

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

DO TWO WHEELS MAKE IT MORE AUTHENTIC THAN FOUR?
SPACES OF BICYCLE TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

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To ride a bicycle across the United States is more than a simple form of tourism or sport. It is a dynamic and dialectical experience producing both spaces of America and the identity of the tourist. It is both a resistance to the American freeway, and an expression of national mobility. Through the coding and analysis of the journals of long distance bicycle tourists, and utilizing a framework that blends existentialist, phenomenological, and historic materialist thought, this paper produces a working definition of the tourist and begins the discourse of how the landscape is read and experienced on the tour. This study finds that non-institutionalized long distance bicycle tourists search for existential meaning, but also utilize mobility and embodiment to mediate institutional and lived spaces in America. These tourists do not merely construct meaning internally; spaces and places must be *felt* as well as seen and pondered to grasp their many scales of meaning. History, geography, the mind, and the body are all at work in the experience of the tour. The long distance bicycle tour is a product of the constant tension between place, space and existentialist meaning.

Keywords: Bicycling, tourism, mobility, identity, landscape, America

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The bicycle, the bicycle surely, should always be the vehicle of novelists and poets.

-Christopher Morley, *The Romany Stain*

In 1976, over 4,000 cyclists hopped on their bikes to peddle from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean in the *Bikecentennial Ride Across America* (Heine 2006, p. 13). Panniers, i.e. bags attached to the bicycle frame, were loaded with camping gear, bike tools, and food. The group that organized the ride has since become the *Adventure Cycling Association* (ACA). The original route, now dubbed the *TransAmerica Trail* (figure 1), is one of eighteen current routes that the Association has created specifically for touring cyclists. The ACA boasts 42,000 members throughout the United States (*Adventure Cycling Association* 2006). The history of the Association's mission is summed up in one sentence; "These idealists not only wanted people to ride bicycles but also to travel very long distances by that mode and to see the nation's landscapes, history, and people from that vantage point" (D'Ambrosio, undated).

While this is a study of the tourist and the practice of riding one's bicycle over a great distance, it is also a study of the cultural and natural landscape of America at the start of the twenty-first century. It is a look at mobility choices and issues of resistance in present day America. As revealed in the above quotation, American long distance bicycle touring is legitimized through the ACA as a means to experience the historical and



Figure 1. The TransAmerica Bicycle Trail

physical landscape. As will be revealed throughout this work, rather than simply collecting the touristic images of the country, the bicycle tourist uses a combination of suffering and sensory experience to mediate the physical and cultural-historic landscape, while in turn, the landscape provides the setting in which the tourist can come to terms with his or her identity. This dialectic reveals that geographic factors cannot be ignored when studying tourism phenomena. Through the coding and analysis of the journals of long distance bicycle tourists, and utilizing a framework that blends existentialist, phenomenological, and historic materialist thought, this paper produces a working definition of the tourist and phenomenon and begins the discourse of how space, time, and place influence the tour and the identity of the tourist.

In the next chapter I briefly discuss the history of the American road network to situate this study in time and give context to long distance bicycle tourism. I also explore

the tourist, and works to define the phenomenon of this type and form of tourism.

Chapter Three incorporates the relevant theories of geography, as well as philosophy and psychology and presents three epistemologies with which to explore bicycle tourism.

Chapter Four outlines the methodology used, and then Chapter Five directly engages the journals of bicycle tourists to develop a three part framework to initiate the discourse within geography and tourism studies. The paper concludes with Chapter Six in which future work is discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

Setting the stage

These great roads are wonderful for moving goods but not for inspection of the countryside.

- John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley*

The road

The bicycle tour cannot exist without the road or trail. This study focuses on the road tour, and as such, must take into account the history and the landscape of the American road before studying the tourist itself. The popularity of the bicycle was, after all, the impetus for better road networks and surfaces beginning in the 19th century (Aronson 1952; Jakle 1990; Raitz 1998).

In the early 19th century, traveling over long distances involved a horse and carriage traversing muddy, rutted roads. The conditions were awful when compared to today's standards (Conzen 1998, Raitz 1998). Writing from the time shows that convenience was not a major concern. Though road improvements were often called for by the traveling public, many were content to experience pristine nature as well as small country towns at a slow pace. Nature's beauty and quality architecture were appreciated, and lodging was carefully scrutinized (Raitz 1998). At this time, much of the roadside land was in a natural state. Many viewed the landscape with awe and felt that the forested roadside was crucial to preserving the beauty of the country; others saw the woods as a place of evil and did not appreciate the long stretches free of civilization (Raitz 1998).

Those who enjoyed the natural landscape cried foul when farmers began cultivating the roadside. In 1842, the English essayist James Silk Buckingham called for legislation that would require a row of trees left to separate the road from any cleared land (Raitz 1998, p. 370).

The 20th Century saw a change in the American road and roadside with the mass production and popularity of the automobile. “New automobiles demanded new roads” (Jakle 1990, p. 295). While this new mode of transportation soon led to problems of congestion and safety, the initial response was one of both pragmatism and aestheticism. Massive parkways were developed not only to move automobile traffic, but were designed for recreational driving and were extensively landscaped (Brown 2005). Despite this approach, critics warned about the fetish of the automobile. C.O. Morris stated in 1909, “The greatest danger... of owning an automobile... is not that we shall not like it, but that we shall get to like it too well, and our gardens, dogs, and outdoor sports will be neglected for it” (in Raitz 1998, p. 376). This prophetic statement can be seen on today’s cultural landscape. “Local roads that once progressed tenuously over the landscape without obliterating anything gave way to wide, straight highways that sliced through hills, buried streams in culverts, filled in valleys with embankments, and stripped away trees” (Siddall 1987, p. 314). This lack of regard for the landscape of which Siddall speaks stems from the fact that the engineer’s vision of the freeway system won out over the planner’s, i.e. an efficient movement of traffic at high speeds was the goal for road construction rather than incorporating the transportation network into the built landscape (Brown 2005). The fact that efficient freeways were built instead of aesthetic networks is a result of the ability to quantify the need for the former as well as the inability to

quantify the latter (Brown 2005), but this also emerged from the Eisenhower administration's push for a network to improve national security (*The Economist* 2006) and the ability to evacuate a city in the threat of a nuclear attack (Jakle 1990). The building of this national road network did not preclude aesthetic benefits though. The construction of the Lincoln Highway for example, the first coast-to-coast road for cars was not only designed for the efficient movement of goods, but for patriotic and educational purposes. Supporters of the project were convinced that it would connect the United States, "thus revealing and interpreting America to its people" (Jakle 1990, p. 297). Since the invention of the automobile, along with decent road networks, the "road trip" has been an integral part of American leisure and recreation (Raitz 1998). People were able to travel with freedom and spontaneity, to an escape from the congested city into the open spaces of the countryside, and roads like the Lincoln Highway were supposed to allow motorists to see the country's landscape and thus experience the nation's history.

The high-speed freeway that soon dominated long distance travel in the United States led to the "asocial" driving of the 1960s, in which "the road takes on aspects of the Kerouac Road – it is the means, the avenue, the movement and the end itself" (Brown, Jr. 1976, p. 25). Rather than the physical experience of controlling the machine that was the norm of the 1950s, broader highways and comfortable vehicles made that very control obsolete. Everything about the modern road networks led to a focus of uninterrupted speed rather than violent bursts of acceleration. "Given this scale and a suitable automobile, a driver can move over the road at speeds from seventy to one hundred miles per hour without a dominant sensation of recklessness, rush, or loss of control" (Brown,

Jr. 1976, p. 25). The comfortable efficiency has not come without a price though. As Lefebvre writes, “It is obvious, sad to say, that repetition has everywhere defeated uniqueness, that the artificial and contrived have driven all spontaneity from the field...” (1991, p. 75). The freeway allows one to “drive two or three thousand miles... without, in a sense, having gone anywhere” (Siddall 1987, p. 314).

Not only have road surfaces changed throughout the course of American history (and consumed more and more of the American landscape), the roadside has developed into a unique and growing place. This “Roadside America,” as Raitz (1998) refers to it, started without planning or mitigation. Entrepreneurs purchased land and began to experiment with marketing to get motorists to stop at their establishment. Those successful invented the franchise, which led to the current state of homogenous off-ramps and truck stops (1998, pg. 380-1). This has led to a general feeling of “placelessness,” in which significance of a particular place is lost (Relph 1976).

Not all Americans judge the freeway and Roadside America with such a critical gaze though. Author Larry McMurtry discounts the ability of human planning and engineering to level the country:

The repetitiveness of that particular stretch of highway [Interstate 35], with the same businesses clustered at almost every exit, tempts me to advance one modest thesis, a counterargument to the often expressed view that because of the chain businesses, America all looks the same. But it doesn't, and it won't, no matter how many McDonald's and Taco Bells cluster around the exits. There are after all McDonald's in both Moscow and Paris, but few would argue that Russia and France look the same. In America the light itself will always differ; the winter light on the Sault Ste. Marie, at the head of the 75, will never be like the light of the Everglades, at the bottom of that road. Eastern light is never as full or as strong as western light; a thousand McDonald's will not make Boston feel like Tucson. Cities and suburbs and freeway exits may collect the ugliness of consumer culture, but place itself can never be homogenized. (McMurtry 2000, p. 15-16)

McMurtry's thesis is powerful, but I would argue one that can easily be missed when driving in an automobile. He admits that his recent travels along the interstates of America are not the stuff of "folksy conversations" (2000, p. 12) with people met along the road. "I drove 770 miles, from Duluth, Minnesota to Wichita, Kansas, speaking only about twenty words... The development of credit-card gas pumps, microwaves, and express motels has eliminated the necessity for human contact along the interstates (McMurtry 2000, p. 12). Can a modern driver see that the light and place has changed as he or she views it from the framing of the windshield? I agree with McMurtry, but it seems that in order to "see the light" the automobile might not be the best mode of transport.

Regardless of how the road as a place is viewed, the amount of aesthetic quality wasn't the only issue Americans had with these high speed roads. In the late 1950s, a backlash against the freeway system began as urban citizens first saw the negative effects of such an efficient means of transportation. Issues like the loss of civil rights due to "urban renewal" and environmental degradation were a direct result of the American freeway (Avila 1998). The backlash culminated in the 1970s with increased environmental regulation as well as the US financial situation (Brown 2005). This led to increased regulation over road design and construction and all but ended the creation of new freeways (Brown 2005, p. 26).

Horvath's 1974 work on "Machine Space" echoes the tail end of this backlash and goes as far as to call the automobile the nation's "sacred cow" (p. 168) as well as discusses the ecological nature of how the growth of "automobile territory" acts much like erosion on urban place. He also provides some examples of resistance to the

automobile; "...a car was buried at San Jose State College on Earth Day, 1970; a mayor who opposed highway construction was elected in Portland Oregon; the national Clean Air Act was passed; and controversy erupted over automobile safety. In hundreds of communities, public sentiment against the building of roads was aroused" (1974, p. 177-178). Social and environmental justice needed to be addressed in American transportation.

This backlash is an important element in understanding the historical context of bicycle tourism in the United States. It should be noted that Horvath's article was published in 1974; two years before the *Bikecentennial Ride Across America* that launched the era of long distance bicycle touring in the United States as a rite of passage. The link between bicycle tourism and anti-car sentiment in the historical context is an important concept of this phenomenon and is explored in Chapter Five.

With such a prevalent network for transportation, be it aesthetic or efficient, mobility is a part of American life (Cresswell 1993). And while the flaws of this network are readily apparent, the majority of Americans have accepted its daily presence. In fact, the freeway is seen as "a symbol of contemporary life" (Arnold 1976, p. 28). The creation of new freeways has been slowed, but the existing ones are still used and an important tool for traveling within the country. So the question becomes, how does one resist the efficiency and homogeneity of the American Freeway?

One starting point for understanding resistance and mobility is Cresswell's 1993 work on the 1957 novel *On the road* (Kerouac 1997 [1957]). Cresswell argues that there is dualism in how Jack Kerouac used mobility to express "a form of resistance to the 'establishment.'" On the other hand mobility is clearly a central theme in mainstream

North American culture, at least as important to the ‘American Dream’ as small town values and apple pie” (1993, p. 249). While this beat writer used mobility, as Brown, Jr. (1976) states it was a fast and disconnected form. The movement of Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty, the two main characters of the book, is fast and frantic and the idea is to keep moving. The freeway is a perfect means to this end. The real place based events occur in urban centers, typically on the West or East Coast of the country. Cresswell provides a deft analysis of Kerouac’s resistance to the contextual national values of early Post War America through mobility, though at the same time using mobility as a means to conformity. “We are presented with a story of two people avoiding attachment to place or people at one level but madly seeking the core of another place – America – on another scale. Mobility represents a search for an American essence; haunted by the spirit of the outlaw, the hobo and the pioneer rather than the settlers, the farmers and the townspeople” (1993, p. 260).

Jack Kerouac’s road might be the one most attributed to a road trip across the United States, but I will show in the following analysis that to tour America by bicycle is not at all an example of Kerouac’s road, but rather a search for both Buckingham’s wooded roads and Raitz’s colorful Roadside America. The resistance by the cyclist is actually a resistance of Kerouac, though the cyclist cannot fully escape the duality of American mobility. Still, the important concept is that the road is not a mere path to a destination. Most of the experience takes place on the road itself, when the tourist is terrified to cross a bridge or is thrilled to have crested the hill. In the case of Maureen Kelly’s tour, the journey does not truly end in a destination city or back at home. It

occurs as she is riding, as she is on the road itself and able to understand why she needed to endure the journey in the first place (2005, p. 43).

The tourist

Bicycle touring has existed in Europe since the Industrial Revolution (Heine 2006). Before the prevalence of affordable motorized transportation, the working class, with the introduction of set work weeks and vacation time, were able to escape the hazy city to relax while gazing at the natural landscape. American workers did not take to this form of recreation so quickly, and it wasn't until the 1950s that bicycle tourist organizations began to form (Heine 2006, p. 11).

This cultural difference is reflected in the bicycle industry. While European bicycle manufacturers have a long history of touring friendly bikes, American manufacturers have focused on road racing and mountain biking (Heine 2006). The popularity of the Bikecentennial event and the steady demand for touring bicycles has led major American brands to maintain at least one touring model in their catalog.

The lean spokes and aggressive rider positioning of a "road bike" work well for the *Tour de France*, but do little for a cyclist hauling forty pounds of gear. The upright seating and fat tires on a "mountain bike" make for a comfortable ride on the trail, but can drastically slow speed on a stretch of open highway. Thus, the "touring bike" merges the two. A typical touring bicycle has the same drop handle bars as the road bike, but heavier wheels and tires and a more comfortable saddle like its off-road cousin. This style of bicycle also comes equipped with racks to hold the cyclist's bags, or at least has the ability to be easily outfitted with such racks. The traditional upright frame is not the only choice for the cycling tourist though; three of the fourteen tours sampled used a

recumbent frame. The positioning of the cyclist is that of a reclining position, which can make for a more comfortable ride.

Bicycle touring has been occurring for the past century (Heine 2006) and the Adventure Cycling Association (ACA) has helped to legitimize it in the US with organized rides for the past thirty years, but its presence is notably absent from academic literature. Tourism studies as a field has grown rapidly since the 1970s (Cohen 1984), yet a survey of the discipline's/discourse's journals does not yield many results. A few studies exist (Lumsdon et al. 2004; Ritchie 1998), but they focus on a small portion of a larger phenomenon. The infrastructure and economics of bicycle touring to aid in tourism revenue are examined, but the geographical and cultural facets are marginalized.

Ritchie uses an unpublished report by Peter Saabye Simonsen and Birgitte Jorgenson that states that a bicycle tourist is “a person of any nationality, who at some stage or other during his or her holiday uses the bicycle as a mode of transportation, and whom cycling is an important part of this holiday” (1998, p. 567-568). The definition is used with a continuum to differentiate the level of bicycle touring. At one pole there are the cycling enthusiasts who use the bicycle as the sole means of transportation while on vacation. The occasional cyclist makes up the other end; he or she uses the bicycle as transportation throughout some of the vacation, typically on days with nice weather.

Ritchie admits a stronger definition is needed and proposes the following definition for a bicycle tourist:

A person who is away from their home town or country for a period not less than 24 [hours] or one night, for the purpose of a vacation or holiday, and for whom using a bicycle as a mode of transport during this time away is an integral part of their holiday or vacation. This vacation may be independently organized or part of a commercial tour and may include the use of transport support services and any type of formal and/or informal accommodation. (1998, p. 568-569)

In Ritchie's definition, anyone not sleeping one night away from his or her home is seen as a recreational cyclist. I find both Ritchie's and Simonsen and Jorgenson's definitions lacking any real use for research. Ritchie does admit that touring cyclists are not all the same, but he fails to explore the differences. To simply say a bicycle tourist rides a bike on a vacation is to say a geographer studies the Earth. While true, its simplicity does little to advance thought or debate. Bicycle tourism is a complex phenomenon and the participants actually span all of Cohen's (1972) often cited tourist categories.

The bicycle tourist can easily partake in either institutionalized or non-institutionalized tourism (Cohen 1972). A cyclist can sign up for a supported group tour in which he or she travels with other bicycling tourists along a specific route, and even has his or her equipment carried in a motorized vehicle for the entire route. This would fit with Cohen's "organized group-mass tourists" of the institutionalized category (1972). Conversely, a bicycle tourist can load equipment onto a bicycle trailer or panniers and either start pedaling along a known route or in a randomly chosen direction. The tourist choosing this form of travel would generally fit in the non-institutionalized category, though depending on route and lodging choices, could in fact be classified as the institutionalized category's other subgroup, the individual mass tourist (Cohen 1972). The non-institutionalized bicycle tourist often shares similar characteristics to the explorer/drifter (Cohen 1972, 1979) or backpacker (Maoz 2006; Sørensen 2003; Uriely et al. 2003), though there are still differences. Apart from the obvious "use of a bicycle" difference, the backpacker is traditionally constrained by (or perhaps prefers) budget limitations (Cohen 1972, 1979; Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995). While some bicycle

tourists do embark on their travels with a limited budget, many do not seem to be excessively concerned with money. After all, many of the bicycles used on these trips cost over US\$1,000, not to mention the hundreds of dollars that can go into a trailer, panniers, Lycra Spandex cycling clothes, etc. One can always ride an inexpensive bicycle purchased from Wal-Mart, but the majority of the tourists documenting their journeys on the Internet want to purchase a “bike shop” bicycle, whether it is for quality of construction, weight and speed issues, or for elitist image reasons.¹

These different *types*, i.e. the mental aspects of tourism, and *forms*, i.e. the material nature of the tour, of bicycle tourism should reveal two things (Uriely et al. 2003). One, the definition of a bicycle tourist cannot be a simple one. Two, using a bicycle at some point on a vacation cannot make one a bicycle tourist. A man who flies from Los Angeles to Key West for a week and rides a rented bicycle one day and takes a taxi for the other six should not be considered a bicycle tourist. He would instead be a tourist, who happens to have bicycled during his trip.

I propose the following definition. A bicycle tourist is one who sets out upon a recreational trip consisting of multiple days with a bicycle, and with the intent of using that bicycle for the majority of that trip. The tourist can travel alone or be part of an organized group, as long as the use of a bicycle “drives” that trip. The bicycle trip must cover new ground, i.e. using a “base camp” to which the tourist returns each night would not be sufficient to be considered touring.

¹ The journal “Learning to ride on a Blue Light Special” by Jenia Ciomek (2006a) is an example of using a \$90 mountain bike purchased from K-Mart to tour, although no true touring ever happens with that bicycle. It allows to Ciomek to get used to bicycling in general, but a \$240 Trek 820 mountain bike (not an elite bicycle, but a step above a department store bike) is purchased for her first real tour (2006b).

Figure 2 continues to define the bicycle tourist by borrowing from Cohen's categories (1972). This is a continuum, so not only can a bicycle tourist exist somewhere in between the categories, he or she may also change types throughout the trip.

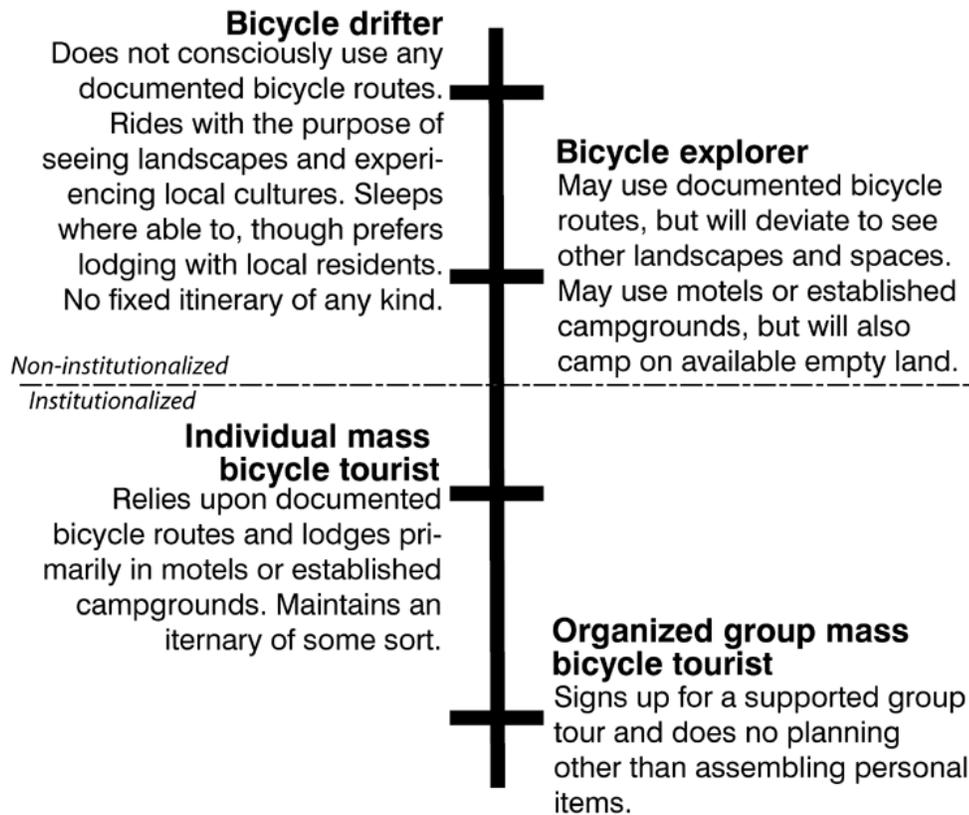


Figure 2. The bicycle tourist continuum, a variant on Cohen 1972.

The bicycle tourist continuum reveals that a bicycle tour is much more than the decision to use a bicycle as transportation. As such, the tools used to study the reasons for such tourism cannot rely upon positivist methodologies. Researchers cannot assume that the tourist will select the path with the lowest cost or that all will respond favorably to the same landscapes. The essence and social context of each type of long distance bicycle tourism must be fully explored before any patterns can be derived.

This should also reveal that this form of tourism, at least as it exists in early 21st Century America, is inherently postmodern. This occurs along the entirety of the continuum. “Postmodernism involves a dissolving of the boundaries, not only between high and low cultures, but also between different cultural forms, such as tourism, art, education, photography, television, music, sport, shopping, and architecture” (Urry 2002, p. 74). When using Urry’s “new cultural paradigm” (2002, p. 75) of postmodernity, the bicycle tourist is a perfect fit. The production of an event such as the bicycle tour is a mixture of different worlds. Efficient roads are eschewed for those traversing the “authentic” American landscape. The vehicles used for the tour are non-motorized, but are far from primitive. For the most part, great care has been taken to select the perfect bicycle frame; the gears have been switched out for a different ratio, the stock saddle replaced with a ninety-nine dollar *Brooks* leather saddle for optimum comfort. There is a rejection of capitalist transportation networks while embracing the material fetish of the bicycle. This will be explored in further detail in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER THREE

Authenticity, geography, and experience

I've been suffering, I've been suffering, and I'll be suffering up around the bend.

- Frank Black and the Catholics, "Suffering"

As this is both a study of tourism and geography, it is logically couched in themes from both fields. The concept of existentialist authenticity is discussed first, and is important in this study of tourism even though its use is highly contested. The work from geography's "spatial turn" of historical materialist and Marxist geographers is then discussed to link the importance of material place and space/time to tourism. Finally, work from geography's humanistic and phenomenological school is explored to return to the mental side of tourism, but with a geographic essence. Each of these epistemologies have their strengths and weaknesses, but it is my hope to borrow from the three – Heideggerian existentialism, historical materialism, and humanistic geography – and effectively play them against the phenomenon of long distance bicycle tourism.

Authenticity is a crucial concept for understanding why a tourist embarks upon his or her travels, but it has varying (and even competing) definitions among the existing body of academic literature (Hughes 1995; MacCannell 1976; McIntosh and Prentice 1999; Pearce and Moscardo 1986; Reisinger and Steiner 2006; Steiner and Reisinger 2006; Wang 1999). It can refer to an actual material thing, i.e. visiting an "authentic" African village, or it can refer to a state of being; traveling without compromising personal beliefs. The latter, *existentialist authenticity*, is used by Wang (1999) and

Steiner and Reisinger (2006) to create a meaningful definition for the term as it is used in tourism studies.

While assigning authenticity to tourist activities may seem simple, Steiner and Reisinger explain the fluid nature of existentialism as framed by Martin Heidegger:

To be oneself existentially means to exist according to one's nature or essence, which transcends day-to-day behavior or activities or thinking about self. Because existential authenticity is experience-oriented, the existential self is transient, not enduring, and not conforming to a type. It changes from moment to moment. As a result, a person is not authentic or inauthentic all the time. There is no authentic self. One can only momentarily be authentic in different situations. Thus, there are no authentic and inauthentic tourists, as much as researchers might like there to be such handy categories. (2006, p. 303)

For existentialists, anxiety and suffering are key to discovering authentic meaning. The courage required to face this anxiety leads to a discovery of one's true self (Steiner and Reisinger 2006). Urry (2000) considers the idea of effort of travel linking with authentic experience. "It is maintained that only if some natural feature involves real exertion to get to it or to climb it can it be properly appreciated" (p. 55).

It soon becomes apparent though, that the discussion of authenticity and tourism quickly becomes something else when we leave the realm of the material and move to the mental. The concept of existential authenticity departs greatly from "object authenticity," i.e. a "thing's" authentic qualities, and a confusion of what is actually being discussed can easily occur. It is important to note the distinction between the two; to be existentially authentic is to have a moment of finding oneself, it occurs internally regardless of the "real" nature of the tourism landscape. The themes of an existentially authentic experience are those of being true to oneself, acting on one's own feelings and not in a way a hegemonic force dictates, and that being authentic is to confront the anxiety created by a potentially meaningless life (see Steiner and Reisinger 2006 for a thorough

discussion of the concept's history in philosophy and psychology). It is also worth noting that Heidegger is seen as the main influence as the term is related to tourism, though other work helps to flesh out the concept.

In addition to Heidegger's work, Frankl's *logotherapy* (1984) is worth discussing in the context of existential authenticity and bicycling. The concept was created to help in the search for the meaning of human existence, humanity's "primary motivation" (Frankl 1984, p. 105) Frankl also touches on space being necessary to discover one's existential meaning. He states, "...the true meaning of life is to be discovered in the *world* rather than within man or his own psyche, as though it were a closed system" (p. 115, emphasis added). It is through suffering and the confrontation of anxiety in moment-to-moment experiences, external of one's mind that he or she can only find meaning. Frankl is speaking of interacting with other people; as a geographer, I read this in a spatial sense. In Chapter Five, I will show that people must interact not only with others, but with space and place as well, to truly understand themselves.

As with Heidegger, suffering and anxiety are key components to discovering one's meaning. Frankl himself survived Auschwitz, which led to this theory. While suffering is important to understanding meaning, he distinguishes between the suffering that is unavoidable and that we must face, and that which is avoidable. "To suffer unnecessarily is masochistic rather than heroic" (1984, p. 117).

To say that bicycle touring is a form of *avoidable* suffering would be a shallow analysis. Yes, a tourist is not forced into the trip, but can he or she avoid suffering once he or she has begun the journey? Is it as simple as deciding to pull out of the trip? Weeks of planning have occurred, money has been invested, and a successful tour is anticipated.

Ego, pride, determination can all play to bicycle touring's *unavoidable* suffering. Riding one hundred miles with forty pounds of gear on an August day is suffering and I would argue that a true bicycle tourist could not simply stop. Masochistic? Most definitely, but this suffering can still force a tourist to confront his existential self. It cannot be compared to surviving the Holocaust as Frankl did, but it cannot be discounted when it comes to discovering that which is authentic about a person. It should also be stressed that to tour by bicycle in a non-institutionalized manner is more than simply participating in a form of exercise. As is revealed in Chapter Five, this is not purely a physical way to challenge one's abilities. It is not the same as running a marathon, nor the same as riding one's bicycle up a hill for a day and then returning home that evening. While these activities can induce mental and physical pain and suffering, it is not at the same scale as a self-supported bicycle tour of 1,000 miles. To tour by bicycle in such a manner is a lonely endeavor that takes the tourist out of his or her comfortable spaces and thus produces mental anxiety and stress at a larger scale than is found in recreational sports and fitness. Cresting a hill by one's own power is combined with being hundreds of miles away from home and loved ones.

I would also argue that in the United States unavoidable suffering at Frankl's level is not that common. To find meaning, the bourgeoisie are forced to seek out their own form of suffering to achieve existential meaning. This is nothing new in tourism. Cohen (1972) describes the "drifter" tourist as "often a child of affluence, who reacts against it" (p. 175). The drifter is a tourist with no itinerary and whose only purpose in traveling is to seek "the excitement of complete strangeness and direct contact with new and different people" (p. 176). Anyone who has traveled and abandoned his or her

comfortable space knows that “excitement” can easily mean suffering. Bicycling adds to the suffering equation. While mental anxiety can be present, thighs burn, sweat blurs one’s vision, and the bike saddle numbs one’s ass. Yes, chosen, but suffering nonetheless.

While this concept is inherently psychological, the issue of place and space do come into play. McIntosh and Prentice (1999) and Wang (1999) discuss how this search for existential authenticity through tourism occurs by visiting places of other cultures or associated with the past to get a better grasp of one’s own place in space and time. And an important concept of Heidegger’s existentialism, as pointed out by Steiner and Reisinger (2006, p. 303-304), is the fact that everything in the world exists as a network of connected things, but these connections already exist from a society’s history and are not a product of constructed meaning by the agent. Furthermore, part of the search for the existential self is a result of “dwelling,” that is, humanity’s connection to a place. This is what Samuels (1978) points to when proposing an existential geography. His concept is that it is a “geography of alienation (p. 34),” which is essentially an objective search for the relationship one has to a place. Samuels writes of the existentialist perspective, “human reality is charged with spatial relations and that a history of man [sic] is a geography of men [sic] in search of their places, articulating their alienation and their concern for relationship” (1978, p. 35). Relph (1976, p. 37-40) also shows the importance of “rootedness” to place and invokes Heidegger’s dwelling as it relates to geography.

This attachment to place is not without its problems though. Pons (2003) warns that Heidegger did not develop the concept of dwelling to “embrace practices, like tourism, based on spatio-temporal flows and mobilities” (p. 50). Furthermore, “Objects, like spaces, not only condition tourist experiences, but also become a way through which

tourist experience unfolds. The introduction of the car, for example, opened new territories to weekend tourism and fastened new modes of landscape perception and sensualities in a constant interconnection between motion and emotion” (p. 60). His primary concern is the deterministic qualities of such an idea, though Steiner and Reisinger (2006) argue that while Pons reads “dwelling” as a metaphor, Heidegger is speaking of the *possibilities of space* not the *determinacy of place*.

Regardless of one’s reading of Heidegger (and such interpretation is not the purpose of this study), the problem still lies in the idea of a tourist’s “place” in the world being a nebulous one and primarily psychological. It still seems that the geographic elements of a process or phenomenon are glossed over and the internal self is the focus of the study. One can quickly lose sight of the totality of spaces (Harvey 1996, 2006; Lefebvre 1991; Urry 2002). Harvey (1996) warns of how the reliance upon experience is not enough to gain a complete understanding of an event:

But what we learn from the sensuous interaction with the things we touch and the processes we directly encounter is different from what we need to know to understand the processes of commodity production and exchange that put our global breakfast upon our individual tables... what we immediately experience is... not adequate to understand the political-economic realities of our world. (p. 313)

In this, Harvey is pushing for the recognition of the impact of geopolitical forces on the localized place. The previous discussion of the American road in Chapter Two is necessary to fully grasp the internal workings of someone attempting to resist the processes which created such a place and space. The homogeneous road network and roadside is the result of a scale far greater than personal experience.

Another important contribution of the historical materialist tradition is in Lefebvre’s (1991) call for rigor rather than blind leaping from mental spaces to physical

places. His spatial triad that is advanced through *The Production of Space* (1991, see p. 33) is useful for the phenomenon of long distance bicycle tourism. The *representations of space*, the spaces and places of the state are present in this study through the American freeway and road networks. The way in which engineers and planners imposed “straight highways that sliced through hills, buried streams in culverts, filled in valleys with embankments, and stripped away trees” (Siddall 1987, p. 314) reveals power and order over the landscape. I would also argue that the automobile itself is also in many ways an extension of state order. Brown, Jr.’s (1976) discussion of the shift from 1950s style of driving to 1960s “asocial” style of driving is also a shift from freedom and spontaneity to order and discipline. To drive the entirety of Interstate 10 in a late model *Cadillac*, stopping only at gas stations and chain motels is not freedom, but an orderly movement from the West Coast to the East Coast (although Larry McMurtry might disagree).

The *representational space* advanced by Lefebvre, i.e. “the loci of passion of action, of lived situations (1991, p. 42),” is comprised of the actual places used by long distance cyclists (e.g. their use of the road surface, improvised camp sites in public parks), as well as the pre-franchise version of Raitz’s (1998) *Roadside America*. The “Cookie Lady’s House” is a representational space of bicycle tourism, offering sanctuary to those choosing this form of tourism and mobility. The house sits atop a steep and challenging climb up Afton Mountain, Virginia, which is part of the TransAmerica Trail. On the original Bikecentennial ride, the cyclists were exhausted by the time they reached the site of June Curry’s house. She provided water and homemade chocolate chip cookies for the cyclists free of charge. This earned her the nickname “Cookie Lady” and her increasing hospitality has made her a well known person within the bicycle tourism

community. Her cookies and water have evolved into lodging and food for long distance bicycle tourists as well as a bicycle museum, all free of charge (Tennant 2007; Woodward 2005). The house is more than a place to stay, and will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

The third aspect of Lefebvre's triad, *spatial practice*, is what I hope to reveal through this work. It is the aspect of social space that allows the representations of and representational spaces to coexist, and it is my argument that the mobility of the bicycle tourists is what allows them to mediate these spaces. Mobility and the mobile lifestyle allow for the existence of the institutionalized American freeway as well as lengthy (and perhaps deviant?) bicycle trips. This mobility is geographic in nature and as the following analysis will show, the landscape plays a role in the positive and negative aspects of spatial practice. The very reasons for resisting the ordered transportation network, as well as the need for such a network are resting within the physical and cultural landscape.

Harvey has his own three part scheme (most recently in Harvey 2006), which is perhaps a more straightforward approach, and which he also plays against Lefebvre's triad (again Harvey 2006). To use Harvey's structure, if absolute space is Euclidian and positivist in nature (e.g. the actual surface of the road or the physical boundaries of a campsite) and relative space is that which exists between two objects (e.g.. the space of transportation networks), relational space is the constructed space that results from the bicyclist's past experience, the urges that drove him or her to leave the car at home, the sum total of all that has brought the cyclist and the landscape together at this place at this moment in time (2006; see also 1990 and 1996). "An event or a thing at a point in space cannot be understood by appeal to what exists only at that point. It depends upon

everything else going on around it...” (Harvey 2006, p. 124) The toured landscapes, in this case the American road and roadside, are both material places and a social process (Raitz 1998). The processes that generate today’s American road (e.g. efficiency of transportation, mapped networks, etc.) create the need for these tourists to hop on a bicycle and travel great distances. Additionally, how the tourist perceives place can be affected by space. “We can create completely different maps of relative locations by differentiating between distances measured in terms of cost, time, modal split (car, *bicycle*, or skateboard) and even disrupt spatial continuities by looking at networks, topological relations (the optimal route for the postman delivering mail), and the like” (Harvey 2006, p. 122, emphasis added).

At first glance, this may seem like a simple retelling of Heidegger’s concept of a preconceived network upon which existentialist meaning plays out, and to a large part, these concepts do work together. The difference though, is the historical materialist’s use of scale. It becomes crucial to employing these concepts to bicycling, as well as most other phenomena. Again, Harvey’s (1996) need to not dwell, so to speak, completely in Heideggerian existentialism stems from his view that experiential accounts are “insufficient to understand broader socio-economic processes occurring at scales that cannot be directly experienced and which are therefore outside of phenomenological reach” (p. 303).

An equally important component to this materialist framework, and an inseparable one at that, is that of time. Not only is this important to the relative aspects of space and the creation of those “completely different maps” (Harvey 2006, p. 122) of one place, it also plays a significant role in what can or cannot occur within a space. By

acknowledging that space and time are linked (Lefebvre 1991; Harvey 1990, 1996, 2006), we are able to see how resisting through bicycle tourism is actually possible. In the second chapter I mentioned that bicyclists gave the initial call for improved road surfaces and networks. Once good roads were in place to ride for multiple days would not allow for resistance, in fact, it would lead to conformity to the state's infrastructure. It is Kerouac's road (Cresswell 1993) that must be in place to allow resistance.

An issue with relying upon the geographic Marxist and materialist tradition is the focus of how production affects space without falling into the trap of a fetishism of space (Soja 1980; 2006). Soja's socio-spatial dialectic helps confront this, "The structure of organized space is not a separate structure with its own autonomous laws of construction and transformation, nor is it simply an expression of the class structure emerging from the social (i.e. aspatial) relations of production" (1980, p. 208). Instead he presents us with a constant tension between the two, a tension which Soja still finds lacking in geography:

Geographers continue to be more comfortable exploring how social processes shape human geographies than they are in examining how spatial processes and the geographies we create shape social forms, social relations, individual and societal development in all its material and representational expressions. As with the critique of historicism, this does not mean the promotion of spatial determinism, but neither should geographers be satisfied with any form of spaceless social or historical determination, from whatever source. (2006, p. 820)

What Soja then provides with the socio-spatial dialectic is the idea that the spaces that are produced by social forces can in turn produce social conduct. There must be vigilance in avoiding the "spatial determinism" Soja speaks of, but this dialectic does aid in understanding something like bicycle tourism. The American freeway is a socially produced space, but does it not follow that its existence produces a social activity like long distance bicycle tourism?

Existentialist thought allows for explanation into why a cyclist accepts and even seeks pain and suffering, and geography's spatial turn provides tools for understanding the material aspects of the landscape. The humanistic school provides insight where existentialism and Marxism stumble. The confrontation of anxiety cannot be the only reason for existence, the only way to truly know oneself. Conformity does not necessarily equal a meaningless life. And while the Marxists of geography focus on capitalism and hegemony, the average person may not see his or her actions dictated by those forces. How then can capitalism be *the* force dictating human actions? Ignoring a less rigorous "essence" of an experience is to once again lose sight of bicycle tourism's totality in much the same way that Harvey warns of placing too much emphasis on the lived experience. Lefebvre departs from Marxist thought to explore sensory perceptions of space as they influence its production; "...space does not consist in the projection of an intellectual representation, does not arise from the visible-readable realm, but that it is first of all *heard* (listened to) and *enacted* (through physical gestures and movements)" (1991, p. 200, emphasis in the original). And while it is a Marxist that starts off this discussion of sense and space, the humanistic geographers provide the missing piece to exploring something like bicycle tourism.

Tuan engages the senses in the second chapter of *Topophilia* (1974). Just as Lefebvre states above, Tuan speaks of the dominance of vision in human experience and the "reading" of the landscape, but our tactile nature cannot be overlooked. "For instance, at this moment we may be feeling the pressure of the chair against our posterior and the pressure of the pencil in our hand. Touch is the direct experience of resistance, the direct experience of the world as a system of resistances and pressures that persuade us of the

existence of a reality independent of our imaginings” (p. 8). But how many drivers are conscious of their posteriors as they drive along a highway? It may become obvious after an hour or two, but the act of driving is so visual, and cars are becoming more and more comfortable (remember Brown Jr.’s 1960s road from Chapter Two) so that tactile sense is almost removed from the physicality of travel. On a bicycle, the seat’s effect upon one’s rear is *never* forgotten. Nor is the resistance felt on the down stroke of the pedal. Hands go numb upon the handlebars after an hour of cycling. Bicycling engages the body’s tactile relationship with the material landscape in a way lost in the automobile. This “feel” of the landscape also works in reaffirming the breathtaking vista one is riding past, rather than seeing it broadcast across the windshield, not far removed from seeing it on television. “To see is not yet to believe: hence Christ offered himself to be *touched* by the doubting apostle” (Tuan 1974, p. 8, emphasis in the original). Tuan goes on to discuss the other senses, which will be discussed in Chapter Five in the context of the bicycle tours themselves. The important part to remember for now is that the automobile removes the tourist from the landscape. A bicycle is unable to do this. “We can see through the window of an air-conditioned bus that the slum is ugly and undesirable, but how undesirable reaches us with pungent force only when we open the window and catch a whiff from the malodorous sewers” (Tuan 1974, p. 10). The bicycle has no windows with which to conceal the tourist.

Suffering upon a bicycle is a large component to the sport and the tourism associated with it, but it is not the only sensation for the rider. After suffering comes a sense of liminality. This is the freedom felt when gliding down the mountain one just suffered to climb. Place moves by quickly and the cyclist feels both connected to the

landscape and yet free of physical laws. The effortlessness of the experience produces a feeling of ecstasy which makes the suffering worthwhile. It is the tension between suffering, history, and the sensory/liminal experience that produces the complete experience for the cyclist. Again, such an experience is directly tied to space, time, and place.

I have presented three epistemologies in the hope to create a better understanding towards the experience of long distance bicycle tourism. It is my goal to show that they are not mutually exclusive of one another. All three (along with the work of scholars not easily labeled to one tradition) are crucial to understanding long distance bicycle tourism. Just as the internalization of existentialism cannot fully explain something like the presence of the American freeway; the political and economic forces that built such a network cannot fully explain the sensation of cresting a hill upon a bicycle. This activity, I would argue, is based around the idea that toured places and spaces directly evoke and produce the existentially authentic experience. Human beings do search for meaning, as will be shown in the following examples, and that meaning is directly tied to spaces and places, which are relative, and can be the result of state imposition or direct lived experience. But humans are not simply the intellectual monads of Leibniz (Harvey 1996), spaces and places must be *felt* as well as seen and pondered to grasp their many scales of meaning. Experience is directly linked to the landscape, though that landscape is read not only by a historic lens, but by the animalistic senses as well. History, geography, the mind, and the body are all at work in the experiencing of the tour. This shall be tested in the following chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

The process

It is by riding a bicycle that you learn the contours of a country best, since you have to sweat up the hills and coast down them. Thus you remember them as they actually are, while in a motor car only a high hill impresses you and you have no such accurate remembrance of country you have driven through as you gain by riding a bicycle.

- Ernest Hemingway, *By-Line: Ernest Hemingway*

The website *CrazyGuyOnABike.com* hosts over 1,800 journals and articles posted by bicycle tourists. The service is free and allows long distance bicycle tourists to post their progress from the road, assuming they can locate internet access. This provides the ability for near real-time updates, which in turn can help capture the raw emotion of the experience. Some tourists simply transcribe their handwritten journals after they have returned home. While many come from the Adventure Cycling Association's routes, some simply involve a cyclist pointing his or her bicycle in a cardinal direction and pedaling. The journals range from well written musings on travel, politics, and life to terse updates on the day's mileage, weather, and mechanical failures. It is through the former that I will explore the issues of experience and resistance in relation to the landscape.

Journals and other forms of detailed travel description have previously been used to perform qualitative analysis on tourism and the tourist (Desforges 2000; Markwell and Basche 1998; McCabe and Stokoe 2004; Noy 2004). Markwell and Basche (1998) briefly address the pros and cons of using journals to conduct research on tourism. It is true that

a journal may omit both dull and negative experiences, but it still provides insight into the perceived experience of the traveler. One particular issue in tourism research, they argue, “is the potential problem of reactivity in the research setting” (p. 229). While a questionnaire may seem to be a hassle when vacationing, writing a travel journal is an almost natural process. Markwell and Basche discuss assigning the task of writing a journal before the travel has occurred, with the purpose of using that journal for research. As the following journals were not originally intended for research, the writers are not focusing on any particular topics or concepts. They simply represent the spaces and ideas that the author felt were important to documenting the journey. While this may have allowed for certain felt themes to go overlooked by the authors, I feel it provides a raw source of information on the experiences of the long distance bicycle tourist.

There is debate over the ethical use of the Internet for qualitative geographic research, particularly in dealing with the distinction between public and private information (Madge 2007). Hewson et al. (2003, p. 53, quoted in Madge 2007, p. 661) claim that “data that have been made deliberately and voluntarily available in the public internet domain... should be accessible to a researcher providing anonymity is ensured.” Care needs to be taken in assessing the context of such data, e.g. chat groups for “sensitive/controversial” subjects may facilitate a need for greater privacy (Madge 2007, p. 661). Some debate the use of “privacy,” and suggest terms like “alienation,” that is, the using the online data for “purposes never intended or foreseen by the actor herself, drawing these products into a system of relations over which the producer has no knowledge or control” (Bakardjieva and Feenberg 2000, p. 236). Bakardjieva and

Feenberg (2000) see the use of information from online communities requiring permission from the authors regardless of its availability.

In the context of this study, the anonymity of the data is not an issue; in fact, keeping this data confidential would be a direct violation of copyright. The names used are real, and care has been taken to attribute intellectual property to its rightful owner. The key distinction in this type of methodology is that the data were not dynamically produced through interaction between the geographer and the subject, as they would be in a chat room or web-based survey. The data already existed in a form that resembled the use of historical archives available online. Alienation was a concern however, and a debriefing of the results was offered to the sampled tourists.

Out of over 1,800 journals on CrazyGuyOnABike.com, 1,073 took place in the United States. Of those U.S. tours, only 104 made site creator and moderator Neil Gunton's "featured" list, those deemed worthy of special recognition. The featured journals appear to be selected for their descriptive quality in both text and photographs; perfect for this analysis. A quick survey of those journals not in the featured section revealed that they were typically unfinished or brief in their descriptions. Several of the 104 featured journals occurring within the United States were written by the same tourist. Redundant authors were omitted to ensure more variety in tour emotions and experiences. Of the ninety-two tourists to then choose from, I omitted any journals not covering at least 250 miles. This was an arbitrary cut, but one I felt was necessary for a true engagement between the cyclist and the landscape. Those not falling into the above bicycle tourist explorer or drifter categories were also omitted. This meant that I limited the tour to no more than two bicycle tourists to eliminate accounts of mass bicycle

tourism. Additionally omitted were those that, while “featured” either did not contain truly descriptive passages or those that did not maintain a narrative structure. Some were playful and poetic for example, which while interesting, looked to prove difficult to extract data for this type of analysis. This left fifty-four journals that would work for my proposed methodology. I then chose fourteen journals at random (though I attempted to maintain a balance of gender representation), which provided a sample size the same as the one McCabe and Stokoe used for their work in the construction of identity in tourist accounts in the United Kingdom (2004). With this study I am attempting to construct a framework that can then be tested against larger and more diverse samples. My goal is not to provide statistics, but to explore a phenomenon and begin an academic discourse on the nature of those conducting such bicycle tours.

Through an “armchair ethnographic” approach I explore this phenomenon and reveal the patterns that show how the landscape affects the rider. I attack this using elements of existentialism, historical materialism, and phenomenology to bring light to both the material and psychological aspects of long distance bicycle tourism. My goal is to explore the dialectic in which meaning is given to the landscape while the landscape in turn evokes existential meaning for humanity.

I coded the sample journals (Cope 2003) looking for reoccurring themes pertaining to the importance of place and space and the mental aspects revealed in the text and photography. I discuss the entirety of the themes and a geographic framework for understanding the non-institutionalized bicycle tour in the next chapter. The use of this systematic qualitative method allowed me to instill an amount of rigor to the process and prevent this from becoming merely a subjective essay.

While reading the journals I used the previously mentioned networks of existentialism and historical materialism as a guiding light to place the activities into context. To ride 3,000 miles on a bicycle is one thing; to ride 3,000 miles on a bicycle in a society that worships the automobile is quite another.

CHAPTER FIVE

Analysis

In the summer time many people went on bicycle journeys in much the same ways as we today go on automobile trips. Of course, they didn't cover as much mileage as we do, but these hardy Americans did cover several hundred miles.

-Sidney H. Aronson, "The Sociology of the Bicycle"

I initially thought of doing the Great Lakes route, convenient since I currently live in Indiana and could hook up with the route easily, but if you're going to ride 1,200 miles, why not do 4,000+?

- Joy Santee, *CircumTrekction TransAm 2006*

Out of the sample of fourteen journals, seven were written by men, six were written by women, and one (Gunton and Sakamoto 2003) was authored by a husband and wife team (I consider the sample to be fourteen, because even though Sakamoto is listed as an author, the tour journal seems to be written solely by Gunton). From what could be discerned from the text, the ages range from twenty-five to sixty. Professions and other personal facts were not always available, but three of the tourists were students (Friedlander, Sakamoto, and Santee), one a college professor (Wayland), one worked in the service sector (Compos), and four were in a professional field (Black, Gunton, Kelly, and Matson). Four of the bicycle tourists were either voluntarily between jobs or recently laid off (Compos, Goldberg, MacHale, and Matson) and used that to justify a lengthy tour. From what can be discerned from the photographs of the journals, all of the tourists appear to be Caucasian, with the exception of Sakamoto, and through the text appear to be United States citizens. While gender is represented, class and ethnic differences are not. The societal class that chooses to embark on such a tour is an important factor in this

study. From what can be discerned from the text, the journals utilized for this analysis can be attributed to the new petit bourgeois (Urry 2002, p. 80-81, pulling from Bourdieu 1984). This professional class that does not fit in with “high society,” nor the vernacular, has “generated a kind of stylistic melting-pot, of the old and the new, of the nostalgic and the futuristic, of the ‘natural’ and the ‘artificial,’ of the youthful and the mature, of high culture and of low, and of modernism and postmodernism” (Urry 2002, p. 81).

The tours were all completely contained within the United States (see figure 3). They ranged from seven days in length to 162 days, and from covering 292 miles to 6,620 miles. The mileage is taken from the reported totals from the tourists themselves, typically generated by a bicycle odometer.

TOURIST	START	END/FAR POINT	LOOP?	MILES	DAYS
Black	Sioux Falls, SD	St. Louis, MO	No	1,020	22
Bruckdorfer	Baltimore, MD	Cumberland, MD	No	300	14
Compos	Outer Banks, NC	San Francisco, CA	No	6,620	162
Dietrich	Faibault, MN	Sioux City, IA	No	292	7
Estes	Jackson Hole, WY	Red Lodge, MT	Yes	628	15
Friedlander	Valley Ford, CA	Santa Barbara, CA	No	473	11
Goldberg	Boston, MA	Missoula, MT	No	3,112	72
Gunton & Sakamoto	Ashland, WI	Fargo, ND	Yes	938	16
Haubert	San Francisco, CA	Morro Bay, CA	Yes	1,127	10
Kelly	Gainsville, FL	Lexington, MA	Yes	2,389	46
Matson	Portland, OR	Missoula, MT	No	959	16
MacHale	San Francisco, CA	Ventura, CA	No	463	13
Santee	Yorktown, VA	Florence, OR	No	4,427	86
Wayland	Tehachapi, CA	Las Vegas, NV	No	358	11

Figure 3. Summary of bicycle tours used in study.

All of the journals contained similar events and elements. For instance, all of the journals started with some sort of introduction that provided justification for going on the tour, as if needing to convince the reader that this was a worthy endeavor. In many cases the journal was written from the tour as a means to keep family and friends posted on the progress and to reassure them that the tourist was in fact, still alive. This justification may have been in part the result of assuaging both one's own guilt for leaving and the fears of those left behind. Detailed equipment lists, bicycle component descriptions and reviews of equipment were also frequent. A similarity in form is likely due to CrazyGuyOnABike.com's popularity as a preparatory tool for a long distance bicycle tour, as well as the limits of the online interface.

Regardless of route, equipment, and time of year, all of the sampled bicycle tourists expressed similar themes, though to varying degree. These three primary themes are:

- 1.) *Being and the other* – in which the existential self is confronted through means of the bicycle tour, the senses are fully engaged, and the tourist gaze (Urry 2002) is directed towards fellow Americans.
- 2.) *Geography makes the tour* – in which space, time, and place play undeniably important roles in the ability to encounter the tourist's existential self.
- 3.) *The burden of structure* – in which the tourist does not live internally and the global economic and political forces play a shaping role in the tour.

These three themes are not exclusive of one another, in fact, they are in constant tension with one another. Multiple themes can be expressed within the same event or place. This tripartite framework is designed to aid in studying the phenomenon of long distance bicycle tourism, through starting the discourse and advancing possible research. The themes are further discussed below and played against Lefebvre and Harvey's spatial

triads along with humanistic and existential lenses. Particularly good examples are pulled from the journals.

1. Being and the other

As mentioned above, a justification for the tour is present in every journal. While they may differ in scope and reason, each account reveals an attempt by the tourist to come to terms with why he or she is embarking on that tour. Each of the journals directly invokes the spatio-temporal as a means to define identity in the introduction to the journal and the justification.

Bicycle tours can be directly related to heritage tourism of some sort, i.e. directly invoking a past space and time, and the Adventure Cycling Association (ACA) provides several routes for this very purpose. The ACA's latest route follows the Underground Railroad, and again the intention is to directly experience it from the bicycle saddle. Another such route approximately follows the route of Lewis and Clark a portion of which Stuart Black (2005) rides in his tour. Black completed a third of the route in honor of the 200th anniversary of the expedition. While he is not trying to authentically travel as the Corps of Discovery did, the themes of adventure and scientific learning are echoed through his travels. His purpose is not to simply cover miles, but to "discover" the natural and cultural American landscapes while keeping with the spirit of Lewis and Clark's expedition. So while he is not searching for "object authenticity" there is a search for the essence of history.

A more personal position in space and time may be important. At opposite ends of the spectrum are tourists Jamie Compos (2006) and Rod Bruckdorfer (2006). Compos

(2006) describes his need to complete the third and final experience on his list of personal accomplishments in *Bicycling across America: Riding from the Outer Banks, NC to San Francisco, CA*. He had already completed a marathon and hiked the entirety of the Appalachian Trail; bicycling across the US was the last event on his “personal triple crown of sorts” (p. 1). His desire to go on a tour is furthered by his disappointment in not going to college:

Sometimes I look at my friends and the people in my life and question if I'm doing the right thing. Just like everybody was in college when I hiked the [Appalachian] trail, now I see my friends getting good jobs, buying houses, getting married, going to happy hour, and establishing "real" lives for themselves. I always tended to look at these things as the sort of thing to be avoided, like giving up all your youthful energy and dreams and ambitions, throwing in the towel and getting "old," but now I see that it can be a great thing to be a young happy couple with jobs and futures to look forward to, especially if you find the right person...

But I know for sure I won't be happy unless I do this trip. I've been thinking about it for so long that it's a part of me as though I've already done it. This is who I am and it's what I do because it's what makes me happy. There is just something special about it that you can't pin down - taking off with a backpack or in this case a bicycle and having everything you need in a tight little bundle - and the freedom it provides - because all the world is like a beautiful living painting, and I'm going to get to run around in it on a bicycle wherever I choose with a childlike wonder at new people, places, and things every day, with the sun on my back and the wind in my face, tanned and free and in the best shape of my life, getting closer to a simple goal every minute... there's nothing quite like this sort of adventure in the world to me. (p. 2)

The two paragraphs present the dualism of mobility and the American Dream as presented by Cresswell (1993); he craves the stability of fixed place that a house, professional job, and wife would provide, yet yearns for the masculine version of wandering the landscape so romanticized by American culture. Time is crucial to this conflict he feels, and thus crucial to the need to go on the tour. Compos, still young at twenty-five, wants the ability to look back at his accomplishments and feel proud, as well as have time for a meaningful future. His position in time dictates the necessity for this

trip; the benefits are a result of the landscape. The language used, “all the world is like a beautiful living painting” (p. 2) invokes the concept of the framing of landscape and its aesthetic beauty (Cosgrove 1985). The bicycle provides the means to explore and play within that beautiful landscape. He also mentions “childlike wonder,” which again places the event in time.

Another interesting aspect of the justification of the tour is to finish his list of three goals. Thru-hiking the Appalachian Trail and running a marathon each involve crossing a specific route in a certain amount of time. The time constraints of the former are dictated by the amount of food one can carry while traversing the landscape, while the latter’s constraints are imposed by the competition element. The bicycle tour, which he admits will make him happy, is a further extension of the time/space correlation, i.e. traveling so many miles in a day to make it to the next town or camp site. For Compos, it would seem that existential authenticity is a direct result of playing space and time against one another.

Rod Bruckdorfer’s *Touring Again: A tour from Baltimore to Western Maryland via Catoctin Mountain, Appalachian Spine and C&O Canal Towpath* (2006) also directly utilizes space and time to invoke his identity as a bicycle tourist and justify his actions. “Life’s milestones, such as turning 60, can and do, trigger personal changes” (p. 1). He explains that on for his sixtieth birthday he pulled his bicycle out of storage and began riding once again:

The day of my birthday, I gave myself the best birthday present - my first ride. After a 14-year absence, I was a little rusty, but the riding techniques were still there and the leg muscles still remembered how to spin the cranks between 80 and 90 rpm. It felt good to be on the road again. I started to ride about 5 days per week. I was happy, had a better outlook on life and the blood pressure dropped to an acceptable range... My old Ideale leather saddle was replaced with a Brooks Champion Flier leather saddle... This proved to be a good purchase. The two large

springs fitted to this touring saddle reduced jarring from Baltimore's bumpy road.
(p. 1)

The bike and its use on the road evoked a past space of youth, freedom, and happiness. Here we see a direct tie between the landscape and an identity, albeit a past version of Bruckdorfer's self. The body is also a key component of this space; his legs "remember" how to spin at the proper cycling cadence. The physical exercise leads to both improved health (lower blood pressure) and to "a better outlook on life" (p. 1). Bruckdorfer is able to reclaim his identity by engaging with the physical landscape through past means. His body is directly responsible for his position in space and time. This return to the bicycle resulted in a desire to tour as he did in his younger days, which resulted in this tour and its journal. I will explore more about the body's role and using all of the senses to mediate the landscape later in the next section.

But what of the confrontation of anxiety and suffering? There is a reoccurrence of accounts of discomfort, pain, and anxiety throughout all of the journals and there is evidence that the tourists use this to come to terms with their existential being.

Bruckdorfer's (2006) tour is almost over on its first day when his tent's water proofing is thwarted by a heavy rain. He plans to meet his wife in Frederick, Maryland where she would pick him up and take him home, thus aborting the trip. The seventeen mile trip into Frederick tests his patience, with hills and heavy traffic challenging any progress.

I was about 5 miles south of Frederick. The traffic counts on 85 were higher than expected with trucks and cars speeding toward Frederick with the hurried pace of drivers not wanting to give a lone, wet cyclist any room. Fortunately, the road had a 1 to 2 foot shoulder but this disappeared as I started to enter the outskirts of the town. On one short curving climb, I lost my balance. I was climbing dreadfully slow, and by the time I unclipped from the left pedal, the bike was rolling to the right, pulling me along with it. Fortunately, the embankment softened the tumble. This would be a 'push-the-bike' hill. Eventually, route 85

(Buckytown Pike) became a four lane modern feat of civil engineering or lack thereof, with it[s] car dealerships and strip shopping centers. I pulled into a BP station. While attempting to telephone my wife, Stacy Trifone, one of the owners of Bicycle Fix in Frederick - <http://www.fixfrederick.com> - invited me to wait at her bicycle store in the shopping center across the road. I rode over and was welcomed with a friendly smile and fresh brewed coffee. There are 'road [angels]...' I met my wife at Stacy's and we were on our way back to Baltimore to regroup. (p. 6)

The challenges of the material landscape had effectively stopped his tour, but after some encouragement from his wife (and a new tent from REI), Bruckdorfer gets back on the bike and continues his trip. While the road and the roadside were viewed as part of bicycle touring's initial draw, age and strength made completing the route difficult. "Perhaps it was time to say, Mountain, you beat me and let me know you were here before our kind and would be here when our kind was long gone from this planet we call home" (p. 9). Again space and time come into play; the sixty year old Bruckdorfer utilized the bicycle to feel young again, but the sensation was ultimately defeated by the material landscape. The suffering experienced along the tour forced him to reexamine why he was touring and how his new identity of a sixty-year-old cyclist positioned him within space:

My tour was not the grand bicycle tour of crossing the North American continent or riding the high latitudes of South America. It was a simple nine day tour covering 300 miles. It was physically and mentally more difficult than I had remembered. When I first considered touring again, I wanted to cover miles and climb into the mountains. At first it was about riding and in the end, the tour was about people and 'just doing it.' (p. 16)

The landscape's challenges and his abilities altered the spatial element of touring for Bruckdorfer. Through suffering he learned that he was no longer a cyclist concerned with riding long distances, but was a traveler who enjoyed meeting people along the way. The landscapes and the social spaces involved revealed Bruckdorfer's authentic self. The

challenges of the places and spaces shifted his attention from mileage counts and the summiting of mountains and onto that of humanity itself. “Sometimes these encounter[s] were just a hand wave or brief conversation, exchanging information about the road behind and the road ahead. At other times, you learn more about the individual, where they were from and their destinations. At all times, you learn about what you are made from” (p. 16).

I mentioned in Chapter Three in my discussion on Frankl’s (1984) work that long distance bicycle tourists might not be able to abandon their trips, and thus it becomes a form of unavoidable suffering once the tour is underway. Neil Gunton and Chiho Sakamoto bike from Ashland, Wisconsin to Fargo, North Dakota (2003) and express this idea early on in the tour, “We were more prisoners of the fact that it was simply as much a nightmare to go home as it was to continue on, and if we gave up so soon into the trip then we both knew we would hate ourselves for ever” (p. 7). Escaping from any rural town or urban center in the United States upon a bicycle is easier said than done both materially and mentally. Gunton and Sakamoto are beleaguered by busy roads, a lack of bicycle-friendly roadside amenities (e.g. twenty miles to get to a town with a restaurant is not much for a car, but exhausting for a cyclist after a day of riding), and their negative perceptions towards all terrain vehicle (ATV) riders:

The Tri-County corridor is supposed to be a multi-use trail, for ATV's, snowmobiles, bicycles, walkers, horses and so on. As such, it is supposed to be respected as a trail, not a racetrack. But we found that around most of the towns the trail surface quality deteriorated substantially because of all the speeding and wheel spinning that the kids (and adults) on ATV's indulge in freely. This erodes the track and turns it into a soft, mushy sandpit that's very hard to ride a bike in. We got extremely pissed off about the ATV's very early on... (p. 5)

A large part of the suffering endured by Gunton and Sakamoto on the first few days of their tour stems from the ATV riders and the fact that they are seen as “the other” along transportation routes. They go so far as to take photographs of the ATV riders to include in the journal, revealing the trails of dust created by their speed (2003, p. 5; see figure 4 below). Not only do the ATV riders fail to recognize what their actions are doing to the bicyclists’ ability to utilize the same trail, but they marginalize the tourists both actively and passively:

We sat outside in the shade of the store while locals pulled up in their big pickup trucks, hauling ATV's on the trailer. They all seemed to glance at us with some disbelief before ignoring us completely.

A kid in his hopped up custom paintjob car left the machine idling outside for about 10 minutes. The noise from just the idling sounded like a small racetrack. (p. 6)



Figure 4. ATV rider and touring cyclist. Photograph by Neil Gunton, 2003.

The two bicycle tourists feel alone, but it is the wrestling with this existential distance, i.e. the “objectivity” and “alienation” from the world as well as the need to create relationships within it (see Samuels 1978) that seems to help Gunton and Sakamoto continue their tour. While distanced from the ATV riders, they find connections with other inhabitants of these places:

We met a nice old guy walking his dogs, who turned out to own a bunch of land around there. He also hates the ATV's, and said that loggers were constantly trying to buy his land from him, but he wouldn't sell. He liked the land the way it was, not stripped of all the old growth... I found this quite sad, as I imagined this same scenario being played out all across the country. (p. 6)

Through long distance bicycle touring, the couple is able to “set the world apart in order to enter into relations with the world” (Samuels 1978, p. 27). As they engage with the inhabitants of Wisconsin they are able to find and reaffirm their place in society. The freedom to think helps, “you do end up writing entire books in your head... when touring” (Gunton and Sakamoto 2003, p. 6). This confrontation of one’s relation with the world is also addressed in Linda Matson’s tour (*Portland to Missoula Solo '04*) from Oregon to Montana:

While I might have been able to recruit another person or two with whom to ride, this was something I really wanted to do alone and, in the final analysis, I'm really glad I did. Going it alone scared me, but also stretched my comfort zone, and it forced me to become more outgoing (which has never been my forte). (2004, p. 1)

To continue the idea of the act of bicycling as a means to a critical reflection of the self, I think Tuan’s work on “island selves” (1995) is relevant to the existentialist aspect of the tour. It is desirable to feel unique in American society, and what better way to stand out than by riding a bicycle across the country, but this very uniqueness causes a disconnect and loneliness (see Tuan 1984, 1995, 1998). The loneliness expressed by the

cycling tourists is similar to the loneliness felt by graduate students as described by Tuan (1995, p. 237-238). He uses an architectural metaphor on academic thought, essentially saying that students first discover a philosopher and thus live in the same house, that is, they are able to easily speak the same language and move freely within the same intellectual structure. “A wonderful sense of community prevails as the students encounter one another in the hallways and speak a common language, with passwords such as capital formation, hegemony, and the theater of power to establish firmly their corporate membership” (p. 237). As time moves on though, the students specialize and “they move from the shared life of a house to rented apartments scattered in the same neighborhood” (p. 237). Eventually the students become professors, construct their own intellectual houses, and the free visitation by their colleagues is a thing of the past. In a sense, this intellectual loneliness can be borrowed for the non-institutionalized touring cyclist. All of the tourists have traveled along the American freeway in an automobile. When they discover or rediscover recreational bicycling it is the same as a graduate student discovering Gramsci. The cyclist moves into the same “house” with other recreational cyclists. When two weekend riders pass in opposite directions along a bike trail they wave and may even stop to talk about bicycles. They share a common lexicon in the same way burgeoning scholars do, though rather than “hegemony” they speak of “granny gears” and “clipless pedals.” Preparing for a long, non-institutionalized tour is the equivalent of moving to the metaphorical neighboring apartments, where the cyclist matures in the way he or she views the landscape and transit modes. As the tour progresses, the cyclist has likely moved to their own intellectual houses in terms of how they view automobiles, roads, and the American landscape.

This accounts for the instances where the bicycle tourist seems to feel more alone in a group than he or she does riding solo along the road. Maureen Kelly (*Girl, bike, road, summer*, 2005) for example, ventures off of her route to visit Myrtle Beach, South Carolina on a busy weekend.

There were so many people, it boggled the mind. People everywhere. RVs, campers, cars. The park has its own concession open from 6:30 AM to 10:00 PM. It has laundry facilities. It has a hundred-yard long fishing pier. The camp sites were two to a picnic table and fire ring. This here was an industrial recreational facility. (p. 11)

She is surrounded by people, but “this was definitely not the camping I was used to” (p. 11). As she explores Myrtle Beach, she describes the distance she feels with the crowd and is uncomfortable with the “creepy guys” (p. 11) that seem to stare at her. It isn’t until a motorcycle tourist pulls into the campsite that she begins to feel safe, and is able to express a connection to another human. “Just as things were looking grim, in rode a motorcyclist on a BMW. It was loaded up with saddle bags for touring. A kindred spirit, I thought, hopefully... We chatted about our respective tours while he set up camp. I got a good vibe from him, and felt a lot better about life in general. The cavalry had arrived” (p. 11). While the modes of transportation are different, the choices of mobility are similar, thus revealing a connection of some sort.

This suffering and coming to terms with the existential being, while a part of bicycle touring, is rarely verbalized as such in the journals. The only tourist who explicitly references existential authenticity is Black, and it is defined from the beginning of the journal:

Now, I don't have anything against organized rides but, just between you and me, that ain't touring! Sure you ride a lot and it is tough but in the end you have someone to take care of you. You are surrounded by friends and fellow cyclists.

You can talk bikes and bike riding at the end of the day. But at the end of that day you are still part of the herd.

Real bicycle touring is, ultimately, a very lonely and enlightening experience especially when you ride alone. You ride, you eat, you sleep. Day in. Day out. Rain, hail, winds, heat, Winnebagos are all part of the deal. Sure there are bad bits but there are also good bits. Talking to fellow travelers that you meet along the way. Having a family invite you to sleep on their floor and ending up making a friend. People of all types marvel at the insanity of riding your bike for that long, alone but they also are just a bit envious of your bravery and daring. You don't think of it as being brave or daring, it's just what you are doing. But it is brave. It is daring. (2005, p. 2)

The organized group and the institutionalized mass bicycle tourist are marginalized immediately due to the comfort level of being supported and being “part of a herd.” Black makes sure that his reader knows that he is responsible for the success of his tour. He is avoiding institutionalized tourism whenever possible. This resistance to the comfortable form of touring also reveals that suffering is part of his authentic bicycle touring experience. The second paragraph details the challenges of riding alone, yet Black wants to experience the negative in order to be able to discover the positive. He wants the suffering induced by weather, space, and time because those factors drive the authenticity of his tour.

In a sense, object authenticity and existential authenticity are blurred together and revealed through some of the journals. Black further defines his identity and legitimizes the authenticity of his tour through the language used in the journal. References to his profession are sprinkled throughout the text. The situations that lead to defining himself as an authentic tourist and as an existential being are all linked to the toured landscape. Black announces that he is a “science guy” when he reaches the Steamboat Trace, a rail trail, i.e. an abandoned rail line converted into a trail for bicycling and running. The trail

is a virtually untouched example of natural space, which Black seizes upon to define his identity:

At one point I had to stop to adjust or rest or some other excuse to not ride. As I stood there, one of the numerous butterflies that inhabit the area... landed on my arm. Because I am a *science guy* I knew why and I wasn't about to disturb him. You see, when a male butterfly mates, he gives the female a fertilization 'packet' that includes essential minerals and nutrients. Sometimes you can see butterflies clustered around puddles or patches of ground or even on animal droppings. What they are doing is collecting this 'packet' that is essential to the survival of their offspring. He sat there for several minutes gently kissing my arm and collecting my sweat for the sodium chloride. I stood there and let him have it.

When he had his fill, he took wing to present his gift for the future to the next female he would meet and he took part of me into his future. As he flitted away, I wish him a good journey and cried at the absolute beauty of our encounter. (p. 17, emphasis added)

This also reveals a moral superiority to other users of the trail. He knows scientific facts, which therefore gives him a greater ownership to the landscape. A “non-science guy” would not understand why a butterfly landed on his arm, and therefore would be disconnected from his natural surroundings. This experience is produced by the natural landscape.

Body and sense

Thus far, the confrontation of anxiety and suffering has helped to explain why one may choose to undergo a challenge like long distance bicycle touring, but other forms of phenomenology are at play. Embodiment and an engagement of the senses are shown to be important to the tour. In Chapter Three I briefly discussed the body's role in mediating the landscape, but I wish to further explore the non-visual aspect of this phenomenon. First I look at the effect of embodiment and gender on the tour. This is followed by a discussion of the senses, which are not necessarily needed for existentialist thought, but for a more primal need to experience the landscape.

Maureen Kelly's (2005) journal is somewhat ambiguous about her personal reasons for going on the tour, though her search for identity unfolds as the tour is underway. Instead, she comments upon the spaces of traveling within modern day America, "Before I started commuting by bicycle, I hadn't noticed the psychological effect of security and enclosure that is produced by going by car. Going by bicycle makes surrounding places and fellow travelers seem much more immediate" (p. 3). When she first takes her fully loaded tour bike out on the road to test it the day before the tour begins, she picks up on the themes of property so crucial in American society. Without a car's windows and doors to hide behind, as well as not having a permanently fixed structure to return to at night, Kelly feels strange, "not quite 'exposed;' maybe 'nowhere to hide!'" (2005, p. 3). Once again we see elements of Cresswell's study of Kerouac (1993). The mobility of the road trip goes against the modern American ideal of fixed place and suburban living. Kelly's unease though, brings up questions of gender in the long distance bicycle tourist. According to Cresswell (1993, 1999), there is a "stereotypical dualism of modernity" (1993, p. 258) in which the idea of traveling on the road is masculine, while femininity is represented through place (such as the home and the institution of marriage). Of the seven women involved in this study, not one explicitly mentioned gender as a barrier to the tour, nor is the tour an expressed form of resistance to gendered hegemony in America. This is not *Thelma and Louise*. Kelly (2005) herself jokes with the concept that she is "unmarriageable" (p. 1) and does note that while traveling through South Carolina the idea of female mobility is foreign to many residents:

Conversations start out with "where are you going," "where are you from," and almost always contain the next two questions: "how old are you," and "are you married?" I get the strangest looks from answering the last one in the negative. South Carolinians, I think, would be much

happier to know that my husband was actually just around the corner. They would be just as happy to know that I'm marriageable at all. (p 11)

This is a reflection of a region's attitude towards gender and mobility; it is not the reason why Kelly is touring.

The closest account to gender issues comes from Linda Matson (2004) though it is a problem easily remedied:

Council [Idaho] was kind of a dreary town (perhaps it looks better in sunny weather) and the main street had a couple of taverns that seemed to be packed with *hard-drinking, pick-up truck driving men* that were spending their Sunday afternoon watching baseball. *It didn't take me long to decide that a motel room might be a wise decision*, so I headed to the classic, 1950's style Starlite Motel. (p. 14, emphasis added)

There is another slight mention of gender in Jody Friedlander's tour (*A California coastal tour: Sonoma County to Santa Barbara: Mirth, wind, and fire... oh yes, and lots of water*, 2004) when she had a flat tire in San Francisco and was aided by a woman who was "very concerned that I was a woman having trouble and very proud for women in general that I was able to take care of it. Of course, she didn't see me in tears on the phone to Scott [her husband] who, luckily, was in his office when I called" (p. 4).

It is difficult to find the reason for this lack of gender issues in the tour accounts. It would be just as easy to say bicycling is a means to end gender duality, as it is to say those not affected by societal gender roles are drawn to bicycling. An interesting component is the dress of the long distance bicycle tourist, which is typically cycling Spandex. This form-fitting clothing could augment the differences in gender roles, as one cannot hide behind men's clothing (Cresswell 1999), but at the same time, cycling clothes typically lack visible gender differences. Another reason could be that the female tourists did not feel that their online journals were the forum for gender issues. My initial

hunch is that the freedom of mobility has more to do with the social and economic class of the long distance bicycle tourist, than gender roles alone. This aspect is beyond the scope of this analysis, but is worthy of further attention.

More universal aspects of the human body are at work in the bicycle tours. Lefebvre warns of placing too great an importance on the visual aspects of reading space. “Sight and seeing, which in the Western tradition once epitomized intelligibility, have turned into a trap: the means whereby, in social space, diversity may be simulated and a travesty of enlightenment and intelligibility ensconced under the sign of transparency” (1991, p. 76). To place such import on the visual qualities of social space, or a place is to lose the ability to “see” its true nature. As I will show here, bicycle touring is a means to get away from the homogeneity produced by the car windshield. Sensually experiencing the material landscape allows the rider to get past the trap of which Lefebvre warns.

Sound plays a large role in all of the journals, thus transforming the space occupied by the tourists. It has not gone unnoticed that geographers often ignore the sonic elements of a landscape in favor of the visual qualities, including that of the written word (Pesses 2007; Tuan 1974; Valentine 1995). Yes, the visual is important when it comes to interpreting a landscape, yet without sound, “space itself contracts, for our experience of space is greatly extended by the auditory sense which provides information of the world beyond the visual field” (Tuan 1974, p. 9).

One of the sampled tourists reveals how important sound is to the tour by including an entry at the end of each page entitled “Audibles.” Wanda Dietrich (*Spring fever 2005: An early season ride home from Minnesota to Nebraska, 2005*) lists the sounds heard, or sometimes not heard, as she tours:

AUDIBLES

Our car horn from the highway beside the trail wishing me a good trip.

Blackbirds

The sounds of a small pond. Frogs announcing to the world how wonderful they are, a mallard and his lady muttering a quiet conversation, small birds.

No traffic noise. (p. 5)

The last entry is a sound that does not exist in the day's ride. And she continues with this practice for the next day's report:

AUDIBLES

A turkey on the Red Jacket trail.

Beeps from car horns. Good wishes? Sure.

That blasted wind. (p. 6)

This continues along with "Quotes of the day" from people Dietrich meets along the road and updates on her bicycle's condition, as well as how her knees are holding up, and a few other lists depending on the day. The importance given to sound is revealing. The Audibles list occurs on all seven pages recounting her tour, while "Smells" only show up on four. Notice how the wind is considered a sound, rather than a tactile sensation. Touches are never cataloged, except perhaps for how her knees feel. No mention is given to tastes. The visual aspect of the tour is even glossed over, except for the "Missed Photograph" section, which occurs on six pages, with two instances mentioning that there was simply nothing worthy of a photo that day.

Sound also transports one of the bicycle tourists to another place: "In fact the noises caused by the bumps on the long, fast descents, including the front panniers rattling on the rack, remind me uncannily of the Blue Streak, and my speed is about the

same as that coaster, too. Nowhere else has my bike made those exact noises” (Haubert 2001, p. 11). Thus Rich Haubert (*California! An amazing adventure through the best of the Golden State*, 2001) in his tour of Central California, is able to experience both the coastal mountains of California and the Blue Streak roller coaster of an Ohio amusement park at the same time due to sound.

Compos also has a connection between sound and place, but it occurs after his 6,620 mile tour is over, providing him the means to relive and revisit his tour:

I go out and see my favorite local guitar players, hear them cover Gnarl Barkley 'Crazy,' and there I am again, maybe somewhere in Montana this time. Next in their set is Blind Faith - 'Can't Find My Way Home.' Nice. Somewhere I hear the hip-hop song that goes 'Tryin' ta catch me ridin' dirty,' and I assume that the first friend at hand needs to hear about how in Oregon I picked up an urban radio station for the first time - in lord knows how long - and humorously cranked along to that tune. (2006, p. 129)

As mentioned above in Chapter Three, the tactile sense plays an important role in bicycling. The physical resistance experienced by the body while trying to cross the material landscape is always present. It can be a subtle force, as in the overall feel of the loaded bicycle (an extra forty to sixty pounds changes the way a bicycle handles): “I hadn't been on my fully loaded bike for about 10 days because I shipped it well ahead of time. I felt a bit wobbly at first, not to mention just nervous about the ride, but after a couple of miles it started to feel good” (Matson 2004, p. 4). This connection with the bicycle and the road even exists after the traveling has occurred. As Maureen Kelly writes, “my legs [reminded] me that they'd never done 80 miles in a day before” (2005, p. 5).

Weather also engages the tactile sense of the bicycle tourist. “Culture enables us to forget the menacing Other – weather for instance – by constructing a house” (Tuan

1998, p. 82). There is no doubt that the automobile allows for the cultural “ease” of which Tuan is speaking (1998, Chapter 3) and makes the motorist forget how difficult it can be to physically travel through heat, rain, or snow. The cyclist cannot forget the weather, even though he or she may have the latest in waterproof clothing or temperature regulating synthetics. Stuart Black (2005) expresses the challenges of the weather that are unique to cycling, “I kept outrunning the storm. I'd take off my rain stuff, get a little chilled and then the rain would catch up with me and I'd have to go through the rain drill all over again” (p. 19). The weather can easily be a constant antagonist for sections of the tour, as Haubert (2001) discovers in between the Central Coast and Central Valley of California:

[Highway] 41 soon splits from [Highway] 46, but now there's far more traffic. I'm amazed at how desolate this area is, and have no idea where all the traffic is coming from or going to. The road is flat at first, but more large hills lie just ahead. The climb is long and has no shoulder. The temperature is in the 90's. Traffic is unsympathetic. The dry air and heavy breathing are making my nose bleed and my mouth so dry it hurts to drink, but I do it anyway, on a schedule to try to make it last 25 miles. I get so desperate I imagine a TV-like scene where young, attractive people in a sports car stop and offer me cold drinks out of a cooler. Annoyingly, it doesn't happen. (p. 4)

Tuan writes “with practice a person can classify the world into such odoriferous categories as alliaceous, ambrosiac, pepperminty, aromatic, ethereal, foul, fragrant, goaty, or nauseous” (1974, p. 9-10). The nose is a powerful device that can aid in judgment of place as well as remind one of a past place. As mentioned above, Dietrich (2005) occasionally inserts a “Smells” list in her tour journal. The entries range from the pleasant, “Lilacs. I love the way different the colors have different smells. I stick my nose in all of them” (p. 8) to the opposite:

Pig lots - YUCK! They can make your eyes burn from 1/2 mile away, and you are always downwind of them in NW Iowa.

Cow lots - Not half so bad. Of course, they were smaller. It's all a matter of what one grows up with, I suppose.

Me - I fear. (p. 10)

The “cow lots” aren’t as bad due to, it would seem, childhood exposure. Pigs and cows might smell remarkably similar for one not accustomed to modernized agricultural practices. Dietrich is the most explicit of all of the tourists in describing the power of smell. Others are subtler; “The smell of eucalyptus greeted us once more as we swung onto the coast. The ocean sparkled. The surf rolled gently and so did the road, as we sped along, wind at our backs, at speeds so in contrast with previous days” (Friedlander 2004, p. 12).

Stuart Black directly invokes the importance of taste into his journal title *Solo without pie* (2005). Taste is the only sense not fully discussed by Tuan (1974) in its connection to how humans experience place and space, but its importance is prevalent in the fourteen bicycle tours. Black actually uses pie to situate his tour in the spatio-temporal context of 21st Century America:

When I was growing up back in the dawn of time, there were diners everywhere with fresh made pies. Huge varieties of pie. Coconut cream, apple, Dutch apple, cherry, blueberry, rhubarb - the list could be endless. But we live in the here and now - the world of Wally World [Wal-Mart] and corporate food. Why make a pie when a machine could make one for you. In Iowan Missouri Valley, the Super Wally Worlds have closed down entire towns because it's 'cheaper' to go to Wally World than to shop at the expensive stores in town. When everyone goes to Wally World, there isn't anything to support the other businesses in town and so they close. It's a story that I saw repeatedly for 400 miles. And so it means pie is hard to find. Almost impossible. But there is some to be had, you just have to look harder. (p. 14)

Black’s resistance to modern structure through back roads and cycling is contextualized with taste. And when pie is found (like in the case discussed below in the section on

space and time; Black 2005, p. 14) it is a reward that makes the suffering of the tour worthwhile.

Black is not the only one who reveals the impact of food on the tour. The quality of food is also commented upon, as are indulgences allowed by the nature of the tour, such as this one by Linda Matson, once again revolving around dessert:

As I was entering the cafe at about 9:00 a.m., a whiteboard advertising their specials of the day caught my eye. The dessert special was Blackberry Cobbler. When greeted by a friendly lady (the owner), I asked her, "can I have blackberry cobbler for breakfast?" She said, "Honey, you can have whatever you want. Would you like it warmed up, with vanilla ice cream?" Yes! So, breakfast #2 was cobbler a la mode with coffee. I don't have words to describe how good it tasted. This is why I cycle. (Matson 2004, p. 11)

The effort in using a bicycle for transportation makes food important and allows for indulgences of pie for a second breakfast, but it also works to connect a certain place to a sensation, in the same ways smell and sound can. Denise Goldberg (*Boston to Oregon: A cross country celebration*, 2002) uses food to cling to her home before heading out across the country. "I needed to get a final fix of New England shellfish before I headed out. A Maine crab roll really hit the spot" (p. 13). Black recounts a previous tour with his wife, which will always be tied to a meal they ate: "In Virginia, we walked into a café on the James River and ordered a flounder stuffed with crab and covered with a mustard sauce. I can still taste it. I can close my eyes and think of it and the flavor comes back on my tongue like an image in my head. It was that good!" (Black 2005, p. 22).

Gazing upon the other

Meeting with locals seems to be hit or miss for all of the sampled tourists. By separating oneself from other present tourists, one can claim his or her right to the landscape. McCabe and Stokoe (2004) show this in their study of discourse and touristic identity. Using personal history is one method to achieve this form of “experiential” authenticity, and Barry MacHale’s journal, *Going number one* (2006, a reference to the California Highway One, a scenic highway which runs along the coast) provides an example of this:

Past Carmel the Big Sur coast started, a land where the slopes of grassy mountains drop off of rocky cliffs and plunge dramatically into turquoise froth; a stretch of Highway 1 that is steep and winding and without generous shoulders. I wanted to make sure I was off the road a little earlier than usual, which would give me time time [sic] to soak in some of the gorgeous scenery and not have to worry about being obliterated by some gawking auto-tourist who doesn't have an ocean in their state. (p. 5)

By describing the rich scenery, which he admits even he is awed by, and then chastising non-Californian motorists for wanting to look at the view, MacHale is able to invoke a sense of his moral right to the landscape.

The encounters can be used to shape identity as discussed above, but they also work on the conceptions of a place. Of the fourteen journals, MacHale’s (2006) was the most “anti-other,” not only attacking those in cars to claim a right to the landscape as mentioned above, but also growing disgusted with residents of particular cities:

I rode around [Santa Cruz, California] for a while, and my initial impression was dim. People were unfriendly, and no one knew where anything was, even though they lived there. Then I pinch-flatted hopping a curb like an idiot, and had to fix that while ants crawled all over me in the hot sun. Then, twenty minutes later, the same tire was flat, and as I fixed it the wind blew my water bottle into the road where some shitnob in a minivan ran it over, even though they could have avoided it. I was tempted to run after it and slash the tires as it stopped at the next light, but I didn't want to leave my stuff unattended. Fucking Santa Cruz. (p. 3)

It is obvious that Santa Cruz is negatively valued based upon its inhabitants. His day in the city is marked by mechanical failures and negative encounters with locals and other tourists. While waiting to check in to the hostel in which he was staying, “I watched surfers and lounged around the disgustingly touristy boardwalk area” (2006, p. 3). But what of other bicycle tourists? Rich Haubert (2001) rides through the same city, yet has a more positive experience:

I had not planned to see much of Santa Cruz, but change [sic] my mind to ride downtown, and am glad I did. I first ride by fantastic Victorians on tree-lined streets, and then down to the beach. A surprisingly large amusement park runs along the beach, and I'm allowed to ride right through it. However, I don't see any surfers - perhaps I'm not looking in the right place. (p 2.)

The amusement park of which Haubert speaks is the same “disgustingly touristy boardwalk area” of MacHale’s account. The same place provides two different experiences. This should also not be read as a mere binary opposition towards tourism. Haubert enjoys Santa Cruz, but later critiques the small town of Sonora in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada for its ‘inauthenticity’. “I reach Sonora, a seriously over-touristy town with heavy traffic and no fast or cheap place to eat. This is one of those 'old-west' places that is trendy but has no real charm” (2001, p. 7).

In the above passage from MacHale’s journal there is mention of local residents not knowing the geography of their own town. “People were unfriendly, and no one knew where anything was, even though they lived there” (2006, p. 3). While the friendliness of locals may vary, the lack of geographic knowledge is a common issue. The problem may not simply lie in the cardinal direction of a place or the route, but the actual time, effort, and mileage required to get there. The automobile has managed to separate those giving

directions from the actual terrain traversed to get to the destination. What is “twenty minutes up the road” may be two hours, and what is “just a mile or so” is really five.

Dietrich (2005) summarizes the lack of connection to the landscape:

The waitress confirmed my route choice, in the process telling me that “We don't really have hills around here.”

Um, false.

Shortly after leaving the cafe, I decided that it would be fair to file this road under “steep.” (p. 10)

This happens again the next day, and Dietrich sums up the situation simply, “I asked for directions. The sweet girl at the desk was trying to be helpful, but didn't quite comprehend the differences between driving a car and riding a bike” (2005, p. 11).

State boundaries play a role in the perception of locals, whether fair or not. In fact, it is through these interactions with local Americans and other bicycle tourists, that Lefebvre's social space fully plays out (1991, Ch. 2 primarily). Some instances are simple, “Not only that, but [Minnesota] drivers are really nice, giving me plenty of room” (Dietrich 2005, p. 6), while some tourists use their experience to muse on tangible social differences in the different states, even relating them to other places:

South Carolina is different from Georgia. I won't say that the people weren't nice, because I met some of the nicest people so far in South Carolina. Maybe I'm getting the “sir” and “ma'am” rules not entirely correct. I wasn't raised in the South, so these rules are not transparent to me. It could be that in this respect Georgia is like France, where if you try to speak their language, they will be amused and delighted that you gave it a shot, but South Carolina is like Paris, where if you get it wrong, someone will be irretrievably offended (And the Mason-Dixon line is still so far off...). (Kelly 2005, p. 11)

Bicycle tourism, like tourism in general, also allows for preconceived notions of a politically designated place and its citizenry to be challenged:

Everyone has their own idea of what California is like - such as too many people and too much money. But overall, the state surprised me by being quite desolate.

Mostly it's just one of the western desert states, but with amazing variety. With the shortage of water, people are crammed into a few areas, and the rest is extremely sparse. I was never overwhelmed by people, probably because I only faced crowds twice: in Yosemite and in San Francisco the last day. Of course I avoided [Southern California] by design. (Haubert 2001, p. 13)

Haubert was not prepared for just how open the American West, including California actually is. His image of California affected his tour, as he writes of trying to make his water supply last until the next town with services. And ironically, Yosemite, a national park set aside to preserve a natural environment had a crowd, while most of the developed areas did not.

The long distance bicycle tourists do have negative experiences with local residents that do not seem to stem from preconceived notions or political boundaries. In fact, the bicyclist is seen as the “other” when occupying the road space. When riding through a construction zone on her tour, Linda Matson (2004) is verbally abused for her mode of transport:

Finally the traffic moved through the mile-long zone at a good speed and I quickly fell behind. The flagman at the other end proceeded to let the oncoming traffic through before I got to the other end and some unfriendly rednecks in an oncoming pickup truck blared their horn and suggested that I “get off the f-ing road.” Momma said there'd be days like this. (p. 10)

Kelly (2005) rode with a small alien toy strapped to the back of her bicycle, a totem to assist with the ride.² Kelly's alien is never really mentioned until:

That's where I overheard an urbane, middle-aged man seated a few chairs down the counter comment on my bike, which was in view through the window, and its little alien passenger on the back.

“Isn't that the gayest thing you've ever seen? I hope it rains.”

² Goldberg (2002) and Santee (2005) also have toys attached to their bicycles, and Black (2005) brings Lewis and Clark dolls to add to the spirit of the journey. Such repetition seems worthy of anthropological investigation...

You can question the masculinity of my little alien buddy all you want, I'm not entirely sure that gender applies to his kind, but as for invoking precipitation, that is just uncalled for. (p. 28)

Humor is used when recounting the experience, but it affected her tour. "It was not right there, but a few miles down a residential yet wearily busy road, that I decided that the trip was no longer fun. I hated the traffic, I hated the people, I wanted to be done" (Kelly 2005, p. 28). She did not quit the tour at this point, and felt better the next morning, but what is interesting is it is the encounter with middle-aged man *and* the "residential yet wearily busy road" (p. 28) that pushes her to the edge. Place once again forces itself into the experience of the long distance bicycle tourist, which is a good point to examine the second part of the framework.

2. Geography makes the tour

The importance of place

Whether discussed or not by the tourist in his or her journal, place is constantly working on his or her experience. There are the expected and obvious accounts of breathtaking views which create a positive experience, "The sight and experience of the basin moves me. While completely barren, it's impressively large and almost pretty" (Haubert 2001, p. 4), as well as the negative places that create some of the anxiety faced on a bicycle tour, like when cycling tourist Rich Haubert (2001) realizes just how desolate and imposing California's Great Central Valley (the aforementioned "almost pretty" basin) can be, "As if to give me everything it has, the wind god [sic] keeps

blowing harder. The miles creep by. I don't know whether to laugh or cry. I hate the idea of two more hours of this" (2001, p.4).

Perhaps the most place driven tour is Scott Wayland's *The Wages of Spin* (2006) in which he, his wife and his dog travel from Tehachapi, California to Las Vegas, Nevada on a tandem recumbent bicycle. The route takes them through the desert, and the natural as well as sparse cultural landscapes have an obvious effect on their experiences as well as Wayland's language in recounting the tour. On the morning of their most difficult climb, roughly 4,000 vertical feet to Emigrant Pass, the wind is harsh and he wants to sleep in. His wife Jodi (Friedlander, the author of the sampled *A California coastal tour*, 2004) and dog Django are up for the challenge:

I pulled my cap tight over my ears, zipped up my down jacket, and set the stove in the shelter of the tent's vestibule. A snow-capped ring of peaks loomed dark and cold above our dusty camp. *Java first, dammit, then we'll get this pig packed.* I wanted to sleep in, put off the uncomfortable chores that awaited us, but Jodi was motivated. Oh, well, I'll sleep when I'm dead, as THEY say. We established what amounted to a brisk walking pace and started punching away at the climb. (2006, p. 5, emphasis in original)

The climb is brutal thanks to a sharp grade and biting wind, with the addition of mechanical failures on the bike. This suffering leads directly to the liminality of the summit as well as the quick descent down the other side. There is a tangible juxtaposition between the two poles of emotion. "But the views! Clear, aching light, Telescope Peak ripping the clouds, snowy escarpments on all quarters. We were *hurting but living* in this icy realm" (p. 5, emphasis added).

These opposing emotions continue to play back and forth. Suffering again enters the tour, this time as one of the panniers flies off of the bicycle at some point on their descent. They are distraught; not only is the bag loaded with crucial tools, it is back up on

the mountain they had just battled to climb. This is fixed by meeting a young couple willing to drive Wayland back up the mountain to search for the bag. The bag is recovered and the two couples eat dinner and celebrate with a bottle of wine. “Our epic ride was made better by the loss of the pannier. Without the ‘catastrophe,’ we would never had [sic] spent the evening with these wonderful people. The blessed life of the touring cyclist” (p. 5). This happens yet again, when turned away from a hotel due to their no pet policy, the tourists find themselves in a perfect campsite watching the sublime desert sunset.

The cultural landscape also affects Wayland’s mood, as does the use of Hunter S. Thompson’s *Fear and loathing in Las Vegas* as a sort of perverse guidebook to the region. Quotes from the book are sprinkled throughout the journal and Wayland’s writing style often mimics the frantic drug-fueled aggression Thompson and his attorney unleashed upon Las Vegas. The less than pristine history of the region also hangs over the tour. “At the base, the ghost town of Ballarat lingered with the spirit of Charles Manson, the twisted killer of Sharon Tate and ideological father to would-be presidential assassins. A wild desert redoubt, perfect for dreamers, prophets and psychopaths. We pedaled onward, pushing for camp where the road split” (Wayland 2006, p. 4). As the Mojave Desert and its residents are woven throughout the account of the tour, it is doubtful such an experience could occur in any other place.

As Harvey writes, “Reading a book about Patagonia will likely affect how we experience that place when we travel there even if we experience considerable cognitive dissonance between expectations generated by the written word and how it actually feels upon the ground” (2006, p. 131). The fact that Wayland had read Thompson’s book

obviously affected his position to see and experience the Mojave Desert. And it is this particular discourse that helps to shape the place of the desert. Just as the bible and cathedral express the social meaning and power of the church, the absence of buildings save for crude roadside amenities and books like *Fear and loathing* create the culturally embedded place of the desert.

Tuan speaks of culture as being an escape from nature, and in turn, “nature” is an escape from culture. “What we wish to escape to is not ‘nature’ but an alluring conception of it, and this conception is necessarily a product of people’s experience and history – their culture. Paradoxical as it may sound, ‘escape to nature’ is a cultural undertaking, a covered-up attempt to ‘escape from nature’” (Tuan 1998, p. 19). This is an important distinction in bicycle tourism. After all, the bicycles used are mass produced products of modern technology. The road is also a product of culture, regardless of its form. But “nature” is important, and it is linked to a rural way of life, or at least one that is not urban.

This is not to say that the bicycle tourists simply blindly accepted what was presented as “natural” along their routes. Joy Santee (*CircumTrekktion: TransAm 2006*) complains of the marketing of Lexington, Virginia’s Natural Bridge. She is wary of the overabundance of brochures promoting the park she finds as she gets closer, but has heard it was worth seeing and was not far off of her intended route.

I started passing some tourist-y things that had warned me that this was probably just an over-developed area lining someone's pockets with the money of tourists. When I got to the natural bridge area, I was a little bitter about how much \$ [sic] they wanted just to go see this "natural wonder", but I hadn't ridden all that way NOT to see it, so I coughed up my dough and went in. It was totally not worth the \$--no secure bike parking area and a condescending girl selling tickets. The bus loads of children leaving the area probably didn't help my attitude.

However, the detour was worth it for one monumental piece of Americana...FoamHenge. Yes, Foamhenge. A life-sized replica of Stonehenge in 400 pound blocks of styrofoam. It was one of those places you are inexplicably drawn to but ashamed to be seen at. (p. 24)

What is interesting is that her complaints seem to be that the natural bridge is not “natural,” yet her actual comments are on the lack of bicycle parking facilities and the attitude of park employees. At the same time, nature and authenticity are not the sole criteria for her type of tourism, as Foamhenge is a positive experience. This is a good example of the postmodern preferences in the new petit bourgeois and tourism (Urry 2002).

The difference in urban and rural places plays a role across the journals, though to varying degree. For the most part urban centers are avoided due to the volume of automobile traffic. Rich Haubert (2001) is an exception and has a truly positive experience in San Francisco. Stuart Black (2005) advises future tourists reading his journal to not avoid cities. “Because the Adventure Cycle [Association] folks are from small town America, they aren't comfortable with city riding. I don't have a problem with traffic and I wish I would have made my rest day in St. Jo or Kansas City rather than Atchison. There are just more things to do and places to see in a larger city” (p. 23). At the same time, the natural landscape not found in a city is crucial to the success of a bicycle tour. Black's experience of the Steamboat Trace (discussed above), in which he uses the natural essence of the place to define his identity as a “science guy” could not be had in an urban setting.

And of course, the road is a constant presence, often dictating the emotions felt by the tourists. “...I spent the morning yelling out Let's get some cows! and celebrating the fact that I wasn't dead, what with all the roadside shrines along my route” (MacHale

2006, p. 11). The numerous wooden crosses and flower shrines that line many California highways, tribute to the victims of fatal auto accidents (see figure 5), serve as a reminder to tourist Barry MacHale that any pain felt on the tour was better than being dead.



Figure 5. Roadside cross memorializing death along a road (photo by the author, 2007).

Wanda Dietrich (2005) also comments on the road as a place and its influence upon the bicycle tourist. “The route finally turned south, and I enjoyed a tailwind and a road that probably had been layed [sic] out by the Native Americans. It followed the lay of the land, instead of an arbitrary grid laid out precisely over any and all hills. Gosh, what a difference. This road made for some nice riding” (p. 11). This ties in with Relph’s (1976) concept of “placelessness” and the inauthenticity of planning practices: “Much

physical and social planning is founded on an implicit assumption that space is uniform and objects and activities can be manipulated and freely located within it” (p. 87). Relph blends object authenticity with existential authenticity; an important point in dealing with tourism. Relph’s concept of place, while perhaps debatable, shows why it is not possible to fully abandon object authenticity for a purely existential version. The tourist himself or herself may view the toured object as authentic regardless of how the scholar views it (Belhassen and Caton 2006). This is shown in the purpose for the Adventure Cycling Association (ACA) mentioned in Chapter One, to help people experience the country’s landscapes and history by bicycle. The ACA develops their routes to consciously reveal the “authentic” pre-freeway America. This desire for an authentic place is revealed through descriptions like Dietrich’s; the rootedness of the landscape (the Native American connection to nature) is a desirable quality.

Place works more surreptitiously though, acting as a force on the emotion of the tourist as a subtle, yet causative setting for resulting drama. A perfect example comes from Maureen Kelly’s (2005) journal. Kelly is on a ferry traveling from Cedar Point to Ocracoke Island, North Carolina. She has noted motorcycles and their riders earlier in the trip and wonders about the “image” that goes along with being a biker. One such biker joins her on the ferry and it is the result of place that allows her to both analyze biker culture and work through her own thoughts about the trip. It is one of the lengthier, more introspective passages of the journal, and is worth reading in its entirety:

I had myself a soda from the machine at the visitor center and sat down to wait. I surveyed the line-up of vehicles. First in line was a 30-something biker, maybe younger, with a red cruiser that he was tenderly polishing with... was it really a diaper? No, just a towel. He spent a good long time on it. Sleeveless "live to ride" shirt, mirrored sunglasses, big tattoos. This might have been one of those bikers with pretensions.

When the ferry was ready to be loaded, one of the workers directed the biker to wait off to the left, and then directed me to wait there with him. I cheerfully said "hello" when I pulled up next to him. I got a gruff "hi" back. He didn't growl, but I could see that he did have an image to maintain, and my ride didn't have enough cc's to qualify for anything more.

Two-wheeled vehicles are always the last to go on, and they get put at the port stern rail. Mine went right behind biker guy's Shadow. (Hm. It wasn't a Harley.) Since this ferry was big enough to have an open deck for passenger seating above the main deck, and it was going to be a long passage, I went up and sat down. Biker guy came up and sat on my bench, three places down. It was the natural spot. We could both keep an eye on our bikes from there.

We got underway, and I watched him from the corner of my eye for a while. He got up to have a smoke (I guess this goes with the image). He definitely cut the figure of a bad-guy biker, what with the tattoos and muscles and shaved head and all that. I wanted to take a picture of him leaned up on the railing looking all mean and biker-like. I smiled to myself as I imagined the response to that request. Maybe he watched me. We had enough in common with our uncommon modes of transportation that someone should have said something, I thought, but instead we avoided eye contact in a joust that indicated we both wanted to be mysterious loners. Something was beginning to tell me that his biker image was a disguise, though. For starters, his shirt was neatly tucked in and one of his tattoos said "USA," and all that polishing seemed to suggest, well, boot camp. I suspected he was a Marine. I'd seen lots of them on motorcycles while I was going through Camp Lejeune.

Three cars forward from our bikes was a red mustang convertible driven by a 40-something shirtless guy with a ponytail and a daughter? / girlfriend? half his age. The, um, daughter stripped down to a bikini top and shorts and came upstairs and sat next to the biker. He struck up a conversation. She and pony-tail guy were from Naples, I overheard. I wasn't in the mood to join that conversation with "Hey, I'm from Naples too. Where are you going to high school?," and by the time I heard her bleat "and then I got really drunk and puked on my shirt" I almost felt bad for biker guy, but hey, he was the one who signed up for that conversation. I left to spend the rest of the passage with my bike.

After some time, down came biker guy to do some more polishing, and packing and unpacking, and attempt a nap on top of his bike. We did some more jousting. I was pretty sure by now, from listening and watching, that he had a depth of character that maybe was supposed to be covered up by the biker image. I wanted to lean over and tell him, as he was searching on the front rims for a third speck of dust to put on that white towel, that when he was done he could start on mine. I smiled to myself again, thinking that maybe I'd just let him think his surly biker aura was working instead. He left to go back up to the passenger deck.

At last, there was the Ocracoke station. Biker guy came back down, and what do you know, asked me how far I was riding. It turns out he was a Marine after all, and he was living at Camp Lejeune, and he was going to Hatteras for the weekend, and he had a big smile. He'd done a lot of riding on his two weeks off, and had been in Jacksonville at the same time I was leaving Florida. I told him he

must really have been taking good care of that bike, for it to be in such good condition with having put that many miles on it. I was sincere about that. My poor bike was filthy, having gone a third of the distance. He got really quiet, and I wondered if I'd said something wrong. It was time to disembark anyway. (p. 16)

The ferry is an interesting place when it comes to mobility. The place itself is moving, yet those within it are stationary. While on a bicycle, the tourist has time to think, though the place in which he or she occupies is constantly changing. The ferry forces the rider to stop moving, yet progress is still made on the tour. Because of this, Kelly seems to have more time to experience her surroundings in an introspective manner.

Experiencing the ferry as a place continued to infect her emotions on the tour.

“Biker Guy” returns to her thoughts at a lonely time:

And I thought about biker guy.

There had been so many things I wanted to ask him, but didn't. Dozens of people today, nearly half of the ferry passengers, had come up to me to ask me about my trip. Why hadn't he? I wanted to ask him how long he had to sit for those tattoos, how long he'd been riding, whether he thought his Shadow could take ponytail guy's Mustang. I wanted to warn him what unspeakable atrocities might befall his bike if the gulls kept hovering over the port stern like that. I wanted to tease him about having two helmets, but no room to put a girl on the back. But there it was. Another person that I would not get a chance to know.

Maybe it was the stress. I let a few tears trickle down my cheek as I fell asleep, listening to the rumble of the surf behind the dunes, the choruses of green tree frogs, and the delicate "pt pt pt" of hundreds of bloodthirsty gnats trying to get into my tent. (p. 16)

And finally, it is with the experience with Biker Guy that Kelly is able to end her tour. When she realizes on her ride home that she would be riding back through Camp Lejeune, Kelly briefly entertains the idea that she might bump into Biker Guy. It dawns on her that she is falling in love with a fantasy, primarily because of heartbreak prior to

leaving the tour. “This trip was about independence, about learning to have an independent heart, about learning to be happy without being in love. How about that. I thought this was just going to be a long bike ride. Now that I understood, I could go home. I called for a ride” (Kelly 2006, p. 43).

Existentially speaking, Kelly had an authentic tour due to the confrontation of self and anxiety. Through the exploration of her “place” in the world, she was able to come to terms with her identity. Factors relating to the other themes of bicycle touring contributed to the tour being experienced positively, and are discussed below, but the experience on the ferry from Cedar Point to Ocracoke Island, North Carolina had the biggest impact on the confrontation of anxiety, and the subsequent freedom, i.e. the ability to end the tour. The desolate California and Nevada desert of Wayland’s tour would likely not have led to the introspection that North Carolina allowed. Kelly needed a more populated area to interact with other people in order to confront anxiety. At the same time, to travel in the style of a manic book like *Fear and loathing in Las Vegas* required an empty desert with a dark history and lonely roads. The tours and the journals recounting them are products of the places through which the tourist traveled.

The importance of space

I have shown that place plays a role in the experiences of long distance bicycle tourists, but spaces of the American landscape are also at work. The relative and relational spaces of Harvey (2006) and the representational spaces of Lefebvre (1991) are described in the sample tourist journals, as is the connection between space and time. The tourists actual position in time was explored in the “Being and the other” section. I now

discuss the importance of time upon the material spaces of bicycle tourism. I then discuss lived or representational spaces as they affect the bicycle tourist.

The spatio-temporal

Stuart Black (2005) gives a wonderful example of the importance of space and time on the tour. In the first days of his tour, the scenery is virtually the same. “For sixty miles all I got to see was fields of corn and soybeans. No cows, no wild animals larger than a squirrel, not even that many houses or dogs, just corn and soybeans” (p. 12). This continues into the next few days. The taming of the natural landscape combined with the efficiency and scope of modern agriculture creates a relational space of monotony (Harvey 2006) for Black. In the initial days, the riding is physically slow and emotionally slowed even further by the constructed space. The space then changes with time:

One of the things that makes bicycling great is a tailwind. I've had a few memorable tailwinds and the one out of Onawa makes the top of the list. Corn and soy beans look every [sic] so much better when they are sailing by at 25 to 30 mph. I was rocketing down the road!

I covered 50 miles in 3 hours! (Black 2005, p. 14)

The same landscape is transformed into a positive and motivating space by its spatio-temporal compression (Harvey 1990). The rest of the page is a frantic account of all of the wonderful occurrences for the rest of the day. Black found a diner that served pie (that seldom occurring treasure he covets on the road; see the *Body and sense* section) and was surrounded by butterflies as he rode. The space produced by resisting a car allows this. “And what was even better was that people in their cars couldn't see them. The only way to see them all was from the seat of a bike. That's how perfect a day can be (p. 14)!”

This is seen again in Scott Wayland's (2006) journal, "The gentle downgrade coupled with the spanking wind meant cycling ecstasy. We applied some effort and were given double the rewards. Cycling gods! In two and a half hours, including breaks, we dispatched the 28 miles to Shoshone" (p. 9). Such accounts not only reveal the presence and effect of space/time compression on the bicycle tourist, but show that speed and compression are not limited to modern transportation modes. Resisting the car or the airplane does not mean that the tourist does not still relish in quickly eliminating a distance. Whether this is an American trait, or a universal human quality is beyond the scope of this work, but it would seem that one cannot escape it by choosing to pedal a bicycle.

The "century" is another aspect of bicycling that directly invokes the compression of space and time. This is essentially a ride of at least one hundred miles in one day, a difficult task, and as such one that evokes elation and pride after the first time. "I RODE MY FIRST CENTURY TODAY!" writes Jamie Compos at the start of the ninth page of his journal (2006). To achieve such a goal can alter one's engagement with the material landscape though. Maureen Kelly speaks of her first century ride on her tour:

The actual bicycling part of this day has been lost to me. When I got to Colleton State Park, I went to the river to soak my feet. That much I remember, because it felt so good. I also remember the campground being that kind of campground that you could leave your wallet on the picnic table all day long and no one would have stolen it. (2005, p. 9)

The places of the toured landscape are trumped by the space, and it isn't until the movement slows down at the end of the day that she is able to acknowledge the place of the tour.

McCabe and Stokoe discuss the importance of getting an early start to the day in tourist accounts. “Here, the destination is desirable only as long as it is unoccupied by other people; it is inextricably tied to a sense of time” (McCabe and Stokoe 2004, p. 611). Leaving early gives a moral sense of ownership to the landscape. This is not the case with the sampled bicycle tourists. There were no instances of equating leaving early with a moral sense of a right to the road. If anything, the cyclists wanted to leave early to ensure enough daylight to safely get to their next destination. If an early start was missed, it seemed to be understandable, likely because of the physical effort from the previous day. The prevailing attitude is expressed in Neil Gunton and Chiho Sakamoto’s (2003) journal: “We packed up and got going by 9am, which was to be quite a common departure time for us. We are definitely not in the ‘Up at 4:30am to beat the rooster’ crowd - more like ‘Huhn, snffgggle where the hell am I zzzzzzzzzzz oh shit it's 8am already????’” (p. 6).

Relative space

As mentioned above in Chapter Three, June Curry, “The Cookie Lady,” inhabits and creates a representational space dedicated to long distance bicycle tourism. Her house and relationship with the cycling tourists started simply, she, along with her uncle, pulled out a hose to provide water for exhausted cyclists and baked cookies to make up for the fact that the lone store in Afton, Virginia had closed down prior to the Bikecentennial ride (Tennant 2007; Woodward 2005). When her uncle died in 1977, his small house next to Curry’s was converted into a cyclist hostel and museum. Curry provides more than just a place to sleep; she also opens her kitchen up to the cycling tourists and provides food,

all free of charge. Donations are accepted, and the tourists are encouraged to leave artifacts for the museum:

‘I know it's junky,’ Curry said, ‘but it's the most interesting thing I've ever done with my life.’

Bikers [sic] who enjoyed their stay have sent postcards, which cover the walls of the living space in a colorful collage. The bikers also leave mementos when they go, which are all displayed. Their photos - and Curry takes a Polaroid of each and every visitor - are organized in albums by year... There are air pumps, jerseys, jeans, old shoes, hats, helmets, gloves, toys and homemade creations. There is a flag from the British isle of Jersey and a flag from Belgium. There is a guitar.

‘I learn more about the world than when I was in school,’ Curry said. ‘They're very, very interesting people to talk to.’ (Tennant 2007)

This unplanned, organic evolution of her home and “place” in life directly speaks to Lefebvre’s concept of the “underground side of social life” (1991, p. 33). The space created by Curry’s selflessness and the relational spaces of the bicycle tourists (thus playing Harvey 2006 against Lefebvre 1991) and is one of lived space and not of state representation. Yet, the road imposed by the state produced Afton, Virginia itself. This tension between the Lefebvrian spaces at work has produced the Cookie Lady. Furthermore, the tension of space works on the relational spaces of the tourists, which can make for different experiences.

Two of the sampled bicycle tourists stayed with the Cookie Lady during their tours (Compos 2006 and Santee 2006). Both had prior knowledge of June Curry and her house, and had planned on staying with her. Jamie Compos (2006) describes the house, and comments upon her generosity. Quoting Curry:

‘There's [sic] couches, blankets, and pillows to sleep on so you don't have to trouble to unpack all your things.’

‘There's a kitchen and lots of food, so be sure to make yourself a good dinner, and don't forget to pack up some snacks and a good lunch for tomorrow - the parkway is hilly and there aren't any stores up there.’ (Compos 2006, p. 16)

Compos also comments on the stationary life of Curry, quoting her about going out to breakfast with a friend: “I haven’t been out in almost two weeks – it’s hard to find friends who will take me to town for errands” (p. 16). Just as the cyclists use her hospitality to aid their tour, Curry depends on the bicycle tourists. “They send her photos of their weddings, children, graduations. She writes back. They send her money when she needs it, cut the grass when they’re in town, clean the windows. She calls them family” (Tennant 2007). The relational spaces of the cyclists all connect to the Cookie Lady’s house and never fully leave.

The next day when Compos continues his tour, he is in a wonderful mood, in part due to his stay with June Curry and his identity as a bicycle tourist. His route then takes him near the Appalachian Trail (Compos hiked this five years prior to his bicycle tour), where he meets some hikers and shifts his identity back to that of an Appalachian Trail thru-hiker, even using his trail nickname of “Duct Tape” in his journal. He stays the night at a “hiker refuge,” which he states “you’d have a hard time finding it if you didn’t know where to look” (p. 17). This is an excellent example of space and identity working in tension; the bicycle history and hospitality of the Cookie Lady’s house influences his position as a cyclist (his tour journal focuses on riding the Blue Ridge Parkway immediately after leaving the house), then his identity shifts to that of “Duct Tape” once he reenters the space of the Appalachian Trail. He revisits his past experience through the place and community of the trail.

What is interesting is how Joy Santee’s (2006) experience with the Cookie Lady is described in somewhat institutional terms. She describes it as a “Shrine” (note the

capital “S”) and has an “appointment” to talk with June Curry (p. 22). She gets a Polaroid photo “taken for Bike House posterity” (p. 22). All of these actions and the language used describe a formal rite of passage; it is as if Santee is getting her driver’s license at the DMV. It is a different experience than the one had by Compos. This is not to say that Santee had a bad experience. Her “appointment” with the Cookie Lady is filled with

hours worth of stories, many illustrated with her self-made model of bustling Afton in the 1920’s (complete with outhouses). She can’t sew or crochet since her stroke, so building is her new creative outlet. She and [her nurse] Debbie are now working on a Western-themed grouping since she likes reading westerns.

We heard stories about ice-cream dates, the railroad, resort guests from her childhood, schoolbus rides, interdenominational Sunday school stipulations from a landowner, Santa Claus-the man of her house, cats, and a gay deer. (Santee 2006, p. 22)

The stories are all part of the space of the house; the meeting of local history and international experience, as well as oddities like homosexual deer. And in an interesting parallel with Compos, she later meets up with a friend hiking the Appalachian Trail. Not having a connection to the trail, this space does not help to define her identity.

3. The burden of structure

According to Lefebvre, “Abstract space, the space of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism, bound up as it is with exchange (of goods and commodities, as of written and spoken words, etc.) depends on consensus more than any space before it” (1991, p. 57). The acceptance of the American freeway and the transformation of American landscape are evidence of this. The “consensus” has allowed for the division of neighborhoods by freeway construction (Avila 1998) and an unfortunate homogeneity of transportation (Siddall 1987). At first glance it would seem that these long distance bicycle tourists are

fully resisting those capitalist networks and lifestyles by traveling without an automobile, train, or airplane, which is discussed first. Structure is complex however, and not only do these tourists not fully abandon modern convenience, there is a dialectic at work between resisting capitalism and the fetish of the bicycle, which is discussed and concludes this chapter.

The infrastructure of American transportation is undoubtedly biased towards motorized modes. The extent of that bias is not readily seen from the windshield of a car. Lefebvre speaks of “mirages” and “mirage effects” when speaking of the duality of space (1991, Chapter 3). The American Road is no exception to this rule. More specifically, bridges, while involving a climb, would appear to be an inviting way to traverse a body of water or another route (e.g. a freeway overpass), but the cyclists were able to reveal the hostility of bridges throughout the country. This dual nature, that is while both useful for travel and almost impossible to travel across without the right equipment, is discussed throughout the journals, but I think best shown through the playful photographs and text of Stuart Black’s journal:

Lexington Bridge is not unlike the other bridges I crossed. Sure, it is narrow and old and about a half mile long.



Lexington Bridge, Missouri

That's not the problem. It's the only bridge for a hundred miles and so there is a lot of traffic on it.



The narrow Lexington Bridge

That's not the problem. The problem with Lexington Bridge (remember that name) is that for its entire length, there is a gap between the road and the railing for the bridge.



Man eating holes in the Lexington Bridge

In some spots, the gaps seem to be about half of the lane. From a bicycle seat these gaps look like they could swallow me, bike and panniers with only strips of skin remaining on the sharpened rebar where the concrete used to be.



Flesh tearing holes in the Lexington Bridge

And since the Missouri River is about 100 feet below the bridge, you'd get to contemplate how much pain there is in having your flesh ripped from you before you hit the water. Ouch!

The only way to get across the Lexington Bridge is to screw up your courage, take a deep breath, try not to look through the holes and ride as hard and fast as you can as near to the center yellow line as possible. If any cars came up behind me, I didn't care. I wasn't about to move next to those damned holes for anything! (photographs and text by Black 2005, p. 19)

This is an extreme case of a road not catering to non-motorized forms of transport, but the hazards of bridge crossings are a reoccurring theme. The duality of roads and their “acceptable” uses in general is seen throughout the journals:

The mist thickened to fog as we approached the turn back onto Highway One, where we also encountered a sign: "bicycles detour to Buellton". Huh? Why? Oh yes, the storm. It had probably caused one or more landslides that had closed down the shoulder or the right lane, but not about to be deterred from our course, we ignored the sign. (Friedlander 2004, p. 12)

There was one section where a landslide had covered the shoulder, eliminating the bicycling space of the road, but “that section was fast, though, and what little traffic there was had to delay their arrivals for a few minutes” (Friedlander 2004, p. 12). Bicycles are often seen as not being able to occupy the same transportation spaces as automobiles. A similar problem occurs repeatedly in Wayne Estes’ (*Wayne’s Yellowstone/Grand Teton bike tour*, 2004) tour of Wyoming and Montana. Road construction required one lane to be shut down and a “pilot car” led traffic safely through the sites.

When I got to the construction zone the flagger stopped me and said that I’m not allowed to bike through the construction. I would have to wait and ride a pilot car. If I had ridden to the front of the line of stopped cars when I got there, I could have ridden the pilot car that led that line of cars. Instead, I had to wait another 40 minutes for the next line of cars to go through. Very frustrating. The construction zone looked like it would be easy to bike through - it was all downhill. But the flagger claimed that "federal regulations" prohibit bikes and pedestrians in the construction zone. To complicate matters, I wanted to stop at Flagg Ranch which is in the middle of the construction zone. So I would have to ride the pilot car to Flagg Ranch, and then later I would have to wait for the pilot car again to get to the north end of the construction zone. After a very long wait I rode the pilot car (pickup truck) 2 miles through the construction zone past several graders, and got off at Flagg Ranch. It would have been easy to get through with my 1.75 inch tires. (p. 4)

It is not just the existing networks and infrastructure that is questioned through long distance bicycle tourism. There is evidence of resistance to the dominance of the car and motorized transport in all of the journals. Some are almost subtle, just pointing out

the things that motorists could not see (like Black's encounter with the butterflies above in the "Being and the other" section). Jodi Friedlander also notes that which would be missed when traveling by car, "in the town of Marshall, right on the ocean, I slowed down to let an otter work its way to the curb and down to the water. That's something I probably would have missed had I passed at high speeds in a car" (2004, p. 3).

Other bicycle tourists are more obvious in their disdain for motorized transportation:

I knew there weren't any other campgrounds in the area, and I briefly considered asking the fairgrounds manager if he or she wouldn't mind if I pitched my tent, say, in the sheep barn. But I took one more look at the hundred or so tour buses, with their owners sitting on white plastic molded chairs under their awnings in the gravel lot, looking smug, self-important and proud of their absurd touring behemoths, and I decided to flee. Why does anyone need to travel with that much stuff? (Matson 2004, p. 4)

Through mobility, the bicycle tourists are able to not only resist dominant transportation networks and modes, but they challenge some American social norms. This mobility is a means to negotiate the representations of and representational spaces put forth by Lefebvre (1991). Cresswell (1993, p. 250) stresses the importance of not simplifying mobility and its effect on the American landscape, as well as the consideration of its deviant nature. The bicycle tourist plays with both sides of the American ideal of mobility and the ability to resist cultural norms through modal choice. On the one hand, he or she plays the role of the admirable outlaw as depicted in movies like *Easy Rider*, although as I addressed above, the gender roles of public and private places discussed by Cresswell (1993; 1999) do not seem to have much influence. As far as these accounts go, the mobile outlaw is a genderless one.

Dietrich makes a slight reference to gender roles, “Mother's Day. I was told I should have been sleeping in and having breakfast served in bed by my dotting family” (2005, p. 6), but I think it speaks more to generalized norms than gendered roles. Mother’s Day is set aside in the US as a day to give mom time to relax, and the suffering endured by Dietrich may not seem relaxing, but same concept could be used with Father’s Day, or Labor Day, or any other day dedicated to rest. The point is that Americans are not expected to suffer for transportation, especially on a nationally designated holiday. Dietrich goes on to express that she wants to be on the bicycle. The bicycle tourist chooses to suffer, which should be seen as a resistance to an American principle, that ease of transportation provided by motorized modes.

The other side of American mobility as discussed by Cresswell (1993, 1999) is the importance of place. The tourists all have experiences with local people who cannot believe anyone would ride a bicycle for so long. In Buffalo, New York, Denise Goldberg (2002) received such a response. “That seems to be a universal initial reaction from most people. I got a ‘you really rode here from Massachusetts?’ today...” (p. 29). Some are envious of being able to resist in such a way; to be between jobs or, to not have a mortgage payment, and have little or no responsibilities. The envy comes from the perception of being able to escape one’s culture (Tuan 1998); in this case the stigma of American mobility, i.e. not having rootedness to place (Relph 1976) and the perception of not owning a home (Cresswell 1993).

It is this very resistance though, that brings up the duality of bicycle tourism. After all, these tourists may be between jobs or houses, or often just using vacation time, but the tour is by no means a complete abandonment of American society. While

capitalist structures are avoided, a material fetishism of bicycle technology surfaces in the tourist. “Just as domination is never complete, resistance is never total” (Cresswell 1993, p. 252). The bicyclist may be resisting the convenience of the car and certain road networks, but he or she will typically spare no expense for the machine that will take him or her across the continent. Ten of the tourists had pages of their journals dedicated to the material items they were bringing along on the tour, as well as detailed specifications on their bicycles. Dietrich (2005) even named her bicycle “William,” thus anthropomorphizing and gendering it, as well as revealing Marx’s concept of fetishism of commodities. MacHale (2006) does the same thing with “Ethyl.” Rather than being the product of labor, William and Ethyl appear to have been “born.”

There is, in a sense, a certain duplicity found within some of the journals regarding anti-car/anti-freeway sentiment, none more prevalent than in Barry MacHale’s (2006) journal. He makes five separate derogatory comments towards automobiles and their drivers, yet relies on a car three separate times during his 463 mile trip (creating what Lefebvre would call a contradictory space [1991]). The first time he gets a flat tire and is running out of daylight to get to his camp and hitches a ride with a California Highway Patrol officer. The second, he is out of inner tubes to repair to his flats, and needs to hitch another ride back to Carmel, California to find a bike shop. Finally, he borrows his stepbrother’s mother’s car:

Scott can’t drive for sordid legal reasons, so he handed me the keys to his mom’s brand new turbo Forester, which I took with small reluctance, what with not having driven in a couple of weeks. Despite obliterating a small animal in a red spray of gore that filled up the rear-view mirror, the trip across town to get Vietnamese food turned out fine (except for the animal, that is). (p. 11)

Note the use of “obliterate” in this passage and the one discussing Big Sur (above, p. 58). While subtle irony may have been a work, there is a clear shift in identity. He is concerned with getting “obliterated” by the “gawking auto-tourist”; when MacHale is behind the wheel, the “small animal” is “obliterated” without any remorse.

It would be easy to bluntly label MacHale a hypocrite, but the ethics and morals associated with driving are not always black and white. Sheller (2004) explains how the “emotional geographies” of the automobile result in such ambivalence. Among the complex frames of meaning, Sheller argues, are the “relationships between the car, the self, the family and friends, creating affective contexts that are also deeply materialized in particular types of vehicles, homes, neighborhoods, and cities.” (2004, p. 229). Not only is the automobile a convenient way to get around, but it is also an object that can reproduce spaces of domesticity, kinship, and identity. When MacHale borrows the Forester, it would appear that he is in a sense reclaiming a non-bicycle tourist identity that he left behind when he started the tour. Conversely, when he is on the bike, his identity is one of moral superiority to the landscape, which allows him to insult the “tourists.”

Another factor in these non-car road trips is that for some, it is not so much about a critique of the car as it is testing one’s limits, i.e. focusing on the existential authenticity. Jodi Friedlander (2004) suffers through seasonally unusual California weather until she and her temporary cycling partner Carol hitch a ride:

I stuck out my thumb at the first pick-up that came by, who kindly stopped for us. He'd had no idea how windy it was until he tried to get out of his truck. He almost couldn't get his door open. I set the parking brake on the trike, which is simply a strap tightened on one of the brake levers. The wind blew the trike backwards. It didn't roll; it just moved backwards. Jeff was Road Angel #2 and loaded our cycles, panniers attached, into his truck and took us all the way to our

motel, the Blue Seal Inn. Wet, windblown, and stunned, we expressed our deepest gratitude, and he was on his way. (p. 11)

Friedlander acknowledges that this was a different type of suffering than she had faced rock climbing, “no sticking out the thumb for a ride up there (p. 11),” but this was the hardest day she had ever experienced as a cycling tourist. The reliance on the truck did not change the fact that she had already fought through forty-two miles of harsh weather and heavy traffic. This tour is not a simple resistance to the car; it is a search for existential authenticity through the best means for the job. The day’s touring was a success, regardless of the mode; “I admit to feeling a bit smug for having pulled it off. Yeah, that's right, we cool” (Friedlander 2004, p. 11).

Other evidence that this is not a full show of resistance to structure and modernity lies in the fact that ten of the tourists used a motorized form of transportation to get to the starting point of their routes (Black 2005; Bruckdorfer 2006; Compos 2006; Dietrich 2005; Estes 2004; Friedlander 2004; Haubert 2001; MacHale 2006; Matson 2004; Santee 2006). Dietrich (2005) drove to the starting point in Minnesota, but that was part of an already planned trip to help her daughter move into a new apartment. The rest started from their front doors (Goldberg 2002; Gunton and Sakamoto 2003; Kelly 2005; Wayland 2006). Goldberg (2002) and Kelly (2005) began without motorized transportation, but relied on it during the tour. Wayland’s (2006) tour journal ends in Las Vegas, and there is no account of returning home.

The freedom given by the automobile is addressed by Dietrich on the last day of her tour (2005, p. 11). She has to call her husband to pick her up as she has to return to work the next day and cannot make it home in time by bicycle. The tour has been a positive experience, but the challenges faced have made her want to return home “This

made for some interesting psychology. Because rescue was just hours away, I had a hard time working up the motivation for getting on the bike and out it to the wind and hills... *I missed my freedom*" (p.11, emphasis added). Perhaps this is where the suffering of the bicycle tourist departs from Frankl's logotherapy (1984). The suffering is fleeting, it can be stopped with a phone call, and perhaps that temporary nature allows the cyclist to retreat from the existential experience. As Tuan says, a critical gaze hides "a deep human fear – one that has always been a part of conscious life – the fear of light in places that best remain in the dark" (1995, p 239).

This should not be seen as a criticism of the sampled long distance bicycle tourists. After all, none of the sampled tourists expressed a desire to fully leave American society. The two bicycle tourists covering the most mileage, Jamie Compos (6,620 miles) and Joy Santee (4,427 miles) do remark on the difficulty of returning to their old lives once their lengthy tours are over.

I'm looking down at roads from 30,000 feet up [flying home] and wondering how long it would take my two wheels to travel them, what stories might be had along their seemingly desolate shoulders...

And it's not that I mind my real life. In fact, I was pretty happy with it when I left, but I dread the transition back. I have to start remembering what day of the week it is... I'll find myself submitting back to a scheduled life with demands beyond eat/sleep/bike, demands and expectations from people other than me...

Of course, I'll sleep in the same spot most nights, have the luxuries of pillows, towels, and ice at hand, and not eat out of convenience stores or buy everything in single serving sizes. But I'll miss my new friends and the freedom of the road. And I'll always have memories and stories of the strange summer where I was a stranger everywhere I went and met all sorts of wonderful people (some stranger than others), saw just a ribbon of the scenic wonders of this vast and varied country, learned something of people (myself included), beat up my body, fed my patriotism, and was reassured that the world isn't as bad of a place as the news and naysayers would have us believe.

In fact, it's quite a nice place when your pace is 10 mph... (Santee 2006, p. 110)

The pace of which Santee speaks directly relates to the separate “map” of the same area by choosing the bicycle over the car (Harvey 2006). This separate map of America reveals that crime and terror do not lurk at every corner, and in drafting such a map, Santee is able to come to terms with her structural resistance while learning to authentically live within structure. Rather than a full resistance, the answer as to *why* they ride for such long distances with such minimal support lies within the overall framework proposed here, and might best be summed up utilizing Harvey’s work (2006). At one scale there are global forces at work that produce a need for efficiency. There is no doubt that the desire for capital accumulation has produced the contextual social space for such a type and form of tourism. This relative space of capitalism, though, generates another scale; a personal need to come to terms with one’s place in the global network. The relational space of individual thought and agency is played out upon the absolute space of the road. The body is also present, connected but not the same as the mind. The senses mediate the absolute spaces as they pertain to the relative and relational spaces. Embodiment and mobility work as the means to negotiate the many scales of space and place. To experience the bicycle tour is to come to terms with the relational, existential spaces of the mind, and find one’s place in the relative spaces of the global economy.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusions

We did it: We pedaled to Fargo. At that moment, we didn't want to think about the obvious next bit: Pedaling Home...

- Neil Gunton and Chiho Sakamoto, *Pedaling to the mall*

The goal for this project was to not provide statistical facts about generalities of long distance bicycle tourism, but to begin the qualitative discourse of such a phenomenon through in-depth case studies of fourteen tourists. There is still much work to be done on bicycling as both a sport and a form of mobility however. There is evidence that it is being recognized within the social sciences (see for example the “Geographies of Cycling” session at the 2008 meeting of Association of American Geographers, as well as Jensen’s work on the politics of bicycle mobilities, 2007), but so much more can still be done. The phenomenon of bicycle tourism provides an excellent medium to utilize geographic tools when studying tourism, as it connects the traveler to the landscape more than many other modes can.

Scholars, however, should not make the mistake of focusing on the material aspects of this transportation mode. As I have shown, to bicycle is to experience, to resist, and to come to terms with one’s identity and “place.” Bicycling, both in touristic and commuting forms can be used to explore human agency and reflect greater societal issues and psychological factors of a sample of humanity. The difficulties faced when riding a bicycle make the dehumanized state of American transportation networks tangible. The

fact that people would choose to resist those same networks and face the resulting anxiety and suffering reveals something about Americans themselves.

It is important to note that there are limitations to simply plucking these journals from the Internet for analysis. While I would argue this method has given a raw look at these tourists and their experiences, it is by no means the end of this work. One flaw with this method is that it relies on the writing ability of the tourist to relate the important factors of the tour. Those with concise journals who were left out of this study may have experienced different emotions due to the landscape, but without descriptive prose, it is impossible to know. Another issue comes from the fact that the journals were written without the knowledge that they would one day be used for an academic study. Again, this gives them a raw quality, but may also have resulted in geographic factors being ignored when writing because the tourist simply did not think they were important. Directed questionnaires regarding the tourists' experiences could help flesh out the importance of place and space and refine the three themes proposed here. Participatory research would also be ideal, to have the geographer actually out observing the sights, sounds, and other sensations of the tour as well as seeing how they affect other bicycle tourists. After all, such a form of landscape analysis also harkens back to the work of landscape geographer J.B. Jackson. According to Paul Groth, "Whenever possible, he avoided travel by automobile and instead traveled by motorcycle, not only for greater mobility but also to engage his other senses, most particularly smell and a kinesthetic sense of road texture and terrain" (1997, p. 20).

Another limitation to simply using the journals, as I have mentioned above, is that there are similarities likely resulting from the use of the website to prepare for a trip. To

once again quote Harvey, “Reading a book about Patagonia will likely affect how we experience that place when we travel there even if we experience considerable cognitive dissonance between expectations generated by the written word and how it actually feels upon the ground” (2006, p. 131). The very discourse of CrazyGuyOnABike.com, that is, the space of that website, is produced and reproduced by the journals. This proposed framework of the three themes of non-institutionalized long distance bicycle tourism can only be fully tested against other examples of the phenomenon that are not confined to this Internet space.

What this analysis should reveal is that each of the tourists essentially rode to see if it could be done, and in part, see who they were. This is an existentialist endeavor.

Kelly (2005) uses Thoreau and a visit to Walden Pond to sum up the challenges and part of the purpose of her tour:

I stopped by the site of Thoreau's house, where I read an inscription on a park sign, concerning his reasons for coming to the woods:

*I went to the woods because
I wished to live deliberately,
to front only the essential
facts of life.
And see if I could
not learn what it had to teach
and not, when I came to die,
discover that I had not lived.*

Happily, I had a few minutes to myself. I sat on a stump in the filtered afternoon light of the pine forest to rest my legs, and felt, after these two thousand miles, confirmed. (Kelly 2005, p. 36)

In addition to this existential search for self and meaning, non-institutionalized long distance bicycle touring is about experiencing and coming to terms with the natural and cultural landscapes as well as produced and relational spaces. History and representations of space (Lefebvre 1991) work with and against the long distance bicycle

tourist. Roads were first built because the cyclists demanded it, and yet today the bicycle is seen as a pest to the automobile. Bridges that are crossed almost unconsciously by a driver are a deadly place for the bicyclist. Mobility and embodiment are used to negotiate the absolute space of the road and relative spaces of global capitalism that allow for such a road to exist. In addition to existential authenticity, it is this confrontation with the material and mental geographies that is necessary for the tour to be deemed a success by the tourist. This dialectic between space/place and existentialist identity reveals just how important the geographic lens is in studying tourism phenomena. Geographic structures and spaces must be incorporated with studies of human agency, experience, and self.

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