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# Landscape, History and the Media: An Introduction

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the journal of media geography

## **Landscape, History and the Media**

### **An Introduction**

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Writing from Nebraska's eastern edge, my mind's eye drawn to the Platte River (west and south of me), I consider landscape, history, and the media. The Oto called the river "Nebraskier" which means flat or shallow, giving us the name of the state.<sup>1</sup> Early accounts describe the Platte as "a mile wide and an inch deep" and "too thick to drink, too thin to plow"; Washington Irving described it as "the most magnificent and useless of rivers" (Allin 1982, 1). But to dismiss this river is to judge too quickly. As the river gains momentum, growing in size, it is covering space and time. Not a single flow but multiple flows. As a classic braided stream, it carries significant sediment from its origins in the foothills of the Rockies. Crossing the Plains and growing in size, it slows in speed, allowing deposition to occur, creating the sand bars and islands that are its braids. The river breaks into multiple flows that merge and split again. Like the Platte, the concepts of landscape, history and the media flow back and forth. They parallel each other, merge to form new streams, split up and then rejoin, reconfigure in new formations. None is discreet but rather have flowed together, now here and later there. At times they are joined, at other times they split, but always they have been traveling together across space and time.

Before going further, let me define what I mean by media: the broad range of tools and/or materials humans have used through history to communicate with each other about a shared reality. This can include texts such as newspapers, magazines, and books; aural and visual mediums such as cinema, television, radio, music, advertising, art; installations such as exhibits or exhibitions; and technologies such as the printing press and the internet. All facilitate communication across space, time, and social collectives (Jensen 2008). But media can refer both to a material object and to an action of communication, both transmitting human expression and carrying cultural and historical meanings (Jensen 2008). If we think about it, as long as there has been

geography, there has been geography's engagement with media, for part of geography is communicating our understanding of our world through words and images. This is reflected in the very term "geography," from the Latin *geo* for earth and *graphia* for description.

The interplay of landscape, history, and the media produces an immense, varied terrain. Both geography and the media have sought to capture and communicate notions of landscapes and their peoples. These are not, however, discrete fields but rather a vast plain where there has been an ebb and flow between areas. Media plays an important role in communicating as well as shaping our knowledge of our world (Schwartz and Ryan 2003; Craine 2007). More than just communicating the classic journalistic "who, what, when, where, why, how," descriptions of places and people help us construct our "imaginative geographies." These imaginative geographies, like media, reflect cultural and historical meaning (Schwartz and Ryan 2003, 6; Jensen 2008; Lukinbeal and Craine 2009, 177-8).

The interaction of landscape, history and the media can take a wide variety of forms: it can be the ways in which the media constructs history (i.e. movies, History Channel, coverage of historic sites) and so creates and communicates imaginative geographies; it may be the imaginative geographies embedded in media accounts from the past (i.e. place descriptions in tourism magazines, in newspapers, on television), providing a window on how particular places, peoples, and events were constructed at specific points in history; but it can also be the ways in which geographers/historians/artists use media to communicate/construct/illuminate history and landscape (i.e. art, websites). Media communicates geography, geographers employ media, and geographers create media and media content. But at the core of all is landscape. Just as mass media arose in the 15th century, so did our conceptions of landscape (Cosgrove 1985, 46). As the academic field of geography developed, geographers focused on landscape as a unit of study, using the term to describe the area they were investigating.

To help you see what I see from my vantage point here on the Plains, I would like to begin with an overview of the interaction of landscape, history and the media. Once I have sketched out the terrain, I will introduce and briefly discuss this special issue's papers before wrapping up with some concluding thoughts about where we might be heading.

#### **THE FLOWS OF LANDSCAPE, HISTORY AND THE MEDIA**

Just as media history began in the earliest days of human social life and communication, the roots of geography can be found early in human communication (Allan 2008). All cultures had their historians and/or writers or artists who contributed to their understanding of their world – from Judaic/Biblical accounts of Abraham and Moses' migrations through Ptolemy's geographies and cartographies to the Islamic geographers' worldviews (texts and maps), such as al-Idrisi. But the audiences reached by these

geographies were limited to some extent by the materials used to communicate: there were no technological means to record and transmit oral information, and relatively few had access to handwritten manuscripts. Despite their limited reach, the worlds and images captured in oral traditions and manuscripts transmit senses of place. They are a frozen moment yet they impact imaginative geographies even today.

### *1450s through 1700s*

With Johannes Gutenberg's development of the movable type printing press in 1456, communication across great distances and to significantly more people was possible. This includes what could be called was "historical geography." Isidore of Seville's tripartiate world map, published in his *Etymologiarum* (1472), is believed to have been the first printed map but is really more of a "world view" or mental map. Ptolemy's work was also an early printed book, published in Bologna in 1477, representing the geographic knowledge of the Greco-Roman world. Mercator's first published map was a 1537 map of Palestine, meant to illustrate texts from the Bible, could be described as a historical geography because it attempts to map the locations of events described in the Bible (viewing the Bible as an historic text). Within 100 years of Gutenberg's innovation, conceptions of historic landscapes were being circulated.

The earliest newspapers began publication in the early 17th century in Amsterdam. Appearing anywhere from one to three times a week, in multiple languages, early newspapers covered the events happening in Europe during a period of crisis, of civil war (France, England, Spain). Through newspapers, pamphlets, and prints, people informed the public and voiced their views. Timely news coverage was lauded, creating a market for the most recent news sources. The magnitude of publication was staggering: between 1640-1663, an English bookseller collected some 15,000 pamphlets and 7,000 newspapers (Briggs and Burke 2005, 74).<sup>2</sup> These media sources were conveying more than just the happenings of Europe: exploration and colonization were "bringing to light vast quantities of new information about the world, about what was where" (Mayhew 2007, 473). Journalism brought to a growing reading public the new ideas and interests of the age, including geographical information (Reitan 1985, 54). For example, *The Gentleman's Magazine* provided "news, descriptive articles, illustrations, and maps of those parts of the world which had become important to Englishmen interested in public affairs" (Reitan 1985, 59). Its first maps were published in 1739. The geography being published was seldom written by geographers in the modern sense; today we would likely label them historians or journalists (Withers 2006, 714).

### *1800s Expansion*

As America was colonized, printers went to work creating a new "national political culture" and a "new imagined community, defined against the British" (Briggs and Burke 2005, 81). By 1800, there were 178 weeklies and twenty-four daily newspapers with most writing for affluent, educated Americans and covering political happenings and

commercial information. Penny presses began in the 1830s, aiming for the “common man” audience, with lower prices and easy accessibility on the street. They were also accused of lowering the standards of journalism “through its vulgarity, cheapness and sensationalism” (Örnebring and Jönsson 2004, 288). Objectivity then became something that regular newspapers could claim in their search for larger audiences, shifting their coverage to information that had more general appeal (Soderlund 2002, 441).

While newspapers were being published more and more, so too were geographies. Geography texts were written and published in the United States and widely read. Jedidiah Morsé’s *American Geography* (1784) was reprinted more than fifty times by 1828 and read, not only by educated urbanites, but also by “hardscrabble families’ on the rural and social margins” (Jerabek 1943; Withers 2006, 724-5). Through books (fiction and non-fiction), newspapers, magazines, games, cards, globes, and maps, “the idea of nation emerged as a cultural artifact,” molded through descriptions of American history and landscape (Brückner 1999, 315).

In the United States and in Europe, geographers were publishing in the popular press. Arnold Guyot’s *Earth and Man* (1849) began as a lecture series in Boston but was then published in a local newspaper before publication in book form (Wilson 2004, 371-2). Friedrich Ratzel dabbled in journalism before turning to geography. After training in biology/zoology, Ratzel traveled throughout the Mediterranean. The letters he wrote home about his travels led to his writing travel articles for a Cologne newspaper, funding more travel until the Franco-Prussian War (Sauer 1971, 245-6; Zimmermann 2007, 59). American Geographical Society president Charles Daly gave “enormously popular” annual lectures in New York on the “state of geographical knowledge,” drawing several thousand spectators. Daly’s lectures, which he gave from 1869 to 1893, were published afterward in both New York newspapers and the society’s *Journal*. These lectures “popularized geography among the public, and...served powerful business interests of New York as well as political communities in the United States and internationally” (Morin 2011, 3, 17 and 45-6).

As the academic discipline of geography developed, geographers turned to media sources as part of their scholarly research. An 1855 article in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* entitled “A chronological table, comprising 400 cyclonic hurricanes which have occurred in the West Indies and in the North Atlantic within 362 years, from 1493-1855” was based on “books and periodicals” (Poey 1855). This may have been the first scholarly use of media as research data by a geographer.

New information was added to the public’s geographic imagination as government expeditions explored the new holdings of the United States (as well as the rest of the world) and published their findings in both government documents and popular media. Thomas Moran’s work on Yellowstone appeared in *Scribner’s Monthly* in 1871 (Fox 2005, 6). Moreover, newspapers collaborated with explorers in creating geographical news, as document by Karen Morin (Morin 2011, 132). Newspapers (or their owners)

employed or funded explorers, thus generating geographical news, such as Henry Stanley's expedition to locate David Livingstone in Africa. In other instances, reporters accompanied the media-funded expeditions, as in the case of the New York Herald and Arctic expeditions. Morin writes: "Thus we see an unprecedented marriage between news organization and geographical patrons working in tandem to create geographical firsts – even if such firsts were not firsts at all" (Morin 2011, 132 and 134).

Americans continued to churn out publications throughout the 19th century. P. Fox estimates that between 1885 and 1905, more than 11,000 magazine titles were produced in the United States (Fox 2005, 5). Through the pages of magazines such as *McClure's*, *Munsey's*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, an emerging middle-class was being presented with a new view of itself and its space (Ohman 1996, 45; Bogardus 1998, 515). As production technology made illustrations and photographic images economical for publishers, maps, photographs, cartoons and other images added to the communication. A significant element of *National Geographic's* transformation from a scholarly journal to a popular magazine was its publication of photographs around the turn of the 20th century (Lutz and Collins 1993, 27; Schulten 2001, 57-8). But geographical topics and maps can be found well outside of geographical journals.

*Good Housekeeping*, a magazine which catered to the "young, affluent homemaker," contained a number of examples of landscapes in its pages. The content of *Good Housekeeping* during this period was far-ranging, keeping with the magazine's subtitle of "Conducted in the Interests of the Higher Life of the Household," and included not only the expected home, food and children but geographical topics such as:

'Vacationing in the Rockies – the Companionship of Mountains and Streams' (1899)

'Child-life in Foreign Countries I – China' (1899)

'How the Sioux Keep House' (1901)

Even some of the magazine's fiction crossed the line into geography, such as "Thirst. How the Revolution Came to Russia – a Masterpiece of Historical Fiction" (1919). Maps and photographs illustrated these articles, providing visual prompts for the textual images.

But new technologies were changing how people were learning of their world. Early moving pictures (circa 1896) captured locations that had been covered by other forms of American media, in what are termed "actuality films." Locations such as Niagara Falls, Yellowstone and the American West offered a new way for Americans to "see" what they had been reading about (and seeing photographs of). According to Iris Cahn, "In the first ten years of cinema, more copyrights were issued in the United States for 'actuality' films than for narratives" (Cahn 1996, 85).

### *20th Century Geographies*

As we move into the 20th century, journalism focused on objectivity as the dominant news production practice, to the point of being doctrine (Soderlund 2002, 442 and 456). Journalism worked to situate and inform readers about their world and what was

occurring in it (Zimmermann 2007, 59). At the same time, academic geography was establishing itself, distancing itself from the media and from popular geography. In an address published first in the *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* and then in *The Geographical Journal* of the Royal Geographical Society in 1904/05, Scottish geographer and fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, Hugh Robert Mill warns geographers:

The methods of journalism, even of the best journalism, are to be absolutely discouraged in science...In geography it is not always easy to obtain exact demonstrations or to apply the test of accordance with fact to an attractive hypothesis; and it is necessary to be on guard against treating such speculations as if they were truths.

*Mill 1904, 672.*

While journalism had been striving for objectivity as “journalism’s crowning achievement” (Sunderlund 2002, 256), Mill was associating journalism with “speculations.”

In William Morris Davis’ 1924 sweeping statement on American geography “The Progress of Geography in the United States,” he begins by tracing the early works in “scientific” geography (Davis 1924). As such, he does not address the contributions by individuals such as Jedediah Morse nor the proliferation of geography texts in the 19th century. Towards the end of his paper, he recognizes that “smaller fractions” of more popular geography, such as “narrative geography, or travel-based popular geographies and ‘inductive geographies’ – textbooks” (Davis 1924, 210).<sup>3</sup> Davis draws a sharp distinction between the work of academic ‘scientific’ geography and the more popular geography that was widely available to the public.

But other geographers encouraged geographers to engage with the popular media, seeing much to gain from geographer’s using the media to inform the public. The 1906 AAG Presidential Address by Cyrus Adams opined that “popular geography” in Europe was in better shape than that of America, in America “most newspaper geography teems with error and platitude”:

When the opinion was expressed that the geographical news and comment in a certain London newspaper were as adequate as those of the geographical periodicals, Henry M. Stanley replied that they might well be, for they were in the hands of a distinguished member of the staff of the Royal Geographical Society. The names of leading geographers of Europe are often signed to newspaper articles. The lucid and able account of Antarctic exploration by Dr. Penck was none the less worthy of his pen because it was written for the readers of a German newspaper. Our editors say that if timely geographical topics are treated by specialists in an interesting manner they will welcome their contributions. But the volunteers are few.

*Adams 1907, 4.*



Adams was calling on American geographers to work with the media. Almost three decades later, in 1932, German geographer Ewald Banse suggested "...that popular media, in form of adventure and travel literature, might be more influential than scientific geography in informing and spreading geographic knowledge" (Zimmermann 2007, 60). John Kirtland Wright, in his 1947 AAG Presidential Address "Terrae Incognitae," called for the study of geosophy, the study of geographic knowledge from any and all points of view:

...depending on our point of view, there are personal, community, and national terrae incognitae: there are the terrae incognitae to different cultural traditions and civilizations; and there are also the terrae incognitae to contemporary geographical science.

*Wright 1947, 3.*

He appealed to geographers to study the geographies constructed through the imagination or "mind's eye," which includes popular culture. Cosgrove puts Wright in the context of writing seven years after Richard Hartshorne's *The Nature of Geography* (1939): "Wright's argument is driven quite explicitly by a distrust of the kind of scientific closure Hartshorne proposed, and an appeal to the poetics of space and place," pointing to the tensions between scientific and humanistic traditions in geography (Cosgrove 2007, 204).

Not all were willing to listen to Wright or what he described as the "call of the sirens." In 1952, in a public lecture on "the Enjoyment of Geography," Stephen Jones, Chairman of the Geography Department of Yale, called for his audience to "shut the books and even fold away the maps and draw strength from the enjoyment of geography at its source" that is from the actual physical landscape (Jones 1952, 550). He writes:

We live, especially we city dwellers, more and more completely in a world of symbols...There is more truth than jest in the story of another Grand Canyon tourist, who drove up to the rim, took a look, and drove away, saying sourly, "It looks just like the picture." For many of us, life is not lived in the real world but in a world of printed paper, television images, and other symbols. We geographers strive to show reality on maps, and then the maps become more real to us than reality.

*Jones 1952, 549.*

Jones, on one hand is acknowledging the media's influence on our imaginative geographies, while on the other is urging geographers to turn away and return to the actual landscape.

In 1955, Donald Brand of the Geography Department, UT-Austin, presented a paper on "Geography and Journalism" at the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers. Brand writes:



The modern journalist has become almost more important than the school teacher as a dispenser of information and moulder [sic] of public opinion, especially since his field now includes not only newspaper and magazine articles and advertising copy but radio and television scripts as well.

*Brand 1955.<sup>4</sup>*

Brand, like Jones, seems to be acknowledging how the media shapes our impressions of our world but sees this instead as an opportunity to educate the journalists who in turn will educate the public.

It was not until David Lowenthal's 1961 paper "Geography, Experience and Imagination: Towards a Geographical Epistemology," that we begin to see active engagement with media. Lowenthal's work is widely considered to be the first to follow Wright's call to explore the "terrae incognitae" which for Lowenthal was "the relation between the world outside and the pictures in our head" (Lowenthal 1961, 241; Edney 2005). Lowenthal describes this article as "an essay in the theory of geographical knowledge" concerned with all geographical thought, scientific and otherwise, how it is transmitted and altered, and how geography depends, well, on geography, varying among individuals and groups (Lowenthal 1961, 241). Lowenthal sets the stage for the development of behavioral geography and critical human geography and the study of imaginative geographies.

Academic geography begins to work with media, such as Roy Merren's "The Physical Environment of Early America: Images and Image Makers in Colonial South Carolina" that examined the different origins and purposes of the descriptions of colonial America, recognizing that each reflects "its own distinctive bias reflecting the objectives, values, and interests of the recorder," grouping the sources into promoters, officials, travelers, natural historians, and settlers (Merren 1969). Allan Pred examined the communication process in "Urban Systems Development and the Long-Distance Flow of Information Through Pre-Electronic U.S. Newspapers" (Pred 1971). Pred tracked the flow of information from New York newspapers to other newspapers in the country and created time-lag maps to express the time-space divergence.

A number of the works from the 1970s explore historic perceptions of the Great Plains. The Plains presented many challenges to the visual aesthetic of American and European explorers and settlers and has been fruitful territory to explore the intersection of landscape, history and the media. William Seiler examined magazine depictions of Kansas between 1854 and 1904 (Seiler 1972). Martyn Bowden's classic "The Great American Desert in the American Mind: The Historiography of a Geographical Notion" examined the ways in which the works of historians influenced the geographic imagination of Americans when it came to the Great Plains (Bowden 1976). Brad Baltensperger used newspaper accounts to explore the perception of the Great Plains in the late nineteenth century (1980 and 1992). There is also the work by John Allen (explorer accounts, literature) and G. Malcolm Lewis (booster images, cartographic

images) in the late 1970s and into the 1980s (Allen 1985; Lewis 1988; Allen 1992; Allen 1993; Lewis 1998). Bowden, Allen and Lewis' work were all influenced by Wright (Edney 2005, 35).

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, art, photography and the media had a growing presence in cultural geography, strengthened by an infusion of theoretical perspectives, as exemplified by the work of Jacqueline Burgess and Denis Cosgrove (Cosgrove 1984; Burgess and Gold 1985; Cosgrove and Daniels 1988; Burgess 1990). By the 1990s, a 'new' cultural geography had emerged, engaging the social construction of "landscape" and "history," as well as exploring the construction of such cultural artifacts as film, print media, visual media, etc. (Lukinbeal 2004, 249). Through the active engagement with these 'texts,' we gain insight into the ordering of society and space and into the value of these texts as an object of study (Lukinbeal and Craine 2009; Allan 2008; Schwartz and Ryan 2003, 6-7).

More recently, a number of geographers have been successful in 'public geography' and encouraged others to do likewise. Harm de Blij had regular segments on *Good Morning America* in the 1980s. Neal Lineback's "Geography in the News" newspaper columns, began with his local newspaper in 1987, were published across the country, and now appear online. Theodore Shabad was a copy editor on *The New York Times*' foreign desk and an adjunct professor of geography at Columbia University. All of these geographers sought to bridge the gap between academic geography and popular geography.

And yet we have another wave of geographers calling for more work with media, to reach out to others, particularly policy makers (Murphy 2006, 8-10; Johnston 2009; Moseley 2010). Ron Johnston called again on geographers to take action:

Geographical imaginations are currently being created and sustained through media which, as demonstrated here, very largely ignore the academic discipline, its practitioners and their work. As a consequence, those popular imaginations are, at best, very partial in transmitting to wider audiences what geography is and what geographers do, and at worst very misleading. The academic discipline can only benefit by adopting strategies to alter that situation, portraying to audiences the range, quality and timeliness of so much geographical research, thereby enhancing their public profile and reputation.

*Johnston 2009, 361.*

Moseley, Johnston, and Murphy all point out that geography has been puttering along with minimal media interaction and done ok...but just ok. Then all go on to point out the benefits of an engagement with the media, including the benefits of pursuing research that is of public importance and *then* ensuring that these findings reach the public, perhaps resulting in societal change (Murphy 2006, 10; Johnston 2009, 361; Moseley 2010, III).

In fact, we are *already* tied to media: our papers, our posters, our PowerPoint presentations, our lectures, our books, our articles are all forms of media. However, if the

point of media is communication, we have to admit that few geographers communicate with anyone but other geographers in their own little subfields (save perhaps other academics in related fields). In our media saturated world, we *must* more mindfully interact with popular media, both in communicating our research as well as studying the media and the ways in which it is transforming our world.

#### **AETHER SPECIAL ISSUE ON LANDSCAPE, HISTORY AND THE MEDIA**

This special issue of *Aether* grew out of extended conversations between Eric Olmanson and me as we pursued Ph.D.s at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and then sought to establish ourselves as professional geographers. We both have long worked at the intersection of landscape, history, and the media and it seemed natural to seek out other like-minded individuals, first for a session at the Association of American Geographers meeting in Las Vegas in 2009, then for papers for this special issue. Our goal has been to expand work at this nexus of history, media, and landscape. We are fortunate to have a remarkable array of papers, covering a broad expanse of time and space.

All of the papers address history, media, and landscape but differ dramatically in time, place, media, and foci. We cover material from the 1840s to the present day. Media ranges from texts such as magazines and newspapers to television commercials and websites. Landscapes vary from the “placeless” pastoral backgrounds of car commercials to the specific landscape of the Hoover Dam. But unifying these papers is the focus on communication. Mike Longan comments in his essay that “The ways that landscapes themselves function as a medium of communication and the role that communication plays in the production of landscape have often been addressed, but communication is rarely at the center of these analyses”. Longan’s and the rest of the essays do just that: place communication at the center of their analysis.

In particular, the question of “whose truth?” underlies these essays. All the essays explore to some extent the construction and communication of place images that represent a group’s view of a place and time. Blake Mayberry’s essay, on the role of the media in treaty negotiations that resulted in the Potawatomi’s removal to Kansas, focuses on how the media were used to veil the power relations at work and justify the removal to the media’s white audience. Wilko Graf von Hardenberg’s work on the creation of Italian national parks in the early 20th century explores the public perception of alpine environments and the rhetorical means used by tourism magazines to shift public perception of the Alps from one of an unhealthy environment to a region to be cherished and preserved. Amanda Rees’s examination of the American West constructed through dude ranch tourism and Hollywood movies (1922-1950) reveals a struggle between these two business sectors to control this regional identity. Maria Lane’s study of Boulder Dam’s portrayal in the media during its construction (1928-1936) finds such a persuasive narrative of “rational technological progress” that virtually no opposition was possible. Leah Jones’ work on William Eugene Smith’s photographs of South Wales in 1950, finds

that *Life* in selecting, privileging some images over others, altered the message that Smith had originally constructed. By selecting, privileging some images over others, Jones finds that *Life* altered Smith's message. Katya Crawford takes on the pastoral landscape images used in contemporary automobile television commercials, arguing that the images of wilderness and the pastoral are obscuring the real ramifications of "progress," "shrouding the car in a complicated moral landscape." Finally, Mike Longan investigates place-related websites in Northwestern Indiana, finding that while the Internet allows for multivocality, certain voices dominate, resulting in a relatively coherent landscape narrative. This focus on particular views of landscape boils down to communication and the ways these particular views are crafted, projected, and then ingrained.

In addition to communication and landscape vision, a number of themes flow through the essays. I would like to highlight three: rhetorics of nationalism, rhetorics of nature, and rhetorics of the iconic landscapes. Rhetoric is essentially argumentative communication: it is the arguments we make to persuade others, how we construct these arguments, and how we choose to communicate them. We usually think of rhetoric as verbal or textual but rhetoric can also be visual and communicated through photographs, maps, and graphics.

Graf, Rees, and Lane all address the rhetorical connection between landscape and nationalism in their essays. Graf finds that the landscape of the Alps has long been associated with borders, with edges, with wilderness, that men conquered by mountaineering. Through tourism journals and their campaigns to create national parks, the image of the Alps was redirected towards sublime alpine nature that embodied Italian nature as well as Italian culture, a fitting memorial to war losses. Graf writes: "Nature became the paragon of an idealized homeland and of all the virtues that it could embody". In Rees's study of dude ranch imagery, while much of the focus is on the construction of regional identity, specifically that of the American West, during this time (1920-1950) American Western regional identity *was* national identity. Hollywood dude ranch movies showed viewers how to dude ranch, and then the dude ranches themselves allowed vacationers the opportunity to be a dude. But there was a schism between the image dude ranches crafted for themselves and the silver screen image of dude ranches, particularly when it came to issues of class, gender, violence, and vigilantism. And this has significant ramifications for national identity, between the cultured dudes from the East and the epitome of the American hero, the cowboy (which I can see playing out even today in popular culture and in politics). Lastly, Lane's examination of the Hoover Dam in popular media (1928-1936) captures the mythology of national progress that was constructed and employed throughout the dam's planning, construction, and completion. Through both textual and visual rhetoric, the American public was told a modernist epic of humans triumphing over nature, of the victory of the American people over worthless desert, of the transformation of dry to wet, desert to garden, placelessness to a tourist destination. All three studies addressing nationalism are examining transitional

periods when societies, nations, and cultures are in transformation and these nationalist rhetorics were reassuring and even heartening.

The rhetoric of nature and human conquest of nature runs through the essays of Graf, Lane, and Crawford. In the case of Graf and Italian national parks, nature was initially seen as dangerous and men's conquering of it through mountaineering was a means of establishing oneself as not only as a man but as a national hero. However, as tourism magazines sought to promote the creation of national parks, the parks were framed less as "nature" and were presented more as a portion of the cultural landscape, as a landscape to be shaped and maintained, and that ultimately came to represent Italy itself. With Lane's Hoover Dam, the dam's creation was the ultimate triumph of American ingenuity over the wild nature of the American West, the final piece of manifest destiny. The creation of the dam, the harnessing of the great, wild Colorado River, not only meant controlling what seemed uncontrollable but also allowed for the transformation of desert into garden through irrigation. However, this metamorphosis was presented more as landscape transformation than domination, through such landscape transformation the United States had taken its place among the great world powers. Katya Crawford's work on what she terms the "30-second landscape" examines the ideologies inherent in contemporary automobile commercials, particularly images of wilderness and pastoral landscapes, and how these commercials reflect current understandings of these landscapes. Particularly in the case of wilderness and pastoral landscapes, Americans view such landscapes as part of the American dream, tied to notions of individuality, freedom, and happiness. But by perpetuating such notions, they are perpetuating myths of both the automobile (freedom, independence, technology without ramifications) and of landscapes (nature as apart from humans). While these three studies represent different time periods and theoretically different perspectives on nature, they share an uneasiness with the changing definitions of nature and humans relationship with it.

Finally, rhetorics of iconic landscapes focuses on the construction and communication of landscape images that have become ingrained in Western society. Three particular landscapes stand out: the American West, industrial landscapes, and the Midwest. Of the three, the American West is given the most attention, with threads in Mayberry's, Rees's, and Lane's essays. This American West, however, is quite a diverse landscape but rich with manifest destiny. Mayberry's West is one in transition from Indian Territory to American landscape with the media playing a significant role in not only justifying Indian removal policies but advocating for a normative view, that this was progress, this is what it looked like, this is what was destined to happen. Rees's American West, as constructed in dude ranch literature and on film, was one where life was built around cowboys, horses, and ranch life (classic Western symbols) and where Americans could experience the "freedom" and "independence" associated with this landscape. Yet ultimately their Wests did not match-up on several levels. Dude ranch literature promoted Wyoming and Montana while Hollywood promoted the Southwest. And

dude ranch literature maintained the elite status quo while Hollywood created a West that offered the thrills movie goers longed for – danger! love! music! And Lane’s American West was one devoid of Native Americans, devoid too of cowboys, just a wilderness waiting to be conquered spectacularly and put to use with good old-fashioned American ingenuity. Leah Jones’s work on the photographs of William Eugene Smith, contrasted to those published in *Life* magazine, center on the coalmining districts in South Wales. While Smith saw and tried to tell through his images a tale of a landscape “haunted by a dying industry,” *Life* instead constructed from Smith’s photographs a hopeful tale of a landscape of modernity and optimism, their vision of this landscape. Both can be viewed as industrial landscapes, it is just a matter of where the accent goes, sending it either in a progressive or a declensional trajectory. Longan’s study of Northwest Indiana websites examines the image created by multiple websites both about and of the place. While Longan does not address the iconic or mythic Midwest, this image is latent as producers construct their own images of places online with the hope of improving their communities. Ultimately, the image that results from the websites is one that resonates with the classic stereotypical image of the Midwest—its history, its rural and small town nature, and its resources—while omitting its less picturesque elements (social issues, industry, etc.). Through these articles, we have examples of the ways in which these iconic images are contested in and by media. What appear to be strong singular views are, in fact, constructed, challenged, and at times contradicted.

We think these essays provide outstanding examples of work at the nexus of landscape, history, and the media, and do much to contribute to our understanding of the interaction of these three powerful realms. There is still plenty of space for exploration: in terms of more international work, in terms of the variety media, and in terms of the construction of historical landscapes and their communication. We hope that they will open your eyes to the landscape potential before you and lead to the discovery of new territories at the juncture of landscape, history, and the media.

#### IMPLICATIONS OF LANDSCAPE, HISTORY AND THE MEDIA

Double hermeneutics—“interplay of social and conceptual changes... changing social realities challenge research to deliver new interpretations and explanations—which, in turn, may change society, for example, through the design and regulation of media.

*Jensen 2008.*

Part of the pleasures of working in this field is its constantly evolving nature. Not only are we finding new territory to explore but we are also discovering new worlds. Media are changing. Geography is changing. While newspapers seem to be going out of business daily, greatly reducing an area that has provided rich ground since the 1620s and which we undoubtedly will continue to return to, we also have new areas opening, such as the Internet and social media. New technologies will open new ground to development



and exploration. Historical landscape studies are greatly advanced by the media made available through the Internet, like the fabulous *Library of Congress* images available on its website, the *New York Times* online archive back to the 1850s, *David Rumsey's* spectacular map collection, blogs such as *Today's Inspiration* and *Modern Mechanix*, all of which make historical media available to new audiences, employing it for new uses. Our networks are shifting, our stream is taking off in new directions.

To advance the practice of critical media geography, I'd like to suggest three paths (directions, streams) that might be explored:

First, we need to acknowledge and work more with the visual nature of geography and media. There have been calls for geographers to recognize our dependence on the visual, our dependence on the visual in our work (fieldwork, maps) and the ways this dependency creeps into the very language we use to describe geography (Sui 2000; Thornes 2004). We talk of "reading" the landscape, of the importance of "observation," and now describe a subfield as "visualization." Research in cartography has advanced our understanding of visual communication and visual constructs to some extent. We have ignored other visual mediums until fairly recently: it is only in the last twenty years or so that we have begun to actively work with other visual media (films, television, photographs, and now websites). In our media saturated visual culture, with new media seeming to develop daily, our understanding of the visual needs to advance.

Secondly, we need to recognize our broad roles as producers *and* consumers of media: we are tied into this vast network. As scholars who illustrate our work with maps, photographs, and other graphics, we need to be more aware of the field of visual rhetoric or visual argument, both in terms of practice as well as a scholarly field. We know images are powerful, but we seldom use them to their fullest extent. We throw a map or photograph up on the screen while doing a presentation but seldom interact with the image, using it as a sort of wallpaper backdrop to our performance and seldom acknowledging its impact on our viewers. Images are powerful means of communication and by not mindfully employing them and engaging them in our work, we are potentially losing out on a medium that is gaining in importance in our world. Geography as an inherently visual discipline has a unique opportunity to help people understand their changing world as it is remolded by new media.

Finally, as we seek to move forward, we must address the threads or strands that connect us to the past and to the future, so that we are no longer focused on 'snapshots' but on 'moving pictures'<sup>5</sup> And moving we are. Media is changing our relationship with our world, as well as the world itself. It is simultaneously smaller (connected to everywhere) and larger (endless information). Geography needs to stay in motion forwards, lest we become a swampy backwater.

Go on, dip your toes in. Go with the flow for a while. You will be joining geographers, journalists and others who have explored this fruitful landscape for hundreds of years. But there is ample room for exploration...and new lands around the bend.



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### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> No matter who encountered the river, flat or shallow was the response. The Pawnee called it Kizkatuz which means flat. Paul and Pierre Mallet, early explorers of the region, called it the French term for flat: Platte.
- <sup>2</sup> This is today the Thomason Tracts collection at the British Library, London.
- <sup>3</sup> Cosgrove suggests that the Association of American Geographers sought to distance itself from popular geography (as well as geographic education – which are really intertwined) (Cosgrove 2007, 206).
- <sup>4</sup> I have not been able to locate the paper, just its abstract which was published in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* in 1955.
- <sup>5</sup> This imagery was inspired by Susan Hanson's Jan Monk Lecture at the 2009 Association of American Geographer's Annual Meeting in Las Vegas.

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