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Deathscapes, Topocide, Domicide The Plains in Contemporary Print Media

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The American print media are a powerful mechanism for communicating information about places and environment to the American public. When it comes to a landscape such as the Great Plains, experienced by many Americans as either sleep-through land in a car or flyover land in a plane, the print media may be their only real source of information about this landscape, excluding 30 second soundbites which occasionally appear in electronic media. Often perceived as monotonous or dull, the Plains has been overlaid with powerful images, of garden or desert, of Dust Bowl or Buffalo Commons. But recent media coverage of the Plains struck me, an American Great Plains scholar, as not just negative but morbid. I began working on Great Plains issues almost twenty years ago. As I've explored the Plains, I've become "Plains sensitive": my ears prick up when something about the Plains is in the air. My position is one of a Great Plainsperson and "pro-Plains." I have now lived the majority of my life on the eastern edge of the Plains (in Grand Forks, North Dakota, and in Omaha, Nebraska). I have spent my academic life engaged in Great Plains research, with my master's thesis and my PhD dissertation on Plains topics. The challenge for me is to NOT be overly Plains-sensitive as I approach the topic of the depiction of the Plains in the media.¹ But over the years, I've been disturbed by news coverage such as "Slow Death in the Great Plains" (Atlantic Monthly, June 1997), "Vanishing Point: Amid Dying Towns of Rural Plains, One Makes a Stand" (New York Times, December 1, 20m), and "The Emptied Prairie" (National Geographic, January 2008).

And it is not just the headlines that are morbid:

Much of North Dakota has a ghostly feel to it: empty homesteads and occasional schoolhouses litter the land, with caved-in roofs and grass growing where there used to be front porches. . . . Cattle ranching and farming of wheat, barley and corn still prevail, especially on large corporate farms in the middle and southern plains. But in Slope, Hettinger, Adams, Grant, Burke, Divide, Garfield or any of the hundreds of other Plains counties that seem to have one foot in the grave, land is being left to the wind and sparse rain.²

Maybe I'm too sensitive, but I find myself asking "Why is so much of the coverage related to the Great Plains tied to death?"

The media have always played an active role in shaping public opinion of this space.³ Coverage of early expeditions awakened Americans to the potential of the region and encouraged migration, both for the opportunities it offered individuals and for the advancement of American manifest destiny. Yet the Plains has long been associated with "negative space"-absence, even death, such as the Long expedition's labeling of the region as the Great American Desert (Fig. 1). Geographer Douglas Porteous has termed landscapes associated with death as "deathscapes."⁴ But what are the long-term ramifications of associating landscapes with death? Porteous has provided us with other terms that might articulate the processes that are occurring. Can it result in the death or killing of a place-topocide?⁵ Porteous coined "topocide" to encompass the notion of place annihilation, the destruction of

places from both natural causes as well as from political and/or economic forces.⁶ But topocide distances the destruction from the myriad of emotions tied to places, particularly those places that we strongly associate with, such as home. To those who call the Plains home, it is not just topocide, it is domicide, as Porteous puts it—the deliberate destruction or murder of their home.⁷ So what are the implications of the media's coverage of the Plains, so focused on death and destruction?

I begin by sketching an overview of national media coverage of the Plains over the last ten years, 1997-2007, then examine the possible ramifications of this coverage. I believe death and destruction are pervasive themes in the media's presentation of the Plains, perhaps even more today than in the past. As a result, the American print media have become active agents in the topocide/domicide of the region.

OVERVIEW OF MEDIA COVERAGE

[T]he values and beliefs we hold about the environment are established through the discourses of a bewildering variety of genres, institutions, and media The language of these various discourses determines what exists, what is good, and what is possible.⁸

In thinking about how the media present the Great Plains, we need to examine the language used, the rhetoric or arguments being constructed, as well as the discourses or conversations found in the American media about the Plains. By investigating the media's construction of places, it is possible to explore the meanings and values associated with places, for "[p]laces are not merely the localities of culture, but rather are mirrored reflections of cultural values and systems of meaning."⁹ To gather data for this paper, I searched the Lexis-Nexis database for articles utilizing terms such as Great Plains, Plains, High Plains, and the various state names associated with the Plains. I focused on articles that came from papers and magazines off the Plains, although I did include major publications from its edges, such as Denver and the Twin Cities. Altogether, I located approximately 600 articles published between 1997 and 2007.¹⁰ I then conducted rudimentary content analysis on the articles, examining the topics of media coverage and the language usage. I then explored the types of stories represented in the sample, what made the material "newsworthy," the arguments made in the stories, the language used, the stakeholders, and the "conversations" depicted seeking to expose and explore the "persistent, politically relevant patterns."¹¹

Language as our primary means of communication, is central to sharing our understanding of the world. Yi-fu Tuan's work on language and the construction of place examines the importance of "naming," or calling a place into being, as well as the importance of "maintenance," the continued use of descriptions to reinforce the existence of places.¹² But language not only calls places into being, it also communicates our view or perception of this world as well as our values. This language is used in everything, from conversations with friends to government reports to newspaper headlines.¹³ While all humans use language, certain "voices" tend to be louder or more prominent (scientists, politicians, business leaders, moral leaders, writers, journalists), and their perspective comes to be taken as the most prevalent. Through careful examination of the words and images used to describe places, it is possible to explore the social meanings ascribed to places and how these meanings may vary by the position of the individual. This process is further complicated by the fact that not only must places be called into being and their images maintained, but these images are not permanent or static. Place images can evolve over time, resulting in a "repositioning" or "resemanticization" of the place: that is, new meanings and

identities can be created through the deployment of new language and imagery in association with places.¹⁴

Language is central to communicating knowledge and perceptions about place, but communication also involves the arguments (rhetoric) we make using this language as well as those arguments we encounter. Rhetoric is a means of persuasion, but it can also be a tool for exploring "significant social and moral issues and make wise or prudent decisions."¹⁵ Rhetoric often masquerades as simple narratives or stories. Hidden within a compelling story are implicit arguments, reducing a complex issue to a single vision of reality.¹⁶ A significant element of rhetoric is the way in which the stories are framed and presented to the public: framing is used to make the world knowable and understandable.¹⁷ Frames are an organizing idea, a cognitive tool, providing meaning to a series of events. By framing their stories, the media limit the range of interpretations by the audience, shaping their perception of issues and institutions.¹⁸ That is, in framing, the media highlight certain aspects of reality while hiding others, encouraging their audiences "to think, feel, and decide in a particular way."¹⁹ For example, when discussing drought or climate change, the media often refer to the Dust Bowl, an image that instantly evokes environmental devastation, human suffering, and economic hardship. In framing, journalists promote very specific worldviews: "Mainstream newspapers are perceived as official, conventional, traditional, legitimate news purveyors that inform and are shaped by relatively powerful social blocs, thus advancing hegemony.,,"²⁰ Framing thus is not just a rhetorical device but also a social practice that has political implications.²¹ Studies have shown that these frames have "significant consequences for how audiences perceive and understand issues and can alter public opinions."²²

Through the arguments constructed, the framing of the articles,

[w]e reveal the processes of arguing, the words shifting, the ideas being connected, and the linking of facts with values, of information with identity. Our claim is that the argumentative environet is a central fact of contemporary culture It links sciences, social sciences, political manifestos, local news, and UN strategies.²³

Myerson and Rydin coined the term "environet" to express "the aggregate collection of texts, words and voices ... a network making linkage upon linkage between the environment words.,,"²⁴ The arguments being constructed do not exist in a vacuum but are part of a complex dialogue taking place that links a variety of voices/stakeholders as well as audiences. In this dialogue, texts interact with each other: they use the same language, address the same audience, appeal to or provoke the same feelings, and even use the same arguments (thus environet).²⁵ Discourse is this dialogue between various stakeholders:

A discourse is a shared way of apprehending the world. Embedded in language, it enables those who subscribe to it to interpret bits of information and put them together into coherent stories or accounts. Each discourse rests on assumptions, judgments and contentions that provide the basic terms for analysis, debates, agreements and disagreements.²⁶

Discourse connects arguments and is focused on the differences between people and between positions.²⁷ These discourses or conversations about place run the gamut from factual, scientific discussions to passionate, strident calls to action and "are constantly produced, circulated, changed, politicized, and re-circulated."²⁸ Imbedded in discourse are the connections between humans and their environment as well as "the assumptions and values it supports, the behaviors it rewards."²⁹ Environmental discourse is specifically concerned with the relationship between humans and their

environment and embodies "an astonishing collection of claims and concerns brought together by a great variety of actors. Yet somehow we distil seemingly coherent problems out of this jamboree of claims and concerns."³⁰ When we string together all the various "conversations" about a location/environment-all the rhetoric, all the frames, all the discourse-ultimately we are constructing a collage or mosaic that becomes place.³¹

But we must look beyond the conversations taking place about the Plains, constructing the Plains, to look at the sociopolitical agendas imbedded in these discourses (critical discourse analysis).³² Our news media do not just merely present the facts; they construct "stories-with structure, order, viewpoint and values," crafting in essence a product, and this product is "knowledge."³³ That is, the audience's "knowledge and understandings of the environment are constructed and maintained via a constant stream of language and images derived from popular culture."³⁴ Social factors, from the news media to popular culture, mediate our understanding and knowledge of our world.³⁵ Thus it is impossible for humans to truly "know" our world as all our information passes through this social filter.

Once the environmental or global information is "out there," it is further filtered. The information being communicated through the media "conduit" does not flow unchanged to then stimulate political action based on the logic of the information.³⁶ Rather, the media actively work to inform the public not only about what is going on in the world but what they should be thinking about these happenings, framing the news for their readers and

"agenda-setting," the placing of certain issues or problems foremost in the minds of the people, including policy-makers, simply by making them salient in news broadcasts and publications. Put succinctly, the news media are not successful in telling us what to think, but they do succeed in telling us what to think *about*.³⁷

Successful framing defines those problems worthy not only of readers' attention but also the attention of our political and economic leaders, not only highlighting the problems but also encouraging moral judgments and promoting favored policies.³⁸ Allan Mazur argues that audiences are more impacted by the quantity of articles on a topic than by "substantive content" and that this quantity can have a significant impact on "public worry and government action."³⁹ As a result of these discourses,

laws are enacted, rules are revised, institutions are created and destroyed, lives endangered and saved. At the same time, meanings are created, thickened, discarded. And the meanings rebound, they affect the outcomes, the laws, rules and institutions.⁴⁰

Words and language have power and are used to wield power and influence public opinion; "they are value-laden, entangled in a mesh of political relations, and built on a foundation of root metaphors informing perceptions of people, physical environments, and worth."⁴¹ The media work for far more than their readers:' they also work for their owners, advertisers, and people in power. Discourse is, in fact, an "exercise of power in modern societies."⁴²

During the study period, 1997-2007, media coverage of the Plains has been a spectrum of topics from environmental to human. The topic receiving the most media coverage in this sample by far was Plains depopulation, with eighty-five articles (not including the rerunning of the articles by other newspapers). The second most covered topic was drought, followed by bison (forty and thirty-five articles each), followed by grasslands (thirty articles).⁴³

In addition to particular topics receiving considerable coverage, the media picked up and reprinted articles originally published in other newspapers. These reprinted articles are not included in my article tallies; only the original article was counted. Table 1 provides a sense of which articles were reprinted where. The table includes only those articles published at least twice beyond the original publication.⁴⁴ Examining the reprinting of articles can tell far more than just the audiences reached. It also reveals the ways in which articles are "recast" by altering their headlines. A Joel Kotkin editorial, "If We Let Rural America Die, We Shall Lose a Piece of Ourselves," had both positive and negative titles when it was run in other newspapers.⁴⁵ Positive-toned titles for Kotkin's editorial included "Keep Rural America Alive" and "Ways to Pump Life into the Heartland"; a negative spin was the simple "Fading Away." A neutrally titled article, "Boom in Economy Skips Towns on the Plains," was renamed the more dramatic "Ghost Towns Sprout Over Much of the Great Plains" by the Cleveland Plain Dealer.⁴⁶

Media coverage of the Plains covered the range of news categories, from straight news to travel and sports. The articles also covered a range of positions on the subject of the Plains, from pessimistic depictions such as "America's Failed Frontier" to more positive framings such as Joel Kotkin's "Great Plains."⁴⁷ To begin, I provide an overview of the most prevalent topics and their media framing.

"Vanishing Point"; Depopulation and the Plains

Since 2000, and the 2000 U.S. Census, there has been a steady increase in the number of articles on Plains depopulation. As the Census Bureau released its results, the results made news, in particular that the "frontier" had returned to the United States. The population of many western counties of Plains states had dropped below six people per square mile and met again the nineteenth-century definition of frontier.⁴⁸ Before 2000 there were perhaps one or two articles on depopulation a year, representing only 3 to 4 percent of the articles. But since 2000 there have been between eight and seventeen articles per year, some of which appeared in multiple news outlets, representing between 15 and 27 percent of the articles. The peak in depopulation articles was in 2003, when seventeen out of sixty-three articles (27 percent) dealt with depopulation of the Plains in one way or another. Their headlines delineate a tragic tale: "Empty Middle," "A Broken Heartland," "Unsettled Plains," "America's Failed Frontier," "Empty House on the Prairie."⁴⁹ This repetitious coverage is significant, as the work of Mazur has demonstrated, impacting public opinion and action.⁵⁰ I use 2003 to illustrate repetitious coverage, beginning with the New York Times, which had two editorials by acclaimed writer Nicholas Kristof, as well as a four-part series entitled "Vanishing Point: The Empty Heartland."⁵¹ Kristof in "Make Way for Buffalo" suggests that the "boldest idea in America today" is "rescuing the rural Great Plains by returning much of it to vast 'Buffalo Commons.'" He argues that this rescue is necessary because "oversettlement of the Great Plains has turned out to be a 150-yearlong mistake, one of the longest-running and most costly errors in American history." The authors of "Vanishing Point," in examining the effects of rural depopulation, present a complicated picture. All the authors employed language such as "drought-ravaged," "dying towns," "last stand," "death chill," "terminally ill"-as if describing some aging relativewhile acknowledging the Plainspeople who work to keep their communities viable.

Besides the New York Times, other newspapers in 2003 also painted bleak pictures of the Plains. The Boston Globe's "Dying Economy Fuels Exodus from America's Heartland" discusses Plains depopulation and the struggling Plains economy and provides an overview of the New Homestead Act. The Christian Science Monitor also covered the New Homestead Act in "O Pioneers! Reversing the Great Plains Drain."⁵² Atlantic Monthly covered depopulation in "The New Continental Divide." Imagine the possible

audience reached by these publications-New York Times, Boston Globe, Christian Science Monitor, and Atlantic Monthly. It is a significant portion of the American public, as well as a significant portion of our political and economic leaders.⁵³

Not all articles that I have categorized as "depopulation" are negative: the author's approach can be positive in presenting how Plainspeople are creatively dealing with the issue, such as "free land" giveaways, and using . neutral or more upbeat language.⁵⁴ Kotkin's 2006 "The Great Plains," from the Wall Street Journal, is an example of positive framing.⁵⁵ Kotkin, while mentioning depopulation, focuses attention on growth in other areas of the Plains as a result of an "energy rush"-both renewable and nonrenewable sources-and as a result of telecommunications technology. Even the newspaper industry, which Kotkin describes as one of the "the most sickly of industries," is thriving in parts of .the Plains. Kotkin attributes this growth to the "entrepreneurial spirit of the Great Plains." He ends with a quote from a Bismarck, North Dakota, newspaper editor: "We're not the middle of nowhere anymore."⁵⁶ Kotkin counters the negative coverage of the Plains, addressing an audience who knows at least of some success on the Plains in the form of companies such as Great Plains Software, Gateway, and Cabela's. Unfortunately, one positively spun article is not enough to outweigh the quantity of negative press.

"Mother of All Dust Bowls": Great Plains Drought

After depopulation, the next highest subject, with forty articles in the sample, was drought, experienced on portions of the Plains in the early twenty-first century. Articles discussed the conditions, including grass fires fed by the drought, impacts on Plains ecosystems, economic implications, and government assistance programs.⁵⁷ They also often compared them to earlier droughts, such as those of the 1930s and the 1950s:

Larry Barbie, a wheat and barley farmer near Inverness, Mont., about 25 miles south of the border with Canada, said he has talked with his mother, who is in her 80s, about her memories of the Dust Bowl. "She says it was dry, but she says it wasn't this bad," Barbie said.⁵⁸

It is unusual for an article on drought NOT to include a reference to the 1930s Dust Bowl, a touchstone for many Americans and a reference point for Great Plains drought (Fig. 2).⁵⁹

But it was not just the present drought that received news coverage. A 2002 unsigned editorial in the New York Times ("High Plains Dust") compared the current drought to the Dust Bowl.⁶⁰ In a Washington Post editorial, conservative columnist George Will discussed Timothy Egan's book *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl* (2007) (reprinted across the country; see Table 1).⁶¹ The majority of the column is given to recounting the events of the Dust Bowl, in particular the drought and dust storms. Survival, the point of the book, is given two sentences, one at the beginning and one at the end. Timothy Egan's article on drought in the New York Times received front-page coverage. Egan not only compared the current drought to the 1930s but suggested that "this drought is among the worst, and in some counties, particularly in the northern plains, it is the most devastating in more than a century."⁶² These articles, the two editorials ("High Plains Dust" and Will's column), and Egan's piece were extensively reprinted, expanding the audiences and covering the country as a result (see Table 1).

It is not just current and past drought that are of interest, but also future droughts, particularly the potential of climate change resulting in more frequent or greater magnitude occurrences, as in Joseph

Verrengia's "Global Warming Could Alter Ecology of the Plains" and Philip Brasher's "Expect More Dust Bowls, Scientists Say."⁶³ The articles point out that the 1930s droughts, while severe, were nothing compared to the "megadroughts" of the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries lasting as long as twenty years, and that in the future we will likely face more megadroughts. The concept of megadroughts really captured the media's attention, for in addition to Brasher and Verrengia's articles, other journalists also covered the topic.⁶⁴ This represents another form of repetitious coverage: a single topic covered by multiple authors, again reinforcing certain images or events on the Plains.

"Buffalo Nation"

Bison represent the third major area of media coverage, which is not surprising given the iconic status of bison, long at the forefront of the American Consciousness when it comes to the plains ecosystem. Between their association with the Plains and the calls to create a "Buffalo Commons" (beginning in 1988), bison, their presence, and their reintroduction have been popular media fodder. The Buffalo Commons concept, while reaching a broad audience thanks to the media-savvy Popper, has not quite materialized as it was originally proposed.⁶⁵ The Poppers now say that the Buffalo Commons is a metaphor, and one that is coming into being, with more grasslands being protected and the highest numbers of bison since the nineteenth century.⁶⁶ Yes, there are more bison and more grasslands; however, the reality of the situation as it appears in the media is a little different.

Between 1997 and 2007, a transition can be seen in this print media sample. The first half of the study is dominated by images of bison returning and being restored to the Plains. Egan's "As Others Abandon Plains, Indians and Bison Come Back" (2001) is an example of reporting that links census results (Native Americans returning to the Plains) with increased numbers of bison and the greater involvement of Native American tribes with bison herds and their management. But as bison numbers increase, there is greater conflict with the humans living in close proximity, such as debates over Yellowstone bison that venture beyond park boundaries and over controlling growing bison herds in other locations.⁶⁷

Beginning around 2000, bison have been increasingly discussed as an industry and a commodity. Since the mid-1990s, farmers and ranchers as well as Native American tribes embraced bison ranching as an economic activity, including for the kosher market.⁶⁸ However, by 2002 the market was oversaturated, the "bubble had burst" as reported by the Wall Street Journal.⁶⁹ More bison were being produced than the market could handle. The U.S. government bought large quantities for food programs. But this is not the end of the bison story. In fact, bison numbers have continued to increase, and in 2004 record numbers were slaughtered and prices were up again, thanks to two unrelated events: the discovery of mad cow disease in the United States and the creation of a new chain of bison restaurants by Ted Turner-Ted's Montana Grill.⁷⁰ Still primarily grass-fed, bison provide an alternative red meat that appeals to the health conscious. Ted's offers an opportunity for consumers to try the meat in a midscale restaurant, to discover its taste and affordability (as well as providing Turner a means to support his lands and herds). In the face of such a commercial turn, bison, while grass fed, are a new commodity from the Breadbasket Plains, healthy yet affordable, with recipes using bison being run in newspaper food sections. Much of the coverage on the bison industry has focused on supply and demand issues, with occasional forays into Ted Turner's real estate and his business ventures or other forms of bison ranching, such as the InterTribal Bison Cooperative. It is almost as if the bison have been "moved" (as it were), or resemanticized, from a wild species to a domesticated species. In 2007 the New York Times reported that many bison have been crossed with cattle and that "[t]he majority of public herds have

some level of hybridization with cattle,' said Kyran Kunkel, a World Wildlife Federation biologist who is doing the [genetic] sampling."⁷¹ It seems they are not as wild as we think.

Museum of Grass

Grasslands articles, particularly from a tourism angle, appeared in a wide range of publications, from newspapers to magazines, including *Money* and the *Economist*. The articles on grasslands begin remarkably the same, with stereotypes of the Plains, and then go on to wax poetically on Plains virtues, particularly the peace and quiet in contrast to the madness of twenty-first-century life. For example, a *New York Times* travel article begins:

From the stony hilltops at the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, the primeval emptiness of the American plains is broadly apparent-and more than a little unnerving. On a recent spring day, the whistles of killdeers and bobwhites were the only sounds in the grayness of late afternoon, other than angry gusts from a wind so stiff it might have knocked visitors backward had a tour bus not served as a barrier Looking west, a few clumps of scrubby trees were the only signs of shade for miles. . . . It is easy to see why characters in Willa Cather's novels and stories, set farther north, were so bewitched by landscapes like this. And how people could be driven to madness by the incessant wind and lonely expanse.⁷²

Not a very auspicious beginning to something that is supposed to encourage you to travel to the preserve, but it does improve when it likens the landscape to "the Scottish Highlands." The piece concludes: "And the wilderness that was once at the heart of the country remains pretty wild, and begging to be rediscovered." In an article on prairie restoration, a biologist is quoted as saying, "We have a real feel for the wilderness again, of the true West."⁷³ Wilderness seems to suggest a lack of human presence-no abandoned homes or boarded-up towns in these grasslands.

A more intriguing beginning comes from a California journalist:

Summer nightfall is a protracted affair on the northern Plains. Sunset arrives late and the sky does not grow truly dark until after 10 p.m. Perhaps it has something to do with the clarity of the prairie air, so dry and therefore transparent to light that eyeballs grow thirsty between blinks. Surely it has to do with the absence of mountains and trees. The horizon is frequently more low, flat and unobstructed on the Great Plains that it is possible for it to be anywhere else but far out at sea, and the grasping land wrings every drop of light from the sun before allowing it to slip away.⁷⁴

In both cases can be found the familiar terminology used to describe the Plains: relentless wind, grasslands as sea, the sense of space from both earth and sky, aridity, treeless.

Grasslands received decent media attention over the past ten years, both in articles that educated the public on their unique ecosystem and in articles that promoted tourism in these landscapes. Many of the articles focused on outdoor activities, such as bicycling, cattle drives, or hiking on prairies, always concluding with advice on where to stay, what to eat, and pricing. Cities on the Plains are given little notice, as tourism emphasizes the Plains as largely depopulated and as the home of Native Americans. Yet there is some sleight of hand under way: only approximately 3 percent of the original grassland is extant.⁷⁵ The focus on grasslands creates the impression that much of the Plains, particularly the western Plains, is still in its natural state.

ASSEMBLING A PLAINS MEDIA MOSAIC

Each of these topics—depopulation, drought, bison, grasslands—does not exist in a vacuum or stand on its own, but resonates with other coverage, heightening the impact. In essence, the American public is being told again and again by the media and in the media that the Great Plains is a problem that needs to be solved. Each article is a piece of the mosaic that forms the public's cognitive image of the Plains—too many pieces of any color or shape change the overall image that is created. When these pieces are put together into a whole, the overall image is that of a flawed landscape, of returning frontier, and of the necessity of ending the Plains "experiment"—topocide.

Plains as a Flawed Landscape

The first image of the Plains resulting from the media coverage is that of a "flawed landscape." With every recurring news article on depopulation and drought, the Plains is sketched as a landscape with long-term problems. Media coverage of population suggests that people do not want this landscape: it is too hard to work, it is too far from anything, it is not valued. At the same time that rapid population growth in areas such as Atlanta or Phoenix has resulted in significant human and environmental problems, people appear to be fleeing from another portion of the country. Media coverage of drought suggests that the Plains is more of a desert in which drought seems to be a weird sort of "stealth" disaster that sneaks up on unsuspecting farmers over years. References to historic droughts reinforce the mindset that perhaps we should not be working these lands.

In addition to depopulation and drought, there is the frequently evoked notion of "flyover country"—a landscape so boring it is better to fly over it, or evade it, than drive through it. Not surprisingly, the term is largely employed by coast dwellers to describe significant portions of the country, such as the Midwest and Plains. For example:

To many Americans living outside that Cubist collection of Great Plains states, Nebraska is a total blank. It is the heart of flyover country. Drivers who race across it on Interstate 80 think it's flat and boring. As one friend who traveled that 450-mile stretch put it, "Nebraska never ends."⁷⁶

Dan Flores, in "Loving the Plains, Hating the Plains, Restoring the Plains," explores how the Plains has moved from a place "of wonder," a place that enthralled explorers, to a place that Deborah Popper (of Buffalo Commons fame) described as follows: "This is terrible country! ... There is nothing here. It is uncountryside. It shouldn't be allowed to exist!"⁷⁷ Flores argues that as a result of the "war on its wildlife" followed by the "agricultural assault," the Plains has moved from wonder to repulsion, and that we are now shifting again, perhaps toward valuing and preserving this landscape.

Overall, the flawed landscape is constructed as a nonplace, which according to Edward Relph is "a placeless geography, lacking both diverse landscapes and significant places" and is often depopulated.⁷⁸ Nonplaces are usually described as modern landscapes of highways, strip malls, gas stations, and fast-food restaurants, often experienced through driving. Experiencing places through a moving vehicle results in "a kind of blurred perception, a semi-virtual encounter with a floating world" because of the speed, movement, and lack of sound: "The motorist traveling through the non-place experiences a particular feeling of solitude and distance."⁷⁹ As travelers pass through the Plains, they often see few towns, hardly any people, and only abandoned homes, "so they seem almost like ancient ruins, opened

up to questions of memory and history."⁸⁰ This is especially true for urban dwellers viewing rural areas (from up close or from afar):

In countries where the majority of people are urban dwellers, the "countryside" is some other place, a place spatially, temporally and symbolically distanced from the everyday way of life. Such distance enhances differences, be they real or imagined, and it is imagination that both inspires and sustains the construction of place myths: the connoted, embellished identities attributed to places.⁸¹

I believe the Plains is being constructed as a nonplace, in which a massive region covering an estimated 500,000 square miles of the United States, or approximately 15 percent of the center of our country, is being reduced to a cartoonish flat line.⁸²

But by constructing the Plains as a nonplace, the media are presenting/creating what Relph refers to as "an inauthentic attitude to place." That is, in describing the Plains, they are constructing not a "sense of place" but its antithesis:

An inauthentic attitude to place is essentially no sense of place, for it involves no awareness of the deep and symbolic significances of places and no appreciation of their identities. It is merely an attitude which is socially convenient and acceptable—an uncritically accepted stereotype.⁸³

Further, "the blankness of non-places—which is as much mythic reputation as actual experience—obscures both their histories and the necessarily political questions about how they are organized and inhabited."⁸⁴ This "inauthentic attitude to place" is one experienced by all places, whether it is the stereotype of New Yorkers being nasty and unfriendly or of the Plains as featureless, waterless, and treeless. As a result of the flawed, nonplace focus on the Plains, Plainspeople become "the Other" and are frequently disempowered as their "borders" are transgressed and their lives and places become the subject of the intrusive gaze and discussion of outsiders, their voices silenced. In 2005 an Economist article entitled "Not Here, Surely? The Poorest Part of America" discussed how virtually all the twenty poorest counties in America are on the Great Plains: "There are two unusual things about the deprivation in this region. First, it is largely white . . . in most areas the poor are as white as a prairie snowstorm. Second, most people do not think of themselves as poor."⁸⁵ But no quotes or evidence is offered in support of the notion of people thinking of themselves as not poor. The article goes on to point out that federal government assistance to these poor is mostly in the form of farm subsidies, and concludes, "The primary difference between this region and other bits of rural America is perhaps denial. Just as rain never did follow the plough, modern jobs do not follow high-cost subsidized food production." The resulting landscape is one of despair and poverty, more often associated with inner cities than with agricultural landscapes. But this is not the first association of the Plains with poverty and deprivation: the work of Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographers also "framed" Plains farmers in such a way.⁸⁶ And just as the FSA framed the Plains as a flawed people and landscape, this image is perpetuated in the modern media.

Return of the Plains Frontier

The second image that results from the media coverage is that of a returning frontier. Drawing on the coverage of depopulation, drought, bison, and grasslands, the topocide/ domicide of the Plains is assisted in the media by census data and the Census Bureau's declaration of a returning Plains frontier.

For example, during the period of drought coverage, Nicolas Kristof's editorial "American's Failed Frontier" commented on the results of the 2000 census. Building on the census data, Kristof writes: "It is time for us to acknowledge one of America's greatest mistakes, a 140-year-old scheme that has failed at the cost of trillions of dollars, countless lives and immeasurable heartbreak: the settlement of the Great Plains." Kristof lays the blame at the hands of "a web of subsidies and government land promotion schemes that lured people to the Great Plains in the first place." He suggests that all farm subsidies do today is continue to contribute to the depopulation of the Plains and that the monies should be shifted to rural business development. It is a powerful combination: census data, a period of drought, and a call for divestment. He concludes: "Instead of the frontier closing, as Frederick Jackson Turner declared a century ago, it is expanding, and we may look back on large-scale settlement of the Plains as a fluke, a temporary domination now receding again."

The census acts as the voice of authority, offering statistics and analysis of the state of the union. The Census Bureau, through its statistics and reports, creates knowledge to support a particular form of policy response, while it does not capture or reflect insight gained from knowing "the actors in question."⁸⁷ The Poppers, characterized as academics, are probably the most often quoted "expert" authority when it comes to the Plains. No article on "the problematic Plains" is complete without at least a reference to the Poppers and the Buffalo Commons, preferably contributing a quote or two, lending their support and credence to the argument. The Census Bureau's results appear to support the Poppers and their proposals, while the Poppers, in turn, support the Census Bureau in its results and analysis. "Expert witnesses," be it the Poppers or census officials, are seldom questioned.⁸⁸ Local voices are most often presented as stereotypes (pioneer, yokel, reactionary, victim), when they given voices at all.⁸⁹ Because the Plains is "not a geographically familiar area, let alone an area in which the audience would have readily understood the political and economic issues," it is then up to the media and their experts to shape the Plains and its story (Fig. 3).⁹⁰

Between the census definition, depopulation, and the focus on grasslands, we now have a mental image, a cognitive image of a returned frontier on the Plains – of fewer people, of open grasslands, of bison. The concept of frontier as it appears in the popular media seems to be shifting. Frontier has historically referred to a region on the edge of development, a zone in transition from wilderness, of "savagery" in Frederick Jackson Turner's words, to civilization.⁹¹ In the American consciousness, frontier can refer both to a specific landscape with a given set of conditions as well as a symbolic region, where individuals search for freedom and opportunity.⁹² I believe frontier is being recast in the American popular imagination from a border of transition at the *advance* of civilization to that of a landscape with low population densities, filled with wildlife and Native Americans, from which civilization has *retracted*. The Plains as a frontier both repels and draws individuals, being perceived at times as a hostile environment where danger (and death) lurks around every corner, and at other times as an idyllic, diverse garden filled with possibilities. Whatever the frontier means, it has an iconic status in American culture and is central to our sense of national identity.

The announcement of the return of frontier to the Plains has given those calling for a restructuring of the Plains an out: there are fewer people to be affected by such a move. We know from the media coverage that droughts continue to plague the Plains. We know also that there are more bison now, so why shouldn't we return it to the bison and other Plains species? And as we are worried about the loss of ecosystems globally, why not make it into parks? Because we value "nature" and the "environment," it is easy to make the claim for parks and preserves that would involve expanding the tourism industry

on the Plains. All are relatively safe and strong arguments for the American public. Best of all, we will have a frontier again. Yes, tragedy will result, but it is a necessity for the common good. It is better for our economy, for our environment, and ultimately for America ... or so the argument might go?⁹³

Ending the Plains "Experiment": Creative Destruction

Clearly, parts of the Plains are of value to Americans: "What we have here is a viewspace," Vicky Patton said. "This is our prized resource, open land and open sky."⁹⁴ What is of value to Americans are open spaces, grasslands, Native Americans, bison. Significant media coverage is of grasslands, both as a unique ecosystem and as a sight worth seeing (tourism). The focus on grasslands, on wideopen range, is a romantic, nostalgic notion of the Plains. We want the Plains landscape to match our dreamy view of the frontier. But this dreamy view is really just another economic activity:

Post-industrial restructuring has compelled others to exploit and promote local tourist attractions, especially natural amenities, in an attempt to minimize, halt or reverse economic decline induced by collapse or contraction in more conventional, manufacture-based sectors.⁹⁵

In order to promote "local tourist attractions," the focus needs to be on landscapes that are valued: common, dominant "countryside ideals" in Anglo-American society include nature, community, open space, heritage, nostalgia, and escape.⁹⁶ Creating a "natural" landscape to which Americans will want to escape means pulling investment out of the current economic activities in the region (in particular, farming, but ranching is approved because it is associated with cowboys) and reinvesting in new sectors: creative destruction, our final media image of the Plains.

The growing call for an end to farm subsidies will mean tremendous changes in the Plains. This is tricky ground. Family farms are sacred American icons, essential to the development of the nation, both culturally and economically. The loss of family farms is clearly lamented, yet farming in the Plains is also framed as a "failure," but not the fault of the farmers. Destruction of this landscape is eased by the fact that fewer sons and daughters are choosing to stay in farming, and as a result, "the rural lifestyle is being phased out."⁹⁷ The population decline experienced by parts of the Plains put it especially at risk:

The places most vulnerable to domicide are inner-city areas, urban fringe zones, damnable valleys, remote islands, and the so-called terra nullius (empty regions occupied by scattered nomads) And, above all, the victims of domicide are almost always smaller in numbers than those destined to benefit from the common good. Small in number and relatively powerless-their chances for successful resistance are not good.⁹⁸

Douglas Porteous suggests that in peacetime, domicide is a result of "the normal, mundane operations of the world's political economy."⁹⁹ It is brought about by inequalities that divide our world into rich and poor, colonizer and colonized, city and countryside. In our capitalist society, "large corporations, transnationals, and banks can alter landscapes and lives at will."¹⁰⁰ Destruction is tolerated when it is viewed as advantageous to the nation at large, and as a result the majority of the nation's population becomes willing participants.¹⁰¹ Creative destruction, the capitalist process by which new emerging ideas, firms, and industries lead to the destruction of the old, best describes the calls to pull out the financial supports of the Plains and shift them to new areas, such as forms of tourism.¹⁰²

We are going through a conceptual revaluing of the landscape-neoliberalism, or "a political project for the reconstruction of society in accord with the demands of an unrestrained global capitalism."¹⁰³ As

our Plains economy shifts, from industrial to postindustrial, from agri-industry to whatever comes next, we are reassessing our use of this resource and attempting to find new, more profitable, possibly more sustainable, ways of extracting value from this land. David Harvey suggested that an outdated landscape is "a prison that inhibits further progress of accumulation precisely because it creates spatial barriers where there were none before" and thus must be destroyed to allow the creation of a new landscape.¹⁰⁴ It is a shift away from primary production sites to centers of consumption. In particular, the commodification of heritage "has resulted in the creation of a new type of rationale landscape; one that appropriates cultural values and images from a previous 'historic and hegemonic bloc.'"¹⁰⁵ Ironically, the more globalized and interconnected we become, the more we "cling to place and neighborhood or to nation ... as specific marks of identity."¹⁰⁶ For Americans, I believe that the "marks of identity" are tied to notions of freedom and open spaces, to frontier and wilderness, which the Plains is increasingly being cast as. But this land-this open space, this wilderness-is not only key to the American identity but also tied to our economy: "It is no longer simply enough to assert one's identity towards recognition, in a market society one must pay to assert it through the acquisition of status and consumer goods." Open space, or wilderness, is not only an American ideal but also a commodity that can be purchased, as seen in Ted Turner's spectacular land purchases in the Plains and in the West.¹⁰⁷ As David Seamon writes: "Nothing is left untouched by the economic obsession to transform nature, history, and place into commodities that can be bought and sold."¹⁰⁸

This call for a restructuring according to "the demands of unrestrained global capitalism" is really a "new imperialism" or, in other words, a recolonization of the Plains.¹⁰⁹ Theoretically, creative destruction occurs from within, but in the Plains we can see evidence of both grassroots restructuring as well as external pressures.¹¹⁰ Part of the economic restructuring manifests itself in the call to end farm subsidies and other supports, as in Nicholas Kristof's editorial "American's Failed Frontier." Richard Manning, a Plains environmental writer, also calls for an end to subsidies in a New York Times editorial:

We regard farming as a permanent condition of rural life, but in the arid West it is a brief experiment of 100 years. From the outset it began failing, a destiny now manifest. Without federal subsidies, the wheatfields would move east to a more appropriate environment During the next few months, Congress will write a new farm bill. The tractor makers, seed companies, fertilizer manufacturers and food processors will probably prevent federal policy from aiding the grassland renaissance.¹¹¹

Such restructuring is relevant not only to the Plains experience but to rural areas and rangelands worldwide as societies now embrace "national aspirations in the belated recognition of indigenous land rights, in preserving unique biota and valued natural landscapes, in fostering sustainable resource use and promoting distinctive styles of tourism and recreation."¹¹² In fact, an article in the Economist entitled "In the Great American Desert" captures the call to end subsidies and also points to global similarities:

Although it may make economic sense to abandon a desert, many feel that America is losing a vital part of its character along the way. As farm towns continue to decline, there is a drive to transform America's agricultural policy into a scheme, more like Europe's, that would try to support rural life in general.¹¹³

A 2006 Washington Post article provides yet another articulation of this external restructuring pressure:

"This is an easy sell," said Diana Beattie, a Manhattan interior designer who summers in Montana and is a well-connected fundraiser among Fifth Avenue's philanthropic elite. "Since the Ai Gore movie, I think caring about nature and preserving its purity is on everybody's plate."

Larry Linden, who lives in Manhattan and is a retired general partner at Goldman Sachs, has pledged about \$500,000. He compares the restoration of the Northern Plains to the refurbishment of the Statue of Liberty.

"There are lot of folks in New York who spend a lot of time in the West, and this appeals to them," he said. "This is not the heavy hand of the government. Over time, ranch families will find it in their interest to sell."¹¹⁴

As the farmers sell, land is made available for other uses, such as tourism, but also for investment. Ted Turner's expansive landholdings (an estimated 2 million acres) have inspired others to "collect land," about which an article from the Wall Street Journal says, "It's like rare art."¹¹⁵ The power of our bicoastal economy and the misconceptions and stereotypes of the Plains have fostered an attack on what is seen as "locked in" modes of production.¹¹⁶ As a result, calls are made to pull agricultural supports and turn the bison loose. In the name of progress, topocide and domicide have been and will be carried out.¹¹⁷ While this may make financial sense, it will mean profound changes in the western Plains.

The Plains images of a flawed landscape, a returning frontier, and the necessity of topocide are, like all mosaics, a human construct, consisting of artistic impressions of a thing, place, event, or mood. As such, they reflect more the culture that creates them than the "culture" the images are attempting to capture. We need now to think about the creators of these images, the media.

MEDIA AND TOPOCIDE

Indeed the Plains-parts of which are now suffering from a severe drought-as a kind of human disaster area remains a popular theme among Eastern journalists: irresistible decline, dying towns, aging populations, a place to visit now before it all blows away.¹¹⁸

So what is the media's role in all this? The New York Times in particular has an immense influence over the nation's news agenda. Its front-page news often becomes the nation's top news stories. Through its wire services, New York Times stories are picked up and published in papers around the country. It is nationally distributed, available for daily delivery in many cities around the country.¹¹⁹ The perspective of the Times has been described as "provincial," focusing on the interests of Manhattanites and viewing the world from their standpoint, but that perspective is projected far beyond the boundaries of New York City and New York State.¹²⁰ Times coverage can be described as having a content bias: "patterns of slant that regularly prime audiences, consciously or unconsciously, to support the interests of particular holders or seekers of political power."¹²¹ Typically, this slant is toward the side of "the most powerful, popular, and unified."¹²²

Michael Massing has argued that because the majority of news networks and newspapers and magazines are based on the East Coast, "there is no nationally distributed heartland perspective."¹²³ Massing suggests that if there were a heartland view, it would provide a very different spin on the news, given that the interests of the Midwest are often ignored in the national media.¹²⁴ But there are heartland views. Eloquent Plains voices, such as Tom Isern, a history professor at North Dakota State

University, provide strong rebuttals to the off-Plains media portrayal of the region. In 2000 Isern published a column that foreshadowed this article:

I get calls from reporters all the time (the last one from Japan) asking where they can go to find the most human tragedy in the least amount of time and space. They have their lists of things to cover: abandoned churches and schools, dusty main streets with stores boarded up (preferably with a yellow dog lying about), old people reminiscing about the good old days, young people complaining there's nothing to do here.

The writers also all have their pat explanations for regional decline-big farm machinery, fast cars, harsh climate. They are strong on description, but their explanations are clueless What I want to know is, why? What's the fascination for readers in distant cities with ghost towns on the plains?

Partly it's simply the journalistic imperative to maximize perception of tragedy.¹²⁵

Isern goes on to suggest that such coverage, in bits and pieces, is probably harmless, but is "destructive in its cumulative effect Taken in sum, there is an agenda to it It is, rather, an emerging national consensus about what transpired on the plains in the 20th century."

In 2003 Isern, responding to Kristof's "Make Way for Buffalo," stated, "I've never seen a writer distill so perfectly every patronizing misconception about life on the Plains."¹²⁶ Isern begins with Kristof's assertion that portions of the Plains are so depopulated that they are "reverting to wilderness." Isern points out that the European notion of wilderness has always been a convenient construct: the Plains was perceived as wilderness, as "land vacant and going to waste," to justify taking it away from the peoples who lived there. It was never truly wilderness but was "an induced formation, the product of native range management." Isern then turns to Kristof's assertion that settlement of the Plains was a mistake and, overall, a failure. Isern counters that depopulation can be the result of success, citing several Plains memoirs as evidence.¹²⁷ Some farmers sold out at a profit and left by choice. Others sold the farm and left because their children had successful professional lives off the Plains and had moved beyond farming as an economic activity. Isern provides an important perspective on the Plains experience, one that comes from the Plains itself and is fully cognizant of Plains history, economy, and politics. Unfortunately, Isern's words are kept on the Plains, published in a weekly column in the Bismarck Tribune. Why doesn't his voice, and others like it, reach farther? By relying on certain dominant voices, or "experts," who sound authoritative and reflect fairly prominent views, the media become biased: "The voices of the unempowered are expected to find little or no space in the pages of the newspapers."¹²⁸

In fact, the media do not really address the complex political and economic forces that transformed the Native American grasslands to ranchlands, then to family farms and finally to corporate farms. The print media are quick to condemn the Plains while eliding over the roles that corporations and our government played in the creation of the landscape, as well as the role of the media itself. It is easier for both the writers and readers to hear a simpler story, one that does not ask the difficult questions about their own roles in this tragic tale.

Mediated stories and images appear to be playing a prominent role in the creative destruction and domicide of the region: "transformations of organizations (workplaces, universities, local government,

etc.) under the pressure of restructuring and re-scaling are partly, and significantly, semiotic and linguistic transformations."¹²⁹ The press appears to be doing the opposite of place promotion. While place promotion is designed to imprint on its audience a particular positive image of place, the press appears to be, at times, stripping away the unique qualities and creating a generic "Plains" composed of flat, empty grasslands. Place promotions, such as state tourism materials, are clearly advertisements, crafted to sell a particular product to a particular audience. Newspapers and other forms of print media are also constructs but are perceived as being factual, as being the "truth." By focusing on the negative, on death and loss, the media are engaging in place destruction or topocide/ domicide. In the process of domicide,

relocation is invariably initiated by an agent, industrial and/or government, which is external to the group, and it is implemented for economic, political, and other reasons. The programs are conducted in such a way as to give the appearance that the external agent holds the cultural preservation of the relocation group as a primary objective. However, the motive for the move is actually the exploitation of the lands that the relocatees are forced to leave.¹³⁰

In the print media I examined, I found language that laments the loss of Plains "culture" and expresses the desire to preserve the Plains environment. But it is also clear that financial aspects are significant and that the media act at times as the agent for promoting domicide.

The images and language used in covering Plains topics are strengthening the association between the Plains and death, creating a deathscape. I believe that by associating the Plains with death, the media are setting the stage for topocide/domicide. Ideas are constructed and exchanged in the public realm, which serves as a site for conversations about issues.¹³¹ It is through this public realm that the American public gathers information and constructs its knowledge about issues and places. The narratives that are constructed are based on shared histories, but they also construct new information and knowledge, especially about peoples and places that are removed from direct experience.¹³² These narratives are constructing a Plains landscape that is America and not America, both familiar and foreign, an internal "Other."¹³³

The depiction of the Plains in the American print media has significant ramifications. Sources of investment in New York and our government leaders in Washington make decisions based upon their perceptions of a place and its people. With the media, especially the New York Times, tying the Plains to the death, it is quite possible that these deathscapes may lead to topocide/domicide as decisions are made about farm subsidies and how best to help the American economy and make use of the Plains. In fact, in Australia it has been found that neoliberalism and economic "rationalism" "have substantially exacerbated the problems currently experienced by rural communities and small towns."¹³⁴

"MANY CAN CROSS, BUT FEW CAN STAY."

In 1859 Horace Greeley, editor of the New York Tribune, one of the most influential newspapers of the day, wrote of the Plains Indians, "These people must die out-there is no help for them. God has given this earth to those who will subdue and cultivate it, and it is vain to struggle against his righteous decree."¹³⁵ My use of this quote is not to suggest that the current situation in the Plains is anything like the violent dispossession of the Plains experienced by Plains Indian tribes. But the language Greeley employed in his role as an extremely influential journalist is an antecedent to today's situation. The Plains has been swept with creative destruction at least twice in the last 150 years. The first "gales"

transformed the open Plains and Native American society to an agricultural landscape of American settlement, the second is now transforming the agricultural settlement to ... well, we are still in transition. However, recent media coverage of the Plains suggests that at least the western portions of the Plains are being reclassified as "frontier." Frontier has long been a problematic term-historians have gone back and forth on its meaning and implications, even suggested banning it-but it remains a strong image in the American consciousness and is often used in discussing the Plains. In terms of the depopulation of the western Plains, frontier is evoked to convey the landscape of low population density, abandoned homes, and great expanses of space. What is this landscape? It is not wilderness; it seems a very different world than the grassland preserves being created for the dual purposes of preservation and tourism. Are reconstructed grasslands wilderness? Or frontier? What about abandoned fields and grazing lands? Are they wilderness or frontier?

The Plains is in transition, swept by the winds of creative destruction. Doreen Massey has written on a trend in the social sciences to reject "settledness" and instead focus on "a notion of place, a concept of nature in balance. The emphasis is on constant movement, the inevitability and inexorability of process . . . on flow rather than territory."¹³⁷ This constant movement, of cycling and adaptation, is in essence sustainable.¹³⁸ Why do we assume that once a landscape is "domesticated" it stays domesticated? The transformation of the Plains was very much tied to notions of progress, transforming "wilderness" into a productive landscape. But to turn a land into something else is not necessarily indicative of failure as has been suggested by some of the editorials and articles. In 1995 the New York Times provocatively asked, "Is North Dakota necessary?"¹³⁹ A North Dakotan responded:

It's true that as the reality of global competition in agriculture prevails over the call for the preservation of family farms, North Dakota's population is migrating from rural areas to cities. But I doubt that anyone asked "Is Lawrence, Mass. necessary?" when the textile mills moved South: The numerical size of a community says little about its values or contribution to the greater whole.¹⁴⁰

Creative destruction in the Manufacturing Belt did not, to my knowledge, result in calls to give up on the region. But the language and focus of the New York Times and other off-Plains papers seem to suggest that the region should, in essence, give up the ghost, be returned to the original Native Americans and bison, and become once more a "frontier."

What will be the end result for the Plains? Frontier? Wilderness? A multifunctional landscape? Our definitions are changing and so is the Plains. While the media are associating the Plains with death, and through this construction possibly facilitating its demise, we are not witnessing the death of the Plains. Grasslands may appear dead in early spring or after a burn, but appearances are deceiving. Give us time, give us space. Our roots are deep. The Plains will restore its equilibrium. What is right for the Plains, whatever that is, will reemerge if nature is left to take its course: "The stake is not change itself (the denial of it in the past or the refusal of it in the future), for change of some sort is inevitable; rather it is the character and terms of that change."¹⁴¹ Perhaps, in the meantime, we need to take advantage of our association with death, murder, and mayhem and use this in our Plains promotion. A wonderfully cheeky editorial from the Denver Post provides a starting place:

The High Plains counties ... need to attract younger residents-that is, the Gen X-ers who are often into extreme sports and challenging lifestyles. . . . Pile on some adventure mystique. After all, the Great Plains offer more ways to kill you than any other part of the country: hail storms of biblical proportions,

blue northers that roar down unimpeded from Canada, world-class tornadoes, lightning that flashes when you're the highest object in sight, alkali water when there's water at all. Bring back a fair-sized bison herd to add stampedes to the excitement. Start promoting that angle with slogans like: "Are you tough enough for the High Plains?" "Short-grass prairie: No room for sissies"; and "Many can cross, but few can stay."¹⁴²

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NOTES

1. I disclose my position, as suggested by Whittaker and Mercer, who state that "discourse analysts should make their position clear in relation to the discourses under investigation and consider the potential implications of their own contributions to the discursive production of our world." See Josh Whittaker and David Mercer, "The Victorian Bushfires of 2002-03 and the Politics of Blame: A Discourse Analysis," *Australian Geographer* 35, no. 3 (2004): 259-72, see p. 272. I could also be defined as an "inpert": "a self-conscious, articulate insider who often has 'outsider' contacts or skills." See J. Douglas Porteous, *Planned to Death: The Annihilation of a Place Called Howdendyke* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 213. Additionally, I recognize that there is no such super-entity as "the media." However, for purposes of this paper, the shorthand is appropriate given the relatively uniform coverage devoted to the Great Plains by major media outlets.
2. Timothy Egan, "As Others Abandon Plains, Indians and Bison Come Back," *New York Times*, May 27, 2001, 1.
3. Historic research on media coverage of the Plains includes Bradley H. Baltensperger, "Newspaper Images of the Central Great Plains in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Journal of the West* (April 1980): 64-70; Baltensperger, "Plains Boomers and the Creation of the Great American Desert Myth," *Journal of Historical Geography* 18, no. 1 (1992): 59-73; John E. Miller, "The Way They Saw Us: Dakota Territory in the *Illustrated News*," *South Dakota History* 18, no. 4 (1988): 214-44. On more recent media coverage, see Mary Umberger, "Casting the Buffalo Commons: A Rhetorical Analysis of Print Media Coverage of the Buffalo Commons Proposal for the Great Plains," *Great Plains Quarterly* 22 (Spring 2002): 99-114.
4. J. Douglas Porteous, "Deathscape: Malcolm Lowry's Topophobic View of the City," *Canadian Geographer* 31, no. 1 (1987): 34-43, see p. 43.
5. Porteous, *Planned to Death*, xi.
6. *Ibid.*, 227-30.

7. J. Douglas Porteous and Sandra E. Smith, *Domicide: The Global Destruction of Home* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2001), ix.
8. Carl G. Herndl and Stuart C. Brown, Introduction to *Green Culture: Environmental Rhetoric in Contemporary America*, ed. C. Herndl and S. Brown, 3-20 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), see pp. 3-4.
9. Lisa Cooke, "Visions of Northern Canada from Abroad Through the Lens of International Environmentalism," *Textual Studies in Canada* 17 (2004): 43-53, see p. 44.
10. Lexis-Nexis does not include all U.S. newspapers in its database. I do not wish to give the impression that I have collected all the articles 'on the Plains published during this time period. Rather, I view this as an extensive sample.
11. Robert Entman, "Framing Bias: Media in the Distribution of Power," *Journal of Communication* 57 (2007): 163-73, see p. 164.
12. Yi-fu Tuan, "Language and the Making of Place: A Narrative-Descriptive Approach," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 81, no. 4 (1991): 684-96; George Myerson and Yvonne Rydin, *The Language of Environment: A New Rhetoric* (London: UCL Press, 1996), 6.
13. Myerson and Rydin, *The Language of Environment*, 7.
14. P. M. McGuirk and D. Rowe, "'Defining Moments' and Refining Mythos in the Making of Place Identity: The Newcastle Knights and the Australian Rugby League Grand Final," *Australian Geographical Studies* 39, no. 1 (2001): 52-66.
15. Herndl and Brown, *Green Culture*, 4. 1
16. Peter Miihlhausler and Adrian Peace, "Environmental Discourses," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35 (2006): 457-79, see p. 465.
17. Frank Durham, "News Frames as Social Narratives: TWA Flight 800," *Journal of Communication* 48 (1998): 100-117, see p. 100.
18. Ibid., 103-4; Holli A. Semetko and Patti M. Valkenburg, "Framing European Politics: A Content Analysis of Press and Television News," *Journal of Communication* 50, no. 2 (2000): 93-109, see pp. 93-94; Fuyuan Shen and Heidi H. Edwards, "Economic Individualism, Humanitarianism, and Welfare Reform: A Value-Based Account of Framing Effects," *Journal of Communication* 55, no. 4 (2005): 795-809, see p. 795.
19. Entman, "Framing Bias," 164; Janne Seppanen and Esa Valiverronen, "Visualizing Biodiversity: The Role of Photographs in Environmental Discourse," *Science As Culture* 12, no. 1 (2003): 59-85, see p. 59.
20. Donnalyn Pompper, "From Loch Ness Monsters to Global Warming: Framing Environmental Risk in a Supermarket Tabloid," in *EnviroPOP: Studies in Environmental Rhetoric and Popular Culture*, ed. M. Meister and P. Japp, 111-40 (Westport: Praeger, 2002), see pp. 113-14.
21. Soren Larsen and Timothy Brock, "Great Basin Imagery in Newspaper Coverage of Yucca Mountain," *Geographical Review* 95, no. 4 (2006): 517-36.

22. Shen and Edwards, "Economic Individualism, Humanitarianism, and Welfare Reform," 796.
23. Myerson and Rydin, *The Language of Environment*, 11.
24. *Ibid.*, 7.
25. *Ibid.*
26. J. S. Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997), 8.
27. Myerson and Rydin, *The Language of Environment*, 204.
28. Cooke, "Visions of Northern Canada from Abroad," 45.
29. Mark Meister and Phyllis Japp, "Introduction: A Rationale for Studying Environmental Rhetoric and Popular Culture," in Meister and Japp, *EnviroPOP*, 1-12, see p. 6.
30. Maarten A. Hajer, *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 1. See also Nancy Coppola and Bill Karis, eds., *Technical Communication, Deliberative Rhetoric, and Environmental Discourse: Connections and Directions* (Stamford, CT: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 2000); and J. Peter Brosius, "Analyses and Interventions: Anthropological Engagements with Environmentalism," *Current Anthropology* 40, no. 3 (June 1999): 277-88.
31. Cooke, "Visions of Northern Canada from Abroad," 44; Myerson and Rydin, *The Language of Environment*, 10.
32. Norman Fairclough, "Political Discourse in the Media: An Analytical Framework," in *Approaches to Media Discourse*, ed. Allan Bell and Peter Garrett, 142-62 (London: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 150; Garrett and Bell, "Media and Discourse: A Critical Overview," in *Approaches to Media Discourse*, 5-6; Hajer, *The Politics of Environmental Discourse*, 15.
33. Allan Bell, "The Discourse Structure of News Stories," in *Approaches to Media Discourse*, 64-104, see pp. 64-65; Brosius, "Analyses and Interventions," 278. See also Norman Fairclough, "Language in New Capitalism," *Discourse and Society* 13, no. 2 (2002): 163-66, and Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2003).
34. Meister and Japp, "Introduction," 3.
35. Whittaker and Mercer, "The Victorian Bushfires of 2002-03," 264.
36. Miihlhausler and Peace, "Environmental Discourses," 466; Peter Weingart, Anita Engels, and Petra Pansegrau, "Risks of Communication: Discourses on Climate Change in Science, Politics, and the Mass Media," *Public Understanding of Science* 9 (2000): 261-83, see p. 262.
37. Allan Mazur, "Global Environmental Change in the News, 1987-90 vs. 1992-96," *International Sociology* 13, no. 4 (1998): 457-72, see p. 458. Emphasis added. See also Entman, "Framing Bias," 165.
38. Entman, "Framing Bias," 164.
39. Mazur, "Global Environmental Change in the News," 459.

40. Myerson and Rydin, *The Language of Environment*, 2-3.
41. Cooke, "Visions of Northern Canada from Abroad," 45. See also David R. Jansson, "Internal Orientalism in America: W. J. Cash's *The Mind of the South* and the Spatial Construction of American National Identity," *Political Geography* 22 (2003): 293-316.
42. Garrett and Bell, "Media and Discourse," 4.
43. I view my numbers as approximate: someone else "counting" themes may arrive at slightly higher or lower numbers. Regardless of the number, I view it as significant that there is double the number of depopulation themed articles than the next category.
44. Another nineteen articles were published once more after their original publication.
45. Joel Kotkin, "If We Let Rural America Die, We Shall Lose a Piece of Ourselves," *Washington Post*, July 21, 2002, B1; "Keep Rural America Alive," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 25, 2002; "Ways to Pump Life into the Heartland," *Times Union*, Albany, NY, July 29, 2002; "Fading Away," *Bergen County (NJ) Record*, August 11, 2002.
46. Peter Kilborn, "Boom in Economy Skips Towns on the Plains" *New York Times*, July 2, 2000, A1; "Ghost Towns Sprout Over Much of the Great Plains," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 2, 2000, 16A.
47. Nicholas Kristof, "America's Failed Frontier," *New York Times*, September 3, 2002, A19, and *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, September 8, 2002, F4; Joel Kotkin, "The Great Plains," *Wall Street Journal*, August 31, 2006, A8.
48. Kristof, "America's Failed Frontier"; Egan, "As Others Abandon Plains"; Egan, "Unsettled Plains," editorial, *New York Times*, June 3, 2001, A16.
49. Bob von Sternberg, "Empty Middle," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, August 9, 1998, 1A; Jeff Glasser, "A Broken Heartland," *U.S. News and World Report*, May 7, 2001, 16-22; Egan, "Unsettled Plains"; Kristof, "America's Failed Frontier"; Bob Greene, "Empty House on the Prairie," editorial, *New York Times*, March 2, 2005, A19.
50. Mazur, "Global Environmental Change in the News," 459.
51. Elizabeth Becker, "Vanishing Point: You Can Go Home Again, but a Farmer's Sons Find It's Not So Profitable," *New York Times*, December 1, 2003, A19; Timothy Egan, "Vanishing Point: Amid Dying Towns of Rural Plains, One Makes a Stand," *New York Times*, December 1, 2003, A1; Peter Kilborn, "Vanishing Point: In Kansas, a Growing Phone Company Helps Keep a Small Prairie Town Alive," *New York Times*, December 2, 2003, A28, and "Vanishing Point: Bucking Trend, They Stay on the Plains, Held By Family and Friends," *New York Times*, December 2, 2003, A1; Nicholas Kristof, "Make Way for Buffalo," editorial, *New York Times*, October 29, 2003, A25, and "4 Teacher's Pets," editorial, *New York Times*, November 1, 2003, A15.
52. Jillian Lloyd, "0 Pioneers! Reversing the Great Plains Drain," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 28, 2003, 3.

53. Hal Clifford, "Dying Economy Fuels Exodus from America's Heartland," Boston Globe, August 23, 2003, A3; Michael Lind, "The New Continental Divide," Atlantic Monthly, January/February 2003, 86-88; Lloyd, "O Pioneers!"
54. Laura Bauer, "Struggling Rural Areas Tout Free Land to Lure New Residents," Kansas City Star, January 29, 2007.
55. Kotkin, "The Great Plains."
56. The Poppers could not let Kotkin's rosy portrayal of the Plains slide by without a comment. In a letter to the editor, they disagreed with his article and his negative comment on their Buffalo Commons, arguing that "[t]he Plains' demographic picture is not all one of growth" and that there are still areas losing population that "remain prime candidates for Buffalo Commons solutions." See Frank Popper and Deborah Popper, "Great Plains Depopulation Offers Historic Opportunity," Wall Street Journal, September 11, 2006, A15.
57. Charlie Meyers, "Drought Leaving Pheasant Hunt High and Dry: Bane Reign Mainly in Plains," Denver Post, October 27, 2002, C08; Tom Webb, "Drought Scorches Region's Wheat; Prices Soar on Crop-Loss News," Saint Paul Pioneer Press, July 13, 2006, 1e.
58. Christopher Thorne, "Senate Nearing Vote on Money to Help Drought-Stricken Farmers," Associated Press State and Local Wire, May 24, 2002. See also Shannon Tompkins, "'It's Like a New World': What a Difference a Year Makes ...," Houston Chronicle June 28, 2007, 9.
59. William Riebsame, "The Dust Bowl: Historical Image, Psychological Anchor, and Ecological Taboo," Great Plains Quarterly 6, no. 2 (1986): 127-36
60. "High Plains Dust," editorial, New York Times, May 22, 2002, A26. This was rerun, under the same headline, in the following California newspapers on May 24, 2002: Alameda Times-Star; Hayward Daily Review; Oakland Tribune; San Mateo County Times; and Tri-Valley Herald (Pleasanton, CA).
61. George Will, "When the Skies Filled with Dust," Washington Post, April 29, 2007, B07, and Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, April 30, 2007, B7; DEATHSCAPES, TOPOCIDE, DOMICIDE 117 "Recalling America's Dust Bowl Survival," Mobile Register, April 29, 2007, 03; "Lessons Left in Dust of 1930s Policies," Chicago Sun Times, April 29, 2007, B7.
62. Timothy Egan, "Dry High Plains Are Blowing Away, Again," New York Times, May 3, 2002, A1.
63. Philip Brasher, "Expect More Dust Bowls, Scientists Say," Associated Press State and Local Wire, December 15, 1998; "Great Plains May Face Future Great Droughts," Deseret News (Salt Lake City), December 15, 1998, A2; "Great Plains 'Megadrought' is Possible, Scientists Warn," Boston Globe, December 16, 1998, AU; "Another Dust Bowl Is Possible, Experts Say," Quincy (MA) Patriot Ledger, December 16, 1998, 5; "Scientists Studying Historical Evidence Predict Severe Droughts for Great Plains," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, December 18, 1998, C11. Joseph Verrengia, "Global Warming Could Alter Ecology of Plains," St. Louis PostDispatch, August 5, 1998, A4; "Great Plains Seen Spreading East, Possibly into Wisconsin," Associated Press State and Local Wire, August 4, 1998; "Study Predicts Increase in Great Plains Wildfires," Bergen County (NJ) Record, August 5, 1998, A13.

64. Charles Davant, "Experts Say Great Plains Due for Droughts Worse than Dust Bowl," Pueblo Chieftain, December 16, 1998; Kevin McCullen, "Mother of All Dust Bowls Predicted: Scientists See Evidence for Decade-Long Drought," Rocky Mountain News (Denver), December 26, 1998, A44; Curt Suplee, "Past Patterns Suggest a Future 'Megadrought,'" Washington Post, December 21, 1998, A3.
65. I am referring to the first articulation of the Poppers' Buffalo Commons concept, which appeared in Planning in 1987: Deborah E. Popper and Frank J. Popper, "The Great Plains: From Dust to Dust," Planning, December 1987, 12-18. See also Anne Matthews, *Where the Buffalo Roam* (New York: Grove Press, 1992).
66. Patrick O'Driscoll, "Couple's Vision of Buffalo-Filled Plains Coming into Focus," USA Today, December 29, 1997, IOA; Haya El Nasser, "Life on the Great Plains Is Anything but Plain, Simple" USA Today, August 13, 2007, 1A.
67. Mark Obmascik, "\$2 Million Backs Effort to Save Bison," Denver Post, January 23, 1997, A1; Dana Hull, "When the Buffalo Roam They May Not Get Home," Washington Post, July 22, 1997, A1; Blaine Harden, "In the New West, Do They Want the Buffalo to Roam? Plans for Tourism-Friendly Reserve Concern Montana Rancher," Washington Post, July 30, 2006, A8; Egan, "As Others Abandon Plains."
68. Erin Schulte, "Thundering Across the Western Plains: A New Kosher Food," Wall Street Journal, February 9, 2000, B1.
69. Scott Kilman, "Buffalo Is a Hard Sell and Lots of Ranchers Are Biting the Dust . . .," Wall Street Journal, July 12, 2002, A1.
70. "Popularity of Bison Meat Reaches Record Levels," CNN.com, March 12, 2004, <http://www.cnn.com/2004/US/South/03/12/eating.bison.ap/index.html> (accessed March 31, 2004).
71. Jim Robbins, "Out West, with Buffalo, Roam Some Strands of Undesirable DNA," New York Times, January 9, 2007, F3.
72. Richard Woodward, "A Sliver of Prairie Still Untamed," New York Times, June 10, 2005, F1.
73. John Donnelly, "Farmers Could Get Crop Change," Boston Globe, October 2, 2006, A2.
74. John Krist, "Prairie Retains Ghosts of Its Past," Ventura County Star, April 28, 2002, A1
75. The concept of "rewilding," reintroducing megafauna such as lions, cheetahs, and elephants to the Plains, is one way visionaries have proposed filling Plains space. Like the Buffalo Commons concept, it is another "turn them loose" proposal dependent on huge tracks of "unsettled" grasslands. Nicholas Kristof of the New York Times wrote an editorial in support of the concept. But I found many more editorials against the plan. For the original proposal see: Josh Donlan, "Re-wilding North America," *Nature* 436 (August 18, 2005): 913-14; Nicholas Kristof, "Where Deer and Lions Play," New York Times, December 13, 2005, A33.
76. Froma Harrop, "It's Simply Nicer in Nebraska," editorial, Providence Journal, September 6, 2006, B5.
77. Dan Flores, "Loving the Plains, Hating the Plains, Restoring the Plains," in *The Future of the Southern Plains*, ed. S. L. Smith, 219-44 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 219. Originally quoted in Matthews, *Where the Buffalo Roam*, 122- 23.

78. Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion Limited, 1976), 79.
79. Joe Moran, *Reading the Everyday* (London: Routledge, 2005), 98-99.
80. *Ibid.*, 125. 81. Jeffrey Hopkins, "Signs of the Post-Rural: Marketing Myths of a Symbolic Countryside," *Geografiska Annaler* 80B (1998): 65-81.
82. If the Canadian Plains are included, the North American Plains cover an estimated 1.2 million square miles. "Great Plains," Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2009, http://encarta.msn.com/text_761558042/GreacPlains.html (accessed April 22, 2009).
83. Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 82.
84. Moran, *Reading the Everyday*, 128. 85. "United States: Not Here, Surely? The Poorest Part of America," *Economist* 377, no. 8456 (December 10, 2005): 51. Reprinted in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* on December 18, 2005.
86. James Curtis, *Mind's Eye, Mind's Truth: FSA Photography Reconsidered* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).
87. Martin Phillips, Sue Page, Eirini Saratsi, Kevin Tansey, and Kate Moore, "Diversity, Scale and Green Landscapes in the Gentrification Process: Transversing Ecological and Social Science Perspectives," *Applied Geography* 28 (2008): 54-76, see p. 61.
88. It is because experts are seldom questioned that the reaction to the "rewilding" proposal is so interesting. News stories cover it, Kristof writes an editorial in favor of it, but generally the proposal was ridiculed in editorials. Is this a result of a proposal that is so far out there that people can't help but question it? Or is it a matter of the postmodern turn in our society and we are finally free to question science? Or perhaps a bit of both?
89. Umberger, "Casting the Buffalo Commons," 109.
90. *Ibid.*, 105.
91. Frederick J. Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *Frederick Jackson Turner: Wisconsin's Historian of the Frontier* (1993; Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1893).
92. Elliott West, "American Frontier," in *The Oxford History of the American West*, ed. C. A. Milner, C. A. O'Connor, and M. A. Sandweiss, 115-49 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
93. Porteous and Smith, *Domicide*, 133; Joanne P. Sharp, "Publishing American Identity: Popular Geopolitics, Myth and the Reader's Digest," *Political Geography* 12, no. 6 (1993): 491-503, see p. 499.
94. Chris Welsch, "Motor Home on the Range: A Rental RV Odyssey Across the Vast Prairies Proves That Some Sort of Pioneer Spirit Survives," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, July 9, 2006, 1G.
95. Hopkins, "Signs of the Post-Rural," 66.
96. *Ibid.*, 77.
97. Porteous and Smith, *Domicide*, 134.

98. Ibid., 191.
99. Ibid., 106.
100. Ibid.
101. Ibid., 115.
102. Alexey Voinov and Joshua Farley, "Reconciling Sustainability, Systems Theory, and Discounting," *Ecological Economics* 63 (2007): 104-13, see p. 105; Jonathan Rutherford, "After Identity," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 21, no. 1 (2007): 5-18.
103. Norman Fairclough, "Language and NeoLiberalism," *Discourse and Society* 11, no. 2 (2000): 147.
104. David Harvey, *The Urbanization of Capital: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 43; Matthew Tonts and Shane Greive, "Commodification and Creative Destruction in the Australian Rural Landscape: The Case of Bridgetown, Western Australia," *Australian Geographical Studies* 40, no. 1 (March 2002): 58-70, see p. 62.
105. Clare Mitchell, R. Greg Atkinson, and Andrew Clark, "The Creative Destruction of Niagara-on-the-Lake," *Canadian Geographer* 45, no. 2 (2001): 285-99, see p. 286.
106. Ibid.
107. Rutherford, "After Identity," 16.
108. David Seamon, "Place, Placelessness, Insideness, and Outsideness in John Sayles' Sunshine State," *Aether: The Journal of Media Geography* 3 (June 2008): 1-19.
109. Fairclough, "Language and Neo-Liberalism," 147.
110. Richard Florida, "Regional Creative Destruction: Production Organization, Globalization, and the Economic Transformation of the Midwest," *Economic Geography* 72, no. 3 (1996): 314-34; Fairclough, "Language and Neo-Liberalism," 148.
111. Richard Manning, "Destiny Revisits the Great Plains," editorial, *New York Times*, July 10, 2001, A19.
112. Holmes, "Diversity and Change in Australia's Rangelands," 363-64.
113. "United States: In the Great American Desert; The Future of Farming," *Economist* 361, no. 8252 (December 15, 2001): 44.
114. Harden, "In the New West."
115. Thaddeus Herrick, "'It's the Only Thing That Lasts'; For Some Rich Americans, Accumulating Land is Like Collecting Art and Autos," *Wall Street Journal*, April 25, 2007, B1. This article was reprinted in *The Seattle Times* one month later with the headline "This is My Land, This is My Land," (May 27, 2007, D1).
116. Florida, "Regional Creative Destruction," 317.
117. Porteous and Smith, *Domicide*, 105.
118. Kotkin, "The Great Plains," A8.

119. Matthew Miller, "Sign of the Times" U.S. News and World Report 125, no. 2 (1998): 23-28.
120. Brent Cunningham, "Manhattan Mindset: The World Sees News through New York Eyes," Columbia Journalism Review 39, no. 6 (2001): 22-27.
121. Entman, "Framing Bias," 166.
122. Ibid., 167.
123. Michael Massing, "Missing Middle: The Geography of the Nation's News," Columbia Journalism Review 45, no. 6 (March/April 2007): 14-16, see p. 14.
124. Ibid., 15-16.
125. Tom Isern, "Our Ghost Towns-As Seen through the Media," Bismarck Tribune, September 25, 2000, 4A.
126. Tom Isern, "Opinion Piece a Patronizing Misconception," Bismarck Tribune, November 16, 2003.
127. The Economist's "United States: In the Great American Desert" (2001) cites Bruce Babcock, director of the Center for Agriculture and Rural Development at Iowa State University, who "sees no point in trying to expand a workforce that has naturally contracted. In his view, the decline of small farms on the plains is a sign of success. Farm towns need to stop relying on the government and find a new raison d'etre."
128. Andrew McGregor, "Ruralness, Development, and Democracy: Media, Myths, and the Creation of Meaning at Lake Cowal, New South Wales," Australian Geographer 29, no. 2 (1998): 191- 204, see p. 195.
129. Fairclough, "Language in New Capitalism."
130. Porteous and Smith, Domicide, 115-16.
131. Romayne S. Fullerton and Maggie J. Patterson, "Murder in Our Midst: Expanding Coverage to Include Care and Responsibility," Journal of Mass Media Ethics 21, no. 4 (2006): 304-21, see p. 305.
132. Ibid., 310.
133. For "internal Orientalism," see Jansson, "Internal Orientalism in America."
134. Holmes, "Diversity and Change in Australia's Rangelands," 366.
135. Horace Greeley, An Overland Journey from New York to San Francisco, in the Summer of 1859 (New York: C. M. Saxton, Barker and Co., 1860).
136. Tonts and Greive, "Commodification and Creative Destruction," 61.
137. Doreen Massey, "Landscape as Provocation: Reflections on Moving Mountains," Journal of Material Culture 11, nos. 1/2 (2006): 33-48, see p. 40.
138. Voinov and Farley, "Reconciling Sustainability," 106.
139. Jon Margolis, "The Reopening of the Frontier," New York Times Magazine, October 15, 1995, 6-51.

140. Leo Wilking, "The Reopening of the Frontier," letter to the editor, *New York Times Magazine*, November 5, 1995, 6, 10.

141. Massey, "Landscape as Provocation," 40.

142. Ed Quillen, "Reviving our High Plains," *Denver Post*, July 30, 2006, E4.

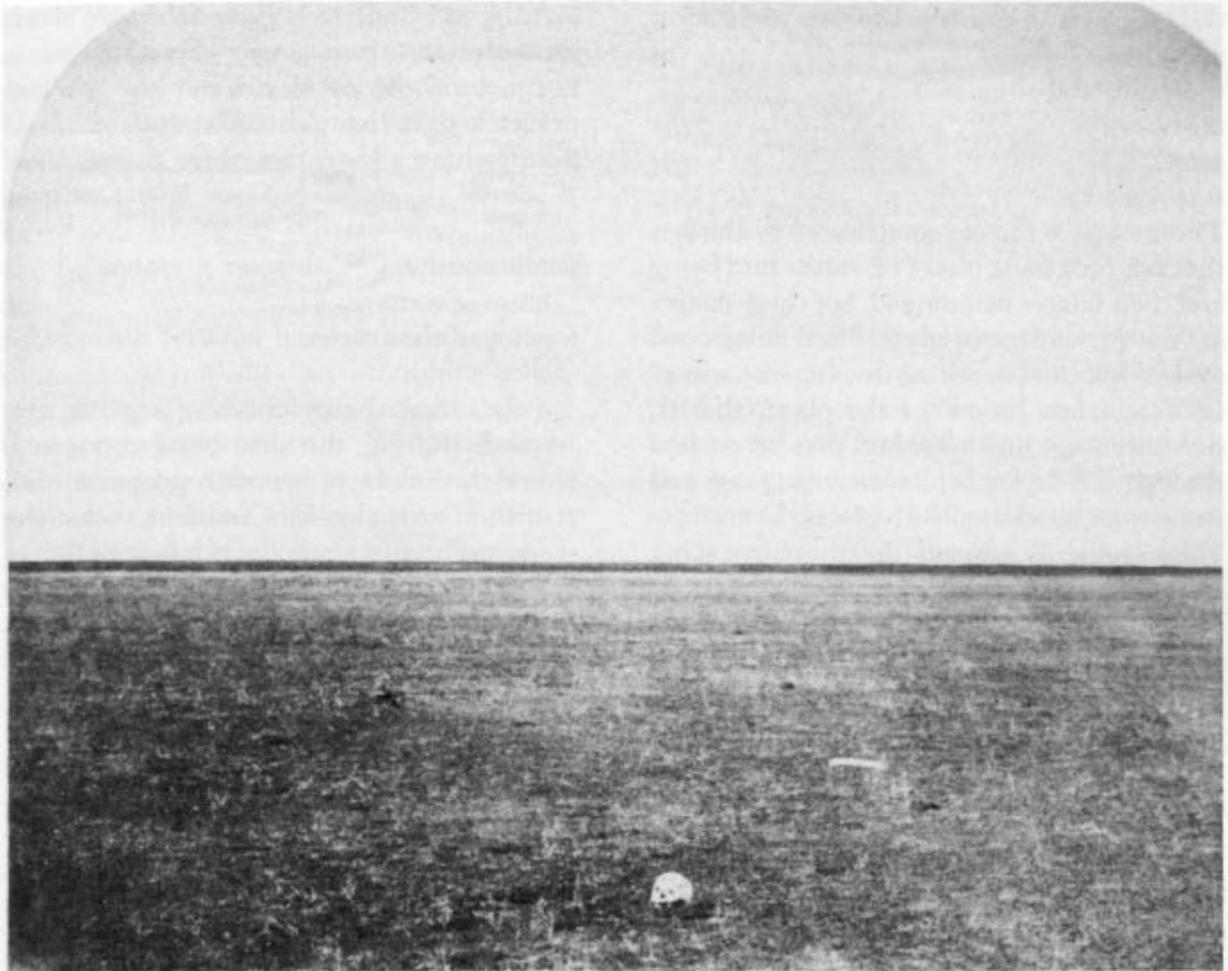


FIG. 1. *Humphrey Lloyd Hime's "The Prairie, looking west," September-October 1858.* Humphrey Lloyd Hime/Library and Archives Canada/C-017443. Taken on the 1858 Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition, lead by Henry Youle Hind. The clearly human skull in the foreground dramatically sets the stage for this wide-open landscape. The question is, is Hime playing to Victorian interests in religion and rebirth or drawing the analogy between this landscape and death? It is believed that the skull may be one that Hime describes in his diary as having been found a year earlier, which he kept and then used to stage this image. See Andrea Kunard, "Relationships of Photography and Text in the Colonization of the Canadian West: The 1858 Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 26 (Fall 2002): 77-100.

TABLE 1
EXAMPLES OF REPUBLISHED ARTICLES

Date first published	Type of article	Author	Original title	Newspaper	Republished title, newspaper, date
Dec. 15, 1998	News	Philip Brasher	Expect More Dust Bowls, Scientists Say	Associated Press	Great Plains May Face Future Droughts, <i>Deseret News</i> (Salt Lake City), Dec. 15, 1998 Great Plains "Megadrought" Is Possible, Scientists Warn, <i>Boston Globe</i> , Dec. 16, 1998 Another Dust Bowl Is Possible, Experts Say, <i>Patriot Ledger</i> , Dec. 16, 1998 Scientists Studying Historical Evidence Predict Severe Droughts for Great Plains, <i>St. Louis Post-Dispatch</i> , Dec. 18, 1998
May 21, 2000	News	Charles W. Holmes	In Farm Country, a Way of Life Slowly Withers	Cox News Service	[Same title], <i>New Orleans Times-Picayune</i> , May 17, 2000 America's Vanishing Heart, <i>Palm Beach Post</i> , May 22, 2000
July 2, 2000	News	Peter T. Kilborn	Boom in Economy Skips Towns on the Plains	<i>New York Times</i>	Booming Economy Skips Towns in the Great Plains, <i>Charleston Gazette</i> , July 2, 2000 Ghost Towns Sprout over Much of Great Plains, <i>Cleveland Plain Dealer</i> , July 2, 2000 Booming Economy Misses, <i>Contra Costa (CA) Times</i> , July 3, 2000
May 22, 2002	Editorial	[Unsigned]	High Plains Dust	<i>New York Times</i>	[Same title], <i>Alameda (CA) Times Star</i> , May 24, 2002 [Same title], <i>Hayward (CA) Daily Review</i> , May 24, 2002 [Same title], <i>Oakland Tribune</i> , May 24, 2002 [Same title], <i>San Mateo County Times</i> , May 24, 2002 [Same title], <i>Tri-Valley Herald</i> (Pleasanton, CA), May 24, 2002
June 2, 2002	Feature, travel	Chris Welsch	Minnesota Prairies Are Pristine Gems	<i>Minneapolis Star-Tribune</i>	[Same title], <i>Deseret News</i> , June 2, 2002 Minnesota Boast Its Own Pristine Stretches of Prairie, <i>Chattanooga Times Free Press</i> , June 2, 2002
July 21, 2002	Editorial	Joel Kotkin	If We Let Rural America Die, We Shall Lose a Piece of Ourselves	<i>Washington Post</i>	[Same title], <i>Milwaukee Journal Sentinel</i> , July 28, 2002 Giving Up on Rural America Would Be a Huge Mistake, <i>St. Paul Pioneer Press</i> , July 28, 2002 Ways to Pump Life into the Heartland, <i>Albany (NY) Times Union</i> , July 29, 2002 Fading Away, <i>Bergen County (NJ) Record</i> , Aug. 11, 2002 Keep Rural America Alive, <i>Pittsburgh Post-Gazette</i> , Aug. 25, 2002
July 29, 2003	News		Study: Kansas Is Flatter Than a Pancake	Associated Press	There Is Little Weirder Than the News, <i>Grand Rapids (MI) Press</i> , July 31, 2003 Flotsam and Jetsam, <i>Norfolk Virginian-Pilot</i> , July 26, 2003 The World Isn't Flat—Just Kansas, <i>Newark (NJ) Star-Ledger</i> , July 22, 2003
Sept. 3, 2002	Editorial	Nicholas Kristof	America's Failed Frontier	<i>New York Times</i>	[Same title], <i>Chattanooga Times Free Press</i> , Sept. 8, 2002 Courage Lacking to Reform Farm Policy, <i>Seattle Post-Intelligencer</i> , Aug. 6, 2002
Mar. 22, 2004	News	Frank D. Roylance	Ocean Temperature Changes Blamed for 1930s Dust Bowl	<i>Baltimore Sun</i>	It Was a Sea Change That Chased the Joads, <i>Albany Times Union</i> , Mar. 22, 2004 Minor Changes Triggered Dust Bowl, <i>Chattanooga Times Free Press</i> , Mar. 22, 2004 [Same title], <i>Milwaukee Journal Sentinel</i> , Mar. 28, 2004
Jan. 30, 2005	Editorial	George Will	Acts of Character Building	<i>Washington Post</i>	The Homestead Act Typifies Conservatism, <i>Augusta (GA) Chronicle</i> , Jan. 30, 2005 Modern Conservatism Echoed in Bush's Inaugural Speech, <i>Deseret Morning News</i> , Jan. 30, 2005 The Crux of Modern Conservation, <i>Pittsburgh Tribune Review</i> , Jan. 30, 2005 A Homestead Act for the 21st Century, <i>Palm Beach Post</i> , Jan. 30, 2005 Public Policy Participates in the Building of Character, <i>Minneapolis Star-Tribune</i> , Jan. 30, 2005 Bush's Acts of Independence, <i>Albany Times Union</i> , Jan. 30, 2005 Society Influence "Soulcraft," <i>Sacramento Bee</i> , Jan. 31, 2005
Sept. 2, 2005	Editorial	Marianne Means	Lions, Cheetahs and Bears, Oh My!	<i>Seattle Post-Intelligencer</i>	Call of the Wild? <i>Chattanooga Times Free Press</i> , Sept. 4, 2005 The Loony Call of the Wild, <i>St. Paul Pioneer Press</i> , Sept. 12, 2005
Dec. 13, 2005	Editorial	Nicholas Kristof	Where Deer and Lions Play	<i>New York Times</i>	[Same title], <i>Pittsburgh Post-Gazette</i> , Dec. 15, 2005 [Same title], <i>Chattanooga Times Free Press</i> , Dec. 27, 2005
April 29, 2007	Editorial	George Will	When the Skies Filled with Dust	<i>Washington Post</i>	Of Wheat Bubbles and Dust Bowls, <i>Pittsburgh Tribune Review</i> , April 29, 2007 Recalling America's Dust Bowl Survival, <i>Mobile (AL) Register</i> , April 29, 2007 1930s Dust Bowl Offers a Warning for Today, <i>Deseret Morning News</i> , April 29, 2007 Lessons Left in Dust of 1930s Policies, <i>Chicago Sun Times</i> , April 29, 2007 The Impact of the Dust Bowl, <i>Augusta Chronicle</i> , April 29, 2007 Environmental Warnings Recall '30s Calamity, <i>Albany Times Union</i> , April 30, 2007
Nov. 28, 2007	News	Nate Jenkins		AP Wire	Ted Turner Draws Ranchers' Ire, <i>Mobile Register</i> , Nov. 29, 2007 Ted Turner's Land Purchases Raise Rancher's Suspicions, <i>Boston Globe</i> , Dec. 2, 2007 Turner Land Grab Worries Neighbors, <i>Newark Star-Ledger</i> , Dec. 2, 2007

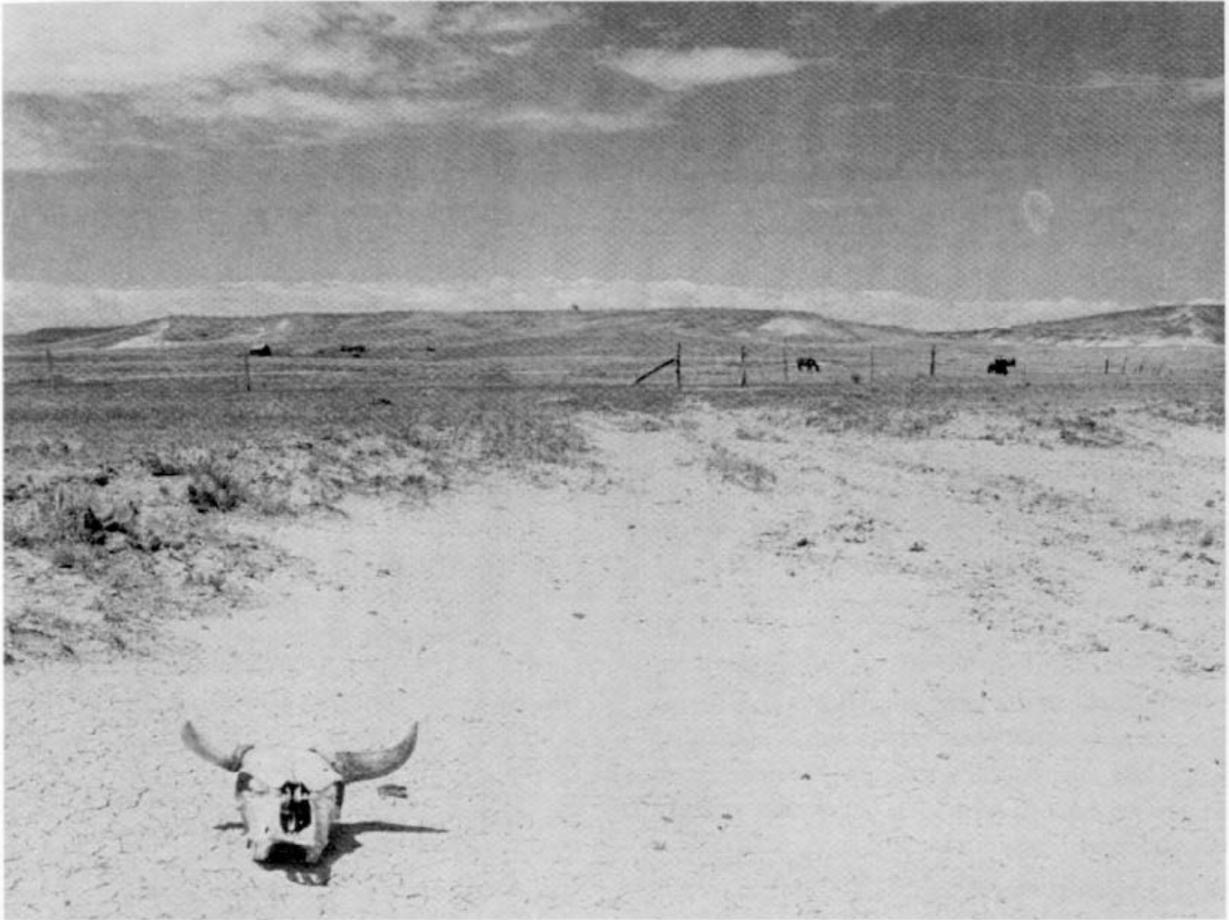


FIG. 2. Arthur Rothstein, "A homestead on submarginal and overgrazed land," Pennington County, South Dakota, 1936. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, FSA-OWI Collection, [LC-USF34-004378-D DLC (b&w film nitrate neg.)]. Taken as part of the Resettlement Administration's efforts, Rothstein's image of the steer skull in the Badlands is both a striking composition and a damning indictment of land misuse and mismanagement. Soon after its release in 1936, it came to light that Rothstein had moved the skull around and taken multiple frames to achieve images with the greatest impact. Rothstein and the Resettlement Administration came under great criticism as a result. (See note 86, Curtis, *Mind's Eye, Mind's Truth*, 71-76.)



FIG. 3. Eugene Richards, "Epping, North Dakota," September 2006. This was the lead photograph for the *National Geographic* article "The Emptied Prairie" in January 2008. The dramatic, lonely landscape is anchored in the foreground by a deer skeleton, the silvery rib bones echoed in the silvery boards of the abandoned home in the background. Photo courtesy of Eugene Richards.