was laughing hilariously. I get the out-of-control water blessing. But I asked my friend, what's the shaving cream about? "Oh, that's *our* blessing," she answered.

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"Legends of Deadwood." Adams Museum, 54 Sherman St., Deadwood, SD 57732.

Permanent exhibition, opened May 2002. M–Sa 9–5 May–Sept.; Tu–Sa 9–4 Oct.–April. Adults $3, children $2 (suggested). 9,000 sq. ft. Darrel Nelson, curator.

Internet: brief description and map of exhibition, hours, directions, events, and online store, http://adamsmuseumandhouse.org/museum/map.html.

Deadwood. Prod. by David Milch and Gregg Fienberg. HBO Inc., 2004–2006. 36 hours. (HBO Shop, 1100 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036; 866-316-4814; http://store.hbo.com/home/index.jsp.)

The Black Hills town of Deadwood, South Dakota, has capitalized on its history for many years. At its founding in 1876, promoters hyped Deadwood as the center of the "last and richest gold field on the globe," and ever since, its history has been inseparable from the process of drawing curious visitors ("The Coming Stampede: A Rush for the New El Dorado," *New York Times,* Feb. 4, 1877). In recent years, though, the stakes have been raised. In 1988 Deadwood reaped the rewards of South Dakota's decision to legalize gaming in select sites, and it has become a year-round tourist destination rivaling Mount Rushmore and other area attractions. Deadwood's gaming establishments have used history to establish a freewheeling mood for visitors, linking the town's "Wild West" heritage to a present-day "anything goes" spirit. In 2004 HBO presented a very different interpretation of the town's past, airing the edgy, critically acclaimed drama *Deadwood,* which for three seasons has explored the dark and complicated power dynamics of territorial expansion and gold mining. What are the multiple roles that history plays in Deadwood, and what do the competing versions of *Deadwood* tell us about popular understanding of the American West?

In 1988, after years of lobbying the South Dakota state legislature to legalize gaming, Deadwood finally saw its wish come true. In the first twelve months of business, the casinos and slots coaxed $281.5 million out of customers. Property values in Deadwood soared as developers swallowed up real estate. With gaming revenues, Deadwood's Historic Preservation Commission undertook an ambitious effort to preserve the town's nineteenth-century buildings, streets, and other physical features (Katherine Jensen and Audie Blevins, *The Last Gamble: Betting on the Future in Four Rocky Mountain Mining Towns,* 1998, pp. 74–75, 105–23). Amid Deadwood's myriad gaming establishments, the Adams Museum, which has benefited handsomely from gaming money, offers a respite from the flashing lights and clinking of coins. On a Sunday in August, during the height of Deadwood's tourist season, the museum was crowded with summer vacationers. Children scurried about and parents seemed to welcome the "family friendly"

environment.

W. E. Adams, a Deadwood businessman and former mayor, paid for the construction of the museum and donated it to the city in 1930. Adams initially used the museum to house his personal collection of "exotic" and "esoteric" items. The museum allowed him to demonstrate his sophisticated nature and philanthropy to the local public. It still contains some of these items in a section of the first-floor gallery titled "Cabinet of Curiosities." They include a two-headed stuffed calf, an armchair made out of steer horns, and a knot collection. Although the Adams Museum has always focused on local history, it was not until the late 1990s when the state legalized gaming and the museum gained access to gaming revenues that it was able to professionalize its staff and interpretation.

Its permanent exhibition, devoted to Deadwood's history, focuses on local legends and myths. It does a thorough job of debunking what is patently false, and explaining why such falsehoods might have emerged. Its ephemera relating to Wild Bill Hickcok, Deadwood's most famous resident, include the famed set of cards—the "dead man's hand"—he was holding when Jack McCall shot him in 1876, as well as romanticized illustrations made in the immediate aftermath of his death by artists who were nowhere near the shooting. The museum also delves into how he became an iconic figure of the West, displaying the *Harper's Weekly* article from 1867 that originally canonized him as a gunslinging hero, and shows artifacts from more recent times, such as a letter from a woman claiming to be the daughter of Hickok and Calamity Jane—a stretch since the two were only passing acquaintances.

Other panels explore the history of Deadwood Dick, the dime-novel hero popularized by the Philadelphia author Edward Lytton Wheeler. Wheeler invented the character of Deadwood Dick at the height of the nation's fascination with the Black Hills, although that did not stop a wide range of individuals from claiming to be the novelist's inspiration. Wheeler was never in the Black Hills and created Deadwood Dick for a theater troupe he belonged to, later making him a dime-novel character. The series began in 1877 and lasted until 1885, when Wheeler is believed to have died. Nat Love, a black cowboy, claimed he was given the name after winning a lassoing and shooting competition in Deadwood in 1876, but it was Richard Clark, a stagecoach driver and (not surprisingly) local tourism official who came to be associated with the name. In this section, the museum shows how the myths surrounding Deadwood became multilayered and how a fictional character became the inspiration for real-life individuals bent on performing the archetype of the western cowboy.

The Adams Museum is diligent in attempting to sort out fact from fiction, but it is no match for the rest of the town. Walking down Main Street, visitors are bombarded with imagery promoting the sensational, less nuanced version of the West that circulates throughout popular culture. Questions of authenticity versus inauthenticity, and whether it is possible to discriminate between the two, fade into the background. The No. 10 Saloon (using the name of the establishment where Hickok was shot), with its sawdust floors, stuffed bison heads, and portraits of Indian chiefs, offers daily reenactments of the murder of Hickok. On an August day, Wild Bill, aka Marcus, plugged his iPod into the bar's sound system so that patrons could hear the fateful moment. A waitress complained about how they were understaffed and how having to take part in the reenactment while also waiting tables was going to be "a real bitch." Still, the show went on.

The contemporary facade of Saloon No. 10 in Deadwood, South Dakota, is modeled after the original. Gamblers at today's No. 10 can enjoy blackjack and poker alongside reenactments of Wild Bill Hickok's assassination. *Photo by Andrew Urban. Courtesy Andrew Urban.*

As Larry McMurtry has written about the so-called revisionist western historians, in particular Patricia Nelson Limerick, who have sought to complicate the history of the American West, "Hers—theirs—is a noble but thankless task; rain though they may on the rodeo-parade model of western history, it's still the parade that people line up to see" (Larry McMurtry, *Sacagawea's Nickname: Essays on the American West,* 2001, p. 86). The Adams Museum, trying to entice people away from the casinos and tourist traps, seems to be fighting a similarly difficult battle. The museum participates in a type of revisionist western history that is decidedly festive. "Legends of Deadwood" celebrates the many myths and legends that the town and its inhabitants have spawned, while paying attention to which are nominally true and which are patently false. Still, the museum stops short of delving into what is at stake when western history is shrouded in myth and legend, and why the Wild West is such a popular concept for people to consume—in the actual town or in the many fictionalized versions of it. HBO's television show *Deadwood* is just the latest.

David Milch, the creator of *Deadwood,* a drama set in the late 1870s when the gold rush to the Black Hills was at its peak, claims not to have had historical accuracy or even history in mind when he started the show. As he notes on the show's Web page, "I want to make it clear that I've had my ass bored off by many things that are historically accurate" ("The Real Deadwood," http://www.hbo.com/deadwood/behind/therealdeadwood.shtml). Indeed, the basic drama that eventually became *Deadwood* was originally intended for a show that Milch (also the creator of *NYPD Blue* and *Hill Street Blues*) proposed be set in Nero's Rome. In addition, the characters in *Deadwood* speak in an idiom that—minus

the many curse words—seems better fitted for a Shakespearean drama than the ribald environs of a gold rush town. The linguistic dexterity of the show's characters does not reflect the language of a population that would have been only minimally educated.

Nevertheless, *Deadwood* is not ahistorical. Its characters struggle through morally gray areas and negotiate with power in a specific representation of time and place. A particular concept of the West appears as a vehicle for advancing the show's narrative and as an idea that needs to be critically assessed by viewers and the show's characters alike. The show, in line with the scholarly work of new western historians such as Limerick and Richard Slotkin, draws attention to how the nineteenth-century history of the West must be understood as inseparable from the history of the nation, not as a moment encapsulated by the expansion and ultimate closing of the frontier (Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West,* 1987, pp. 17–32; Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800–1890,* 1985, pp. 3–12).

The myth of the West as a place of opportunity and autonomy seems to haunt the show's characters. Slotkin has argued that such concepts of the frontier enabled and masked the sordid business of expanding the railroads, removing American Indians from lands containing valuable resources, and canonizing suspect individuals such as Gen. George Armstrong Custer (Slotkin, *Fatal Environment,* 8). *Deadwood* debunks the myth of the self-made man by showing how that very notion eventually destroys Hickok. Indeed, Hickok (Keith Carradine), holding his aces and eights when he is shot in the show's fourth episode, comes off not as the self-made man of the West, but rather a man made by forces beyond his control. As a chronic gambler, Hickok can only outrun his debts by trading on his reputation. When his friend Charlie Utter (Dayton Callie) tries to get him to quit, Hickok tells him, "Can you let me go to hell the way I want to?" Calamity Jane (Robin Weigert) is a hopeless drunk who wanders around in a stupor. When brought before the town's young students to recall her experiences as a scout for Custer, all she can say is that she called him by his middle name, Armstrong, despite his rank, because "he seemed puffed up to me."

The third season of *Deadwood* ended in August 2006 with nary a sunset to be seen. George Hearst (Gerald McRaney), father of William Randolph Hearst, has consolidated his gold mining interests in the Black Hills with all the ruthless measures available to him. Hearst has orchestrated the assassination of the miner Ellsworth (Jim Beaver) to facilitate the sale of his rich mining claim, colluded with authorities in the Dakota territorial capital of Yankton to fix an election, and bought Deadwood's main hotel and other property.

The third season of *Deadwood* and the shadow Hearst casts over the town stand in stark contrast to the dramas that preoccupied the show at its inception. The first season saw Deadwood's sheriff, Seth Bullock (Timothy Olyphant), at odds with Al Swearengen (Ian McShane)—the owner of Deadwood's largest saloon and brothel—over whether Bullock's desire for justice, however flawed, could be reconciled with Swearengen's economic plans for the town. By the third season those conflicts appear trivial. Bullock and Swearengen are allies in attempting to keep Hearst's corporate plans from displacing independent miners and business owners. Hearst, a national figure of seemingly limitless power who has Pinkertons (private hired detectives), government officials, and investors at his disposal, has rendered the local struggles moot. Hearst does not even require Dead-

wood's continued existence to run his mining operations, a point he makes clear during repeated threats to destroy it.

The creators of *Deadwood* imagine how their characters would have acted in a particular historical moment and then direct them accordingly, both hypothetical activities that academic historians typically eschew. For example, until 1876, the Black Hills were off limits to white prospectors, who were forbidden on the land of the Oglala Sioux by the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie. Nevertheless, when the U.S. government appointed surveyors in 1875 to verify whether the rumors of gold were true, they found upwards of fifteen hundred white prospectors working the creeks and gulches (Bob Lee, Stan Lindstrom, and Wynn Lindstrom, *Gold, Gals, Guns, Guts: A History of Deadwood, Lead, and Spearfish, 1874–1976,* 2004 [1976]). On *Deadwood* that history is invoked when Gen. George Crook, having defeated the Sioux at Slim Buttes, arrives in Deadwood and identifies Swearengen as one of the squatters he previously expelled. Wary of the numerous scams being perpetrated against his soldiers, he comments that he would have been better off "provisioning with the Sioux."

Deadwood also breaks new ground for westerns—if it fits in that nebulous category—by introducing the Chinese as significant subjects who took part in the settlement and development of mining camps, and were objects of white racism and scapegoats for labor agitation. *Deadwood* thus complicates the understanding of race in the American West, as racial problems there have too often been portrayed as conflicts only between whites and Indians (Arif Dirlik, ed. *Chinese on the American Frontier,* 2001, pp. xv–xxxvi). Mr. Wu (Keone Young) represents the Chinese community on *Deadwood.* In perhaps attempting to illustrate that race mattered little in the universal pursuit of money, the screenwriters portray Wu as Swearengen's incomprehensible sidekick and Chinese counterpart. At times that approach can make him a caricature. Unable to speak English, Wu can nonetheless match Swearengen's use of the word "cocksucker." He is happy to lend his pigs for the disposal of bodies that emerge from the Gem Saloon in exchange for Swearengen's guaranteeing him a monopoly on the opium trade. During the second season, Wu cuts off his queue and declares "Wu America," while reasserting his criminal allegiance to Swearengen. This interpretation of what it means to assimilate is certainly not what Frederick Jackson Turner had in mind when he claimed that the frontier was responsible for forging Americans (Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Frontier in American History," http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/turner/).

Deadwood also attacks the ideology of Victorian domesticity. The mining town lacks the middle-class white women who were believed to embody the late nineteenth-century ideal of femininity, but the one character closest to it is also the most lacking in "womanly" restraint. Alma Garrett (Molly Parker) is the wife of a wealthy New Yorker caught up in the hype surrounding the Black Hills gold rush who is trying his hand in prospecting. Garrett, bored by her husband's bumbling dreams—and, it is implied, his effeminate ways—becomes addicted to laudanum, which she uses to pass the time. After Swearengen murders her husband because he threatened to bring in the Pinkertons to redress a fraudulent land deal, the widow Garrett enters into an affair with the married Bullock. The liaison is fraught with comic tension as both attempt to stifle their sexual feelings in the name of propriety. As the sole "respectable" woman in camp, Garrett takes on the role of raising an orphaned girl (Bree Seanna Wall) whose family was killed by road agents.

A monument to James Butler "Wild Bill" Hickok—complete with engraved pistols—is located next to his grave site in Deadwood, South Dakota's Mt. Moriah Cemetery. *Photo by Andrew Urban. Courtesy Andrew Urban.*

But Trixie (Paula Malcomson), a prostitute from the Gem Saloon, is far defter in handling the child and repeatedly comes to the girl's rescue.

Of all the historical characters *Deadwood* portrays, George Hearst is perhaps the most fascinating. Charlie Utter describes Hearst's business practices and philosophy, paraphrasing Karl Marx, as "all fucking amalgamation and capital." The show alludes to Hearst's less-than-genteel business past when his agents murder Cornish miners working to unionize. That incident is fictional—or at least absent from the historical record—but Hearst's true violence is more evident in the bloody process of litigation. Hearst capitalized on the confusion regarding the earliest mining claims, which had been worked on the surface and then abandoned since there were no courts or officials to record them. Hearst and his associates dug them up, purchased them from their owners, and then displaced the current claimants. It is alleged that his high-priced lawyers used all the means available to them and were not averse to bribing judges or politicians to receive a favorable result. The screenwriters take pains to illustrate that "uncouth, illiterate" Hearst is not different from the other characters who inhabit the mining camp (*New York Times,* March 1, 1891). Hearst shows no inhibitions about cursing around women, drinking whiskey during meetings, and above all, using violence to get his way. Despite the claim in Hearst's authorized biography that on arriving in the Black Hills, "Hearst had seen too many 'wickedest towns on earth' to be interested in another shooting, fighting camp," the show depicts Hearst as being both of Deadwood in its customs and above it in gaining its resources (Fremont Older, *The Life of George Hearst: California Pioneer,* 1933, p. 134).

Bullock's real-life history also provides material for comparisons to his character on the show. According to historians of Deadwood and town lore, Bullock was a cultivated man who embodied self-restraint and civility, the archetype of the noble lawman. Estelline Bennett, the daughter of the local federal judge Granville Bennett, wrote in her

memoirs that Bullock was "tall, lean, with drooping mustache, keen gray eyes, a whimsical humor, a soft voice that spoke English like the educated gentleman he was" (Estelline Bennett, *Old Deadwood Days,* 1982 [1928], 54). After befriending Theodore Roosevelt during the future president's sojourn in the Dakota Territory, Bullock would later join his famed Rough Riders unit and participate in Roosevelt's presidential inauguration parade ("Seth Bullock," http://adamsmuseumandhouse.org/answers/sethbullock.html). Bullock seems to have occupied a symbolic role in Roosevelt's mind, a reference point for proclaiming the values of western living. When Bennett met Roosevelt in Chicago after his postelection trip around the world, Roosevelt commented that he had asked Bullock to come to London, because "I wanted those Britishers to see my ideal typical American" (Bennett, *Old Deadwood Days,* 54).

Bullock's western-style masculinity offers a study in the thin line separating the right side of the law from vigilantism. Bullock repeatedly resorts to savage beatings unrelated to upholding the law. The second season of *Deadwood* begins with Swearengen and Bullock engaged in a vicious fight that nearly leaves both men dead. Swearengen provokes the battle by making a crude comment about Bullock's hardly secret affair with the widow Garrett. When Bullock puts aside his badge prior to the fight, it is clear that the fight is about maintaining his personal image above all else. In typical westerns, the sheriff is the noble individual who maintains the law even when the law is not firmly established. Bullock is not somehow at the vanguard of American civilization, keeping law until the town becomes civilized and settled; he is determining the law himself, relying on his own personal code.

The fourth and final season of *Deadwood* will pick up in the wake of Hearst's triumph and take the form of a pair of two-hour specials, eschewing the typical HBO format of twelve episodes per season. The show's conclusion comes prematurely, the result of cost-saving measures by HBO. The show's devoted fan base and enamored critics accuse the network of retreating from its artistic vision in favor of profit. Milch has been more diplomatic, promising that the upcoming miniseason will allow the show to "touch on events in the history of the real Deadwood, including perhaps a fire and a flood" ("'Deadwood' Gets a New Lease on Life," *New York Times,* June 11, 2006). Given that nearly all of Deadwood burnt to the ground in 1879, that fits well with the show's overall chronology, which has roughly equated to a year of Deadwood's history each season.

When *Deadwood* premiered in spring 2004, the initial response to the show was amazement about its heavy use of profanity. *Deadwood* has a type of vulgarity that goes beyond language. Many of Swearengen's most profound soliloquies on the dilemmas that he and the town face occur while he is receiving fellatio from a prostitute. Knifings are frequent, and a violent street battle between two men ends when one rips the other's eye out of the socket.

Still, *Deadwood* is not about the sadistic possibilities that the pre-social-order West enables, but about how one form of violence is replaced by another. The national implications that *Deadwood* hints at are equally important. Without the coarseness and violence of the Black Hills and other gold mining regions, there cannot be the Nob Hill neighborhood in San Francisco that George Hearst later called home, his future position as a

U.S. senator, or, to stretch it a bit, the journalism of his more famous progeny (vulgar in its own right).

It would be nice to note that the town of Deadwood followed those cues from the show and has become more conscious of its self-presentation and complicated historical importance. Instead, Deadwood has touted *Deadwood* as another piece of evidence pointing to its exciting past without bothering to contextualize it. Gamblers can now wait for their lucky "21" in blackjack while life-size cutouts of Bullock and Swearengen hover nearby. Perhaps it is predictable that with gaming the sole profitable venture in Deadwood, a commercialized, amusement park version of the West will persist as the easiest way to get people to spend their money.

Certainly, Deadwood's kitsch can be fun, but the museum and the show have more to offer in terms of history. It would be hypocritical (not to mention futile) for the Adams Museum to rail against how the casinos use *Deadwood* and Deadwood legends for profit making, since it is reliant on the gaming institutions indirectly for money. But in the midst of casinos and ubiquitous slot machines the museum presents a more nuanced and complicated approach to understanding Deadwood's history. While popular culture continues to embrace the West as a unique facet of U.S. history that can be celebrated, isolated, and packaged, *Deadwood* pushes in the other direction, bringing to life a convoluted struggle between forces and ideals that still resonates today. It is safe to say that it will be a while before television produces another drama that is so riveting as entertainment and so historically acute.

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I would like to thank Derrick Becker, Eric Richtmyer, and Aaron Windel for transforming research on Deadwood into a summer road trip that explored South Dakota. Nicole Heater as always was a partner—in this case, one who watched the show with me and shared her insights. Finally, I would like to thank Benjamin Filene for his diligent work as an editor.

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