

Narrating the Hills:

Linking history, memory, and imagination in Black Hills tourism

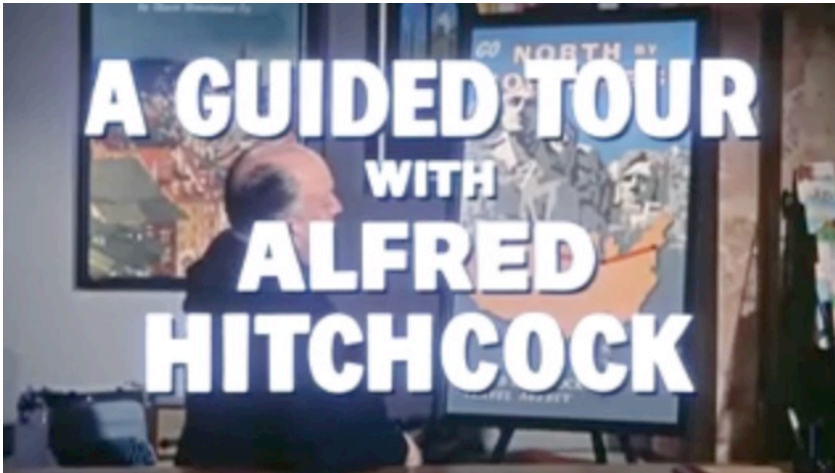
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May 11, 2009

Abstract

Dissecting how tourists, tours, and destinations are imagined can be an important and productive way to critique tourism and to understand its connection to national identity and cultural memory. It requires engaging in a rigorous analysis of the many narrative frames involved in contemporary tourism. This task will be accomplished by exploring popular imagination of the Black Hills of South Dakota, a microcosmic example of the mythos of the “wild” American West. A number of theoretical and historical narratives map the Black Hills today. The aim of this paper is to uncover just a few of the dominant narratives, to trace their construction, and to hint at their continued circulation and transformation.



Opening of Alfred Hitchcock's trailer for *North by Northwest* (1959b).

Have you planned your vacation yet? You've a choice between sand and sunburn or mountain climbing and the charley horse. I find it all very enervating, but we should all have some kind of holiday. So, my suggestion is a quiet little tour... say about 2000 miles.

I have just made a motion picture, North by Northwest, to show you some of these delights. And, the

ideal place to start our holiday fun trip is New York, where Carey Grant can go places and do things. You don't find a tasteful little murder on every guided tour, now do you? But, this means we must leave Manhattan. A train may be an old-fashioned way to travel, but an upper-berth can be a lovely place to go... when it's your time to go. After an uneventful, fine night's rest, we arrive in Chicago. We seek out culture in a great art gallery. We can't leave Chicago without a visit to the Great Plain. The people are all so friendly in the great outdoors.

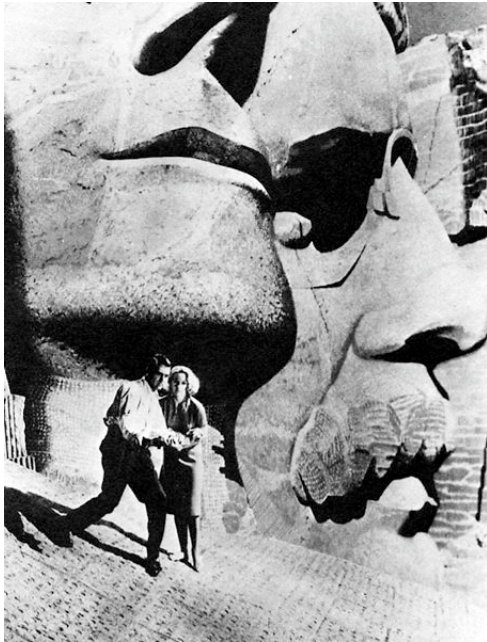
And, now for the climax of our tour, the inspiration of a great American monument [scream], the serene nobility of Mount Rushmore... On this tour, you are sure of charming companions, like Carey Grant, entirely relaxed and a bit on the reticent side. And, for vacation romance... how about an amorous blond like Eva Marie Saint? She's the kind of girl that gets into a man's blood, even if she has to shoot her way in. Now for the best news of all... You can enjoy this wonderful vacation while seated comfortably in this theater. I promise you nothing but entertainment, a vacation from all your problems... as it was for me. (Hitchcock, 1959b)

Introduction: A note on tourism and popular imagination

Alfred Hitchcock's trailer for his 1959 film *North by Northwest* is narrated as a guided tour, a tour of delights, murder, and romance. Set in the *Alfred Hitchcock Travel Agency*, Hitchcock plays our tour guide. He introduces us to our "charming companions" Carey Grant and Eva Marie Saint and divulges the highlights of our "holiday fun trip" from New York to Chicago to South Dakota. A map of our trip appears on a travel poster next to Hitchcock, a red line streaking across a bold yellow United States. The phrase "Go North by Northwest" lines the poster's top, reminding us this is, after all, a movie advertisement. Yet, the film is to be a vacation, a tour of "great art galleries" and "great outdoors." And, our tour has a climax too – "the serene nobility of Mount Rushmore." Our final destination appears with sublime importance in the center of Hitchcock's travel poster, just above the yellow U.S.A. Like any good travel agent, Hitchcock tells us how and how far we will travel (2000 miles by train), what we will do along the way

(kiss, punch guys, shoot guns), and where we will end up (climbing the presidents' heads). He assures us we will be inspired, comfortable, and entertained. No carsickness. No rest stops.

Hitchcock's trailer and film illustrate the complicated relationship between tourism and imagination, hinting at many of the issues this paper will address. First, the trailer outlines how tourism in general is imagined and performed, including both tourist and tour. Hitchcock's tourist



In this image from Hitchcock's film (1959a), we see Carey and Eva at Mount Rushmore. *North by Northwest* has had a lasting impact on how the site is imagined by tourists. "Today, the first question out of many visitors' mouths is not why, or even how Mount Rushmore was carved, but can they climb it" (Perrottett, 2006,

is someone who seeks culture, romance, and comfort, someone who is charming, relaxed, and, of course, well dressed. Carey Grant and Eva Marie Saint are ideal tourists, adventurous, good-looking, and respectable. Age, race, class, and nationality all play their part in shaping our ideal tourists. The tour itself is also idealized, imagined in advance. This great American trip involves a balance of urban (New York, Chicago) and rural (Great Plain, Mount Rushmore), of travel (train, car) and destination (art gallery, memorial), and of safety (the upper-berth) and danger (climbing Mount Rushmore). Hitchcock constructs these balances through the itinerary and

map he offers in the trailer – he is our tour guide after all! – playfully evoking similarities between tourist and movie-goer. Second, the trailer and film offer a glimpse of a specific tourist destination, a particular "great American

monument," thus, adding to an already complex web of narratives surrounding Mount Rushmore. The adventurous end to Carey Grant's north by northwest trip is among the many tales, factual and fictional, that now map the site for future tourism.

The relationship between imagination and tourism, like that between Hitchcock's trailer and his film *North by Northwest*, is one of expectation and fulfillment. What we see, do, and feel on a vacation is imagined long before the car and hotel are reserved. A multitude of stories map the tourist, the tour, and the destination, framing tourist expectations and their fulfillment. These frames are, of course, complicated; they layer over time, weaving history and memory into the mix. Hitchcock's trailer is no exception. While the ideal 1959 tourist maps its surface, stories of technological innovation, westward expansion, social mobility, and so on compound and circulate

beneath. These stories tell as much about tourism as they do about how American identity is imagined and enacted through popular culture. Of course, links between popular imagination and tourism are further complicated when the destination is marked with historical, political, or cultural significance. Mount Rushmore is such an example. In addition to being the dramatic backdrop to Hitchcock's tale, Mount Rushmore is mapped by a number of contradictory narratives; the struggle to represent it as either a "shrine of democracy" (Perrottet, 2006, p. 78) or a symbol of "the founding terrorists" (p. 80) is a case in point. Yet, an adequate understanding of Mount Rushmore as a tourist destination, as a heritage site, requires that the many stories, images, desires, and expectations that coat it be unpacked. This unpacking includes Hitchcock as much as it does George, Thomas, Teddy, and Abe.

Dissecting how tourists, tours, and destinations are imagined can be an important and productive way to critique tourism and to understand its connection to national identity and cultural memory. It involves engaging in a rigorous analysis of the many narrative frames involved in contemporary tourism, a daunting task to say the least. It also involves acknowledging competing narratives, like those surrounding Mount Rushmore, and exploring varied sources. I have selected a particularly rich case study, a case swathed in popular and historical yarn. The Black Hills of South Dakota is a tourist destination with much to offer. It is home to sites of national, cultural, and historical significance – such as Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse, Sturgis, Wall Drug, and Deadwood – as well as entertainment sites like Bear Country U.S.A. and Bedrock City. It is also a location of political struggle, the long-time battleground between the native Lakota and the United States government (Perrottet, 2006; Churchill, 2002). The Black Hill's popularity as a tourist site is undeniable. Over two and a half million people visit each year (National Park Service [NPS], 2009). The ways the region is imagined are almost as diverse. HBO's popular television show *Deadwood*, Kevin Costner's film *Dances With Wolves*, and The Beatle's tune *Rocky Raccoon* can be added to Hitchcock's tale, further complicating an already intricate narrative web.



Hitchcock appears alongside the founding fathers in this film poster (Movieposter.com, 2009).

The goal of the following pages is to uncover just a few of the dominant narratives that map the Black Hills as a heritage destination, to trace the construction of these narrative maps, and to hint at their continued circulation and transformation. My investigation is divided in three parts: 1) a brief exploration of the pertinent theoretical frames of tourism, imagination, and nation building; 2) an examination of the key historical frames of grand touring, western expansion, and the early exploration and conquest of the Black Hills; and 3) an assessment of the dominant narratives mapping the Black Hills today. The analysis to follow assumes that tourist imagination plays a significant role in shaping tourist experience. How tourist, tour, and destination are imagined impacts such things as tourist behavior, destination branding, historical pedagogy, and so on. Importantly, tourist imagination also shapes experiences of authenticity and inauthenticity, providing their conditions of possibility. Thus, exploring the role of imagination in tourism is an essential first step to any discussion of authenticity as it relates to tourist, tour, and destination.

PART I – Tourism, imagination, and nation building (a theoretical framing)

Assessing the relationship between tourism, imagination, and nation building requires thinking of these concepts as theoretical frames that help tourists make sense of their experiences, the experiences of fellow tourists, and the meaning of tourism in general. Before a specific tour or destination can be imagined, the tourist must be tacitly understood. The aim of this section is to explore three aspects of this tacit understanding: the purpose of travel and tourism; the construction of tourism through media; and the links between tourism, nation, and national identity. Ultimately, we are, here, trying to unpack what it means to be a tourist today.

Why do we travel anyway?

Excluding immigration, flight, displacement, and work; travel is a choice; it is leisure. James Clifford in *Routes* says this about travelers: “The traveler, by definition, is someone who has the security and privilege to move about in relatively unconstrained ways. This, at any rate, is the travel myth” (1997, p. 34). To add to this freedom of movement, the mythical traveler is searching, looking for some knowledge or experience. Clifford explains:

“Travel,” as I use it, is an inclusive term embracing a range of more or less voluntarist practices of leaving “home” to go to some “other” place. The displacement takes place for the purpose of gain – material, spiritual, scientific. It involves obtaining knowledge and/or having an “experience.” (p. 66)

The quest for knowledge or experience through travel can, of course, vary widely. People travel to celebrate important occasions; to visit or spend time with friends and loved ones; to encounter unknown people, places, or things; or simply to escape the boredom of normalcy. In each case,

travel is intimately connected to a desire for meaning, a desire for exception or intensity. In other words, “having an experience” requires something out of the ordinary; to travel is to be bracketed from daily routine, to have the time, energy, etc. to focus on tourist, tour, or destination.

By going on vacation, “vacating” the workaday routines, tourists moved beyond both the physical and the imaginary boundaries of home and work that shaped and defined their everyday identities. They entered a realm of fantasy, they communed with strangers, they witnessed the foreign. (Shaffer, 2001, p. 177)

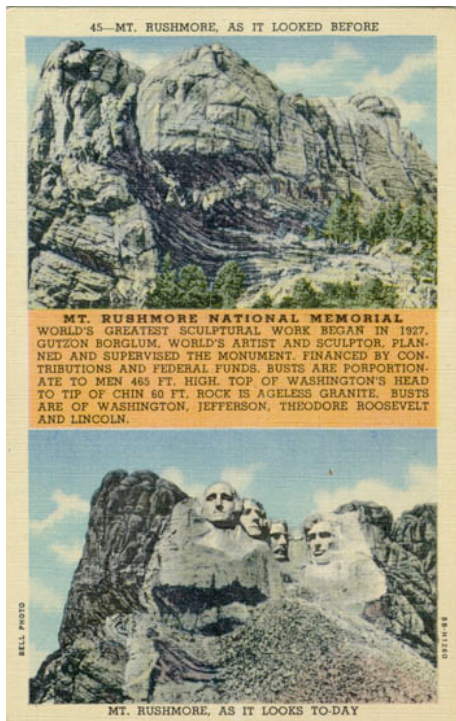
To travel is to search for a space of freedom and fantasy, a space of reinvention. Travel is also pivotal to shaping boundaries between self and other, home and away, work and play.

While travel is definitely a privilege of sorts, especially certain types of travel, it may not be truly free and voluntary. As Caren Kaplan notes in her preface to *Questions of Travel* (1996), “Travel was unavoidable, indisputable, and always necessary for family, love, and friendship as well as work” (p. ix). Immigration, exile, and displacement – the many movements of modernity have left people scattered; “home” and “away” are neither singular, nor stable. “For many of us there is no possibility of staying at home in the conventional sense – that is, the world has changed to the point that those domestic, national, or marked spaces no longer exist” (p. 7). Why we travel is oftentimes a matter of obligation, whether actual (Missing that family reunion would be disastrous!) or imagined (Marriage without a honeymoon is bad luck!). In fact, the obligation to travel shapes the modern world, shapes our own subjectivities. It is a “special form of play” (Shaffer, 2001, p. 177) through which we come to understand our selves, our communities, and our nation. In some sense, the mobility, liminality, and opportunity modern travel affords is perceived less as a freedom of movement than as a requirement, a necessary condition of modern existence. This means that travel, whether through media, fantasy, or tour, is not experienced as something we *can* do; it is something we *must* do. This, of course, does not mean that we can all afford a Bahaman holiday, but it does mean that travel plays an important role in how we imagine ourselves, the world, and ourselves in the world.

How do we imagine travel today?

Travel stories tell of “the strange, the exotic, the dangerous, and the inexplicable; they convey information about geography as well as human nature” (Blanton, 2002, p. 2). Travel stories narrate the world, mapping it, shaping its past, present, and future. They also narrate how one behaves in the world, prescribing desire, fashion, and so forth. And, they tell, of course, of what is possible, where and how we can go and what we will see, do, and feel while we are there. The forms of travel imagination are as varied as its content: travelogues, guidebooks, postcards, films, television shows, photographs, paintings, websites, blogs, and so on. These forms mix to create

the dense layers that map tourist, tour, and destination. To borrow from Rudolf Mrázek (2002), the travel narrator must use words, images, and tales “like blocks of stone in a pavement” (p. 19). Travel imagination, like asphalt and metaphor, must “cement even the most incongruous things together” (p. 19). Travel narration – from Hitchcock’s *North by Northwest* to *Lonely Planet USA* – can be thought of as technology, technology mapping people, places, and things. In other words, travel narration, and the imagination it generates, is as essential to travel as any compass or map. Travel tales engineer the world in ways not unlike cartography and asphalt.



“Postcard images are probably the way most Americans know the Black Hills. It seems as if everyone must have received a postcard of Mount Rushmore or Crazy Horse from vacationing friends, or has a few cards from their own trip stashed away” (Popp, 2002, p. 7).

We could, perhaps, think of travel narration as a type of “imagineering” – the production of stories, images, etc. that make people and places thinkable, knowable, and understandable. Similar to *Walt Disney Imagineering*, travel narration “is the master planning, creative development, design, engineering, production, project management, and research and development arm of” (Disney.com) modernity. This is not to say that the world is “imagineered” entirely by others; we each participate in the circulation and transformation of travel narration and imagination. We each “imagineer” the world for ourselves and for others. Many forms of this production, this engineering, of the world are commonplace today: family photo albums, scrapbooks, diaries, home movies, and postcards are just a few

examples. Each time we document and share the world, we are, in a sense, “imagineering” it. Mount Rushmore, to return to our introductory example, is mapped and mediated by multiple sources; it is continuously “imagineered” by professionals, by

amateurs, by tourists, by scholars. Perhaps, before a visit to the memorial, we watch *North by Northwest*, read *Lonely Planet USA*, and receive a Mount Rushmore postcard from a friend. In this case, we may imagine: climbing Mount Rushmore (Perrottett, 2006, p. 78); seeing a summer light show (Campbell & Bendure, 2006, p. 696); or sending our own postcard. Regardless of the forms or degree of “imagineering” we engage in, technology and travel play pivotal roles in our understanding and knowledge of the world, the other, and the self.

Why do we tour the nation?

It is important now to consider the significance of travel to the experience of nationhood and nationalism as well as the consequence of the nation to travel and tourism. Traveling is a matter of self and other discovery. It is a space where world and traveler intersect, a space where we “commune with strangers” (Shaffer, 2001, p. 177). An important aspect of this communion is the production of national unity, of national identity, and of what Benedict Anderson calls “imagined community” (In Pretes, 2003, p. 125). Participation in a shared identity, a shared heritage or history, is an important aspect of tourist desire. In fact, touring the nation is itself a way to construct both nation and nationality; national tourism is one of those “cultural artefacts” (Anderson, 1983, p. 4) essential to the formation of nation-ness. For Anderson, imagined communities are achieved through national institutions, such as censuses, maps, and museums (Pretes, 2003, p. 127). Tourism is another institution essential to the creation of the imagined community of nation. The aim of national tourism is the construction of national unity and identity through the circulation of narratives celebrating a common history, a common way of life, and common signs that represent both history and way of life. Creating a shared heritage is especially crucial for nations of diversity, such as the United States (Pretes, 2003, p. 125). Heritage tourism allows citizens with divergent lives and beliefs to share a common experience.

The construction of the National Park system in the United States is a rich illustration of the significance of tourist sites to national identity. U.S. National Parks are sacred and symbolic.

Nature “set apart” in the parks become the embodiment of an archetypal America, which is the ever-pristine source of the greatness of the nation and the people and, as such, serves as a sacred site and a unifying symbol in U.S. American culture. (Ross-Bryant, 2005, p. 31)

In this case, touring national nature is a way to unify people and place; it is also a way to imagine an ideal nation, a nation free from contradiction, turmoil, or trauma. Following 9/11, for example, Interior Secretary Gale Norton evoked U.S. National Parks as sources of solace and healing, saying, “What better places to begin that healing process than in our parks, where Americans can draw strength from national icons of freedom and peace from splendors of nature” (2001, In Ross-Bryant, 2005, p. 31). Yet, the link between nature and nation enforced through touring National Parks does more than merely heal or provide strength; it allows Americans to imagine and enact the innocence of citizen and nation. As Marita Sturken notes in *Tourists of History* (2007), tourism is a position of innocence: “Tourists typically remain distant to the sites they visit, where they are often defined as innocent outsiders, mere observers whose actions are believed to have no effect on what they see” (p. 10). Nowhere is this idea more glaring than in the U.S. National Park system. National Parks are a particularly powerful evocation of national

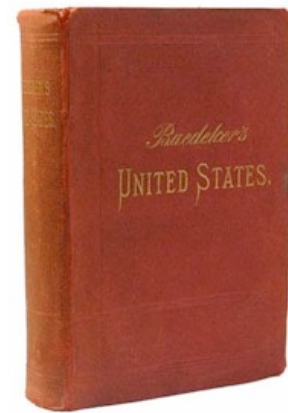
(American) innocence. We will explore this idea further in the next section of this paper, pondering connections between the American West and American imagination and tourism.

PART II – Conquering the “wild” west (a historical framing)

Unpacking what it means to be a tourist, to take a tour, today is only a very small portion of the web encircling the Black Hills. We have called this the theoretical framing of the tourist experience and have briefly explored just a few of the aspects or frames that make up our tacit understanding of contemporary tourism. We move now to an examination of the historical frames involved in this understanding. In this section, the goal is to excavate three of the many histories that map the Hills: the birth of grand touring; the myth of the American West; and the exploration and conquest of the Black Hills. The general meanings of tourism are, thus, to be linked to specific times and places. The tourist experience is mapped as much by history as it is by theory.

Grand touring: The birth of modern tour and tourist

Travel is not a new phenomenon. Nomads, explorers, traders, and conquistadors all traveled. Many even left extensive records of their journeys. The writings of explorers from Marco Polo to Bruce Chatwin, for example, are still “remarkably popular reading” today (Blanton, 2002, p. 2). Even the travel guidebook has a long history. A *Guide to Greece*, written by Pausanias, circulated as early as ca. 170 C.E. (p. 2), and Baedeker guidebooks first appeared in 1832 – with 992 editions in German, French, and English from 1832-1944 (bdkr.com). These “small, red and crammed” books played a significant part in cultivating tourist imagination. “Once you have opened one, it is almost impossible not to let your imagination wander along the Rhine in 1881 or to the pyramids in 1908 or along the boulevards of Paris in 1907...” (bdkr.com). Travel and travel writing became, in the eighteenth century, an important aspect of cultivating the educated and cosmopolitan citizen. The significance of travel to education culminated in “the necessity of the Grand Tour as a kind of finishing school for university students and writers” (Blanton, 2002, p. 11). As such, the Grand Tour, and hence travel itself, was not narrated as voluntary leisure. On the contrary, the Tour was essential to understanding and participating in modern subjectivity.



The first edition of Baedeker's United States was printed in 1893 (bdkr.com).

While the practice of Grand Touring marked a shift from utilitarian travel to travel “for the sake of travel” (p. 30), hence transforming the meaning of travel itself, the Grand Tour remained a privilege of aristocratic, predominately male, youth (Sorabella, 2009). “This so-called Grand

Tour could last from a few months to 8 years, thus only the very wealthy, with the time and means to travel, could participate” (Getty, 2001). From the mid-sixteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries, young men and women zigzagged their way across the European continent. They traveled not for trade, diplomacy, or conquest, but for curiosity. “Desire replaces duty as the motivation for travel” (Blanton, 2002, p. 17). The desire of the Grand Tourist included learning “about the politics, culture, and art of neighboring lands” (Getty, 2001), but it also required being let loose “in a strange city, far from home, father, and duty” (Blanton, 2002, p. 31). It is the Grand Tour, then, that generates tourism’s modern twofold meaning: to tour is to explore both self and other. Nonetheless, it was during this exploration that self and other were traced, defined, and preserved. The Grand Tourist traced a line across Europe – London, Paris, Italy, etc. – examining architectural and archeological sites, learning classical languages and customs, and collecting art and artifacts (Sorabella, 2009). It was a heritage tour that defined “proper” European culture, outlining its inside and its outside, its members and non-members, while offering sites of play.

Grand Touring cannot be separated from global conquest and colonization; the two are deeply connected. While Grand Tourists were tracing the “civilized” world, explorers and conquistadors were mapping “uncivilized” people, places, and things. Both Grand Tour and global conquest relied upon a unified heritage or civilization (Western European) against which the rest of the world could be collected and compared. In this way, the progress of civilization could be defined and measured; souvenirs of conquest could be collected, preserved, and displayed; and imperialist nostalgia could mark the future of Grand Tourism. These three aspects will have continued significance in how the American West is imagined and toured.

The “wild” west: Imagining, expanding, and touring America

The myth of the “wild” American West is, perhaps, one of the most important historical frames mapping the Black Hills. Not only did this myth play an essential role in America’s expansion westward, it remains an important component of national identity, cultural memory, and popular imagination today. Touring the “wild” west, similar to Grand Touring Europe, is a way to trace, define, and preserve American heritage. Yet, while the Grand Tour was careful to plot a “civilized” course, touring the American West necessarily blends wild and tame, civilized and uncivilized, evoking Susan Buck-Morss’ “wild zone of power” (2000, p. 3). Of course, the natural landscape is the most striking example of this blend, a blend that seems “to symbolize freedom, beauty and the renewal of the spirit to many Americans” (McAvoy, 2002, p. 383). Journeying across country takes us through forest, mountain, plain, desert, and beach – each zone pushed to its furthest extreme. The extremity, intensity, and diversity of American nature are, in

some sense, emblematic of its heritage as well. “Whether it was the forest primeval, the danger of starvation or thirst in the American desert, or the threat of wild animals or still wilder Indians, the West was a training ground for national character” (O’Conner & Rollins, 2005, p. 5). The “wild” Western landscape is a crucial way America, as a place and a people, is imagined.



This image of Harney Peak, the highest peak in the Black Hills, illustrates the “wild” landscape Americans would encounter as they moved westward (Sanford, 1902).

Traversing and conquering the “wild” land and “wilder” man of Western America is significant to imagining the American nation as great and unique. Technologies used to traverse and to conquer America’s “wild zone” are, thus, a vital part of the story. In fact, technology often appears, in some guise or other – newspaper, railroad, telegraph, photograph, or gun – in “wild” west myths, from film to folk tune. The technology of words is a powerful example:

The strange, but undeniably spectacular sights of the Far West forced Americans to come up with new standards and descriptive strategies independent from powerful European ideals. The process of grappling with a language suitable to the realities of the far western landscape helped to forge a particularly American culture. (Hyde, 1990, p. 9)

The difficulty of narrating the far western landscape was ameliorated by image-making technologies, like painting and photography. This is the story of Rebecca Solnit’s *River of Shadows* (2003), a text that uses Eadweard Muybridge’s biography to explore the consequence of technology in western expansion. She notes many examples: the proliferation of western landscapes on everything from wallpaper to teacups (p. 42); the reduction of an eighty-eight day sea journey from New York to San Francisco (p. 29) to a shorter trip by stage or railroad; the standardization to Railroad Time (p. 60); and the speed of telegraph communication (p. 20). The American West became, with the help of technology, a place where anything was possible, where people were “unburdened by the past” (p. 33). One of the most significant narratives mapping the American West, then, is this freedom from history, this independence from Eastern ideals. The “wild” American West is imagined as “blank” slate, a space to be molded through the perseverance, hard work, and ingenuity of man (with a little help from his tools!).

The American West is, in fact, burdened by three historical struggles: man against himself; man against nature; and man against man. In other words, the American West as a “wild zone” becomes itself a burden, a history. This history is reproduced for the popular imaginary through Western pulp fictions, films, and television shows, as well as tourist practices. The myth of wildness reveals much about American nationalism, imagination, and ultimately tourism.

The West became the antithesis of the northeastern industrial core. Tourists associated it with democracy, freedom, friendliness, and community. They saw only a land of farmers, ranchers, cowboys, and friendly Indians – people who lived close to the land. Over and over again touring narratives idealized the West as the “true” America in opposition to the overly civilized, urban East. (Shaffer, 2001, p. 175)

Western America as a “wild zone” is home to two characters of note: the cowboy and the Indian. (We could add the helpless white woman too!) The battle between these two characters, as well as the relation of each to the natural landscape, comes to signify both America and American-ness (O'Connor & Rollins, 2005). Cowboys and Indians dominate how America is imagined, both at home and abroad. The narratives that frame relations between cowboys and Indians, civilization and wilderness, are practically un-ending; they include accounts of “real” cowboys, like Buffalo Bill Cody and Theodore Roosevelt, and “real” Indians, such as Black Elk and Crazy Horse. But, these “real” accounts mix with the tall tales of popular fiction: Tonto and the Lone Ranger, for example. The Lone Ranger’s goal was, after all, “to make the West a decent place to live” (Lawrence, 2005, p. 81). Touring cowboys and Indians is a decisive way to tour America.



“Tonto, from this day on I am going to devote my life to establishing law and order, to make the West a decent place to live” (Lawrence, 2005, p. 81).

There's gold in them thar hills

The Black Hills of South Dakota embody – in one 50 by 70 mile swathe of land (Mitchell, 2002, p. 22) – the “wild zone” so crucial to the American nation and its imagination. The Hills are a microcosm of the larger American West with its historical struggles between man and nature, civilization and wilderness, and humanity and technology. Here too, we encounter epic battles between cowboys and Indians, starting, of course, with early settlers and ultimately

coming to a head with the first Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851. The 1851 Treaty recognized a number of indigenous nations – the Lakota, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Crow, to name a few – and granted these nations ownership of a sizeable tract of land, about seven percent of the contiguous United States (Churchill, 2002, p. 114). In 1868, the Lakota homeland was reduced to a “Great Sioux Reservation” that consisted of all of present-day South Dakota and portions of Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana, and North Dakota (p. 115). For the United States government and the hordes of settlers flooding the American West, the “Great Reservation” was an attempt to contain the “wild” Indian. For Indians, this and similar treaties restricted their nomadic lives, while acknowledging their status as “independent” nations. The paramount protection demanded of the Lakota was ownership of *Paha Sapa* (Black Hills), a sacred spot of earth to all Lakota, the origin of man, the spot of creation (Naughton, 1989, p. 9). Then, as today, the Black Hills were the most sacred strip of earth to the Lakota Nation. It was protected, but only for a short while.

Enter Custer. General Custer, along with his Seventh Cavalry Regiment, embarked on a “fact-finding” mission in the Black Hills in 1874, a mission that led to the discovery of gold (Churchill, 2002, p. 115). Word of gold in the Hills spread quickly, and by 1876, lawless towns like Deadwood and Lead had established a permanent industry mining gold (Mitchell, 2002, p. 26). But, incursion into the Hills and defiance of the 1868 Treaty also sparked the Great Sioux War. The Lakota, under the leadership of an Oglala named Crazy Horse, defended their sacred Hills for a time, even defeating Custer at the Battle of Little Big Horn (Churchill, 2002, p. 116). Nevertheless, the armies kept coming, larger and better equipped. The Lakota surrendered in 1877 (p. 117), and the Hills were quickly stampeded. John McClintock, an early pioneer, recalls the gold rush days, saying, “It could no longer be restrained, and precipitated one of the most stupendous stampedes of fortune seekers to a new Eldorado that has ever occurred” (1939, p. 5). Eldorado, the myth of golden fortunes, is perhaps one of the foremost myths responsible for American expansion and conquest. From the Spanish conquest of the Maya and Inca to the San Francisco Gold Rush of 1848, the promise of wealth moved men and women across the harsh landscape, pushing them to do good and evil, including the near extinction of native peoples.

This new Eldorado, the Black Hills, lured some pretty infamous cowboys and cowgirls into its territory – Wild Bill Hickok, Charlie Utter, Calamity Jane, and Seth Bullock to name just a few. Some of North America’s most well known natives – Crazy Horse, Black Elk, Red Cloud, and Sitting Bull – were also linked to the Hills, and the brutal tales of the Great Sioux War and the massacre at Wounded Knee have come to stand in for indigenous-U.S. relations of the nineteenth century. The battles between the Lakota Nation and the U.S. government are “perhaps the best

known, and certainly one of the more sustained” of all native struggles in North America. While the Black Hills was eventually narrated as “a natural playground and sanitarium” (p. 7), it would not lose its wild streak. Instead, the lawless days of gold digging and Indian fighting would persist, blending with the “pristine” imaginary of the western landscape. In fact, the Hills would come to symbolize the American West, with its battles between “cowboys and Indians” and its struggles between “civilized” man and “savage” nature. Tourist imagination of the American West, perhaps even of America in general, cannot be separated from the tales of intensity that map the Black Hills of South Dakota.

PART III – Touring the Black Hills today (a case study)

***Your family vacation begins in the Black Hills...** These are the legendary Black Hills of South Dakota, an oasis of pine-clad mountains on the Great Plains. The mountains and forests of the Black Hills include a treasury of six national parks. 101 miles of National Scenic Byways. Waterfalls. Watchable wildlife. Acclaimed recreational trails. Trout fishing. Old West landmarks like Deadwood and Wounded Knee. Seventy fun-filled attractions for boys and girls, parents and grandparents. Gaming, spas, golf, fine arts and shopping, too. (Black Hills & Badlands, 2009)*

Thus far, we have tackled, at least cursorily, the theoretical and historical frames mapping the Black Hills of South Dakota. We have explored general links between tourism, imagination, and nation building and have sought to further situate these links within the three specific historical contexts of grand touring, western expansion, and the discovery of gold in the Hills. While the dense network of tales, images, and desires that encircle the Hills is still rather unfocused, its intricacy should, at this point, be apparent. The task of this section is to expose how the frames of theory and history shape Black Hills tourism, how the Black Hills are imagined as tour and destination, and how the Black Hills’ tourist is understood. We will approach this task by tracing three lines through today’s Hills: its dominant narratives; its key destinations; and its primary tours or routes. Our ultimate goal, here, is to understand what the Black Hills mean as a site of contemporary American heritage tourism.

"No law at all in Deadwood... is that true?" (Milch, 2004)

Famous gunslinger Wild Bill Hickok and Sheriff Seth Bullock ride through town in the Pilot episode of HBO's *Deadwood* television series.



What narratives map the Black Hills?

The dawn of the Black Hills history rises in the dim, uncertain light of Indian tradition. Its first rays are tinted, like the sunrise, with yellow, glistening with golden color, to be followed by the deeper blood tints, ere the full day of civilization had reached its meridian. (Sanford, 1902, p. 12)

But the Mountain That Stood On Its Head was no more. That titanic struggle had demolished it and spread it out over the plain. Only a few heaps of blood-darkened dust remained, a series of mounds that are called the Black Hills today. (Miller, 2006, p. 82)

Hundreds of narratives map the Black Hills, some tall, others not so. Most tales of the Hills fit roughly into one, or all, of the three epic battles paramount to American Wild West mythology: the struggle between man and man; the conquest by man (via technology) of nature; and the formation of the man through perseverance, morality, and hard work.

What are the key Black Hills tourist destinations?

The “wild” town of Deadwood, while a popular tourist destination throughout the twentieth century, experienced a recent boom in tourism, a boom generated by the legalization of gambling (Perret, 2006, p. 54) and by the popularity of the HBO television series *Deadwood* (Mitchell, 2008, p. 28). Deadwood, in fact and fiction, has a central place in tourist imagination of the Black Hills as a “wild” frontier of gold diggers, outlaws, cowboys, and prostitutes. Deadwood appeared often and prominently in dime novels of the nineteenth century and in Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show. “Indeed, Buffalo Bill Cody’s Wild West Show, which toured nationally and in Europe, closed with the re-enactment of the robbing of the Deadwood stage” (p. 28). Deadwood is imagined as a lawless space where man battles man, savage, and nature all for the elusive gold nugget; in short, it is a microcosm of the American West. A key myth to mark Deadwood as a heritage destination is the shooting of gunslinger Wild Bill Hickok. “The murder created a great stir, an unusual sensation amongst the populace” (McClintock, 1939, p. 109). Both Wild Bill’s murder and Jack McCall’s trial appear in numerous dime novels, films, and most recently in the *Deadwood* series. Both murder and trial are performed daily for summer tourists to Deadwood. Of course, tourists can also “pan” for gold in tourist mines near town or in one of the many casinos lining Deadwood’s historic main street. In a sense, then, Deadwood tourists get to grand tour the American West, witnessing and performing an imagined history.

Tourism in the Black Hills began just about as quickly as gold digging. The wealthy sought solace and healing in the Hills as early as the late nineteenth century, flocking first to the “warm springs of the Southern Hills for rest and medicinal qualities” (Schumacher, 2007, p. 69) and later to Mount Rushmore and the many other national and state parks that would dot the region. “By

1892, the rich and famous were riding the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad to try the cure at Fred Evan's spa in Hot Springs. Six or seven trains a day pulled into town" (p. 70). In fact, the entire town of Hot Springs, S.D., arose in response to tourist desire for the Hills' healing waters (Popp, 2002, p. 78), sparking the creation of sanatoriums and public baths. Mammoth Plunge Bath, known today as Evan's Plunge, advertised its curative powers – powers to heal stomach, kidney, intestinal disorders, asthma, tuberculosis, and so on – as early as 1901 (p. 78). The sky, lakes, rocks, forests, and beasts were also imbued with magical powers, powers to awe and transform any visitor, to unburden them of their past and their daily routines. One such mystical mount is Harney Peak, the highest peak between the Rockies and the Pyrennes (Mitchell, 2002, p. 23). Wind Cave and Jewel Cave are two more of the Hills' sublime natural destinations. Wind Cave was the first cave to be named a national park, in 1903, and Jewel Cave, the second longest cave in the United States, quickly followed, becoming a national park in 1908 (p. 23). To either side of the Hills are the Badlands (east) and Devil's Tower (west), both



The mineral waters of Mammoth Plunge, shown here in 1901, were thought to have miraculous powers to cure ailments of the kidneys, intestines, liver, gout, syphilis, and more (Popp, 2002, p. 77).

destinations of natural awe, both framed by the spiritual naturalism of the Black Hills region. Ultimately, these sites tell of the “wild” land that played such a pivotal role in western expansion and American nationalism, hinting that the western landscape as a “wild zone” or a “liminal space” of awe and healing continues to be significant to Hills tourism.

The Black Hills' most popular tourist destinations are not the promise of its casinos, the healing powers of its waters, or the underground bewilderment of its caves, however. Mount Rushmore National Memorial and Crazy Horse Memorial rely, instead, upon height, history, and mobility to attract their visitors. While the natural height of the Hills was a “gift” of nature, so to speak, and the history of the region as a “wild zone” was well established by the early twentieth century, it was Henry Ford's automobile that set in motion the carving of the massive stone faces of George, Thomas, Teddy, and Abe. In the 1920s, Ford's auto combined with a national system

of highways to provide Americans a new mobility (Pretes, 2003, p. 130). To capitalize on this mobility, a South Dakota historian Doane Robinson proposed the creation of a “monumental sculpture of Wild West figures in the Black Hills” (p. 131). The monument would attract out-of-state tourists as well as memorialize the Hills’ significance to Wild West mythology. South Dakota hired Gutzon Borglum to take on the project; Borglum, however, rejected the Wild West imagery, proposing instead a more strictly national myth, a sculpture of “great presidents.” South Dakota agreed. “The four selected presidents would thus represent the nation’s foundation, preservation, and continental and imperial expansion” (p. 131). Despite the fact that the four selected presidents were not Wild West figures in any strict sense, Mount Rushmore, in effect, established the Black Hills as “a quintessential American region” (p. 132). The leap from “Wild West” to “quintessential America” was not a far one. The American West was already imagined as a uniquely American landscape of uniquely American ideals.

It took more than fourteen years (1927-1941) to dynamite and drill Mount Rushmore’s four faces (*USA Today*, 1991) in a granite hill. This feat, a feat against the immobility of granite, of earth, is an essential facet of the meaning of the memorial today. Mount Rushmore stands “as a triumph over nature, as evidenced through the focus on engineering, the obsession with the difficulties of the project, and the beauty of nature improved” (Pretes, 2003, p. 133). A similar focus on engineering the land surrounds Mount Rushmore’s rival memorial, Crazy Horse. While Crazy Horse Memorial, located a mere 15 miles from Mount Rushmore, is the literal depiction of

Sunday’s Blast Removed 2,916 Ton of Rock from the Mountain. Sunday May 3, 2009 marked the 62nd anniversary of Korczak Ziolkowski’s arrival in the Black Hills of South Dakota. At the request of Native American elders, Korczak came west to carve a mountain to honor all American Indians (Crazy Horse, 2009).

Oglala resistance
leader Chief Crazy
Horse, for the



Ziolkowski family of sculptors, it is “a tribute to all Native Americans” (Griffith, 2006, p. 66). This tribute is envisioned foremost as one of grand engineering, of epic scale. The scale of Mount Rushmore is that of “men 465 feet tall” with heads 60 feet long (*USA Today*, 1991, p. 64). Crazy Horse, by contrast, will be a “565-foot

tall sculpture” – the largest mountain carving in the world – the entirety of Mount Rushmore will fit in Crazy Horse’s 87.5-foot head (Perrottet, 2006, p. 4). Crazy Horse’s construction is an important aspect of its tourist meaning, of the way it is imagined and understood as a tourist site. One of the most-valued tourist views of Crazy Horse Memorial is that of a dynamite explosion – or, even better, of many dynamite explosions (cdnj, 2007). Explosions are staged for tourists or as commemorations of sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski’s arrival in the Black Hills in 1947 or sometimes for his or his wife Ruth’s birthday (*Crazy Horse*, 2009). Both explosion and scale participate in tourist imagination of the American West as “wild” and in need of control.

How do tourists navigate the Black Hills?

First, train travel and, later, automobility were essential to the development of tourism in the American West. There are, of course, practical reasons for the link between mobility and tourist development – ease of movement; choice of destination, route, and time; expense; and so on – but there are, undoubtedly, a number of cultural reasons as well. Two stand out as paramount: touring and traveling. Both are constitutive of how contemporary Black Hills tourism is imagined and experienced. The first, touring, involves moving freely from site to site, constructing a personal narrative, a personal history, from visits to heritage destinations. Touring is a genesis of the Grand Tours of Europe and a consequence of the displacements and fragmentation of modernity. It is a means of experiencing or performing history. The second, traveling, involves moving freely, traversing or engineering the land with the aid of technology. Traveling is a genesis of imaginizing and a consequence of the mythos of the “wild” American West. It is a means to experience or perform cultural memory. In this context, perhaps in all, touring and traveling are flip sides of the same Janus coin. They are heuristic categories that help locate the influence of the many theoretical and historical frames marking tourist imagination and experience.

There are many examples of touring and traveling the Black Hills. We will look only at the two most influential: Wall Drug and Sturgis. Ted and Dorothy Hustead established the Wall Drug Store, located in Wall, S.D. on I-90, in 1931. It was the height of the Great Depression in a town of 300 people in arid South Dakota; it was “as stupid a business decision as you can make” (Pretes, 2003, p. 135). Wall, however, was on a direct route to the Black Hills, then U.S. Highways 14 and 16, so they lined the highways with “Free Ice Water” signs directing tourists to a new stop on their route to the Hills. The signs worked, and free ice water expanded to 5-cent coffee, a soda fountain, a cowboy orchestra, wooden Indians, and much more. Wall Drug signs started popping up everywhere, including London, Paris, Antarctica, and Kenya. During the

Vietnam War, for example, there were 127 Wall Drug signs just in South Vietnam (p. 136). In contrast to Wall Drug's practice of marking the tour, Sturgis, S.D. became a sign of travel. The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally started in 1938 as a gathering of only 9 motorcycle racers; in 2000, the number reached 600,000 (City of Sturgis, 2009). The weeklong annual event – 2009 will mark the 69th rally – lures travelers to ride the roads of the Hills, to ride them again and again. “The excitement is hard to shake and the new friends are hard to leave so deciding to come back and do it all over is a fairly easy choice. The magic of the Hills is mesmerizing and the roads, well, there are few places on this good earth that offer this kind of riding” (City of Sturgis, 2009). Sturgis and Wall Drug, then, signify two varying approaches to navigating the Black Hills.



Here is an example of one of the many “Free Ice Water” signs advertising Wall Drug Store along I-90 in South Dakota.

What do the Black Hills mean today?

Two competing narratives appear in stone. Cowboys battle Indians. On one level, Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse offer two very different symbols of America. Mount Rushmore narrates America's “foundation, preservation, and continental and imperial expansion” (Pretes, 2003, p. 131). Crazy Horse narrates what America destroyed in the process of expansion. On another level, both narrate a similar tale of the “wild” West, of the struggle between man and nature. When work on Mount Rushmore began, sculptor Gutzon Borglum declared: “American history shall march along that skyline!” (*USA Today*, 1991, p. 59). Yet, the grandiosity of this stone battle is simply the latest manifestation of a long, epic attempt by man to conquer man through the landscape. Borglum later stated: “A monument's dimensions should be determined by the importance to civilization of the events commemorated” (p. 64). In fact, both Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse actively participate in this view of “commemoration” – remembering history in granite. Gerard Baker, Mount Rushmore's first American Indian superintendent says, “A lot of Indian people look at Mount Rushmore as a symbol of what white people did to this country when they arrived – took the land from the Indians and desecrated it” (Perrottet, 2006, p. 79). Crazy Horse's method of contesting this desecration is, however, a replication of the very same ideology, the notion that man and nature are enemy combatants. Members of an indigenous organization called Defender's of the Black Hills oppose Crazy Horse Memorial for just this reason, saying it violates the land every bit as much as Mount Rushmore (p. 82). What is at stake in the struggle to narrate

the Hills is less the history it narrates, although this certainly occurs as a surface sign, than the cultural memory it performs. In each instance, tourists are positioned as the innocent consumers of history (Sturken, 2007) not as its active participants.

Conclusion: A note on touring, imagineering, and authenticity

We have come now to the climax of our tour – or, should we call it a travel? We have meandered and traversed the complicated narrative terrain of the Black Hills of South Dakota. We have, like Carey and Eva, gone west, riding the curves of the American Western landscape, climbing the stone heads of presidents, and, ultimately, excavating – if only a tiny fragment! – the imagination underpinning contemporary tourist, tour, and destination. Of course, we could have embarked on an altogether different tour, but our decisions reflect our own “imagineering” as well as the intricate network of theory and history that mapped our tour in advance. We scholars are, of course, every bit the tour guide. Like filmmakers, postcard writers, dime novelists, or army scout, we use technologies – words, images, and analytic categories – to “imagineer” self, other, and world. Ultimately, theorist and historian map the Hills as much as do Hitchcock, Bullock, Custer, Borglum, and the Ziolkowski clan.

The previous pages have traced merely a handful of the many narratives mapping the Black Hills of South Dakota as an important site of American heritage tourism. The Hills are imagined as a “quintessential American” space, a space of “wild” nature and even “wilder” man. Yet, this space allows Americans to imagine their own innocence in the face of extreme adversary and to narrate their own brutality as a necessary consequence of survival. Several important events have been narrated in just this way. The grand touring of Europe, American expansion westward, and the discovery of gold in the Black Hills are just three examples to have important consequences for how tourism is imagined and experienced in the region today. And, we could, of course, add many more narratives to the mix. The picture that emerges through even the few frames exposed thus far is twofold. On the one hand, we clearly see the continued influence of a Wild West mythos upon Americans’ imagination of their heritage. Americans understand their nation, their national identity, and their history through the lens of Wild West characters, battles, and landscapes. On the other hand, we glimpse some of the ways national histories and cultural memories are, in fact, complex productions, sometimes involving dynamite and genocide.

Americans idealize travel as a symbolic act, an act “heavy with promises of new life, progress, and the thrill of escape” (Blanton, 2002, p. 18). Thinking of travel in this way requires a re-examination of the role of authenticity in contemporary tourism and its usefulness as a critical

category to engage the tourist imaginary. Excavations, like the one just completed, are perhaps a more useful means of laying bare tourist desire in all its gory detail. Re-positioning authenticity within the framework of the tourist imaginary reveals the numerous layers of popular culture at work in each and every tourist experience.

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