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From the Middle of Nowhere: Place-Making on My Supermodern American Road

Maxwell Allen Werner
College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences

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From the Middle of Nowhere: Place-making on My Supermodern American Road

Maxwell Allen Werner

Sterling, Virginia

Bachelor of Arts, The College of William & Mary, 2010

A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the College of William and Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Department of Anthropology

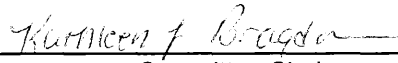The College of William and Mary
May 2013

APPROVAL PAGE

This Thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
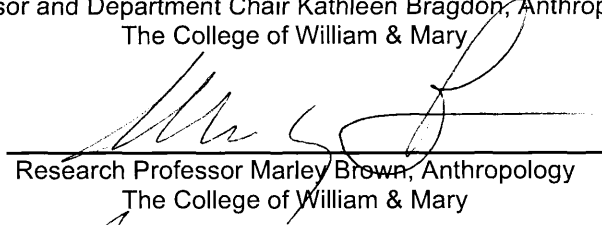the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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Maxwell Allen Werner

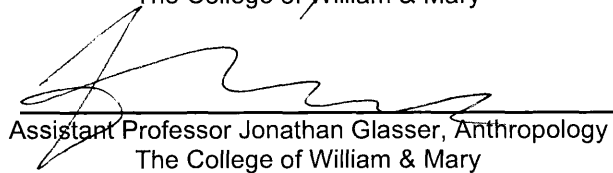Approved by the Committee, March 2013

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ABSTRACT

In this project, I autoethnographically investigative place-making in travelers spaces, the spaces through which individuals travel while traveling between places. I am particularly interested in examining the spatial experiences of drivers of the American road. Essays, vignettes, photographs, and quotations are montaged in order to pursue this inquiry. Because of the form that my research has assumed, discussions of the ethnographic rigor of travel writing, the self as other, and ethnographic aesthetics are included in the project.

My work dialogues with Marc Augé's work on supermodernity, which Augé outlines in *Non-Places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* (1995). Augé assumes that space is primal to place. He then contends that a categorical spatial binary in which individuals categorize spaces as either anthropological places – spaces that are inscribed with symbolic meanings via the language used by the place-making community or individuals in question – or non-places – symbolically insignificant spaces in the contemporary world that are indicators and producers of supermodernity. Augé suggests that non-supermodern structures and spaces have the same forms as supermodern structures and spaces (e.g. train stations, conservation areas). However, supermodern structures and spaces (i.e. non-places) dictate or inform the human relations had in them and determine spatial understandings for their users, whereas non-supermodern structures (i.e. anthropological places) allow for a variety of human relations and a variety of spatial understandings. Augé concludes that travelers' space is the archetypal non-place of the supermodern world.

This project attempts to nuance Augé's thesis rather than reject it. Primarily referring to three transAmerican drives in which I participated from May 2010 – August 2011, I suggest that the individuals with whom I traveled and I transformed the cars that we drove from non-places to anthropological places. I conclude that travelers can place-make in supermodern situations and that a diversity of spatial (and placial) experiences are had in non-places. Furthermore, I argue that the ways in which particular individuals understand or categorize particular places changes over time.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From his hospital bed, my once mustachioed, double scotch-drinking grandfather said to me, "Read. Marcus Aurelius. Epicurus. Epictetus. Kant." My grandfather was dying from cancer.

"Okay. I will Grandpa. I love you," I said, while recording my grandfather's words on the back of my hand.

"And, Max," my grandfather said, "you're going to have some ideas someday. And when you do, make sure that you follow them through. You'll probably find that they're good ones."

I nodded and left the room.

The next afternoon, my grandfather donned his death mask and began the big sleep.

I have often recalled this exchange with my grandfather since his death. He was a thoughtful man and a fortuitous motivator. My grandfather's death re-inspired a curiosity that I had had as a child and lost until my final two years at William & Mary.

I am not sure that this project expresses any good ideas, but it does express the first ones that I followed. I am terrified, yet hopeful, that I followed them the right ways.

for Carl Werner

RIP

The statement "To travel is better than to arrive" comes back to mind again and stays. We have been traveling and now we will arrive (Pirsig 2005[1974]:153).

PREFACE

I have driven across America three times. The first time, in May 2010, Sean, Morgan, Andy, and I drove from Williamsburg, Virginia to Truckee, California in The Vehicle. That trip was motivated by Sean's move to Reno, Nevada. The second time, in May 2011, David and I drove from Williamsburg to San Francisco, California in Our Home. That trip was motivated by my move to San Francisco. The third time, in August 2011, my dad and I drove from Pasadena, California to Sterling in The Big Rig. That trip was motivated by my move to Sterling, my first home.[1b, 1d]

The material collections from those three trips amount to notebooks that record experiences and sightings, gas

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[1b] I moved to San Francisco to work at the Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD). I had discovered MoAD while conducting research for my former MA thesis, which was supposed to look at the African(-American) diaspora in Liberia and the ways in which that diaspora has produced, and produces, contested Liberian histories, particularly those associated with the monuments at Ducor Hill. I abandoned that project after feeling ill equipped to complete it and after becoming pre-occupied with writing about the experiences that I had had while driving across America.

During that period of writing and reflection, I began thinking about the differences between the places to which I had driven and the spaces between those places. I expressed that basic difference as one between place and not-place. I searched online for the term "not-place," curious about its ubiquity. At that point, I learned of Marc Augé and his theory of supermodernity.

I read Augé's *Non-Places: Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* (1995) after returning to Sterling. Then, I began developing a personal theory of place in a supermodern world that was in dialogue with Augé's work. This project, in part, is the manifestation of that personal theorizing.

[1d] As noted by Bruno Bosteels in "Non-Places: An Anecdoted Topography of Contemporary French Theory" (2003), the term "non-place" has been important to French social science since at least the mid-twentieth century. Augé's use of the term differs from the usage of it by earlier thinkers, including Michel Foucault and Michel de Certeau, among others. I address the notion of "non-place" as Augé describes it, which might be problematic to those interested in terminological genealogy.

mileage, and route ideas, personal collections of road memorabilia, emails, blog posts, digital photograph albums, and too many crumpled road maps that remain archived in my car. Such material collections from the first two trips were produced without this thesis in mind. That is to say that they were produced so that I might remember the Americas that I had experienced rather than produced so that I might write an MA thesis. During my third trip, I attempted to record my real-time experiences of America and my recollections of revisited parts of the country. I also attempted to seriously record my dad's communicated experiences of the drive – his reactions to the land, his stories, and his hopes for our trip. And, lastly, I attempted to record *his* recording of our cross-country drive by noting the things that he photographed, collected, and wrote while we were on the road. By that time, this project was in its nascence and my recordings of our travels were doubtlessly affected by the nebulous vision that I had for it.

This project was organically born – accidentally, even – from my first two transAmerican drives and somewhat mindfully focused by my third one. During each trip, I, like Robert Pirsig and Jack Kerouac and William Least Heat Moon and many other cross country travelers, found that the

roads in-between America's places were at least as important as the places to which I traveled. That seemed like a special thing each time that I realized it. Reflecting on that phenomenon has motivated my work.

Attempting to present this project as a working document that underwent cuts and growths was perhaps the greatest challenge that I faced while writing. I wanted my writing and thinking processes, and their respective biographies, to be visible to readers who would only see this project in its completed form. I used lettered + numbered footnotes to impose the sort of processual quality that I wanted this project to have. That quality is intended to mimic the processual qualities of the project's ethnographic subjects – traveling, place-making, and the self – which tends to be cumulative as one drives and acquires experiences and the recordings of those experiences. The footnoting method used in this project seemed to be the most effective way to preserve the parts of the original texts that were worth preserving, while still building the project, and showing its development. Substantial cuts and important revisions are noted in appropriate instances.

Most of my important second draft edits expanded or clarified first draft thoughts (excluding the

"Introduction" and "Conclusion" sections, which were once brief and ambiguous, and were pointedly rewritten for the second draft). A third draft section entitled "28c," which reflected on unread works that might have been read for this project, was eliminated during the fourth draft because the fourth draft made 28c obsolete. The works included in that section have since been incorporated into the project in more substantial ways. Other sections of the text, such as earlier versions of this paragraph and the previous one, were once footnotes and were moved into the text during later drafts.

Dr. Jonathan Glasser, one of my advisors, suggested that I "multiply the voices" for the fourth draft in order to strengthen the arguments that I had made in previous drafts. With that suggestion in mind, I used the fourth draft to identify new voices, which, generally, I let speak for themselves. Fourth draft footnotes, marked with ^ds, therefore include the exact quotations of the authors that were added for the fourth draft, rather than mere citational, in-text acknowledgements of the works of those authors. Readers might skip the quotations of fourth draft footnotes and just read the citations (included at the end of the footnotes) if they feel so inclined. Supplying full

quotations as I have done is rare in other ethnographic works, but important to this one's integrity.

The footnoting that I employ in this project tends to mention, or suggest, issues that are at least tangentially related to this project. Those issues might have been more thoroughly investigated in the following pages, but investigations more thorough than the ones included seemed outside of the scope of this work (and they are better investigated by the works being mentioned).

John L. Jackson, Jr.'s 2005 ethnography, *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity*, was particularly influential on my footnoting while this project was in its formative stages. During that time, I was considering the ways in which I might expand this project to make it more relevant to Anthropology, yet, avoid compromising the transparency of its making. Jackson's extensive footnotes, which implicate innumerable works and issues, motivated me to try to do a much lesser, albeit similar, thing.

Ultimately, this project is about processes traveling, place-making, writing, reading. It is an ethnographic exercise in exposing processes of change rather than forgetting them with each stop, with each edit.

M. A. W.
Flagstaff, Arizona
August 2011 - March 2013
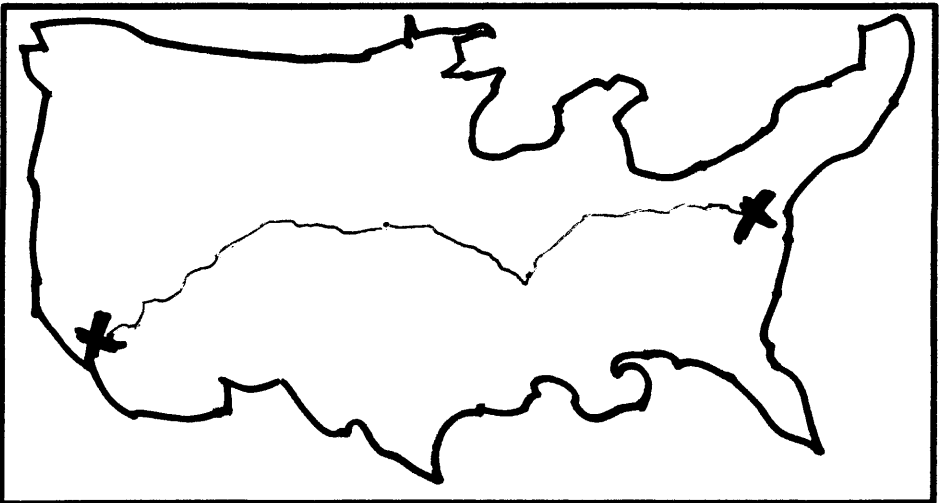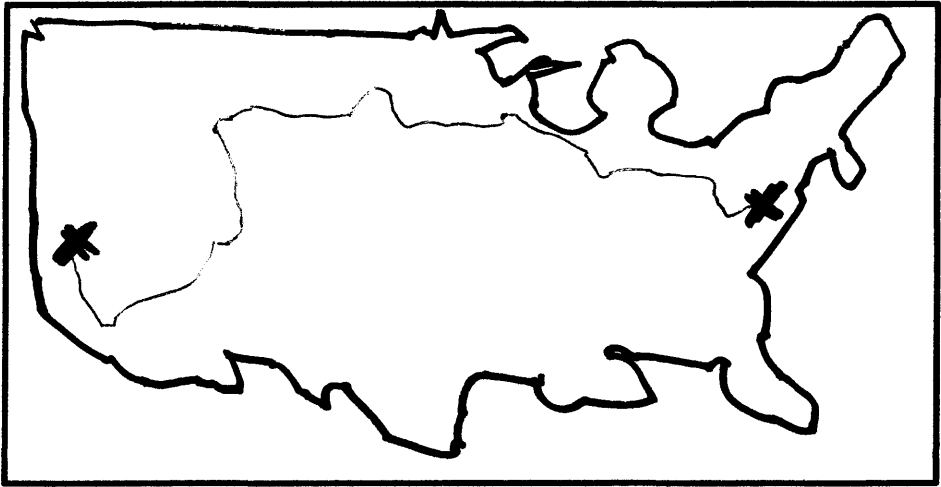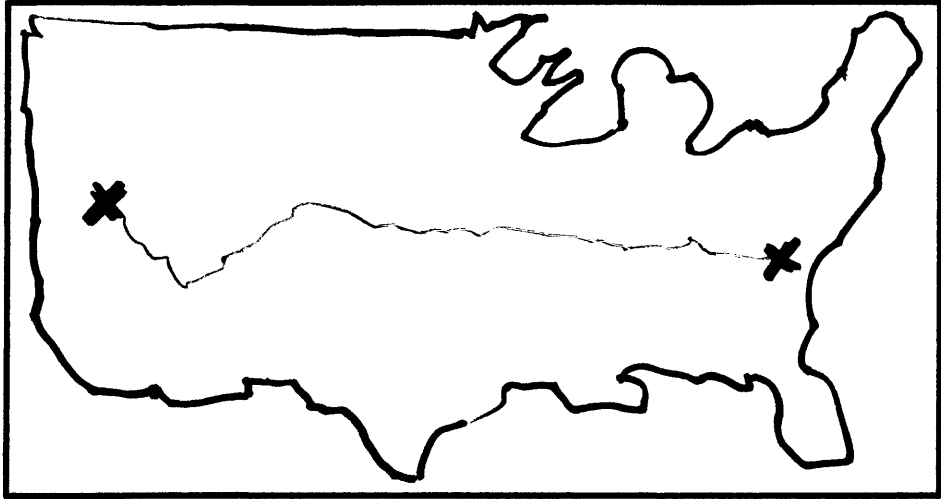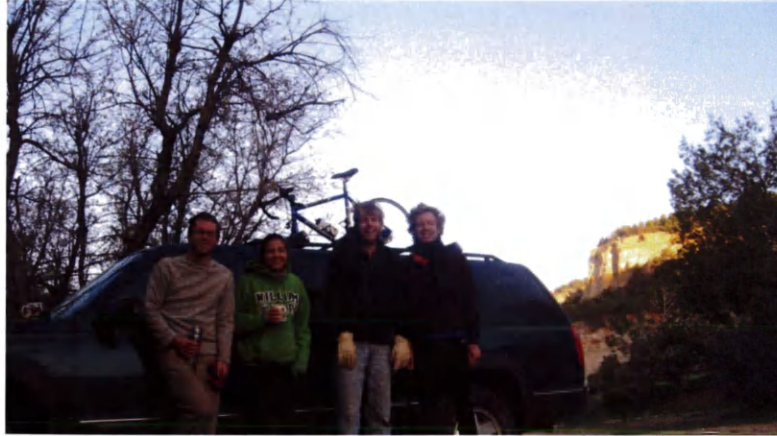
Sean, Morgan, Andy, Me, and The Vehicle

Me, Dave, and Our Home

Me, my dad, and The Big Rig

…the Lord put roads for
travelling: why He laid them
down flat on the earth. When
He aims for something to be
always a-moving, He makes it
long ways, like a road or a
horse or a wagon, but when he
aims for something to stay
put, He makes it up-and-down
ways, like a tree or a man
(Faulkner 1985[1930]:35-36).
--Anse Bundren

INTRODUCTION

Driving across America requires one to see a tremendous amount of the long ways of America in order to reach the up-and-down ways of America that seemingly dot the country. That is to say that a tremendous amount of American road must be traveled in order to see the places connected by those roads.

A cross-country driving trip is planned with particular places of interest in mind. For me, those places have tended to be National Parks and previously unseen cities. Each place has promised memory-making opportunities. Some places have been memorable because my experiences of them exceeded expectations. My third trip to Bryce Canyon National Park, which was had with my dad, made Bryce Canyon one of those places. Arriving near midnight in early August, my Dad and I parked in the empty Bryce Point parking lot and walked to the Canyon's rim. We expected to see a dark emptiness. Fortunately, moonlight – perhaps most fantastic at the beginning of months – transforms places in fascinating ways. Instead of darkness, we saw long, haunting shadows that were cast into the Canyon by the knobby spires that erupt from the Canyon's floor and reach for its rim. Bryce Canyon, for me, is memorable because of my chance sighting of it during

a mid-August full moon. That experience of Bryce Canyon exceeded my expectations for the Park.

Other places have been memorable because they were especially unmemorable. Louisville, a city in which Sean, Morgan, Andy and I ate Kentucky Fried Chicken in a downtown cafeteria and purchased an MP3 car adapter for The Vehicle to save ourselves from static talk radio shows, is that type of place for me. My time there made Least Heat Moon's idea that "Maybe America should make the national bird a Kentucky Fried Leghorn" seem correct (Least Heat Moon 1982:16). For better or worse, Americans' knowledge of particular fast food chains is capable of changing the unfamiliar into the familiar and the unmemorable into the memorable. I learned that in Louisville.

Cross-country trips also include unplanned stops at once-unknown places. Those stops might be made due to exhaustion or boredom or because they come highly recommended by billboards and rest stop folks. In each case, unplanned stops tend to be in small town that, to passers-by, are "placeless places that sprout up along the junctions of interstate highways" (Bryson 1989:154).

This sort of "placeless place" most memorably revealed itself to me in Kadoka, South Dakota. Kadoka is in the southwestern part of the state and was founded in 1906. It

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is the self-proclaimed "Gateway to The Badlands," one of the nearest towns to Badlands National Park. There, David and I bought our first motel room of the trip. We were tired from driving and uninterested in camping in a Midwestern rainstorm that had forced many small cars to the shoulders of I-80.

David and I went to Main Street, Kadoka on the morning after we arrived. It was Sunday and the road was memorably

Main Street, Kadoka, South Dakota

deserted. On Main Street, we photographed the empty town and read sun-bleached local newspaper clippings that were posted in shop windows. Kadoka became our standard for measuring the smallness of every small town after it.

Despite the personal values of the experiences had in the aforementioned places, I am interested in examining experiences had while *driving* across America.[2d]   Those

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[2d] "Equally eventful…are the journeys we take between the dwellings in which we reside, for we also dwell in the intermediate places, the interplaces, of travel – places which, even when briefly visited or merely traversed, are never uneventful, never not full of spatiotemporal

experiences, according to Marc Augé, occur in travelers spaces, the archetypal non-places of the supermodern world (Augé 1995:86). By examining the travelers spaces in question, I intend to nuance Marc Augé's theory of supermodernity, which posits

> that supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places and which, unlike Baudelairean modernity, do not integrate the earlier places: instead these are listed, classified, promoted to the status of 'places of memory', and assigned to a circumscribed and specific position (Augé 1995:78).

Augé's contention assumes that space is primal to place. It also assumes a placial binary in which individuals categorize spaces as either anthropological places — spaces that are inscribed with symbolic meanings via the language used by the place-making community or individuals in question — or non-places — symbolically insignificant spaces in the contemporary world that are indicators and producers of supermodernity. Augé suggests that non-supermodern structures and spaces have the same forms as supermodern structures and spaces (e.g. train stations, conservation areas). However, supermodern structures and spaces (non-places) dictate or inform the

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specificities that reflect particular modes and moods of emplacement" (Casey 1996:39).

"Places are complex constructions of social histories, personal and interpersonal experiences, and selective memory. Curiously, it is while anthropologists themselves are most of out of place that they attempt to gain an understanding of the place and placement of others" (Kahn 1996:167).

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human relations had in them and determine spatial understandings for their users, whereas non-supermodern structures (anthropological places) allow for a variety of human relations and a variety of spatial understandings.

In the following sections, I will explicate Augé's theory of supermodernity as Augé defines it in *Non-Places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* (1995). I will then attempt to complicate Augé's theory of supermodernity by arguing that individuals are capable of personally making symbolized places from seemingly insignificant or impersonal physical spaces (e.g. the spaces experienced while driving across America), despite the ways in which contemporary infrastructure may attempt to define such spaces for populations (as Augé argues that it does).[3d] I will not argue against the ubiquity of supermodern situations.[4d] Rather, I will attempt to recast the supermodern world as *a* contemporary world in which supermodern situations exist rather than as *the* world in which supermodernity is an omnipotent force that controls

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[3d] "…sense of place is not possessed by everyone in similar manner or like configuration, and that pervasive fact is part of what makes it interesting. Like all the other 'senses' we have invented for mankind (the aesthetic sense, the erotic sense, common sense, etc.), sense of place is inseparable from the ideas that inform it, and just for that reason, as Lawrence Durrell remarked in a letter to a friend, it is 'everywhere parochial and everywhere specific'" (Basso 1996:84; Basso 1996:84, quoting Durrell 1969:283).

[4d] "Revision in history…is better characterized as spatial rupture than as the successive, chronological modification of historiological positions" (Hughes-Warrington 2007:62).

the spatial experiences of individuals in, and through its construction of, Augéian non-places.[5b] I will argue against the monolithic model of supermodernity that Augé suggests frames the contemporary world for individuals as they experience particular types of contemporary spaces.

My response to Augé's general theory of supermodernity relies on examining my experiences of, and recordings made while, driving across the United States. Specifically, I will attempt to show that I transformed the cars in which I drove across America (Augéian non-placical tools used to traverse Augéian non-places) into anthropological places according to Augé's definition of "anthropological place." If successful in doing so, my project should show that supermodernity is not a universal informer for individuals' experiences of spaces in the contemporary world because individuals place-make – either passively or deliberately – in supposedly universal supermodern situations. (Augé argues that such situations [or, to refer to Augéian vocabulary, such a "world"] ought to undermine such individual place-making potential as individuals navigate a shared world defined by non-places.) These topics will be discussed in the sections entitled "Augéian Geometry &

[5b] See footnote 35b on page 56 for an expanded discussion of this notion.

Mapping Social Space, "Places & Non-Places, and "Place-making on my Supermodern American Road."

This project's form is "experimental" and autoethnographic. Augéian theory, critiques of it, vignettes about/from my travels, photos of non-places that are associated with specific vignettes, and quotes from the works of traveling authors are montaged in an effort to express (and support) my arguments. Hopefully, this project's form appropriately, and interestingly, helps the project achieve the aforementioned theoretical goals.

I will explicitly discuss the issue of ethnographic shape (i.e. ethnographic form and style) and its relationship with argumentation in the "Anthropologists & Travel Writers" section and in the "Form & Style" section.[6b] The self as an ethnographic other, an other that I term the "Heraclitean Other," which invokes Heraclitus's well-known Fragment 12, "As they step into the same rivers, different and (still) different waters flow upon them," will also be discussed in the "Form & Style" section (Heraclitus 1987[5th c. BC]:17). This work's autoethnographic style relies on considering the self as such an other, an other

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[6b] My treatments of ethnographic shape and ethnographic voice/perspective (i.e. autoethnography) are intended to support the defenses of those two matters that I outline in the "Form & Style" section. In the first draft of this project, I had hoped that the project's form and style might effectively defend itself, but such was not the case. Therefore, explicit defenses of my employments of these devices were added in the "Form & Style" section for the second draft.

that has similar transformative qualities as the spaces that I discuss and the project that I have written. Despite being often criticized for being dubiously ethnographic, autoethnographic writing has gained traction in anthropology during the last twenty years. Several sessions from the 2012 American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting in San Francisco that imagined the future of anthropology referred to the work of Ruth Behar, Paul Stoller, Michael Taussig, and Barbara Tedlock to project autoethnography's potentially valuable contributions to the discipline during the coming decade.

I sequenced the aforementioned sections of my project in an effort to anticipate, and answer, challenges that might be launched by Augé and others against my work. (The "Rememberings" section serves a similar purpose.) The challenges that I have in mind primarily pertain to anthropological propriety. Though the spatial issues explored in the following pages founded this project, issues of travel (and travel-writing style), reflexivity and the self, and ethnographic shape are implicated because of the ways in which I have investigated and presented my investigations of this project's primary interest – space. Of course, I selected the theoretical and ethnographic approaches in question. However, it should be emphasized

that those approaches were deliberately chosen because of their apparent complementarity. My theoretical inquiry informed my choice of ethnographic design because they seemed mutually supportive, co-translative. They usefully related the ethnographic field to the field of anthropology, then ethnographically merged those fields (Gupta and Ferguson 1997).[7d]

This project will close with a Postface written for the project's first draft, then, with a Coda written for the second draft. These sections are intended to anecdotally reinforce my argument for the individual's place-making power in supermodern situations.

On the following pages, I will share rememberings from my Americas in order to examine Marc Augé's theory of supermodernity, discuss the relationship between travel writing and anthropology, and advocate for an anthropology of the self as a changing other.

[7d] "'The field' of anthropology and 'the field' of 'fieldwork' are…politically and epistemologically intertwined; to think critically about one requires a readiness to question the other" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:3).

At 11:15pm on the first night of our trip, I was riding shotgun in Illinois. My driving shift had just ended after several hours and Andy was at the wheel. Sean and Morgan were sleeping in the back of The Vehicle. I emailed Grace from my phone. I told her that now that it's late (and we're in the middle of nowhere), there are few cars on the road. fireflies are sparkling in the darkness. i have never seen so many in my life. they're quite neat. many have splattered on the windshield, leaving a moments worth of lightning juice and then a trips worth of guts on the windshield. Then I turned on *This American Life*, and Andy I listened to it while we watched fireflies pop on the windshield.

David and I left Sterling near 10:00am, determined to drive until we arrived in Chicago. David entered "Chicago, IL" into the GPS as we left my driveway. The GPS directed us to Chicago via the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

"The Pennsylvania Turnpike is the most miserable road in America," David said as he attempted to re-route our trip. Unfortunately, our new route still led us to Chicago via state turnpikes.

Several hours later in central Ohio, frustrated by our misfortune, we left the Turnpike for a toll-free detour. Soon, we stopped at an empty intersection near Bucyrus, Ohio. There was an ice cream shop on one corner, a BBQ restaurant on another corner, and a weathered gas station on a third. The fourth corner was overrun by crabgrass. A few people sat at picnic tables outside the ice cream shop, watching us as we passed.

"This is America," David said. He sounded refreshed.

I agreed and left the intersection, turning right toward the Ohio Turnpike. Turnpikes would be faster than our detour. As we returned to the highway, we sang "I Hear Them All" in decidedly Midwestern voices and discussed the pronunciation of "Bucyrus." The sun set to our left.

We learned that my air conditioner was broken as we left Pasadena on the 210. It was hot in the packed car. We felt hotter after turning north onto I-15 toward the desert. Later, an alien-looking lakebed near the road made me feel worse. I worried that we would overheat. Help seemed distant.

"What should we do?" I asked my dad. "It's so hot."

"Just keep ballin' the jack," he said.

"What?"

"Just drive. Just keep ballin' the jack. We make time. You read 'On the Road.' You know what I'm talking about."

"Okay. I'll ball the jack." And I balled the jack.

Anthropological place…is geometric. It can be mapped in terms of three simple spatial forms, which apply to different institutional arrangements and in a sense are the elementary forms of social space. In geometric terms these are the line, the intersection of lines, and the point of intersection (Augé 1995:56-57).

AUGÉIAN GEOMETRY & MAPPING SOCIAL SPACE

Augéian geometry provides a useful vocabulary for the conceptual mapping of social spaces. Augéian maps will include spaces that are places and spaces that are non-places.[8b] Marc Augé, the namesake of Augéian geometry, identifies the supermodern world (a world of non-places) as a world that is characterized by "[an] overabundance of events, spatial overabundance, [and] the individualization of references" (Augé 1995:40). Though these features of supermodernity are interconnected and of equal importance to a comprehensive understanding of Augé's notion of supermodernity, understanding Augéian spatial vocabulary and its application to an examination of the spatial overabundance of supermodernity will be most important to this project. That vocabulary will be especially useful for understanding and comparing spaces that one encounters while driving on the American road. In this section, I will discuss the vocabulary of Augéian geometry and consider its application to a general understanding of place and the American road.

Anthropological space can be geometrically mapped in terms of the line, the intersection of lines, and the point of intersection (Augé 1995:56-57). "Lines" spatially

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[8b] Augéian maps of contemporary social spaces are increasingly, and markedly, populated by non-places.

translate to "routes, axes or paths that lead from one place to another and have been traced by people" (Augé 1995:57). "The intersection of lines" spatially translates to "crossroads and open spaces where people pass, meet and gather" (Augé 1995:57). "Points of intersection" spatially translate to "centres of more or less monumental type…constructed by certain men and therefore defining a space and frontiers beyond which other men are defined as others" (Augé 1995:57). By applying this Augéian geometric vocabulary to the United States, one might arrange and compare the different types of social interactions that generate, and are generated by, particular geometries.

Augéian geometric forms can be independently identified (especially in the West, as noted by William Least Heat Moon in *Blue Highways* [1982]). The following Augéian geometric mapping of Moab, Utah is intended to show a simple application of Augéian geometric vocabulary.

Moab's line geometry is represented by US-191, which leads cross-country drivers south of I-70 past Arches National Park and into downtown Moab. There, US-191 becomes Main Street

The Lazy Lizard Hostel, a strange property on Main Street that provides campgrounds and beds to travelers, represents Moab's intersection of lines (i.e. "crossroads")

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geometry. The Lazy Lizard, unlike Main Street's chain hotels (products and indicators of supermodernity) that one must pass in order to arrive at the Lazy Lizard, might be considered an Augéian intersection because it requires boarders to sacrifice their anonymities upon arrival and socialize. The hostel does so by forcing new boarders to walk through groups of earlier-arrived boarders who congregate by the hostel's entrance, drinking cheap beer and playing music and chain-smoking cigarettes. Such fraternity is impossible to dismiss.

I experienced this crossroads effect most strikingly during my first stay at the Lazy Lizard (which was had during my drive with David). On that occasion, I met Dennis, a New Yorker who has driven across America more than 40 times since 1990 to "get" landscape photographs. Dennis has an encyclopedic memory of American roads, an endless supply of destination recommendations, and keen insights as I have learned from emails that we have exchanged since meeting at the Lazy Lizard. I have been most glad that the note that he sent to me before I drove to Sterling with my dad was right – "It is a rare opportunity and honor to be a man as you are and to be able

to travel like this with your father" (email to author, 14 August 2011).[9b]

Arches National Park exemplifies Moab's point of intersection geometry. Known for the geologic arches that can be found in the Park, Arches is the attraction for which most people travel to Moab. Delicate Arch is the most famous of the Park's arches, accessible via stony trails marked by cairns. Delicate Arch, along with a secret place in Yellowstone National Park and the Canyon de Chelly Monument in northeastern Arizona ("an Anasazi place with big medicine"), is a place that Dennis calls one of the most special places in America. Each of these places might be considered Augéian points of intersection, as each has, at least to Dennis, the gravity of a monumental center.

Delicate Arch, Arches National Park, Moab, Utah (Photos by Russ Werner)

[9b] For Augé, the Lazy Lizard's facilitation of long-term friendships distinguishes it as an Augéian intersection that is a *place* rather than an Augéian intersection that is a *non-place* (e.g. a chain hotel). Augéian geometry intends to account for all spaces, but the interactions had in different examples of particular Augéian geometries is intended to differentiate between such spaces as either places or non-places. I will contend that place-making of chain hotels is possible and that non-placing of the Lazy Lizard is equally possible as individuals independently design their respective Augéian cartographies.

As previously stated, the three basic forms defined by Augéian geometry can be independently identified in social space. Still, they might also be infinitely layered and combined.

The layering of Augéian geometries is evident as the size of the mapped space in question is changed. As discussed in the previous paragraphs, each Augéian geometric form can be identified through an Augéian geometric mapping of Moab. Then, once Arches National Park is identified as an Augéian point of intersection in Moab (a city that might likewise be considered an Augéian point of intersection), an Augéian geometry of Arches National Park might identify the Park's trails as Augéian lines, water stops along the trails as Augéian intersections of lines, and destination points (e.g. Delicate Arch) as Augéian points of intersection. By changing the scope of an Augéian map, the layering of Augéian geometries becomes evident.

A second apparent result of the application of Augéian mapping is that it seems that Augéian geometric forms are subjectively identified. Dennis's most special points of intersection might be dismissed by some travelers as

placeless space to be passed on the highway.[10d] That phenomenon is a mark (or, perhaps, THE mark) of supermodernity.[11b] To me, Emblem, Wyoming (POPULATION 10), an ephemeral up-and-down on highway 14 most memorable for its reported population, is forgettable space next to an Augéian line (i.e. US-14). Emblem's welcome sign is my only memory of the town. I suspect that Emblem's residents can imagine a complex Augéian map that is unimaginable to those who drive through the town, frustrated by the temporarily reduced speed limit. Still, it seems that the number of Augéian maps of Emblem is innumerable given the diversity of experiences of Emblem among passers-by and Emblem's residents. Augéian maps of particular physical spaces therefore seem to necessarily vary.[12d]

Interestingly, Augé seems to agree with the aforementioned notion of the potential for the "layering" (as I have called it) of Augéian maps. However, he seems

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[10d] "Because place is many things and speaks in many voices – individual biography, shared history, meaningful memory, and moral lesson, as well as euphemism – it is constantly shifting, emerging or receding, being accentuated or veiled" (Kahn 1996:168).

[11b] Understanding the influence of signs on an individual's experience of space is important to understanding supermodernity as it is described by Augé. Signs indicate the presence of places that might be visited by travelers, providing those travelers with a sort of false knowledge of a particular place being identified by a particular sign. Bypassing the particular "place," or perhaps visiting it, but being informed about the place by more signage, marks the location in question as an Augéian non-place for the transient traveler whose false knowledge (or false experience) is considered inadequate for the place-making of the space in question.

[12d] "Peoples differ in how they mark off continuous spaces into bounded places" (Frake 1996:235).

to disagree with the notion that there might be an infinity of Augéian maps (or an infinity of spatial evaluations) that could vary based on the experiences of different individuals. That is to say that Augé seems to contend that supermodernity universally informs individuals about particular space, establishing some particular spaces as "non-places" and leaving other spaces as "places." Thus, in some sense, the supermodern world produces the same *sorts* of spaces that were produced in a pre-supermodern world, but the spaces emerge as non-places rather than as places (as chain hotels rather than Lazy Lizards, as standardized suburban town centers rather than Delicate Arches). And though this project is interested in understanding non-places, it will not investigate rememberings from the sorts of spaces that might be geometrically represented by Augéian intersections of lines or Augéian points of intersection. It will only consider transient rememberings from the American road, an Augéian line. Rememberings from those spaces, and the spatial categorization (i.e. placing/non-placing) of Augéian lines, seem to be the most difficultly analyzed with a theory of supermodernity in mind.

In this project, I will adopt Augéian vocabularies of supermodernity, then attempt to show that individuals *do*

experience supermodern situations (via certain spatial experiences of the contemporary world). However, I will argue that individuals variably understand their experiences of shared Augéian supermodern spaces. I will also argue that particular individuals understand and categorize particular spaces differently over time.[13b, 13d]

Furthermore, I will attempt to show that the relationship between the individual and his experience of space is dialectical insofar as he can identify a particular space as a "place" or "non-place" (or otherwise?) based on his experience of that space, but also based on his understanding of the ways in which that space

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[13b] Consider the following scenario: L, a woman raised in Washington D.C., knew that her mother, K, took the Red Line of the Washington D.C. Metro from the family's home in northwest DC to Union Station each morning for work. At Union Station, K disembarked her train and walked to her job at the Library of Congress. As an adult, L commuted to work via the Washington D.C. Metro. She, too, disembarked her morning train at Union Station, then walked to work. After commuting in this fashion for several years, L became pregnant. She continued commuting to work via Union Station. One morning, L's water broke as she was commuting to work (earlier than her doctor had predicted), and L was forced to have her baby delivered in Union Station.

To L, Union Station would seem to be a non-place – solely a place of transit – prior to her child's birth. Afterward, it seems unlikely that L would still identify Union Station as a non-place. However, hurried commuters who commuted via Union Station on the morning of the birth of L's child would seem to have had their spatial attitudes toward Union Station unchanged by the birth of L's child.

[13d] The place-making ability that I am advocating resembles that for which Henri Lefebvre advocates in *The Production of Space* 1992[1991]. However, Lefebvre is generally interested in the dialectic between space and politics or economics whereas I am interested in the dialectic between space and narrative.

is intended to architecturally/technologically and functionally operate in his life.[14d]

I have belabored this discussion of Augéian geometry because doing so is critical to the arguments that follow in this project.[15b] Spaces that can be mapped with Augéian geometries have the *potential* to be places insofar as they are spaces that are contacted, organized, or designed by humans and are therefore anthropological in a basic sense. Those same spaces also have the *potential* to be non-places. The Augéian geometric forms seem to be the basic forms of social spaces regardless of the time period to which the forms are being applied. Understanding the ways in which human spatial experiences of those forms change over time (and therefore relate to the happening of supermodernity) can be usefully attempted after adopting a standard spatial vocabulary.

By mapping social space in terms of Augéian geometry, it seems that we might clarify the ways in which we

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[14d] "…perception remains as constitutive as it is constituted. This is especially evident when we perceive places: our immersion in them is not subjection to them, since we may modify their influence as we submit to it. This influence is meaningful as it is sensuous. Not only is the sensuous senseful, it is also placeful" (Casey 1996:19).

[15b] That is the case because successfully complicating Augé's theory of supermodernity philosophically requires the acceptance of Augé's spatial vocabularies and theoretical premises and then showing the possibility of reaching different conclusions than those reached by Augé. I suppose that his premises may instead be rejected (prior to reaching new spatial theories), but it seems that anthropological theory progresses more interestingly by generating a theoretical dialogue than by dismissing entire theories and their vocabularies.

understand the spatial diversity that is encountered while driving in America. We might profitably discuss the relationships between long ways parts and up-and-down ways parts, between Space and matter. Most basically, we might usefully examine places and the ways in which they seem to differ from spaces that are not places.

Sean noticed a MANDATORY DRUG INSPECTION STOP AHEAD sign as we neared the Kansas/Colorado border on I-70. He pointed to the sign from the drivers seat.

"What should we do?" Andy asked from the back seat.

"What do you mean? Do about what?" Morgan asked.

"About the pot," Andy said.

After a car-wide deliberation, Sean decided that we needed to dump the pot before the drug inspection. We left the highway and drove north toward a distant silo.

"You should pitch it. It's yours," Sean said to Andy.

"I can't, man. You do it," Andy said. He anxiously rocked back-and-forth. Andy couldn't do it.

Sean took the bag and counted-down while he drove. I rolled down the passenger window. At "0," Sean side-armed the bag out my window without looking away from the road. He u-turned for the highway. Two cops idled in I-70's rainy median. There was no drug inspection stop.

"At least the Vehicle is clean," Sean said.

David and I arrived late in Chicago. We stopped at Giordano's for dinner and talked to our waiter, Aaron, about Chicago bars while our food cooked. Aaron directed us to The Map Room, which, supposedly, is a karaoke bar.

We never found The Map Room, and, at 1:00am, we decided to continue north on I-94. I was too tired to continue driving after only an hour, so I drove into a parking lot and parked the car to sleep. We tried to rest in the cramped front seats.

Unable to sleep, I started the car at sunrise. David awoke later. Neither of us spoke for a few hours. We were tired and sore and cold. David broke the silence as we entered Wisconsin.

"Our Home, mmhmm. That was a miserable night. I guess that this is Our Home now, mmhmm," David said.

My dad had helped my aunt move from Kansas to Virginia a few weeks before he flew to California in order to join me for my drive home. He made the trip from Kansas to Virginia in a thirty foot moving truck – a big rig – in two days. And, he reported, "[he] chose to ball that jack across 9 states entirely without the radio. Or CD. Or iPod. Just [him] and the committee in [his] head, doing a filibuster."

"I can't imagine doing that," I said. "I bet it wasn't this hot, though."

"It wasn't," my dad said. He took a long drink of his Red Bull. "But so what. Ball the jack in your Big Rig."

The true West differs from the East in one great, pervasive, influential, and awesome way: space. …Space west of the line is perceptible and often palpable, especially when it appears empty, and it's that apparent emptiness which makes matter look alone, exiled, and unconnected. …But, as the space diminishes man and his constructions in a material fashion, it also – paradoxically – makes them more noticeable. *Things show up out here* (Least Heat Moon 1982:132).

PLACES & (AUGÉIAN) NON-PLACES

Augéian geometry, as it was discussed in the previous section, will ground the discussion of spatiality that follows in this section. Basing a discussion of one's experience of space while traveling via car on Augéian geometric forms is useful because those basic forms are plainly visible on the road (particularly while referring to road maps, and, less romantically, GPS units). In this section, I will briefly outline Augé's notions of anthropological place and non-place as they are born from his geometry and described in *non-Places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* (1995). I will then discuss those notions and the ways in which they are significant to this project.

The spatial forms that are mapped by Augéian geometry can be grossly characterized as forms that humans impose on space. That is to say that Augéian spatial forms include the means by which people travel to places and the places to which people travel. Anthropological places, to Augé, are human impositions on space that are unable to exist prior to the physical identification of them by humans.[16a] Recalling the types of features/structures (e.g. roads,

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[16a] The Fountain of Youth is an interesting example of an imagined place that seems to possess the qualities of an anthropological place by those who sought it, yet would not be considered a place by Augé because it is an imagined space, as far as I know.

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markets, temples) that might be mapped according to Augéian geometry reiterates this point.

Anthropological places must possess symbolic meanings in addition to their spatial forms. Spaces cannot be termed "anthropological places" because they have simply been bounded. They must be spatially defined and symbolically significant. Augé describes anthropological place as "a principle of meaning for the people who live in it and also a principle of intelligibility for the person who observes it" (Augé 1995:52).[17d] I will assume this part of Augé's definition of anthropological place for the remainder of this project.

Anthropological places also depend on time. The spatial forms described by Augéian geometry must be dynamized. It must be inhabited and house social interactions over time rather than statically mapped. They can be characterized as having properties concerning social relations, identity, and history, each of which necessarily develops over time (Augé 1995:52; 58; 78). At this juncture, anthropological places might be identified as spaces that are physically and symbolically inscribed by

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[17d] "[place]…is a kind of imaginative experience, a species of involvement with the natural and social environment, a way of *appropriating* portions of the earth" (Basso 1996:83, from Momaday 1976).

"Sense of place is not just something people know and feel, it is something people *do*" (Basso 1996:83, quoting Camus 1955:88).

humans whose social lives develop, in part, according to the unique inscriptions of those places.[18d] Anthropological places are places that are "established and symbolized" (Augé 1995:81).

Lastly, Augé attaches the significance of language to the establishment and persistence of anthropological places. Citing Vincent Descombes's, "Proust, philosophie du roman" (1987), Augé refers to anthropological places as "rhetorical territories" and "rhetorical countries" (Augé 1995:77; 108).[19d] Augé argues that anthropological places can be aptly understood as such because "Place is completed through the word, through the allusive exchange of a few passwords between speakers who are conniving in private complicity" (Augé 1995:77). He concludes this discussion of language and place by arguing that "[anthropological] place…includes the possibility of the journeys made in it, the discourses uttered in it, and the language characterizing it" (Augé 1995:81). Language, to Augé and others is the means by which physical spaces are inscribed

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[18d] "…'it is activity that creates places, giving significance to impervious matter'" (Blu 1996:215, quoting Myers 1991:54).

"The places were not preexisting empty stages to be filled with activity, they took on meaning only when activity gave them form. They blossomed into places of significance through my actions and interactions with others" (Kahn 1996:188).

[19d] "The limits of a name serve, like a verbal fence, to enclose an individual place as a spatial self" (Frake 1996:235).

with the symbolic meanings that transform them into anthropological places.[20d]

Thus, anthropological places are spaces that are inscribed with symbolic meanings via the language used by the place-making community or individuals in question.

Augé contrasts anthropological places with non-places. He characterizes non-places in the following ways:[21a]

1. "[Spaces] that cannot be described as relational, historical, or concerned with identity" (Augé 1995:78).
2. Spaces that are created by one's traversing of places. "The traveler's space may thus be the archetype of non-place" (Augé 1995:86).
3. "Spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure) and the relations that individuals have with these spaces" (Augé 1995:94).
4. Spaces in which the "link between individuals and their surroundings…is established through the mediation of words, or even texts" (Augé 1995:94).
5. "Places that exist only through the words that evoke them…[that are] imaginary places: banal utopias, clichés" (Augé 1995:95).

[20d] "Places, like persons, have individual names. In fact, unlike persons, whose creation precedes naming, places come into being out of spaces by being names" (Frake 1996:235, from Basso 1988).

"Placenames, semantically empty as proper nouns, when used in what Certeau calls 'the practice of everyday life,' become 'names that have ceased precisely to be proper … A rich interdetermination gives them, by means of a semantic rarefaction, the function of articulating a second, poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, forbidden or permitted meaning. …They seem to be carried as emblems by the travelers they direct and simultaneously decorate'" (Frake 1996:241, quoting Certeau 1988:104-105).

"Ultimately, it is processes of experienced activity, including the activity of talk, rather than linguistic structure, physical type, or function, that invests places with memorable depths, laminating living to language" (Feld 1996:113).

[21a] It is important to note that every non-place, to Augé, is not necessarily characterized by all of these qualities. Non-places do not exhaustively possess these qualities nor do these qualities exhaustively describe non-places.

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6. Spaces in which the users are "in contractual relations with [the non-place] (or with the powers that govern it)" (Augé 1995:101).
7. "[Spaces] that create neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude and similitude" (Augé 1995:103).

These characteristics of non-places are meant to support Augé's central thesis, which, recalling page 16 of this project's Introduction, argues

> that supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places and which, unlike Baudelairean modernity, do not integrate the earlier places: instead these are listed, classified, promoted to the status of 'places of memory', and assigned to a circumscribed and specific position (Augé 1995:78).

Augé carefully notes that non-place ought not be characterized as "non-symbolized space." However, it seems that his thesis, if considering the previously enumerated characteristics of non-place, seems to express that non-place is just that – symbolically insignificant space in the contemporary world, albeit in a variety of forms.

With the aforementioned points in mind, "non-place," for the remainder of this project, will refer to spaces that I encountered while driving across America that were symbolically (that is, experientially) insignificant to me, yet nominally known.[22a]   "Augéian non-place" will be

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[22a] "Non-place," therefore, will have a similar meaning to the meaning that Augé provides for it, but, perhaps, one that Augé would find disagreeable because of its relative simplicity.

understood as space that Augé would identify as non-place according to the enumerated criteria on the previous pages. This distinction is important because I understand non-places as changing spaces that are co-produced by individuals and the infrastructural qualities of the spaces in question (in *supermodern situations*), whereas Augé seems to understand non-places as supermodern spaces that produce experiences for individuals inhabiting the spaces in question. That is to say that I understand individuals as contributors to their understandings of spaces (yet not independent makers of their understandings of those spaces), even in supermodern situations. Contrastingly, Augé seems to argue that supermodern spaces (i.e. non-places) universally determine that individuals in non-places will categorically understand and use those spaces as non-places rather than as anthropological places.

American highways, the Augéian lines that extend for miles without interruption, are Augéian non-places. They collage the fleeting Augéian non-places that flick by car windows, the distant Augéian non-places mentioned by road signs, and the Augéian non-places occupied by the means of transportation (i.e. roads) that facilitate the journey to anthropological places into a seemingly overwhelming, unknowable space. Augéian non-places such as these – the

non-places that physically represent "Augéian lines" — are the spaces that I am interested in examining in this project. They are the spaces of the traveler.

The supposed symbolic insignificances of such Augéian non-places seems to suggest that experiences that occur in supermodern situations should be similarly insignificant, in part because those experiences are means to ends.[23d] For me, relocation has been the end of experiencing a significant number of non-places on the American road.[24a] For Bill Bryson, reaching the next small town on his American road trip was the end of driving through (or "in" or "on") non-places. For John Steinbeck, non-places needed to be experienced during his "Travels with Charley" (1962) journey in order to reconnect with the American places about which he famously wrote. For William Least Heat Moon, the end of driving was killing time in blue highway America. Least Heat Moon was fired from his job before he drove around America, and, reportedly, had nothing better

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[23d] "Roads are not ends in themselves but means to ends. They depend on and are designed for human enterprise. Other inventions bring the world to us. But the car enables us to go out into the world ourselves. Communication of ideas and emotions thus established has the effect of bringing the country into a closer unity" (Khan 2006:89-90, quoting Bel Geddes 1940:283).

[24a] Though I write "a significant number of non-places," I do not mean to suggest that the number of non-places encountered on the American road can be counted. That phrase is constructed in that way for the sake of number agreement. As mentioned earlier, there seem to be an infinite number of ways in which an Augéian geometric map can be drawn. Similarly, there are an infinite number of ways in which one might count the number of non-places that he encounters while driving.

to do than drive. For Robert Pirsig, vacationing and showing his old haunts to his son, Chris, were the ends of traveling in America via Augéian lines. For John Howard Griffin, the end of traveling was experiencing 1960s racism in cities in the American south. For each of these travelers, non-places were experienced for the sake of experiencing places, as means to ends (such is the nature of the terms, I suppose). And yet, the non-places encountered on the American road were important and memorable and recorded. Developing an understanding of the ways in which non-places assume place-like importance is central to this project, and, I think, central to the aforementioned traveling authors.

In this section, I have discussed the spatial notions of place, non-place, and Augéian non-place as they might be understood according to Augé's theory of supermodernity.

Before we left Williamsburg, we decided that we would drive until we arrived in Boulder. We took turns driving and sleeping and paying for gas.

After we tossed the pot, Sean stopped at the first rest stop in Colorado so that he and I could sleep in the back of The Vehicle while Morgan and Andy continued driving on 70W. It had been raining for many hours and Sean and I were tired from driving all morning in Kansan rain.

Sean and I woke about ninety minutes from Denver. The rain had stopped and the sun warmed the inside of The Vehicle. Andy drove fast and sang loudly with Katy Perry as the radio blasted "California Girls." Morgan laughed and clapped and repeatedly said "oooo-ee!" from the passenger seat. We were west.

I drove until we arrived at the Mall of America. After we roamed the consumerist monstrosity for too long, we returned to Our Home. David had recovered from the previous night outside of Chicago and decided to drive. He drove south to 90W.

An endless field of southern Minnesotan wind turbines spun on the north side of the highway. I watched them rotate through the side passenger window while David drove. We did not speak for many miles, though David grumbled to himself about lagging traffic.

In South Dakota, WALL DRUG billboards replaced the wind turbines. There seemed to be a WALL DRUG billboard every half-mile on 90. We sped by the signs, liberated by the 75 MPH speed limit that licensed David to drive in the low-90s. Traffic and lower state speed limits had slowed our driving speeds before we entered South Dakota.

"Man, they really let you get it out here." David said. "Knuckles." He made a fist and rested it on the center console.

"Yeah, knuckles," I said, meeting his fist with mine.

"Max, your grandfather only invested in two things," my dad said while he balled the jack. "One was an unfortunate jointly-owned real estate deal that ended in a lawsuit. The other was a company called Stokely-Van Camp."

"Stokely-Van Camp?" I asked.

"Stokely-Van Camp invented Gatorade. For some reason, your grandfather just thought that they'd make it big."

"Good foresight."

Rusk balled the jack toward Utah while I sweated in the passenger seat of The Big Rig. I was on the sunny-side of the car. It was hot in the Nevadan desert.

REMEMBERINGS

The term "rememberings," as I am using it, refers to happenings or experiences that were recorded near the time at which they occurred and then later recalled as memories. Rememberings differ from memories insofar as rememberings are intentionally remembered whereas memories may or may not be intentionally remembered. A remembering, therefore, is a type of memory.

This distinction is important to this project because a discussion of rememberings assumes that the experiences in question were significant at the time at which they occurred (or at least sufficiently significant for recording) and at later times. By discussing rememberings of Augéian non-places rather than memories of Augéian non-places, I hope to demonstrate that the significances associated with experiences of such spaces were developed in real time rather than significances that I bestowed on my journeys as a nostalgic former traveler who may have been discontent during my time on the road.

The vignettes included in this project are rememberings. I hope that favoring such memories makes this project sufficiently ethnographic to those who believe that travel should be "something mistrusted by the ethnologist to the point of hatred" (Augé 1995:86).

"So, who wants a Shirley?" Andy asked.

"Oooo-ee! Me," Sean, Morgan, and I said.

"But Andy, what's a Shirley?" Morgan asked.

"The sandwiches that I was talking about at the grocery store in Boulder. I'm calling them Shirleys."

Sean handed Andy a pocketknife from the front seat. Andy and Morgan made two Shirleys – avocado, tomato, and Swiss cheese sandwiches – and handed them to me. One was for me and the other was for Sean. I held the sandwiches until Andy and Morgan finished making sandwiches for themselves. Then, twisting down a steep road that carved into the Rockies, we communed on Shirleys and Coors.

After spending a night in Kadoka (the "Gateway to the Badlands"), and an afternoon in Badlands National Park and Wall Drug, David and I were taken by South Dakota (the "Gateway to the West"). For that reason, we decided that we would camp in the Black Hills as night approached.

David looked for campsites with the GPS while I drove. The GPS directed us from Wall to some campsites via Greyhound Gulch Road. We followed the GPS's directions as it guided us to a hilly gravel road that was riddled with potholes and tightly flanked with trees. It may have been Greyhound Gulch Road. I didn't, and don't, know.

After some time, we arrived in a clearing. I stopped the car. The scene was haunting. Trash covered the patchy dirt field. A horse with a mangy mane roamed to the right of the road. The horse slowly wandered between the loose trash piles and approached Our Home. The horse frightened David when it pressed its nose against the passenger-side window. A swing set and an abandoned house wilted on a gentle hill to the left of the road. The house had roofs like a dojo.

Afraid, I restarted the engine. Our GPS was without signal and we were lost.

"Look," I said as I pointed out my window.

"VOTE MCCAIN NOT HUSSEIN" was painted on a lone doublewide that was parked in a field on the south side of 24E near Simla, Colorado (ELEVATION 6039 FT).

Though it was early – 9:39AM – Rusk and I had been on the road for a few hours and we had seen few interesting things in rural central Colorado. Discussing this project had passed some of the time.

With Kansas, a state that I had remembered as endless homogenous space from my trip in The Vehicle, looming, I hoped that the doublewide would amuse us for some time.

And because my planned trip had aroused some satiric remarks among my friends, I named [my truck] Rocinante, which you will remember was the name of Don Quixote's horse (Steinbeck 1997[1962]:6).

…I named my truck Ghost Dancing, a heavy-handed symbol alluding to ceremonies of the 1890s in which the Plains Indians, wearing cloth shirts they believed rendered them indestructible, danced for the return of warriors, bison, and the fervor of the old life that would sweep away the new (Least Heat Moon 1982:5).

PLACE-MAKING ON MY SUPERMODERN AMERICAN ROAD

This project's first quotation, the statement, "To travel is better than to arrive," is cliché. Still, experiences had in Augéian non-places can be significant. My efforts to record such experiences during the travels discussed in this project were serious. My recollections of those experiences are vivid. My rememberings of experiences that occurred in Augéian non-places seem spatially locatable, symbolically significant, and characterized by distinct language.[25a, 25d] That is to say that my rememberings of the Augéian non-places that I encountered via the Augéian lines of the United States seem to possess the same qualities as those associated with rememberings that might be had of Augéian places. I will argue that those rememberings are indicative of, and the result of, having transformed the cars in which I traveled on and through and near Augéian non-places into anthropological places. I will argue that individuals experience supermodernity in the contemporary world, but

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[25a] The "symbolic significance" of an anthropological place includes the emotional significance of the place in question (insofar as an anthropological place is a "principle of meaning for the people who live in it" [Augé 1995:52]). That is to say that an anthropological place might be considered symbolically significant if it inspires a significant feeling. Rememberings are symbolically significant because they are produced by personally significant experiences that inspire recording and recollection.

[25d] "History, biography, memory, and emotion all merged with and settled in the landscape" (Kahn 1996: 188).

they also variably and dynamically place-make in supermodern situations.

Supermodernity (as articulated by Augé) is characterized by infrastructure that has provided increased access to hard-to-reach places, which, in turn, have had their placenesses compromised due to such accessibility. The commercialization of the Annapurna Circuit is a good example of supermodernity at work. As the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported in May 2011,

> In less than a year, a road will cut Nepal's classic 250-kilometre Annapurna Circuit in half, threatening the livelihoods of local villages and turning one of the world's most challenging treks into a short hike in the Himalayas. …Though the new road will make it easy for short trips, resort-style hikes and commercial luxuries, it will cut out the earlier walking paths that Nepal and its loyal trekkers have coveted since the country first opened its doors to outsiders in 1949 (Tasman 2011).

In this example, the symbolic significance of the Annapurna Circuit is being compromised by infrastructure (i.e. non-place) that will allow travelers to bypass towns and places of interest along the Circuit. As a result of the Circuit's commercialization, once-symbolically significant places may become non-places to Annapurna Circuit travelers.[26a]

[26a] Augé is principally interested in this sort of transformation – the transformation of place into non-place in the supermodern world. Conversely, I am interested in accepting this transformative quality of supermodernity as an important contributor to one's spatial experience of the

Despite the evident transformation of the spaces of, and the spaces associated with, the Annapurna Circuit into non-places for many of the Circuit's "loyal trekkers," it seems that the accessibility to space previously inaccessible to less savvy trekkers could similarly change the ways in which members of the latter party identify the spaces associated with the Circuit. Various locations might no longer be named yet unknnown spaces to inexperienced trekkers, as the new roads will allow such individuals to experience previously inaccessible space. Perhaps the infrastructural/commercial changes to the region will cause some travelers to lose interest in the area. Those individuals might reclassify the space from "place" to "non-place." However, it seems similarly possible for travelers new to the region to conceptually place the spaces that they would have never known without such infrastructure.

Assuming that such phenomena occur, it seems that supermodernity has a double effect. Supermodernity seems to aid in place-making for some individuals and impose non-places on others. Supermodernity does not universally dictate the spatial experiences of individuals. Supermodernity does not fix places and non-places.

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contemporary world, then understanding the ways in which people might preserve or make places in spite of supermodern forces.

Supermodernity seemingly creates new spatial vocabularies that allow for spaces to be in categorical flux. This project evaluates the categorical flexibility of spaces, specifically travelers' spaces.

Infrastructure similar to the previously described Nepalese infrastructure connects American places. Highways, especially in the American West, allow drivers to travel through seemingly endless, unknowable space in order to reach places. Those gaps between places, often collectively identified by travelers as "the middle of nowhere," are the non-places of the American road, often assumed to be insignificant because passing through/by them is a requirement of travel. Yet, experiences had on the American road (perhaps the quintessential Augéian non-place [see Augé 1995:87]) are memorable to travelers.[27b] The journey is important.

I have recorded and recalled (remembered) experiences of the apparent non-places of the American road like I have remembered the places to which I have taken the American

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[27b] Cross-country drivers often refer to experiences had on the many roads that they traveled as "experiences had on the American road." The tendency of using the expression "American road" or "road" in this sense seems to show the strange mental territory in which "the road" lies. In one sense, the term homogenizes a tremendous amount of space in which a tremendous amount of interactions were had. That sense of the term may seem to undermine the significance of particular rememberings (or experiences yet to be had at the term's time of utterance). However, the existence of the term (and common usage of it) seems to show "the road" as space that *could* become a felt place in the memories of those who have traveled "it." Perhaps that also suggests the potential for space like "the road" to be variably felt or understood by individuals.

road. That, I think, is the result of the transformation of the cars in which I have traveled from utilitarian non-places into anthropological places.

Recounting the previous section, "Places & (Augéian) Non-Places," anthropological places seem to have the following qualities:

1. They are spatially defined by people. An individual, a community, or a natural limit may define the spatial boundaries of an anthropological place.

2. They are symbolically significant insofar as they are relational, historical, and concern identity (from Augé 1995:52). These qualities dynamize the physical space occupied by anthropological places by situating them in time.

3. They are characterized by particular vocabularies or terms. The language associated with an anthropological place provides symbolic significance to the place in question (from Augé 1995:81). Additionally, the language of an anthropological place is of symbolic significance to the speakers of the language.

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Each of the cars discussed in this project developed the aforementioned qualities of anthropological places.[28b]

Firstly, each car occupied space and was created by people. The Vehicle was a Chevrolet Suburban, Our Home was a Nissan Xterra, and The Big Rig was the same Nissan Xterra. People manufactured each car and each car occupied space.

Secondly, each car, as a physical space, was symbolically significant. Each space (car) was relational because individuals who occupied independent spaces populated each car; yet, each individual contributed to the transformation of the spaces in question due to the juxtapositions of individual spaces (or personal spaces) in particular cars.[29d] That is to say that the relations that occurred between travelers in particular cars vitally contributed to the ways in which I came to understand each space. Each space was historical insofar as each space

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[28b] The conceptual change of a physical object – in this case, the change of cars from places to non-places – that I am attempting to describe in this project relies on an approach to understanding place that resembles Igor Kopytoff's "biographical approach" to understanding things (Kopytoff 1986:66-68). For Kopytoff, the "economic, technical, and social biographies" of objects profitably founds his understanding of commoditization. If adopting Kopytoff's biographical vocabularies, then I am most interested in linking the conceptual (or social) biographies to the physical biographies of the cars that I am considering in this project. However, I am interested in applying an independently developed sort of "biographical approach" to a study of space rather than to a study of commoditization. Therefore, this footnote is intended to invoke or mention Kopytoff rather than to suggest that his biographical approach founds this project and the spatial theory that I advocate in it.

[29d] "…a given lived body and a given experienced place tend to present themselves as particular: as just this body in just this place" (Casey 1996:22).

changed over time as I accumulated rememberings that I eventually associated with particular spaces.[30d]   The temporality of the spaces (cars) is best exemplified by the transformation of Our Home into The Big Rig. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, Our Home and The Big Rig were the same car, occupying the same physical space, but Our Home and The Big Rig were distinct spaces as they existed during different periods of time. Each space was named and thus concerned identity.[31d]   And the community that inhabited the space in question named each space. These qualities – relationality, historicality or temporality, and identity – imported symbolic significances onto the spaces with which particular examples of the qualities were associated.

Thirdly, each space was characterized by unique vocabularies. In that sense, each space was a "rhetorical territory." For example, "oooo-ee" was never uttered in Our Home nor was it uttered in The Big Rig. "Oooo-ee" was only uttered in celebration in The Vehicle. And I only

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[30d] "The detritus of history piled high on the local landscape has become central to a sense of place emergent in re-membered ruins and pieced together fragments" (Stewart 1996:137).

[31d] "…placenames are arguably among the most highly charged and richly evocative of all linguistic symbols. Because of their inseparable connection to specific localities, placenames may be used to summon forth an enormous range of mental and emotional associations – associations of time and space, of history and events, of persons and social activities, of oneself and stages in one's life" (Feld 1996:125, quoting Basso 1988:103).

"got it" and swapped "knuckles" and entered "highway mode"
in Our Home.   And I only "balled the jack" with my dad in
The Big Rig.   The users of those expressions (a few of
which are included in this project) only use the
expressions while reminiscing about shared experiences or
in statements that are intended to invoke experiences had
in the places associated with the particular vocabularies.
Particular expressions are uniquely associated with their
spaces of genesis and use.

Place-making and the production of rememberings are
dialectically related.[32d]   The making of cars – non-places,
according to Augé – into anthropological places facilitated
my makings of rememberings of events that occurred on
anonymous American roads (also Augéian non-places).   By
making the cars in which I traveled into anthropological
places, I tethered my rememberings of the placeless
American road to particular temporal orders and places.[33d]
And, dialectically, such rememberings transformed the cars

[32d] "As places animate the ideas and feelings of persons who attend to them,
these same ideas and feelings animate the places on which attention has been
bestowed, and the movements of this process – inward toward facets of the self,
outward toward aspects of the external world, alternately both together –
cannot be known in advance.   When places are actively sensed, the physical
landscape becomes wedded to the landscape of the mind, to the roving
imagination, and where the mind may lead is anybody's guess" (Basso 1996:55).

[33d] "The final anchor for the house, however, was the large, flat, gray stone my
friend laboriously carried from the riverbed and placed at the doorstep.
Wamirans immediately explained that it would be my buderi, a material object
that represents emotional events and triggers memories. …Thus, places gradually
evolved that had my own stories attached to them. …Landmarks within and around
places, such as my hearth stones and front stoop, were moorings for the many
memories of my connection to Wamirans (Kahn 1996:187).

in which I traveled from non-places into places. Rememberings dynamized the spaces of the cars in question by projecting temporal order and symbolic significances onto them, thereby altering my conceptual understandings of the spaces (and transient spaces, in general). This dialectical relationship between place-making and remembering seems to transform, and indicate the transformative potential of, particular spaces, even those spatiotemporally located in typically supermodern situations.

A discussion of the photograph at the bottom of this page (which is also printed at the bottom of page 4) may help explain the ways in which a car can ground rememberings had in "the middle of nowhere." The photograph's story, like the vignettes printed in-between sections of this project, is part of my spatial biography of a particular car.

Southern Utah

The photograph is one of many placeless photographs thoughtlessly taken during the travels discussed in this project. This photograph is unique, though, because of the ways in which it affected my understanding of place and remembering on the American road. My review of this photograph propelled this project. It motivated one of this project's central arguments, which asserts that place-making and remembering can work in tandem to influence one's understanding of space in typically supermodern situations (i.e. in Augéian non-places).

Initially, I was unable to recall the context of the photograph. I recalled that it was taken during sunset in southern Utah, evidently near the road to Parowan. That seemed to be its story.

The dark vertical line on the right side of the image bothered me. I could not identify it. It seemingly tarnished a rather usual photograph of nowhere.

Eventually, I realized that the line was The Big Rig's antenna. Then I realized that many of the photographs and writings from the travels that came to be discussed in this project recorded events that occurred in transient, anonymous spaces on a macro-level (i.e. the vast Augéian non-places bypassed while driving on American highways). However, I also realized that those documentary records

recorded events that occurred in very familiar spaces on a "micro-level" (i.e. the cars in which I traveled). Landscape photographs showed images seen from the highway. But most of those photographs did not show the spaces from which the photographs were taken.

After redirecting my efforts to tell this photograph's story from the macro-level "landscape" to the micro-level Big Rig, I was able to recall taking this photograph in the following context (after recalling the general story, I reviewed my notes for some of the details and quotations):

> "You ever been to Arthur Treacher's, Max?" my dad asked.
> "I've never even heard of Arthur Treacher's."
> "It's sort-of like Long John Silver's. The ice cream made me think of it."
> We were eating ice cream that we had purchased at a Dairy Queen drive-thru in the last town. It had been a hot day for driving without air-conditioning.
> "Nothing could be like Long John Silver's," I said, sarcastically.
> "Well, anyways, Arthur Treacher's is a fast food place, and back in college, we used to go there after we'd had a few beers and we'd order chicken-on-a-run from the drive-thru. That was the joke because Arthur Treacher's had this sandwich called chicken-on-a-bun. So then the drive-thru attendant would say, 'what?' and we'd laugh and say 'chicken-on-a-bun.' Maybe it's not that funny. It was funny, then, though. Let's just keep ballin' the jack."

This example suggests the ways in which seemingly placeless rememberings of unfamiliar spaces can be associated with the familiar spaces in which they occur(ed). The example recounts a brief, vivid remembering had near the exit to

Parowan, on an unknown highway, which occurred, generally, during sunset of the first night of my drive from San Francisco to Sterling with my dad. Rememberings of Augéian non-places seem capable of transforming those spaces personally defined as anthropological places. And, in return, the construction and later consideration of those personal anthropological places can enhance the richness of rememberings associated with the grand non-places in which the rememberings seem to have occurred.[34d]

In this section, I have argued that place-making and remembering are dialectically related. I have also argued that re-examining experiences had on the American Road as experiences that were had *in one's car on the American Road* can indicate the place-making powers of transient travelers in supermodern situations.[35b] If these arguments have been

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[34d] "…places gather things in their midst – where 'things' connote various animate and inanimate entities. Places also gather experiences and histories, even languages and thoughts" (Casey 1996:24).

[35b] Here, and elsewhere, I use the expression "in supermodern situations" rather than "in supermodernity" or "in the supermodern era" because I have attempted to show that supermodernity, though present in the contemporary world, does not define the entirety of contemporary spaces, nor do supermodern interpretations of spaces exist uniquely in the contemporary world.

Many of the quotes that precede sections in this project suggest that supermodern situations pre-dated the urban infrastructural explosion of the late twentieth century. For example, the Anse Bundren quote that I printed on page 12 seems to aptly speak to the dichotomy between place and not-place that is the mark of supermodernity. And Anse Bundren, a rural Mississippian from William Faulkner's 1930 novel, *As I Lay Dying*, seems an unlikely bringer of the supermodern age as Augé describes it. Yet, even *As I Lay Dying* tells of vivid, significant experiences had in the space between places, "the long-ways."

So, I have extensively used the terms "supermodern" and "supermodernity" throughout this project as a matter of convention, but I

convincingly supported, then it seems that they would be important premises for a theory of supermodernity. Therefore, it seems that Augé's theory of supermodernity might be interestingly expanded to express that supermodernity exists insofar as non-places exist; yet individuals might transform non-places into places, even in generally supermodern situations or supermodern spaces. And, ultimately, those places may be variably re-imagined as non-places by the individuals who later inhabit or experience the spaces in question.[36b]

Spaces inherit diverse biographies from their inhabitants, who, in part, develop those biographies from the intentions or features of the spaces in question. Spatial biographies are variable. Spatial biographies are in flux.

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hope that it has been apparent that I have been discussing supermodern *situations*. Supermodernity exists and it does not exist. It has existed and it has not existed. Identifying a timeline for supermodernity seems like an impossible task. With that in mind, it seems more profitable to discuss supermodern situations than to discuss the age of supermodernity or something temporally similar.

[36b] This logical extension of the argument advanced in this section is briefly explored in the "Postface, 29 October 2011," section.

We arrived in Moab in the evening. We hoped to do a driving tour of Arches National Park and then camp in the Park's campgrounds. All of the campgrounds were full. So, too, were all of the campgrounds and RV parks in Moab.

Fortunately, one of the RV park owners told us that we could camp for free outside of town – "You'll be fine to camp nexta the highway, ya know. Just get back on the road and turn right through the break in the fence on the side and drive on the dirt road and you'll see other RVs. You'll be fine out there," she said.

We took her advice and went "out there," which, as I later reported to Grace via email, was outside of .. everywhere, a rocky, sandy field for RV travelers who would be safe from desert winds. We made camp by flashlight, situating our tents on the least windy side of The Vehicle. Still, we were unprotected. There was no escape from the thick sandstorms that barraged our tents throughout the night.

On one of the last hills that we descended in South Dakota, I put my right hand on the gearshift, and then retreated it. I had done so many times that morning as I drove Our Home toward Wyoming, through the western South Dakota hills that were littered with tree trunks and planned-burn pyres. The trees had been chopped to combat the spread of a lethal parasite.

Mid-downhill, I returned my hand to the shifter. I shifted into neutral and removed my foot from the accelerator. We were neutralling a downhill, just like Dean, the original mileage hog.

"David, I'm doing it."

"Doing what?"

"Look." I tapped the shifter.
"Neutralling, eh? How does it feel?"

"Really good."

"Knuckles."

Cement bugs ricocheted off the Big Rig's front windshield. They left streaky residue that looked like dirt and they sounded like rocks when they hit the glass. Still, I doubted that the impact killed them. The cement bugs were better armored than The Big Rig.

Through the dirty windshield, I took blurry photographs of homemade Kansan billboards that advertised roadside stops – the five-legged cow, the second friendliest yarn store in the world, and the Wizard of Oz Museum. We bypassed all three sites in favor of an earlier arrival in Branson.

This strategy of defining itself by contrast to adjacent and antecedent discourses limits ethnography's ability to explain or examine itself as a kind of writing. To the extent that it legitimates itself by opposition to other kinds of writing, ethnography blinds itself to the fact that its own discursive practices were often inherited from [travel books, personal memoirs, and journalism] and are still shared with them today (Pratt 1986:27).

ETHNOGRAPHERS & TRAVEL WRITERS

Anthropologists do not seem to have a consensus regarding the ethnographic rigor of travel writing. Mary Louise Pratt, for example, expressed the important influence of travel writing on ethnography. She was sympathetic to the former's style and objects. Oppositely, Marc Augé, as I cited earlier, has argued that travel is "something mistrusted by the ethnologist to the point of hatred" (Augé 1995:86). And, to Augé, the traveler's writings are similarly dubious. While I question the inflexibility of Pratt and Augé's respective attitudes toward the entirety of travel writing, the tension between ethnography and travel writing that is invoked by Pratt and Augé is important to this project because of the ways in which the project's "data" were recorded and evaluated.[37d] In this section, I will attempt to defend the anthropological rigor of travel writing as it pertains to this project and consider the disciplinary differences that may make anthropologists wary of travel(ing) writers (particularly those interested ifn notions of place).

Augé's critiques of travel (and travel writing) must be seriously considered at this juncture. Augé argues that

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[37d] "Fieldwork has always been a mix of institutionalized practices of dwelling and travelling" (Clifford 1997:198).

> [travel]…constructs a fictional relationship between gaze and landscape [that situates the spectator at the center of a moving landscape] which he catches only in partial glimpses, a series of "snapshots" piled hurriedly into his memory and, literally, recomposed in the account he gives of them, the sequencing of slides in the commentary he imposes on his entourage when he returns (Augé 1995:86).

This "fictional relationship," insofar as it is one that is self-righteously fabricated by the traveler in question, suggests to Augé that "The traveler's space may thus be the archetype of *non-place*" (Augé 1995:86).

Ultimately, the non-place of the traveler is space that is either devoid of spatial or symbolic meaning, or space that has had meanings imposed on it by travelers who failed to realize that such spaces were "spaces in which neither identity, nor relations, nor history really make any sense" (Augé 1995:87). To Augé, the space experienced during a journey (non-place) is imparted with false meanings. In the supermodern world, the excess of space that is accessible via, and includes, non-places (i.e. roads), thus provides travelers with an excess of opportunities to produce false meanings made in transient spaces as individuals strike poses of contemplative travelers. Travel writing (or perhaps, writing about traveling), it seems, might be anthropologically unreliable

to Augé because of the potential disparity between the actual and felt experiences of travelers.

This charge may seriously undermine this project by challenging the validity or accuracy of the rememberings of my travels that were had in travelers' space. However, I think that this charge might be answered in three ways.

Firstly, Augé's critiques might be answered by appealing to the micro-level/macro-level distinction of spaces encountered on the American road, as described in the previous section, "Place-making on my Supermodern American Road". Such consideration should show the false equation that might be made between road, car, and "landscape," while traveling. Those spaces are easily conflated into one non-place, and, oftentimes, that conflation may be accurately made. However, those three types of spaces need not be conceptualized in a manner that equates those three (or more) distinct spaces into one non-place.[38b] Each space should have the potential to be imagined independently, yet spatially relative to the other spaces in question. The micro-level/macro-level

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[38b] This statement is intended to mention the spatial simplification that might occur if one is attempting to simply categorize space as "place" or "non-place."

This statement is not intended to express the notion that the terms "road," "car," and "landscape" exhaustively stand for the spaces encountered by a driver. And, as discussed earlier, "landscape" is intended to refer to the space to which it colloquially refers – the spaces seen by travelers and called "non-places" by Augé.

distinction is intended to illuminate the potential for the
nuanced evaluation of supermodern space as variable and
more complicated than the place/non-place dichotomy might
allow.

Secondly, Augé's critiques might be answered by
referring to James Clifford's 1992 paper, "Traveling
Cultures." Clifford's paper will help respond to Augé's
argument that travelers falsely impose meanings on non-
places.

In "Traveling Cultures," Clifford argues for a
comparative anthropology of "traveling" that might
complicate the spatial fixing of cultures by historicizing
the movement of peoples and cultures rather than locally or
regionally bounding them (Clifford 1992). Clifford
mentions a variety of experiences and peoples that might be
included in such a comparative anthropology. Clifford's
following discussion of diasporic communities is especially
interesting:

> Unresolved historical dialogues between continuity and
> disruption, essence and positionality, homogeneity and
> differences (cross-cutting "us" and "them")
> characterize diasporic articulations. Such cultures
> of displacement and transplantation are inseparable
> from specific, often violent, histories of economic,
> political, and cultural interaction, histories that
> generate what might be called *discrepant
> cosmopolitanisms* (Clifford 1992:108).

Surely, I did not experience the cultural and physical attacks that might be felt by the diasporic communities to which Clifford refers during my drives across America. The important part of this passage for my experiences is the suggestion that cultures are intimately connected to the various cultures or interactions that preceded them. And while I am uncertain that cultures were formed that might be associated with the cars in which I traveled across America, I am certain that each person with whom I traveled had particular experiences (like those mentioned by Clifford) prior to arriving in The Vehicle or Our Home or The Big Rig that significantly influenced the spatial, symbolic, and linguistic meanings that I eventually associated with each car, respectively.

So, in response to Augé's charge that the traveler's space is one "in which neither identity, nor relations, nor history really make any sense" and is therefore space that is poorly suited for ethnography, I contend that that might be true of the larger spaces or (decided non-places) in which I traveled (the colloquial "landscape" viewable from the highway), but that it is not necessarily true of the smaller spaces in which I traveled while driving on the

American road.[39b] Those smaller spaces – the cars – were

places from which the transient non-places seen from the

road might be oriented. The people who traveled in each

car with me had histories that influenced the localized

meanings born from our travels through vast non-places.

For the rememberings discussed in this project, it seems

inappropriate to dismiss the symbolic significances of

traveling because the rememberings *seem* to be associated

with placeless spaces. It seems that an anthropology of

travel in anonymous travelers space (non-place) can rely on

a *philosophy of place* if one's orientations to relevant

spaces of various sizes is carefully considered. I hope

that this project has demonstrated that such is the case.

Thirdly, Augé's critiques might be answered by

referring to Mary Louise Pratt's 1986 article, "Fieldwork

in Common Places." Pratt's article helps one sympathize

with the traveler and the veracity of his or her

recordings. Pratt's work might pair with the previous two

responses and help answer Augé's critiques of the

anthropological viability of travel writing and travel

writing's treatment of place.

[39b] This point, consequent of Clifford's discussed arguments from "Traveling
Cultures," reinforces the points made in my first response to Augé's critiques
of travel and travel writing.

As Pratt has suggested, ethnography has been importantly informed by travel writing (among other media). In "Fieldwork in Common Places," Pratt argues that

> Modern ethnography obviously lies in direct continuity with [the travel writing] tradition, despite the disciplinary boundary by which it separates itself off from travel writing. Ethnographic writing as a rule subordinates narrative to description, but personal narrative is still conventionally found, either in the separate personal volumes or in vestigial form at the beginning of the book, setting the stage for what follows (Pratt 1986:35).

Ultimately, ethnographies and travelogues are similar, and seem to have been so for a long time.[40a] Whereas ethnographies overtly pose questions and attempt to overtly answer them, travelogues often provide unwritten answers to unwritten questions. Whereas anthropologists write ethnographies, traveling authors write travelogues. This occupational titling may be the most real difference between the two disciplines. Marc Augé and Robert Pirsig write in similar manners and ask similarly "philosophical" questions, yet Augé has made a literary career of being an anthropologist because he officially writes as an ethnographer and Pirsig has made a literary career of being an author-autobiographer because he officially writes as a

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[40a] As Pratt notes "The practice of combining personal narrative and objectified description is hardly the invention of modern ethnography. It has a long history in those kinds of writing from which ethnography has traditionally distinguished itself" (Pratt 1986:33). Such literary tactics are even common to early sixteenth century European travel accounts (Pratt 1986:33).

traveling writer. Some sort of professional terminological difference between the two practices/geners seems to most importantly distinguish their respective forms, which are often more similar than many anthropologists (e.g. Augé and the many anthropologists identified by Clifford in the beginning of "Traveling Cultures") tend to believe.

In this section, I have attempted to defend the anthropological or ethnographic rigor of this project with particular attention to the project's potential problems that Augé prophesied in *Non-Places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* (1995). My three-part defense has attempted to acknowledge the similarities between the decidedly different disciplines (i.e. anthropology and travel writing), and then attempted to express that a combination of the respective styles or forms might interestingly produce a contemporary ethnography of the contemporary.

I have attempted to show that ethnographers and travel(ing) writers are anthropologically oriented.[41d]

[41d] "The border between the two relatively recent traditions of literary travel and academic fieldwork is being renegotiated" (Clifford 1997:198).

The sun set as Morgan drove us toward Reno on 95N. We had been at Zion National Park in the morning, Las Vegas in the afternoon, and we were finishing the last long driving day of our trip. Telephone lines paralleled the highway, as they often do, and the assumed Sierras surrounded us.

"Guys, I have something that I want to read to you. I've been saving it for a time after we found America," Andy said.

He retrieved a fedora and a thin book from his pack.

"This poem is called 'American Feuillage'," he said.

Andy read and read and read. Sean, Morgan, and I stilly listened. Morgan drove fast.

"How can I but as here chanting, invite you for yourself to collect bouquets of the incomparable feuillage of these States?" Andy read, ending the poem.

"Oooo-ee. That was real pretty, Andy," Sean said.

David parked the car on our side of the two-lane road. He could not pull off the road because of the snow that bounded the road. Snow continued to fall, turning into icy pellets when the wind gusted. David left the car running while we stood on the road and watched the snow.

We were in Wyoming and had ascended a few thousand feet to reach the point at which we stopped. A truck with Wyoming plates approached us going the opposite direction. Its driver stopped and asked if we were okay and we said, "yes, we're just looking around at the snow" and he said, "okay be careful" and he kept driving. Blanketed in snow, every direction looked identical.

I got back in Our Home while David photographed the snowy landscape. I could not understand the reason that he felt so inspired to do so. Cold, I told him that we should continue "gettin' it." He returned to Our Home and drove.

Eighteen hours. That was the amount of time that it would take to ball the jack to Sterling.

From 44E in central Missouri, my dad pointed to a sign on the south side of the road that advertised "GRAPE PIE 4$." On the north side, a mechanic-motel-junk shop withered. A large wooden sign painted green and purple marked the junk shop section of the building. "WE SELL PRECIOUS MEMORIES," the sign read.

"Where are we? Missouri has grapes?" I asked my dad.

"Who knows," he said. "Wine country?"

"There aren't as many dead armadillos here," I said.

We had seen many armadillos, the South's unassuming hit-and-run victims, rotting on southern Missouri highways.

With ethnography we have a method that embraces the ignorance of the researcher. The anthropologist is one who can tolerate truly not knowing where one is headed. You begin a project quite literally not knowing how to end it, allowing it to be transformed in the process of bringing it into being (Thompson 2011).

FORM & STYLE

This project's shape has been inspired by the notion that ethnography's form and style should result from the individuals involved in the work, the subjects discussed by the work, and the methods that produced the work. The propriety of ethnography's shape is dependent on adhering to these notions.[42b] A very personal, perhaps alienating work is the result of embracing this notion. In this section, I will discuss the ways in which subjectivity and improvisation have contributed to this project's form. I will also discuss the relationship between shape and writing, and, specifically, that relationship's significance for ethnography.

This project is principally about me and my experiences. It is not about traditional alterity or ethnological otherness (see footnote 49b on page 77). This project may be non-anthropological in that sense. Such a

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[42b] This position was most specifically expressed to me during a spring 2011 graduate seminar with Dr. Richard Price. Many of the works assigned for the seminar were selected because they championed such an ideal. Dr. Price's ethnography, *The Convict and the Colonel: A Story of Colonialism and Resistance in the Caribbean* (1998), Michael Taussig's ethnography, *My Cocaine Museum"* (2004), and Paul Sullivan's ethnography, *Xuxub Must Die: The Lost Histories of a Murder on the Yucatan* (2004), each read during that spring, most importantly influenced the opinions that I express, and show, about ethnographic shape in this project.

John Dos Passos's *USA* Trilogy (1930; 1936), which I read, in part, prior to meeting Dr. Price, and, in part, after meeting him, Dr. Price's *First Time: The Historical Vision of an African American People* (1983) which I read after submitting the first draft of this project, and Alan Moore and David Gibbons's *Watchmen* (1986), which I read while writing this project's second draft, importantly reinforced the positions toward form and style that I expressed in the first draft of this project.

personal work may be a disciplinary faux pas. It may be

narcissistic or, as James Clifford wrote in his

Introduction to "Writing Culture" (1986), "self-absorbed."

Perhaps it is all of those things. I hope that such

qualities will not undermine its anthropological quality.

This project might usefully be considered an

autoethnography.[43b] I did not seriously interview the

individuals with whom I traveled on the American road nor

did I share stories from their perspectives. The vignettes

shared were produced by my rememberings. The spatial

theory-building, if my work has interestingly done such a

thing, resulted from the ways in which I recorded and

recollected my experiences from the American road during my

three trips across the country, the ways in which I

casually discussed those experiences with fellow drivers

after our travels, as well as my recordings of my dad's

recordings (e.g. photographs, notes, stories) during our

[43b] While writing the second draft of this project, I read Ruth Behar's *The Vulnerable Observer* (1996). In it, Behar notes that she "came to realize that in much contemporary writing, [ethnography and autobiography] seemed to have exchanged places, ethnography becoming more autobiographical while autobiography had become more ethnographic" (Behar 1996:19). I hope that this project reflects the compatibility of these genres that Behar notes, rather than destroying the disciplinary confidence in the compatibility, which has grown in recent decades.

Anthropology's confidence in autoethnography might be traced to Paul Rabinow's *Reflection on Fieldwork in Morocco* (1977) and has come to include works dedicated to autoethnographic methods (including Heewon Chang's *Autoethnography as Method* [2008]) and many reflective works (published before and after *The Vulnerable Observer* (1996) that merge fieldwork and biography (including Behar's *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story* [1993] and Price's *The Convict and the Colonel: A Story of Colonialism and Resistance in the Caribbean* [1998]).

trip. That is not to say that the individuals with whom I traveled were dispensable characters in my place-making ventures. Their behaviors, utterances, and attitudes were vital to the creations of the distinct places (cars) in which I traveled across America. And though I did not develop this project's form with them while writing, I tried to craft this project into a form that would be intimately readable to each of them, a form that would make my rememberings more understandable to those who traveled with me than those who did not travel in The Vehicle or Our Home or The Big Rig. Familiarities with places render them more understandable, more vivid.[44d] This is my project, about those with whom I traveled, and about the places that we made and remember.[45d]

I approached this project in the personal, subjective manner that I did because my favorite American travelogues are autobiographical and because my favorite ethnographies

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[44d] "Names like [*do:m*, *fele*, and *eleb*] inevitably seem far more abstract when one reads about them in English than they must feel to Kaluli people, who experience them directly as signs of the sensual obviousness of place" (Feld 1996:105).

"You will tell stories about our place to your friends and play our tapes for them, but only you will really know. You will cry for Wamira. You will be homesick for Wamira. Only you have been to our place. Only you will really know" (Kahn 1996:187, quoting Alice, the woman who introduced Kahn to Wamira).

"…ultimately, places are emotional landscapes, and the most intimate, personal ones are shared with only a few" (Kahn 1996:195).

[45d] "Fueled by sentiments of inclusion, belonging, and connectedness to the past, sense of place roots individuals in the social and cultural soils from which they have sprung together, holding them there in the grip of a shared identity, a localized version of selfhood" (Basso 1996:85).

are reflexive and memorable for their unusual (and thoughtful) shapes. I have attempted to blend travel writing and ethnography, the two genres that, while historically distinct, have become increasingly blurred and increasingly co-referential.

Openness to improvisation has been important to this project's form. The quotations that precede each section have changed many times. I initially read the one that precedes this section in a Savage Minds blog entry that was posted two days prior to the writing of this sentence, for example. The printed quotation replaced a Stephen A. Tyler quotation – "The point is that questions of form are not prior, the form itself should emerge out of the joint work of the ethnographer and his native partners" (Tyler 1986:127). Transformative (or improvised) ethnography is important, particularly for a project like this one, which is about processes.

Improvisation also contributed to the layout of this project's words and photographs. I thought of the rule that was used to place photographs on pages after completing nearly half of this project's first draft.[46a, 46b]

[46a] This rule has two parts. First, photographs taken in the American West are placed on the leftmost third of the page, those from the Midwest are placed on the center third, and those from the East are placed on the rightmost third. Second, photographs are vertically situated by thirds according to the trip on which they were taken (the vignettes included in this project have been oriented with the same care.)

The content and form of this project have changed as ideas have emerged. Writing, like traveling, is a process. Ethnographically demonstrating the improvisational similarities of those processes has vitally contributed to the form of this project as it attempts to engage the "field of fieldwork" with the "field of anthropology," then coherently merge those fields ethnographically (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:3).[47d]

"Accidental" might best characterize this project's research methods. As I have mentioned, my recordings from my first two trips were made so that I might recollect my experiences of the American road.[48b] My recordings from my third trip were made after I began wondering about the ways in which I was able to vividly remember particular placeless experiences from my first two trips. I recorded

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[46b] *The Convict and the Colonel: A Story of Colonialism and Resistance in the Caribbean* (Price 2006) most specifically inspired my opinion that one ought to be thoughtful about the ways in which one orients words and photographs on pages. Reading is, among other things, a visual experience.

[47d] Writing, traveling, place-making, and reading – the processes in which I am interested in this project – might be considered emergent examples of "improvising with the already-felt" (Ness 2011:83, quoting Manning 2009:30).

"'Travel' denotes more or less voluntary practices of leaving familiar ground in search of difference, wisdom, power, adventure, an altered perspective…'often, getting away lets uncontrollable, unexpected things happen'" (Clifford 1997:218, in-quote quotation from Tsing 1994).

[48b] My recordings were also habitually made. I began carrying a pocketbook in February 2010, tree months before I began my transAmerican trip in The Vehicle. I used (and use) the pocketbook to record and collect things – quotes, experiences, happenings, small papers, memorabilia – that I deemed worth remembering.

things ethnographically without doing so for the sake of Anthropology. I was accidentally anthropological.

I began reviewing my recordings and photographs as I specified my primary research interests for this project. I attempted to interpret those documents as if someone other than me had made them. Of course, my memories of the experiences recorded by often vague notes and placeless photographs, provided me with unique access to the "documents" that I was examining, the documents produced by Heraclitean Others.[49b, 49d]   This method, which has helped

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[49b] I developed this term while writing this project's first draft. The term is intended to invoke Heraclitus's well-known Fragment 12, "As they step into the same rivers, different and (still) different waters flow upon them" (Heraclitus 1987[5th c. BC]:17).

"Heraclitean Others" refers to imagined previous versions of me that produced the documentary records that represent my experiences of the American road. By attempting to review those records as if they had been produced by Heraclitean Others, I have hoped to review my recordings with a critical eye that is intimately knowledgeable about the rememberings in question, thoughtful about the challenge of evaluating recordings about space made by a traveler (particularly the challenges expressed by Augé that I outlined in the previous section, "Ethnographers & Travel Writers"), and sufficiently removed from the recordings so as not to feel silly about the ways in which some of the events may have been documented in real-time.

[49d] The notion of Heraclitean Others resonates with the synthesized positions of otherness described by Anne Freadman in *The Machinery of Talk: Charles Peirce and the Sign Hypothesis* (2004). Freadman writes, "How…does a representation *refer*? The answer is suggested in the phenomenological terminology that Peirce has adopted from Hegel. The 'it' is not an object until and unless it *represents*. There is no originary singular, it is always already two. Peirce writes 'Before any *comparison or discrimination* can be made between what is present, what is present must have been recognized as such, as *it*'" (Freadman 2004:9, in quote quotation from Fisch 1984:49). Furthermore, Freadman writes, "repetition presupposes difference. Subjects are produced by difference, and difference is the condition of re-cognition and hence of comparison" (Freadman 2004:10, from Deleuze 1994). These points suggest that the ethnographer as fieldworker differs from the ethnographer as writer (assuming that those ethnographic stations must be chronologically ordered). The latter re-presents the experiences of the former, a Heraclitean Other.

[49b] I imagine that some anthropologists might identify this project as non-anthropological because of the popular notion that anthropology is inherently about the Other. Here, I have attempted to be the Other

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produce a work that might be called an "accidental ethnography" in addition to an "autoethnography" (or, as Dr. Jonathan Glasser has suggested, an "auto-ethnography" to invoke "automobile") has importantly shaped this project's form by helping to provide the critical reflexivity that is vital to ethnography.

A commitment to subjectivity and a willingness to improvise has formed this project into an ever-changing (until its moment of submission, I suppose), accidental autoethnography. This work has assumed a form that is intended to blend mundane record keeping, travel writing, and ethnography in order to express my understanding of my rememberings from my supermodern American road. The final form should usefully support my argument for having made anthropological places from conventional Augéian non-places. That is to say that the project's shape and the argumentation should be complementary. This project's form and its explicit arguments are intended to interestingly complicate, and expand, Augé's theory of supermodernity.

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and the anthropologist, ethnographic subject and ethnographer. Still, it seems that such an ethnography might legitimately, or popularly, be about the Other if one accepts the ways in which people change over time (and, thus, if one accepts the notion of the Heraclitean Other).

We could see Reno. Oversized highways and too-many bright lights announced The Biggest Little City in the World before the city limits were reached. As we entered the city, ruins of grandeur remained like Parisian Arcades. A Reno cab driver later told me that the once-wealthy city had "started imploding ten years [earlier] as the Indians made it possible to gamble anywhere in the country."

"I can't believe that we're here," Sean said. "I'm really going to miss you guys.

We weren't quite there, but it felt like it. We had sought, and achieved, personal manifest destinies and we neared the unsatisfying conclusion of our journey.

"Goddamn it, man," David said as a policeman approached our parked car. We had been stopped for an unknown offense.

"You boys from Virginia, huh?" BRINKERHOFF said.

"Yes," we said.

"What're you boys doin' here, drivin' so fast?"

We were in Utah.

"Driving to San Francisco, sir," David said.

"Hum, so you been through lots'a itty bitty towns and you're still speedin' through mine?"

Evidently, the last town through which we passed was BRINKERHOFF'S town. Far from there and stopped on an empty road, I recalled stories of Williamsburg's Parkway Killer while David talked to BRINKERHOFF.

"I'm sorry, sir," David said.

"Alright, well, I'll let you boys off with a warnin'."

"Thank you, sir."

David restarted Our Home. He returned to driving.

"GODDAMN YOU, BRINKERHOFF. HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO WORRY ABOUT YOUR GODDAMN ITTY BITTY TOWN WHEN I'M IN HIGHWAY MODE."

"I think that we should just ball the jack home," I said.

"Agreed. Pull over so that we can get some drinks, though. We've got a-ways to go," my dad said.

We were in Ohio, near the Ohio/Pennsylvania border on 70E. We had been in The Big Rig for twelve hours, unsure of the night's destination. Finally, it had been decided.

I stopped at the next gas station. A faint neon sign on the roof announced the showers that were inside the station. We bought drinks and skipped the showers.

Back on the road, my dad opened his first drink.

"El Toro rojo!" he said. "Let's ball some jack."

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Eddie drove alone, the cowboy
and myself following, and no
sooner were we out of town
than Eddie started to ball
that jack ninety miles an
hour out of sheer exuberance
(Kerouac 2003[1957]:17).
--Sal Paradise
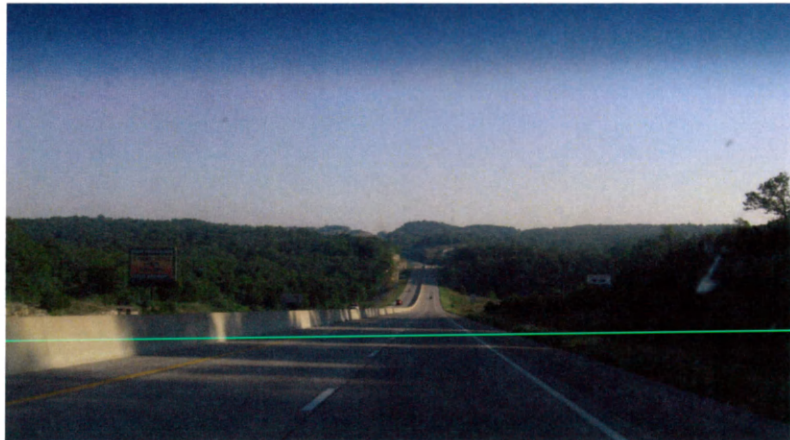
CONCLUSION

In this project, I have engaged Augé's notion of supermodernity and considered the ways in which examining rememberings of Augéian non-places might contribute to a theory of supermodern place-making. My examination of these topics has been founded on the experiences that I recorded and recalled – remembered – during my three drives across America, which occurred between May 2010 and August 2011.

I have argued that individuals are capable of personally making places from seemingly insignificant or impersonal physical spaces, despite the ways in which contemporary infrastructure may attempt to define such space for individuals writ large. I have then argued that place-making and remembering are dialectically related. Successful defenses of these assertions are intended to contribute to a theory of space in supermodern situations. That is to say that it seems that Augé's theory of supermodernity might be interestingly expanded by considering my previous assertions. A revised theory of supermodernity might therefore express that supermodernity exists insofar as non-places are ubiquitous, as Augé suggests; yet, individuals transform such non-places into places. Individuals have subjective understandings of the

placeness or non-placeness of particular spaces. And the subjective understandings of spaces held by individuals change over time. Space is subjectively variable and in temporal flux.

I have briefly discussed the relationship between travel writing and anthropology. In regard to this relationship, I have argued that travelogues, and the "travel data" collected while traveling, ought to be critically evaluated, then examined as ethnographic data by anthropologists, rather than dismissed as Augé, recalling Levi-Strauss, has suggested (Augé 1995, from Levi-Strauss 1977[1955]).

I have attempted to defend the form and style of this project, which, I hope, was not impossibly alienating. I have argued that the project's shape is intended to complement the arguments advanced by this project. Ultimately, I think that this project's handling of ethnographic shape is the project's greatest potential contribution to anthropology.

I was once told that ethnographies are often read, then had their contents forgotten because ethnographers have drastically different research interests, which may be tangentially related to the contents of particular ethnographies, but which rarely overlap. Form and style,

however, are notions that can be universally considered by ethnographers. With that in mind, I attempted to write something that might be taken seriously during its reading, then, at least partially remembered after its reading because of its unusual form. I attempted to write an ethnography that would generate rememberings for its readers. I hoped to inspire mindfulness regarding ethnographic shape, mindfulness that could be applied to ethnographies about hugely different subjects.

That effort, that hope for communal validation, may be a sign of desperation for community in an impersonal, placeless, supermodern world that lacks community. If such is the case, then it seems that this introspective ethnography – "a reflection of the society of which it is a part" – may be the sort of "ethnology of solitude" that Augé predicted would be necessary in a future world marred by non-places (Nader 2011:216; Augé 1995:120). I am not sure whether my theorizing about space has suggested that Augé may have oversimplified the relationship between individuals and their waning tendency (or power) to place-make in an increasingly supermodern world or if I have proven his predictions accurate. Perhaps I have shown that an appropriate ethnographic shape and ethnographic investigation of transit in the twenty-first century is one

that insists on examining subjectivity and solitude. This
project may represent the supermodern effect that it is
attempting to deny.

POSTFACE, 29 OCTOBER 2011

I have lived in Sterling (my childhood home) with my parents since my dad and I finished driving across America. My car is usually parked in the driveway.

My dad and I no longer refer to the car as The Big Rig. The car similarly lost its former name, Our Home, while I lived in San Francisco and it spent most of its time parked on 19th Avenue.

Now (and then) the car provides services. It is a means for going to work or running errands via over-traveled suburban roads. It is no longer a producer of rememberings (though it is certainly one for nostalgia). It has again changed from place to non-place. Not for the first time, nor, I hope, for the last time.

The family met at the most important place, near the truck. The house was dead, and the fields were dead; but this truck was the active thing, the living principle (Steinbeck 1988[1939]:85).

After I wrote the first draft of this project, Sean and I spent five months in New Zealand on working holiday visas. We hitchhiked around the North Island for ten weeks before relocating to the South Island. There, we bought a car – a striped 1989 Ford Falcon with a broken aerial mounted to the trunk – for $800 NZD. Allegedly, the car began its life as a police car. For that reason, we called it, "The Cruiser."

In eight weeks, we "did our thing" in The Cruiser. We drove over 5000 kilometers in The Cruiser and spent twenty-six nights in it. We cooked meals on camp stoves on The Cruiser's passenger-side floor. We endlessly listened to a cassette of Frank Sinatra's Greatest Hits of the '20s in The Cruiser. We washed our dirty

clothes in a plastic bucket that was in The Cruiser's boot. Our clothes always seemed dirtier after being washed than before they were put in the bucket. But,

a shaking bucket of water and laundry soap seemed quite similar to a tumble washer, so we maintained our washing method until The Cruiser suffered its final break-down on Moorhouse Avenue in Christchurch.

Before any of those things occurred, Sean and I were tramping the Heaphy Track in Golden Bay. We had purchased The Cruiser about a week earlier. While tramping, Sean asked me to tell him about my MA project. I was reluctant to do so. I wanted to observe the life that we would build for The Cruiser and then compare The Cruiser's life to the respective lives of the cars that I had been examining while writing the first draft of this project. Still, I told him that it was partly about driving and thinking about the notion of cars as places, specifically the ones in which I had driven across America. Then, I told him that I had wanted to keep my project a secret from him in an effort to avoid influencing his treatment of The Cruiser. I did not want Sean to feel self-conscious about his relationship to our car. And I did not want him to feel like I was leading him into enacting particular situations in The-Cruiser-to-be.

"The Cruiser is already becoming like The Vehicle, man," Sean said after I described my project. We had already slept in The Cruiser for three nights.

"I guess so," I said. "But I just wanted to see if The Cruiser would naturally become like my other cars."

"It probably would've, and it probably will, even though you've told me about your project."

Three months later three months after Sean and I watched The Cruiser being towed to the wrecker from a curb on Moorhouse Avenue – I have decided that Sean was correct. And maybe he was correct because the individuals who made the outrageous Cruiser into their Kiwi sanctuaries, were older versions of the pair that saw America through The Vehicle's windows. And if that is the reason that Sean seems to have been correct, then this project may not be a universalizing treatise about the relationship between individuals and space in supermodern situations. But, it was not supposed to be that. Human experiences are too varied for such a work. This project was simply supposed to be a personal, imaginary journey, a following of ideas, an embrace of my grandfather's last words.

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