‘Place of Light’: what cultural villages can tell us about ‘culture’, ‘ethnicity’ and tourism in post-apartheid South Africa

by

Anna Tinker, TNKANN001

A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

Master of Philosophy in African Studies

Faculty of the Humanities

University of Cape Town

2010

COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my gratitude to the following people:

- My supervisor, Professor Nick Shepherd for his guidance and support
- Professor Brenda Cooper for her comments and her support
- Kate Piscator for her advice, her editing and her encouragement
- Mr. Craig Hill, the General Manager of Lesedi Cultural Village for his support and communication
- Mr. Nkosana Mondi, Cultural Manager at Lesedi Cultural Village, for his time and his knowledge
- Professor Michael Parkinson, for his comments, his editing and his support
- The Isle of Man Government, for their financial support
- The staff at Lesedi Cultural Village, Shakaland and Village People

Abstract

The ‘new’ South Africa is abuzz with keywords. There is much talk within academic discourse and beyond of ‘ethnicity’, ‘culture’ and the ‘rainbow nation’ among others. They are a national obsession at this crucial time when South Africa is still struggling to negotiate its identity. The usage of these words is rapidly evolving and today they their use extends far past their original meanings. However, their use has persisted and has done so largely unchallenged. This has meant that the words are now highly problematic.

In order to critically examine these concepts, I use the space of the cultural village as an analytical tool. Cultural villages have faced criticism in recent years – accusations that they ‘stage’ their ‘authenticity’, and freeze cultures in order to package them for international consumption. While this paper does devote space to these criticisms, it focuses its attention on ‘what cultural villages can tell us about the nature of post-apartheid South Africa’, specifically about the keywords, ‘culture’ and ‘ethnicity’.

Research is based at Lesedi Cultural Village in the North West Province. I use the landscape of the surrounding area and the signs and symbols in the village itself as entry points to map and frame my discussions. The Cradle of Humankind where Lesedi is situated is saturated with an evolutionary narrative that visitors to Lesedi will bring with them to the site. Evolutionary notions of the ‘primitive’ have been re-appropriated by the tourist industry to draw visitors back ‘home’ to Africa, while South Africa owes much of its difficult history to the same evolutionary narratives.

Through ethnographic fieldwork, the space of the cultural village is de-constructed to see what it can tell us about ‘culture’ and ‘ethnicity’ in the country beyond its fences. I interrogate the concept of ‘culture’, by closely analyzing the meaning of a proverb on Lesedi’s shebeen wall which reads, *‘a man without culture is like a zebra without stripes’*. It transpires that the humble zebra can tell us a great deal about the nature of ‘culture’ in South Africa and the current debates which surround the use of the word.

Lesedi's physical layout tells us about the nature of 'ethnicity' as it is understood in contemporary South Africa. The distinct, bounded ethnic villages in Lesedi are separated by long, empty pathways, providing a simplified, but tangible model of South African society and the perceived importance of 'belonging' to one of South Africa's ethnicities. Lesedi's layout is compared to that of another cultural village, based at Sun City. At Sun City, eight different huts stand together in an arc – a tangible model of the 'rainbow nation' metaphor?

Far from being inconsequential 'touristy' sites that can only offer insight into such things as 'the tourist gaze' and 'authenticity', I argue that when one looks in the right places, research at cultural villages can shed light on some much bigger questions being asked about South Africa's post-apartheid identity.

‘Place of Light’: what cultural villages can tell us about ‘culture’, ‘ethnicity’ and tourism in post-apartheid South Africa

Introduction

It’s a Thursday morning in April 2007. A British tourist is slowing to stop at an intersection near Hartebeespoort Dam in the North West Province. She is on her way to a highly recommended pancake place for breakfast. She has only been in South Africa for five days, but already knows that the taxi behind her is going to use the hard shoulder to beat her to the stop sign. As it stops beside her, two young men alight. They are wearing full Zulu costumes and wave at her as she pulls away. “Huh”, she thinks to herself. “It’s pretty neat that people in South Africa can still wear their traditional clothes to work.”

I was that naive tourist and I had just unknowingly had my first encounter with Lesedi Cultural Village, which was down the road from that particular intersection. Those men would have been cast members. I didn’t know it at the time, but exactly a year later I would be living in South Africa and commencing a research project based at that very site.

Today, in 2010 the ‘new’ South Africa is abuzz with keywords, such as ‘ethnicity’ and ‘culture’. The country has been experiencing change and uncertainty and is still struggling to find and negotiate its post-apartheid identity. South Africa has a new president and in a few months from the time of writing, will be hosting the 2010 soccer World Cup. This sporting event is expected to draw thousands of new tourists to South Africa, and the tourism industry is preparing for the influx. In the coming months, this industry will have the power to represent South Africa to the world on a much grander scale than it has done in the past.

This combination of factors mean that it is an exciting time to research anything associated with ‘culture’ in South Africa. Karen Barber explains that, ‘few areas of inquiry within African studies could attract more interest, for cultural change is obviously central to the creation of the new South Africa’

(Barber, 177: 2001). Everyone seems to be talking about these keywords, which include (but are not limited to): ‘culture’ and ‘ethnicity’, but also ‘tribe’ and ‘identity’. The ubiquitous ‘rainbow nation’ metaphor, coined by Desmond Tutu upon the fall of apartheid, is constantly referred to in public discussions of contemporary South Africa. The ‘rainbow nation’ metaphor and these keywords are a national obsession. It may be said that they are becoming trite through overuse. And yet, little consideration is given to their tremendous complexity.

The concepts of ‘ethnicity’ and ‘culture’ are highly problematic. The words have evolved from their original uses and now carry with them a multiplicity of meanings and connotations. The ‘rainbow nation’ too, has shifted in its use in the short time since it appeared. Under the pretext of rainbow nationalism, South Africans were meant to be equals, all free to collectively identify themselves as ‘South Africans’, and as ‘one nation’.

The feverish rush to celebrate this new, ‘free’ South Africa resulted in the creation of a new tourism in the country – one where the world could come to experience not only its famous wildlife, but also South Africa’s many cultures. Tourist attractions were built that celebrated the diversity and uniqueness to be found in the country with eleven official languages. Witness the birth then, of the cultural village in South Africa.

The cultural village format is found all over the country. The format encompasses both the small-scale community projects aimed at giving passers-by an insight into life in rural South Africa, as well as the larger, mass-marketed cultural theme parks designed to give the tourist a ‘one-stop’ opportunity to experience a number of South Africa’s cultures at one tightly packaged site.

It is this second type of cultural village, ‘the cultural theme park’, where I have based my research. The largest of these attractions, Lesedi Cultural Village in the North West Province (my primary research site) and Shakaland in rural KwaZulu-Natal, were created towards the end of apartheid. The use of the

problematic keywords I mentioned earlier, are all-pervading at these sites. These tourist attractions have seen very little modification in their presentation since their inception nearly two decades ago. They are built upon the foundations of these keywords; 'culture', 'tribe', 'ethnicity' and the concept of the 'rainbow nation'. A complicated predicament now exists because though the concepts have been evolving, the cultural village format has not. Not only do the concepts evolve, but the cultures and ethnicities they define are in a constant transitional state as well – another fact that cultural villages do not allow for in their fixed presentation. Given these observations we must ask, what can visitors expect to find at a cultural village?

While carrying out research at Lesedi Cultural Village, it was important to consider the surrounding area. Lesedi lies within the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage site. It is while studying this area that I first unearthed the irony of South Africa's 'new' tourism agenda. Throughout the 'Cradle', there exists a strong evolutionary narrative. Visitors are informed that their origins are here in South Africa and are welcomed 'home'. Interesting that evolutionary discourse has been exhumed and re-appropriated in order to draw visitors to the country, given its historical applications in South Africa when it was once used to justify colonial practice and even apartheid. Because Lesedi lies within this site, it too contains this narrative. Lesedi's manager tells me that Lesedi and the Cradle tell 'one story'. I argue in my second chapter that evolutionary discourse may supplement any ideas that the tourist may hold about African cultures being 'primitive'.

Another irony falls from the 'rainbow nation' metaphor. I mentioned that it was intended to signify a united South Africa. Instead, the 'freedom' it implies, is often understood as a freedom to be Zulu or to be Xhosa or Batswana, not to be 'South African'. It was not predicted that under the 'rainbow nation', South Africans would revert back to associating primarily with tribes. The rainbow metaphor has been re-imagined and this is discussed at length in my fourth chapter.

While on the subject of ‘tribes’, I mention in chapter four that this word is no longer considered a ‘keyword’ in South Africa. ‘Tribe’ has gained too many negative connotations and its use is often considered to be politically incorrect. Paradoxically, cultural villages thrive on the word ‘tribe’, which appears in promotional material and in the presentation itself. Witz, Rassool and Minkley (2000) explain that, ‘… the Irony of South Africa’s modernity is that the country is still mapped and memorialized for international and domestic tourists as a sequence of routes from tribe to tribe…’ (Witz, Rassool & Minkley, 2000: 10).

Following from this, I argue that the physical layout of Lesedi is reminiscent of the geographical divisions created within South Africa under apartheid. The five ‘ethnicities’ portrayed at Lesedi are separated by long pathways and fences around each village. In chapter four, I compare this format with that found at Sun City’s cultural village, which is presented in the shape of an arc – and how it evokes (intentional or not) the ‘rainbow nation’.

By studying the paradoxes and the contradictory ideas found at cultural villages like Lesedi, it becomes possible to shed light on the processes at work behind the complex concept of lived identity in contemporary South Africa. The tourism industry cannot be dismissed when exploring these ideas. I argue that tourism has a crucial role to play in constructing ‘ethnicity’ and ‘culture’. It is found that ethnicity and culture and tourism mutually influence each other and the flow of ideas travels freely in both directions.

There is a significant body of literature in this field that I aim to add to. In my analysis of the cultural village concept, I draw heavily from Edward Bruner’s work on cultural attractions in Kenya. The sites that Bruner worked with were the predecessors to similar tourist attractions in South Africa. Bruner’s theoretical approach to ‘authenticity’ at cultural villages has directly influenced my own. Another of my key sources is Carolyn Hamilton, who has written extensively about Shakaland. Many of her writings come from Shakaland’s formative years while it was being established and was struggling to find its

place in the ‘new’ South Africa. Her observations and insights have been invaluable.

The works of Leslie Witz and Ciraj Rassool have also been instrumental to my understandings of tourism and identity in the ‘new’ South Africa. They have done much work on the ‘power relations’ that exist within South Africa’s international tourism industry, and emphasize that, ‘these power relations begin in the tourist's home country, where the tourist, confident of his country's presumed place in the imagined world of trade and international relations and 'knowing' what to expect, embarks upon his journey’ (Witz & Rassool, 1996: 336). When studying cultural villages it is critical to remember that visitors to the site will carry ideas and imaginings with them which will have a significant bearing on how they interpret their experiences in South Africa. I explore these ideas further in my first two chapters.

Jean and John Comaroff have revolutionized the discourse surrounding ethnicity in South Africa. They have theorized the dynamic processes by which ethnicities evolve. Their ideas about ‘ethnicity as corporation’ have been useful in understanding why, despite encouragement to identify with the ‘nation’, South Africans associate themselves foremost with an ethnicity (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009: 131). This is turn, helps us to understand why the cultural village format is so successful in South Africa, and why the ‘ethnicity’ label is here to stay.

It is my aim to explore the themes in this paper from a unique and original perspective. I use local landscapes and symbols to re-imagine and theorize existing concepts. For example, in my second chapter I draw a line across the map between Johannesburg and Sun City to explain how evolutionary ideas are at work in the ‘new’ South African tourism narrative. I name this tourism narrative in the North West Province, a ‘world *from* one country’. In my third chapter I interrogate the concept of ‘culture’ using the zebra as an analytical tool, and in my fourth chapter, I use the physical topography of Lesedi as a model to explain how ethnicity is lived in South Africa.

Why Lesedi?

There are many reasons why I chose Lesedi Cultural Village as the focal point for my research. First, from a theoretical perspective Lesedi provided me with a physical embodiment of all of the key themes that I wanted to study in the 'new' South Africa: 'identity', 'culture', 'ethnicity', 'tourism' and of course, the 'rainbow nation'. As I discovered on my first visit to Lesedi, the site is heaving with these concepts. The fences can barely contain them.

Secondly, Lesedi also proved to be a controversial space. Before my first trip to the village, I questioned local friends and acquaintances who had previously visited Lesedi. While some found it to be entertaining and educational, others considered it unethical, two even calling Lesedi a 'human zoo'. Many people had very strong opinions about Lesedi, whether positive or negative. I was enticed by these varying reactions and began to consider the controversial cultural village format in South Africa, to be an irresistible research subject. As a cultural tourist attraction, Lesedi is the largest 'and most popular' cultural village in South Africa (see Harrison, 2005: 114). Witz, Rassool and Minkley (2001) refer to Lesedi as the 'crowning achievement of South Africa's 'new tourism'' (Witz, Rassool & Minkley, 2001: 279). It therefore became the logical choice to concentrate my studies on this particular site.

To base my work at Lesedi made sense from a practical perspective also. There are a multitude of tourist attractions within an hour's drive of Lesedi which were relevant to my research. Sites such as the Maropeng Interpretation Centre, the Wits Origins Centre and the Sterkfontein Caves were easily accessible and visits to them greatly enhanced and supported my research. Of course, Lesedi's location within the Cradle of Humankind is critical, and I ask how this particular location influences visitors to Lesedi, given the evolutionary narrative that has been inscribed into the landscape there.

Finally, Lesedi was also a convenient as a research site because of its close proximity to Johannesburg's West Rand, where I was living when my research commenced in April 2008.

Methodology

Throughout my four chapters, I use personal journal entries to introduce themes and ideas. These entries were recorded during my first visit to Lesedi, on May 3, 2008. I returned to Lesedi seven more times over the course of my research. In 2008 I visited on June 3, July 15 and September 22 and in 2009 I visited Lesedi on January 17, March 31 and December 19. My final trip to Lesedi came on January 13, 2010.

I also carried out comparative research at Shakaland in KwaZulu-Natal and at Village People at Sun City. I visited Shakaland on February 6 and April 7, 2009. Visits to Sun City came on January 21, 2009 and in 2010 on January 3, January 17 and January 18. Other sites visited for research purposes include the Wits Origins Centre, the Apartheid Museum, Sterkfontein Caves, Maropeng and a Soweto 'township tour'. In addition to site visits, I conducted extensive library-based research to supplement my field observations, making use of libraries at UCT, Stellenbosch and when in Johannesburg, at Wits University and Sandton City.

Lesedi and Shakaland are both known for their overnight programmes (which include accommodation in the village) which complement their day programmes. Unfortunately, due to cost restrictions I was unable to participate in any overnight programmes Therefore, the work in this paper is based largely on the 'lunch experiences' offered at Lesedi and Shakaland. However, the vast majority of visitors to these sites only experience the day programmes and therefore I feel my research is still highly relevant.

On all visits to the three sites, I was a paying guest and did not make my status as a researcher known to the establishment. The exception to this was my March 31, 2009 visit to Lesedi when I met with the General Manager,

Craig Hill and was given a two-hour ‘backstage’ tour of the village (before the day’s production was to start) and an interview with the Cultural Manager, Mr. Nkosana Mondi.

I was alone on all visits but two. On one I brought two guests from Ireland and on another I brought an American friend, curious to see their reaction. Local friends often declined my invitations to come to Lesedi, citing the high costs. Those who had been in the past could not justify a second visit. Two friends refused to visit Lesedi because they believed it to be an unethical ‘human zoo’. It then came as no surprise that fellow visitors at Lesedi were nearly always foreign.

On every site visit, I took detailed notes. On many occasions this drew unwanted attention and suspicion. At Shakaland, my guide was clearly agitated with my constant note-taking. “*You don’t have to take notes! We’re giving you a paper that explains everything!”* Other visitors also commented on my notes. “*You’re taking a lot of notes there*.” What neither the irate guide, nor the tourists knew, was that I was rarely recording the content of the production, but was focused largely on the actions and re-actions of the guide and the visitors. I was looking for consistencies, patterns, themes and possible scripted elements of the production.

When I did not want to encounter curious or hostile reactions to my note taking, I would take photos instead. Then, using the photos as mnemonic devices, I would sit in the parking lot after the show and compile my notes. I spent a great deal of time in parking lots. Lesedi’s was always full of cattle, which made the tedious act of note-taking much more enjoyable.

In addition to note-taking and observation, I conducted informal interviews with fellow guests to gauge their response to the production. To some, I made myself known as a researcher at a South African university. To others, I feigned ignorance and took on the role of a British tourist. These informal interviews would be valuable, providing me with honest comments and opinions of the sites. It must be mentioned that I encountered very little

negative reaction to cultural villages during these interviews. There seemed to be a general consensus among the guests that I questioned, that the display was inauthentic but had educational value and was 'good fun'.

About Lesedi

Lesedi Cultural Village lies approximately forty kilometres to the West of Johannesburg and Pretoria, within the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site and close to Johannesburg's Lanseria Airport. The area surrounding the village is still largely rural but is developing quickly, as will be discussed in my first chapter.

The site was established in August 1995 and is currently owned by Tourvest. Tourvest is the 'largest, most empowered tourism group in South Africa' (see Tourvest, 2009). In addition to operating Lesedi, it holds many other tourist attractions and gift shops in South Africa, including 'Out of Africa' , 'Indaba Gifts', 'Drifters' and 'Forex financial services'. Tourvest also owns Shakaland, and as a result, Lesedi and Shakaland are often referred to as 'sister attractions'. In my fourth chapter I examine the powerful role that Tourvest has in influencing what visitors to South Africa want to see, and what they then end up consuming. In 2008 when my research was beginning, controlling interest in Tourvest was acquired by Guma Tourism Holdings, a BEE company. Lesedi now asserts its BEE status on its website (see www.lesedi.com).

While still owned by Tourvest, Lesedi's overnight accommodation was formerly operated by Protea Hotels, but Protea ceased operating in the village in 2006. Accommodation at Lesedi is now controlled by Tourvest. However, at Shakaland Protea Hotels is still active and is responsible for Shakaland's overnight accommodation packages.

At both Lesedi and Shakaland, Kingsley Holgate's name features prominently in promotional material. It is said that the popular South African explorer

helped to transform Shakaland from a film set to a tourist attraction and then later helped with the establishment of Lesedi.

At Lesedi, day-visitors partake in a two-hour ‘cultural experience’, which begins with an introductory video. Following this, visitors accompany a guide through five separate villages, where they witness people ‘living’ supposedly in accordance with their cultures. The rural idyll permeates each of Lesedi’s five separate villages. The experience ends with ‘tribal dancing’.

The Lesedi experience is meticulously mapped out and it rarely deviates from its formula. By my final trip to Lesedi I was exceedingly familiar with the script and the routine. I would find it tremendously exciting on one trip when our group visited the Xhosa village *before* the Sotho one. I also delighted in the surprise I had on one visit when a large group of dancers came into the auditorium and started an energetic dance routine during the wildlife scenes on the introductory video.

What did change over the course of my research was the quality of the performance. I recall my first two visits as being rather shambolic. The cast was for the most part sullen, even hostile at times. Scowls directed at visitors were not uncommon. The dance show was uncoordinated and headpieces and shoes flew into the audience or fell onto the dance floor where they were tripped over. The dancers were exhausted and unhappy and made no effort to conceal these facts. However, with each following visit the production improved. The cast was friendlier and interactive and the quality of the dancing neared perfection. I mentioned my observations to Lesedi’s cultural manager, who credited the improvements to the new BEE management.

The Coming Chapters

On my first visit to Lesedi, it became apparent that the site was highly codified and ritualized. There were signposts at various points during the village tour, which not only interpreted the presentation at Lesedi, but guided my research questions. These signs frame many of the key debates surrounding cultural

villages and thus proved themselves to be invaluable analytical tools. And so, the entry point to each of my four chapters is marked by one (or more) of these signs, of which photos are provided.

Chapter one begins with a sign that I encountered on the R512 while driving towards Lesedi. It is a large wooden sign in the shape of a Zulu warrior, which reads, 'Lesedi Cultural Village Lodge, 3 KM' (see figure 1). This sign made me contemplate the area that surrounds Lesedi. I compare this area to the ones surrounding Shakaland and Sun City. What emerges from the experience of driving to these three cultural villages, is that the route taken primes the visitor to expect something specific to come at the 'end of the road'.

This first chapter is entitled 'Product Placement', because it deals not only with the idea that cultural tourism functions as a 'product', but also with the ways in which the 'product' is placed, both on the physical landscape and in the 'market'. I go on to describe what a cultural village is, and reveal my three sites of study as 'cultural theme parks'. As cultural 'theme parks', I note that they are given theme park prices, excluding the majority of South Africans. I ask whom these attractions are meant to serve, given the irony that each site tasks itself with the responsibility of teaching South Africans about their own culture, yet prices their display to the income level of a wealthy, international clientele.

My second chapter, entitled 'Welcome to Lesedi: Cradle of Living African Culture', begins with three signs, all encountered in the vicinity of Lesedi's entrance. I borrow my title from the first. There are many keywords to be found in these signs which describe Lesedi as being within the 'Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site', and as a 'place of light'. I take the key terms drawn from these signs, and embark on a journey through the Cradle of Humankind, finding meaning in its relationship with Lesedi. I then dissect the multiple meanings that can be extracted from 'place of light', and finally ask whether people '*really live'* at Lesedi.

The first two chapters set the scene for the debates and discussions that follow in the third and fourth chapters, where I question what cultural villages can teach us about the nature of culture and ethnicity in contemporary South Africa. Chapter three is entitled, 'Is a Man Without Culture like a Zebra Without Stripes?: Interrogating the concept of culture'. The title is borrowed from a proverb on a sign displayed at Lesedi's shebeen and at Shakaland's bar. 'Culture' is a word which is currently under debate in academic circles. Some commentators are even calling for its abolition. In this chapter, I analyze the word 'culture', explaining why its use is so problematic, and questioning its relentless deployment across the South African tourism narrative. Throughout the chapter, I use the zebra's characteristics as an analytical tool.

The fourth chapter is called, 'Ethnicity at Lesedi and Beyond' and is introduced with another of Lesedi's signs. It is a directional signpost found on the pathway which points left to 'Xhosa' and right to 'Sotho'. I use this sign to open a discussion about ethnicity in South Africa. I argue that the long walkways and bounded villages at Lesedi act as tangible model of the separations between ethnicities in the country.

'Lesedi' means 'place of light' in Sotho. In this paper, Lesedi itself becomes an analytical tool. I use Lesedi as a light, like a torch, using it to illuminate cultural processes at work in South Africa. What can be learned about 'ethnicity' and 'culture' in post-apartheid South Africa, by shining the light on cultural villages?

Chapter 1: 'Product Placement'

On Location

I'm driving through vicious rain on the R512 away from Lanseria Airport and out into a countryside which seems poised to be swallowed up by an expanding Johannesburg metropolis in the coming years. I've already passed giant billboards advertising new golf estates, elegantly themed wedding venues and slick new investment opportunities. But before long, I'm outside an incongruous rural grocery store (unlikely to survive the imminent influx of affluence) with a café which advertises itself as the 'Home of the Chicken Pie' on a bright red Coca-Cola banner. I have just left Gauteng Province and crossed into South Africa's North West Province. It is here I get my first taste of Lesedi. Beyond the store stands a Zulu warrior, complete with spear and shield (see figure 1). Drawn proudly on a wooden board, cut to fit his impressive figure, he informs me that 'Lesedi Cultural Village' along with its accommodation, dining opportunities and conference venues is now just three kilometres away…

He is just another billboard, a reminder that, to survive, what we perceive as 'culture' needs to offer such things as conference venues, dining experiences and elaborate dance shows. It must have something of itself to sell. It must become a product, packaged carefully by the South African tourist industry. This chapter is concerned less with the product itself, the nature of which will be dealt with extensively in coming chapters, but more with how the product is located and what this implies.

Bruner (2005) explains that the tourist experience is 'as much about the accommodations and forms of transport as it is about the destination' (Bruner, 2005: 15). I would like to add a crucial element to Bruner's tourist experience, which he doesn't mention. A Friday morning drive from Durban to Shakaland taught me that the roads taken *en route* have a powerful influence upon one's sense of place and understanding of a destination.

The Drive There: Lesedi and Shakaland

It wasn't long after I left the N2 and turned inland that I began to gasp. Rural Kwa-Zulu Natal was like nothing I'd experienced before. The R66 took me through eighty kilometres of lush, steamy, graded hills, dotted with family kraals and the sort of iconic, round Zulu architecture I'd shamefully only ever seen in their reconstructed form at the cultural villages I study. The land radiated with something I couldn't quite place: the 'real', perhaps? The smells of the farms and the vegetation made it 'postcard Africa' in every sense; what the foreign tourist would have prepared themselves for and longed to experience.

Given the sensory indulgence that overwhelms you on the road there, it's frightfully easy to miss Shakaland altogether. Perhaps it's my North American upbringing that had led me expect the largest cultural village in South Africa (constructed as a major film set in the 1980's) to come at the end of a long trail of large, glossy billboards, or at least ones depicting proud Zulu warriors as is the case with Shakaland's sister attraction, Lesedi. But Shakaland was marked only by a discreet brown arrow, pointing down a long dusty path that would have been best negotiated with the 4x4 that I wasn't driving. After ten bumpy minutes and much debate as to whether I had taken the wrong road and should turn around (or if I *could* turn around given the state of the road),

Shakaland appeared, bringing with it a sense that this place truly comes at the very end of a long journey.

The drive to Shakaland and the drive to Lesedi pull the expectant tourist across two vastly different backdrops. While a similar attraction awaits them at the end of both roads, the scenes that have moved across their vehicle's windows mean they will arrive in very different mindsets. Any approach to Shakaland will take tourists through the sort of terrain I have just described. The visitor having arrived at Shakaland will be spending the afternoon in a space which is essentially a hyperreal microcosm of the 'real' spaces they've spent the past few hours travelling through. Shakaland is thus a cultural village situated in the traditional home of the Zulu.

A drive to Lesedi is another experience altogether. It lies a few kilometres from Hartebeespoort Dam, a rapidly developing country community favoured by former city dwellers disillusioned with the crime levels in Pretoria and Johannesburg. The area has been capitalized upon by the tourist industry too; providing visitors with a 'safe' and 'sanitized' alternative to attractions in the nearby cities. Within a few minutes drive of 'the Dam', one may visit an elephant sanctuary, a cheetah breeding centre, a crocodile farm, colourful markets, hot-air balloon safaris, a cheese farm – I could continue. This area has become the tourist's refuge from Johannesburg, as well as the local's. Whatever route a tourist takes to Lesedi, they will be immersed in a landscape dominated by golf clubs, private game reserves, new security complexes and the ubiquitous 'conference venue'. In other words, one travels to Lesedi Cultural Village through the traditional homeland of the wealthy Johannesburg executive.

These two cultural villages, similar to each other in content and format (and under the same management) are sited within opposing landscapes. As a result, the visitor to each site will develop different expectations prior to arrival. Given Lesedi's location in a tourism oriented area just outside a cosmopolitan centre, the visitor will expect something staged 'for the tourists'. In the next chapter, I will further detail the ways in which Lesedi's position within the

Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site influences a visitor's interpretation of Lesedi.

On the other hand, the driver on the road to Shakaland has not been bombarded by a tourism narrative. Carolyn Hamilton describes how the 'long journey' to the 'remote Nkwalini Valley and its conclusion on dirt roads', acts as a 'certificate of authentication…This is Zuluness in its real setting' (Hamilton, 1992: 8). Thus, one is primed to find something 'real' and 'authentic' at the end of the road (see figure 2), whether they do or not…

Sun City: Legend of the Lost Cultural Village

I am still in the North West province, only this time further north and further west. I've turned off a cleanly tarred road, which has taken me across a hundred or so kilometres of empty, dusty savanna, dotted with impoverished, makeshift roadside settlements. In this deserted place, it feels odd to hand a man in a brightly coloured toll booth R70. But this is no ordinary toll booth and in return, he has given me a handful of 'Sun Bucks'. Through the barrier now, and I'm edging the car slowly forward, unsure of where to go. To the left up in the air is what looks like a monorail. A monorail? Here? And in the distance I can just make out turrets which resemble an ancient Aztec palace. I decide to take the overpass which heads towards the distant palace, drawn by the promise of abundant parking.

I didn't know it at the time and most visitors to Sun City will *never* know it, but beneath that overpass is what I'm looking for. This truly is the 'Lost Village' on the outskirts of the not-so 'Lost City'. For nestled between the Kwena Crocodile Farm and the horse stables, lies 'Village People', Sun City's take on the cultural village format.

We must remember that unlike Lesedi and Shakaland, Sun City's 'Village People' (which opened in January 2004, as Motseng Cultural Village) is never a destination in itself. It comes as an afterthought to visitors at the resort, most of whom were not aware of its existence prior to arrival. Even this most diligent researcher felt obliged to spend a morning at the 'Valley of the Waves' and had high tea at the Palace before making the trek out to the cultural village. Given that each Sun City guest has been absorbing (whether consciously or not), the rather ridiculous 'Lost City' legend (see Martin Hall, 1995) embedded into every polished wall, floor and escalator at the resort, one would expect the on-site cultural village to support the Lost City fantasy and offer a production worthy of Broadway. However, when I managed to find the 'lost' cultural village under that overpass on that bright January afternoon, it was not at all what I had anticipated. In fact, my findings at this third site will have a significant bearing on coming discussions of ethnicity.

I have now introduced the three sites at which my research is based. What follows is an explanation of why these were selected. Lesedi, Shakaland and Village People all refer to themselves as 'cultural villages'. Before progressing further, I must explain what this project is *not* about. It is not about the small community ventures; the 'grass roots cultural villages found within a rural setting where communities share their daily experience with visitors' (Tassiopoulos & Nuntsu, 2005: 95). Such spaces are numerous in South Africa, and are often found in close proximity to the larger cultural 'villages' featured in my study. These small attractions are highly valuable in their potential to inform, but their audiences are minimal, attendance numbers dwarfed by their glossy, heavily marketed neighbours.

This body of work focuses then, on what have been coined 'cultural theme parks'. Lesedi and Shakaland are the largest and most known of these in South Africa. Village People, while smaller, is itself contained within a 'theme park'. I have chosen to research such sites because of their sheer responsibility for representing African culture.

The Product: what is a cultural village?

The drive to Lesedi is making me nervous. This is a place I have avoided, despite living nearby. I'm almost there, but I'm inclined to drive right past it. I know that further down the road there's a great pancake place. I could go there instead, indulge in the tasty familiar. I've decided to write a thesis about cultural villages, but thus far my only experience with them has been seeing two men in Zulu costume at a stop sign not far from here last year, which ignited my curiosity. I don't know what awaits me. Do I really want to spend my morning at a 'human zoo', where people perform for rich tourists? Or do I want my pancakes with cinnamon and sugar or with maple syrup and ice cream?

On many visits to Lesedi, I found that the majority of visitors were encountering the site as part of a tour group. Often these tourists were spending just a day in the area, using it as a transition point between two other destinations, not as one in itself. Speaking to these guests, I often learned that Lesedi was to be their only 'cultural' destination in South Africa. As one visitor explained, Lesedi was a way to "*meet the people, because I don't have the time to go and tour the villages on this trip"*.

South African tour companies know that many visitors to this area 'don't have the time', and as such, Lesedi has become the token cultural destination in the area. It has gained a reputation for being, 'a large complex with a popular following… that features on the major tourist circuit' (Harrison, 2005: 114). Shakaland is also considered to be a vital stop amongst the 'local package of attractions', with visitors often taking leave from cruise ships in Durban, with only a day to explore the land (Allen & Brennan, 2004: 16).

Of course visitors to these sites will experience South African culture with every turn their bus makes. They will see culture by the roadside, in the form of small business and architecture, but they aren't always likely to process these sights as 'culture'. They need a venue for that. This is why the cultural theme park is so important and why I have chosen to interrogate it. In many cases they will provide a touristic site of 'first contact' or even 'only contact' with the cultures of South Africa.

The Cultural Village Formula: what happens there?

Each of these spaces adheres to a common formula, intent on immersing the visitor within a particular 'culture'. First, the visitor undergoes a sort of introduction; at Lesedi and Shakaland, this comes in the form of a video, at Village People this is a short talk. Next, one tours the village, accompanied by a guide who explains various aspects of everyday life. Inevitably, there follows an energetic dance routine, with drums and impossibly high kicks, before the visitor is released from the experience or sent to lunch, where they can recover and enjoy a familiar buffet.

The sites also promise a hands-on experience with stereotyped activities such as spear-throwing/making, beadwork, dance and authentic African cuisine. But in practice these experiences are only available to a select few, but for the average visitor the experience is distinctly 'hands-off'. On only one of my Lesedi visits was our tour group offered Zulu beer, something nobody accepted. The only consistent hands-on experience is an awkward 'participatory dance' at the end of each program. Shakaland fares a little better. Here, I tasted the beer and had the opportunity to ineptly balance a water jug on my head (see figure 3). At Village People in Sun City, I was offered and swallowed my first crunchy mopane worm. A visit to these theme parks consists of a production with very little opportunity to actively participate. Even your tour guide, instead of drawing you into the production, seems to serve as a barrier between you and the cast.

To cater for their audiences who might refuse the plate of mopane worms, these places are all marketed as 'traditional', but come with an assurance that they are modern as well. The visitor is welcome to gaze curiously upon the traditional dances and politely refuse a plate of 'exotic food', but as they do so, they are cushioned and supported by the knowledge that this is a tourist fantasy. They imagine that their mopane worms were probably roasted in a conventional oven, and the beer brewed in a sterilized, steel vat to meet familiar hygiene standards, before being transferred to the 'show' jug that now sits on the dirt in the Zulu village. These theories come as a delight to guests who beforehand imagine their foray into African culture to be 'primitive' in all its aspects. An online guestbook response to the accommodation offered at Lesedi summarizes what surprised visitors often discover upon visiting. It reads,

"… The rooms are very nice, much more modern than one would expect." (5 June, 2009)

Is the Concept Out-dated?

My initial reluctance to visit Lesedi stems from existing knowledge. I had studied the critiques of such spaces. I knew that I would be seeing a staged performance, put on by actors on an elaborate set. I expected the cultures on display to be presented in an utterly homogenized form. My knowledge of the South African economy told me that these actors would not be paid well. It is known that the San once on 'display' at the popular Kagga Kamma game reserve performed their 'traditions' for tourists by day, and returned to their shanty dwellings by night (in Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009: 11). My concerns are shared with many informed visitors.

In 1992, Hamilton wrote, of South Africa, that 'historical curriculum writers and museum curators are immobilized and admit to being in state of deep crisis' (Hamilton, 1992: 21). Lesedi was conceived in 1995 in the 'spirit of *ubuntu*', a response to this 'deep crisis', an attempt to display South Africa's cultural

diversity. The village's post-apartheid birth came not only at a critical time for the re-appropriation of South Africa's public places, but at a time when, globally, museums and exhibitions were experiencing change, with a more intense focus on the post-modern 'fetishism of the ordinary' (MacCannell, 1992: 188) and a recognition of multiple 'publics'. Because these cultural villages 'developed at a time of social change' (Hall & Bombardella, 2004: 23), they become interesting tools for the study of South Africa's post-apartheid identity and its self-presentation to a global market hungry for images of Africa. But what is their continued role today? Are they still relevant? *Should I even be here?*

In the 1990's, Lesedi and other 'cultural villages' may have been well positioned to serve such public interests, but now they face competition from the 'township tour', which is seen as occupying a more 'authentic' space in the imagination. As a result, the 'cultural village' format is currently facing criticism from academics and tourists alike. 'The townships in the Western Cape have become living museums on a grand scale' (Witz, 2007: 268). They are 'introduced to tourists as a potential site of danger' (Witz, 2007: 260). While Witz talks only of the Western Cape, Lesedi's proximity to Johannesburg puts it into competition with Soweto's famous township tours. I argue that by presenting township tours as 'potential sites of danger', they will possess touristic qualities that Lesedi attempts to re-create, but fails. These qualities are *risk* and with it, *adventure*. Any hope of experiencing genuine risk at Lesedi is broken down at the first barrier where the visitor must pass through various security points and even produce a passport. There is no threat that the public may spill into the controlled, international space of Lesedi Cultural village.

Bruner (2001) terms such concerns as the 'questioning gaze'. To possess a 'questioning gaze' is to be one who doubts the 'credibility, authenticity and accuracy of what is presented to them in the tourist production' (Bruner, 2001: 899). The questioning gaze is far-reaching. 'According to local tour operators, most tourists are not interested in cultural villages once they begin to realize that these are all based on staged authenticity' (Ramchander, 2004: 202).

The questioning gaze has meant that visitors are demanding something 'real' and are no longer satisfied by elaborate productions put on for their entertainment.

'Authentic Staged Authenticity'

In Shakaland's case, it has been argued that the theme park provides a solution to 'problems of authenticity', by declaring its origins as a film set, and basing their presentation around the rural/pastoral paradigm depicted by their film set (Koch & Massyn, 2001, Carton & Draper, 2008: 594). They don't offer the 'real thing, but rather the real film-set', so Shakaland in fact, 'emphasizes its artifice' (Hamilton, 1992: 14,). Lesedi makes no such admissions and in a 2008 brochure insists that it is a place, 'where families of the Zulu, Pedi, Sotho, Xhosa and Ndebele live in the traditional rural way, all nestling in pristine Bushveld' (Lesedi, 2008). In the next chapter, I address questions raised by such claims.

I must here declare my theoretical position regarding ideas of 'authenticity' at my research sites. For this approach I draw upon the work of Edward Bruner who states,

'(My research) is an effort to move beyond such limiting binaries as authentic-inauthentic, true-false, real-show, back-front. I take the exact opposite approach, analysing all of the tourist productions I encounter… for what they are in themselves- authentic- that is, authentic tourist productions that are worthy subjects of serious anthropological enquiry' (Bruner, 2005: 5). *'I argue against a fixed, static model that sees producers as in control, natives as exploited, and tourists as dupes'* (Bruner, 2005: 12).

Therefore, Lesedi, Shakaland and Village People are all unquestionably 'authentic tourist sites', with very real effects on the individuals involved in their creation, production and consumption. I argue that despite their often controversial content, they are spaces where 'authentic' learning will take place. I term this phenomenon, 'authentic staged authenticity'.

Reasons for Existing: the salvage paradigm

We have seen that perceptions of danger may keep tourists away from townships and urban spaces. Logistics often prevent tourist movements into rural areas of South Africa and therefore prohibit the visitation of community cultural projects found in those places. Yet the average tourist has experienced essentialized images of Africa before their arrival and they feel compelled to encounter South Africa's culture, if even for one morning. So where does that leave us? It leaves us with cultural theme parks, and their great responsibility for exhibiting South African culture to the world and even to South Africans themselves. Witz, Rassool and Minkley (2001) give examples of prominent public figures who make a point of visiting cultural villages in order to 'know oneself, to learn about the 'other', and to become a nation'. One such example is Mosiuoa Lekota who, while premier of the Free State, visited a Basotho cultural village to learn about 'authentic Sotho lifestyles' (Witz, Rassool & Minkley, 2001: 281).

Additionally, Derwent (1999) views cultural villages as 'living museums' and with that label comes one of the responsibilities of museums; that of functioning as an archive.

'*Cultural villages… provide an extremely important function in that they are repositories of history, giving a living portrayal of activities, crafts and the way of life during a certain period in the history of a people that may otherwise be lost to modern society'* (Derwent, 1999: 13).

Indeed, this compulsion towards preservation was a driving force behind the conception of cultural theme parks. The creators of Shakaland (and later Lesedi), 'white Zulus' Barry Leitch and adventurer Kingsley Holgate saw themselves as embarking on a 'salvage mission of African cultures' (Carton & Draper, 2008: 600). On visits to Lesedi, the village's existence was nearly always credited to this salvage paradigm. The guide often explained before the introduction film, that without places like Lesedi, some of these cultures

would 'forget their way of life'. In coming chapters, I explain how the salvage paradigm employed by cultural villages, gives their directors the power to select what aspects of culture are to be preserved and frozen, and which are to be forgotten altogether – cultural facts and features that do not fit in with the rigidly constructed master tourist narrative of the '*new* South Africa'.

Lesedi Game Reserve's BIG 5: Zulu, Xhosa, Pedi, Sotho and Ndebele

I will briefly introduce another understanding of the cultural village to be used in coming chapters; that of the safari. Hamilton (1992) points out that 'for some visitors (places like Shakaland) are simply a safari experience, a convenient way of viewing the other' (Hamilton, 1992: 31). On my first Lesedi visit, I witnessed an encounter (one of many) that would spark my interest in Lesedi as research topic. In the Pedi 'village', I watched as a Canadian tourist reached to shake the hand of one of the kilted Pedi 'actors'. As he clutched it warmly, he exclaimed, *"I've been all over Africa now, but you're my first Pedi!"* He proceeded to photograph the young man (see figure 4). It oddly reminded me of my first leopard sighting on safari, where I whispered to the leopard in the distance, "*you're my very first leopard*!"

Pricing for the Market: performance or pancakes?

In addition to being wet and cold, I know that this morning is going to be expensive. Lesedi is just over the hill and when I booked yesterday, I was told over the phone that the 'full cultural experience only' would cost me R200, and that doesn't even include lunch! I'd need R320 if I wanted to eat as well. Yet, pancakes with cinnamon and sugar would cost just R15. I could go to the snake park after the pancakes – entrance there is only R35. I'd even have change left with which to buy many beads at my favourite curio market. R200 buys a lot of things,

so why am I about to spend it on a morning at a place I don't particularly want to go to?

Cultural 'theme parks' come with theme park prices. They are capable of charging such prices because 'products with indigenous content are coined 'value- added' tourism' (Johnston, 2006: 11), and 'anything exuding culture, through either perceived connoisseurship or actual cultural exposure commands a premium price' (Johnston, 2006: 87). Cultural theme parks do both. Bruner (2005), explains that 'experience', especially of the cultural variety, 'is the ultimate tourist commodity' (Bruner 2005: 20).

At the time of writing, the 'Monati Lunch experience' at Lesedi now costs R360.00. Shakaland's three-hour 'Nandi Programme' costs R270, and a two hour show at Village People is R110. And I am only one person. This means that a family of four having a Monati Lunch experience will pay R1440. This makes Lesedi an exceedingly expensive day out and it becomes both financially and physically out of reach for most South Africans (given that access is almost exclusively via private transportation).

So who *can* afford a visit to a cultural theme park? In 1996, Donald McNeil writing in the New York Times, naively and idealistically described Lesedi as a 'place where whites can get a sense of rural Africa… and Africans can celebrate their cultures which have been heavily diluted by western and urban ways'. Quoting one of the 'villagers', McNeil goes on to write that 'most of our visitors are from overseas… white South Africans are not so interested' (McNeil: 1996). It is thirteen years later and this paradox remains. While it may be a place where Africans should 'celebrate their cultures', the majority of them are barred from entry.

Because the 'demand for cultural experiences appear to derive primarily from foreign visitors' (Koch & Massyn, 2001: 143), the presentation must cater to such clients. On a visit to Shakaland, tours were organized according to language. Being one of three visitors who had specified their language as

'English' at reception, I was placed in a larger group of Russian speakers for the morning. This example illustrates the notion that within the cultural village context, the tourist can 'traverse the landscape in a small cultural bubble of his own nationality' (Pearce, 1982: 199). It isn't only language. Cultural theme parks must deliver what the international visitor wants; and these 'wants' frequently find themselves influenced by persistent colonial narratives of Africa. No visit to a cultural village can be complete without singing, dancing and animal-fur costumes.

My numerous visits to the three sites of study revealed that indeed, most visitors were still from overseas. White South Africans made occasional appearances, often hosting foreign friends and taking an authoritative role in interpretation. On one visit, I observed one such South African turn to his guests and state the following with conviction, "*The Zulus… they're are all warriors. They killed all the other tribes in Africa and made them all into the Zulus. So the blacks you see now, they're all born from the original Zulus*". It is men like this which cause observers such as Carolyn Hamilton to state that the 'cultural experience' provided at cultural villages provides 'much needed knowledge of a perceived *other'* (Hamilton, 1998: 199), as well as an opportunity to acquire 'first-hand knowledge of this feared other' (Hamilton, 1992: 23).

At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned briefly that Lesedi's conference venue was a reminder that in order to survive, culture must have something of itself to sell. The conference venues at Lesedi and Shakaland in turn, provide a means to sell 'culture' to South Africans. In 2001, Francois Meyer (general manager of Shakaland), pointed out that, 'domestic tourists who come to this complex (Shakaland) as part of a conference group, for instance, end up exploring Zulu culture with a new degree of fascination, even though this was not their primary motive for visiting' (quoted in Koch & Massyn, 2001: 163).

In an interview with Mr. Nkosana, Lesedi's cultural manager, he tells me that the most effective way to reach South Africans is, in fact, through school tours. "*The children… they feel very proud (that) people live like this. They*

bring their mothers here. That's how you get South Africans. Some of them don't know about this place".

Lesedi and Shakaland also 'show acute awareness of African renaissance discourse that calls for greater community participation in heritage tourism… by extending inexpensive tours to historically marginalized groups' (Carton & Draper, 2008: 601). A search through Lesedi's online guest book reveals telling comments from the organizers of such trips. Below are two such examples.

"*Thank you very much for your kindness in letting our children and mammas visit your cultural village yesterday. It was exciting for them to see how beautifully their culture is practiced and shown to the world.*" (8 April, 2009)

"Men cannot go forward and dream… unless they know where they have come from… Thank you… for giving 47 of our learners an opportunity to look into their cultural pasts and thus giving them a platform and foundation from which to launch their dreams for the future… We are giving them roots from which to grow. Many of our children… come from orphanages and care centres and thus have missed out on learning about their cultural past from family members. This experience was thus key in providing them with a snap shot of where they have come from." (19 November, 2007)

These comments illustrate that Lesedi does provide a service to many South Africans who may otherwise be unable to visit the site, and there is no doubt that keeping prices high for those who can afford it facilitates these school visits. But it remains that the average South African is excluded. If South Africa is a 'world in one country', then Lesedi is a 'country in one theme park', and as with any other travel to a foreign country, it requires privilege, a passport and a degree of wealth.

This chapter has been an introduction to my main research site, Lesedi, as well as Shakaland and Village People, two sites which have been valuable for comparison purposes and have brought their own questions to the debates

surrounding cultural villages. We have learned that what cultural villages and 'cultural theme parks' are and who their intended audience is. I have discussed the potential effects that the cultural village's physical placement on a landscape has on visitors. The next chapter builds upon the last idea and begins with a discussion of Lesedi's strategic location within the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site.

Chapter 2: Welcome to Lesedi: Cradle of Living African Culture

I can see the entrance to Lesedi now. The landscape is decidedly more green and natural. The wedding and conference venues are still around, but they're more discreet and secluded. I am here. The entrance is on the left and this is my last chance to opt out. The cinnamon pancake option is irrevocably taken off the table as I turn left, past a colourful sign welcoming me to Lesedi, a 'Cradle of Living African Culture' (see figure 5).

'Cradle of living African culture'? I remember repeating those words slowly to myself as I drove into Lesedi for the first time. The description requires deep thought and dissection. The following section explores the use of the word 'cradle'. The next manipulates the concept of 'light' at Lesedi, and uses 'light' to explore the nature of the site. What is meant by 'living' will follow in a coming section, and an entire chapter will be needed to interrogate the problematic concept of 'culture'.

Lesedi in the Cradle of Humankind

At Lesedi's front entrance I'm met with a barrier and a security officer. He presents me with a paper on which I must supply my name, phone number, licence plate number, nationality and passport number. Passport number? I tell him I don't know it and didn't think to bring it. I'm going to a tourist attraction, not another country. Or is it? The ambiguity has begun. I should have gone for the pancakes. As I drive towards Lesedi's parking lot, another sign comes into view. This one reads, 'Welcome: Lesedi in the Cradle of Humankind: A World Heritage Site' (see Figure 6).

In 1925, Jan Smuts was one of the first to refer to the area as a 'cradle'. During an address, he speculated that, '*South Africa may yet figure as the cradle of mankind, or shall I rather say, one of the cradles'* (Smuts, 1925: 17)

Nearly eighty-five years later, South Africa has indeed figured as the 'cradle of mankind', and Smuts' term has endured and been appropriated by the South African tourist industry. Today, Lesedi falls within UNESCO's famous Cradle of Humankind World Heritage site, so named for being the site in which some of the oldest examples of *australopithecus africanus* examples have been found; the most famous was discovered in 1947 and nicknamed 'Mrs. Ples' (who I like to note 'may actually have been a small male rather than a large female'. Dawkins, 2009: 91).

While conducting research at Lesedi, I was told that the cultural village's location was chosen because during the early 1990's a small group of Zulus had set up home on the site where Lesedi stands today. The group had already been opening their doors to passing tourists. The community's willingness to participate in the construction of Lesedi and then continue to reside there was said to legitimize the creation of a cultural village at Lesedi.

However, it is unlikely that Lesedi's birth was quite so accidental. Johnston (2006) explains that in the search for commercial opportunities, eco-tourism companies 'scan' the World Heritage List for 'product ideas' (Johnston, 2006: 121). The pairing of Lesedi Cultural Village and the Cradle of Humankind heritage site has created a special relationship between the two sites.

When asked about Lesedi's role within the Cradle heritage site, Lesedi's cultural manager explained the special relationship to me. *"We help each other. I recommend people to go there. What we don't have here, they have there*". He tells me that there is 'one story' being presented at the sites and that both must be visited to comprehend it.

Perhaps this ‘one story’ he refers to is the story of humankind in Africa and how it figures on a global scale. The story begins with humanity’s origins, today found deep below the veld. It concludes with Africa as it is today; those who stayed on the continent, and those who left during a time of pre-history, only to return now and consume the continent in the form of tourism. In my previous chapter, I explained that the location of a cultural village plays an important role in how it is interpreted by visitors. In this chapter, I argue that, because Lesedi is located within the Cradle of Humankind, the surrounding landscape will be embedded with evolutionary discourse, which visitors to the site will no doubt bring with them.

Cradle Tourism: ‘A world from one country’

The archaeological findings at the Cradle of Humankind have fashioned a distinct tourism narrative in the area. Dubow (2007) calls this the ‘back to Africa’ model, portraying the African continent as ‘the original cradle of civilization’, serving as a ‘key prop of the cultural foundation of the African renaissance’ (Dubow, 2007: 9). The tourism industry has played upon this model, and gives a message to visitors who have answered the call and made the pilgrimage ‘back to Africa’. An message written in stone at the nearby Maropeng visitor centre declares that ‘*Africa is the birthplace of humankind’* and a sign at the Wits Origins Centre reads, ‘*Welcome Home’* (see figures 7 & 8).

Using the words of the South African tourist industry, I have a different slogan for this ‘back to Africa’ model, that posits that humanity originated in the cradle and spread over the earth; ‘*A world from one country’*.

‘The Darwinian theory of biological evolution encouraged the widespread view that savage and barbaric bands and tribes represented earlier stages in an upward path towards the caucasian race’ (Hall, 1995: 187), was once used to justify cruelty and contributed to the founding principles of apartheid. And yet, in an amiable and ironic twist, evolutionary discourse is now being employed for the opposite effect: to explain that we are all ‘one’, and share the same

beginnings. I argue that the three sites, Maropeng/Sterkfontein, the Wits Origins Centre and Lesedi, despite their distance, collapse into one to tell 'one story'. How the story 'plays out' is detailed below.

The North West Tourist Track: Lesedi as a 'missing link'

If visitors are called to imagine that their beginnings are in Africa and specifically in the North West Province, I hypothesize a scenario whereby Lesedi functions as a sort of 'missing link' in both the touristic imaginings of the province and upon the geographical and archaeological landscape of the area.

This sounds perplexing, but let us imagine a line (let's use a railway track) which runs South to North. It begins in central Johannesburg at the Wits University Origins Centre. The Origins Centre is a modern, interactive interpretation centre which forms a starting point. It is a place where visitors can discover who South Africa is, and how it became what it is today. One learns about archaeology and culture, but these things only appear as representations in the urban museum. To experience the archaeology and culture of South Africa, the tourist must begin their journey and head north to the next stop.

Forty kilometres North, we find ourselves in the 'Cradle' and at our next destination: The Sterkfontein Caves and their elaborate interpretation centre, Maropeng. This is where the 'real' experience begins as visitors descend into the caves and see the bones of their anscestors for themselves.

After a short journey, the next stop is Lesedi. Here the tourist experiences the product of evolution – culture. Given the evolutionary narrative of the area, it is no surprise that Lesedi's cultural manager tells me that many visitors are astounded to find that Africans "*live in houses"* and do not *"swing from trees"*.

In Lesedi's parking lot there is a sign that reads, 'Going… to Pilanesburg or Sun City?' (see figure 9). Sun City happens to be the final stop on the line

North, and its distance from Lesedi and Sterkfontein serves to establish its difference. Here, the visitor disembarks and rejoins the world of the familiar- a commercial, western-style fantasy resort, all in the heart of Africa. Their journey to an imagined 'pinnacle of civilization' is complete. Moving across the inscribed landscape of the North West Province, they have followed a sort of linear progression through notions of time and culture. On their route, they have experienced the evolutionary story of Africa, from Mrs. Ples to Mr. Kerzner.

The line is real. Because the North West Province finds the majority of its tourist facilities clustered in small areas separated by large distances, it is likely that visitors to the area do travel along this line. They may begin their tour in the South with Sterkfontein then Lesedi, or chose to travel from the North, beginning their descent through the touristic spaces of the province from Sun City, regressing from luxury suites, to 'cultural huts' to caves, before departing from Johannesburg's airport.

I argue that Lesedi functions as a 'missing link' in the story. If the Sterkfontein presentation serves to explain that we all came from Africa, and Sun City represents the idea that we are all heading for the same globalized future, then Lesedi acts as a site which tells the visitor, 'this is what you missed while you were away'.

Lesedi Cultural Village: 'place of light'

I have parked my car below the 'going to Sun City?' sign. My walk towards the entrance takes me under an arch painted with bright Ndebele patterns which says 'Lesedi welcomes you; siyanamukela' (see figure 10). But it's still cold and it's still raining and I still want pancakes instead. The courtyard I enter into is deserted and I wonder whether the program today has been cancelled. I find the unattended reception desk and wait. A stack of Lesedi brochures sits on the desk

and I inelegantly pick one up and begin to fidget through it. I learn that 'Lesedi' is a Sotho word, meaning 'place of light'. I look back at the courtyard. On a day as gloomy and grey as this, it's hard to imagine any light in this place.

Lesedi' means *'place of light'*. The description appears throughout the site and in the attraction's promotional material. When Lesedi refers to itself as a 'place of light', what do they mean? My own meditations upon the curious expression have led me to interpret it in a number of interesting ways, to be discussed in this section.

In this section, I look at the various interpretations of the phrase, allowing for an investigation of what is displayed at Lesedi (in the 'light') and what is hidden in the darkness and 'forgotten'. An investigation of these processes is of value, given that South Africa is attempting to 'rewrite' its history from a post-apartheid vantage point.

In another interpretation of 'light', I contrast Lesedi to nearby Maropeng, a recently completed cultural interpretation centre focusing on pre-history. There is much to be said about Maropeng's location being underground; a place of fossils and archaeology, while Lesedi is a site of the surfaced and the 'living'.

Darkness Metaphors: Lesedi as a 'place of enlightenment'

"The world only has one role for Africa- as a destiny for other peoples' expeditions, and as the home of 'dark forces' (Hall, 1995: 198).

Africa has long been known by the West, as the 'dark continent'. This metaphor has its origins in literature and still affects how Africa is experienced in the global imagination. Visitors to Lesedi may thus bring with them the notion that Africa is a dark space. When Lesedi refers to itself as a 'place of

light' this may prime the visitor to conceive the village as being something different; unexpected and illuminating. To understand the implications of the darkness metaphor, I will first look at its origins.

The term 'Dark Continent' in reference to Africa, appears in literature for the first time with Henry M. Stanley in 1878 (Jarosz, 1992: 106). Joseph Conrad's use of the expression, 'Heart of Darkness' became established in popular culture after first appearing in an 1899 magazine publication. Both expressions, and their connotations, worked to portray Africa as dark and hostile.

The influence of literature on scientific knowledge is a profound and precarious one. Said (1978) tells us that 'every writer on the orient assumes some oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the orient, to which he refers and on which he relies' (Said, 1978: 20). We need to examine the basis of this 'oriental precedent' that Conrad worked from. Livingstone and Harrison (1981) state that, 'since the investigation of the unknown can only be conducted with open-ended concepts, the 'flight of the imagination' is an indispensible element in geographical epistemology' (Livingstone and Harrison, 1981: 95). If we look to the foundations of Conrad's darkness metaphor, we can see that it was based on imagination, rather than grounded in empirical truth. It can be argued that Conrad was not describing the 'unknown', as he had in fact spent time in the Congo during the 1890's. And yet, it's revealed that he is describing a place unknown to him, existing only in his imagination:

'*The Congo Conrad saw in 1890 with its factories, plantations, missionaries and commercial farms was a more highly organized and 'civilized' region that the Congo of Heart of Darkness, which is presented in the rudimentary stages of development'* (Raskin, 1967: 117).

Raskin (1967) goes on to explain that Conrad believed 'blacks were a corrupting force' (Raskin, 1967: 127) and that his opinion of Africans stems from just one 'unfortunate experience' with 'evil blacks' in Haiti (Raskin, 1967:

128). This goes to show that a highly influential piece of literature from which many derived their knowledge of an entire continent, was constructed from a 'flight of the imagination' and the characteristics of a continent's inhabitants are based on one sour experience with one man on an entirely different continent. So it is 'through a series of cycles of experience and retrieval' that 'Europe's knowledge of 'others' accumulates' (Jacques, 1997: 193), and we see here that it is often the case that a body of inaccurate knowledge results.

Before going further, it must be mentioned that the dark: light dichotomy can be historically read in a number of ways. It may stand for Africa/Europe, other/us, savage/civilized, death/life, primitive/evolved, knowledge/unknown, dark skin/light skin, pagan/Christian. This list is not exhaustive.

Much has been written and debated of the colonial agendas served by these darkness metaphors, so there is little need to detail them here. In short, the 'darkness' of colonial Africa provides a black space that can be illuminated in patches by colonial anthropologists on a mission of 'othering'. The black space could also be said to be enlightened by Christian missionaries on a mission of conversion. Finally, the black space is decorated in the colours of empire as European countries take pieces of the space for their own. The latter is a mission supported through a complex system of colonial 'knowledge' generated by the anthropologists and missionaries reporting from within the supposedly darkened space.

Visitors to Lesedi *do* carry these conceptions of darkness with them to the site. I mentioned earlier that tourists were often reported to be surprised that Africans do not 'swing from trees'. On my first visit to Lesedi, as my tour group prepared to leave the Basotho village, a man from Belgium turned to our guide and asked solemnly (and with genuine concern), "*Have you had any cases of cannibalism here in the village, or does that only happen in Central Africa*?". His question falls in line with what MacCannell (1976), observes about western tourists. He describes the 'primary fantasies that western visitors have about the primitive'. Notably that 'they are cannibals, who feed off human flesh…' (cited in Hoskins, 2002: 814). The guide who is obviously

amused, but does his best to hide this from the visitor, answers with a simple, straight-faced, *"no, not here."*

The cannibalism question is jarring, but not entirely unexpected given how the colonial darkness metaphor has endured into the present. Diawara (1998) describes Africa as it stands in contemporary global imagination:

'*There is a globalized information network that characterizes Africa as a continent sitting on top of infectious diseases, strangled by corruption and tribal vengeance, and populated by people with mouths and hands open to receive international aid*'. (Diawara, 1998: 103).

This statement evokes a number of images. One can see the map of Africa as a cover, heaving to contain infection. Evolutionary narratives come with the mere mention of 'tribal vengeance'. Most startling is the image of upturned mouths and hands, with its animalistic connotations – hatchling birds, helpless, immobile, demanding, waiting to be fed. Diawara's statement is hellish, hopeless and dark. It speaks of a continent lost to the darkness. Lesedi has much work to do if it aims to cast 'light' on such a grim portrayal of Africa. I argue that in the context of darkness metaphors, Lesedi operates as a 'place of enlightenment', a small space where there exists the opportunity to challenge old assumptions and learn truths about a perceived 'other'.

Forgetting Space

My second interpretation of 'place of light' has to do with forgetting. Lesedi is a 'place of light', where certain aspects of culture and history are illuminated. But where there is light, there is also dark. Many local traditions, stories and history that have been 'forgotten' by the site, making way for the postcard 'images of Africa' that an international audience endeavours to find. So it seems that Lesedi also becomes a space of forgetting; a place of darkness. I will explain how beneath the concrete paths and comfortable huts at the tourist site, a history is literally buried and forgotten.

As one of his proposed 'ideologies of imperialism', Ekeh (1997) asserts that the African continent was seen as having 'no history of its own' (Ekeh, 1997: 7). For to afford a people a history, is to afford them agency. With no history to get in the way, the map of Africa remained dark back to an age of pre-history. This dark and ahistorical cartographic surface became the reason why, for example, the early astronomical knowledge accumulated by the Dogon culture (see Mudimbe 1988) and the architectural achievements made at Great Zimbabwe were accredited to civilizations originating in an illuminated space beyond Africa.

Picture the early, detailed maps of Africa as being covered with lines (boundaries, rivers, roads) and nodes (villages, cities, points of interest). The space looks a lot like the surface of a human brain with its sections and connections. The gradual erasing of the African map is like the dismantling of the brain – the process of forgetting. As connections in the brain are severed, villages and rivers are erased and forgotten, a continent is darkened.

Working with ideas of power, dominance, and colonial thought, the JBHE Foundation (1996) offers a theory explaining why the darkening and forgetting of Africa's map was undertaken.

'…Europeans recreated the image of Africa as an empty continent, bereft of cities, towns and civilizations later served to justify the slave trade. The new maps of Africa portraying a vast interior wilderness with no towns, cities or trading routes reinforced European beliefs that the continents interior inhabitants were nothing more than savages'. (JBHE Foundation, 1996: 53).

If we look at the history of the Magaliesburg area where Lesedi is situated, we learn that the area was once covered in large Tswana towns, each home to as many as 20,000 people. Hall (2007) explains that the history of these towns has become 'mute' and 'all but lost from popular view' (Hall, 2007: 163). In accordance with the 'ideologies of imperialism' previously mentioned, Hall explains that the presence of these sites of great archaeological wealth are overlooked because of the 'popular perception that nothing much went on in

the African past because people were mired in timeless custom' (Hall, 2007: 163).

It is interesting that the depths of the Sterkfontein caves are being constantly excavated, and scoured for information to add to a body of knowledge. Sterkfontein finds itself in a continual process of retrieving lost information. This uncovered knowledge eventually finds its way into the local tourism and origins narratives. Yet, the Tswana villages lie much closer to the surface than the caverns and tunnels at Sterkfontein.

Given the intimate, rural scenes depicted at Lesedi, it becomes hard to imagine a sophisticated community, 20,000 strong, may have stood on that very site. Today, it is not so much the 'ideologies of imperialism' that affect presentation at Lesedi, but the tourism narrative, which tells us that Africa is 'untouched' and not spoiled by the trappings of the West, when in fact, the very opposite is true. Note that in the province, the tourism narrative is directly influenced by the origins narrative, or as Mr. Nkosana calls it, the 'one story'. At present, there doesn't seem to be room for Tswana villages in the 'one story', despite their proximity to the surface.

The North West Tourist Track: Lesedi as a 'place of life'

Finally, I return to the hypothetical line that I described in the last section. Here it is useful for describing the concept of 'light' in the Northwest Province's tourism circuit.

Remember the first stop? Sterkfontein Caves are just that – caves. They lie deep below the surface, completely hidden from the roads and travellers as they obliviously make use of the space above. To reach the caves, the visitor must leave the light and descend far into the stagnant darkness.

The next stop is Maropeng, Sterkfontein's state-of-the-art interpretation centre. Interestingly this is also underground and tunnel shaped, but doesn't lie as deeply, creating a prominent grassy mound visible to passers-by (see

figure 11). The presentation here begins with a 'journey' (an elevator ride) into Earth's creation, focusing dramatically on the elements of earth, wind, fire and ice. As the Maropeng experience unfolds, the visitor unwittingly travels upwards towards the surface. Along the way, the exhibits 'evolve', taking the tourist through the basic elements before progressing into the various kinds of life on Earth. The format is quite clever. By the end of the experience, one can start to see the outdoor light through the exit doors. In this final space, narratives of guilt are employed to their fullest. One is even given the opportunity to 'Dial-a-Quagga', (see figure 12) who will tell you over the phone that it is you who is responsible for his extinction. The last question posed on the wall before the exit and its fresh air morbidly asks, '*will we destroy ourselves*?' (see figure 13).

Given the sensory and intellectual bombardment on offer at Maropeng, the visitor must be somewhat relieved to see the 'light at the end of the tunnel'. The acacia trees and aloe plants growing in the scrub near the outdoor café provide a welcome confirmation that, '*no, we have not destroyed ourselves'*.

It's a good thing we haven't been destroyed, or we would miss out on the next stop, Lesedi. Lesedi is completely above ground, in stark contrast to Sterkfontein and Maropeng, which are the haunts of fossils and archaeology. I argue that the light at Lesedi signifies something that the first two stops lack. That is, *life*. Stumbling underground is replaced by colourful, energetic dancing on the surface, and rock becomes flesh. Lesedi is a 'place of light'; a 'place of life'.

What then of the final stop, Sun City? Its Las Vegas style wattage on an otherwise vacant landscape, means that it is a 'place of hyperlight'. Light here is relentless. It radiates and flashes and flickers in a multitude of colours, right through the night. The overwhelming light at Sun City is blinding. It illuminates a space that has been designed for consumption and activity, twenty-four hours a day. In contrast, the light at Lesedi appears muted and natural, bound to natural rhythms of the Sun, and the orange glow of an occasional campfire.

The light at these two places are indicative of the two very different ways-of-being lived at the two sites.

Place of Life: "Do people *really* live here?"

I'm not looking through my brochure for very long, before someone appears behind the reception desk. I'm uncomfortable. All of my pre-trip research (mostly using Lesedi's promotional material) has told me that this isn't only a tourist site, but a home and a community to its 'residents'. I feel like I'm intruding on their land, but at the same time I question whether people actually inhabit such a synthetic, touristic space. As I part with my R200, I ask the receptionist, "Do people **really** live here?"

I remember that she smiled and laughed. "*Of course they do*!" I wasn't convinced. Indeed at the end of that first visit, my handwritten notes are concluded with, '*but do people really live here?*', circled and underlined twice.

In Bruner's (1994) work on Meyer's Ranch in Kenya, he asks us to 'imagine a troupe of Broadway actors who live in a theatre. Not just for fun, but they really live there, sleep there and cook there' (Bruner & Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1994 :463). This was indeed the case at Meyer's Ranch; a place much like Lesedi in its depiction of local 'tribes' for the 'amusement' of wealthy (mainly foreign) guests. The 'performers' at Meyers 'were not allowed to wear or display modern clothing, watches or any other industrial manufactured objects (Bruner, 2001: 882), in an attempt to present the Maasai culture as undiluted. Because of course, in European thought, 'Africans were imagined as either spoiled or unspoiled' (Haraway, 1989: 53).

I found it hard to imagine people 'living, eating and sleeping' at Lesedi. Indeed, at Meyer's Ranch the actors resided in a makeshift village away from

the tourist gaze. Here in South Africa, much has been written of the San on 'display' at Kagga Kamma, who lived in dire poverty when their performance at the luxury resort ended for the evening. In another example, 'women working at a cultural village complained of having to behave like 'professional Ndebeles' while not earning enough to move out of the mud and zinc shacks they live in after work – housing structures very different from the brightly coloured indigenous homes at the cultural village' (Koch & Massyn, 2001: 161). What would I find at Lesedi? Do people really live here?

My question goes largely unanswered until my sixth trip to Lesedi, on March 31, 2009. This time, I'm here before the 'show'. It's 9am and I've come to interview Mr. Nkosana, Lesedi's cultural manager. He takes me on a tour through the park, where, in each small 'village', the cast is waking. People sit on stoeps eating toast and cereal, in their plain clothes. This is truly a venture into the backstage.

It wasn't as if I hadn't seen the backstage before. It had crept to the forefront on several previous visits. On one, a woman had watched our tour group approaching down the pathway. As we neared, she picked up her hoe and began to 'tend' a garden. She worked as our guide explained the garden's crop. With his last word she, rather dramatically, threw the hoe to the ground, sat down again and begun to write a text message on her phone, unconcerned that we could still see (see figure 14).

On another occasion, while watching a Pedi woman pound grain, a small boy in jeans and running shoes emerged from a nearby hut with an electric kettle and a tin of Milo. Even during the 'performance', tennis shoes are always the footwear of choice for Lesedi's actors (see figure 15). Not to mention that when it's cold, the actors will always wear their Lesedi branded zipped sweaters over their traditional costumes. *Whatever would the proprietors of Meyers Ranch think of that*?

Yet from these previous glimpses of the 'backstage', my question had not been answered. Now seeing the toast and the trainers it was clear; people

really *do* live here. Or do they? Dean MacCannell (1973) presents an idea that gives me cause for suspicion and I quote him at length.

'It is found that tourists try to enter back regions of the places they visit because these regions are associated with intimacy of relations and authenticity of experiences. It is also found that tourist settings are arranged to produce the impression that a back region has been entered even when this is not the case. In tourist settings, between the front and the back there is a series of special spaces designed to accommodate tourists and to support their beliefs in the authenticity of their experiences' (MacCannell, 1973: 589).

Was the cereal on the stoep one of these 'special spaces'; a deliberate manipulation of the space, staged for the sake of duping early morning visitors such as myself? For a moment, I considered the possibility that there could be another 'village', beyond the bounds of this one, where people had woken up in corrugated shacks rather than beehive huts.

At Sun City's Village People, the backstage was brought directly to the forefront, when I was greeted on my first visit by a woman who began the tour with the words, "*Welcome to Sun City. This is a place of the very rich and of the very poor*". Quietly adding, "*the place that is always happy"*, in a disheartening tone that now strikes as deeply ironic. She then proceeded to describe the corrugated shacks that Sun City's multitude of staff go home to at night, in a dusty, exposed settlement referred to as 'Sun Village'. At Sun City, the stage is transparent. However, at Lesedi it is blurred, ambiguous and demands an investigation which requires more thought and time than a two-hour 'lunch programme'.

As the 'cast' at Lesedi prepares for the day, I ask Mr. Nkosana about the lives of those who live there. He maintains that this is a 'home'; that people are 'born and bred here'. I note the children running around the village (see figure 16). They are all toddlers. I'm told that children born to the village's residents are eventually sent for schooling in Limpopo, as many of the performers have extended families in that province. When these children reach Standard 10,

they are given the option of continuing their schooling, or returning to Lesedi to work as tour guides. When asked about the dancing ability of Lesedi's cast, Mr. Nkosana tells me that much is practiced, but he defends that these people are 'born that way'. However, many of Lesedi's cast members have a background in theatre and several have toured with Johnny Clegg (see McNeil, 1996) Mr. Nkosana himself studied the performing arts whilst at university in Potchefstroom.

So it has been established that people really do live here. But *what* do they live here? On several visits I noted villagers who had earlier been portraying Zulu warriors, were later seen in the dance boma, performing the traditional dances of not only the Zulu, but through a succession of quick costume changes, the Xhosa and Sotho as well. The same is observed at both Shakaland and Village People. At Shakaland, an all-Zulu cast performs several dances belonging to other South African groups, while at Village People, each culture is represented by only one individual , and for the dance show, the cast combines to perform a variety of cultural dances.

Bruner (2001) describes a similar scenario at Bomas, a successor to Meyer's Ranch in Kenya. '*At Bomas, a Kikuyu dancer for example, could do the dances of the Maasai, the Samburu, the Kikuyu or any group. Bomas creates an ensemble of performers from different groups who live together at Bomas as a residential community, as an occupational sub-culture, apart from their extended families and home communities'* (Bruner, 2001: 888).

Lesedi creates just that – an 'occupational sub-culture'. Being apart from their 'extended families' and 'home communities' (presumably in Limpopo), how do the performers retain their cultural practices? Surely living in such an environment, this sub-culture must enact only the most tourist-friendly aspects of their culture. When I ask Mr. Nkosana about this, he smiles at me. "*Her name is Mama Malatjies"*.

I soon learn that 'Mama Malatjies' is the head of the Pedi family and has lived at Lesedi since its inception. Mr. Nkosana credits her as the one who keeps

storytelling alive in the village. It is she who meets with guests each night around a fire and passes on cultural knowledge to both guests and residents. Mama Malatjies is described as a primary cultural advisor to the village. This is where I feel I'm in one of MacCannell's 'special spaces'; a backstage constructed for those hoping to find authenticity behind-the-scenes.

While Mama Malatjies clearly holds a vital and esteemed position at Lesedi and has been there since the beginning, it is impossible to imagine that she is the primary cultural advisor at such a large cultural theme park. I regard her as a figurehead; as a legitimizing face utilized by the team of cultural advisors who work far behind Lesedi's backstage.

Still curious about *what* life is being lived here, I ask what *time* the village is. Specifically, whether it is meant to portray cultural life as it is today or whether it aims to provide a historical take on South Africa's former way of life. At Sun City's 'Village People' this question is answered easily. Exhibition huts include power sockets ("*of course we have electricity too*"), CD players and a verbal acknowledgement of the merits of 'PPC cement' over traditional materials ("*because it is much better"*) in the construction of dwellings.

A quote from Lesedi's online guestbook supports the idea that Lesedi depicts a primitive and 'lost' way of life, needing to be salvaged and remembered.

'…*i really like your cultural activities. They remind me of my younger stage and where i am from. I really feel at home when i am at Lesedi*' (sic). 20 May 2009.

Time is ambiguous at Lesedi, and the manager's response to my question about *when* the village is meant to be situated is cryptic and contradictory. He explains that ways of life such as pounding grain are staged for the benefit of the tourist. "*We show what they did before."* Yet when asked later whether the village was meant to 'show what they did before', he exclaims, *"This is now!"*

This conflicting outlook means that the presentation at Lesedi is blurred and difficult for the tourist to understand. On my trips to the village, I heard several fellow visitors discussing whether the village was meant to be set in a distant past, or whether it was supposed to be contemporary. At Lesedi, guests *do* learn about people and their culture, but are unable to situate this knowledge into a temporal space, thus they don't know *what* culture they are learning about.

This chapter begun with a series of signs at Lesedi Cultural Village, which referred to the site as a 'Cradle of Living African Culture', asserted its place in the 'Cradle of Humankind: A World Heritage Site', and called itself a 'Place of Light'. I have analyzed the concepts put forth in these signs. We have examined Lesedi's critical relationship with the 'Cradle' and found that the two sites work together to tell 'one story', which forms the basis of South Africa's new tourist narrative. 'Place of light' can be interpreted in numerous ways, including 'place of *enlightenmen*t' and '*place of life'* to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of Lesedi. In the final section, I answered the pressing question I had of Lesedi, '*do people really live here*?', when I entered the backstage behind Lesedi's production. The scene has been set for the next chapter, an interrogation of the word 'culture' which has so far been used all too freely in this body of work, at Lesedi itself and within the 'new' South Africa's tourism discourse.

Figure 1: 'Beyond the store stands a Zulu warrior, complete with spear and shield.' R512, Lanseria**

** All figures © Anna Tinker

Figure 26: In the Zulu village, Lesedi**

Figure 2: Shakaland, Zuluness in its 'real' setting?**

Figure 3: At Shakaland, I 'had the opportunity to ineptly balance a water jug on my head'.**

Figure 4: "You're my first Pedi!"**

Figure 5: 'Cradle of Living African Culture'. Sign on the R512.**

Figure 6: 'Welcome: Lesedi in the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site'. Sign in Lesedi's parking lot.**

Figure 7: '*Africa is the birthplace of humankind*'. Message in stone at Maropeng Visitor Centre. **

Figure 8: 'Welcome Home'. Sign at the Wits Origins Centre, Braamfontein.**

Figure 9: '*Going to Sun City?'* Sign in Lesedi's parking lot.**

Figure 10: At the entrance of Lesedi Cultural Village. 'Lesedi Welcomes You'.**

Figure 11: Maropeng, Cradle of Humankind. Most of the centre lies underground.**

Figure 12: 'Dial-a-Quagga' at Maropeng.**

Figure 13: 'Will we destroy ourselves?' on the wall at Maropeng.**

Figure 14: Before she 'threw her hoe to the ground' at the Sotho village, Lesedi.**

Figure 15: 'Tennis Shoes are always the footwear of choice for Lesedi's actors'. *Whatever would the proprietors of Meyers Ranch think of that*?**

Figure 16: ‘I note the children running around the village’ at Lesedi.**

Figure 17: Lesedi’s ‘suspiciously clean’ shebeen.**

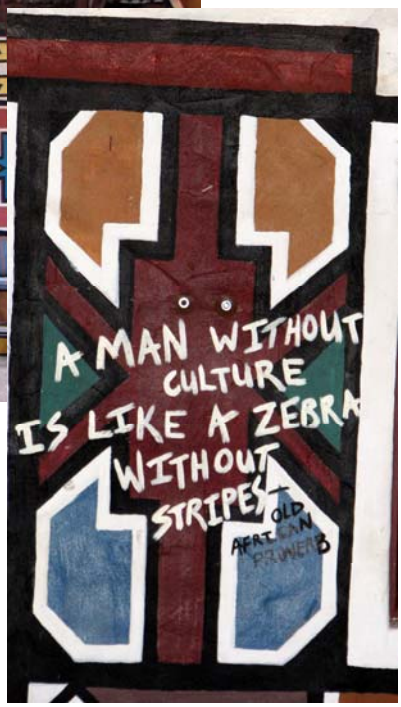

Figure 18: ‘A man without culture is like a zebra without stripes’.**

Figure 20: ‘I know where I am by the small signposts outside each village’, at Lesedi.**

Figure 21: Map of Lesedi, showing the 'bounded' villages.**

Figure 22: The 'rock pile' at the Zulu village, Lesedi.**

Figure 23: The 'Rainbow Nation' explained at Lesedi.**

Figure 24: The sangoma on the pathway, Lesedi.**

Figure 25: The sangoma contained**

Figure 27: Energetic dances in the boma.**

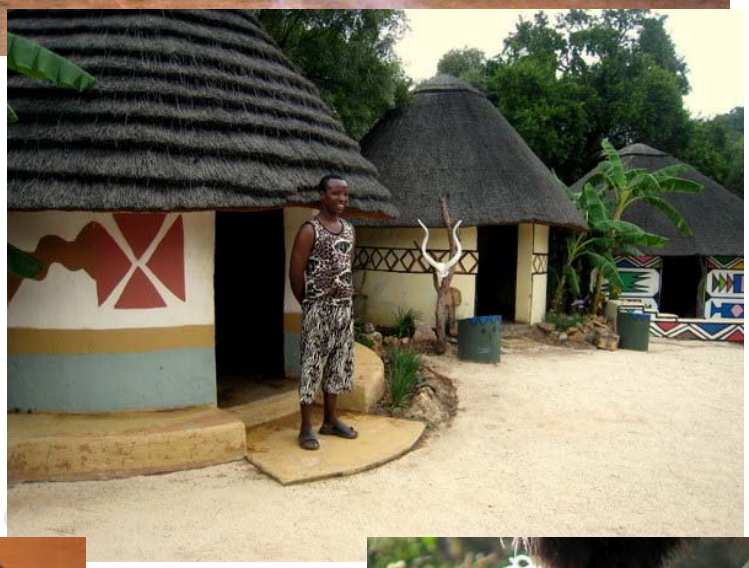

Figure 28: The arc shape of Village People, Sun City**

Figures 29 & 30: Performers at Lesedi.**

Chapter 3: Is a 'Man Without Culture Like a Zebra Without Stripes'?: interrogating the concept of 'culture'

Before progressing further, the word 'culture' must be interrogated. The term 'culture' has spread well beyond its original anthropological uses and is suddenly everywhere, mobilized for political means, monetary gain, identity formation and more… and yet it still eludes clear definition. The word is used indiscriminately throughout cultural villages. I explore the word 'culture'; its problems, its connotations and its various facets, using a proverb displayed on the wall in Lesedi's shebeen…

I've now passed through the barriers and paid the entrance fee. The morning's 'Monati' program has yet to begin, and 'standing around' feels awkward. My eyes assess the scene. Do I join the 'locals' in the impromptu soccer game taking place in the courtyard? Do I browse the curio stands? Should I make uncomfortable conversation with the woman offering beadwork for sale? As I long for my cinnamon pancakes, I spot a solution. Lesedi's very own shebeen; providing both shelter from the rain and dark corners to hide in (see figure 17). This shebeen is suspiciously clean and colourful. My gaze is drawn to a large sign on the wall which reads, "A man without culture is like a zebra without stripes- old African proverb" (see figure 18). I believe I understand what the proverb is trying to say. It tells the tourist at Lesedi that what makes a man, is his culture. Most visitors probably read the proverb, smile, shrug their shoulders and head for the curio shop next door…

When I try to shrug off the proverb, my shoulders come over all heavy. I stare at the sign and re-read it several times. My academic background has taught

me that the word ‘culture’ is one of the most contested and problematic terms in the English language. Thus far, I’ve used it as flippantly in this body of work as the cultural tourism industry does; but this cannot continue. The proverb at Lesedi confuses me, and it isn’t only found at Lesedi. Sure enough, on a mural at Shakaland, one finds the same proverb. What does ‘culture’ even mean? And surely a zebra without stripes is no less a zebra? And so, I decided to write a chapter whereby I would attempt to negotiate the fuzzy concept of ‘culture’… using the equally fuzzy zebra as my key analytical device.

I’ll begin by looking at various attempts to define the word ‘culture’, followed by an examination of the connotations carried by the word, which stem from evolutionary and colonial thought. I’ll then look at what processes are intrinsic to the word, such as the tendency to essentialize ‘culture’ and place it within a hierarchy. How we understand ‘culture’ affects what we take from these cultural theme parks. Drawing on a recent debate as to whether the word ‘culture’ should be abandoned or not, I’ll consider whether man can live not only without the entity *that is* culture, but without the *word* that is ‘culture’.

Hunting the Zebra: an attempt to define ‘culture’

Take a quick look at the zebra stripes below (see figure 19). At first glance, the stripes are clear and defined, but gaze for any longer and they begin to blur and dance. They give you a headache. Just as it seems impossible to see this image as static and keep it still in our field of vision, it is equally impossible capture the elusive definition of culture.

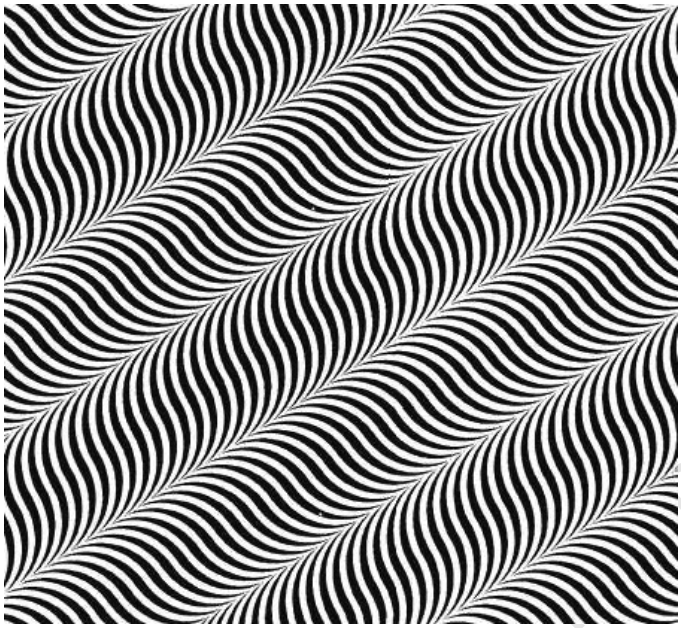

Figure 19: the zebra stripes illusion

Before turning to a dictionary, I first posed a question on a South African internet forum devoted to wildlife and heritage conservation, which I frequent (see www.sanparks.org/forums). I opened a new topic and asked simply, 'what does culture mean to you?' Within a few hours, the topic had become so heated and controversial that it was deleted by the website's moderators. Responses ranged from explanations drawn directly from the nearest dictionary, to people explaining why cultures were too incompatible and should not interact with each other; instead they ought to 'keep to themselves'. A moderator finally ended the topic by exclaiming, 'culture is yoghurt!' and locked the discussion, deleting it a day later (unexpectedly), leaving me without a record of it, and no closer to understanding what 'culture' means.

This exercise allowed me to observe firsthand the chaos that the word 'culture' can elicit. There can be no doubt: 'Culture' is an extraordinarily problematic word, well beyond the confines of academic discourse.

Now, it is widely believed that the zebra's stripes serve a primary purpose. They have evolved to allow the zebra a degree of camouflage, so as to avoid being caught by predators. The black and white colouring may have arisen as an evolutionary response to the lion's colour-blindness. It's ironic that the zebra's stripes produce such confusion, that they can prevent a predator spotting the zebra and pinning it to the ground. 'Culture' in turn produces such confusion that we too, fail to capture it. So, let us now imagine ourselves to be a hungry lion, desperate for a zebra lunch, and begin the hunt for a definition of culture.

Garuba and Raditlhalo (2008) explain that culture is indeed tricky to define, and give a list of five widely accepted definitions of culture. They place emphasis on the last two, which carry the most weight within anthropological discourse. In this instance, culture is defined as, 'the meanings, values, ways of life (cultures) shared by particular nations, groups, classes, periods' (Garuba & Raditlhalo, 2008: 38) and as, 'the practices which produce meaning- signifying practices' (ibid: 39). Using a similar approach to the word, Fanon (1963), states that, 'a culture is first and foremost the expression of a nation, its preferences, its taboos and its models' (Fanon, 1963: 177).

These definitions look at culture in a societal sense, but notice that all three of the quoted 'definitions' are fairly different and we aren't any closer to catching our cunning zebra. It may be helpful to look at the origins of the word. The Oxford English Dictionary (9th ed.) explains that 'culture' is from the Latin, 'cultura', meaning 'growing'. It is interesting to see the ways in which this organic conception of the word has affected our understanding of 'culture'.

First of the organic definitions are the rock-solid evolutionary understandings. 'Culture' is understood as something that evolved together with 'the large forebrain', and consists of 'extrinsic information coded in symbols' and is a 'condition of our viability as a species' (Sewell, 1999: 44). Chase (2006) similarly sees culture as a series of socially created codes and explains that genetic pre-disposition is a pre-requisite for the attainment of culture (see Chase, 2006: 14, 15).

I believe the intended meaning of the Lesedi proverb is best matched to these evolutionary ideas of what constitutes a 'culture'. Just as a zebra without stripes would lack what it relies on to survive, a man without culture would, too, lack what he requires in order to succeed in his environment. However, I doubt I'm the only one to find these evolutionary explanations of culture to be cold. It is as if they deduct the living, human element of culture, reducing it to the realm of the fossil- a scientific object. Bennetta (1991) tells us that a 'scientific Africa' (and I add, its cultures) has been invented to be placed under a 'microscope of cold scrutiny in the examination of human evolution' (Bennetta, 1991: 952). In an argument against this cold, scientific view of 'culture', Clifford & Marcus (1986), write that, 'cultures are not scientific objects (assuming such things exist, even in the natural sciences). Culture and our views of it are produced historically and are actively contested' (Clifford & Marcus, 1986: 18).

James Clifford provides us with a more 'living' explanation of culture. He draws upon the dictionary definition of culture and explains that the word is, 'deeply tied up with organic notions of growth, life, death- bodies that persist through time. All of the etymologies of the word go back to cultivation' (Clifford, 2003: 46). From this approach, culture is viewed as a body which grows. Yet it also pre-supposes a state of old-age and eventual death. T.S. Eliot supports this understanding of culture, when he explains that a culture is faced with, 'dangers of disintegration' when it reaches a 'highly developed state' (Eliot, 1948: 28). It's interesting that he uses the term, 'highly developed'. This indicates that he viewed cultures as hierarchical; a relic of colonial thought that I will later return to.

To further complicate the ways in which we seek to hunt down a tangible definition of culture, Brumann (1999) warns us that we must be 'careful not to say 'culture' when we mean 'society', group', 'tribe'…' (Brumann, 1999: s23).

Thornton (1988), views the attempt to define 'culture' as a sort of paradox, but explains, to a satisfying end, why an absolute definition is so impossible. 'This

is because the attempt to understand and to define culture, is also a part of culture (Thornton, 1988: 18). He goes on to say that, ‘an understanding of culture is not simply a knowledge of differences, but rather an understanding of how and why differences in language, thought, use of materials and behaviours have come about’ (Thornton, 1988: 25). I add that Thornton is constructing his theories on culture, from a South African perspective. Of South Africa, he explains that, ‘the apparent gulf that separates the different cultures in South Africa is… a historical product… the cultural differences are themselves created by cultural processes and span and encompass these very differences. This is part of what culture does’ (Thornton, 1988: 20). This South African explanation of cultural difference will be critical in the next chapter.

It appears that a concise and accepted definition of culture is not to be found. Like a lion after a frantic chase, we’re left dizzy and disorientated. Our zebra lives, but our mouths are watering. However, the above explanations will prove useful, as I go on to look at whether ‘culture’ is a fated word.

I must close this section by using an explanation of culture from T.S. Eliot. Simple explanations are always refreshing and this one seems right to conclude this section with. In his 124 page volume, ‘Notes Towards the Definition of Culture’, he hypothesizes that, ‘culture may even be described simply as that what makes life worth living’ (Eliot, 1948: 27).

About the Use of Animal Metaphors: did Lesedi choose their shebeen’s décor wisely?

I would briefly like to question whether it’s right that Lesedi displays this proverb. First it is necessary to look at the roots and use of the proverb form. The proverb genre itself is often associated with notions of the primitive. Speaking about African literature, Ngugi (1998) explains that the use of proverbs give stories an ‘African flavour’ (Ngugi, 1998: 120). Julien adds that the proverb form is, ‘seen as more authentic because (it) has antecedents in African cultures historically’ (Julien, 2006: 679). For early anthropologists,

‘the primitive… was rooted in orality’ (Ngugi, 1998: 107). Of course the proverb is derived from origins in orality. Thus, we have a proverb painted on the wall that provides an ‘African flavour’, but its form supposedly evokes notions of ‘primitive’.

Lesedi’s proverb is also made problematic by the fact that it falls under the category of ‘animal metaphor’. Remember how visitors to Lesedi sometimes believe that Africans ‘swing between trees’? There is much debate over the use of animal metaphors in African scholarship. Like the word ‘culture’ itself, animalistic metaphors are frequently bound to out-dated colonial and evolutionary representations of Africa and its people. In 2001, Mbembe wrote that, ‘a discourse on Africa is almost always deployed in the framework (or on the fringes of a meta-text) about the animal…’ (Mbembe, 2001: 1). The animal is used as a framework to understand Africa, and in our proverb, the zebra is used as a framework to understand African culture. The Lesedi proverb likens ‘African’ to 'animal’, and the cultural village does little to rectify any perceptions of Africans which may arise from the use of animal metaphors in its narrative.

Lesedi’s orientation video begins with majestic images of Africa’s wildlife (including zebras). Images of the ‘big five’ fill the screen. We watch sweeping aerial photography depicting vast herds of animals moving across an unnamed savannah. The DVD seamlessly merges back and forth between wildlife scenes, and shots of human activity. A degree of affinity is afforded to man and animal, and we’re told that both have occupied this continent since ‘early man took his first faltering steps’. The video that visitors have watched before touring the village would not have helped to eradicate any persisting colonial myths about animalistic characteristics allegedly possessed by Africans.

Reducing the human to the animal is still common, even romanticized. I was somewhat surprised to observe the following descriptions of the Kalahari’s Khoi-San, in a recent issue of ‘Wild’ magazine; a SANParks publication. ‘Elvis digs like a porcupine. That’s how he learned to dig, watching them’ (Siebert,

2009: 24). '*We* build *our* environment to fit with *us*; the Bushmen fit in with *their* environment. *They* are great conservationists' (Siebert, 2009: 33). 'Tracking is in *their* DNA… *they* almost become the animal, and display a connectedness to the earth which *we* have lost' (Holmes, in Siebert, 2009: 32). I've added my own emphasis to these quotes, which I find similar to the narrative played out at Lesedi which creates an unforgiving '*us*' and '*you*' binary. These animal metaphors and the language used to express them leads to the sort of cultural essentialism that threatens to overwhelm the use of the word 'culture'. I would argue that the romantic nature of these animal metaphors correspond to the messages transmitted at Lesedi Cultural village. The idea that visitors to the site might *want* to see essentialized 'culture', is the basis for my next argument.

Essentialism: I want to see a Disney Zebra!

I was most disappointed the first time I saw a real zebra in Africa. Having been raised on cartoons, I expected all zebras to be black and white. But my first zebra had grey stripes between the black ones, and some of the stripes looked faded. I later learned it to be a 'Burchell's Zebra'. I didn't realise that there are many different species of zebra. My Burchell's Zebra was a letdown; it wasn't a *real* zebra. I wanted to see what I shall refer to as the 'Disney Zebra', and wasn't going to be satisfied that I'd seen a zebra, until I saw the right zebra. I've discovered that my Disney Zebra most resembles a Cape Mountain Zebra. Mountain Zebras are a solid, un-faded black and white; pure and true. No grey here.

The five cultures on exhibit at Lesedi have no doubt been chosen because they live up to the expectations of the largely foreign visitors to the village. Lesedi provides the tourist with what they want to see, and the production is flawless. The more naïve tourists may leave after lunch, believing that all Africans live such uncomplicated lives, nothing 'modern' to interfere with their pristine, Rousseauean existence. You would never find a Burchell's Zebra at Lesedi.

Brumann (1999) describes the type of 'culture' on display at cultural villages like Lesedi. 'Whether anthropologists like it or not, it appears that people- and not only those with power, *want* culture, and they often want it in precisely the bounded, reified, essentialized, and timeless fashion that most of us now reject' (Brumann, 1999: s11). Yet the average tourist won't be told what aspects of the village are resurrected, and which are 'how people live today'. In my first chapter, I argued that Lesedi has the potential, and indeed the responsibility, to educate its visitors and leave them with an accurate representation of how 'culture' is practiced today in South Africa. Instead, they choose to present visitors with the Disney Zebra, and they'll be none the wiser.

I eventually found the grey striped Burchell's Zebra of cultural villages in the most surprising of places. While Lesedi keeps its informative narrative to a minimum (instead choosing to rely on theatrical production and colourful imagery), Sun City's 'Village People' cultural experience does the opposite.

The Village People visitor is led to a 'kraal' facing eight dramatically different huts in a semi-circle. Each belongs to one of the eight cultures that are represented at 'Village People'. At the site, emphasis is placed on the local cultures that currently exist within the Northwest Province and specifically the Batswana around the Rustenburg region, '*because most of the hundreds of people who work here at Sun City are from these cultures'*. The Zulu and Xhosa that a visitor may have some passing knowledge of, are represented here, but overshadowed in favour of those most relevant to the location itself. By taking this approach, the attraction is holding back their 'Disney Zebra', and choosing to display the unexpected and unessentialized.

The small group of visitors is taken to each hut, where a 'villager' emerges in traditional dress and begins to deliver a fast-paced lecture (perhaps a learned script?), providing thick descriptions of history, kinship structures, arts, customs and architecture. More facts are imparted in a couple of minutes than during a two hour program at Lesedi. But crucially, 'Village People' removes Lesedi's 'timeless' veneer from their presentation.

The rest of the hour-long program at Village People follows the same paradigm of transparency. No attempt is made to hide facts and objects from view, which wouldn't fit into the guest's essentialized, undiluted image of African 'culture'. Instead, efforts are made to challenge essentialized views of Africa. On my visit to Village People, I didn't interview any of my fellow guests after the program, but their smiles, enthusiasm and eagerness to talk to the guides was proof that the bold method of presentation was a great success. Should Lesedi too, add some grey stripes between the black and white ones and begin to de-construct some of the more essentialized images of Africa in their display? 'No two (zebras) have identical stripe patterns, nor are the two sides of the body mirror images of each other' (Penzhorn, 1988: 1). If Lesedi is going to use the word 'culture', is it viable to accompany with it a disclaimer that every 'culture' in Africa is unique, and has its own distinct pattern, including grey stripes? It is classically argued that the practice of essentializing cultures inevitably results in the formation of hierarchy, an idea I will discuss next.

Hierarchy: when stripes signify rank

I shall now return to the zebra's stripes. 'Stripes' are defined in the Oxford dictionary (2002) as 'long narrow bands' and 'strips of different colours'. However, there is a second definition we can use to re-interpret Lesedi's proverb. 'Stripes' also describe, 'a v-shaped strip sewn onto a uniform to show military rank'. In the light of this meaning, our proverb can be re-read. If stripes signify 'culture', then it follows that 'rank' is also bound up with ideas of culture. In this reading, stripes are worn to indicate rank and hierarchy, which brings me to a classic problem presented by the word 'culture'; that is its implicit undertones of hierarchy and ordering.

Abu-Lughod (1991) has argued that in the classical anthropological sense, 'culture is the essential tool for making 'other'…' and, 'culture is important to anthropologists because the anthropological distinction between self and other rests on culture' (Abu-Lughod, 1991: 143). She states also that,

'…cultural theories tend to overemphasize coherence' ask asks whether difference 'always smuggles in hierarchy' (Abu-Lughod, 1991: 146).

I would respond that given current understandings of culture, and the word's colonial roots, that 'difference' in this sense, *does* indeed 'smuggle in hierarchy'. The innate human compulsion to organize, compare and order objects on scales, is a result of a paradigm; a way of seeing and making sense of the world. The notion of 'culture' finds itself trapped in this linear world-view. In struggles for power or legitimacy, 'culture' is a tool by which one group can construct and claim some sort of superiority over another.

Traditionally, 'cultures' have been ordered in the following way, explained by Garuba & Raditlhalo (2008). 'The closer a culture or group was to European criteria of civilization, the higher up it could be found on the scale' (Garuba & Raditlhalo, 2008: 39). However, I argue that the narrative employed at Lesedi, turns traditional 'cultural ordering' on its head; and in the process, twists the traditional understanding of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital.

As we have already learned, a harsh binary between 'us' and 'you' is constructed throughout Lesedi's cultural presentation. Because Lesedi's zebra metaphor involves just that- a zebra- 'culture' is portrayed as an 'African thing'. Bruner (2005) tells us that, 'most people in most societies take their culture for granted and do not ordinarily think about it' (Bruner, 2005: 119). This is especially true of western cultures, which had once imagined themselves at the top of a hierarchy of civilization. I believe that Lesedi's orientation video reinforces the idea that the West is without 'culture', and that tourists must come to Africa to learn what 'culture' is, because it is something special that won't be found in their own backyards. Thus, I argue that Lesedi Cultural Village grants itself cultural capital – 'secrets' and insider knowledge of customs that the culturally underprivileged Westerner can only have bestowed upon them by Lesedi.

In explaining her term, 'ornamentalism', Eileen Julien (2006), states that, 'In the West and even in Africa, the African is ornamental, invited at the whimsy and for the pleasure of the hegemonic host' (Julien, 2006: 673). At Lesedi, the African clearly remains 'ornamental'- there to be photographed and gazed upon by western 'others'. Yet in the light of the above ideas relating to 'cultural capital', It can be argued that at Lesedi, it is the West who is 'invited at the whimsy' for the 'pleasure of the hegemonic host'.

It has previously been mentioned that throughout the region where Lesedi is situated (the Cradle of Humankind), the visitor is exposed to the evolutionist narrative that, '*we are all Africans'* because this is where our '*collective umbilical cord lies buried'* (see figure 7) and are thus warmly '*welcomed home'* (see figure 8). Lesedi appears to abandon this collective approach and constructs a hierarchical narrative which seems to say: '*We* are African, *you* are not. *We* have culture, *you* do not'. In short, the village exists to essentialize and emphasize cultural difference.

Given that the word 'culture' is impossible to define, has connotations rooted in colonial thought about the 'primitive' and 'animal' and it serves to essentialize differences and construct hierarchies, it comes as no surprise that some academics are proposing that the concept of 'culture' be abandoned altogether.

Lesedi's proverb can be read in a more literal sense. 'A Man without Culture' might refer to a man who does not possess the word 'culture' in his language. In anthropological discourse, it has become a popular thought exercise to imagine a world where the word 'culture' is deleted not only from anthropological use, but, more implausibly, from the English dictionary.

Let us ponder the zebra's stripes. Their black and white pattern conjures up images that have come to represent the idea of confinement. Bars and stripes fall across buildings to which nothing can enter or escape, especially in a security-minded South Africa. Furthermore, black and white stripes feature as the standard adornment of prisoners, if only in children's cartoons. Either

way, this is how I imagine the word ‘culture’. As bound to inescapable connotations and paradigms, unable to escape and reform itself in an enlightened and fresh-air environment.

In 1991, Lila Abu-Lughod wrote a piece called, ‘Writing Against Culture’, which spearheaded a debate about the contemporary use of the word ‘culture’. She explains that the term once served a purpose, but it may have overstayed its welcome. ‘The notion of culture, despite a long usefulness, may now have become something anthropologists would want to work against in their theories, ethnographic practice and ethnographic writing’ (Abu-Lughod, 1991: 138). She goes on to criticize the anthropological use of the term, arguing that most anthropologists ‘believe or act as if ‘culture’, notoriously resistant to definition and ambiguous of referent, is nevertheless the true object of anthropological inquiry’ (Abu-Lughod, 1991: 143). She argues for the confining nature of the word, by stating that, ‘despite its anti-essentialist intent… the culture concept retains some of the tendencies to freeze difference…’ (Abu-Lughod, 1991: 144).

Importantly, Abu-Lughod cites that the ‘most problematic connotations of culture’ are, ‘homogeneity, coherence and timelessness’, and proposes a solution for their subversion; ‘by focusing on particular individuals and their changing relationships’ (Abu-Lughod, 1991: 154), a method she refers to as ‘ethnography of the particular’. However I do not believe her ‘ethnography of the particular’ solves the problems with ‘culture’ she wishes to solve. By publishing ethnographies focused on the individual, I would argue she is simply producing oral history and storytelling. In 1999, she defended her use of ‘ethnography of the particular’, but note the somewhat defeatist past-tense form she employs, as if to admit a degree of failure. ‘I *explored* ways to write against the typifying of communities that results from thinking of them as ‘cultures’, and I *tried* to highlight the contestatory nature of discourses within communities’ (Abu-Lughod, 1999: 122, emphasis added). She must remember how knowledge of a culture is produced. Speaking on the sort of ethnographic ‘thick description’ that Abu-Lughod advocates, Clifford (1988) explains that, fields of synecdoches are created in which parts are related the

wholes, and by which the whole- what we often call culture, is constituted' (Clifford, 1988: 38). And so it is precisely through individual examples, that certain qualities come to epitomize the culture as a whole. The macro is inevitably derived from the micro.

So then, according to Lila Abu-Lughod, the word 'culture' evokes an impression of wholeness; the complete, the closed. It is for this reason that she argues it is time to write 'against culture', and abandon the word. Clifford (1988) agrees that, 'expectations of wholeness, continuity and essence have long been built into the linked Western ideas of culture…' (Clifford, 1988: 233). Furthermore, he states that 'the idea of culture carries with it an expectation of roots, of a stable, territorialized existence' (Clifford, 1988: 338). Such views do in fact imprison and 'freeze' our ability to understand the concept of 'culture', as they do not allow for the possibility of cultural change.

In 1999, Christoph Brumann wrote a response to Abu-Lughod, imaginatively titled, 'Writing for Culture'. Here, he argues that, 'the unwelcome connotations are not inherent in the concept, but associated with certain usages that have been less standardized than these critics assume'. He goes on to explain that 'culture' sceptics concern themselves with notions such as 'boundedness' and 'homogeneity', yet fail to account for 'social reality', which he says is, 'characterized by variability, inconsistencies, conflict, change and individual agency' (Brumann, 1999: s1). He believes that 'cultures have no natural boundaries but only those that people (anthropologists as well as others) give them…' (Brumann, 1999: 6). He is telling us that the word 'culture' has been made 'bad', but in reality, it is still a useful concept for understanding the phenomena it seeks to explain.

Sherry Ortner (1999) agrees with Brumann that the word 'culture' should not be 'banished'. 'Rather, the issue is… one of reconfiguring this enormously productive concept for a changing world, a changing relationship between politics and academic life, and a changing landscape of theoretical possibilities (Ortner, 1999: 8). But I would be quick to question how easy it would be to 'reconfigure' the concept of culture. When a zebra is born, their

stripes are already as they will remain for the rest of their lives. As the zebra foal grows into adulthood, its form will expand and change just as the world around it does, but the configuration of its stripes is fixed for life. Does the use of 'culture' share the same fate as the zebra's stripes?

Lila Abu-Lughod (1999) argues that the word 'culture' shares many of the problems associated with the word 'race' (Abu-Lughod, 1999: s14). Indeed, the words 'culture' and 'race' share the same origins (see Erasmus, 2008: 170), and under South Africa's apartheid regime, 'race' and 'culture' were 'inseparable' (Erasmus, 2008: 172). Even today, many use the two words interchangeably.

We must remember that the 'culture' debate is taking place within specialized academic circles. While the word is being questioned by a small enclave, its use has flourished well beyond its anthropological origins. Garuba and Raditlhalo (2008) tell us that, 'culture is suddenly present everywhere- from the smallest event of everyday life to the most rarified levels of academic analysis.' They declare a 'recent resurgence of culture' (Garuba & Raditlhalo, 2008: 35). It seems that like the once extinct Quagga, the word 'culture' has made a comeback and it's more popular than ever. It is for this reason I will argue that the word simply cannot be reconfigured.

I mentioned earlier that Bruner (2005) argues, 'most people in most societies take their culture for granted and do not ordinarily think about it'. But he continues, 'However, in times of change… people are led to examine their culture' (Bruner, 2005: 119). Take the example of South Africa, a country experiencing tremendous change. Here, 'culture' has been taken up by the public both as a means to initiate change and to cope with change. 'In South Africa, culture has always been regarded as a significant tool of struggle and resistance and more recently as a means of constructing new identities.' (Garuba & Raditlhalo, 2008: 43).

'Culture' may be a historical construct pilfered by anthropologists intent on colonial-style ordering, but it has now been appropriated by a world where it

allows for a more personal type of ordering; for the lay observer to make sense of his existence and his position within a cosmos. It creates and strengthens identities. Ngugi (2000) argues that, 'it is culture which enables a community to imagine and re-imagine itself in history (Ngugi, 2000: 3).

So despite its uncertain definitions and conflicting understanding of the word, 'culture' has been latched upon and used as an analytical tool by those who are most pressed to find an identity. Ortner say that the 'fate of culture will depend on its uses' (Ortner, 1999: 11), and I believe that 'culture' will continue to evade definition, but will gain strength in the uses mentioned above.

To put it simply, as problematic as the word is, 'culture' means a great deal to those who use it. The passionate responses (and subsequent confrontations) drawn out when I asked users of an internet forum what 'culture' meant to them, is evidence of this. Many responded that they couldn't explain what culture meant, but considered culture to be something deeply 'personal' and significant. Returning to T.S. Eliot's definition of the word, 'culture' makes 'life worth living'; it makes us human somehow… but no one seems to posses the words to explain why. Remembering our proverb, there are certainly masses of individuals to whom a life without their marks of culture, is as inconceivable as a zebra without stripes.

What might happen if we *were* to abandon the word? What could possibly replace it? Brumann explains that many advocate a shift from 'culture' to 'cultural' (Brumann, 1999: s2). One such advocate is Appadurai (1996) who finds himself, 'frequently troubled by the word culture as a noun but centrally attached to the adjectival form of the word, that is, cultural'. He suggests that 'cultural' as an adjective 'moves one into a realm of differences, contrasts and comparisons that is more helpful' (Appadurai, 1996: 12). However, 'cultural' would surely retain the connotations that have come to be associated with 'culture'.

I side with Brumann (1999), when he explains that, 'dropping 'culture(s)'…will leave us without a word to name those clusters that ill-shaped though they

may be, are nonetheless out there and do play an important role…' (Brumann, 1999: 9). He admits the word carries inherent flaws, but that it still has its uses. To illustrate his point, he challenges his reader to re-write a novel without 'e', or to re-write Abu-Lughod's work without using the word 'culture', and 'decide for yourself' whether 'culture can be erased from our language (Brumann, 1999: 24). Brumann concludes his '*Writing for Culture'* by saying that, 'any scientific concept is a simplifying construct that has its costs, but on the advantages have been found to outweigh these costs, it should be employed with a clear conscience' (Brumann, 1999: 13).

Perhaps it may be time to abandon not the word 'culture', but the attack on it. Because the word has moved well beyond the domain of elite scholarship, it seems too late to reconfigure it, as Ortner proposes. 'Culture' (whatever it means) is here to stay.

Re-Decorate Lesedi's Shebeen?

So we find that a man cannot live without his 'culture'; be it the word itself, or the elusive entity 'out-there' that the word seeks to describe. If I were to be tasked with re-decorating Lesedi's shebeen, besides toning down the colours, I would paint over the zebra metaphor. If I had to replace it with another metaphor, I'd use Ngugi's: '*Culture is to a community what a flower is to a plant'* (Ngugi, 2000: 3). It remains a 'nature' oriented metaphor, but by removing the zebra and replacing it with a plant, its meaning and connotations are significantly transformed. The flower, like 'culture', is living and it grows. It isn't timeless- bound and fixed like a zebra's stripes. A flower adds colour; it isn't a solid black or white. Ngugi's metaphor doesn't essentialize; flowers are infinitely diverse. Replacing the zebra metaphor with this one removes any suggestion that animals may be equated to human beings. We could wipe some of the ornamental flavour from the shebeen wall and tone it down. 'Culture is to a community what a flower is to a plant', would provoke thought; something for the Lesedi tourist to think hard about as they peruse the curio shop.

Culture Collecting as Trophy Hunting

In my first chapter I referred to Lesedi's different cultures as the 'Big 5' (Zulu, Xhosa, Pedi, Sotho & Ndebele). I argued that visitors to Lesedi were on a sort of Safari expedition, looking to 'collect' different cultures.

With their cameras they hunt and capture cultures. Images and memories of other cultures are brought home and put on display. 'Culture' in this context becomes as the zebras skin, stripped from its living parts and transitioned from 'life' to changeless 'commodity'. Perhaps it is set down upon a floor to act as an ornamental rug. At best, the striped skin would adorn a wall, hanging as a trophy.

Branding: The mark of culture

I present one final 'zebra' related thought experiment, to introduce the theme of the coming chapter. A Zebra's stripes serve as individuating marks, a unique *branding* of identity, just as culture is physically marked onto the human body in the form of dress and décor. A zebra inhabiting a game farm may additionally be branded with a man-made identifying mark, something unnatural, used to differentiate it from its fellow *equid* friends. The next chapter deals with the notions of culture and ethnicity and how these come to be 'branded', in more ways than one.

Finally, it seems even the zebras stripes cannot be understood

Let us recall the meaning of Lesedi's zebra proverb; that man is made by his culture, just as a zebra is made by his stripes. We've seen how deeply problematic it is to say a man is made by his culture, but what about the zebra? At the beginning of this chapter I remarked that surely a zebra without stripes is 'no less a zebra'. I could not resist including the following two quotes taken from studies concerning zebra biology, which prove that the zebra's stripes are just as contested as 'culture'.

'Stripes, the molecules tell us, do make a zebra' (Miller, 1985: 70)

❖

'The various affinities within the subgenus Equus, of the living, striped equids explain why stripes do not a zebra make…' (Bennett, 1980: 273)

In this chapter, I have interrogated the concept of 'culture' through the examination of a proverb displayed in Lesedi's shebeen. We have learned that culture is a fluid concept and is almost impossible to capture. Because of its use in the public domain, it can almost certainly never be eradicated from the English language. By examining the uses of 'culture' at Lesedi and other tourist attractions, we have learned how 'culture' is understood, constructed and employed in South Africa and within South Africa's tourism narrative. The next chapter interrogates another problematic keyword in South Africa: 'ethnicity'.

Chapter 4: 'Ethnicity' at Lesedi and Beyond

I'm now sitting in the cinema room and enjoying my day at Lesedi Cultural Village. The film was 'interesting', but I'm eager to go and 'meet the villagers' now. That's why I came. Suddenly the doors to the left open and light filters into the blackened room. We stream out in single file and, armed with the information leaflet we've just been handed, follow our guide out into Lesedi Cultural Village. On foot, I soon learn that it isn't one village, it's five. Each one is distinctly bounded from the next and separated by lengthly walkways through the bushveld. I know where I am by the small signposts outside each village, which read simply 'Sotho', 'Zulu', 'Xhosa', 'Pedi' or 'Ndebele' (see figure 20).

Defining Ethnicity is Like Trying to Define Culture

Like 'culture', the definition of the word 'ethnicity' is elusive and difficult to capture. 'Ethnicity', the Comaroff's (2009) tell us, has fallen into 'taken-for-granted usage' (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009: 38), making it a challenging concept to theorize.

The Comaroff's (2009) argue that ethnicity, 'is neither a monolithic 'thing' nor, in and of itself, an analytical construct'. Therefore, ethnicity is, 'best understood as a loose, labile repertoire of signs by means of which relations are constructed and communicated; through which a collective consciousness of cultural likeness is rendered sensible; with reference to which shared sentiment is made substantial' (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009: 38).

An important dimension in the framing of 'ethnicity' comes from contemporary definitions of the word, where a pattern emerges. Van der Waal (2008)

explains that ethnicity is ‘always a process of identity formation that occurs between two or more social identities that oppose each other’ (Van der Waal, 61: 2008). Similarly, in 1988, Sharp identified that ethnic groups were the result of separation, defining ethnicity as, ‘the political process by which people seek to form groups, and to differentiate one set of peoples from another, by appealing to the idea of ineluctable cultural difference’ (Sharp, 1988: 80).

If ethnic groups are always constructed in this pattern of opposition, Lesedi (perhaps unknowingly) acts a tangible model of this process. The village’s design is such that each separate ‘village’ is bounded and contained. The marked footpaths between each village are long and winding, creating the impression of vacant space between the different village presentations (see map; figure 21). When standing on these paths, one can never see more than one village. The pathways are largely empty, dotted with the occasional ‘nomadic’ chicken. The attraction’s layout then, serves to accentuate the perceived differences between the various ethnicities on offer.

There is also a ‘primordial’ component in the understanding of ethnicity. Comaroff and Comaroff (2008), explain ethnicity as being concocted in a ‘most primordial fusion of blood and culture’, emphasizing that the term is a blend of both biological and social components (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2008: 79, 80). Sharp (1988) clarifies that within colonial thought, Africans were said to comprise a series of primordial groups (Sharp, 1988: 94). It is interesting to note that the word ‘primordial’ frequently arose within African ethnic discourse. To speak of the primordial, is to speak of something in its most raw form. Recall the ‘primordial soup’, something basic, elemental and existing in the very beginning. At Maropeng, the primordial is evoked to such an extent that the visitor finds themselves in a reconstructed primordial environment, to ‘witness’ the first ‘sparks’ of life. It can be said then, that the ‘Cradle’ where Lesedi stands, is splattered with the primordial soup narrative.

Influenced by the enduring notion of the ‘primordial’, Jan Smuts once remarked that, ‘…Our Bushmen are nothing but living fossils whose

contemporaries disappeared from Europe many thousands of years ago' (Smuts, 1925: 16). Reflecting on such a position, Dubow (2007) explains that to liken the Bushmen to 'evolutionary curiosities' and preserve them as such, was 'commensurate with racial attitudes during the segregationalist era' (Dubow, 2007: 14).

But I argue here that because Lesedi plays extensively upon the novelty of cultural difference, sips heavily on a primordial soup, and exhaustively reiterates its location within the Cradle of Humankind, it too portrays its 'subjects' as 'evolutionary curiosities'. Hamilton (1998) describes Shakaland as a place where 'visitors were primed to re-imagine questions of differences and similarities' (Hamilton, 1998: 200). Indeed they inevitably do, and to a much greater extent at Lesedi, where the visitor is introduced to not only one culture, but five separate ones. However, we have established that 'culture', 'ethnicity' and their resulting 'differences', are constructed and political in nature. In the last chapter, it was argued that these concepts may have overstayed their use. So now we must ask *why* these terms have become such fixtures in South African contemporary discourse.

Problems with 'Ethnicity'

To understand why the word 'ethnicity' is such a problem, I place it alongside the words, 'culture', 'tribe' and 'race'. These four concepts are frequently coded together and used interchangeably. I add that 'religion' may also fit within this group, but will not be discussed here. Ethnicity has found itself coded with a set of words with different historical uses, who have found themselves converging in the modern day, often blending to signify the same thing. Each of these words has been garnished with immeasurable connotations and have found themselves hopeless to define. Thus, each in turn has been called up for abolishment or for re-evaluation. We have already discussed Lila Abu-Lughod's appeal to abolish 'culture'. 'Tribe' is quickly gaining negative connotations and is now frowned upon in academic circles, even being expunged as a 'keyword', as we shall learn. Zimitri Erasmus (2008) critiques 'race' by telling us that,

'We need to start thinking about unmaking race. Race is not found in nature or society. In other words, race is not given. The idea that race is biologically given was produced by modern science, which did not stand outside but rather was intricately shaped by the complex matrices of thought and culture, and by the politics of imperialism at the time' (Erasmus, 2008: 178).

'Ethnicity' too, is in the throes of re-evaluation and re-construction, as will be demonstrated in a coming section. What matters though, as I have argued in my chapter dealing with 'culture', is that the word 'culture' has become too internalized by a 'general public', and the evolution of its use will not come easily. Here I add the words 'tribe', 'race' and, importantly, 'ethnicity' to this predicament.

One such attempt to redefine and evolve the concepts of 'ethnicity' and 'tribe' as they pertain to the 'new' South Africa comes from Burgess (2002). In his book, 'New SA Tribes', he puts an economic spin on the entrenched idea of the 'tribe', reclassifying South Africa's population into a set of 'new tribes', pertaining not to language group or geographical positioning, *a la* Group Areas act of 1950, but to their perceived new roles in the global consumer market. By naming the 'new tribes' such things as 'Matchbox Suburban Youth' (pg 57), 'Earth Mothers' (pg 64) and 'Highveld Survivalists' (pg 53), Burgess makes a sore attempt at healing and re-evaluating the concepts of 'tribe' and 'ethnicity', instead trivializing concepts that still weigh heavily on South African society.

The Unique Understanding of 'Ethnicity' in South Africa

After navigating a series of paths, our group has reached the first 'village' on the tour. We've all stood around a pile of rocks, rather uncomfortably, and eyed each other suspiciously after being instructed to spit on a rock and throw it onto the pile 'for luck' on the

journey (see figure 22). It is what the Zulus do - apparently. In our group of sixteen, just two discreetly 'spit' onto their rocks. We wait as an impressive looking Zulu climbs up to a platform to greet us. Before being allowed into the village, we must yell for permission, and we do it with the same restrained 'enthusiasm' that we mustered to spit on our rocks. "UKU-KHULEKA!" Now involved in the production ourselves, we are instructed to yell louder! "UKU-KHULEKA!" This time, the barrier is lifted and we make our way into the Zulu village. I only hope I'll be fed there. The pancakes are still on my mind and I don't know how I'll make it through three more villages without lunch.

Mngomezulu (1999) cites the *group areas act of 1950* as one law that 'whilst not being the only act that consolidated ethnicity', did 'play a crucial role in conscientising South Africa's black population of the differences that existed between them'. However, it was the *bantu authorities act of 1951* which legislated for the creation of ethnic 'Bantustans', which served to categorize South Africans in terms of ethnicity rather than just race. Not only did these acts divide the map of the nation on ethnic lines, but they also forced the mass relocations of individuals based on their presumed ethnic belonging. It is ironic that Lesedi contains similar bounded, 'group areas', housing their Zulu, Xhosa, Pedi, Sotho and Ndebele

In the creation and resulting context of apartheid, ethnic labels assisted in forming what Sharp refers to as 'convenient units of people' (Sharp, 1988: 90), whom under the vision of apartheid, might each reach their 'potential' and become a 'sovereign nation' (Sharp, 1988: 79). The apartheid idea that these groups may 'evolve' into sovereign nations coincide with old ideas of the 'tribe'. Skalnik (1988) describes the concept of the 'tribe' as being 'discreet cultural - linguistic political units'. With these units, there comes an

assumption that they have ‘continued, unchanged, into the present’. Skalnik points out that these ‘tribes’ that were said to exist in pre-colonial Africa corresponded with the various ‘nation states’ in South Africa’ (Skalnik, 1988: 74). Defining ‘tribe’ in this sense, echoes our attempt to define ‘ethnicity’.

This commentator was writing at a time when the apartheid regime was being dismantled. The concept of the ‘tribe’ still played an important role in South Africa’s understanding of its identity. As such, the word featured in the significant 1988 publication of, ‘South African Keywords’. Interesting then, to note that the former ‘keyword’ didn’t survive to see inclusion in the most recent publication of the volume, entitled, ‘New South African Keywords’, printed 20 years after the original in 2008. In this most recent edition, the ‘ethnicity’ chapter (written by Comaroff & Comaroff) seems to continue where ‘tribe’ left off in 1988.

So it seems that ‘tribe’ is no longer a ‘keyword’ in South Africa; at least not within post-apartheid academic discourse. This isn’t to say that the word no longer holds great bearing beyond the space of academics. Skalnik (1988) tells us that, ‘anthropologists managed to implant the word ‘tribe’ into almost everyone’. The word came to be synonymous with notions of ‘the primitive’, ‘tradition’, the ‘savage’ and ‘backwardness’ (Skalnik, 1988: 70).

‘Tribe’ has an indispensible relationship with the word ‘race’, a word which also found its critical place in South African society during the apartheid era. In one sense, the word ‘tribe’ was simply used as a tool to explain subdivisions in race (see Skalnik, 1988: 68), because within colonial discourse it was widely understood that ‘Africans’ belonged to ‘tribes’ whereas Europeans belonged to seemingly more ‘evolved’ nation states. ‘Tribe’ was not only ascribed to the people of ‘darkest Africa’, by colonial European imagination, but more significantly, it became internalized by those it had been assigned to. Sharp (1988) explains that, ‘…Africans have remained interested in, and concerned with, the specifications or regional or ‘tribal’ practices’, all without ‘subscribing to the apartheid vision of primordial ethnic groups’ (Sharp, 1988: 98). Not only are South Africans ‘interested’ in

ethnicity, but Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) explain that many 'attach their personal fate' to it (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009: 50). The implications that arise from these interests, especially in spaces like Lesedi, will be discussed shortly.

At Lesedi I have mentioned that the display hinges on the idea that for an unidentified (presumably pre-historic) amount of time, the 'ethnicities' on display at the village have remained frozen in a 'traditional' and distinctly 'tribal' way of life. One only needs to watch their introductory video to recognize this. The illusion is painted that these tribal and ethnic distinctions are – here comes the word again – '*primordial*' in nature. The visitor to Lesedi consumes any imagery associated with the 'tribe' as hungrily as a famished researcher who has been let loose in a pancake café.

Yet Skalnik (1988) questions whether these 'tribes', on which so much of our contemporary understanding is based, ever existed at all. He explains that 'scholars now recognize that the early African population was not culturally or linguistically homogenous' (Skalnik, 1988: 74), instead groups evolved and intermixed, creating infinite new cultural forms and what we now call 'ethnicities', along the way. What does this mean for the presentation at cultural villages like Lesedi?

The day is nearly over. We've just come from the Pedi village and have been led to a sort of 'holding area' with a cash bar. We're encouraged to buy 'refreshments' (alcohol) because we're told we will need it for 'what's coming next'. I'm a little nervous. I don't buy anything, because I'm primed for cinnamon pancakes and a small bag of salty chips will not suffice. After standing in this area for some while (giving me ample time to informally interview my fellow guests), we're invited into Lesedi's famous 'dance boma'.

As I enter the boma, my eyes cannot adapt to the darkness. I see only a fire burning in the centre of the room. Its comforting smell and warmth are much welcomed on this cold day. I find my seat and my eyes begin to adjust. I'm surprised at what I see. At the back of the room sit many of the characters I'd met that morning in the villages. The sangoma takes centre stage. Beside her sits the 'Zulu warrior' who had demonstrated his spear throwing abilities to us. He now sits sullen in a Pedi kilt.

Post-apartheid, South Africa has branded itself as the 'Rainbow Nation' in an attempt to reconcile differences from the past and draw a new tourist market to the country. The 'rainbow' is a reference to the various ethnicities represented in this vast and diverse country. A strong selling-point of 'rainbow nationalism' is South Africa's eleven official languages, proclaimed in 1994. We know that language is linked incontestably to 'ethnicity'. It is for this reason that Lesedi's owners wish to see nine of these eleven languages eventually represented at the site; the obvious exclusions being the two official languages of apartheid South Africa: English and Afrikaans, which would not fit with international imaginings of 'tribal' Africa.

Presently, South Africa still proudly refers to itself as the 'Rainbow Nation' and employs a 'rainbow nationalist' narrative. But what is a 'rainbow nation'? It was first coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and has since been used extensively. Taylor & Foster (1997), describe it as being a metaphor which accepts a 'multi-racial outlook'. A metaphor designed then, to show that South Africans belong to the same 'rainbow' (the 'nation') yet the people of the rainbow belong to different strands. These authors go on to explain that, 'all is not rosy for non-racialism though, as there are countervailing pressures… the 'rainbow nation metaphor'… is not a good metaphor' (Taylor & Foster, 1997: 8). But why is it not a good metaphor?

Habib (1996) points out that a metaphor's purpose is to 'appeal to as wide an audience as possible'. He explains that the 'rainbow nation' metaphor is 'cloaked in an aura of patriotism that makes it difficult for critics to interrogate the metaphor and expose the political assumptions that underlie it' (Habib, 1996).

Yet although 'difficult for critics to interrogate', the 'rainbow nation' metaphor fits nicely with South Africa's intentions to introduce itself to the world as an emerging tourist destination. In this context, the rainbow makes a glowing impression; colour and light after the stormy, isolated days of apartheid. It symbolizes a future. Tourists at Lesedi are introduced to the rainbow nation concept before the film, when the guide waves a pointer over the map of South Africa, and exclaims, 'we are the place of light in this rainbow nation' (see figure 23).

In the tourist context, the rainbow nation is a good metaphor. It is a cleverly marketed slogan that establishes a promising image in the minds of visitors. Perhaps Taylor and Foster (1997) believe it to be a poor metaphor because it has come to contradict its original intentions. Habib (1996) says that the 'notion of the rainbow nation projects an image of different racial groups coming together and living in harmony' (Habib, 1996). Rather, Nuttall & Michael (2000), offer that the, 'rainbow nation has in fact been about polite proximities, about containment, which is antithetical to a notion of the 'creole'' (Nuttall & Michael, 2000: 6). It seems that a metaphor intended to signify ethnic harmony, can also come to symbolize and accentuate ethnic difference. It is then not *always* a good metaphor.

Robins (2000) sees the 'rainbow nation' as a sort of replacement for 'tribe'. '*Throughout the apartheid years Africans were the object of exoticizing and essentializing tribal discourses that were clothed in the language of apartheid multiculturalism. In the post-apartheid era it would appear that multiculturalism and the celebration of cultural diversity of the 'rainbow nation' have replaced, and at the same time reproduced, the tribal discourses'* (Robins, 2000: 416). 'Freedom' under the rainbow originally meant that South Africa was free to be

'one nation' – one rainbow. And yet, freedom under the rainbow metaphor now frequently finds its interpretation as freedom to be Zulu, or Pedi or Sotho, not to be 'one nation'. The rainbow can thus come to represent a series of alternative modalities; new and multiple ways-of-being in the 'nation'.

Lesedi's cultural manager feels strongly that South Africa is 'one nation'. He told me that, '*we need to celebrate because we are one nation. We are not divided anymore'*. Our interview took place at the time when South Africa was recovering from a wave of violent xenophobic attacks, and the topic was fresh in Mr. Nkosana's mind. While the crisis of May 2008 was directed at foreign nationals, animosity is rife between South Africa's ethnicities. '*I hate xenophobia. I hate it!*' he remarked passionately. He feels strongly that Lesedi has an important role to play as 'a place of healing'.

Given previous observations, it seems unlikely Lesedi can serve as a major 'place of healing' for South Africans, as the site is not accessible for the majority of the population. 'Healing' cannot come from tourism either. Koch & Massyn (2001) suggest that the tourist industry is not a significant source of national reconciliation for South Africans (Koch & Massyn, 2001: 163).

If you look at a manmade 'cartoon' image of a rainbow, it comprises six colours, distinctly bound from each other, a little like Lesedi. But if you look to the sky after the rain, and look closely at a natural rainbow, the colours subtly blend and blur together. There are not six, or even eleven colours, but countless ones. Familiar colours sit alongside less recognized intermediary stages. This rainbow gives us a constructive image for interrogating the concept of ethnicity.

People of the Lost Cultural Village: Rainbow Nation

I used the closed villages and long pathways at Lesedi to describe the ways in which ethnicity is thought of today in contemporary South Africa. A compartmentalized and divided format reflects the wider society beyond

Lesedi's discreet electrified fences, and there are no rainbows to be seen. Conversely, I liken the topography of Village People at Sun City to a natural rainbow. The village is even presented in the shape of an arc (see figure 28). The visitor stands in a courtyard and looks out upon eight different huts positioned in a semi-circle before them. Like Lesedi's layout, I doubt Sun City's layout is intentional, but it can be used as a valuable analytical tool.

Mngomezulu (1999) argues that 'compartmentalizing the nation into ethnic groupings' becomes an 'ungrounded egoistic enterprise' for the simple reason that these groupings 'don't last long, but keep on changing all the time' (Mngomezulu, 1999: 5). When ethnicity is 'changing all the time', at what point do cultural attractions step back and re-evaluate what is now considered to be an 'authentic' depiction of a particular ethnicity? With Lesedi's planned expansion, the idea of cultural change and ethnic flexibility may be taken into account, but given the rigid format currently employed, this seems unlikely.

A response to this problem comes from the !Kung. It is said that the !Kung 'reject the notion that their culture can be depicted in an authentic way'. Instead, they 'stress that their culture is constantly adapting to new circumstances' and 'prefer to talk of an 'oorkruisingskultuur' (cross-over culture), rather than a static set of traditions' (Koch & Massyn, 2001: 161). I argue that this 'oorkruisingskultuur' approach is applied at Sun City to a slightly greater extent than at Lesedi, because they explain that cultures change over time and new ethnicities are created. But I argue also that the approach is difficult to express in a cultural village setting.

Ranger (1983) further emphasizes the importance of viewing ethnicity and culture as an 'oorkruisingskultuur'. I quote him at length:

'These societies had certainly valued custom and continuity but custom was loosely defined and infinitely flexible. Custom helped to maintain a sense of identity but it also allowed for and adaptation so spontaneous and natural that it was unperceived. Moreover, there rarely existed in fact the closed corporal

consensual system which came to be accepted as characteristics of 'traditional Africa' (Ranger, 1983: 247).

He goes on to explain that it is at a certain point where traditions 'stop changing', and cites this turning point as the time when 'traditions relating to community identity were written down in court records'. When such processes began to unfold, 'a new and unchanging body of tradition (was) created' (Ranger, 1983: 247), thus rendering flexibility nearly impossible.

Further demonstrating the ability of legal and political processes to affect ethnicity, Skalnik (1988) states that 'tribes' are 'not natural or immutable social groups'. He reveals that the Native Administration Act 38 of 1927, clearly proves that 'tribes' can be 'divided, amalgamated and have chiefs appointed to them'. In short, 'tribes' are 'created' (Skalnik, 1988: 75).

Lesedi adheres to these strict institutionalized ethnic groupings; the ones created and emphasized in South Africa through a long history of national instability. Remember the 'cartoon rainbow' and the empty spaces between separate villages. This presentation is clear-cut, packaged comfortably to fit into South Africa's cultural tourism framework, and from my own observations, leaves visitors to the site with a high level of customer satisfaction.

It isn't only the arc shaped design of Village People, but the information provided by the guides, that reinforces the impression of a rainbow with un-bounded colours. At Sun City, there is much emphasis on the ethnic makeup of the local community: the Batswana, the Bakgatla, the Bantwana and the Bafokeng to name a few. It is also explained that the local Bantwana people are a mixture of Pedi and Batswana, a simple fact that serves to break down the idea that these ethnicities are historically fixed and timeless, and adds much needed elements of complexity and fluidity to tourist imaginings of ethnicity. You learn here that South Africa cannot possibly be home to a mere eleven languages.

Ethnicity as Lived and Experienced

"You're taking a lot of notes there", a fellow visitor comments. The rest of the group have entered the Zulu village and I'm still frantically trying to scribble down my observations about the rock pile. This man hangs back with me. "So whatcha writing?", he asks. I tell him I'm considering writing a thesis about cultural villages. "Great stuff! What tribe are you going to write about?"

Little did I know, this would be a question I would be hearing a lot. During the course of the last year, I was frequently asked about my thesis topic. "I'm writing about cultural villages", I'd reply. "Oh. What tribe are you studying then?" was a common response. I soon learned the futility involved in trying to explain that, no, I wasn't studying any 'tribe' in particular, but was focused on the dynamics of the concept of how the 'tribe' comes to be constructed and how such things are represented within South Africa's tourism initiatives. My answers were often met with blank looks. "*But what tribe are you studying? I hear the Xhosa have some interesting habits. Why not study them?"* Skalnik (1988) provides some reassurance, insisting and reminding me that today the assumption remains that 'every African belongs to a tribe' (Skalnik, 1988: 68).

In a further assessment of how the word 'tribe' is used today, Bruner (2001) mentions that the word 'tribe' and its derivative, 'tribal' have become terms used primarily for the benefit of foreigners, and indicated that local populations now favour the term 'traditional' over 'tribal' (Bruner, 2001: 888). However, my conversations (such as the one above) with South Africans are indication enough that the word is still an essential tool utilized in making sense of their country and imposing an order upon it. Lesedi Cultural Village knows its chief market is international visitors, and it comes as no surprise that their promotional material is littered with the words 'tribe' and 'tribal'.

At Lesedi, the assumption that 'every African belongs to a tribe' is made clear in the village's architectural planning. Earlier I mentioned that the bare pathways between villages were the realm of nothing more than 'nomadic chickens'. This isn't entirely accurate…

We've left the Zulu compound. When we were still inside, there were no pancakes, but we were offered some Zulu beer. Eyes darted back and forth within our tour group. I wanted to jump up and raise my hand, "Me, me, me! I'll try some!", but I held back, because everyone else did.

Back on the paths beyond the Zulu 'village', we are looking for the next wooden sign telling us which tribe we are to visit next. The chickens cross the path in front of us (to get to the other side, naturally). But then I see something. A structure! Outside a village compound! On a path itself! Our group edged closer to the small, open stall. Cameras began to click. I could see dried leaves hanging from rafters. Small bottles of strange concoctions stood on the counter. Our guide started to whisper. 'This is a place of great danger'.

I too pulled out my camera. For a moment or two, I photographed dried flowers before I noticed a well camouflaged woman sitting on the floor of the hut (see figure 24). I jumped back. I wasn't expecting someone to be there. I'd been photographing her without knowing it and I felt rather guilty. I hoped she wasn't mad at me. When our guide told us she was supposed to be a 'sangoma', I really hoped she wasn't mad at me!

Several revelations came from this encounter, which would influence the course of my research at Lesedi. Our guide spoke, "*This is the sangoma. She*

lives outside the village because she has very dangerous things". The role of the sangoma is primarily to 'heal and protect people in the community'. To provide this service, the sangoma is said to be a 'wanderer of borders and boundaries', occupying both a 'privileged position and a dangerous one… at the very limit of the community' (Lambrecht, 2000).

So the sangoma (witchdoctor) 'lives' beyond the confines of the rigidly bounded villages at Lesedi? On the pathway? 'At the very limit of the community'? Again, without intention, Lesedi's layout tells us about the nature and status of 'ethnicity' in South Africa today. In order to belong in today's South Africa, one feels obligated to associate oneself with one of the country's many 'ethnicities'. Comaroff & Comaroff (2009) explain that, 'ethnicity may seem closer to the core of everyday life than does nationality, hence more substantial, more real (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009: 131). Ethnicity is seen as a crucial and highly internalized marker of identity. Without placing oneself within the confines of a particular ethnicity, one's place of belonging within the country is thrown into question. Ethnicity, being a significant tool of power and resistance in both today's political climate and during the apartheid era, would be difficult to live without. Thus, one who does not associate with a 'tribe' in South Africa dwells, as the secluded sangoma at Lesedi does, on the margins and outside the protective walls of a closed, bounded system. In other words, it can be said that the individual needs a 'tribe' to survive, an idea mentioned earlier in this paper and which will now be elaborated upon.

Ethnicity at Lesedi and Beyond

In the first chapter, we discussed how cultural tourism allowed cultures to survive and in the last chapter, I introduced that idea of 'branding ethnicity'. Here, I build upon these ideas, adding that ethnicity has become a resource, and can be produced in the context of a market.

There is no doubt that ethnicity can be marketed. *Africa Geographic* magazine found that 'Zulu' is the word most often associated with Africa and that there 'should be something exploitable in the combination of 'Zulu' and international

tourism' (in Carton & Draper, 2008: 593). It comes as no surprise then, that many visitors to Lesedi and Shakaland will come expecting a face-to-face encounter with a Zulu. It would be unthinkable that South Africa's largest 'cultural theme park' could be without its Zulu constituent. Hamilton (1992) gives this process a long history, explaining that 'Zulu ethnic tourism – the consumption of 'Zulu' history and culture in situ by outside visitors – has been actively marketed for much of the 20th century'. She cites 'Zulu ethnic tourism' as being a key contributor of the 'growing international commodification of African culture' (Hamilton, 1992: 1). Thus, ethnicity can be as a brand.

Thornton (1988), describes how culture and therefore ethnicity is seen as a 'resource', and indicates that this resource is unique in its properties. He states, 'unlike other resources, culture is never used up, but can only grow, change or even disappear in use' (Thornton, 1988: 24). Thornton is right that culture is never 'used up', and that its nature is fluid. Yet, at these cultural villages, culture is not given the opportunity to 'grow, change or disappear'. Culture and ethnicity, as we have seen, are built, fixed and sealed with PPC cement into the physical landscape of the attraction.

If one looks at Tourvest's portfolio, it becomes evident that, as well as Lesedi and Shakaland, the company holds some of the most lucrative tourist-targeted retail endeavours in South Africa. With these holdings come power and influence over touristic imagination, what visitors will consume during their stay in South Africa. Patterns of imagination and consumption are naturally linked, and Tourvest has a strong influence on these processes in the country. Visitors passing through any of the country's international airports have probably browsed the colourful shelves of an 'Out of Africa' outlet. Those visiting the top tourist destinations in the country such as the V&A Waterfront, Sun City and Sandton City may have spent time in an 'Indaba' shop. The images presented in these highly themed, colour schemed retail shops contribute strongly to the tourists 'impression of Africa', that will be carried to Lesedi. I argue that these impressions provide inspiration for what guests 'must see' in Africa. Obvious emphasis is given to 'tribal' forms in a practice

stemming from the colonial vision of Africa which dictates what Africa and Africans are supposed to look like.

I use an anecdote from the work of Abu-Lughod to support this idea. She recalls that while in Egypt, 'the women knew what kinds of gifts I would appreciate; objects with a local 'culture'. Abu-Lughod explains that this 'culturing process is related to encounters with others, many whom arrive already primed with notions of culture (Abu-Lughod, 1999: 123). A cycle perpetuates itself here; one where 'local culture' creates itself to be marketable to outsiders.

Through this cycle, certain objects can come to epitomize entire ethnicities. At 'Out of Africa' shops and many other gift shops throughout the country, I found that beaded jewellery was inevitably labelled as being handcrafted by Zulu women. Pretty trinkets made from ostrich eggs were associated with the San, and decorative throws and blankets were said to have come from Kenya and originated with that county's most famous ethnic brand, the Maasai.

What You Don't See in Gift Shops…. ethnicity as corporation

What visitors don't see in lavishly appointed curio shops are the processes tied to ethnic group formation. We already know that the 'ethnicities' (as we know them) in South Africa are a relatively recent construct. Working with such ideas, the Comaroff's have recently revolutionized the discourse surrounding ethnicity. They suggest that ethnic groups are coming to 'act like corporations'. They explain a process by which culture is produced, possessed and copyrighted. Their hypothesis can be summarized simply as, '*culture infuses the market and the market infuses cultural identity'* (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2008: 82). Thus the flow between ethnicity and the 'indaba' gift shop travels both ways. This theory of how ethnicity acts in contemporary South Africa is useful in the analysis of Lesedi.

In both their contribution to the 'New South African Key Words' (2008) volume, and their own recently published book, 'Ethnicity Inc.' (2009),

Comaroff & Comaroff present two examples, (in a 'tale of Two Ethnicities', 2009: 86), of how ethnic groups have come to stand as corporations, one of these being the Bafokeng.

On my initial visit to Village People at Sun City, I encountered the Bafokeng for the first time. They were presented by our guide as, "*the richest tribe in our area*". She explained that they happen to live where the "*earth is very, very rich*". Comaroff & Comaroff describe an ethnicity that has built its wealth on platinum through a history of well-timed strategic business deals. As a result, the Bafokeng has become an 'ethnic brand' (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009: 108), acting as a corporation rather than solely a culture or ethnicity. In this case, association with a tribe means economic advantage. The Comaroff's provide a similar example from the San, of whom many are benefiting from the western 'discovery' of the San's Hoodia cactus' weight loss advantages. This marketability has resulted in a renaissance of the San ethnicity, once imagined as 'extinct' by some (see Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009: 89). It must also be noted briefly that many ethnicities are 're-grouping' and re-asserting their identities in order to make and legitimize land claims. This practice is commonplace in South Africa and across the world where ethnicities have been historically marginalized.

If ethnic identification has often lead to mutual support networks, especially during the difficult years of apartheid, then this concept has now advanced to find compatibility with tourism and a global market. At Lesedi, it cannot be said that ethnicity is being constructed for economic gain, but it *is* being exhibited for economic gain (thus being the nature of cultural villages). However, we have learned that ethnicity is anything but a fixed concept. It seems then, obvious to accuse cultural villages of presenting something inauthentic, 'staged' and frozen in time. Yet, I have largely avoided employing an 'authentic-inauthentic' binary in my dissection of the cultural village format. The fictiveness at Lesedi is in its presentation of the rural idyll and ethnic stagnation. This is because ethnicity in South Africa is *lived*. The ethnicities on display at Lesedi are internalized and possessed, far beyond its chain-link fences.

In the last chapter, I noted Thornton (1988) who explained that cultural differences in South Africa are, 'themselves created by cultural processes which span and encompass these very differences…' (Thornton, 1988: 20). This offers an explanation for why 'culture' has become internalized. 'Ethnicity' is bound to the same processes. Burgess (2002) explains that, 'apartheid social engineering manipulated racial and ethnic identities. Many scholars predicted that apartheid identities would quickly be jettisoned with the advent of democracy. However, it seems clear that many South Africans may not dismiss the consequences of 40 years of social engineering and the previous history of racial separation so easily' (Burgess, 2002: 84).

I had previously mentioned that it was ironic that Lesedi's layout consisted of contained villages, reflecting on a micro-scale the traditional 'homelands' created during apartheid. Kadalie (2000) adds that, 'the de-politicization of race in the new South Africa has led to the re-emergence of ethnic identities, ironically, in the same way as used by the architects of apartheid in the construction of homelands on the basis of ethnicity' (Kadalie, 2000: 114). So it appears that ethnic categories are here to stay in South Africa, despite the early intentions of the 'rainbow nation' movement. I will now discuss what Lesedi plans to do with their ethnic exhibits in the near future.

Ethnicity as the 'Big 5': plans for Lesedi

The 'tribal dances' in the boma flashed by in a whirl of drums, high-kicks, and hazy smoke (see figure 27). But the smoke wasn't disorientating enough to draw my attention away from the little flaws in the production. With high-kicks, shoes had gone flying, headwear had fallen to the floor and been trampled. The exhausted cast could not keep up with the demanding routine, and the man in the Pedi kilt (who changed into yet more different costumes during the performance) simply never cheered up.

As I exited, I felt like one of the worn out performers. I had been whisked through five different 'villages' and had been entirely overwhelmed by my first Lesedi experience. The sounds, the colours, the smells all ended rather abruptly as I was turned out into the grey, wet, parking lot. I knew that there I would stay until I had compiled all of my notes from the morning's program. Many of those notes centred around a common theme. Lesedi seemed on the verge of falling apart. The production was shoddy, the guests were unenthusiastic and I still didn't like the idea that this was a place where wealthy tourists came to gawk at the Africa of their imaginings. As I pulled out my pen and paper in my car, I gazed up at the big sign in the parking lot. I wished it read, 'going to pancakes?', rather than 'going to Sun City?' But it was 2008, and I was asking, 'where is Lesedi going?'

I have already mentioned that Lesedi's parent company, Tourvest had been taken over by Guma Tourism Holdings, a BEE company, at the end of April 2008, just days before my first visit on May 3, 2008. When I visited in December of that year, there was a marked difference at Lesedi. The production had been polished considerably. The obsolete website I had struggled to navigate for months had been stylishly re-vamped. The welcome at Lesedi was cheerful, and this reflected positively in the visitors. The change of management was obvious. Over the course of my research, I have learned that, under the new management, there are bigger changes to come.

In previous chapters, I have introduced the idea that South African tourism not only has their 'Big Five' animals, but to an extent, their 'Big Five' cultures as well. In recent years, even the famous Big Five animals are becoming mundane. People have 'been there and done that'. This is why the Big Five, have been joined by the 'Little Five' and one national park in the Eastern Cape even markets itself as being home to the 'Big 7' (see SANParks, 2007: 43).

In my meeting with Lesedi's cultural manager, I learned that Lesedi has plans to expand their exhibit and add three more cultures to the existing five. In fact, he indicated that he would like to see at least nine cultures represented at

Lesedi. The Tsonga, Venda and Batswana should be the first new 'attractions' unveiled. Mr. Nkosana felt that the inclusion of the Batswana was most important of the three, as the history of the Batswana is 'here already'. I somehow doubt though that the inclusion of Batswana would allude to the vast Tswana towns which once existed in the vicinity of where Lesedi stands today.

Because Lesedi and Shakaland both belong to Tourvest, I'm told that there are changes in the works for Shakaland as well. Mr. Nkosana welcomes these. 'It (Shakaland) only talks about the Zulu, but South Africa is now united. They should engage other cultures'. The 'boss' of both sites wants Shakaland to be more like Lesedi, with a greater emphasis on establishing a site of 'cultural exchange'. It is unlikely that these changes will be completed before the 2010 World Cup. So the Lesedi that stands today is the one which will be experienced by the influx of international tourists to South Africa in June.

Conclusion

It appears that despite the difficulty we face when trying to capture and frame it, 'ethnicity' is like 'culture', here to stay. I opened the chapter with a sign at Lesedi and a map of the site. These two signs served to explain the ways in which ethnicity is understood and constructed both at cultural villages and in South Africa as a whole. Ethnicity cannot be viewed as a prehistoric entity, but must be seen as a dynamic process. The problem with the cultural village format, is that they are unable to clearly represent this changing nature of ethnicity, and can offer only snapshots.

We discussed the rainbow nation metaphor, which was coined at the demise of apartheid with the understanding that it would come to symbolize 'one' blended nation. Instead, we find that in the light of South African tourist narratives and long-held and internalized understandings of ethnicity, the 'rainbow nation' has come to symbolize a different kind of freedom – the freedom to be Zulu, or Sotho, or San.

If ‘ethnicity’ is seen as an outdated term for some, then the space of the cultural village serves to ensure that ‘ethnicity’ will continue to have an ‘afterlife’. We have seen the processes by which the tourist industry and ethnic identity mutually influence each other, and it can be hypothesized that they will continue to do so.

Concluding Remarks

I sat alone with my pancakes and my notebook. Since that first Lesedi visit, pancakes had become a 'post-cultural experience' tradition (I never could afford the buffet lunch at Lesedi). It was now my fourth visit. The ambiguities I had encountered during my first few visits were fading and I now looked forward to the comfortable and familiar routine at Lesedi. I had originally begun my research with the intention to explore the relationship between the 'hosts and guests' at Lesedi. But the site was telling me that it had much greater things to reveal about the country beyond its fences. I looked down at my pancakes and wasn't so excited about them anymore. There were so many new questions to answer! I wanted to get up and go back to Lesedi at that very moment (but of course I didn't, because that would have cost another R200).

In my introduction I asked what we could learn about the keywords, 'ethnicity' and 'culture' as they are applied in post-apartheid South Africa. Through my research I have learned that Lesedi is indeed a 'place of light'. I have used the site itself as a tool to illuminate and shed new light on some of the lived realities in contemporary South Africa.

In my first chapter, I revealed the important role of location and landscape in influencing visitors to South Africa's tourist attractions. I also introduced the idea that sites like Lesedi are carefully constructed 'products'. Here, I asked a question commonly asked of cultural villages – who are they for? Their creators and advocates claim that the presentation is for the benefit of local South Africans, but the sites are priced for international consumers.

The second chapter illustrated the first of several ironies that exist in the 'new' South Africa's tourism narrative. In the Cradle of Humankind, evolutionary narratives are called upon. Visitors are asked to imagine their own origins in Africa. By pairing Lesedi with the Cradle of Humankind, it can be argued that tourists are primed to imagine evolutionary curiosities and 'the primitive'.

Ironic, given South Africa's cruel history, which began with early European imaginings of 'the primitive'. Colonial thought inscribed the landscape surrounding Lesedi, and the sophisticated Tswana towns that once stood near the site are forgotten because they do not fit in with the dominant tourism narrative.

Perhaps the most useful of Lesedi's signs was the zebra proverb on the wall of the shebeen. By deconstructing the potential meanings of one simple phrase, 'a man without culture is like a zebra without stripes', I was able to critically and creatively engage with the current 'culture debate' and attempt to understand 'culture' as it is used in contemporary South Africa.

Finally, when it came to discussions of ethnicity in South Africa, Lesedi unintentionally revealed some truths in its very design. The villages at Lesedi are distinctly separated from each other. At Sun City, the eight cultures on disply are represented in one arc – I liken this to an interpretation of the 'rainbow nation'. The 'rainbow nation' metaphor has come to mean something else in the 'new' South Africa. Rather than evoking 'one nation', it symbolizes the freedom to live one's ethnicity.

By analyzing the rigid interpretations of 'culture' and 'ethnicity' on display cultural villages, it becomes apparent that these categories are anything but fixed. The visitor to Village People is quietly informed that ethnicity and culture are in a constant state of motion. They are relatively constructed and political in nature. Tourism has a role to play here too. Lesedi's position as a Tourvest product highlights the ways in which tourist demand can influence cultural production. In Tourvest's case, it can be said that they have the ability to manipulate 'demand' at their gift shops, then produce 'culture' at sites like Lesedi and Shakaland to accommodate this demand. The Comaroff's (2009) describe entire ethnicities who have re-constructed themselves in order to meet consumer demands and benefit from belonging to an 'ethnicity'. It could be said that the concept of 'ethnicity' has an 'afterlife' at places like Lesedi. But places like Lesedi will ensure that 'ethnicity' and 'culture' will stay alive in South Africa.

Further Research?

I have based this thesis on the signs that one encounters in the highly codified environment at Lesedi, but there is surely another body of work to be written concerning the things at Lesedi that are *not* signposted. I talk here of the ambiguities that I found discouraging at the beginning of my research period and fascinating towards the end: the photography, the language barriers, the role of the guide, the tipping of performers and the awkward silences and sideways glances. These are the variables in an otherwise meticulously signposted and ordered experience. These variables carry with them the implicit undertones of inequality and serve to amplify the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy that pervades the presentation at Lesedi. Lesedi may be a 'place of light', but there are still dark corners to be investigated. *Alternatively, I know a great pancake place just down the road…*

Works Cited

Abu-Lughod, L., 1991. 'Writing Against Culture'. In: Fox, R. G. (ed.) *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present.* Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Abu-Lughod, L., 1999. 'The Interpretation of Culture After Television'. In: Ortner, S. (ed.). *The Fate of Culture: Geertz and Beyond*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Abu-Lughod, L., 1999. 'Writing for Culture: Why a Successful Concept Should Not be Discarded [comment]. *Current Anthropology*, vol. 40. Special issue: Culture. A Second Chance.

Allen, G., & Brennan, F., 2004. *Tourism in the New South Africa: Social Responsibility and the Tourist Experience*. London: Palgrave.

Appadurai, A., 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Barber, K., 2001. 'Cultural Reconstruction in the New South Africa'. *African Studies Review.* Vol. 44, No. 2.

Bennett, D., 1980. 'Stripes Do Not a Zebra Make, Part 1: a Cladistic Analysis of Equus'. *Systematic Zoology*, vol. 29, no. 3.

Bennetta, J. 1991. 'Speaking About Hidden Times: The Anthropology of V.Y. Mudimbe'. *Callaloo*. Vol. 14

Brumann, C., 1999. 'Writing for Culture: Why a Successful Concept Should Not be Discarded'. Current Anthropology, vol. 40. Special issue: Culture. A Second Chance. Allen, G., & Brennan, F., 2004. *Tourism in the New South Africa: Social Responsibility and the Tourist Experience*. London: Palgrave.

Bruner, E. M., & Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B., 1994. 'Maasai on the Lawn: Tourist Realism in East Africa'. *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 9, No. 4, November 1994, 435: 470.

Bruner, E., 2001. 'The Maasai and the Lion King: authenticity, nationalism and globalization in African tourism'. *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 881: 908.

Bruner, E., 2005. *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Burgess, S., 2002. *SA Tribes: Who we are, how we live and what we want from life in the new South Africa*. Cape Town: David Philip Publishers.

Carton, B., & Draper, M., 2008. 'Bulls in the Boardroom: The Zulu Warrior Ethic and the Spirit of South African Capitalism'. In: Carton, B., Laband, J., & Sitole, J., (eds.). *Zulu Identities: Being Zulu, Past and Present*. Durban: University of KwaZulu Natal Press.

Chase, P., 2006. *The Emergence of Culture: The Evolution of a Uniquely Human Way of Life*. New York: Springer Inc.

Clifford, J. & Marcus, G. E., 1986. 'Introduction: partial truths'. In: Clifford, J. & Marcus G. E. (eds.). *Writing Culture: The poetics & politics of ethnography.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Clifford, J., 1988. *The Predicament of Culture*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Clifford, J., 2003. On *The Edges of Anthropology (Interviews).* Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.

Comaroff, J., & Comaroff J., 2008. 'Ethnicity'. In: Shepherd, N., & Robins, S. (eds.). *New South African Keywords*. Johannesburg : Jacana.

Comaroff, J., & Comaroff, J., 2009. *Ethnicity Inc*. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Conrad, J., 1971. *Heart of Darkness: An Authoritative Text*. Second Edition. Kinbrough, R. (ed.). New York: W.W. Norton & Co. Inc.

Dawkins, R., 2009. *The Greatest Show on Earth: The Evidence for Evolution.* London: Bantam.

Derwent, S., 1999. *Guide to Cultural Tourism in South Africa*. Cape Town: Struik.

Diawara, M., 1998. 'Toward a Regional Imaginary in Africa'. In: Jameson, Fredric & Miyoshi, Masao, (eds.). *The Cultures of Globalization*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Dubow, S., 2007. 'White South Africans and the South Africanisation of Science: Humankind or Kinds of Humans?' In: Bonner, P., et al. (eds.). A *Search for Origins: Science, History and South Africa's Cradle of Humankind'.* Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Ekeh, P., 1997. *Problematising History and Agency: From Nationalism to Subalternity.* Buffalo: State University of New York.

Eliot, T. S., 1948. *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*. London: Faber & Faber Ltd.

Erasmus, Z., 2008. 'Race'. In: Shepherd, N., & Robins, S. (eds.). *New South African Keywords*. Johannesburg : Jacana.

Fanon, F., 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press.

Garuba, H. & Raditlhalo, S., 2008. In: Shepherd, N., & Robins, S. (eds.). *New South African Keywords*. Johannesburg : Jacana.

Habib, A., 1996. 'Myth of the Rainbow Nation: Prospects for the Consolidation of Democracy in South Africa'. *African Security Review*, Vol. 5, No. 6.

Hall, M., 1995. 'The Legend of the Lost City; or, the Man with Golden Balls'. J*ournal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, June 1995.

Hall, M., & Bombardella, P., 2004. 'Las Vegas in Africa'. *The Journal of Social Archaeology*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 5: 24.

Hall, S., 2007. 'Tswana History in the Bankenveld'. In: Bonner, P., et al. (eds.). A *Search for Origins: Science, History and South Africa's Cradle of Humankind'.* Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Hamilton, C., 1992. 'The Real Goat: Identity and Authenticity in Shakaland', paper presented at the History workshop conference, Myths, Monuments, Museums: New Premises? Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand, 16-18 July.

Hamilton, C., 1998. *Terrific Majesty: The Powers of ShakaZulu and the Limits of Historical Invention*. Claremont: David Philip Publishers.

Haraway, D., 1989. *Primate Visions: Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Science*. New York: Routledge.

Harrison, P., 2005. *South Africa's Top Sites: Arts and Culture*. Kenilworth: Spearhead.

Hoskins, J., 2002. 'Predatory Voyeurs: tourists and tribal violence in remote Indonesia'. *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 29, No. 4, November 2002. 797: 828.

Jacques, C. T., 1997. 'From Savages and Barbarians to Primitives: Africa, Social Typologies, and History in Eighteenth-Century French Philosophy'. *History and Theory*, Vol. 36, No. 2. 190: 215.

Jarosz, L., 1992. 'Constructing the Dark Continent: Metaphor as Geographic Representation of Africa'. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, Vol. 74, No. 2, 105:115.

The JBHE Foundation, 1996. 'Concept of the Dark Continent Created Through European-Erased Maps of Interior Africa'. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 11, Spring 1996, 53.

Johnston, A., 2006. *Is the Sacred for Sale? Tourism and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Earthscan.

Julien, E., 2006. 'The Extroverted Africa Novel'. In: Moretti, F., (ed.) *The Novel, Volume 1: History, Geography and Culture*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Kadalie, R., 2000. African Renaissance: Interviews with Sikhumbuzo Mngadi, Tony Parr, Rhoda Kadalie, Zakes Mda & Darryl Accone. In: Nuttall, S., & Michael, C., (eds.). *Senses of Culture: South African Culture Studies.* Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

Koch, E., & Massyn, P., 2001. 'South Africa's Domestic Tourism Sector: Promises and Problems'. In: Ghimire, K., (ed.). *The Native Tourist.* London: Earthscan.

Lambrecht, I., 2000. 'Cultural Artifacts and the Oracular Trance States of the Sangoma in South Africa'. *Metropolitan Museum of Art. Online resource found at:* http://www.metmuseum.org/explore/oracle/essaylambrecht.html. Accessed: September 4, 2009.

Lesedi Cultural Village. 2008. Promotional Brochure.

Lesedi Cultural Village. 2009. Guest Comments. (online resource). Found at: www.lesedi.com/guestbook.htm. Accessed October 30, 2009.

Livingstone, D., & Harrison, R. T., 1981. 'Meaning Through Metaphor: Analogy as Epistemology'. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 71, No. 1, 95: 107.

MacCannell, D., 1973. 'Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings'. *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 79, No. 3, Nov. 1973.

MacCannell, D., 1976. *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York: Schocken.

MacCannell, D., 1992. *Empty Meeting Grounds*. London: Routledge.

Mbembe, A., 2001. *On The Postcolony*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

McNeil, D. G., 1996. 'My Hut Is Your Hut: South Africa's New Tourism'. *The New York Times,* May 17, 1996, p. 4.

Miller, J., 1985. 'Telling a Quagga by its Stripes'. *Science News*, vol. 128, no. 5.

Mngomezulu, B. R., 1999. 'Compartmentalizing the Nation: Zulu Ethnicity and the Role of the IFP'. Paper presented at the South African and Contemporary History Seminar. University of the Western Cape, South Africa. May 11, 1999.

Mudimbe, V. Y., 1988. *The Invention of Africa*. London: James Curry.

Ngugi, T., 1998. *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State in Africa*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Ngugi, T., 2000. 'Europhonism, Universities, and the Magic Fountain: The Future of African Literature and Scholarship'. *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 31.

Nuttall, S., & Michael, C., 2000. 'Introduction'. *Senses of Culture: South African Culture Studies*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

Ortner, S., 1999. 'Introduction'. In: Ortner, S. (ed.). *The Fate of Culture: Geertz and Beyond*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Oxford Dictionary (pocket). 2002. 9th ed. Soanes, C. (ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pearce, P., 1982. 'Tourists and Their Hosts: some social and psychological effects of inter-cultural contact'. In: Bochner, S., (ed.). *Cultures in Contact*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Penzhorn, B., 1988. 'Equus Zebra'. *Mammalian Species*, no. 314.

Ramchander, P., 2004. 'Soweto Set To Lure Tourists'. In: Bennett, A. & George, R. (eds.). 2004. *South African Travel and Tourism Cases*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Ranger, T., 1983. 'The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa'. In: Hobsbawm, E., & Ranger, T., (eds.). *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Raskin, J., 1967. 'Imperialism: Conrad's Heart of Darkness'. *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 113:131.

Robins, S., 2000. 'City Sites'. In: Nuttall, S., & Michael, C., (eds.). *Senses of Culture: South African Culture Studies*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

Said, E., 1978. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin.

SANParks 2007. *Addo Elephant National Park: Official Guide*. Cape Town: The Tourism Blueprint.

SANParks 2009. (online discussion, no longer available) www.sanparks.org/forums

Seibert, M., 2009. 'Kgalagadi: Park in the Spotlight'. *Wild*. Issue: Autumn 2009.

Sewell, W. H., 1999. 'Geertz, Cultural Systems and History'. In: Ortner, S. (ed.). *The Fate of Culture: Geertz and Beyond*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sharp, J., 1988. 'Ethnic Group and Nation: The Apartheid Vision in South Africa'. In: Boonzaier, E., & Sharp, J., (eds.). *South African Keywords: the uses and abuses of political concepts.* Cape Town: David Philip.

Skalnik, P., 1988. 'Tribe as Colonial Category'. In: Boonzaier, E., & Sharp, J., (eds.). *South African Keywords: the uses and abuses of political concepts.* Cape Town: David Philip.

Smuts, J. C., 1925. 'South Africa in Science'. *South African Journal of Science*. Vol. 22.

Tassiopoulos, D., & Nuntsu, N., 2005. 'Cultural Tourism in South Africa: a case study of cultural villages from a developing country perspective'. In: Sigala, M., & Leslie, D., (eds.). *International Cultural Tourism: management, implications and cases.* Butterworth-Heinemann: Oxford.

Taylor, R., & Foster, D., 1997. 'Non-Racialism in Post-Apartheid South Africa'. Paper presented at the National Democracy conference. Cape Town, South Africa. March 14-18, 1997.

Thornton, R., 1988. 'Culture: A Contemporary Definition'. In: In: Boonzaier, E., & Sharp, J., (eds.). *South African Keywords: the uses and abuses of political concepts.* Cape Town: David Philip.

Tourvest. 2009. 'Tourvest Re-Launch Presentation' (pdf). 19 March 2009. Available at www.tourvest.co.za. Accessed: October 30, 2009.

Van der Waal, K., 2008. 'Essentialism in a South African Discussion of Language and Culture'. In: Hadland, A., et al. (eds.). *Power, Politics and Identity in South African Media*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Witz, L., 2007. 'Museums on Cape Town's Township Tours'. In: Murray, N. & Shepherd, N. & Hall, M., (eds.). *Desire Lines: Space, Memory and Identity in the Post-Apartheid City*. Oxford: Routledge.

Witz, L., & Rassool, C., 1996. 'South Africa: A World in One Country: Moments in International Tourist Encounters with Wildlife, the Primitive and the Modern'. *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*. Vol. 36, No. 143, 335-371.

Witz, L., Rassool, C., & Minkley, G., 2000. 'Tourist Memories of Africa'. Paper presented at the Conference on Memory and History at University of Cape Town. August 9 -11, 2000.

Witz, L., Rassool, C., & Minkley, G., 2001. 'Repackaging the Past for South African Tourism'. *Daedalus*. Vol. 130, No. 1.