" found overwhelming support across different stakeholder groups. A handful of Afrikaans speaking respondents felt the word "freedom" aroused unpalatable inter-race conflicts, fighting and so forth". It was summarily suggested that the word "Peace Park" be a more suitable name for the proposed venture (undated: 4). This led to a recommendation being made in the conclusion of the summary that "given slight concerns were raised about possible misperceptions or misinterpretation of the "Freedom" part of the name, we recommend that this issue be reviewed through consultative channels involving people in higher political positions" (undated: 11).

In practice, Freedom Park seems to have further amplified this apparent contradiction. One well publicized example of the exclusion of the South African Defence Force (SADF) soldiers' names from the Wall of Names. In 2006 when the Wall element had been established, the Freedom Park requested that names be submitted for those who died in one of the eight conflicts that shaped the South African nation, from pre-colonial wars, to the liberation struggle. Interpreting the call in light of the Park's founding value, reconciliation and nation building, groups representing SADF veterans involved in South Africa's border conflicts during the late 1970's and 80's summarily advanced a list of names for commemoration. Freedom Park rejected the names on the grounds that the "SADF symbolises oppression, represented military invasions and occupations of the townships" and that these soldiers did not fight for a just cause.[5] This drew vehement protest on the part of civil organisations such as Solidarity and Afriforum and threw Freedom Park firmly in the media spotlight (see Baines, 2008; 2009a; 2009b). The names of these soldiers were eventually captured for the Freedom Park data base but were not included on the Wall. In protest, a small memorial was erected in their honour by Steve Hofmeyer, singer, former SADF soldier and activist. Significantly, debate has now also been initiated around whether or not to commemorate the names of Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) members "who died during the conflict during the 1990 – 1994 period leading up to South Africa's first democratic elections" on the Wall (Freedom Park Media Release 12 and 14 April 2011).

Officials at Freedom Park are either unaware of the contradiction or are unwilling to address it. This is evident in an encounter I had with researchers in the Freedom Park Heritage and Knowledge Department while on fieldwork there. On this occasion, I presented a paper with preliminary findings about the staff's perception of authenticity and the premises upon which the legitimacy of the Park. That discussion revolved around the controversies Freedom Park had attracted regarding the SADF Wall of Names issue, questions about the spirituality at the Park, the use of Indigenous Knowledge Systems

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[5] Julius Ledwaba, Freedom Park, Heritage and Knowledge Department Seminar Notes, 25 October 2010 – Presenter, Duane Jethro: Talking about the real thing: exploring the significance of authenticity at Freedom Park.

(IKS) and experts in the field of Indigenous Knowledge. My work was not well received. At the outset, it was argued that my paper ignores the shift in ideological point of view that came with the change in political dispensation post-1994, which ushered in a new set of values focussed on the promotion of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, the fostering and promotion of reconciliation and nation-building, the breaking of colonial mindsets, and finally, the celebration of the positive, unifying values of the democratic dispensation. When the floor opened for questions, one of the first comments that came from the audience "You are really brave to present something like this here. Really, I have to applaud your courage. It takes guts to say these kinds of things to people's faces."

As the session progressed questions were raised about my flawed methodology, my negative perspective on IKS and my criticism of the IKS experts such as Sanusi Credo Mutwa. The overall consensus being that I should have been more balanced in my view of Freedom Park. It was clear that employees were upset because they had perceived my presentation as an attempt to undermine the truth of their work. This is understandable since the work ethos at Freedom Park is strongly informed by the values of emancipating the African voice and the revelation and exposure of previously marginalized histories. At Freedom Park heritage practise is not about discipline, as Ramzie Abrahams, Head of the Heritage and Knowledge Department pointed out to me. Rather, it also appeared to inform the manner in which one conducted one's work (Ramzie Abrahams interview 12 October 2010). Once it was made clear that my argument flawed, the chair rounded off the seminar by pointing out the Park's position on authenticity. If authenticity may described as a "validation process of how to legitimise [] knowledge", when it comes to Freedom Park, "we try to redress the wrongs of the past. We validate [and therefore legitimate our work] through redress".[6] Mr Abraham's comment appear to be of a similar ilk to those of Mrs Nomsa Mtsweni, former MEC for Culture, Sport and Recreation for Mpumalanga Province, when responding to the question about the renaming of the town of Witbank to Emalahleni: "the process of name changes is about rewriting our history and preserving our heritage … it is about reclaiming and restoring our identity" (The

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[6] Ibid.

Star, 2005: as cited in Labuschagne, 2010: 113). On the surface these comments reference Bruner's notion of the authentic as that which is duly authorized, since these authorities invoked the power of the state as the legitimate voice of the nation. At the same time, they further allude to a moral impulse as justification for practices of ameliorating lost, marginalised or forgotten histories on the part of a silent majority.

- *Authenticity as Historical Essence vs Authenticity as Cultural Appropriation*

For Labuschagne, the physical location of the Freedom Park monument on Salvokop Hill was also problematic. This was because when choosing a site for a monument of this nature, the location would have to have some kind of historical significance in and of itself that had been created through human cultural memory work which imbued that location with meaning and value. This would entail having to situate the venture in a "specific nexus to an area which could spiritually and symbolically enhance its underpinning values". In that sense the ground upon which the Park was located should have had a "strong existing historical, cultural, anthropological or religious link that was *not invented or artificially imposed on the area*" (116/7 original emphasis). This was not the case with Salvokop argued Labuschagne since it was not "a heritage area and has no physical, symbolic, spiritual or sacred nexus with the past", and neither has the area "been known under a different [vernacular name]" prior to its present name Salvokop. That would suggest that "the original decision to place Freedom Park on Salvokop bypassed symbolic and heritage status [that could have been afforded by another site] because political priorities were regarded as more important than spiritual and symbolic values" (117). Here it appeared that Labuschagne seemed to referred to Bruner's notion of the authentic as the original, as in original essence, that the landscape had to have borne traces of the past that were clearly evident, and marked it out as significant for commemorative purposes.

While the site may not necessarily have had a real historical link to the past it was appropriated using African traditional beliefs and rituals. As the former CEO, Dr Mongane Wally explained to Radio Talk Show host Jenny Crys-Williams regarding one of his first visits to the Salvokop site with the late General and traditional healer, Andrew

Masondo. As Mr Serote put it, Mr Masondo "was the first person to have went up that mountain we know as Salvokop and revealed what I am talking about … the old knowledge". As the CEO explained, "he stood there and called the names of Generals and Dikgosi from different language groups, across colour lines, asking them to preside and reside on the mountain so that we can be guided as to what we have to do now". The purpose of this invocation of spirits was driven by the call that "we are going to build this memorial and monument … we would like to find a manner for it to contribute to peace in our country, to an understanding of freedom, to an understanding of responsibility to being able to put closure to the past". The CEO declared that he was not aware that Dr Masondo was going to embark on these prayers of intercession, but had asked him to accompany him to the site because of his experience in the liberation movement, and that he "had deep knowledge of South Africa". Subsequently, Mr Serote declared, "The manner in which he interceded gave me allot of ideas about how I was going to approach the building of this very important structure in our country". These initial prayers of intercession were followed up in the lead up to the construction of the Park by a series of Cleansing and Healing and Return of the Spirits rituals that were performed over a period of 2 years in various locations across the 9 Provinces of South Africa, countries in the Southern African region, across the continent and the world, "bringing back the spirits of all the fighters who had laid down their lives for the freedom of South Africa" to Freedom Park (Talk Radio 702 interview 28 April, 2011).

In this case, Mr Serote affirmed that while the hill may not have had real historical links to heritage or history, or at least links that have not as yet been laid bare, the hill could be imbued with historical significance through the practise of African traditional beliefs and customs in the present. In this sense, authenticity referred to the practise of cultural appropriation that functioned as a means of embellishing space and material culture with enduring, historical meaning.

- *Authentic Visual Aesthetics vs Authenticity as Symbolic Verisimilitude*

One of the main stops on many Freedom Park tours is a visit to the highest point of the Salvokop Hill. Once at the peak visitors not only get a broad vantage of the Amphitheatre

and the *S'Khumbuto* but also the many historical sites that surround Freedom Park. Usually, tour guides will start their narrative about the history of the region by pointing out the different Koppies or Hills that surround the Park, mentioning Klapper Kop, Schanskop and Monument Hill, and if one is on a tour with the right guide, reference is also made to 'Jacob' who is especially adept at narrating the history of the hills. The other sites pointed out include the Union Buildings, the Reserve Bank, and Loftus Versveld Rugby stadium. This was not the only occasion that the guides talked-up the spatial location of the Park. When at the African Olive Tree, the first feature to have been installed at the Park in 2002, guides will usually point to the Voortrekker Monument and the Union Buildings on either side of the Freedom Park and say, 'no building is allowed to be built to obstruct the view between the Union Buildings and Freedom Park since it is said that when the president deliberates upon important matters of state he is able to view where the country has come from in the past'. The purpose of taking tourists to these points is therefore to locate the Freedom Park in time and space. Situating the Freedom Part amongst these well established historical buildings not only amplified the auspicious aura of the Park but also helped affirm the state's practical application of the spirit of reconciliation regarding colonial and apartheid era heritage sites through a practise that I have referred to as meaningful complimentarity.

The spatial positioning of Freedom Park has been a subject of criticism however. Labuschagne (2010) and others (see Janse van Rensburg, 2009; Mare, 2007) have noted the prominent spatial location of Freedom Park in Pretoria's heritage landscape. For Labuschagne, the situation of the Park at this point represents "a deliberate action to counterbalance the surrounding monuments and forts and to share the historical entrance to [Pretoria]". Furthermore, he highlights the prevalence of the practice throughout South Africa, saying that this "dual approach to correcting imbalances by placing the counter-interpretations of monuments within the spatial and visual space of existing monuments has been duplicated by similar initiatives in South Africa". The problem with this approach in the author's opinion was that as a visual practise it demonstrates that "reconciliation and nation building imagination is lacking, because the meaning and values that the monuments reiterate are *again* a matter of "our and their" history, this

time visually eternalised and embodied in two monuments" (119 original emphasis). In that sense, he argues that we cannot see Freedom Park as a symbolic centre-point within the broader heritage landscape of Pretoria. Instead, the positioning of the Park within the "spatial axis line between the Voortrekker Monument and the Union Buildings, would seem to have a specific political intent". Translating this political intent into visual language, the spatial location of Freedom Park could therefore be said to represent "a visual amputation of the historic link between the cultural dimension (Voortrekker Monument) and Afrikaner control of political power, politically manifested by its supporters occupying the offices at the Union Buildings" (119). The practice of locating post-apartheid memorials in the vicinity of colonial and apartheid era memorials was therefore not representative of a search for meaningful complementarity in the heritage landscape. Rather it referenced a "dual confronting approach" that served to further assert difference, division and marginalization in the post-apartheid present (Labuschagne, 2010: 119).

It was not only the spatial and physical location of the Freedom Park that appeared to be problematic but also the visual codes in which the Park was materially manifest that were viewed as being somehow dubious. As Sabine Marschall (2010) has pointed out, despite Park official's bold "affirmation of African traditions and value systems and the frequent references to a character firmly rooted in the local, the conceptualisation and design of Freedom Park is of course also strongly influenced by a concern for international recognition and competitiveness within the global arena of public memorialisation" (228). Looking at the material product of a design process that was steered by a local architectural firm, Mashabane Rose Associates, and through consultative meetings with what Freedom Park refers to as 'organic and conventional intellectuals' with special knowledge about African Traditional beliefs and customs, Marschall concludes that "the sources for almost all of Freedom Park's components are quite clearly Euro-Centric or specifically American" (228). Here the author cites the examples of the Wall of Names concept, the eternal flame, the organic appearance of the buildings, and "the assembly of ascending steel poles at the Sikhumbuto" as examples of common tropes in international, or rather Western heritage commemorative practise (2010: 229). This is undeniable.

But neither did Freedom Park officials always deny that many of the elements had similarities with commemorative features appearing elsewhere in the World. When asked about the uniqueness of Freedom Park's architectural features Mr Ramzie Abrahams, declared that he was aware that the Wall of Names concept for example was not unique to the Park, and referenced a number of examples including the Vietnam Memorial. The difference between these and other concepts was that at the Freedom Park's Wall of Names concept had original South African inspiration. As he explained, following the unveiling of the *Isivivane* element, commemorating all those who died in South Africa's struggles for Freedom and humanity, former president Thabo Mbeki approached Mr Wally Serote and asked him "what must I tell people when they ask me, who are the people that are actually being commemorated at this site". And so a Wall was required to document the names of those who had died in South Africa's struggles for freedom and humanity (Ramzie Abrahams interview, 12 October, 2010).

The visual repertoire that Freedom Park has been constructed in may not be uniquely South African or even African for that matter, but as narrated by the tour-guides, the Park is the genuine article. Up until December of 2010, Freedom Park tours were conducted exclusively with the assistance of tour guides. Freedom Park is a beautiful site but as was made clear by the Guest Relations officer and others, tours were not meant to be a tranquil, refreshing engagement with African aesthetic beauty, but rather served to highlight the sacrifices and struggles that the Park represents (Tesh Tsivase interview 6 October, 2010). Indeed, as the tour guides make plain in their introduction, "it is hoped that a visit to the Freedom Park is a liberating, spiritually cleansing and inspirational experience". What is of the essence here is that the tour guides almost literally spoke the Park into life. This narrative component was essential since the symbolic significance of many of the Park's features would ordinarily wash over the heads of tourists. For example, tour guides explain that the "ascending steel poles" that surround the outer perimeter of the Park, and which form its most striking visual marker, are known as Reeds. This references the reeds from the 'African Story of Creation' where humans either emerged from the reeds or from a hole in the ground through a process representing the sprouting of reeds. As deployed at the Park, they are meant to symbolise

the rebirth of the nation. The reeds are tipped with lights, which add to the visual appeal of the Park at night. The guides sometimes also embellished the lights with symbolic significance saying that they were indicators of incendiary devices such as candles used in religious rituals of many different faiths.

This symbolism certainly had purchase with tourists. For example, the Swiss ambassador to South Africa declared on an unofficial, private tour: "I bring all my guests here. There is allot of symbolism … [the Freedom Park] explains allot about South Africa" (Tour 17 October, 2010). On another occasion after a particularly lively tour with a group of young, enthusiastic visitors, a guest thankfully remarked to the tour-guide that he was "preaching Freedom". Another member of that party went on to affirm the guest's statement saying that initially they wanted to go on a self-guided tour, but they were very glad for the guide's assistance as they had come to realise that the tour would not have made sense since "in Africa everything is explained through symbolism" (Freedom Park Tour 24 October 2010). Visitors further affirmed their appreciation of the Park's symbolic resonances with comments in the guest book, which included statements such as "very informative rich history of Africa and interaction with the world"; "amazing and captive history"; "Freedom Park is an outstanding work of the Historical Imagination"; "An excellent site. It's all about your mind. Peace!"; "So beautiful. Symbolic. I want to come back in the future"; "So beautiful and Powerful. Full of Meaning"; "It is wonderful and spiritual (Ubuntu is Here!)" (Guestbook Comments, July, August, September 2010). Visitor comments therefore indicated that with the help of the tour narrative, Freedom Park's architecture seemed to cue an alternate authenticating repertoire, one that posited symbolic verisimilitude as a marker of authenticity which was separate from authenticity as original architectural distinctiveness.

Conclusion

Freedom Park claims to display the authorized image of South Africa's heritage and function as the legitimate narrator of the nation's history, yet this claim making process has taken place in a context where officials steering the project have had to deny that it was a fabrication. In this paper, I have discussed 3 types of criticism that have been

lodged against the Freedom Park project, and in doing so I have tried to elaborate upon the competing concepts of authenticity that they seemed to evoke. In this way, I have tried to show that merely embarking on a historicist or constructivist critique of the venture in an effort to reveal the factual flaws in the Freedom Park narrative is academically unproductive. Underlying this mode of criticism is a failure to recognise the unstable tropes of meaning some of the major heritage sites against which Freedom Park is often compared are founded upon. Both the Union Buildings and the Voortrekker Monument, for example, were cast in aesthetic traditions that sought to establish them in a lineage that was either Greco-Roman, European or African in origin. These monuments also served to inscribe the landscape with new histories, effectively erasing the past in the process of establishing a new socio-political order. At heart, we have to ask what notions of authenticity are scholars and public intellectuals expressing when they embark on critique of Freedom Park. That is not to defend Freedom Park. There are many problems with the project which need serious attention, yet at the same time some due needs to be paid to the cultural memory work being practiced there. Despite its apparently natural allure for controversy, Freedom Park has attracted attention because it has been erected at a time when South African history and heritage has been thrown into flux. The South African media is saturated with discussion about monuments being taken down, the relevance of liberation era songs and political opposition parties appropriating the images and ethos of ANC struggle heroes. This suggests that the nation is still working out who it is and where it comes from. With all its flaws, Freedom Park is a part of that process. By looking at the competing notions of authenticity that have emerged from the Freedom Park debate, I have therefore tried to assess the stakes invested in the production, dissemination and consumption of the authenticating narratives that have served to affirm some aspects of South African history and heritage and downplay others. Overall, I have tried to analyse how cultural heritage narratives more generally have been designed and portrayed as authentic under circumstances of close public scrutiny.

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