



TOURISM AND NATIONALISM

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Abstract: The viewing of heritage sights by domestic tourists is a key aspect in the formation and maintenance of a national identity, especially when nationalism is understood as an “imagined community.” Tourist sights may function in the same way as do museums in Benedict Anderson’s classic study of nationalism: as places presenting the defining characteristics of nationhood and displaying historical evidence of its existence. Using three examples from the American state of South Dakota—Mount Rushmore National Memorial, Wall Drug Store, and Rapid City Dinosaur Park—this article argues that, despite their recent creation, each provides a foundational history and “archeology” upon which a national identity can be built. **Keywords:** American West, South Dakota, nationalism, heritage, monuments. © 2003 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Résumé: Tourisme et nationalisme. La visite des attractions touristiques du patrimoine national par des touristes du pays est un aspect clé de la formation et du maintien d’une identité nationale, surtout quand le nationalisme se comprend comme une “communauté imaginée”. Les attractions touristiques peuvent fonctionner de la même façon que les musées dans l’étude classique du nationalisme par Benedict Anderson: ce sont des lieux qui présentent les caractéristiques déterminantes d’un nationalité et qui font une preuve historique de son existence. En utilisant trois exemples de l’état américain de Dakota du Sud: le Mémorial National du Mont Rushmore, le Wall Drugstore et le Parc des Dinosaurés de Rapid City, l’article soutient que, malgré leur création récente, chacun offre une histoire fondamentale et une “archéologie” sur laquelle on peut construire une identité nationale. **Mots-clés:** Ouest américain, Dakota du Sud, nationalisme, patrimoine, monuments. © 2003 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

One of the odd things about the arrival of the era of the modern nation-state was that for a state to prove it was modern, it helped if it could also prove it was ancient. A nation that wanted to show it was up to date and deserved a place among the company of modern states needed, among other things, to produce a past (Mitchell 2001:212).

Heritage sites, representing a nation’s past, are an important element in the construction of a national identity (Johnson 1995). Sites of significance help to create a common identity, or “imagined community,” among a diverse population. A shared identity is an official goal of countries comprised of many different immigrant cultures. A

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hegemonic discourse of nationalism may manifest itself in tourism sights, both public and private, encouraging tourists to embrace national goals. These sites may be official government-sponsored constructions with such clear aims, but may also be privately-established enterprises that play on tourists' own national feelings. In the United States, both government and private resources helped shape a common "American" identity from diverse immigrant backgrounds. Heritage sites have played an important role in this identity formation.

This article explores the links between nationalism and tourism by examining three sights in the American state of South Dakota: Mount Rushmore National Memorial, Wall Drug Store, and Rapid City Dinosaur Park. Each attraction disseminates a hegemonic discourse of national identity and imagined community. They date from the 20th century, yet are analogous to ancient ruins (such as Egyptian Pyramids, Angkor Wat, and Parthenon) in that they represent an earlier, *U-*civilization that is still partially present. The analysis follows the views of scholars of nationalism, including Anderson (1991), Nairn (1977), and Kammen (1991), who argue that there exists a common urge to create a national identity to overcome diversity and difference within the nation-state.

The article begins by reviewing the meaning of nationalism, drawing especially on Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as an "imagined community" and the role that tourism plays in creating this community. After a brief overview of tourism in South Dakota, the focus shifts to the three attractions, each of which represents a particular facet—political, economic, and scientific—of American nationalism. The conclusion notes how a hegemonic discourse of nationalism is an essential feature of each of these ostensibly tourism sights, and how visiting them may help to create and strengthen a national identity.

TOURISM AND NATIONALISM

Heritage ... is the chief focus of patriotism (Lowenthal 1998:2).

Nationalism, specifically in the form of state-building, is "the attempt to assimilate or incorporate culturally distinctive territories in a given state" (Hechter 2000:15). It is the result of the conscious efforts of central rulers to make a multicultural population homogenous, and to form a single "nation" out of this diversity.

Anderson's classic study of nationalism defines the nation as an "imagined community":

It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nations will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion ... it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship (1991:6-7, emphasis in original).

Nairn argues that the development of nationalism brings with it an attachment to custom and tradition. It encourages societies to:

Propel themselves forward to a certain sort of goal (industrialization, prosperity, equality with other peoples, etc.) by a certain sort of regression—by looking inwards, drawing more deeply upon their indigenous resources, resurrecting past folk-heroes and myths about themselves and so on (1977:348).

The creation of this imagined community requires the establishment of national institutions to disseminate a feeling of common identity. Anderson identifies three key institutions used by nationalist movements to achieve their aims: censuses, maps, and museums. Censuses define aspects of the population, determining who is included in the nation and who is defined as an outsider. Maps delimit the territorial extent of the nation. Museums, giving the nation a history and sense of common heritage, present the defining characteristics of nationhood and display historical evidence of its existence. They also manifest the foundation myth of the nation, as do archeological sites and reconstructions, with which they are closely connected (Anderson 1991:178–185). Sights are likewise agents for disseminating a sense of national identity. As Lenoir and Ross note, “Tourism, in effect, makes a place into a museum” (1996:374).

Archeological sites give each nation a deep history and connection to the land, thus performing the same function as museums. Anderson suggests that archeological practice takes four steps: first, the writing of reports; second, the production of illustrated books; third, logoization or the display of the archeological image on postcards, postage stamps, and so forth; and fourth, the market or the use of the image as a marketing device (1991:182). Tourism is perhaps a fifth stage, when tourists begin to make pilgrimages to “archeological” sites. The United States had no “American” archeological sites (Native American sites were not considered as carrying an appropriate national message to a *domestic* audience, though used as American symbols overseas). Therefore, “archeological” sites had to be created. Sites such as Mount Rushmore become analogous to the Pyramids in Egypt, the Parthenon in Greece, or the Borobudur in Indonesia as expressions of national identity, heritage, and foundation. These monuments are likewise depicted on currency, postage stamps, and other official products, as well as in commercial advertising, entertainment, and the media, and represent something shared by all citizens, helping to popularize a hegemonic nationalist message of inclusion. An especially detailed analysis of the role of archeological sites in the formation of national identity can be found in Zerubavel (1995).

Tourism sights, like censuses, maps, and museums, may project a hegemonic, or official, discourse of nationalism. As Smith notes, forms of economic development, including tourism, can serve the interests of a national elite by:

Stabilizing their dominant position through the creation or expansion of the popular affiliation to an historically “real” national identity and [by] encouraging socioeconomically “divergent” groups to adopt life-

styles embedded in and geared to world system commoditization (1997:200).

In the United States, nationalism is a goal of the hegemonic political elite; it reflects the “political exigencies of the moment” (Levinson 1998:5). Spillman’s (1997) study of nationalism shows how centers of cultural production promote a central value system (1997:34–47). In the 19th century, these centers of cultural production were the “well educated Eastern industrial elite,” though in the next century they became increasingly associated with the national government (1997:39–49). Spillman’s discussion of the American bicentennial celebrations notes how the four themes of the founding moment, political culture, diversity, and spectacle dominated the hegemonic discourse of nationalism and national identity. A unified national identity can be created in a diverse country because *diversity itself* becomes an aspect of national identity (1997:126–130). The sharing of a common spectacle helps transcend subnational difference. In the United States, cultural production—in such forms as celebrations, monuments, and sights—is essential in creating a national identity because the country had no real nationalist political movements, unlike places such as Finland or Greece, or in the post-colonial world. Though the United States had unifying-nationalist goals and policies, beginning especially with the presidency of James Monroe in 1817, this was not the same as in Europe, where “nations,” such as the Finns or the Greeks, struggled for statehood against a dominating “foreign” power, and where the basis for nationhood was a shared ethnic and linguistic identity.

The creation of a national identity operates through the use of “guiding fictions”, which are commonly held beliefs that shape people’s attachment to the nation. According to historian Shumway, “The guiding fictions of nations cannot be proven, and indeed are often fabrications as artificial as literary fictions. Yet they are necessary to give individuals a sense of nation, peoplehood, collective identity, and national purpose” (1991:xi). These “official” fictions are disseminated in schools, textbooks, public statements, monuments, festivals, and official documents, and include the American ideals of the melting pot, the American dream, progress, manifest destiny, westward expansion as a civilizing process, and representative democracy. Guiding fictions provide a sense of self, purpose, and community. When produced by an elite, they reflect a hegemonic discourse of power:

Privileged members of the American hierarchy, bent on maintaining their economic and social class advantages, attempted to appropriate the symbols of America almost from their inception and use them to stimulate an illusion of inclusivity (Boime 1998:8).

Boime’s study of American icons shows that they “tend to be mediated by, and emblematic of, the operation and circulation of the ideological practices of dominant economic and political formations” (1998:xiii). While a unifying nationalism may be contested, sights that reflect and support national ideology still contain the nationalizing

guiding fictions of their creators. This article considers attractions representing political, economic, and scientific guiding fictions.

In the American West (typically defined as that part of the United States lying to the west of 100° W), despite great diversity and difference, a common national identity was shaped—albeit sometimes resisted—because of shared history and geography, and despite different readings of the same history. As historian Limerick (1987:292) notes, “Western groups, for all their differences, took part in the same story.” Aquila observes how the American West as depicted in popular culture helps unify national identity, despite its earlier association with Anglo-Saxon hegemony:

The pop culture West also served as a mirror and a matrix for American attitudes toward gender, race, ethnicity, and class ... The pop culture West frequently served as a metaphor for the superiority of white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant culture, idealizing middle-class Anglo males at the expense of women, new immigrants, Hispanics, Indians, and other people of color ... [yet] the pop culture West was never monolithic. The malleability of the mythic West guaranteed its continued success ... *The pop culture West has survived, providing a unifying symbol for Americans divided by race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, or region* (1996:12–13, emphasis added).

Anthropologist Bruner’s examination of the New Salem Historic Site in Illinois is also of interest. He notes that tourists in New Salem are involved in five activities: “(1) learning about their past, (2) playing with time frames and enjoying the encounters, (3) consuming nostalgia for a simpler bygone era, ... (4) buying the idea of progress, of how far we have advanced, ... [and] (5) celebrating America” (1994:398). While each individual tourist is free to construct and apply his or her own meanings on the sight, Bruner notes that certain patterns recur, notably the consumption of nostalgia, the idea of progress, and an image of traditional America—in other words the guiding fictions of the nation. These patterns are also those found in the three South Dakota attractions.

Tourism in South Dakota

The whole settlement of the Black Hills might well come under the head of tourist business, for it consisted of a series of incursions by strangers (Clark 1952a:196).

The state of South Dakota, located in the northcentral United States, contains virtually all the elements of American Western mythology. Most of these elements—cowboys, Indians, miners, fur trappers, the steam railroad, saloons and casino gambling—are represented in South Dakota’s two most touristic regions, the Black Hills and the Badlands, both in the western part of the state. The landscape itself is typically “Western”; at least it is in accordance with the depiction of the American West in film and other media. This part of South Dakota was one of the last parts of the conterminous United States to be

explored by whites—not only was it remote, but until the 1870s it was Indian land. It was not until gold was discovered in 1874 that an influx of Euro-Americans began.

Railroads, which were essential in introducing tourism into the American West, came late to this part of South Dakota: “Railroad travel in the West manifested the power of American wealth, creating a pattern in which the act of tourism affirmed American society” (Rothman 1998:43). The status of Indian lands made access by rail difficult. With the dispossession of increasingly large tracts of Indian land, the western parts of South Dakota were slowly developed for tourism. One of the most important early sites was the town of Hot Springs, which was famous for the eponymous mineral baths and as a center for divorce (Miller 1994). This early tourism was largely the preserve of the wealthy classes and reflected their tastes: hotels and resorts were modeled after those of the East and of Europe (Pomeroy 1957:3–30). It was later, with the rise of the automobile, that Western tourism began to assume its “Wild West” form (Pomeroy 1957:31ff.). The automobile made tourism accessible to the middle classes, and their tastes became established (Jakle 1985:140–145).

The tourism boom in western South Dakota began with the automobile (Athearn 1986:143). The Great Depression coincided with increased automobility on the part of Americans, and prominent South Dakotans, such as Governor and later Senator Peter Norbeck, realized the automobile’s potential for increasing tourism. Aggressive promotion on the part of the state did indeed have the desired effect, beginning with the visit of President Calvin Coolidge in 1927. Tourism in western South Dakota is today heavily dependent on automobile and bus traffic, while rail based traffic is non-existent. As middle (and later working) classes are the primary targets of nationalist messages, the tourism discourse was closely tied to the rise of the automobile.

Mount Rushmore: Politics

It started as an idea to draw sightseers (Mount Rushmore Home Page 2001).

The single largest attraction in the state of South Dakota, and the engine that drives the image of the state, is the Mount Rushmore National Memorial in the Black Hills, a monumental sculpture of four American presidents: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt. So dominating is the monument that it is essentially on its own, accountable for most of the tourism in South Dakota. The spin-off effects of Mount Rushmore, in the sense that it lends its aura to other attractions and makes them desirable and touristic in the first place, cannot be over-emphasized.

The genesis of Mount Rushmore took place in the 20s, when state authorities, realizing the potential benefits to be derived from touristic automobility, decided to create a spectacular attraction that would bring attention, and tourists, to their state (Fite 1952:9). Establishing

an *attraction* was only part of the overall strategy: in 1925 South Dakota constructed the State Cement Plant in Rapid City, which provided material for the roads that would bring in the tourists (Schell 1975:383). The original concept for Mount Rushmore is attributed to South Dakota State Historian Doane Robinson, who in the 20s espoused the idea of a monumental sculpture of Wild West figures in the Black Hills. Such a monument would become a major destination for out-of-staters. In 1924, the state invited the renowned Idaho sculptor, Gutzon Borglum, to undertake the project. Borglum, who had been working on the Stone Mountain Memorial in Georgia, but who was having artistic and other differences with the sponsors of that project, accepted the invitation. He rejected, however, the Wild West imagery suggested, and proposed a more national theme, namely that of great United States presidents (Karolevitz 1975:273; Smith 1985:32). This theme would help to de-marginalize the West, strengthening its links with the rest of the nation (Fite 1952:26).

The selection of the four presidents whose visages grace the mountainside was relatively uncomplicated. George Washington, as Revolutionary War hero, the nation's first president, and "the father of his country," was an obvious choice. Likewise Abraham Lincoln, who held the nation together during its most devastating internal conflict, the Civil War, and whose abolition of slavery made moves towards equality among all Americans. Thomas Jefferson, the architect of the Declaration of Independence, and the prime mover behind the Louisiana Purchase (which doubled the country's size) and the Lewis and Clark expedition (which helped initiate westward expansion), was also accepted with little debate. More controversial was the selection of Theodore Roosevelt. Both Gutzon Borglum and Senator Norbeck were enthusiastic supporters of Roosevelt, despite criticisms that his status did not measure up to the other three presidents. Borglum and Norbeck were ultimately successful by arguing that Roosevelt's sponsorship of the Panama Canal (which linked the Atlantic and Pacific oceans), his more general role in the country's imperial expansion, and his championship of the "average" citizen against the corporate trusts earned him a place on Mount Rushmore. The four selected presidents would thus represent the nation's foundation, preservation, and continental and imperial expansion. (The mountain itself was named after Charles E. Rushmore, a New York attorney and "representative of Eastern capital" (Clark 1952b:221)).

South Dakota state officials accepted the "great presidents" idea, and work began on the monument shortly thereafter. Progress was slow, primarily due to a shortage of funding. A big boost came in 1927, when President Calvin Coolidge, at the invitation of Senator Norbeck, established his "Summer White House" at the State Game Lodge in Custer State Park, very near to Mount Rushmore. Coolidge's presence had an instant effect: "the presence of the President of the United States in the park and at his working offices in Rapid City high school focused national attention on the Hills. In effect, the emergence of the state's vital tourism industry can be traced to that historic visitation" (Karolevitz 1975:251). Coolidge promised federal financing for the

project, which, together with increased private funding, allowed the finishing touches to be placed on the memorial by 1941. As Bedeau (1994:34) points out, several of the private donors were railway and oil companies with vested interests in fostering tourism in South Dakota.

Coolidge himself was impressed by the Wild West ethos, at least by its sartorial and millinerian aspects:

... he wore a ten-gallon hat at the Belle Fourche roundup and an Ogalala Sioux headdress at The Deadwood Days of '76 show. Six thousand people watched his adoption into the Sioux as "Leading Eagle".... The press reported that the West had taught the President how to play and how to enjoy the wide-open spaces, that he enjoyed wearing boots and ten-gallon hat in the living room.... (Pomeroy 1957:181).

The taste expressed by the president was disseminated through the media, and further popularized Western fashion. In essence, Mount Rushmore worked according to plan:

In 1939 ... a potential new source of revenue—the tourism industry—seemingly blossomed overnight as Americans everywhere indicated their intention to make up for the unlamented stay-at-home years. An estimated one million auto travelers came to the state, with their primary destination being the Black Hills and a phenomenal attraction called the Rushmore Memorial (Karolevitz 1975:271).

Historians have generally praised the monument as vital to the interests of the state. Schell, whose *History of South Dakota* is perhaps the standard text, grandiloquently notes that "the mountain sculpturing, high up among the clouds, may be regarded as a symbol of greatness and durability which embodies the dreams, ambitions, and accomplishments of the American people" (1975:398). Smith's *The Carving of Mount Rushmore* describes Mount Rushmore as "not only America's greatest and most enduring monument, [but] all of mankind's as well" (1985:13). Pomeroy is a bit more sober in his assessment:

There was no reason why Gutzon Borglum should have carved the faces of four presidents on Mount Rushmore ... except that South Dakota was willing not only to interpose no objection but to help raise the money in order to attract tourists ... (1957:211–212).

Pomeroy, a Californian, was aware that Mount Rushmore could have been carved anywhere and that it did not particularly reflect the history or heritage of the West. Nevertheless, it helps to unify national and regional identities and establish the West as the quintessential "American" region: "The West alone seems to be a national possession. Its experience speaks for all Americans, not just for those who live there" (Athearn 1986:271).

Sculptor Borglum himself perhaps best stated the meaning and significance of Mount Rushmore to Americans. The monument would be:

... so inspiring that people from all over America would be drawn to come and take a look and go home better citizens My dream has come true ... There, on the mountain top, as near to Heaven as we could make it, we have carved portraits of our leaders, that posterity

and civilization may see hundreds of thousands of years hence what manner of men our leaders were, with a prayer and a belief that there among the clouds they may stand forever, where wind and rain alone shall wear them away (quoted in Karolevitz 1975:274–275).

This is, even by American standards, laying it on a bit thick. The parallels with totalitarian art are striking: Mount Rushmore was state-supported and financed, monumental in size and ambition, portrays “great leaders,” and—as even Borglum admits—is supportive of state ideology and values and contains theological appeals. It also functions as a national shrine. As Golomstock (1990:plates) notes, “The ceremonial portrait of the leader (in painting and in monumental sculpture) occupied the most important position in the hierarchy of genres of totalitarian art.” Mosse also considers stone monuments to be the most important public manifestation of national myths, helping to condition the populace to new political forms (1975:8, 47–72).

That an average of 2.5 million people visit, via car or bus, Mount Rushmore each year suggests that its image resonates strongly with American tourists. Why is this so? Mount Rushmore acts as a national icon. To emphasize this purely symbolic function, the memorial must, like Barthes’s (1979:4) Eiffel Tower, be useless; that is, it must have no productive function. The meaning of Mount Rushmore is socially dictated and is projected onto the sculpture; the meaning is not inherent or fixed: it can change over time and be understood differently by different groups.

The Mount Rushmore visitors’ center is an important part of the overall memorial. It provides viewing decks (both indoor and outdoor) and sundry amenities (restaurants, restrooms, gift shops, and film sales) and *interpretation* (which is really symbolification, or encoding of a guiding fiction). Very little of the interpretive material at the center focuses on the presidents memorialized: it is sufficient to know that they were “great leaders.” Conversely, its interpretive materials are relentless in explaining the history of the *monument*, rather than the *monumentalized* (in semiological terms, one could speak of an emphasis on the *signifier*, rather than the *signified*). The display text focuses on the vision and construction of the monument: the subjects themselves are less interesting. Tourists learn that the faces depicted are 60 to 70 ft (18–20 m) high, and that if the sculptures had bodies they would be nearly 470 ft (143 m) in height. They learn all about the number of person-years it took to complete the project, the risks involved, the tons of rock hauled away (450,000 tons). Mount Rushmore, like other shrines, has become a place where “the memorializing structures were equal to if not more important than the history remembered” (Jakle 1985:291). The emphasis on the memorializing structures points to Mount Rushmore 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.

Mount Rushmore is clearly a shrine and repository of signification, but what exactly does it signify? President Franklin Roosevelt called it the “Shrine of Democracy.” The monument can be read differently by each viewer, but in the intentions of its creators and sponsors, Mount

Rushmore signifies *American Values* and the *American Way*: it transforms these intangible fictions into a somatological, visual, and consumable form. It becomes an icon, a shrine, an object of pilgrimage allowing the viewer to consume a nationalist understanding of what it means to be an American. The monument becomes a focus for American collective memory. A visit to Mount Rushmore can make the tourist feel proud and happy about America, though the monumentality of the sculptures can dwarf the tourist, making him or her feel tiny and insignificant in the face (literally) of the “great leaders,” who are also father figures. Monk has noted how a message of male power is expressed through monuments (1999:154–155). The meaning of Mount Rushmore is constructed by carving the visages of known “great leaders,” endowing them with values disseminated through popular culture. The stories of George Washington chopping down cherry trees and crossing rivers to attack enemy mercenaries are but two examples of how values such as honesty and fortitude are associated with the person, then with his monument, and then with the nation in general. The same applies to the values and attributes associated with the three other presidents.

Not all tourists to Mount Rushmore accept its hegemonic discourse. That the monument is constructed on land originally belonging to Native Americans, notably the Lakota (Sioux), and which was unceremoniously alienated, is rarely mentioned. It is certainly not celebrated in interpretive displays. It is doubtful that Native Americans have the same impressions of Mount Rushmore. They are, however—in an excellent example of mimesis—fighting fire with fire: another, much larger, sculpture of the Lakota Chief Crazy Horse is under construction not far away. In a further irony, the sculpture will be sited just north of the town of Custer. The Native American reading of Mount Rushmore is quite different from that of white Americans. Likewise, Asian-Americans may take differing views of the monument. The contemporary artist and Hong Kong immigrant Tseng Kwong Chi, for example, in his photo *Mount Rushmore, South Dakota* (1986) depicts himself as a tiny figure in the foreground of the monument, perhaps referring to “the powerlessness of Asian Americans” (Lippard 1999:35). Though tourists are presented with a hegemonic discourse of nationalism, emphasizing inclusion in the American polity, they are free to reject this discourse and construct their own reading of the site. These conflicting discourses are not part of the interpretative displays.

Borglum himself thought that Mount Rushmore would rank with the great works of Egypt, Greece, and Rome (Fite 1952:188). Though the monument was completed only in 1939, the sculptor and his backers understood Mount Rushmore as an “archeological” site, as a place representing a foundational myth that can be used to create an imagined community. As the historian Fite noted, “The one who views this monument sees more than four stone faces. He sees and feels independence, freedom, justice, equality, self-reliance, individuality, and other qualities which have characterized America ...” (1952:235). Further, as Smith observes, “monumental architecture has, for millennia, enhanced the prestige of the elite and serves as visible

representations of progress, prosperity and power” (1997:204). At Mount Rushmore, the tourist is brought face to face with the guiding fictions of America.

Wall Drug Store: Economics

The name Wall Drug strikes a familiar note of horror with anyone who’s driven the interstate system west of the Appalachians or east of the Rockies with a back seat full of screaming children. “Mommy, Daddy, lookit the funny signs! Can we stop huh please huh can we just for a minute puh-leeeeeze?” Those who have been denied this experience may still have heard of Wall Drug if they’ve visited the North or South Poles, for even at the ends of the earth, Wall Drug has posted signs advertising the mileage to itself (Roadsideamerica.com 2002).

Wall Drug Store (commonly known simply as Wall Drug) is probably the best known drug store (a “chemist shop” outside North America) in the Midwest, perhaps the best known in the country, and just possibly the best known in the world. The store is one of the most important attractions in South Dakota, and certainly one of its most influential commercial enterprises. As Kirby, Smith and Wilkins humorously note, “Over fifty Minuteman missile silos surround Wall, making Wall Drug the best-defended tourist attraction in the world” (1992:269).

Wall Drug is located in the small town of Wall (population 800), not far from Badlands National Park. It is indeed a drug store, though it is also much more than that. Ted and Dorothy Hustead founded it in 1931. As Bryson observed:

Buying a drugstore in a town in South Dakota with a population of three hundred people at the height of the Great Depression must be about as stupid a business decision as you can make. But Hustead realized that people driving across South Dakota were so delirious with boredom that they would stop and look at almost anything. So he put up a lot of gimmicks like a life-size dinosaur, a 1908 Hupmobile, a stuffed buffalo, and a big pole with arrows giving the distances and directions from Wall Drug to places all over the world, like Paris and Hong Kong and Timbuktu. Above all, he erected hundreds of billboards all along the highway between Sioux Falls and the Black Hills, and filled the store with the most exotic and comprehensive assortment of tourist crap human eyes have ever seen, and pretty soon people were pouring in (1989:291).

The Husteads were able to turn their “stupid business decision” into an entrepreneurial success through clever use of image and signification. When the federal highway system was organized, US Highways 14 and 16 (the principal routes from the East to the Black Hills), were routed through Wall. The Husteads put up signs saying “Free Ice Water” to encourage people to stop in. This was a phenomenal success—not too surprising given the dry, dusty, and desolate landscape of western

South Dakota—and business boomed. Wall Drug still serves free ice water, to the tune of 20,000 glasses per day in summer. Following the success of their ice water promotion, the Husteads advertised coffee for 5 cents per cup—a price that remains in effect even today. The Husteads further expanded their use of signage not only by placing signs along South Dakota highways, but also by encouraging their customers to carry signs and bumper stickers to exotic places, giving the distance in miles or kilometers to Wall Drug. Such signs have been placed in Antarctica, on Easter Island, on 20 London double-decker buses, in 6,000 Paris bistros, at every major railway station in Kenya, and there were 127 signs in South Vietnam during the Vietnam War (*People Weekly* 1986; *USA Today* 1985). Wall Drug signs and billboards once blanketed large tracts of America before Lady Bird Johnson's Highway Beautification Act, and many still remain in South Dakota itself. Most of these signs are of painted wood, for as Ted's son Bill once noted, "Painted wood isn't as fun to shoot as enameled metal" (Roadsideamerica.com 2002).

From its humble beginnings, Wall Drug has expanded to include, among other things, and within the same structure, a number of restaurants, a soda fountain, a Western art gallery, several Western clothing stores, a number of jewelry stores, a book store, card shop, shoe store, camera and photo supply store, chapel, harness shop, poster shop, pottery and iron shed, rock shop, museum, and several "souvenir" shops. Interior corridors and an outside yard area contain covered wagons, antique automobiles, stuffed animals, music boxes, sculptures (including a scale replica of Mount Rushmore), a mechanical cowboy orchestra, wooden Indians, a six foot high rabbit, at least 17 other (sic) "life size historical figures," and even a large fiberglass specimen of that perennial Western favorite, the Jackalope (Jennings 1990). Wall Drug even has a museum to itself, consisting of a replica of the original 1930s store. The Husteads have resisted opening more stores and instead prefer to concentrate all their operations in one place: "Once you branch out, you lose your uniqueness. Our main drive has been to make Wall Drug a tourism center," noted the late Bill Hustead (*USA Today* 1985), who possessed a canny understanding of hyperreality.

Wall Drug is located on Main Street and it maintains a decidedly Western theme throughout, which also predominates on the remainder of Main Street. The street sports a Wild West Historical Wax Museum, Black Hills Gold Emporium, Badlands Bar and Lounge, Trading Post, The Tumbleweed, Dakota Mercantile, Cactus Cafe, and Buffalo Gift Shop. The folksy image cultivated by Wall Drug ideally captures the regional perceptions of the American West. The projected image (of Americans) of the West is a happy one, where small businessmen prosper, everyone has fun, and the occasional "bad guy" is run out of town or justifiably shot down by the local sheriff. One would search long and hard in a Sergio Leone film—which presents an alternative, and notably non-American, vision of the West—for a "Cactus Cafe" or a "Badlands Bar and Lounge".

Wall Drug is a successful, privately-owned business. It has turned its

original disadvantages— isolation and small town locale— into advantages through the marketing of image. Tourists who visit Wall Drug see much more than a drug store and the actual products they purchase. Whereas Mount Rushmore evoked the political guiding fictions of America, Wall Drug evokes economic ones: free enterprise, small-town America, prairie pioneers, survival through the Great Depression, the Protestant work ethic, success and prosperity through hard work and perseverance (as well as the more recent guiding fiction of the ability to consume and shop). By combining American charm with Wild West imagery, Wall Drug portrays itself as a repository of American family values. *Time* magazine observed that Ted Husted “looks like a kindly drugstore man out of Norman Rockwell” (1981:8). As in the case of Mount Rushmore, these values encapsulate a nationalist hegemonic discourse.

Rapid City Dinosaur Park: Science and Nature

Dinosaurs are the most American animals that ever lived. They were big, strong, he-man animals who ruled the earth during a time of free-market ecology, and they didn't take flak from anyone. Every patriot loves and identifies with dinosaurs ... (Kirby, Smith, and Wilkins 1992:28).

Life-size and scale model dinosaurs crafted out of concrete or similar materials are not unique to South Dakota, but they do assume a certain expressive function there. The western half of the state contains numerous specimens of concrete animals, of which dinosaurs are perhaps the most important and notable. The “brontosaurus” (*Brachiosaurus*) and similar genera appear to be the most popular, though one can find representations of other forms as well. Dinosaurs seem to go in and out of fashion, perhaps reflecting societal views of Science and Nature. Evidently a phase of dinosaur interest took place in Depression-era South Dakota, and continues intermittently to this day. The success of such films as *Jurassic Park* in 1993, *The Lost World* in 1997, and *Dinosaur* in 2000, and of the television series *Walking With Dinosaurs*, suggests that dinosaurs are currently “in”.

Dinosaurs as a taxonomic order are a relatively recent “invention.” They were first identified as an order in the fossil record by Richard Owen in 1838–1841. His organization of the Crystal Palace Exhibition in London in 1854 featured the newly “discovered” dinosaurs, and already myths and legends about these creatures were being formed. Owen thought that viewing the recreated dinosaur models—there were no fossils in the exhibition—would have a moralizing effect on the populace (Lenoir and Ross 1996:376–379, 385). The dinosaur is “the totem animal of modernity” in that “it is a symbolic animal that comes into existence for the first time in the modern era” (Mitchell 1998:77), bestowing an historical importance and sense of grandeur on those lands, like the United States, fortunate enough to have had dinosaurs.

The dinosaur holds a special place in American culture, and is typi-

cally seen as a very American animal. For example, Thomas Jefferson saw dinosaurs as patriotic representations of America and its scientific superiority to Europe. America was a land where mighty creatures once roamed, whereas Europe was not—and its plentiful fossils were proof of this. “The dinosaur image serves as a monument to the prestige of modern states and nations” (Mitchell 1998:113, 19) because modern nations “needed ... to produce a past,” especially an ancient past (Mitchell 2001:212). As dinosaurs are no longer living creatures, recreated versions of them, in concrete and other materials, form part of the “archeological” record made manifest. Like Mount Rushmore, the dinosaur parks across the western United States serve a nationalist archeological function similar to that of the Pyramids or the Parthenon:

The American obsession with bones, especially with *big* fossil bones left by gigantic creatures, has a history going back to the founding fathers, and is woven inextricably into an emergent sense of national identity from the beginning (Mitchell 1998:111, emphasis in original).

Rapid City’s Dinosaur Park contains a number of life-size concrete dinosaurs of various types. The park was the brainchild of Dr Cleophus C. O’Harra, a paleontologist and retired president of the South Dakota School of Mines (Bedeau 1994:16). As in the case of Wall Drug, the Chamber of Commerce wanted to capitalize on the increased auto traffic in the Black Hills region stimulated by Mount Rushmore. The dinosaur theme seemed to fit in well with the region, as some important fossils had been discovered nearby. In 1936, once the dinosaur theme was agreed upon, Emmet A. Sullivan, a local sculptor and lawyer, was commissioned to design the dinosaurs and supervise their construction (Bedeau 1994:16). Sullivan did not see the project through to completion, although he did return to operate a concession stand until 1968. As Bedeau notes:

Sullivan did not get along with the WPA [Works Progress Administration] and resigned from the project in 1937. When he quit he refused to turn over the set of teeth he had made for the Tyrannosaurus Rex, claiming that he had made them on his own time. A compromise was eventually worked out and the teeth were installed in 1938 (1994:16).

The American Museum of Natural History also assisted and provided the correct measurements for the dinosaurs (and provided the models with scientific legitimacy), and the project was funded through the Works Project Administration (WPA project #960). The park was dedicated in 1936 but not completed until 1938. In addition to containing the model dinosaurs, it contains a privately-operated gift store.

Dinosaur fossils are fairly common throughout the western part of the United States, and help to signify the antiquity of the American past. This is especially critical in a nation that views itself as having a rather brief past, especially when contrasted with European nations as is usually the case. Dinosaurs lend an air of grandeur to American history; they were big animals in a nation obsessed with bigness (Marling 1984). They also function as an ideal nature symbol,

especially evocative of the terror of nature and the “desart wilderness” so castigated by the Puritan Cotton Mather and his ilk. Dinosaurs give pause to reflect on the world before humans, but their presence as physical and contemporary symbols, albeit in concrete form, contains an element of terror. Of the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1854, according to Lenoir and Ross: “The exhibits were massive, distant, frightening in the controlled way that a roller coaster at an amusement park is frightening: offering no real danger, just a tantalizing thrill” (1996:379). Human beings can feel satisfied that dinosaurs no longer exist, that in this sense they have posthumously triumphed over nature, which is imagined as hostile and brutal. Though not contemporary with human beings, dinosaurs help validate the claim that the American wilderness was more terrible and dangerous than it really was, a belief that lends a greater glow to the achievements of pioneers and settlers. Settlers could conquer a “desart wilderness” where dinosaurs once roamed (Bowden 1992).

Gigantic concrete dinosaurs may help with fears of the unknown and terrors of nature. These physical manifestations may induce catharsis, in that actual dinosaurs no longer exist. According to Chatwin, one etymology of “catharsis” derives the word from the Greek *katheiro*, meaning, “to rid the land of monsters” (1988:242). Dinosaurs can be enjoyed as a pleasing fantasy or as a terrible, but fortunately unreal, nightmare. As Chatwin asks, “... has not the whole of history been a search for false monsters? A nostalgia for the Beast we have lost?” (1988:285).

CONCLUSION

Tourism sights, like censuses, maps, and museums, may contain a discourse of nationalism, allowing hegemonic cultural producers to project their values of national identity and national inclusivity. Such sights may function in the same way as museums, guarding national heritage and history and preserving it for public display. Tourists receive messages sent to them by the creators of the sites they visit. Whether the sites are public monuments, private businesses, or science parks, each encodes a shaping of a common national identity. These sights, presented as aspects of a national heritage, help to construct an imagined community.

The three South Dakota attractions—Mount Rushmore, Wall Drug, and Rapid City Dinosaur Park—are vehicles for creating a supra-primordial identity in a country of great diversity. That Mount Rushmore was created simultaneously as attraction and national shrine is clear from its history. Mount Rushmore speaks to the political guiding fictions of the United States, presenting, in gigantic and permanent form, the images of four great presidents associated with historical moments and values such as the nation’s foundation, preservation, and continental and imperial expansion, and more generally with such “national” values as independence, freedom, and equality. Less obvious, though equally powerful, is the simultaneous purpose of the two other sites as both attractions and vessels for a hegemonic nationalist discourse. Wall

Drug embraces national economic guiding fictions of free enterprise and pioneering, expressing these through a recreation of an idyllic small town institution, the drug store. Wall Drug also cultivates its links with the American West by simultaneously celebrating the region as a national treasure and veiling the conflicts inherent in its settlement. Rapid City Dinosaur Park, with its life-size models of prehistoric creatures, depicts guiding fictions of the antiquity and grandeur of the American landscape. Each of these attractions helps to disseminate national guiding fictions, promoting a discourse of national inclusion and a past shared by all Americans.

Using site-based readings of three attractions, this article has explored the links between them and the construction of a national identity. Future research might explore in greater depth the significance of individual attractions and extend the analysis to other sites. Of special interest is the role that recently constructed sights may play as “archeological” sites, in which the nation’s past is uncovered, restored, and displayed. Because the United States had no “American” archeological sites (apart from Native American ones), such sites had to be invented as a way of providing a deep history and connection to the land. When imbued with national values, modern attractions may serve the same purpose as the Egyptian Pyramids, the Greek Parthenon, or the Indonesian Borobudur in shaping the conception of a glorious shared past. The guiding fictions of America are made manifest in many places, each of which is a kind of “archeological” site in which lies buried layers of meaning. ▣

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